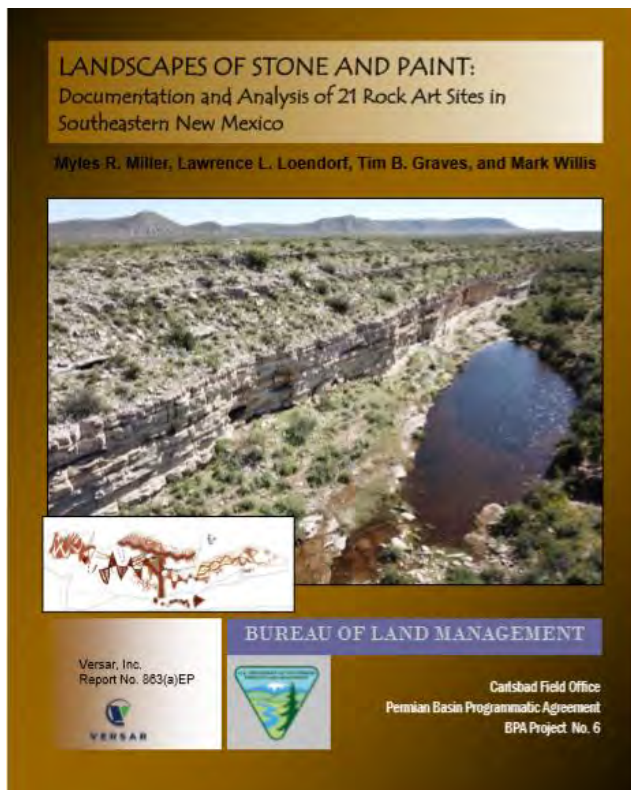


**Sacred Sites Research, Inc.
2019 Annual Report
Prepared by Lawrence Loendorf**

Sacred Sites Research, Inc (SSR) had another great year with many successful projects. A major accomplishment was the completion of the report for the recording 21 rock art sites in the Permian Basin, southeastern New Mexico. The Permian Basin project, undertaken through parts of three years, was directed by Versar, Inc. with SSR as a subcontractor. The final report titled *Landscapes of Stone and Paint: Documentation and Analysis of 21 Rock Art Sites in Southeastern New Mexico* is authored by Myles Miller, Lawrence Loendorf, Tim Graves and Mark Willis. Segments of the report which is 664 pages in length are currently being abstracted for publication in other formats.

Throughout the Permian Basin project, SSR worked with consultants from the Mescalero Apache and the Hopi Tribe. One of the obligations, at the end of the project, was to present a program on the results of the work to the Hopi Tribe. On June 5, 2019, Lawrence Loendorf, SSR, made the presentation to the Hopi Cultural Committee in Kykotsmovi Village, AZ. The presentation was well received with good exchange of ideas between SSR and the Hopi. SSR is hopeful that Joel Nicholas, from the Hopi Tribe, can work with us on a Montana project in the future.



(Left) Cover of the final report for the rock art recording project. The work was sponsored by the Bureau of Land Management. (Right) Joel Nicholas, Hopi Tribe, helping with photography at one of the sites recording during the project.

In July, SSR worked with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office to continue recording sites on the Wold Ranch west of Kaycee, Wyoming. We have now collected enough information to complete a National Register nomination form that will be submitted to the Wyoming review board for National Register sites and if approved to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. Amanda Castenada will be writing the nomination but SSR has offered to help in any way that is feasible.

We did find new images on existing panels and several completely new panels. One of the latter was up high on the canyon wall where it was hard to see from below. Partly to offset this problem, Mark Willis, used a camera mounted on a pole to photograph the panel. An important innovation that Willis added to this process was the use of a flash on a second pole. The flash was in sync with the camera shutter so Laurie White, who held the flash could move around the petroglyphs to create side shadow from all sides. The images can be overlapped on one another via software to create a good replica of the rock art.



*(Left) Mark Willis with camera, Laurie White with flash and Larry Loendorf with remote shutter control
(Right) Photograph of a portion of the panel.*



Laurie White drawing of the high panel on the Wold Ranch.

