

## ANCESTRAL AND MODERN SITE STEWARDSHIP IN THE MOJAVE DESERT

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*In 1980, a novel mission of recruiting volunteers to assist with invasive species eradication and installation of access barriers to protect cultural resources at springs expanded to monitoring by volunteers at “adopted” sites. Volunteerism spread, and a training program and written direction were prepared for a similar program across the Colorado River in Arizona, which became the foundation for subsequent formal site stewardship programs in California and Nevada. Issues faced then are still with us: what sites should be monitored, what constitutes “at-risk sites,” site secrecy, program expense, efficiency, and sustainability. The benefits of standardizing written guidance is explored.*

Many think of archaeological site stewardship as simply a function of land management agencies, but in reality it is a social and cultural movement. Historically, land management agencies and cultural resources professionals have been the gatekeepers of archaeological site information -- their location, their nature, and their significance. Site stewardship requires agencies, archaeologists, and other cultural resources professionals to share some of their responsibilities and, in specific cases, to loosen the grip on information traditionally closely guarded. Site stewardship returns some of the responsibility for site preservation to the public, the people who actually own the land.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the roots and growth of modern site stewardship programs on public lands by looking backward to what I believe is the ancestral desert site stewardship program: the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) Historic Site Adoption Program. I initiated that program in 1981 (Figure 1) in response to historian and activist Dennis Casebier’s “Friends of the Mojave Road” campaign to publicize the location of sensitive archaeological and historical sites. As the Needles (East Mojave) BLM Archaeologist, I took the idea for site adoption from the Adopt-a-Highway program that California had instituted for the purpose of litter collection; people were adopting highway segments for litter collection, so why not have volunteers adopt sites along the historic Mojave Road to assist me with site recording and monitoring the status of the remote sites along its corridor?

I have been privileged to participate in some of the very earliest site stewardship efforts in the California desert and to watch as site stewardship programs have grown and changed in response to different needs. I see the maturation of site stewardship programs from the early 1980s to the diversified, modern programs of today as a process with many of the characteristics of pioneering programs still reflected in the core architecture of such modern programs as the California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (CASSP) and the Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (NASSP).

For this paper, I compare and contrast early site stewardship with the modern programs that have evolved. What have we learned, what has changed, and what would help us to improve the program based upon the experience of the past?

### **THE ANCESTRAL ROOTS: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE FOUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE STEWARDSHIP**

I believe the first organization that adopted a cultural site for purposes of patrol and monitoring was the California Association of 4-Wheel Drive Clubs, Inc., in 1981. They adopted Camp Rock Spring, a multicomponent historic/prehistoric site with petroglyphs, which once functioned as one of the outposts along the Mojave Road, also known as the “Mojave Trail,” “Old Government Road,” “Beale Road,” or “Beale’s Camel Road.” The growth of programs can be traced both through time and across space from



Figure 1. In 1981, the BLM Field Archaeologist in Needles, California, Ruth Musser prepared this announcement which was published in the local Desert Star news in 1982, formally initiating the first archaeological Site Adoption program. Musser recruited artist Ted Jensen, a "Friend of the Mojave Road," who volunteered to complete the artwork for this kick-off stewardship program.

this “ancestral” root. The Mojave Road is not just a California phenomenon, since the road stretched from the Pacific Ocean across the Colorado River into Arizona, onto public lands managed by the BLM around Beale Spring in Kingman, Arizona, and eastward across Arizona toward New Mexico. The threat of Casebier’s “Friends of the Mojave Road” grew quickly during the early 1980s, with “weekend warriors” in droves exploring the road and its numerous outposts and forts on both sides of the river via four-wheel drive (4WD).

The early 1980s situation facing BLM managers of the East Mojave was daunting, including a large land area (five million acres), limited funding and personnel (one archaeologist and three rangers), and huge and growing urban populations in southern Nevada and southern California visiting the desert with off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and bringing an upswing in looting and vandalism. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA) had just passed, so there was an added impetus for law enforcement agents to stop people from looting sites, but even with all of these factors in play, it is unlikely that a site adoption/monitoring program would have been generated as a top-down management response.

