

## LESSONS FROM THE ARIZONA SITE STEWARD PROGRAM

MARY ESTES

*The Arizona Site Steward Program began in the late 1980s, and has now grown to almost 700 members. This author has been the state program coordinator for the last nine years, and the following paper outlines the pros and cons of developing a stewardship program, working to ensure accountability in volunteers, suggestions for limiting the flow of site information to volunteers, and working with the news media to ensure program coverage while at the same time protecting site locations.*

From the chalking of petroglyphs on the Arizona Strip, to the looting for Spanish treasure behind the Chapel at the Presidio de Santa Cruz de Terranate near Sierra Vista – from Arizona’s northern rim to its southern border – Arizona Site Stewards report vandalism almost weekly to the various land managers who participate in the Arizona Site Steward Program. Unlike most other stewardship programs in the United States which have been developed to serve a single land manager, for ten years, Arizona Site Stewards have been assisting federal, state, county, and municipal land managers with cultural resource management. Arizona’s Site Stewards also monitor historic cemeteries and sites for the Archaeological Conservancy.

Currently, Arizona has 700 volunteers serving in 22 communities across the state. Each region has a volunteer Regional Coordinator to oversee the training, site assignments, and operations of the Stewards in the region. While most of the work is done by the Regional Coordinator in the local area, the Land Manager must get involved with assigning sites to the region, responding to reports of vandalism, assisting with the initial field training of Stewards and as speakers at workshops and conferences sponsored by the program.

Several times the question has been asked whether the land managers sponsoring the program believe it is worth the funding they provide, and the time and effort they put into working with the volunteers. When posed that question at a recent compliance workshop, City of Phoenix Archaeologist Todd Bostwick said without hesitation that he could not manage the sites he is responsible for without the assistance of the Site Stewards. Over the years, Site

Stewards have earned the reputation of being an essential part of the protection of cultural resources in the state of Arizona.

For organizations or agencies in the beginning stages of developing an archaeological stewardship program, the question might be whether or not it is worth the time, effort, and expense. What are the pros and cons of such a program?

Bill Smith (Figure 1) has been an Arizona Site Steward for about ten years, monitoring an historic military camp known as Camp Date Creek, north of Wickenburg, Arizona. Unfortunately, the site is located on topographic maps of Arizona and included in many books written for the treasure seeker, and has been the target of several cases of Antiquity Law violations in the past several years. Not only does Bill monitor the site, but he has done extensive research on its history; in fact, while not formally educated in the discipline of history, he is considered the state’s foremost historian on Camp Date Creek. In fact, he has been asked to speak on the history of the camp so often by various organizations that he has worked up a very entertaining and authentic living history reenactment.

Late last year, Bill drove from his home in Phoenix to check Camp Date Creek and immediately noticed a Bobcat® tractor and pickup truck with a trailer that had cut a wide path across private property gathering boulders, and had crossed a posted fence surrounding State Trust land onto the historic military camp. Bill copied the license number of the truck and called the information into the State Land Department, which handles trespass issues on State Trust lands in Arizona.

Due to a quick response by law enforcement, they were able to seize the tractor and identify the suspect. The Yavapai County Sheriff's Department and the County Attorney's Office are working on the case. Without a Site Steward monitoring this site on a regular basis, the vandalism likely would not have been noticed until the stones making up the camp walls had been completely relocated to some rock company's sales lot. Having Stewards with the talent and dedication that Bill Smith demonstrates is a definite "pro" for the time and effort it takes to develop a stewardship program. The greatest reward of having extra eyes to assist with cultural resource management may be in seeing the dedication of the trained volunteer working for an agency or program, when they have observed and reported vandalism.

A Site Steward program is not free. And its cost is not always found in the funding of the program. Sometimes the greatest cost is the time and effort spent by both the volunteer and the land manager. For instance, reports of vandalism by the concerned volunteer requires the time of the professional to respond and to do a damage assessment. If the land manager is too "busy" with other priorities to take the time to show concern for the vandalism, the volunteer soon loses heart. The Stewards' dedication and enthusiasm for continuing their efforts will only match that of the paid professionals who are their contacts with the land agency. Generally, for every hour we put into training our Stewards, responding to the concerns of the volunteers, and doing whatever paperwork must be done, we can expect the efforts of the volunteers to come back tenfold.

Depending upon the size of the program, or the size it grows to be, the hours volunteered are equivalent to one or more paid positions, yet not being professional, the volunteers can never take away positions from an agency, which must have work overseen by someone who meets the Secretary of Interior Standards.

While "pros" weigh heavily in favor of developing stewardship programs, there are inherent difficulties. Financial security for a program like this is a must, and is not always easy to put and keep in place. Someone has to coordinate the activities, training, and general operations. The job is usually more than can be given to an existing staff member who is already struggling to keep up with his or her work load. Often that means funding must be found to hire a person to manage the program. Once the scope of the program is decided upon and developed, a budget must be planned to fund the "wish list" of activities and events.

There is no monetary value we can place on the void left in the minds and hearts of those who value our Nation's shared history when a site is damaged or destroyed by collecting or looting. Site Stewards often become emotionally attached to the resources that they have been given the charge to protect. If there is a "con" to this, it might be that some Stewards may become so attached to the site they monitor that they forget the sites are on public lands and open to anyone who decides to hike across to them. An over zealous Site Steward might want to close the site to the public at the first sign of vandalism.