Another important outcome of the research at the Wold sites in 2019, was a preliminary analysis of the alluvial terraces along the Middle Fork of the Powder River. Bill Eckerle, the geoarchaeologist who completed the study, believes the high panels SSR has recorded on both sides of the river were once accessible from the Kaycee terrace. The destruction of the Kaycee terrace is dated elsewhere along the Powder River at 1200 years before the present. This suggests the rock art, made by an individual standing on the terrace, is older than that age.

This is an important finding that needs additional research on the Wold Ranch. Although we plan to go back this coming summer, we are not completing more geomorphology studies this season. We do hope to set up scaffolding to examine the high panel described above and perhaps use an auger to examine the deposits in front of the panels at one of the sites.

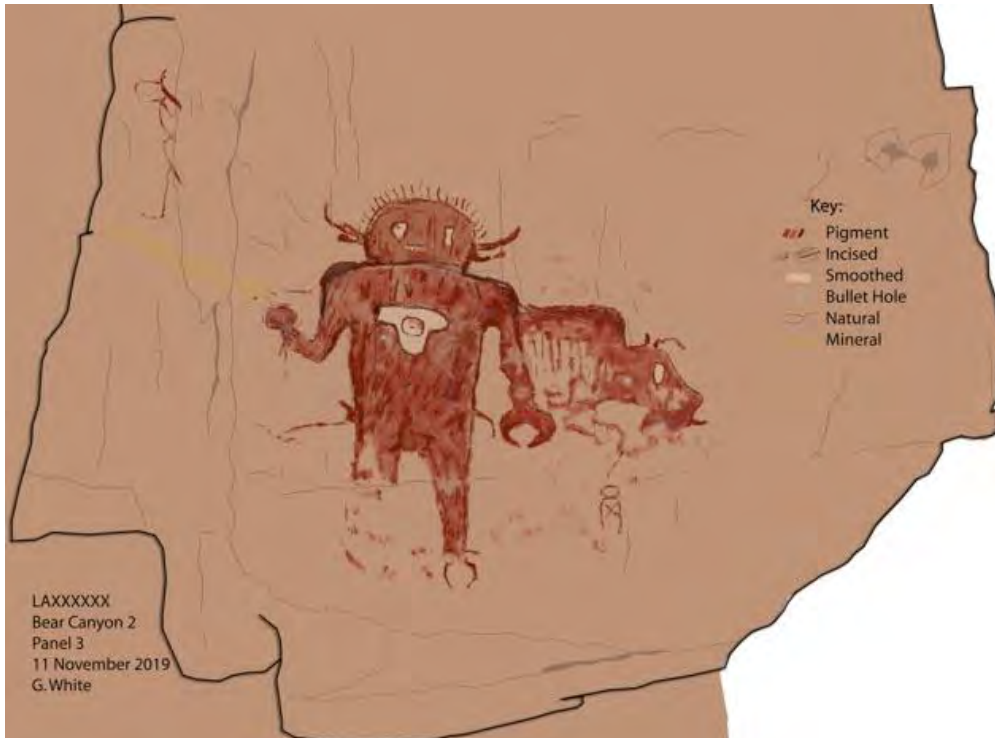
In August SSR recorded the Buffalo High site near the mouth of Bear Canyon in the Pryor Mountains, Montana. Rock paintings at the site are high in a canyon wall and so faded that they are hardly visible from the valley floor below them. They were discovered by a bird watcher who told Tim Urbaniak of Billings about the site. Tim encouraged SSR to record the site which we did with the help of Cobe Chatwood and Loren Rausch. Loren has helped SSR on previous projects by setting up systems of ropes to make access safe and that is what he did at Bear Canyon site.



(Left) Loren Rausch setting up the rope access to the ledge where the paintings are found. The main panel is on the exposed rock in the upper center of the photograph. (Right) View to the east from the ledge. Note how it slopes toward a drop off.



(Left) Unmodified view of the panel. (Right) DStretch photograph which shows the details of the panel. The faded nature of the painting explains why it had not been found in previous work in the area.



Drawing of the main panel at the Buffalo High site. Greg White completed the drawing from a field sketch and extensive photographs.

