

Aucilla Research Institute Supports Wakulla Springs 2015 Field Campaign By Joe Latvis

Project Objectives:

Principal archaeological investigator and Aucilla Research Institute board chairman Dr. James S. Dunbar along with Co-Principal Investigator, project historian and chair of Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park, Dr. Madeleine Carr designed Wakulla II Project Phase 1 objectives to evaluate two 10-acre parcels lying within the Wakulla River State Park and strategically selected nearby the Wakulla River headspring in Wakulla County FL. One parcel named West of Lodge lies approximately 0.2 km southwest of the headspring and is contiguous with previous excavations where numerous artifact specimens spanning 14,500 years of human activity have been recovered. The second parcel named The Meadow lies approximately 1.3 km downstream along the spring run's south bank. The resultant Phase 1 artifact density counts, material and stylistic characteristics and depths beneath surface terrain recorded at each grid-work excavation would then serve as a statistically georeferenced guide for targeting more-precise and concentrated excavations in future research objectives. The project is a collaborative effort of 501(c)(3) organizations including the Aucilla Research Institute, the Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park and the Panhandle Archaeological Society at Tallahassee (PAST). Professional collaborative support services and local knowledge expertise provided by Wakulla Springs State Park Manager Pete Scalco and his entire team were instrumental in accomplishing project objectives.

Project Surveying Methodology:

Surveying and mapping teams equipped with a total station instrument stakeout program accurately located the coordinates of each grid-point on the mostly-forested ground by referencing them to GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates established at nearby forest clearings. A 20-meter (approx. 65-ft) grid-interval of galvanized steel spikes was then sequentially driven into the ground along with PVC stakes and surveyor flagging-tape to uniquely identify the intersection of each lettered (East-West) row with each numbered (North-South) column designation. Aucilla Research Institute board-member, professional surveyor, engineer and geographer, professor and landmark author of numerous professional surveying publications Dr. George Cole, along with distinguished retired Professional Surveyor and Mapper and homebuilder Tom Watters, directed the grid surveying teams. Archaeological excavation team members Matt Newton and Joe Latvis participated along with the professional surveyors on these challenging stakeouts in forested environments.

Project Excavation Methodology:

Because each 10-acre parcel contained more than 100 grid-points and traditional block-excavation of $\frac{1}{2}$ -m by $\frac{1}{2}$ -m (approx. 1-3/4-ft) test units would far exceed the project's 2-month time schedule and primarily-volunteer excavation-team resources, manual posthole digging techniques were selected by Principal Investigator Dunbar. Previous experience having indicated that artifacts in this area could be encountered as deeply as 1.5 meters (approx. 5 ft) beneath ground contours necessitated posthole diggers with 8-ft (approx. 2-1/2-m) long handles to reach bottom with enough purchase remaining above ground to ergonomically retrieve the sediment from the hole. The handle-

spreading mechanism of these diggers that retains the sediment sample in the cutter head necessitated a linear array of three contiguous postholes be sunk for spread-handle extraction of the deepest cores. Vertical provenience of each grid-point's sediment/artifact depth was controlled by advancing the excavation depth from surface contour in discrete 25-cm (approx. 10-in) increments. Each 25-cm sample was screened in a ¼-inch (approx. 6-mm) hardware cloth rocker box, after which recovered artifacts were sealed in labeled bags and recorded on log sheets documenting all relevant 3-dimensional provenience parameters.



Excavation Crew Party (L to R): Data Recorder, Posthole Excavator, Sediment Screeners/Artifact Retrievers. Photo by Bob Thompson.

Daily supervision of excavation crews was provided by Phil Gerrell and Matt Newton. Daily volunteer excavation crews were organized from the membership ranks of Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park by Madeleine Carr and from Panhandle Archaeological Society at Tallahassee by Cameron Forfar. Their combined contribution of more than sixteen hundred hours' dedicated service to this project proved pivotal to its success. Continuing his longstanding tradition of logistical support to archaeological projects involving public participation, ARI board member Tom Pertierra donated use of

the SEPAS, Inc. (Southeastern Paleoamerican Survey, Inc.) equipment trailer and computerized analysis laboratory, fully-stocked with hand excavation equipment for the duration of this project. Aucilla Research Institute board-member and longstanding supporter of numerous Florida Archaeological Projects, Ed Green provided his excavation tools and decades of archaeological field experience to this project. Wakulla Springs State Park provided onsite billeting at the Administration Building's visiting scientist's quarters for project members hailing from distant home-bases.

Preliminary Findings

Wakulla II Project Phase 1 test excavations produced numerous artifact specimens consistent with the 14,500-year time-span of human activity previously recorded in this area. A brief listing of these current finds includes chert hand tools, a Bolen projectile point, numerous stone tool re-sharpening flakes, a calcined horse tooth fragment, numerous historic and prehistoric pottery shards, the glass of broken bottles, a .62-caliber lead musket ball, and iron nails.



Subset Types of Artifacts Recovered During 2015 Campaign.
Graphic and Photos by James S. Dunbar

Final conclusions regarding these identifications and interpretations await completion of the scientific processes of artifact cleaning, preservation and analysis, currently in progress. Posting updates will follow at this website as the methodological and deliberative pace of scientific investigation and discovery permits