

HISTORIC PRESERVATION SERIES



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The Alaska Heritage Resources Survey

The Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) is a data repository with information on over 45,000 reported cultural resources (archaeological sites, buildings, structures, objects or locations, etc.), from prehistoric to modern, and some paleontological sites within the State of Alaska. This data repository is restricted by state law to prevent unauthorized use and to protect identified cultural resources from unwarranted destruction. The AHRS is maintained by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) staff and the electronic version of the AHRS is part of OHA's Integrated Business Suite (IBS).

The goal of the AHRS is to be the long-term, central data repository for all of Alaska's cultural resources information and to provide that information for potential research, development of historic contexts, and for project-planning purposes. Federal and state agencies, private companies, and professional consultants are encouraged to use the inventory when a proposed project involves State or Federal land, jurisdiction, funding, permits, or other authorizations. These types of projects are likely subject to review by our office under the Alaska Historic Preservation Act (AHPA) (A.S. 41.35.070) or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800). Identifying previously reported cultural resources in a project's Area of Potential Effect (APE) early in planning can help guide permitting and construction decisions, prevent unnecessary destruction of non-renewable resources, and avoid possible project delays.

The AHRS is continually being updated with both new and revised information. We strongly encourage all possible cultural resources, and all projects that might affect them, be reported to the OHA. Please note that only a very small portion of the State has been surveyed for cultural resources. Not reporting cultural resources compromise the inclusive scope of the database. This affects project managers and planners, who will not be able to fully consider potential impacts of future development through AHRS research. While listing on the AHRS does not, in and of itself, provide any sort of protection, knowing where cultural resources are and what they may contain allows project planners to make informed decisions. Note that the absence of cultural resources within AHRS in a particular area on the AHRS mapper or in the database could mean that location has never been surveyed (meaning that no one has ever looked for cultural resources in that area).

The AHRS began as a map-based system that used USGS topographic maps at 1:250,000 and 1:63,360 (1" = 1 mile) scales. AHRS site numbers are still assigned by USGS Quad today. Each cultural resource is given an individual AHRS site number consisting of a three-letter designation (tri-graph) relating to the USGS quadrangle map on which the cultural resource is located, followed by a unique sequential number within that quadrangle (i.e., SIT-00010 is the AHRS number for the tenth cultural resource recorded within the Sitka quadrangle). For each individual cultural resource, the AHRS has a record with the site name, description of the physical remains, data on the site's location (using the NAD83 datum) as well as a variety of additional descriptive information relevant to management and research needs. In some cases, pdf documents will be attached to the record.

Who Has Access to the AHRS?

Access to the AHRS is restricted under the federal Freedom of Information Act (PL 89-554) National Historic Preservation Act (PL 89-665, 54 U.S.C. 300101), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (PL 96-95). AHRS restrictions are also supported by Alaska state law AS 40.25.110 and Alaska State Parks Policy and Procedure No. 50200.

Authorized users are those people who have a demonstrated need for the information, apply for access to the AHRS, and are approved by OHA staff. Approved users include representatives of federal, state, or local governments on official business; researchers engaged in scientific research; individuals or representatives of organizations conducting Cultural Resource Management (CRM) investigations; or other potential users determined by the AHRS Manager and/or State Historic Preservation Officer as having a legitimate need for access. It is **highly recommended** that any individual using the AHRS database and mapper have the appropriate background in CRM/historic preservation, or consult with an individual(s) with the appropriate background, to properly interpret the database information. Just looking at the AHRS Mapper or database is never sufficient to fully evaluate the potential effects of a project on cultural resources under either the AHPA or Section 106.

What Types of Cultural Resources get AHRS Numbers?

The AHRS inventory includes buildings, objects, structures, archaeological and historic sites, some paleontological sites, districts, shipwrecks, travel ways, traditional cultural properties, landscapes, and other places of cultural importance. Most cultural resources on this inventory are over 50 years old, but that is neither a requirement nor justification on its own for inclusion in the AHRS. Cultural resources listed in the AHRS should contribute to our understanding of Alaska's prehistoric and historic cultural heritage and should be important in some manner to be considered a cultural resource.

Cultural resource "sites" (spatial locations of cultural resources) must have location data (NAD83; Lat/Long required: shape files preferred for line/polygon boundaries) and should have physical evidence. The general provisions below are to help determine if a potential cultural resource needs an AHRS number.

