

# Idaho ARCHAEOLOGIST

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# Idaho ARCHAEOLOGIST

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Mark G. Plew, Editor  
*IDAHO ARCHAEOLOGIST*  
Department of Anthropology  
Boise State University  
1910 University Drive  
Boise, Idaho 83725-1950

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Cover Photo: Line weights from the Hornby Creek site and vicinity.

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# ARTICLES AND REPORTS

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## BOLA STONES AND LINE WEIGHTS FROM THE HORNBY CREEK SITE, NORTHERN IDAHO

*Gary J. Weisz*

### INTRODUCTION

Following completion of Albeni Falls Dam in 1955 and subsequent erosion of its 68-mile long reservoir, (25 miles of which are on the Pend Oreille River downstream from the outlet of Lake Pend Oreille at Sandpoint, Idaho, U.S. Army COE: 1995), large collections of cultural materials were made by local residents (Fig. 1). Interestingly, large-stemmed and shouldered projectile points similar to varieties associated with the Pleistocene/Holocene transition are present in most of these private collections (Thoms 1991; Gough 1997; Choquette 2004; Miss and Hudson 1987). In addition to stemmed and shouldered points, bola stones and line weights from this early period have been documented in local collections though in small numbers. Other cultural materials consisting of artifacts dating from the fur trade era, items of Chinese manufacture and materials associated with the Northern Pacific Railroad camps of 1881-1882 have been documented (Miss and Hudson 1987; Weisz 2003, 2004).

Although what have been referred to as bola stones have been recovered in archaeological contexts at several sites dating to the early Holocene occupation of the Pacific Northwest, these enigmatic and poorly understood ground stone tools have basically remained an anomaly. Are these culturally modified egg-shaped girdled stones, often labeled as bolas actually that, or are they a form of fishing tackle (line weights)? In this article, they are referred to as bola stones in keeping with the nomenclature used in prior archaeological research in the region.

### THE SETTING

The Hornby Creek site (10-BR-522) rests near the eastern extreme end and at the base of a large gravel terrace composed of stratified out-wash sediment deposited during the Late Pleistocene. The terrace is characteristic of many flood-related deposits resulting from the collapse of a massive ice dam near the present Idaho-Montana border about 12,000-13,000 B.C. (Bjornstad 2006). The flood waters released from Glacial Lake Missoula rearranged the existing land forms across northern Idaho, leaving in their wake massive deposits of washed gravel

and boulders several feet in diameter and larger. The Channeled Scablands of eastern Washington were stripped of their fertile soils as the wall of water scoured the terrain to bedrock (Breckenridge and Lewis 2005).

The Hornby Creek site is bordered on the south by the Pend Oreille River and on the north by a sheer cliff face several hundred feet high. Both natural barriers created an extremely narrow travel corridor through which any migrating herd animals would have had to traverse. The cliff face on the north and the river channel on the south would have prevented escape; an ideal kill site would have been the result. Directly upriver to the east lies the Purcell Trench, which extends to the north into British Columbia. Hundreds of tools, including several dozen paleoindian-style projectile points, curated flake knives, drills and scrapers, edge-modified flakes, and expedient tools were gathered from about 100 yards of beach frontage as the fluctuating reservoir levels and sheet erosion decimated the existing cutbank at the water's edge.

The river channel evidently had been cut down to near its present level during the early period. As of the time of this writing, no residential base camps have been discovered on any of the high terraces, indicating that the Pend Oreille River, at least above Albeni Falls, had incised its channel to near its present summer pool level of 2,062 feet about mean sea level (A.M.S.L.) quite early. To the north the Kootenai River had yet to cut through several hundred feet of sediment to reach the valley floor as it is seen today (Choquette 2004; Gough 1997).

### PRIOR RESEARCH

A number of previous investigations have recovered bola stones. Cressman (1977, 1960), during salvage excavations in the 1950s at the Five-Mile Rapids along the Columbia River in Oregon, recovered what he referred to as 17 modified and 24 unmodified bola stones, the largest collection ever recovered from a single location. Cressman notes that the earliest appearance of these groundstone artifacts occurred in a context dated to more than 9,000 radiocarbon years ago, disappearing from the record about 7,500 B.P.

