

HOW ARE STEWARDS SELECTED?

Individuals may be nominated or may nominate themselves to the TASN program at any time. Nominations are submitted to the THC's Archeology Division and reviewed with the assistance of a group of advisors. Recommended nominees are then invited to join the TASN.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Would you like to learn more about the TASN program? Do you need help with archeological sites or collections? Contact the THC's Archeology Division by phone (512.463.6096), mail (Archeology Division, Texas Historical Commission, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276), or by email (archeology@thc.texas.gov or marine.archeology@thc.texas.gov) for assistance.



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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TEXAS ARCHEOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

Volunteers Saving the Past



DAN POTTER

One of the many tasks TASN members perform is documenting archeological sites. In the photo above, volunteer steward Teddy Lou Stickney examines Native American pictographs in Central Texas.

In Texas there are as many as a million archeological sites—the traces of at least 12,000 years of human occupation. Our understanding of this period relies mainly on the careful interpretation of material remains left behind by the “First Texans.” Archeological investigation also enables us to clarify important aspects of recent Texas history.

The responsibility for a public archeology program dedicated to understanding, preserving, and interpreting the vast archeological landscape of the state—covering 266,807 square miles and 254 counties—falls largely to the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the state agency for historic preservation. The THC is a relatively small agency, with a small number of staff archeologists. While the staff are dedicated and capable, they need help in tackling this huge job.

AN ALL-VOLUNTEER “ARMY”

The effectiveness of the THC’s public archeology program has benefited greatly from the assistance provided by Texas Archeological Stewardship Network (TASN) members. Founded in 1984, the stewardship network is a group of highly trained and motivated avocational archeologists who work on a volunteer basis. These stewards play a critical role in bringing public archeology to life in their own communities. Each year these women and men devote thousands of hours to a broad range of tasks, such as assisting landowners, recording archeological sites, and giving public talks. Their efforts in preservation, education, and research are an essential part of the THC’s statewide program. The TASN is one of the most innovative and successful programs of its kind in the nation and has served as the model for similar programs in other states.

WHAT CAN STEWARDS DO FOR YOU?

Each steward brings unique talents and strengths to the TASN program. Some stewards involve themselves in a broad range of activities, while others concentrate on one or two areas. Everything they do benefits Texans because they are preserving our archeological heritage. They also can provide one-on-one assistance. If you have an archeological site or collection that could benefit from assessment by a steward, direct your request to the THC’s Archeology Division. The following list highlights the major activities undertaken by stewards.

Recording New Sites. Stewards identify and record new archeological sites and place the data in the state inventory, providing a permanent record of Texas’ past. These records also are helpful to other researchers and are useful in identifying sites that may be threatened by planned development. *Site recording on private property does not affect the landowner’s property rights in any way.*

Monitoring Known Sites. Stewards monitor archeological site preserves, conservation easement sites, State Archeological Landmarks, National Register sites, and sites on public lands that are protected by law. Any observed disturbances or threats of disturbance are reported to the proper authorities. *Sites on private land are monitored only with permission of the landowner.*

Seeking Protective Designations for Important Sites. Stewards work with THC staff archeologists to secure conservation easements and protective designations. These measures enable us to preserve a representative sample of sites that have the greatest potential for yielding significant archeological data. Ask for a copy of our landowner’s brochure (*A Property Owner’s Guide to Archeological Sites*) if you are interested in protection for sites on your property.

Recording Private Collections. Private artifact collections can reveal a wealth of important insights about the prehistory or history of an area if a collector can provide details about the location and circumstances of the discoveries. Stewards document significant private collections and submit the data to the THC so that others can use these records for research. Recording private collections does not threaten ownership of a particular collection. However, stewards can help place a collection in a qualified archeological repository or museum for permanent protection and study. Stewards do not and should not be asked to evaluate monetary value of private collections.

Carrying Out Emergency or “Salvage” Archeology. In some cases, stewards are called upon to undertake emergency recovery of data from sites threatened with imminent destruction. For example, a site that is eroding in a creek bed might qualify for emergency salvage excavation.

Providing Local Programs. Stewards promote awareness of archeology by giving talks to local preservation groups, schools, and civic groups and by assisting regional museums with their archeological exhibits. Stewards also participate in or plan activities for Texas Archeology Month (TAM) held every October. Contact the THC’s Archeology Division to receive information about TAM events.

Assisting in Cultural Resource Surveys. Although most steward assistance is given to the general public, professional archeologists carrying out state or federally mandated cultural resource surveys also call upon stewards to share their knowledge of local archeological resources. This activity helps preserve our regional archeological heritage.



The Red River War Battle Sites Project helped locate and preserve military sites from the 1870s in the Texas Panhandle. The participation of volunteer archeological stewards and private landowners was essential to the success of the project.