

Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Task Agreement

National Park Service

Recipient: Portland State University

Project Title: Processing/Cataloging Museum Archaeological Materials and Hosting a Public Archaeology Field School at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction and Objectives

The Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) Task Agreement between the National Park Service (NPS) and Portland State University (PSU) was first established on August 15, 2010 and was later modified through 2015. It provided funding for the processing and cataloging of archaeological materials at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site (FOVA), as well as for conducting the archaeological field schools in the summers of 2013-2015. The focus of these efforts was the Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) Fort Vancouver multicultural village site, part of the world-renowned historic site now known as Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

The goals of this agreement were to: make the data more available to researchers, corresponding to the larger NPS objective to support public archaeology and curation efforts, increase security and preservation of these objects held in public trust, and provide the NPS staff at FOVA with accessible data for planning and management of park resources. Additionally, the partnership with PSU provided opportunities to train students for future careers, supporting the research and educational mission of PSU. The public also benefited from the agreement through accessible data collections and excavations open to park visitors. The NPS and PSU staff achieved these goals over the course of five years through archaeological lab work, research and writing, cataloging, and conducting five public archaeological field schools.

Processing and Cataloging Archaeological Materials

The archaeology lab processed, analyzed, and prepared collections for curation over the course of the five years. Collections included recent field school excavations, as well as older collections that had not been cataloged or prepared for preservation. A graduate student from Portland State University supervised the archaeology lab, with guidance from NPS staff. The lab was staffed by volunteers, including PSU students, others from surrounding universities, and community members. Upon completion of processing and analysis in the lab, collections were cataloged and prepared for storage in the museum.

This work provided the graduate student lab supervisor and volunteers valuable hands-on education experiences. Training included processing, handling, analyzing, cataloging, and storing artifacts. In-depth training sessions were also held for specific artifact material types, including lithics and beads. This student participation provided a means to train the next generation of specialists.

These completed collections are now more easily accessible to NPS staff and the public with data. NPS staff can use the data for planning and management of park resources. These collections are also available to researchers and the public, providing support toward public archaeology efforts.

Public Archaeology Field Schools

The agreement provided funding for the Public Archaeology Field School at FOVA in the summers of 2011-2013. The field school was jointly ran between PSU, Washington State University Vancouver (WSU-V), and the NPS. The course taught college students enrolled through PSU or WSU-V archaeological field and laboratory methods. Excavations tested the HBC's Fort Vancouver multicultural village site, continuing the research initiative started in 2010 that focused on landscape use at the site. Fieldwork in 2011 through 2014 continued the research, with the added opportunity to test village deposits in the South Vancouver Barracks, which transferred to the NPS in May of 2012.

Funding also went toward remote sensing workshops, the purchasing of field data recording gear, and travel for guest speakers and vehicle rental for field trips. These aspects enhanced the field school students' learning experiences, allowing a more comprehensive understanding of the field of archaeology. The remote sensing workshops also provided additional data on the nature of the sub-surface resources present at the site. Digital field data recording increased the quality and consistency of data, and streamlined the process of digitization of field paperwork at the completion of the excavations.

The field school excavations supported the objectives of PSU and the NPS through academic training, data collection, and public access to the excavations. Students were trained in methods required for a career in archaeology. These excavations gathered data on the sub-surface resources at the site, vital for cultural resources management. Allowing park visitors to view the excavations and interact with students and staff increased public awareness of cultural resources at FOVA.

Research and Report Preparation

Starting in the fall of 2014 and continuing to present, one PSU research assistant helped NPS analyze and report on the eight years of village excavations that occurred between 2001-2014. The research assistant identified artifacts from earlier excavations, maintained and created databases of artifact and stratigraphic information, produced and updated GIS files, and drafted report chapters. The archaeological report is currently in progress, and NPS will compile and interpret eight years of data on the village.

Conclusion

In summary, the CESU agreement funded 5 years of archaeological lab work and cataloging, three archaeological field schools, and two years of research assistance. The lab and cataloging efforts resulted in collections that are now easily accessible, secure, and preserved in the public trust. This work also provided hands-on experience for PSU students, supporting the training of future specialists. The archaeological field schools also provided vital training for students, increased data on the sub-surface cultural resources present at FOVA, and enhanced public awareness of archaeology and the cultural resources at FOVA. With the help of a PSU research assistant, NPS staff members are synthesizing eight years of village excavations in a report that will increase understanding of the historical multicultural village community. Working together, NPS and PSU staff met the goals of the CESU agreement,

benefiting both of the organizations and the public with knowledge, data, and curated collections that will have long lasting impacts on cultural resources management.