At Wildcat Canyon (Philippi Canyon, 35-GM-9), located about 65 kilometers upriver (east) of the Dalles on

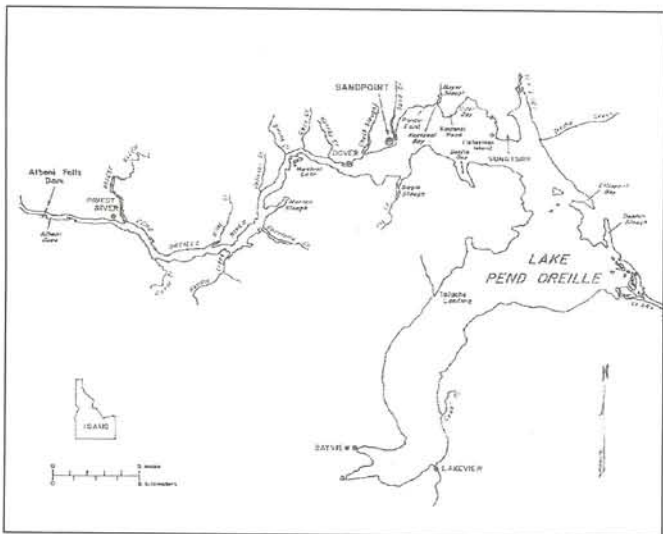


Figure 1. Albeni Falls Reservoir

the south bank of the Columbia River, Dumond and Minor (1983), summarizing seven seasons (1959-1967) of fieldwork, note among several hundred thousand artifacts a number of peculiar girdled pebbles. Commenting on these they state,

In this category were placed a number of generally rounded pebbles which exhibit various degrees of modification. The most extensively modified specimens characteristically have a shallow groove pecked around their circumference. Similar specimens are sometimes considered to have served as bola stones (e.g., Cressman 1960:54).

Though the oldest geological horizon produced a radiocarbon date of  $10,600 \pm 200$  B.P., (GAK-1322), the earliest radiocarbon date for cultural materials is a date of 7,890 B.P. (Dumond and Minor 1983).

Richard Pettigrew (1981) depicts a bola in an illustration included in his work while presenting a proposed cultural chronology for the Portland Basin on the lower Columbia. The object was found by a collector at the south end of Sauvie Island 35-MU-12, a surface site which years before was frequented by amateurs. Pettigrew (1981) describes this unique tool as follows:

Specimens of this sub-class are defined as rounded pebbles with a pecked groove all the way around from end to end. Often they taper so that one end is more pointed than the other and look somewhat like plummets. These seem to be identical with what Rice (1972) illustrates as bola stones in his description of the Windust phase artifacts from the lower Snake River.

The occurrence of bola stones is not exclusively restricted to the Columbia Plateau. Though girdled bolas have not been reported from California (Breschini 2006) or from east of the Rocky Mountains, at Namu, in British Columbia, Roy Carlson reports a girdled bola stone from an archaeological context dating to about 9,000 C-14 B.P., (2006). Referring to this small oval modified pebble,

Carlson (1996) wrote, "The small grooved pebbles are usually interpreted as bola stones, but they could well have been line weights for fishing." Carlson (1996) also notes that although Namu is now a coastal site, during its earliest human occupation, a time of lower ocean levels, could have been an up-river site and more "dependent on land hunting than fishing."

Additional bola stones of line weights were also recovered from Marmes Rockshelter (45-FR-50) located near the confluence of the Palouse River with the lower Snake River. Here, Leonhardy and Rice report the recovery of a total of seven bola stones (1970; Rice 1969, 1972) representing different stages of manufacture. The specimens were recovered from Stratum II radiocarbon dated  $10,475 \pm 270$ - $10,810 \pm 275$  years B.P. and Stratum III radiocarbon dated  $7,400 \pm 110$ - $10,475 \pm 270$  years B.P. (Davis 1995).

### BOLA STONES AS TIME MARKERS

Within the early Holocene assemblages from the Hornby Creek site, bola stones and diminutive line weights were found in association with large-stemmed or shouldered projectile points. The artifacts are among the earliest curated groundstone tools so far recovered in the Northwest. Many of these pendant-shaped plummets, that are girdled around the long axis, exhibit extensive grinding and polishing, and more than a few are made from exotic materials such as soapstone and steatite.