There was one more very significant, very local factor that was really the greatest impetus behind starting a local site adoption or “stewardship” program. Dennis Casebier began preparing a guidebook to the Mojave Road and had started distributing maps, directions, and descriptions of significant archaeological sites, disclosing provenience information that had been previously protected. Casebier’s actions attracted undesirable attention to the sites, promoting unrestrained tourism and recreational visitation at the relatively remote, unprotected ca. 1860 military outposts along the Mojave Road, many of which also happened to be prehistoric archaeological sites associated with the Mojave Road. Also associated with this road are significant concentrations of petroglyphs and other easily damaged features.

Casebier had launched a campaign to “Reopen the Mojave Road” as a “viable recreation trail” (Casebier 1983) -- a sort of tourist route. His *Guidebook to the Mojave Road* (Casebier and Friends 1983) would lead the way, and he wanted clear public access on the entire route across public land from Fort Mojave on the Colorado River to Camp Cady near Barstow.

One of the sites, an outpost at Soda Spring, was gated, closed to general public access, and occupied under permit by the Consortium of California State Universities. Earlier, a Christian destination resort facility had been built there on a mining claim by Dr. Curtis Howe Springer, a radio evangelist, who named the location Zzyzx and who sold remedies for baldness, cancer, hemorrhoids, faded lips, and other maladies. The BLM had evicted Springer as a squatter in 1976. Casebier used the eviction as a tactical wedge, publicly criticizing the BLM for confiscating the property in the name of public use and then closing off public access by locking the gate. Casebier promoted public access and would quip, “When Doc Springer was in control everyone was welcome at Zzyzx, as long as the visitor did not swear, smoke, drink, booze, or argue.”

After the eviction of “Doc” Springer, the BLM recruited Gerry Gates (Figure 2) as a maintenance man at Zzyzx, and he was working there in the early 1980s when I snapped his picture. He was a former “Skid Row” unfortunate whom Doc Springer brought to Zzyzx to dry out in exchange for help building the mineral baths and Christian retreat destination during a 30-year period between ca. 1940 to 1970. Note his tattoo bearing the words “Gates of Zzyzx,” a rather symbolic play on words that captures the mood and spirit of the period and the question of public access through Zzyzx or Soda Spring onto the Mojave or Old Government Road.

Casebier used the Springer controversy that followed the eviction as part of a campaign to build interest groups in support of access to the Mojave Road under the loose umbrella of his Friends of the Mojave Road organization. These interest groups included Needles locals, college students, Marines stationed at Barstow, but principally the numerous 4WD clubs with a rapidly increasing interest in recreation use of the desert and the trans-East Mojave dirt road.

