WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

INADVERTENT FIND PLAN (IFP) TEMPLATE

This template for an Inadvertent Find Plan (IFP) outlines the procedures to be followed in accordance with federal and state laws and without exception when potential cultural resources or human skeletal remains are unexpectedly encountered. This template is designed for projects on state, private, and locally managed lands. For projects on Tribal Trust and Tribal Reservation Lands, please consult with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office regarding use of this document.

Please note that an IFP is **not** a substitute for formal cultural resources review under federal or state law (e.g., Section 106, Governor's Executive Order 21-02, State Environmental Policy Act [SEPA]), nor does it supersede or satisfy requirements for monitoring, site protection, or other plans developed to address concerns related to cultural resources and/or human skeletal remains.

The IFP is to be kept on site with other permits during all project activities. **All** individuals on site should receive training in the implementation of the IFP prior to any ground disturbing activities and be familiar with where the document is kept on site. This is especially true for all team members involved directly in ground disturbing work (e.g., excavation, geotech drilling).

This template describes the minimum procedural steps to be followed in the event of an inadvertent find. Your project may require additional steps. It is the responsibility of the project proponent/sponsor to ensure that the IFP is complete, accurate, and available to all individuals on site.

To use this template, fill in the tables on the following pages (in the blue brackets) with information specific to your project prior to implementation of this plan. Additional optional resources are provided at the end of this document, including quick guides (Appendices A and B) for how to handle an inadvertent find on site, visual examples of commonly encountered cultural resources (Appendix C), and important contact information that will aid in the completion of your project's IFP (Appendix E). We recommend keeping the IFP and these additional resources in a visible location on site for ease of use.

Remember that regardless of project type, the inadvertent find of a potential cultural resource or human skeletal remains must follow the same basic procedure:

1. **STOP**
2. **PROTECT**
3. **NOTIFY**

This plan provides you with information specific to your project to help you follow these steps in the event of an inadvertent find.