Bolas, the "tangle-foot weapon," seem to have disappeared from the archeological record about 8,000 years ago (Chatters 2002), possibly after the traditional lifeway of early broad spectrum hunter-foragers began to fragment. Whether this recognizable change in early Plateau cultural history is the result of climatic factors remains a matter for debate. Though bola stones display distinct attributes, the likelihood that they evolved independently in separate unrelated cultures and over time seems highly probable. These unique tools are considered by the archaeological community to be temporally diagnostic artifacts occurring only with assemblages dating from

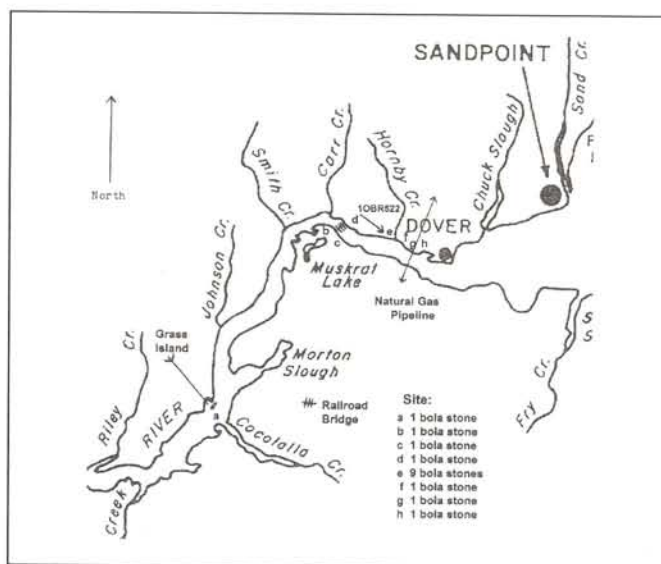


Figure 2. Bola stone site locations

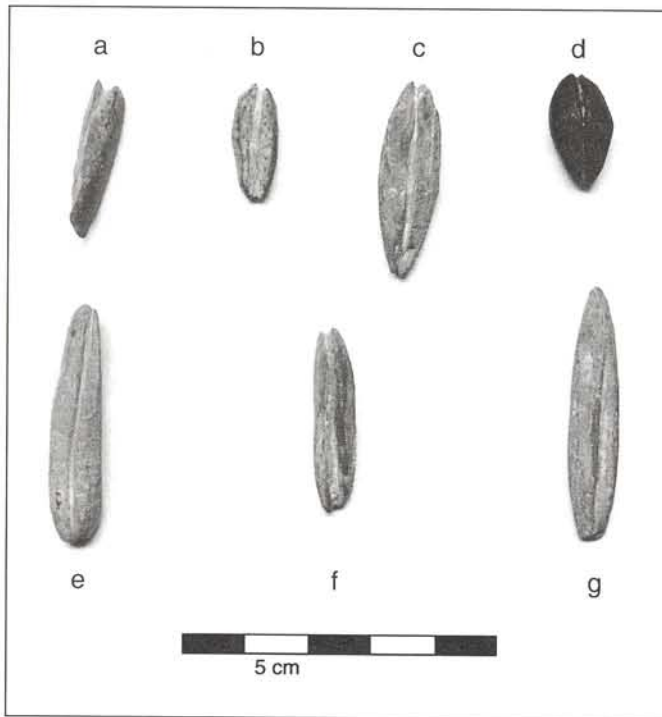


Figure 3. Line weights from the Hornby Creek site (10-BR-522)

the terminal Windust and early Cascade phases (Sappington 1994; Miss and Hudson 1987).

#### BOLA STONES AND LINE WEIGHTS FROM 10-BR-522

Sixteen girdled bolas and seven girdled line weights have been located in private collections, all found in the Albeni Falls Reservoir on the Pend Oreille River of northern Idaho. Nine of the 16 specimens and all seven of the line weights were surface collected at site 10-BR-522, which is situated on the down river side (west) of the mouth of Hornby Creek where it enters the Pend Oreille River near Dover, Idaho (Fig. 2). The majority of the projectile points, flake knives, and associated tools including all the bolas are reminiscent of Windust-like assemblages, especially those found at Marmes Rockshelter (Rice 2005).

The small line weights recovered from 10-BR-522 are made from a non-gritty gray shale. One unusual specimen resembles a miniature bola stone except in size and is made of black steatite, which is a form of talc or soapstone. These appear to have no counterpart in the prehistory of the Northwest except at one upland Windust phase site located on Pilcher Creek, a tributary of the North Powder River in the state of Oregon. The Pilcher Creek site (35-UN-147) and its soapstone lithic reduction industry and associated soapstone quarry are located approximately 14 miles northwest of Baker City, Oregon (Brauner 1985). According to Brauner (1985), "No similar soapstone objects or manufacturing process has been noted in any other Windust Phase site to date." The soapstone, which came from an outcrop about 400 meters away, grades in color from gray-green to black.