# "Gates of Zzyzx" or "Locked Gates"

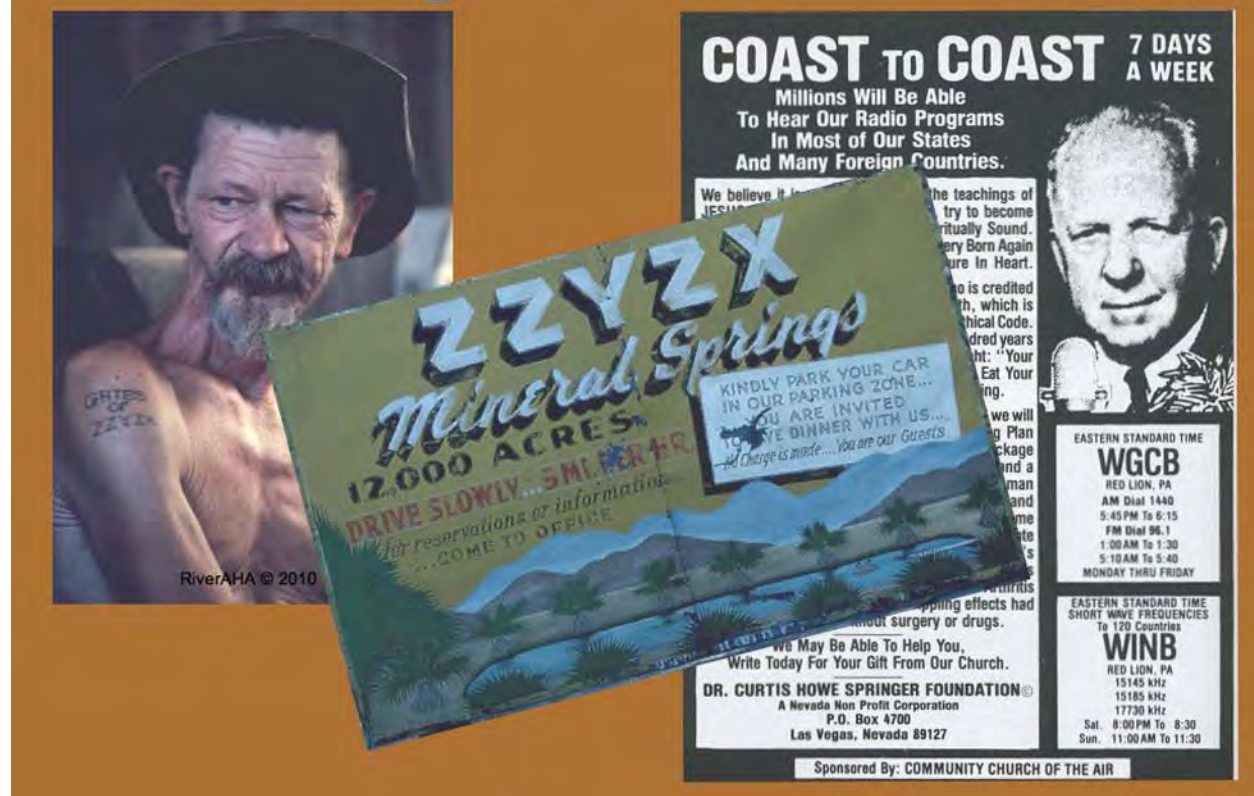


Figure 2. Gates of Zzyzx or Locked Gates??? Former skidrow unfortunates like Gerry Gates (shown at left bearing the tattoo "Gates of Zzyzx") were recruited by Doc Springer (right) to dry out and be productive working at the vacation spa resort which bill board is shown in center. Evicting Springer, the BLM recruited Gates as a maintenance man for the facility in 1976. (Photo photo courtesy of Dennis G. Casebier and [MDHCA.org](http://MDHCA.org))

Casebier brought further attention to the campaign with such publicity stunts as a reenactment of the construction of Beale's Wagon Road, complete with camels. In another reenactment, he brought in uniformed military troops to commemorate the 1860s cavalry guard of the Old Government Road, and in so doing publicized the road, the Calvary's role in escorting pioneers across the desert, and, most importantly, the fact that they built numerous outposts, camps, and forts along the road, the remnants of which could be viewed by hopping into a 4WD vehicle and heading for the Colorado River. Casebier encouraged visitation by announcing the annual Mojave Road Rendezvous and leading the pack with car-to-car narrative provided via CB radio.

There was little the BLM could do other than prepare the camps, forts, and outposts along the Mojave Road for an onslaught of public visitation in advance of publication of his guidebook. BLM archaeologists had a very strong concern for protection of the remote, unprotected outpost sites, particularly those with prehistoric components, including petroglyphs. During 1979-1980, lead archaeologist Eric Ritter, his team from the BLM's Desert Plan staff, District Archaeologist Russell Kaldenberg, and the resource area archaeologists, including me, prepared recommendations for the Desert Plan. We worked to recommend designation of the Mojave Road's various outposts as Areas of Critical



*Figure 3. BLM's California Desert Plan Staff Lead Archaeologist, Eric Ritter and BLM Field Office Archaeologist Ruth Musser examining maps and evaluating records to identify "at risk" cultural resource sites, districts, and/or localities to be included in "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern" (ACECs), which became some of the first sites to be monitored by volunteers.*

Environmental Concern (ACECs) (Figure 3). The outpost sites were prioritized, and management plans for Camp Rock Spring and Fort Paiute, outposts along the road, were high on the list. Ritter's and Kaldenberg's teams worked with a near-frantic sense of urgency, volunteering weekends to get protections in place, knowing that the floodgates of tourism were opening. One of the protective measures was to involve volunteers, and recruitment began.