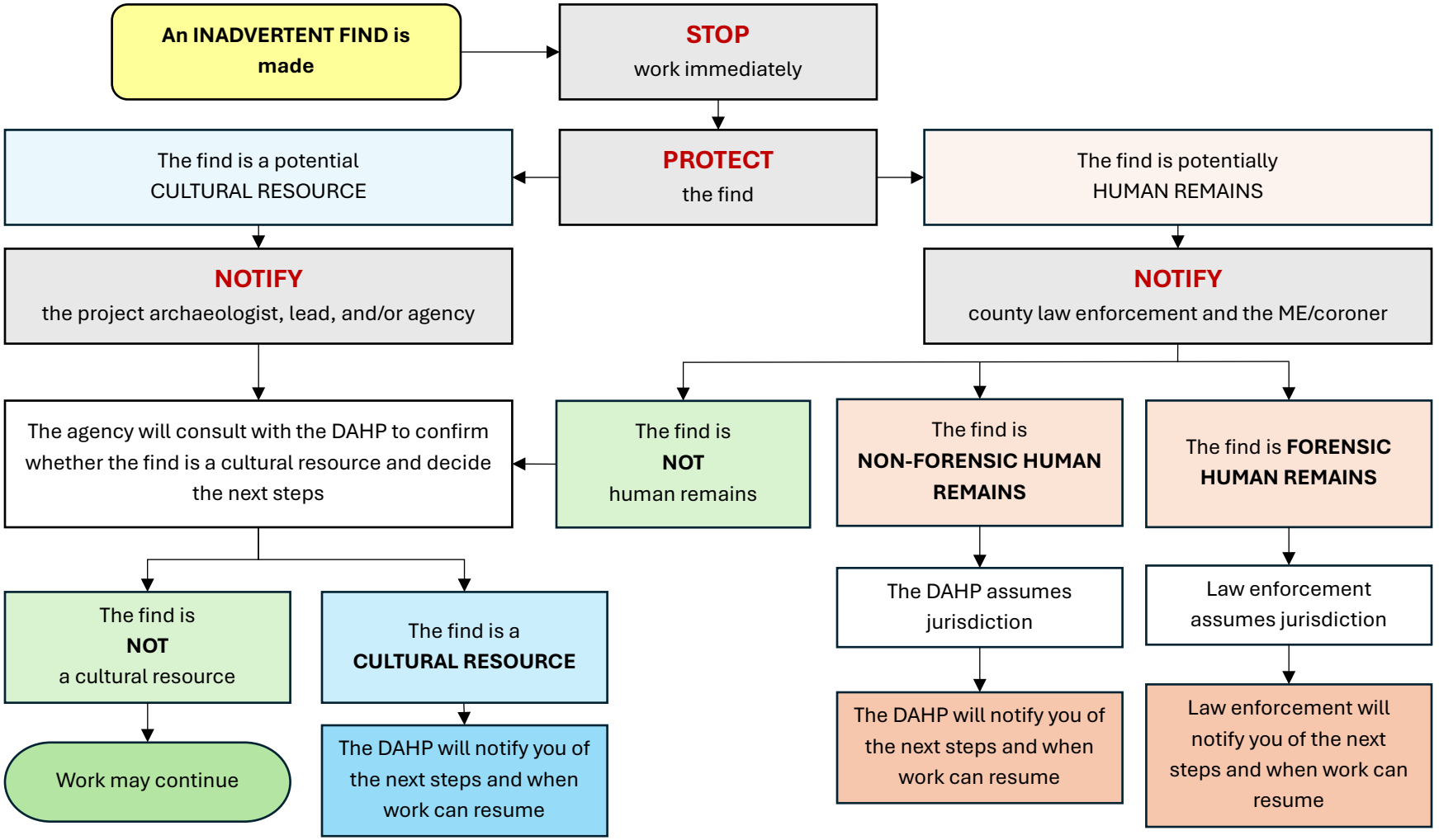
Document Version Date: 10/21/2026

Project Information

Project Name:	
Project Location:	
Project Managing Lead/Agency Contact:	
DAHP Project Number:	
Cultural Resources Knowledge/Expectations (if known):	

Inadvertent Find Procedure Flow Chart

Note: If you have an Inadvertent Find with both cultural resources and human remains, follow the human remains side of the flow chart.



Procedure for the Inadvertent Find of Cultural Resources

A cultural resource is any object that has been used by humans in the past. Humans have been present in what is now Washington State for at least 13,000 years, which means that many items can be considered cultural resources and there are numerous opportunities for cultural resources to be encountered during project-related activities.

The Cultural Resources Visual Reference Guide (Appendix C) at the end of this document provides examples of commonly encountered cultural resources across the state of Washington.

All on-site personnel must be aware of the potential for an inadvertent find and notify appropriate personnel if suspected cultural resources are encountered.

When in doubt, assume the item is a cultural resource and follow the Inadvertent Find procedure described below. If cultural resources are encountered, the on-site project lead or manager should sign off with time and date stamps in the tables below to create a record that each step of the IFP was followed.

If you encounter a potential cultural resource, follow these steps:

1. STOP

Immediately stop all work in the area. Record the date and time of the find below and obtain a signature from the on-site project lead or manager.

Date and Time of Find: _____

Name and Signature, Person Making Find: _____

Name and Signature, On-Site Project Lead: _____

Work cannot continue until procedure has been followed and the DAHP has issued approval for work to proceed.

2. PROTECT

- Leave the find untouched and in place. Do not take photographs unless instructed to do so by the DAHP, your lead agency, or a supervisor. Do not share information regarding the find or its location.
- Create a clear, identifiable, and wide boundary around the find. An appropriate boundary size depends on the size of the project and the find. Begin with a 100-foot buffer surrounding the find and consult with the DAHP and Affected Tribes for

guidance regarding reduction of the buffer size if needed. The boundary can be made using flagging tape, stakes, temporary fencing, or other highly visible materials on hand. Do not permit vehicles, equipment, or unauthorized personnel to cross the boundary.