There is a sloping ledge in front of the panel, which was originally reached by a route that is no longer passable because a portion of it fell away. While this explains how the painters got to the site without using ropes, it does not help us understand why such large figures were painted on the cliff face. There are three panels at the site with two that retain details of massive figures standing six and seven feet tall. One impressive figure is a combination human and bison that is superimposed on a bison emerging from behind it. The site is fascinating and an important addition to the inventory of Montana rock art sites.

Also, in August, SSR worked to record 15 panels of petroglyphs at a site near Ryegate, Montana. The site on private land has been off limits to researchers in recent years but SSR was allowed access with strict rules about distribution of photographs and other information about the site. The site is very large and SSR plans to return for additional work in the coming years.

SSR worked with Versar, Inc. to record several sites on Fort Bliss, Texas. None of the sites had rock paintings, but that was not known before the field work. We did visit an interesting site in Soledad Canyon in the Organ Mountains near Las Cruces, New Mexico. The site is on Fort Bliss where it had been visited previously by Arden Comanche, a Mescalero consultant who has incredible knowledge about traditional cultural properties used by the Mescalero Apache in southern New Mexico.

The site is a tree camp where the Mescalero strategically trimmed an oak tree to make it grow into the protective shelter that was then used as a natural camping lodge. There were bedrock mortars and other features associated with the tree lodge that was likely used in the late 1800's.



(Left) Arden Comanche, Mescalero consultant. (Center) James Kutnisis, Mescalero consultant. (Right) Mark Willis photograph of the oak tree trimmed to grow into a shelter that was used as a Mescalero camp in the 1800's.

An enjoyable undertaking was a field trip with Crow Indian students from the Pryor, Montana school. The trip was organized by SSR and Loren Rausch, who teaches science at the school. The students and teachers loaded on a bus to meet in Joliet, Montana where SSR had arranged for them to visit a nearby site known to Crow Ammaáhpawaalaatuu, Where There Are Writings On The Wall. The site is well-known by Crow people as the site with petroglyphs that display Crow Indian war honors.

We had to cross an irrigation ditch to get to the site which meant we had to build a bridge, but everyone got across without getting wet. Everyone—students, teachers and the bus driver—had a good time and got to see an important traditional property to the Crow tribe.



(Left) Pryor school students crossing the irrigation ditch on the way to the site. (Right) Group of the students in front of the cliff wall with the Crow Indian war honors petroglyphs.

SSR started an important new program to offer cash awards up to \$7000 for research related to pictograph and petroglyph sites in North America. The goal is to increase the number of rock art sites, or portions of these sites, that are recorded according to standards accepted by SSR. All sites are considered for support, but those located on private lands (where there is little opportunity for support from a land managing agency) are considered more appropriate for funding from this program.

SSR had two successful applicants in the first round of the awards. One to record a petroglyph site on a flat surface at a location in northwestern Montana and another to better record and eventually radiocarbon date paintings at sites in Idaho. The projects are currently on hold because of the Covid 19 restrictions on travel and assembling groups.

In April, the Society for American Archaeology had its annual meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. SSR had a strong presence in the meeting with papers presented board members but the highlight was a session titled: Art and Archaeology in the American West: Papers in Honor of Lawrence L. Loendorf. Organized by David Whitley and Chris Loendorf, it was an excellent group of papers about rock art and adventures through the years with me. Very nice tribute to SSR as an organization that is trying to protect and record rock art sites.

In sum, SSR had a very good year. We did not complete as many funded projects as in previous years, but we probably needed a break from that kind of research, and we did find and record some impressive new sites. We appreciate the support of volunteers and are especially pleased to have Charles Koenig and Amanda Castenada as part of the volunteer team. Charles and Amanda are great archaeologists with extensive rock art research at the Shumla Archaeology Center in Texas. Charles is currently working toward a doctoral degree at the University of Wyoming while Amanda is working for the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office. It is wonderful to have them as SSR volunteers.

We are also thankful for the monetary donations we received during the year. Margaret Berrier continues to be a strong supporter of SSR but there are others who contribute to our success as well. Thank you.