### **THE CALIFORNIA DESERT "SITE ADOPTION" AND ARIZONA "SITE STEWARDSHIP" CONNECTION**

Beginning in 1981, organizations and individuals involved in the Friends of the Mojave Road were invited to "Adopt a Site" along the Mojave Road, more or less co-opting them into protecting the very locations that they were already visiting, then tasking them to help record the petroglyphs and monitor the status of the site condition whenever they were there. Numerous clubs and organizations on both sides of the Colorado River volunteered. One of the outposts on the road was just across the Colorado River in Kingman, Arizona, and I was working with Pat Georgi, Gary Stumpf (archaeologist in the BLM Arizona State Office), and other BLM archaeologists there, particularly pertaining to projects involving such OHV activities as the Score 400 race that ran on both sides of the river. It was later, in Arizona, that the first related statewide program of site stewardship grew, a spin-off, as I was informed, of the already rooted site adoption program in California. Gary Stumpf later assisted in the development of the first Arizona Site Stewardship Handbook (Arizona State Parks 2002).

Around 1985, Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt established the Arizona Archaeology Advisory Commission (AAAC) to make recommendations for state actions to protect archaeological resources in response to serious site looting and vandalism there. The Commission, for example, released anti-pothunting television spots and posters. I reported the Arizona and East Mojave volunteer monitoring activities in the *SCA Newsletter* while I was assistant editor.

An important component of this early program of site stewardship was recognition of the efforts of volunteers. The BLM established an awards program to recognize volunteer stewards. During the early 1980s, articles in local newspapers appeared which publicly recognized local residents for their site monitoring and patrolling. One person recognized was Robert Derichsweiler, who reported locations and status of prehistoric sites to the BLM archaeological staff. Tribal members from the Chemehuevi Reservation also participated, including Georgia Laird Culp, Darrell King, Donald Smith, and Tito Smith (Figure 4), patrolling the Chemehuevi range spanning two states, Arizona and California. Matthew Leivas and the Chemehuevi Reservation Fish and Game adopted a BLM site that the tribe considered to be sacred, patrolling and guarding the petroglyphs at West Well, east of Havasu Landing (Figure 5). Everyone seemed to like seeing their name in the paper doing good things to protect archaeological sites, but at the time, reporting of monitoring results was informal and inconsistent.

One major concern was releasing site information to volunteers. In the case of this early program, site stewards had previous knowledge of the sites they adopted. Potential stewards were not assigned to sites unless they already knew about them. They had to show them to me first. Even when the local police chief's wife wanted me to take her out to show her sites, I refused. However, assigning sites in concert with confidentiality agreements, rather than responding to the public's preexisting knowledge of a site, became a sensible characteristic of the programs that took root elsewhere; somewhere along the way, archaeologists relaxed their instinctive grip on closely guarded site information. I think this first happened in Arizona, and likely because many locals already know where many sites are and how to find and identify archaeological sites.

Both the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management had started using volunteers to patrol sites on their lands in Arizona before 1986, the date when Babbitt's Arizona Archaeological Advisory Commission organized the first statewide site monitoring program. The East Mojave was turned over to the Park Service soon after, so the East Mojave site adoption program faded away, except in the case of Casebier, who later moved to Goffs and "personally took over informal guardianship of the entire Mojave Road" (Russell Kaldenberg, personal communication 2010).