- Provide protection for the find to ensure its integrity. This step may include covering the find with plywood, a tarp, or other material available on site. Avoid placing heavy materials directly on top of the find, as these resources can be fragile.
- If instructed to do so by DAHP, a supervisor, and/or the lead agency, take photos of the protected area to create a record that an effort was made to protect the find. Do not share images with anyone other than the DAHP or the lead agency unless requested by the DAHP or the lead agency to do so.
- Any associated soils or other materials (e.g., rocks, gravel, wood) from within the find boundary are also considered a part of the find and related context, even if they were moved prior to the find. Do not remove or transport these items from their original location, and make note of any locations where items from this area may have been transported at an earlier point in the project. Avoid further disturbance and transport of associated soils or other items.
- Do not:
  - Take personal photos of the find or find site
  - Share information regarding the find or its location beyond the required contacts
  - Speak with any media about the find
  - Post anything related to the find on social media

Confirm that the find was protected by completing the section below.

Steps Taken to Protect the Find:_____

Date and Time Find Protected:_____

Name and Signature, Person Verifying Find Protected:_____

3. NOTIFY

- If the project has a project archaeologist or archaeological monitor and they are not already on site or aware of the find, contact them using the following information.

Project Archaeologist Name:	
Project Archaeologist Phone:	
Project Archaeologist Email:	

Additional Contact Information:	

- Notify the project lead or manager (on-site or otherwise) and lead agency' using the following contact information.

Project Lead Contact:	
Alternate Project lead:	
Lead Agency Contact:	
Alternate Agency Contact:	

Confirm that the appropriate parties were notified by completing the following section.

Name of Project Archaeologist Notified, Date and Time of Notification:

_____

Name of Project Lead Notified, Date and Time of Notification:

_____

Name of Lead Agency Contact Notified, Date and Time of Notification:

_____

Name and Signature, Person Recording Notifications: _____

Next, the lead agency will contact the DAHP and all affected Tribes to confirm the find as a cultural resource, record the inadvertent find, and receive guidance on the next steps.

- If the find **is** a cultural resource, additional guidance will be provided by the DAHP and the lead agency.
- If the find **is not** a cultural resource, notice will be given that the project can continue as planned.

Please note that this template contains the minimum procedural steps to be followed in the event of an inadvertent find. Your project may require additional steps or additional contacts that should be notified. Use this space and the table below to provide any additional project-specific steps or notes.

Procedure for the Inadvertent Find of Human Remains

The inadvertent finding of human remains follows the same basic process as that for cultural resources: stop, protect, and notify. However, the finding of human remains has additional legal requirements and necessitate a level of caution and sensitivity beyond that needed for cultural resources. Regardless of context, all human remains deserve to be treated with the utmost dignity and respect. Please remember that these remains were once a living person and are someone's family and/or ancestor. Treat them with the same level of respect as you would your own family.

Many animal bones can be mistaken for human bones, and other materials such as wood can resemble bone. When in doubt, assume the object in question is human bone and follow the inadvertent find process, as knowing and willful destruction of a burial is considered a felony under RCWs 68.50.140, 68.60, and 27.44. Any cultural resources found near and/or with human remains should be treated with the same level of caution as the remains themselves, as they could be funerary objects that were intentionally placed with that person.

If you encounter material and you are unsure whether it is bone or human bone, contact Dr. Guy Tasa, State Physical Anthropologist at (360) 790-1633 or Guy.tasa@dahp.wa.gov, or Dr. Jennifer Spence, Assistant State Physical Anthropologist, at (360) 890-0174 or Jennifer.spence@dahp.wa.gov.

All on-site personnel must be aware of the potential for an inadvertent find and notify appropriate personnel if suspected human skeletal remains are encountered. If suspected human skeletal remains and/or associated cultural resources are encountered, the on-site project lead or manager should sign off with time and date stamps (see tables below) to create a record that each step of the IFP was followed.

If you encounter suspected human remains, follow these steps:

1. STOP

Immediately stop all work in the area. Record the date and time of the find below and obtain a signature from the on-site project lead or manager.

Date and Time of Find: _____

Name and Signature, Person Making Find: _____

Name and Signature, On-Site Project Lead: _____

Work cannot continue until procedure has been followed and the DAHP has issued approval for work to proceed.

