

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Topics covered in this Development Information Bulletin (DIB) include:

- What is an Archaeological Site?
- How Can I find out if my Property is Within an Archaeological Site?
- What are the Requirements?
- What Do I Do if I Encounter Human Remains or Cultural Resources?

### WHAT IS AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE?

Island County has a rich cultural history dating back thousands of years. For example, a spear point found near Penn Cove on Whidbey Island is estimated to be approximately 12,000 years old. The ancestors of today's Swinomish, Tulalip, and Samish Tribes frequented Whidbey and Camano Islands, leaving archaeological sites that in some areas represents unbroken records dating back thousands of years. Dozens of seasonal villages dotted the shoreline. The most common type of archaeological site in Island County are the "middens", where mollusk shells, bones, and other debris have been placed. Middens can range from a few inches to several feet in thickness. The deeper ones are the accumulated evidence of hundreds or thousands of year's worth of occupation by Native Americans. These peoples often buried their dead near middens along the shoreline, though there are also centuries-old rock cairns marking prehistoric burial sites in inland areas.

Many of these sites have been disturbed during the last century and a half of development in Island County. Significant cultural resources remain intact, however. Human remains are still frequently discovered during excavation for foundations, utilities, or septic systems, and are even occasionally found lying on top of buried artifacts.

### HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF MY PROPERTY IS WITHIN AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE?

Island County maintains maps of known archaeological sites. Because of the sensitivity of these sites, State law prohibits releasing detailed site-specific information about archaeological sites to anyone other than the landowner of the site in question.

Island County maps show very general locations of known archaeological sites. If you are located outside an indicated area, then it can be concluded that no **known** archaeological sites are present. Undiscovered archaeological resources likely exist in Island County, particularly along the shoreline.

To find out more about a specific archaeological site and about State regulation of archaeological resources, contact the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in Olympia at (360) 407-0752.

### WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?

Prior to issuance of a development permit involving *any* ground-disturbing activities (excavation, grading, trenching, septic installation, etc.) within an area mapped as archaeologically sensitive, an archaeological report must be submitted to Island County for review and approval. See Island County's Shoreline Use Regulations (ICC 16.21.060).

The report must be prepared by a professional archaeologist hired at the applicant's expense. A list of some of these archaeologists is available by contacting Island County. The report must

discuss the potential for disturbance to archaeological resources by the proposal, and if there is any such potential, must provide recommendations for avoidance or mitigation of impacts to the resources. The best treatment is avoidance. If a portion of a property is determined to be underlain by intact cultural resources, then the proposed home, drainfield, utility trench, access or whatever is proposed should be located elsewhere on the property or designed so that it does not intrude into the cultural materials. Typically, the report will recommend that any earth-disturbing activity be monitored by an archaeologist if there is any potential to encounter intact cultural materials.

The report is required to be sent to the affected tribe, usually the Swinomish or Tulalip Tribal Communities and to the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). The applicable tribe and staff from DAHP are given an opportunity to comment on the proposal.

It is strongly recommended that you contact the Tribe before hiring an archaeologist and initiating development of the property.

**WHAT DO I DO IF I INADVERTENTLY ENCOUNTER HUMAN REMAINS OR CULTURAL RESOURCES?**

If you find stratified or layered concentrations of shell fragments, a mound of rocks which looks out-of-place, or human remains during development of a property, you should do the following:

- Immediately cease work.
- Contact the affected tribe (the Swinomish Tribal Community in most cases), Island County Planning and Community Development, the Island County Coroner, and the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Deliberately disturbing any Native American remains is a felony, and subject to stiff criminal penalties.

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*IMPORTANT NOTE - "Development Information Bulletins" (DIBs) are intended to assist the general public in understanding the effect of codes and regulations. DIBs are not complete statements of the laws and rules and should not be used as a substitute for them. If conflicts and questions arise, the code and regulations are the final authority. Because these regulations may be revised or amended at any time, consult Island County staff to be sure you understand all current requirements before beginning any work. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the project meets requirements of all current codes and regulations.*

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