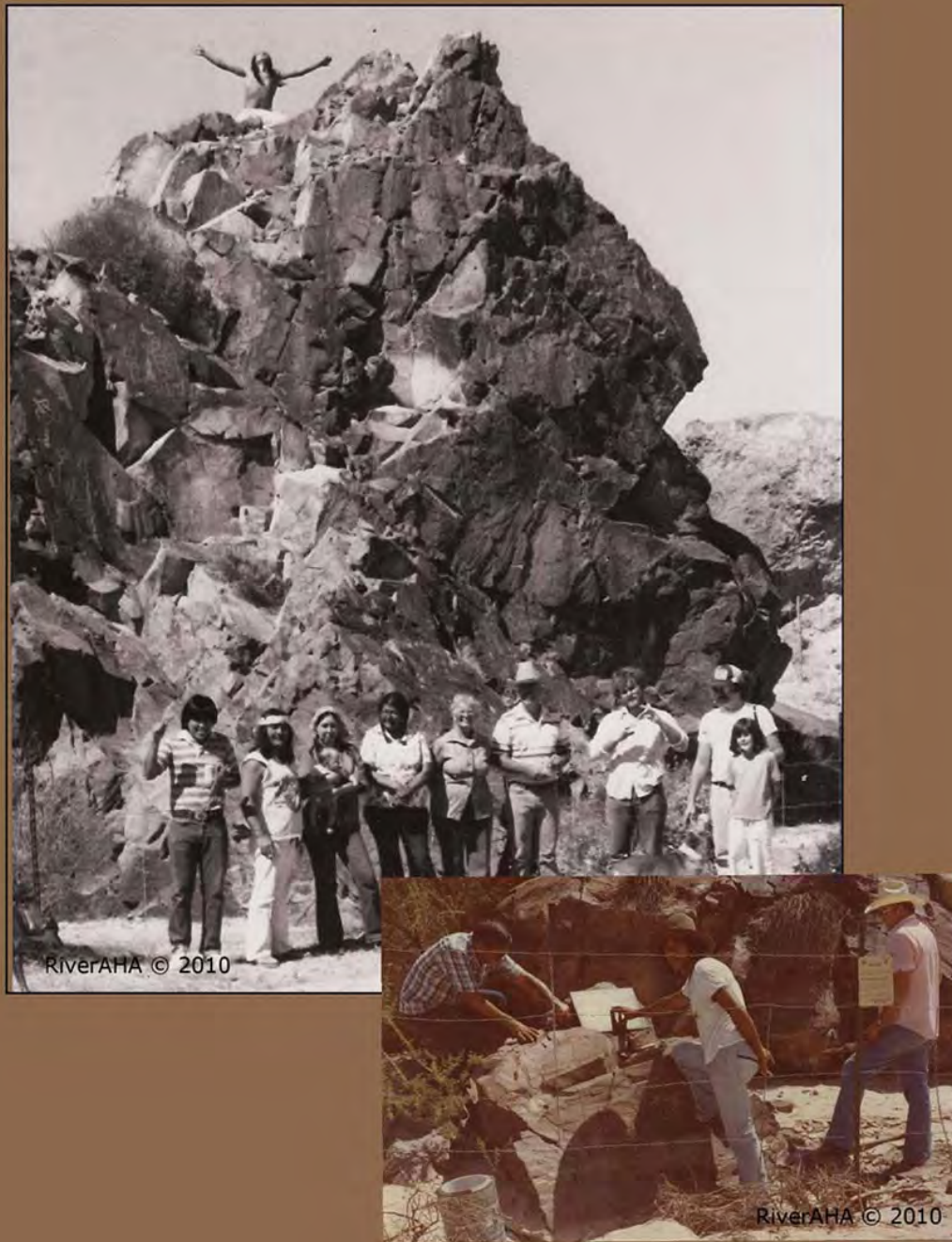
## **FORMAL WRITTEN GUIDELINES ESTABLISHED IN CALIFORNIA**

The Arizona program was the inspiration for the Partners in Preservation (PIP) Program at Los Padres National Forest by 1990 (Horne and McFarland 1995). Janine McFarland of the Los Padres National Forest in California learned about the program from Peter Pilles, Coconino National Forest Archaeologist, who was later involved in producing the Arizona handbook. Janine and Steve Horne, Los Padres Forest Archaeologist, built the PIP program with institutional support. The PIP program was characterized by formal guidelines and training instructions (Figure 6).