2. PROTECT

- Leave the find untouched and in place. Do not take photographs unless instructed to do so by the DAHP, your lead agency, or a supervisor. Do not share information regarding the find or its location.
- Create a clear, identifiable, and wide boundary around the find. An appropriate boundary size depends on the size of the project and the find. Begin with a 100-foot buffer surrounding the find and consult with the DAHP for guidance regarding reduction of the buffer size if needed. The boundary can be made using flagging tape, stakes, temporary fencing, or other highly visible materials on hand. Do not permit vehicles, equipment, or unauthorized personnel to cross the boundary. No work is permitted within the buffer until notified otherwise.
- Provide protection for the find to ensure its integrity. This may include covering the find with a tarp or other lightweight material available on site. Avoid using plywood or heavy materials in direct contact with the find, as bone and associated material can be extremely fragile.
- Once protected, take a photo of the PROTECTED AREA ONLY to create a record that an effort was made to protect the find. **Ensure to the best of your ability that the photo does not include visible human remains.** Do not share this photo unless requested by the DAHP, law enforcement, the coroner/medical examiner, lead agency, or other supervisory person to do so.
- Any associated soils or other materials (e.g., rocks, gravel, wood) from within the find boundary are also considered a part of the find and related context, even if they were moved prior to the find. Do not remove or transport these items, and make note of any locations where items from this area may have been transported at an earlier point in the project. Avoid further disturbance and transport of associated soils or other items.
- Do not:
    - Take personal photos of the find or find site
    - Share information regarding the find or its location beyond the required contacts
    - Speak with any media about the find
    - Post anything related to the find on social media

Confirm that the find was protected by completing the section below.

Steps Taken to Protect the Find: _____

Date and Time Find Protected: _____

Name and Signature, Person Verifying Find Protected: _____

3. NOTIFY

When human remains are inadvertently discovered, state law **requires** that both local law enforcement and the county medical examiner or coroner be notified as soon as possible (RCW 68.50.020). Appendix F includes resources for finding county-specific contact information to assist with completing this step.

Local Law Enforcement Contact	
County Coroner or Medical Examiner	
County Coroner or Medical Examiner Phone Number	

- If the project has a project archaeologist or archaeological monitor and they are not already on site or aware of the find, contact them using the following information.

Project Archaeologist Name	
Project Archaeologist Phone	
Project Archaeologist Email	
Additional Contact Information:	

- Notify the project lead or manager (on-site or otherwise) and lead agency using the following contact information.
- If the project is on Tribal Trust Land, Tribal Reservation Land, or Federally-owned or managed land, contact the federal agency leading the project, as different processes and requirements will apply.

Project Lead Contact	
Alternate Project lead	
Lead Agency Contact	

Alternate Agency Contact	

Confirm that the appropriate parties were notified by completing the following section.

Name of Law Enforcement Agency Notified, Date and Time of Notification:

_____

Name of Coroner/Medical Examiner Office Notified, Date and Time of Notification:

_____

Name of Project Archaeologist Notified, Date and Time of Notification:

_____

Name of Project Lead Notified, Date and Time of Notification:

_____

Name of Lead Agency Contact Notified, Date and Time of Notification:

_____

Name and Signature, Person Recording Notifications: _____

Next, the medical examiner or coroner will determine whether the human remains are forensic. Until explicitly told otherwise by the medical examiner, coroner, and/or the State Physical Anthropologist, treat all potential human remains finds as if they are forensic.

- If the remains are forensic, the county coroner/medical examiner will assume jurisdiction and law enforcement will handle the scene. Law enforcement will notify you when work can continue as planned.
- If the remains are non-forensic, the DAHP will assume jurisdiction. The State Physical Anthropologist will notify affected Tribes and appropriate local cemeteries of the find and keep them informed regarding the legal process (RCW 27.53.060, 68.60, 27.44).
- Work cannot continue until all legal processes are completed. You will receive notice from the DAHP when the process is complete and work can continue.

Please note that this template contains the minimum procedural steps to be followed in the event of an inadvertent find. Your project may require additional steps or additional contacts that should be notified. Use this space and the table below to provide any additional project-specific steps or notes.

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

INADVERTENT FIND PLAN (IFP)

Additional Resources Appendix

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Quick Reference: Inadvertent Find of Cultural Resources

1. STOP

🛑 STOP WORK IMMEDIATELY! 🛑

2. PROTECT

Do not touch or pick up the find. Protect the area by creating a highly visible boundary that buffers the find by 100 feet and prevents access to any areas within the buffer. Cover the find, complete documentation in your IFP demonstrating these steps were taken, and await further instruction. Do not continue work until authorized to do so by your lead agency or the DAHP. Do not take photographs unless instructed to do so. If photographs are taken, do not share or distribute these images. Do not speak with the media or release any information to anyone regarding the find or its location. Do not post any photos or information on social media.

