

## **CONDITION ASSESSMENT STUDY OF SIGNIFICANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN FDOT DISTRICT 1 RIGHT-OF-WAYS**

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

According to the provisions of Chapter 267.061 (2)(c), Florida Statutes, state agencies are responsible for establishing a program to locate, inventory, and evaluate all historic properties under their jurisdiction that appear to qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Further, state agencies are directed to exercise caution to prevent the deterioration or substantial alteration of National Register properties under their control.

Statewide, more than 500 archaeological sites listed or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register may exist on Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) right-of-ways. Typically, these sites receive little or no archaeological attention except during contracted archaeological surveys immediately in advance of road construction activities, and then only if the sites fall within the survey area. Currently, no archaeological survey program exists with the purpose of identifying National Register sites on FDOT right-of-ways or of assessing their current condition.

Florida Site File (FSF) records indicate that current or complete information is not available for many of these sites because no recent site visits have been made. Many sites may be actively deteriorating, while others may no longer exist due to previous impacts. Other archaeological sites may have intact National Register-quality components on lands adjacent to FDOT right-of-ways but might lack qualities of significance on actual FDOT property.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Researchers conducted an archaeological study focused on the identification and assessment of the 45 listed or potentially eligible National Register archaeological sites recorded in FDOT District One right-of-ways. This study was intended to serve as a model for future efforts and to demonstrate a good-faith effort by FDOT in the responsible management of significant historical resources for which the agency is responsible.

Specific objectives included the development of the following:

1. Methods and procedures for documenting and evaluating the conditions and integrity of recorded significant archaeological sites in FDOT right-of-ways.
2. Recommended management procedures for recorded significant archaeological sites in FDOT right-of-ways, including the identification of patterns of endangerment.
3. Updates to significant archaeological sites in District One right-of-ways as submitted to

the FSF, which is maintained by the Division of Historical Resources (Tallahassee, FL).

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

A sequential five-step evaluation methodology was developed to enable the least field-intensive evaluation to occur in the early stages, and to allow for sites to be dropped from further consideration based on cumulative data gathering, starting with documentary, literature-based or map sources first. Sites carried forward were subject to increasingly intense field investigation, although many were able to be evaluated through visual inspection or limited field reconnaissance. This was particularly the case with sites for which map location information was ambiguous (turning out to be on or near county roads rather than on or near state roads) or where high levels of impact clearly had altered or eliminated site integrity. On the other hand, visual examination indicated that several sites potentially possessed the properties of significance previously recorded for them, and they were duly reevaluated with minimal effort.

Implementation of the first two steps, which involved detailed research or archival investigation, resulted in the removal of nearly 50 percent of the sites from further consideration (22 of 45 sites deleted). The third step, visual inspection and limited field investigation, resulted in 14 sites being removed from the list. The final steps (four and five), shovel testing and other forms of subsurface investigation, resulted in the removal of four more sites. Of the original list of 45 sites, five were considered to possess the properties of significance and to be of potential further concern to the District.

For management purposes, it is important to recognize that approximately 84 percent of the listed sites were satisfactorily evaluated through additional archival research and map study or limited field inspection. Few sites required more intensive subsurface archaeological techniques for evaluation, which suggests that routine condition assessments of significant sites on District lands is both feasible and effective as a management tool.

This project has statewide relevance for FDOT archaeological management practices. Researchers have developed an effective methodology for efficiently identifying and reevaluating archaeological sites recorded in the FSF as National Register site associated with FDOT right-of-ways. This management tool will ably assist the FDOT in fulfilling its responsibility to such resources under the requirements of Chapter 267 F.S. The completion of the research project has accomplished this task in District One, and it has provided a methodology that is suitable for use in all Districts.

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