PIP provided assistance in the development of the California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (CASSP), which had its origins in the BLM. BLM supported the development of CASSP by extending institutional support, including a modest start-up grant of \$7,000 (Kaldenberg, personal communication 2010), and further support through the OHV Green Sticker grant program. It is revealing that the operating funds for CASSP have from the outset come from the OHV grant program, and one of the first training sessions included the Gear Grinders 4WD Club (Kaldenberg, personal communication, 2010), a testament of the CASSP's links to the first "site adoption" effort by a California 4WD club in 1981. It is also significant that the Society for California Archaeology played and continues to play an important role in support of CASSP.



*Figure 4. One of the first site stewards, Donald Smith (Chemehuevi), volunteered to monitor and inspect specific sites in the area of the reservation. He is shown here in the early 1980s reporting a looted rock shelter to BLM Archaeologists.*



*Figure 5. BLM Archaeologist Ruth Musser snapped these shots in the early 1980s, after volunteer site stewards from Havasu Landing installed a protective barrier around the West Well petroglyphs upon the urging of Georgia Laird Culp of the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation (now deceased), the daughter of Carobeth and George Laird. Above: Darryl King (top), and (left to right) Mel King, Tommy Murdock, Mona Pencille (holding Arlene Winter-Cloud King), Georgia Laird-Culp, Maggie McShan, Hiram Wilson (BLM), John Richnow (BLM), unidentified individual (could be Chuck Lamb from CRIT museum), and Wayne Culp. Below: Donald (l) and Tito Smith (center) (both Chemehuevi) and Wilson (r) installing interpretive signage. Members of the reservation, including the Matthew Leivas, in law enforcement, regularly patrolled and informally monitored this important traditional site.*