3. NOTIFY

Reach out to the following project contacts as soon as possible to let them know of the potential find. Our contacts for this project are:

Project Archaeologist:	
Lead Agency Contact:	
Project Lead Contact:	
DAHP Archaeology Contact:	
Backup DAHP Contact:	Main Office Phone: (360) 586-3065

See Inadvertent Find Plan (IFP), located in _____ for more detailed instructions. Complete documentation of your actions in the IFP by signing off on all finished steps to demonstrate that appropriate actions were taken and the IFP was followed.

You will be notified by the DAHP or your lead agency when and where work can continue.

Quick Reference: Inadvertent Find of Human Remains

1. STOP

🛑 STOP WORK IMMEDIATELY! 🛑

2. PROTECT

Do not touch or pick up the find. Protect the area by creating a highly visible boundary that buffers the find by 100 feet and preventing access to any areas within the buffer. Cover the find, complete documentation in your IFP demonstrating these steps were taken, and await further instruction. Do not continue work until authorized to do so by your lead agency or the DAHP. Do not take photographs unless instructed by law enforcement to do so. If photographs are taken, do not share or distribute these images. Do not speak with the media or release any information to anyone regarding these remains or their location. Do not post any photos or information on social media.

3. NOTIFY

Contact law enforcement and local coroner/medical examiner immediately. **This is required by state law!** Next, reach out to the following project contacts to let them know there is a potential inadvertent human remains find. Our contacts for this project are:

Local Law Enforcement:	
County Medical Examiner/Coroner:	
Project Archaeologist Contact:	
Lead Agency Contact:	
Project Lead Contact:	
DAHP Contacts (Anthropology Unit):	Dr. Guy Tasa, State Physical Anthropologist guy.tasa@dahp.wa.gov (360) 790-1633 Dr. Jennifer Spence, Assistant State Physical Anthropologist jennifer.spence@dahp.wa.gov (360) 890-0174
Backup DAHP Contact:	Main Office Phone: (360) 586-3065

See our Inadvertent Find Plan (IFP), located in _____ for more detailed instructions. You will be notified by law enforcement, your lead agency, or the DAHP when work can continue. **If you encounter material and you are unsure whether it is bone or human bone, contact Dr. Guy Tasa, State Physical Anthropologist (see above for contact info).**

APPENDIX C: Cultural Resources Visual Reference Guide

This guide is meant to provide photographic examples of commonly encountered cultural resources within the state of Washington. If you are unsure whether you have encountered a cultural resource, assume that you have and implement the IFP.

In addition to the following photos, examples of inadvertent finds might also include:

- An accumulation of shell, burned rocks, or other food-related materials
- Bones, either intact or in small pieces
- An area of charcoal or darker stained soils containing artifacts
- Projectile points or clusters of chipped stone debris (these often appear as shiny or waxy-looking angular rocks that differ in color and/or texture from native rocks in the area).
- Modified or stripped trees or other modified natural features, such as petroglyphs or pictographs.
- Agricultural or logging materials that appear older than 50 years of age, such as equipment, fencing, canals, spillways, chutes, derelict sawmills, tools, etc.
- Clusters of tin cans or bottles, or other debris older than 50 years of age
- Old munitions casings (**If encountered, always assume these are live. Do not touch or move**)
- Buried railroad tracks, decking, foundations, industrial materials, or trails
- Homesteading remnants, including bricks, nails, household items, toys, food containers, etc.

IFP Visual Reference Guide: Stone Artifacts

DAHP

Chipped stone tools are objects made by chipping flakes, or small pieces of stone, from a larger piece, or core. If you see stone that appears intentionally shaped, shiny or waxy, areas of chipping that occur in a regular or angular pattern, or stone or glass-like material that seems unusual for the area, implement the IFP.

DAHP

DAHP

DAHP

Ground stone artifacts are objects made by grinding a stone into a specific shape. If you see stone in an unusual or unnatural shape, or a stone with striations, etches, or perforations, implement the IFP.

