



Department of Defense-Wide Inventory of Rock Art Sites and Assessment of Management Practices

Project # 11-480

Background:

Rock art consists of Native American pictographs (rock paintings), petroglyphs (engravings) and geoglyphs (earth figures). These are unusual but not in all cases uncommon cultural resources. They potentially may have research and aesthetic values, and often are important to Native American tribes for cultural heritage and religious reasons. Rock art differs from other aspects of the archaeological record in significant ways. It requires different field and analytical techniques to document, evaluate and study, as well as very different approaches for management and treatment. As a newly developing archaeological emphasis, very few Cultural Resource Managers (CRMs) are knowledgeable about or trained in rock art research or management. While rock art sites have the potential to represent the most significant cultural resources in a given region, the numbers of these sites on DoD facilities, the ways that they are being managed, and their impacts to DoD facility missions have been undetermined and unevaluated.



Bighorn sheep petroglyphs from the Coso Rock Art National Historic Landmark District, NAWS China Lake, California.

Objective:

The objectives of this project are to help ensure regulatory compliance and improve management practices with respect to rock art sites, and thereby promote the long-term sustainability of these cultural resources on DoD facilities within the 50 U.S. states.

Summary of Approach:

This project involved two coordinated approaches. The first was to provide background for facility CRMs intended to aid their regulatory compliance and

management efforts. This included guidelines for site documentation, National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility evaluations, and treatments; basic principles of management approaches, and a model rock art management plan that can be modified and used in facility-specific cases; summary of current analytical approaches in rock art research, intended to assist CRMs overseeing rock art contracts; and a historical-context study useful for the preparation of NRHP evaluations and nominations. Second, an assessment was completed of the numbers of DoD rock art sites, management approaches currently being employed, effectiveness of these programs, and problems the resources have created. This involved the identification of DoD facilities with rock art sites, use of written questionnaires, and detailed interviews with selected facility CRMs.

Benefit:

The project will assist facility CRMs manage rock art sites using state-of-the-art techniques and following internationally-accepted principles and practices that will improve the long-term sustainability of these resources. It will also improve the cost effectiveness of management programs through the identification of best management practices for rock art sites.

Accomplishments:

The project has resulted in a manual providing guidance to facility CRMs in rock art management and regulatory compliance. The assessment determined that rock art sites are present on approximately 5% of DoD facilities but are most common in the western states, where they may constitute 5-10% of a facilities cultural resources. Few defense-mission conflicts have been caused by the presence of rock art sites, and their preservation is generally good or better. A widespread management weakness is full NHPA Section 106 compliance. Standardized best practices for site documentation and condition assessments have been identified that can enhance cost effectiveness and resource sustainability.

Contact Information:

Dr. David S. Whitley
Principal
ASM Affiliates, Inc.
20424 West Valley Blvd., #A, Tehachapi, CA 93561
Phone: 661-823-7690
Fax: 661-823-7897
Email: dwhitley@asmaffiliates.com