#### BOLA STONE AND LINE WEIGHT ANALYSIS

The bola stones from the Albeni Falls Reservoir are

made from a wide variety of materials, some of which are exotic in this locality. Size and weights vary somewhat but all fall within the same size range of bolas from all other sites discussed in this article. The description of bolas and line weights reported here include size variations in length, width, and thickness given in centimeters for bolas and millimeters for line weights with weights given in grams. Specific site locations are given by name when possible. The seven bola stones shown in Figure 2 are from the John and Gary Weisz collection.

The smallest bola stone (Fig. 3a) is made of black steatite and was collected from the Hornby Creek site. This specimen displays exceptional grinding and polishing over its entire surface. It measures 3.4 x 2.0 x 1.7 cm and weighs 17.5 g. The broken bola (Fig. 3b) fashioned from a pale green sedimentary stone was found at the Hornby Creek site. The width of this artifact is 3.6 cm, the thickness is 2.7 cm. Another fragmented bola (Fig. 3c) is made of a medium gray-colored sedimentary stone. Although broken, this specimen measures 4.4 cm in length and 3.8 cm in width. It was found about 1/4 mile east (upriver) of the Hornby Creek site. A rather small bola stone (Fig. 3d) measuring 3.6 x 2.9 x 2.6 cm and weighing 40.0 g is made from a medium green granodiorite and was collected from the Hornby Creek site. The multicolored soapstone bola (Fig. 3e) is a mottled gray and pink-colored material with black swirls and measures 4.7 x 3.0 x 2.2 cm and weighs 39.7 g. This specimen is another well-made example from the Hornby Creek site. The black bola stone (Fig. 3f) is made from a coarse-grained sedimentary rock, probably a very hard and compact sandstone. This groundstone object was collected from Gypsy Bay, a large site occupied during the early Holocene and located on the south side of the Pend Oreille River approximately 1.5 miles west (down river) of the Hornby Creek site. It measures 4.8 x 3.4 x 2.7 cm and weighs 53.9 g. The largest bola documented (Fig. 3g) from the Albeni Falls Reservoir was found on the north bank of the Pend Oreille River, adjacent and directly upriver from the Union Pacific Railroad bridge. This bridge spans the narrow river channel, crossing over to the south bank at Gypsy Bay. This bola is a light green soapstone, but most of its surface is covered by a brown patina. Displaying exquisite workmanship, this ground stone artifact measures 4.5 x 4.1 x 3.4 cm. It is by far the heaviest of the girdled bolas, weighing 87.9 g. Willard Piehl of Sandpoint, Idaho, found two bolas (Fig. 4) near Dover, Idaho. The black steatite bola (Fig. 4a) was collected from the Hornby Creek site (10-BR-522). This highly polished bola stone weighs 46 grams and measures 4.0 x 3.1 x 2.6 cm. The gray specimen (Fig. 4b) was manufactured from a coarse-grained sedimentary stone. This example measures 3.8 x 3.1 x 2.6 cm, weighs 45 g and was found at site 10-BR-14, which is situated immediately upriver from 10-BR-522 and on the east bank of Hornby Creek.

The exotic lithic materials (soapstone and steatite), were probably acquired through an early Holocene trade network believed to exist throughout the Plateau region (Hicks 2004). Two possible sources include the Fraser River Corridor, where according to Ames, et. al. (1998),



Figure 4. Bola stones near Dover, Idaho

"...abundant supplies of nephrite, serpentine, steatite, and soapstone (are) known to occur in the Lytton-Lillooet region of British Columbia," and the Blue Mountains of Oregon, quite possibly the area encompassing the locality of the Pilcher Creek site (35-UN-147) not far from Baker City, Oregon.

Seven small line weights (Fig. 5) from the John and Gary Weisz collection were collected from the Hornby Creek site. Six of these (Fig. 5a-c, e-g) are made from a non-gritty gray shale. Three of these six weights are complete; three are broken. The smallest intact line weight (Fig. 5b) weighs 0.42 g and measures 14.0 x 5.0 x 3.0 mm. Another complete bi-pointed specimen (Fig. 5c) measures 23.0 x 7.0 x 5.0 mm; its weight is 1.06 g. The dimensions of the final unbroken shale line weight (Fig. 5f) are 21.0 x 5.0 x 3.0 mm. This specimen weighs 0.48 g. One peculiar specimen (Fig. 5d), which resembles a miniature bola stone except in size, is composed of black steatite, which is a form of massive talc or soapstone. This miniature line weight is highly polished and measures 13.0 x 7.5 x 5.5 mm and weighs 0.82 g.

#### CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this article is to add to the meager knowledge that exists concerning the distribution and function of two unique and extremely rare types of

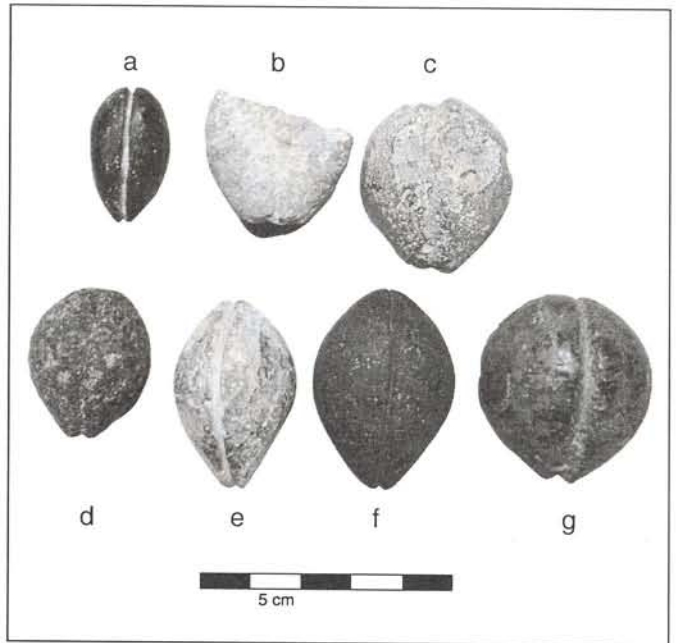


Figure 5. Line weights from the Hornby Creek site (10-BR-522) and vicinity

ground stone tools referred to in the literature as bola stones and line weights. The question of the functional use of both the so-called bola stones and line weights remains unresolved even though the Hornby Creek site produced both nine bolas and seven diminutive line weights in association with one another. This appears to be the only recorded site in the Northwest where these tools occur together. Though the function of the Hornby Creek site is not specifically addressed by this article, the occurrence of bola stones suggests small game and bird procurement. Their presence also suggests a wider range of activities than the big-game hunting commonly suggested by Late Holocene-style points. The presence of line weights is indicative of a diet breadth that included fish (Chatters 2007). The variety of tool types present in the assemblages suggests that this and several other related sites in this area were used as seasonal base camps where a range of activities occurred. Excavation at Hornby Creek may answer many questions as to the significance of this particular site, its material assemblage and how it relates to the early Holocene human occupation of the Columbia Plateau.

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# SHORT CONTRIBUTIONS

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## ***ABSTRACTS FROM THE 33<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL IDAHO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE***

*Boise Idaho  
September 30, 2006*

### **PAPER ABSTRACTS**

#### **Test Excavations at Bancroft Springs (10-EL-231)**

Andrew Carroll, Stephanie Horton, and Craig Cordell,  
Idaho State University

During the summer of 2006 Idaho State University conducted test excavations at Site 10-EL-231 on the Snake River near Bancroft Springs downriver ~4 miles from the Bliss Dam. The site is located on a terrace on the west side of the river bordering a stretch of rapids. The site surface exhibited sparse concentrations of artifacts along the terrace near the river margin. Subsurface testing demonstrated use of the site from historic ranching and farming through prehistoric Late-Middle-Early Archaic. Excavation of the deepest test unit taken down to 2.2 m appears to document cultural and depositional environment over the span of the Holocene. Re-deposited layers of ash fall may represent Mazama and Glacier Peak.

#### **Southern Idaho's Canals and Ditches: Evaluating the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**

Pam Demo and Jennifer Theisen, Bionomics

Canal systems come in all shapes and sizes. Whether plain and obscure or big, bold and brazen, they snake across the dry Idaho landscape transforming desert into farmland. Each has a plan, a purpose, and a history. From their beginnings some have been highly successful, others have struggled, many have failed, but most are features that contribute to southern Idaho's history. Their presence and history on the landscape trigger the need for recognition, recordation, assessment, and in many cases, mitigation efforts when these cultural features are impacted by federally-funded projects. This presentation offers a general overview of survey considerations accorded to these resources and their contributing elements.