University of Oregon Museum of Natural & Cultural History Digital Collections

IFP Visual Reference Guide: Shell and Bone Artifacts

University of Oregon Museum of Natural & Cultural History Digital Collections

Natural materials such as shell or bone can be modified by past people into artifacts. If you see shell or bone that appears pointed, shaped, smoothed, and/or displays drilled holes, unnatural shapes, or geometric designs, implement the IFP.

Nez Perce National Historical Park Virtual

Nez Perce National Historical Park Virtual

University of Oregon Museum of Natural & Cultural History Digital Collections

DAHP

DAHP

IFP Visual Reference Guide: Archaeological Features

DAHP

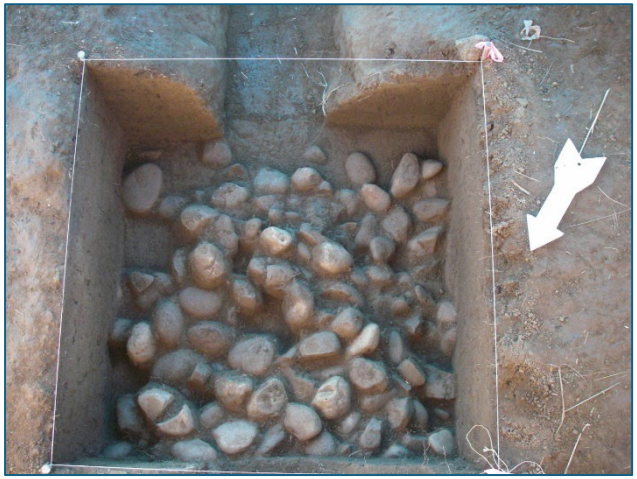
Archaeological features are cultural resources that cannot be moved from their location. Implement the IFP if you encounter:

- Buried dark soils with layers of shell, charcoal, and fish and/or mammal bones, which could indicate a shell midden site (see top left).
- Unusual accumulations or unusually shaped accumulations of rock
- Unusual accumulations of shell or bone
- Trees with carvings, unique bark patterns, or unnatural shapes (see right).

Lepofsky, D. and M. Caldwell. "Indigenous marine resource management on the Northwest Coast of North America." *Ecological Processes* 2 (2013): 1-12.

DAHP

DAHP

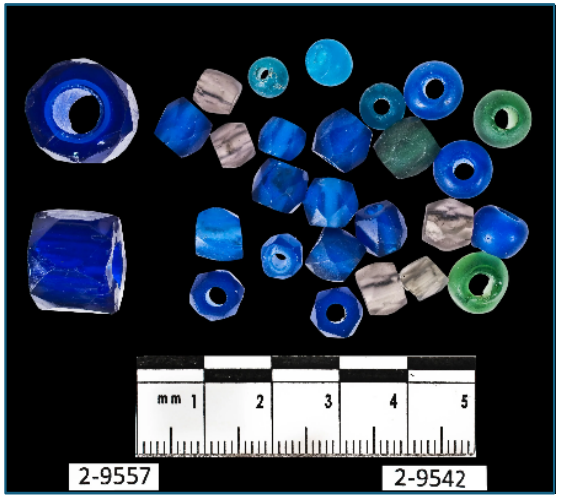


DAHP

IFP Visual Reference Guide: Historic Features and Artifacts

DAHP

Historic sites include cultural items that are more than 50 years in age. These objects and sites are also protected under cultural resources laws. If you encounter concentrations of broken ceramics, bottles, bricks, and/or metal objects that appear older than 50 years in age, implement the IFP. If you encounter historic building foundations or trash deposits, implement the IFP.



University of Oregon Museum of Natural & Cultural History Digital Collections

DAHP

DAHP

DAHP

IFP Visual Reference Guide: Bones and Teeth (Note: no human remains pictured here).

