Investigations at LA 110299, a Late Dinetah Phase Occupation along U.S. 550, North of Cedar Hill, New Mexico

ABSTRACT

The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD) has initiated a project to widen and improve U.S. Highway 550 between Aztec, New Mexico, and the New Mexico-Colorado border (NMSHTD Project Nos./Control Nos. NH-550-1 (29) 14 CN 3000; NH-550-1 (36) 25, CN 3329; NH-550-1 (37) 27, CN 3696). This undertaking complies with the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended through 1992, and applicable regulations.

The data recovery program at LA 110299 focused on the complete excavation of an ash stain, the recovery of associated artifacts, and the excavation of any additional subsurface features. This work revealed the presence of a small brush structure, two extramural activity areas with associated hearths, and the recovery of 197 lithic artifacts and 183 ceramic fragments. Radiocarbon assays obtained from corn cupules indicated a Dinetah phase occupation. The evidence suggests that this site was a residential camp occupied by a nuclear family group for a short period of time, probably during the summer/early fall. The lithic artifacts indicate a lithic technology that emphasized a combination of bifacial reduction and formal tool manufacture and expedient tool production. This technology suggests that hunting and gathering were important components of the early Navajo subsistence system. The charred macrobotanical remains recovered from the fill of the features also support a reliance on wild plant resources supplemented by maize agriculture.