

On May 15, 2000, archaeologists with Human Systems Research, Inc. (HSR), began data recovery at four archaeological sites located on the U.S. Highway 54 right-of-way between Tularosa and Carrizozo, New Mexico. Archaeological Sites LA 86735, LA 86736, and LA 86737 are on New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department land acquired from private sources, and Site LA 120,979 is on State Trust land. The data-recovery plan was approved by both the Historic Preservation Division, State of New Mexico, and in the case of Site LA 120,979, the State Land Office. Data recovery at these four sites was conducted to mitigate the adverse effects of federally funded highway construction proposed by the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department. Data-recovery efforts were limited to the existing highway right-of-way, from the highway to the fence lines, or to the width of the legally recognized highway right-of-way.

The data-recovery effort consisted of taking sample surface collections in the highway rights-of-way, systematic augering of the right-of-way to search for subsurface features at Sites LA 86735 and LA 120,979, excavation of trenches and areas scraped by mechanical equipment at Sites LA 86736 and LA 86737, and excavation of units in areas of artifact concentrations or where augering, trenching, or scraping produced evidence of subsurface cultural materials. Archival research and oral history interviews supplement the recovery of historic artifacts.

Site LA 86735 is the remains of the Temporal Station, a railroad siding on the El Paso and Northeastern Railroad. The proposed highway construction will not impact the structural remnant and immediately associated artifact concentrations as these features are outside the highway right-of-way. A grid system was placed on the site and it was surface collected. Fifteen 1-by-1-m excavation units and a series of auger transects were placed in the site. Only limited numbers of artifacts were recovered from the excavation units and all but one of the auger holes, which located an extensive deposit of artifacts dating to the period of occupation. Recovered artifacts, oral history interviews, and archival sources now provide increased insight into the lifeways of the Temporal Station community.

Site LA 120,979 consists of two cinder piles and one slag pile, with associated historic artifacts located between the highway and the right-of-way fence. A grid system was placed on the site and surface diagnostic artifacts were collected. Excavation units were placed in features as well as in areas with no surface artifacts. An auger transect was placed in the site to determine if subsurface deposits were present. No such deposits were found. Data are limited to the observations made on the survey, excavation of the features, and the few artifacts found on the surface. The limited data suggest that the site was created by multiple railroad- and highway-related activities over a period of many years.

Site LA 86736 was an extensive albeit low-density scatter of prehistoric artifacts characterized by a preponderance of Mimbres white ware ceramics. Several small concentrations of artifacts were present in the area between the highway and the fiber-optics line. The survey report suggested that subsurface deposits might exist. A grid system was placed on the site and it was surface collected. Thirty-three excavation units were placed in areas with and without surface artifacts. Seven shallow hearth features with associated Mimbres white ware were found on the east side of the right-of-way and excavated, yielding a suite of seven radiocarbon dates. A partial infant burial was found directly beneath a hearth feature. Eleven trenches excavated by mechanical equipment were systematically placed on both sides of the right-of-way. Two shallow hearths and a metate were located in the trenches. Upon completion of excavation and trenching, large areas of the site were scraped with mechanical equipment. The scraping identified one shallow hearth feature. Sufficient data were recovered to address the issues of chronology, function, seasonality, and regional relationships.

Site LA 86737 is an extensive scatter of prehistoric artifacts and a limited number of historic artifacts associated with a nearby historic homestead foundation. Prehistoric Late Ceramic Period artifacts are scattered within the project area and the historic artifacts extend from the historic structure into the highway right-of-way. A grid system was placed on the site, artifacts were pin flagged, and the site was surface collected. In the process of marking artifacts, it was found that the site extended 280 m further south to the banks on the south side of an arroyo. These

additional materials were included in the data-recovery project. Twenty-seven 1-by-1-m excavation units were placed at various locations on both sides of the right-of-way. Excavations in the northern portion of the site yielded only limited numbers of artifacts and no features from either the historic or prehistoric components. The historic component had been previously disturbed by highway construction and provided little insight to the homestead occupation. Excavations at the newly discovered southern concentration yielded a great number and variety of prehistoric artifacts as well as flecks of charcoal. No features were found. In an attempt to find subsurface features, trenches were systematically placed on both sides of the right-of-way. After excavations and trenching were completed, these areas were scraped with mechanical equipment. No additional features and a limited number of artifacts were located. Charcoal recovered from the stratigraphic profiles yielded a radiocarbon date and limited macrobotanical information. Although the lack of prehistoric and historic features was disappointing, sufficient data were recovered to address research issues of chronology, function, and regional relationships.

Fieldwork was completed on July 19, 2000. This report describes the four archaeological sites, with emphasis on the portions located within the existing highway right-of-way. It further presents methodological detail and the results of data recovery specific to the right-of-way at each of the four sites. Research themes addressed through excavation and laboratory analysis, archival research, and oral-history interviews are chronology, site function, and interregional relationships.