DAHP Anthropology Unit

Although no human remains are depicted here, both animal and human bone share some basic characteristics and can appear very similar. Implement the IFP if you encounter the following:

- An object that has a solid outer surface and spongy appearance on internal surfaces
- Multiple objects that appear to be arranged in a specific pattern that may look similar to a skeleton

Horwitz LK and Lernau O. 2009. "Iron Age IIb faunal remains from the Ophel, Area A2009". *The Ophel Excavations to the south of the Temple Mount, 289-309.*

https://mappingmv.matrix.msu.edu/zooarch.html

DAHP Anthropology Unit

https://animalarchaeology.com/2017/11/30/from-the-question-bag-fish-remains-in-scotland/

DAHP Anthropology Unit

APPENDIX D

Sample Agreement Form

Project Name:
Lead Agency Project Number:
DAHP Project Number:

This Inadvertent Find Plan (IFP) is intended to provide guidance for the management of an unexpected find of cultural resources, such as artifacts, archaeological features, or human skeletal remains. The plan applies to any and all discoveries not governed by a Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)-issued permit or a federally-issued permit.

This IFP is to be implemented without exception when a find occurs. It applies to all individuals involved with the project, including but not limited to, project sponsor staff, contractors, subcontractors, and/or volunteers. This plan is not a substitute for formal cultural resources review under federal or state law (e.g., Section 106, Governor's Executive Order 21-02, SEPA), nor does it supersede or satisfy requirements for monitoring, site protection, or other plans developed to address concerns related to cultural resources.

I acknowledge that I am responsible for the implementation of this Inadvertent Find Plan.

Optional text to include: It is my responsibility to ensure that all site crew on all phases of project excavation and construction understand the requirements of this plan.

A complete copy of the IFP will be maintained at all times on the project site for the duration of the project. This document will be made available for inspection by the DAHP or others authorized.

I will follow the actions in the plan if anyone uncovers cultural resources as a result of project actions, including, but not limited to, ground-disturbing activities such as excavation, boring, and concrete removal.

I understand that failure to follow the actions in this plan means that I am knowingly disturbing an archaeological site, which is a Class C Felony (RCW 27.53.060).

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E
Important Contact Information

Last updated: 10/14/2026

- If you are not sure which Tribes should be consulted, you can find more information at: https://dahp.wa.gov/archaeology/tribal-consultation-information
- A contact list for area Tribes can be found at: https://dahp.wa.gov/dahp-tribal-contact-info
- To contact local law enforcement, we recommend calling your county, city, or state police department at the non-emergency or sheriff's office dispatch line.
- A contact list of county coroners/medical examiners can be found on the DAHP website at: https://dahp.wa.gov/archaeology/human-remains/what-do-i-do-if-ive-found-human-remains
- Contact the following individuals at DAHP regarding the inadvertent find of human remains or for assistance identifying potential human skeletal remains:
    - Dr. Guy Tasa, State Physical Anthropologist
        - guy.tasa.dahp.wa.gov | (360) 790-1633
    - Dr. Jennifer Spence, Assistant State Physical Anthropologist
        - jennifer.spence@dahp.wa.gov | (360) 890-0714
- Contact the following individuals at DAHP regarding the inadvertent find of cultural resources:

Federal and State-Funded Projects	Dr. Rob Whitlam, State Archaeologist rob.whitlam@dahp.wa.gov | (360) 890-2615
Archaeological Permitting and Violations	James Macrae, Assistant State Archaeologist james.macrae@dahp.wa.gov | (564) 669-0899
Local Government Projects, Southwestern Washington; Dept of Ecology 21-02 Projects	Dr. Jessica Stone, Assistant State Archaeologist jessica.stone@dahp.wa.gov | (360) 890-2633
Local Government Projects, Eastern Washington	James MacNaughton, Local Government Archaeologist james.macnaughton@dahp.wa.gov | (360) 280-7563
Local Government Projects, Northwestern Washington	Tamela Smart, Local Government Archaeologist tamela.smart@dahp.wa.gov | (360) 628-2755
Renewable Energy Projects, CCA Projects	Brianna Patterson, Renewable Energy Project Archaeologist Brianna.patterson@dahp.wa.gov | (360) 972-4616
Transportation Projects; Local Government Projects (Clallam/Jefferson/Kitsap Counties)	Dennis Wardlaw, Transportation Archaeologist dennis.wardlaw@dahp.wa.gov | (360) 485-5014

- If you are not sure who to contact at DAHP, or are unable to reach your primary contact, please call the main office at (360) 586-3065