

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release



### **Archaeology Center Receives Three Grants for Site Protection**

(August 3, Camp Verde) Archaeological site vandalism is an on-going issue, with four major instances of vandalism documented since 2012. Earlier this year, the destruction of a prehistoric dwelling in the Sedona Uptown area received significant coverage in the local press as well as on social media. In 2013, a large prehistoric village in Cornville was vandalized by pothunters who dug up a large area apparently looking for artifacts. A large hilltop pueblo owned by the Archaeological Conservancy in Cornville was vandalized in 2012. Instances of graffiti and artifact collection have occurred repeatedly.

While the U.S. Forest Service is responsible for the protection of the ancient sites in the forests, with over 2,500 sites in the Sedona/Verde Valley it is a task that is beyond the resources provided by Congress. The need for on-going monitoring will become even more critical to site preservation as tourism increases as a result of the forthcoming National Geographic Geotourism program.

The mission of the Verde Valley Archaeology Center (VVAC) includes the preservation of archaeological sites. Volunteer programs are an integral component of the VVAC's operations. In response to these acts of vandalism and the anticipated increase in visitation, the VVAC has developed the Verde Valley Site Watch program in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service and the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office. This program is based on, and in support of, the existing Arizona Site Steward Volunteer Program run by the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office. The Center's program will assist the Prescott National Forest and Coconino National Forest in archaeological site monitoring and public education that will involve other local groups and students in the preservation and appreciation of archaeology.

For many years, the Forest Service has relied on the State of Arizona's Site Steward Volunteer Program to recruit and train site monitor volunteers who regularly visit their assigned sites and report on any vandalism. However, the number of volunteers is inadequate and even though a site is regularly monitored, vandalism continues. More is needed and the State program is in need of many more site stewards.

To support this new program, the Verde Valley Archaeology Center has received three Arizona Community Foundation (ACF) grants totaling over \$10,000. These grants were awarded by the ACF of Sedona, the ACF of Yavapai County and the ACF Boyton Canyon Preservation Fund. These grants will support several components of the Verde Valley Site Watch program including:

**100 New Site Stewards.** The primary focus of this program is to support the Site Steward Volunteer Program with the recruitment and training and retraining of site stewards. The goal is to train 100 new site stewards in 2016. The Center will engage existing hiking groups and clubs that often visit archaeological sites as a source of new site stewards. Site steward training will be held at the Center.

**Public Awareness Campaign.** Center is developing a public awareness campaign through the use of:

- Preservation posters and rack cards at visitor centers and other gathering locations
- Public Service Announcements on local TV and radio stations
- Weatherproof signage at archaeological sites encouraging respect for the sites and notifying visitors that the sites are monitored by site stewards and/or electronically
- Additional electronic monitoring equipment for Forest Service law enforcement
- Public Awareness talks at local clubs and associations

**School Education Initiative.** Studies have shown that most graffiti at sites are not done by the visiting public but rather by local school age children. This will be addressed through:

- High School and Middle School Poster Contest during the coming school year to develop anti-graffiti and preservation posters for display in schools
- High School Outreach to provide presentations and/or exhibits on local archaeology and heritage

Executive Director Ken Zoll described the program as “a vital addition to the cultural resource and heritage management of these ancient sites. It is our intention to provide public education programs that will promote, guide and provide the ethical foundation for responsible site stewardship by every resident of the Sedona/Verde Valley area.”

The Verde Valley Archaeology Center is located at 385 S. Main Street in Camp Verde. Additional information on how to get involved in this program is available on the Center’s website at [www.vvarchcenter.org](http://www.vvarchcenter.org) or by calling 928-567-0066.

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High Resolution images of the program logo and instances of vandalism are attached to this email release.

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## **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE STEWARDSHIP?**

Archaeological Site Stewardship is a program of monitoring recorded prehistoric and historic sites on a regular basis. Monitoring includes obtaining baseline data on an initial visit, regularly revisiting the site and making observations about various aspects of site condition, reporting findings to a designated agency staff member in a timely fashion after each visit, and immediately reporting any major impacts to the site that have occurred during the last monitoring visit. Archaeological Site Stewardship includes accepting a Code of Ethics and always acting on behalf of the protection and preservation of the cultural resource.