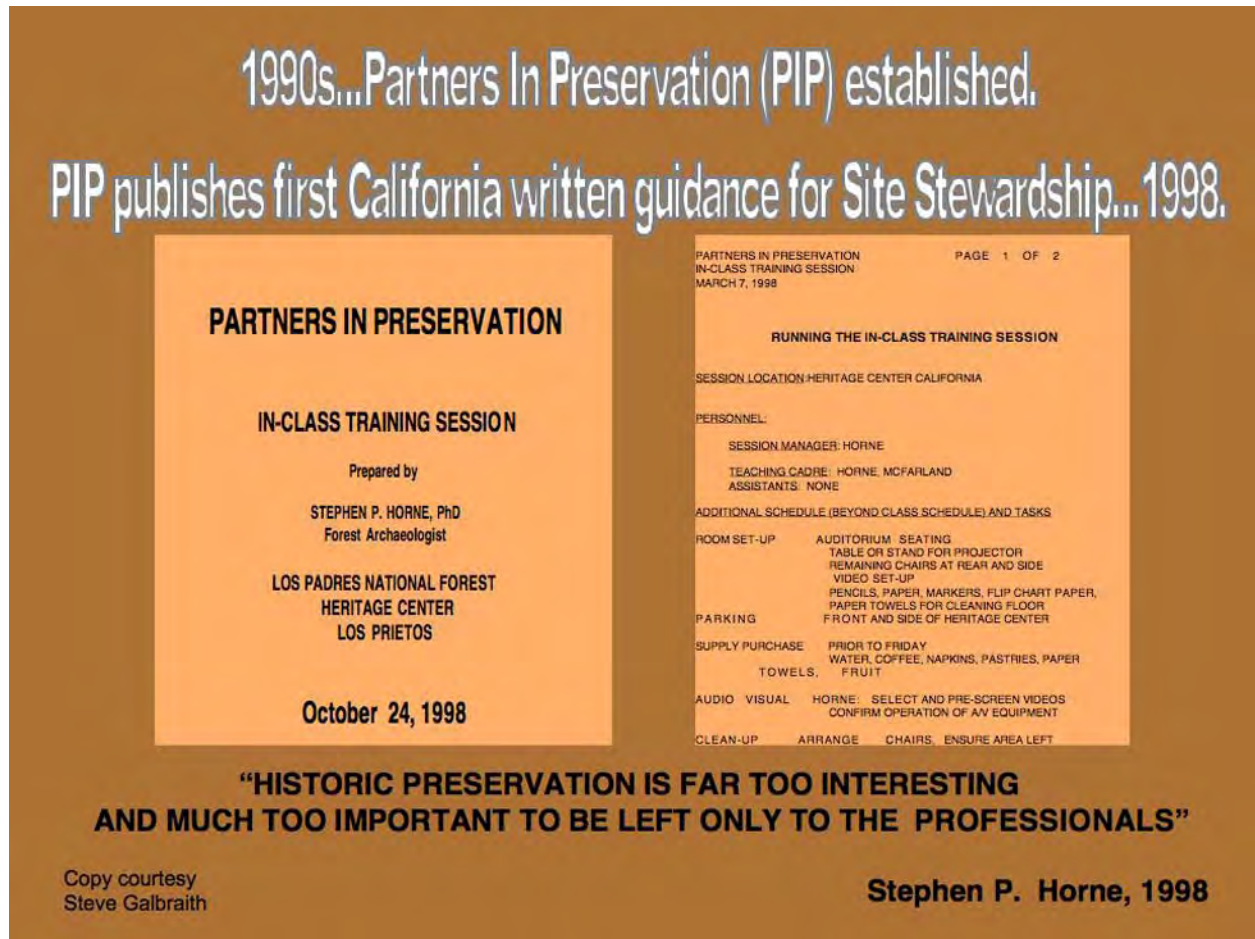


Figure 6: Stephen P. Horne, Forest Archaeologist on the Los Padres National Forest, delivered the first formal guidelines for site stewardship, which he laid out in 1998 under the title of “Partners in Preservation.”

### STANDARDIZED NAME: “SITE STEWARDSHIP” REPLACES “SITE ADOPTION”

The first training in California under the name archaeological “Site Stewardship” was in 2000 at the Ridgecrest BLM office, with Beth and Chris Padon, Steve Horne, Judyth Reed, and Russ Kaldenberg providing the training (Kaldenberg, personal communication 2010). This training was held before the Arizona handbook was published, so programs were steadily evolving on both sides of the Colorado River. Other programs, including the Adopt-a-Cabin program, also at the Ridgecrest BLM, had emerged; that program drew on the long tradition of volunteerism on public lands and on the early idea of “site adoption” but was, at its core, a recreation program, not a program for historic preservation (Horne and Musser-Lopez 2008).

Kaldenberg recalls that the California SHPO was involved at the beginning of site stewardship by being supportive. Cherilyn Widell, the SHPO at the time, Hans Kreutzberg, and Dwight Dutschke were involved and supportive. The program organizers also had to work through concerns about sharing the site locations with the public and about the site stewards being “pseudo-cops,” a problem that was occurring in Arizona. Kaldenberg (personal communication 2010) emphasized that he “did not want stewards to act as police, so stewards were instructed never to confront someone they thought was breaking the law, to get out of there and contact a sheriff or a ranger.” Since the first training, there have

been numerous other CASSP “initial trainings,” the last one being just a few months ago (Figure 7), and such advanced training workshops as handling collections and site sketch mapping classes (Figure 8).

### **NEVADA ADOPTS “SITE STEWARDSHIP”**

The Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (2010) Site Stewardship website at *nevadasitestewards.org* provides an excellent summary of the state’s program history:

In 2000 archaeology groups began discussing the creation of a site steward program for Nevada. Archaeology advocates Helen Mortenson and her husband, Assemblyman Harry Mortenson, created legislation for a program. The bill was proposed and defeated in the Nevada legislature in 2001 and 2003. Because there was still an immediate need, citizens and federal land managers began training stewards with special funding from the BLM. Mark Henderson, Ely District BLM, and volunteers Darrell and Terri Wade joined with others to create a training manual and program modeled after the Arizona Site Stewardship Program. The Wades began recruiting and training stewards and placing them in the field. The Nevada Archaeological Association (NAA) provides support through funding stewardship activities within the state....