By involving a few people in cultural resource management and educating them to the importance of preserving the archaeological record, the word spreads in the community. We are seeing others besides our volunteers who are becoming aware that archaeological site vandalism hurts us all and are making the effort to contact agency law enforcement when vandalism is observed.

How do we bring a sense of accountability to our volunteers? In Arizona, we ask them to get involved mentally and emotionally, not just physically, with our program: we invite them to write articles for our program's newsletter, we ask them to be the liaison with an Indian community to let the tribe know about the program's mission, and we get them involved with planning workshops, training, and other activities. When volunteers are recruited, we are not just recruiting a "body" to do a certain job. We are recruiting a variety of talents and skills that are inherited with the "body." Some of our Stewards are outstanding photographers, airplane pilots, great organizers, and have the skills to format regional newsletters.

We train them, then we trust them. Rarely have our volunteers let us down. In the ten years that Arizona has had the program, more than 700 people have left for one reason or another, and of these 700, there were only a handful we felt might have questionable integrity or lacked the common sense needed to serve as a representative of the land managers they served.

The better the volunteers feel about what they are doing, the more accountable they will be. A volunteer who has been used as an example of good stewardship inspires others. Praising and rewarding volunteers gives them a sense of acceptance by, and appreciation from, the professional archaeological community.

Should we limit the flow of site information to our volunteers? This is a rather complex question and not



Figure 1: Arizona Volunteer Site Stewards in Period Costumes at an Historic Military Camp Known as Camp Date Creek.

easily answered with a yes or no. Most of the sites that Stewards have been asked to monitor are sites which the public has already impacted. Where sites are so remote or so relatively unknown that the public has made no trail to them, and that we feel reasonably safe have not yet been discovered, we do not have Site Stewards monitoring them. Or we assign them to a Steward who has been with the program long enough to have established a good rapport with the land manager and a better-than-average level of trust. Let your Steward know how important confidentially is, especially for that site. The important point is not to make a trail to the site by too many visits. The Steward might be encouraged to visit the site at least twice a year, unless impacts occur in the future which make more frequent monitoring necessary.

With the large populations in Arizona and California, it is rare that hunters and hikers have not

already found more sites than even the land manager knows about. Normally, surveys are done across the landscape in a lineal strip for right-of-way in readiness for installations of telephone lines, the grading of a new road, or the development of new buildings or subdivisions. Often, the sites found during a survey are the only sites documented in a survey report and therefore make up most of our known sites.

Site Stewards, on the other hand, are proving to be helpful tools in increasing the state's inventory of known sites. Because Stewards are out hiking, horseback riding or flying their aircraft on a weekly basis, they are reporting new sites all the time to the land agencies. This, of course, can be a "pro" or a "con," depending on how you look at it. Once discovered, a site must be professionally surveyed and documented – another time consuming task on the part of the land manager.

Generally, we do not make a concerted effort to limit site information given to our trained and trusted Site Stewards. By the same token, we do not automatically provide each Site Steward with the locations of every site which we have been asked to monitor – this list and the site kits prepared for each site on our Site Steward inventory for a particular region are given to the Regional Coordinator to use to assign sites to the various volunteers.

One of the pros and cons—challenges—of developing and managing a stewardship program is working with the news media. Most of us want some coverage of our program, and the media finds the concept of citizen volunteers assisting with the preservation of archaeological sites extremely interesting and newsworthy. We want the public to know that volunteers are providing a physical presence at archaeological sites. However, we also want to have a limited amount of media coverage beyond what we use in trying to recruit new Stewards; controlling the flow of information is important. Inappropriate information to the public must not endanger the cultural resources that we are trying to protect.

We had a situation in Arizona where a freelance writer approached us and asked to be part of one of our conference field trips. Permission granted for him to attend and write an article about his experience, he wrote an exceptionally good article that promoted both the program and the field trip along the Camino del Diablo in southern Arizona. We have also had the opposite results. Last year, a well known reporter for the *Arizona Republic* became part of a field trip without the Team Leader knowing who he was or that he intended to write a story about his experience. Fortunately, on finding out that one of her Site Stewards had invited a “friend” along on what was suppose to be a site orientation, instead of taking the small group to the site she had intended to take them to, the Team Leader took them to a site which is on every topographic map and everyone knows about it already, what we call a “show” site. As expected, when the article appeared in the *Republic* without any SHPO contact or communication with our Public Information Officer, his editor had included a locational map of the site. Fortunately, even good comes out of a negative experience, as I had 40 calls from people interested in knowing more about the Arizona Site Steward Program as a result of his article. Remember that once an interview is granted, no one really has much control over the tone or the content of the media’s approach.

In Arizona, our program has a formal Code of Ethics which states that Site Stewards are not allowed to bring media to site locations without first contacting the land manager and the Public Information Officer at Arizona State Parks. Usually the land manager will take an active part in the interview, and the Public Information Officer contacts the reporter to ensure that proper credits, site etiquette, and antiquity laws are mentioned in the article. The best advice is to know your reporters and media people; the ones who have worked well with you in the past are the ones you want to work with in the future.

In summary, the Arizona Site Steward Program, started in 1987, has taken many years to develop, lots of effort in finding funding, and much dedication on the part of the Site Stewards and of the land managers and other archaeologists in the community. Nevertheless, the “pros” well outweigh the “cons,” and the critical issues discussed in this presentation are not insurmountable. Keep the channels of communication open and discuss problems openly with your volunteers. Think of them not just as volunteers, but as volunteer staff – and they will help solve problems with new and creative perspective to help stop the Thieves of Time.

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