

TECHNICAL SERIES 2015-3



## LA 159879: A LATE ARCHAIC/EARLY AGRICULTURAL PERIOD SITE IN THE MIMBRES BOLSON, NEAR DEMING, LUNA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

Office of Archaeological Studies  Museum of New Mexico  
Archaeology Notes 456



### ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

Between March 21 and April 15, 2011, data recovery efforts were completed at LA 159879, an archaeological site located just north of the city of Deming near the intersection of NM 26 and US 180 and between Milepost 163 and Milepost 164 of US 180, in Luna County, New Mexico. The project was performed by the Department of Cultural Affairs' Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) at the request of Mr. Blake Roxlau and Ms. Janet McVickar of the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), in preparation for highway construction to widen US 180.

Data-recovery efforts were undertaken on 100 percent of the site within the Area of Potential Effect (APE), which extended 38 m east of the right-of-way fence. Specific treatments for archaeological resources followed field methods discussed in a data recovery plan (DRP) developed by DMG Four Corners Research, Inc. (Greenwald et al. 2009). These efforts resulted in the documentation of 25 features, 21 of which were thermal and residential features, and the collection of 2,091 artifacts and samples including diagnostic projectile points. Analytical results suggest that the occupants of this Late Archaic/Early Agricultural-period base camp exploited both wild and domestic plant species growing along the floodplain of the Mimbres River. Evidence for early corn and cotton were found in association with several features at the site including phytoliths, pollen, and carbonized kernel fragments. The most accurate radiocarbon dates for the corn remains are 758-429 cal BC (2 sigma). Cotton pollen was identified beneath a ground stone artifact associated with an ephemeral structure; the most accurate dates recovered for the structure were between 897 and 774 cal BC (2 sigma). This indirect date for cotton is consistent with early cotton dates in southeast Arizona and may currently be the oldest evidence of domesticated cotton in New Mexico.

Based on the data-recovery results, LA 159879 remains recommended as "eligible" for inclusion on the *National Register of Historic Places* (NRHP) under Criterion 'd.' However, since no intact archaeological materials or features remain in the location designated for road modification activities, OAS recommended that the client proceed with its activities within the areas treated during the OAS data recovery program. If future construction activities are expanded to include areas outside the APE, further work at LA 159879 may be necessary.

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MNM Project 41.928 [US 180]  
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