In 2005 the Nevada Legislature approved Nevada Revised Statute 383.075 presented by Assemblyman Harry Mortenson. Signed by the governor in 2005, the measure authorized creation of a statewide site steward program and provided funding to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to hire a program coordinator to oversee the Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program.

The Nevada State Historic Preservation Office maintains an office and funding for the site stewardship program coordinator. Since the archaeological site stewardship effort in Nevada is a cooperative venture, and the program coordinator works closely with the Nevada Archaeological Association, Nevada Rock Art Foundation, the Interagency Cultural Site Stewardship Team, the federal land managing agencies, and concerned citizens. The duties of the project coordinator include standardization of training, reporting, and a database to track stewardship activities. Also, the coordinator assists the federal agencies in maintaining a list of priority sites that would benefit from the Nevada Program, and supports volunteer appreciation and award efforts throughout the state.

### **PROGRAM EXPANSION AND THE EFFECT OF FUNDING MECHANISMS**

A federal interagency program independent of the statewide program was contractually established in Clark County, based upon the same principals developed in the Arizona handbook and being practiced in California. The Interagency Cultural Site Stewardship Team (ICSST), composed of five federal agency archaeologists and a Site Steward liaison, form a voting council for the program. Working with federal land managers in Clark County and under the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA), the “Outside Las Vegas” group obtained funding, enabling the team to contract a program manager through the Public Lands Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Nevada State Historic Preservation Office 2010). A database of site monitoring information largely separate from that of the SHPO ushered in a new perspective on control of the data, management of cultural resource/archaeological volunteers, and the role of professional archaeologists in the site stewardship program.

## DISCUSSION

The past conditions both the present and the future. The ancestral site adoption program in the California desert was initiated in response to perceived risk from an external source. This idea, focusing the energy and resources of site stewardship on those sites objectively defined as most “at risk,” is an essential component of successful modern site stewardship programs. While both the ancestral and modern programs are volunteer-based efforts, the ancestral roots of site stewardship in the California desert are firmly anchored in the idea that cultural resource professionals are the key to defining which sites are at risk and are best positioned to ensure that site stewardship programs comply with professional ethics, provide meaningful data under the control of professionals, and provide the essential skills for interpreting the flow of monitoring data.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Figure 7. (Top) BLM announces the new volunteer program “Preserve America Stewards” and “Cultural Heritage Stewardship” at <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/Volunteer/stewardship.html>; (Bottom) First California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (CASSP) Initial Training class, here shown with BLM Archaeologist Judyth Reed as instructor. Also assisting with the training were Russ Kaldenberg, Steve Horne, and Beth and Chris Padon. (Photo credit: Beth and Chris Padon)

California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program

# CASSP JANUARY 2002 newsletter

Volume 1, Number 1, January 2002

## CASSP Celebrates Third Anniversary

by Beth and Chris Padon

The California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (CASSP) began in a meeting in January, 1999, at the Sacramento office of Russ Kaldenberg, State Archaeologist for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Everyone had heard stories about more people visiting archaeological sites on public lands and about the damage that resulted, both accidental and deliberate. But there was little hard data. From this meeting, the idea developed to recruit volunteers from the public to regularly visit and monitor archaeological sites on public lands and then report their condition to agency archaeologists.

The Society for California Archaeology (SCA) has the mission and expertise for this type of project. With assistance



*BLM archaeologist Judyth Reed answers a question about local archaeology during lunch break at the volunteer site steward field training near Jawbone Canyon. (Top and bottom photos by Chris Padon.)*



*Figure 8: (Above) First CASSP Newsletter in 2002 celebrating third anniversary of the program. (Below, Right) 2008 CASSP Site Mapping Class in Barstow, with Instructor Steve Horne. (Below, Left) The class of 2010 at Initial Training with program directors Beth and Chris Padon. (Photo credit: the Padons).*