#### **An Analysis of the Walter's Ferry Skeletons**

Pat Derbidge, Idaho State Historic Preservation Office

In August 2006, two graves were excavated at Walter's

Ferry. The graves were located at the top of a hill that is being used for sand and gravel extraction. The excavations revealed that part of each skeleton had been lost to the sand extraction process or to the activity of resident swallow populations. Burial A is a male skeleton that is nearly complete below the sixth cervical vertebra. No skull was associated with this skeleton. The bones are in poor condition because of the moist sandy soils. The remains are those of a male of European descent, about 40 years of age at the time of his death, who was between 66 and 69 inches tall. There is no indication of cause of death. Burial B is a female whose skeletal remains consist only of the legs and feet. All the skeleton above the proximal portions of the femurs is missing. Analysis indicates that this is likely to be the remains of a woman of European descent who was about 54 inches tall, was likely in her 30s at the time of death, and was suffering from a significant infection.

#### **Nora Creek: An Analysis of North-Central Idaho Foodways**

Ryan Harrod, University of Idaho

During the summer of 2003 historical archaeologist Mark Warner and undergraduate and graduate students of the Department of Anthropology at University of Idaho conducted an excavation for a field school on a homestead site outside of modern-day Troy, Idaho. The excavation of the site revealed two distinct regions or areas. A moderate amount of faunal remains with 1,830 bones and two shells were recovered from these two areas. The following report is a comprehensive analysis of the remains in an attempt to gain insight into the subsistence strategies and lifestyle of 20th century settlers of the Palouse region of North-Central Idaho and Eastern Washington.

#### **Fungal Contamination: A Limiting Factor for Winter Food Storage**

Susan Hawkins, Boise State University

Economic strategies gained from both the archaeological and ethnographic records suggest a mixed forager



/collector pattern for the Snake River Plain. Archaeological data for food storage pits is inconclusive, in part because of the lack of evidence in the archaeological record and variable ethnographic accounts. While few cache pits are known, recent research suggests that the lack of evidence of long-term storage is the result of highly mobile foragers. This paper will consider these issues in relation to Dr. Michael Dunn's 1995 study on fungal contamination of stored seeds. His study is especially useful for several reasons; it allows us to focus on the implications of fungal contamination and how it relates to storage time, as well as the relationship between understanding storage on the Snake River Plain and its importance in hunter gather behavior. Based on his empirical data and through replication of his experiment we might show how subsistence strategies for winter food utilization fail to connect with the archaeological data.

### **Standing Rock Overhang: Site Seasonality and Function**

Julie Kramer, Idaho State University

Standing Rock Overhang (10-FR-5) is located in Weston Canyon which divides the Malad Range and Bannock Range in Franklin County in southeastern Idaho. Prior to excavation the site had only minimal disturbance on the surface and none below. This paper will relate materials found during excavation of June through July 2005 and discuss the relevance of the remains to site seasonality and function as a short-term hunting base camp and preliminary butchering and processing area. It will also discuss the similarities between Standing Rock Overhang and Weston Canyon Rockshelter (10-FR-4) which are in close proximity to one another.

### **Age, Race, Sex, and Lifestyle-The Answer May Be All in Our Head!**

Shawn Naccarato, Canyon County Sheriff's Office

Forensic dental identification procedures are based on the premise that each human is considered to be unique, and that no two individuals are exactly alike. Dental forensic identification procedures are usually concerned with the accurate documentation of dental and other anatomical skull features in either confirmation-type identifications or identifications of unknown individuals. Valuable clues relating to the age, race, sex, or even lifestyle of a particular deceased individual can be obtained via proper analysis of unique dental soft tissue and hard tissue structures of the dentition and skull. The following presentation represents a summary of my dental forensic analysis of an unknown skull which was presented to me on May 10, 2006 by the Canyon County Sheriff's Office.

### **Walter's Ferry Unknown Remains-Dental Forensic Finding**

Shawn Naccarato, Canyon County Sheriff's Office

On June 20, 2006 skeletal remains were located in the Walter's Ferry area of Canyon County, Idaho. Subsequent excavation of grave sites at that location resulted in a number of unique, interesting, and perplexing findings. The dental forensic analysis of the maxillary

and mandibular portions of the unknown remains provided some information about the deceased individual(s); however, it only represented a small piece of a much larger puzzle which may never be completely resolved.