- All archaeological sites, buildings, structures, objects or locations [other than Culturally Modified Trees (CMTs)] that indicate prehistoric or historic use or occupation and contribute (even slightly) to Alaska's heritage likely will receive an AHRS number regardless of the size, function, possible eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, or research potential. All paleontological sites likely will receive AHRS numbers.
- In almost all cases, individual CMTs will not be assigned an AHRS number. Only large groves preferably associated with another particular cultural resource or resources and with very good documentation will be included in the AHRS. Modifications less than 50 years old will generally not be considered.
- Ideally, cultural resources recorded on the AHRS database are 50 years old or older **AND** contribute in some way to Alaska's cultural heritage. Sites, buildings, and objects younger than 50 years old are listed on the AHRS when they exhibit exceptional significance within a well-developed and defined historic or architectural context.
- Graves (isolated and clustered, marked and unmarked) need an AHRS number, even if they are located adjacent to or in the vicinity of a church. In support of AS 11.46.482 (a)(3), **all graves, no matter how recent**, need an AHRS number for management purposes. Readily defined cemeteries and/or burial areas may be recorded under one AHRS number.
- Prehistoric isolated finds should be assigned an AHRS Number. Historic isolated finds should be further evaluated [what is it, is it associated with other activity in the area (an historic camp, mine, road, district nearby, etc.)] before asking for an AHRS number.
- Features located less than 50 meters apart generally do not need individual AHRS numbers (unless they are from a different resource type or otherwise distinct).

- Resource types that are "co-located" generally need two AHRS numbers; an example is a historic cabin (building) and a prehistoric lithic scatter (site).
 - Please contact the AHRS Manager by phone at (907) 269-8718 or by email at oha.ibs@alaska.gov with questions or comments.
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How to Request an AHRS Number

Requests for new site numbers should be sent by email to the AHRS Manager at oha.ibs@alaska.gov. If you have more than a few site number requests, you may use an Excel spreadsheet to submit your AHRS number requests. Following a request via email, the AHRS Manager can provide our preferred spreadsheet format for submitting site data when requesting multiple AHRS numbers. AHRS staff will assign numbers, enter the data into the AHRS-IBS and add the AHRS numbers to the excel spreadsheet provided. When the process is complete, the AHRS Manager will return the table with the assigned AHRS numbers via email.

The following information should be provided with an AHRS Number request.

- **Temp/field number** (if used by you, helps track information when large blocks of numbers are requested).
- **USGS quad** (required, for assigning trigraph) i.e. Fairbanks quad or FAI.
- **Site name** (required) can use AHRS number if not named.
- **Site description** (required) i.e. Collapsed cabin, prospecting pit, isolated flake, 3 depressions (including shape), can scatter. **Be as descriptive as possible**; you determined it was a cultural resources site for a reason. Please state why. The information you submit should not simply define the record as a place holder until you complete your reporting of the site or project.
- **Site type (resource nature):** (required) Site, Building, Structure, Object, and District.
- **Site area:** (optional) in acres. You should have an idea of how big the cultural resource is before you come back from the field.
- **Location description** (required) i.e. "on the west bank of Tom Creek north of Fairbanks," or for a building, the street address. **Location descriptions are critical**, as they serve to verify GPS or other location data when plotting the cultural resources site and are used to supplement other location data when relocating the cultural resource in the field.
- **Latitude/Longitude in decimal degree** (required) if the site will be recorded as a point. Submitting maps when asking for AHRS numbers are not absolutely necessary but can be helpful to ensure that there are no issues with projection or typos. If the site is a polygon or a line, a site map or shape file should be submitted. NAD 83 Datum.
- **Owner information** (optional) helpful if known.
- **Period code:** (required) historic, prehistoric, proto-historic, paleontological, or modern.
- **Cultural Affiliation:** (optional) Culture of people affiliated with, or responsible for creating/using the cultural resource. We expect detailed site data upon requesting an AHRS number and complete site data to be provided in a timely manner.

How to Update Existing AHRS Data

If you have additional information about a cultural resource already in the AHRS database, we would prefer that you download the blank AHRS site card form from the OHA website, fill out the relevant fields, and send it by email to oha.ibs@alaska.gov. Alternatively, you may contact the AHRS Manager by phone at (907) 269-8718 with additional information for existing AHRS records