

Landowner Archaeology

Factsheet and Best Management Practices

1 How do I know if I have an archaeological site on my property?

You likely have an archaeological site on your property if you've ever found an **artifact** somewhere on the property. There may also be sites that are unknown to anyone because they are deeply buried or located under pastureland that has never been plowed.

An **artifact** is anything that has been altered by humans. This can include stone tools, ceramics, bone tools, shell beads, and much more. Historic artifacts like metal, glass, and brick can also be important if they are more than 100 years old.

2 What do I do with artifacts I find?

An artifact is yours to keep if you found it on your own private property. It is a good idea to put it in a ziplock bag that is marked with the location or has a map of the place where it was found inside the bag. It is a bad idea to sell or trade artifacts or let them go to an auction. If you are looking for a good home for your artifacts, contact a local museum, university, Office of the State Archaeologist in Iowa City, or the Sanford Museum and Planetarium.

3 Who should I contact if I have a site?

If you have any questions about archaeological sites, contact the Office of the State Archaeologist in Iowa City at (319) 384-0732, or the Sanford Museum and Planetarium in Cherokee at 712-225-3922. Archaeologists at these offices may want to record the location of the site for future research. Having a site does **not** mean anyone will take away your property or limit your use of the property.

4 Does having a site on my property limit me?

In most cases, NO. If you have an archaeological site on your property you can still use it as a working landscape. However, if you have burials, mounds, or suspected cemeteries on your property, it is against Iowa's state law to disturb them in any way.

5 What is the BEST way to take care of the archaeological site on my property?

- If you have a site on agricultural property, the best way to preserve it is to halt any planting or tillage on that portion of your property and return it to grassland. Tillage on a site can cause erosion, break artifacts, and disturb the integrity of the site.
- If you have a site in pastureland, monitor it to make sure the livestock are not cutting a trail through it or disturbing it.
- If trees are growing on top of a site, it is a good idea to have them cut down, without using earthmoving equipment. Tree roots can disturb a site and, in some cases, trees uproot in high winds and disturb the site.
- Do not dig or allow others to dig at the archaeological site unless they are trained archaeologists. Once a person digs at an archaeological site, we can never return it to the way it was, so it is vital to have the training and funds to properly study the site. Also, be wary of collectors who want to collect artifacts from the site. Removing artifacts from a site is like ripping a page out of a library book, it takes away from the story of the people who once lived there.