### **Data Recovery Results from the Clearwater River Region site 10-NP-463, North Central Idaho**

Jared Norman and Robert Lee Sappington, University of Idaho

In response to the proposed development of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sportsmen access site along the Clearwater River near the town of Peck in north central Idaho, the University of Idaho conducted a field school at the site (10-NP-463) summer 2006. During the months of May, June and July excavations were carried out where ground disturbance would take place. Nineteen units were excavated, totaling ??? cubic centimeters. Nine features were recorded and a variety of stone tools were recovered. Already ten obsidian artifacts sent for sourcing indicate southwestern Idaho, and two sources from Oregon are their places of origin. Immunological and radiocarbon testing are still pending.

### **Preliminary Findings of Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey of Lava Flows in the Eastern Mount Bennett Hills, South-Central Idaho**

Mark M. O'Brien, Idaho State University

Approximately 800 acres of basaltic a'a lava flows and their margins were surveyed in an upland setting of southcentral Idaho as part of a study being conducted for a master's thesis. This paper discusses preliminary findings of this survey. The study explores the prehistoric utilization of these flows by prehistoric peoples. A descriptive account of archaeological sites adjacent to or within these flows is given, cultural features associated with these sites are described, chronological parameters for these sites are established, and some ideas are posited about how these sites may have fit into the broader system of behavior of prehistoric peoples.

### **A Preliminary Report on Excavations at Castle Rock State Park**

Paul Santarone and Coral Moser, Idaho State University

During the late summer of 2006 the Idaho State Park Service called on an archaeological team from Idaho State University to complete test excavations near Castle Rock as part of an ongoing development project. Excavations at the future site of restroom facilities and a parking lot revealed historic and prehistoric deposits including a Paleoindian activity area along an extinct stream channel. Recovered artifacts suggest an early Paleoindians quarried local toolstone, emphasizing quartzite and quartz crystal. This paper presents the results of preliminary analysis of this potentially important site.

### **Lithic Findings from Boise's Gowen Field: Indications of Windust Phase Activity**

Ericha Sappington, Boise State University

Recent pedestrian surveying and site monitoring projects conducted at Boise's Gowen Field during the summer of 2006 led to the discovery of an isolated Windust phase projectile point. The intention of these projects is to protect known cultural sites as well as locating any previously undiscovered materials. The current projects began in 2004 and will actively continue through 2013, covering approximately 140,000 acres within Gowen Field's military training area. Since the first Windust projectile was discovered in Washington by H.S. Rice in 1965, less than twenty Windust sites have been documented in the Northwest.

### **Results of Recent Investigations at Three Sites in the Clearwater River Region, North Central Idaho**

Robert Lee Sappington, University of Idaho

Data recovery excavations were conducted at three sites along the Clearwater River in 2004 prior to two proposed passing lanes along highway US-12. The investigations were conducted by archaeologists from the University of Idaho and the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Resource Program under contract with the Idaho Transportation Department. These sites provided 27 radiocarbon dates, as well as samples for protein residue analysis, obsidian sourcing, faunal identification, and other analyses. Protein residue analyses of flaked and

ground stone tools indicate that bison, deer, mountain sheep, and rodents were processed, as well as pine and aster. Obsidian from Timber Butte in southwestern Idaho was identified at all three sites and one site also had material from two sources in eastern Oregon. These sites were used intermittently for hunting, processing, lithic tool manufacture, and other activities throughout five regional cultural phases dating from ca. 10,000 to 200 years ago.

### **Preliminary Test Excavations at Site 10-EL-110 on the Middle Snake River, Idaho**

Christopher Willson, Boise State University

During May and June of 2006, Boise State University conducted an archaeological field school located on property owned by Harry Knox and Pamela Swenson. The area selected for study lies on the southwestern edge of the property approximately a 1/4 mile west of King Hill, Idaho. The site proper is located on a riverine terrace situated on the north bank of the Snake River and is bordered by King Hill Creek to the west. The excavation provided cultural materials including ceramic sherds, bone tools and beads, and varied stone artifacts consistent with a Late Archaic occupation. Although the site had clearly been looted, a general geologic and cultural depositional history was established and further analysis, including XRF and sediment studies, are currently being conducted at the Boise State University Laboratory, Idaho.



College of Social Sciences  
and Public Affairs  
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