Abstract

Data recovery efforts along US Highway 64 between Lumberton and its junction with US Highway 84, west of Chama, New Mexico, in Rio Arriba County, were conducted as part of a highway improvement project. A program to mitigate the adverse effects to three archaeological sites was implemented by Four Corners Research for the New Mexico Department of Transportation. Based on the project design, Sites LA 133205 and LA 133206 would receive impacts through road improvements and widening; Site LA 155234 would receive impacts through construction of new roadway and associated features (construction of bar-ditches, drains and culverts, and fences). Although efforts were confined to the existing and newly acquired highway right-of-way, recovery efforts were rewarded with significant data interpretations from sites that yielded few features and possessed small artifact assemblages. The multi-disciplinary approach enabled comparisons to be made of the various data sets, from which interpretations were drawn and conclusions presented. Considerable knowledge has been gleaned from these “low-intensity” and limited-use sites, sometimes represented by brief, multiple occupations. This investigation examines the project data results and evaluates the applicability of the research design. An attempt also has been made to place the project interpretations into a regional context.

Data recovered from Site LA 133205 argues that the site represents a short-term encampment used by highly mobile hunter/gatherer groups during the Late Archaic period. The limited number of features encountered, the small number of items that compose the artifact assemblage, and the narrow range of botanical taxa recovered from macrofloral and pollen samples support the supposition that the site was used for a brief period, perhaps for a single event. The faunal remains indicate that hunting was probably associated with the site occupation; recovered elements suggest the site was located near the kill site.

In consideration of South’s (1977) functional groups of artifacts, the groups represented are domestic group, clothing group, personal group, tool group, and hardware group. The historic artifact assemblage at Site LA 133206 supports an Anglo occupation, lacks items that demonstrate a Hispanic association, and does not support a Native American presence after 1880.

Arguably, two temporal components are represented at Site LA 155234, separated minimally by 1200 to 1400 years. Both components represent short-term, perhaps re-occurring occupations by highly mobile hunter/gatherer groups. The earliest occupation occurred during the Late Archaic/Transitional Formative period, while the later occupation occurred during the Protohistoric/Historic period. Few data were recovered to support intensive use of the site; rather, activities were restricted to tool production/retooling, limited food processing/cooking, and reduced use of thermal features. Neither the faunal nor the paleobotanical record support much diversity of activity. The presence of the Ocate Micaceous pottery indicates a presence at the site of Jicarilla Apache or exchange and interaction with neighboring groups to the Jicarilla. Few economic botanical taxa were recovered from the thermal features, and the faunal remains were too weathered to provide information on their association with the site’s occupation.