### **WHY DO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES NEED STEWARDSHIP?**

There are a number of reasons why archaeological sites need stewardship. An uninformed public may purposefully, inadvertently, or unknowingly cause damage to fragile nonrenewable cultural resources. Vandalism is a huge cause of loss of cultural resources. Recent significant examples of archaeological site vandalism include a Verde Valley site owned by the Archaeological Conservancy in 2013, an archaeological site along a Sedona trail in 2014, and a site in Cornville in 2015.

It is not clear why certain people and groups purposefully damage archaeological sites, but many social, educational, and economic causes have been postulated such as ignorance and a lack of a stewardship ethic on the part of our youth (particularly graffiti to rock art). Accidents and inadvertent damages are usually due to a lack of understanding about the value of cultural resources, the importance of context, and the fact that once disturbed, cultural resources cannot be restored to their full value. Another important cause of compromise to archaeological sites is natural causes, such as water and wind erosion; erosion caused by foot, vehicle, and horse traffic; earth movement; and other forms of weathering and wear. While we often cannot prevent

natural and human impacts to sites, sometimes we can prevent further damage and possibly control some of nature's forces that cause the damage.

### **WHEN IS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE STEWARDSHIP IMPORTANT?**

Archaeological Site Stewardship is important when the professional staff of public agencies is unable to periodically and systematically visit recorded archaeological and/or historic sites that are under their jurisdictions and that are subject to impacts. Limitations in agency staffing, funding, priorities, and physical access to remote areas are some of the reasons why Archaeological Site Stewards can make a significant contribution to our collective cultural heritage. Site Stewards can be the “eyes and ears” of professional staff and help preserve and protect cultural resources for future generations of scientists and the public.

### **HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THE PROBLEM?**

There are over 2,500 recorded archaeological sites in the Sedona/Verde Valley area. Only 160 have been listed by the Arizona Site Steward Program for periodic visitation and reporting. Of these sites, only about 20% are actually visited. The existing base of site stewards is less than 40. Both the number of stewards and the sites visited are woefully inadequate to protect this nonrenewable resource.

### **WHAT IS REQUIRED TO BE A SITE STEWARD?**

Before they begin monitoring sites, volunteers take a one-day training workshop. The classroom session consists of lectures, small group discussions and question-and-answer periods. Presenters usually include archaeologists, law-enforcement officials, and may include other experts in natural sciences and history. The tools needed to be a Site Steward include:

- General knowledge of and interest in local and regional history and prehistory
- Understanding the cultural and natural landscapes
- Understanding Native American views of archaeological sites, Traditional Cultural Properties, and their visibility and use.
- A knowledge of State and Federal Cultural Resource Laws

- Willingness to embrace and operate under the Code of Ethics regarding cultural resources
- Ability to commit to a regular schedule of observation and recording
- Knowledge of fieldwork safety practices

Arizona SSVP volunteers are expected to make one site visit (about 8 hours) a month. Because site stewards receive sensitive information about their assigned sites, they must sign an agreement of confidentiality. This agreement states that you will comply with legal and ethical requirements to keep specific site location and other sensitive information confidential. The agreement is subject to renewal every year.

Advanced training workshops provide training and experience in skills that are useful for volunteers. These workshops may last one or two days, and usually combine lectures and other presentations with hands-on practice. Topics of advanced workshops may include preparing site sketch maps (to scale), use of hand-held GPS units, recording techniques for rock art, faunal identification, flintknapping demonstrations, historic and prehistoric artifact identification, and field survey techniques.

### **HOW DO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE STEWARDS CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES?**

Archaeological Site Stewards carry out their monitoring activities independently after initial training and adoption of a Code of Ethics. They may set their own schedules, but agree to monitor a specific site or sites on a regular basis, recording their observations and reporting to a designated person. Archaeological site stewards are not enforcers of the Cultural Resources laws. They do not enter into confrontational situations with the public. Archaeological Site Stewards understand and practice field safety procedures. They have observational skills and reporting skills. They identify themselves as Site Stewards to the public.