

TECHNICAL SERIES
2000 - 4

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



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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.

This report describes the excavation at an early Navajo site, LA 110299, along U.S. 550 north of Cedar Hill, New Mexico. The report is consistent with applicable federal and state standards for cultural resource management.

The site is situated on state land controlled by NMSHTD and appears to be wholly within the expanded right-of-way for the widening and improvement of U.S. 550. This data recovery project was implemented by the Office of Contract Archeology, University of New Mexico under a statewide services contract with the New

Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department.

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.

