

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY STANDARDS FOR TEXAS

Archeological survey standards identify the minimum amount of work considered acceptable for intensive archeological surveys of 200 acres or less. These standards are not intended to limit additional work (i.e. more shovel tests or backhoe trenches) that may be deemed necessary to identify archeological sites on the basis of the Area of Potential Effect, anticipated impacts, or the likelihood of encountering significant cultural resources. Survey methodologies for project areas larger than 200 acres should be discussed with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) Archeology Division prior to implementing the survey.

- 1. Professional Qualifications:** Archeological investigations must be supervised by an archeologist who meets the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Archeology (48FR 22716 or 36 CFR Part 61); or meets the requirements for Principal Investigator defined in Title 13, Part II of the Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 26.
- 2. Background Research:** Archeologists must conduct a background literature search prior to field investigations. At a minimum this shall include searches of the Texas Historical Commission and the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) records or the equivalent Texas Archeological Sites Atlas Database for previously recorded archeological sites and historic properties, and previous archeological work in the vicinity.
- 3. Submerged Archeological Sites:** Projects crossing navigable state or federal waters may require an underwater survey.
- 4. Deeply Buried Cultural Deposits:** Archeologists must assess the potential for deeply buried cultural deposits within the Area of Potential Effect prior to starting field investigations. At a minimum, this shall include a review of the USDA soil surveys and geologic maps. If there is a potential for deeply buried cultural deposits within the depth of impacts, deeper subsurface investigations (such as backhoe trenches, or other method acceptable to the THC) will be required.
- 5. Site Forms:** Texas Archeological Site Data Forms must be completed for all archeological sites revisited or discovered during survey. These forms are submitted digitally through the TexSite database and a copy of the paper form is mailed to the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, The University of Texas at Austin.
- 6. Survey Report:** Archeologists are required to submit the results of their investigations in a report to the THC that follows the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archeological Documentation* or the *Council of Texas Archeologists Guidelines for Cultural Resource Management Reports*. The THC normally will complete its review within 30 days. Comments from the THC must be addressed in the final report and **one** paper copy and **two** electronic copies (a tagged PDF) of the final report must be submitted to the THC. Note: one electronic copy with site information (a plotted map) and one without site information. In addition, 11 copies of the report without site information should be sent to university-based libraries and archeological research facilities around the state.
- 7. Curation:** Archeological field notes, photographs and artifacts must be curated in accordance with the Council of Texas Archeologists guidelines.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

8. Fieldwork

MINIMUM SURVEY STANDARDS For Project Areas of 200 Acres or Less		
Transect Interval	Not greater than 30 meters	
Shovel Tests¹		
Project Areas	<u>Size</u>	<u>Shovel test density</u>
	0-2 acres	3 per acre
	>3-10 acres	2 per acre
	>11-100 acres	1 every 2 acres
	>101-200 acres	1 every 3 acres
Linear Projects	≤100' (30 m) wide corridor	16 per mile
Number of Shovel Tests required to define site boundaries²	minimum 6 – more for larger sites	
Average Rate of Survey (per person/per day)	Non-linear surveys: 15 acres	Linear surveys: 1-3 miles

¹Shovel tests are excavated in settings that have potential for buried cultural materials. They must be dug whenever there is less than 30 percent ground surface visibility, except on slopes greater than 20 percent. Shovel tests are 30 cm in diameter or on a side and are excavated to the bottom of Holocene deposits, if possible. They are dug in levels no thicker than 20 cm with sediments screened through ¼-inch mesh unless high clay or water content requires that they be troweled through.

²Sites with more than 30 percent ground surface visibility do not have to be defined by six shovel tests.

Texas Historical Commission
Archeology Division
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276
512/463-6096
www.thc.state.tx.us



**TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

The State Agency for Historic Preservation