
Archaeology, Business, and the Public

■ JUDY L. BRUNSON

The Salt River Project (SRP), a public power utility based in Phoenix, Arizona, made an important discovery when its employees uncovered a village constructed by the Hohokam people sometime between 350 and 700 A.D. A team of archaeologists uncovered more than artifacts: They also unearthed a thirst for knowledge among several thousand local residents.

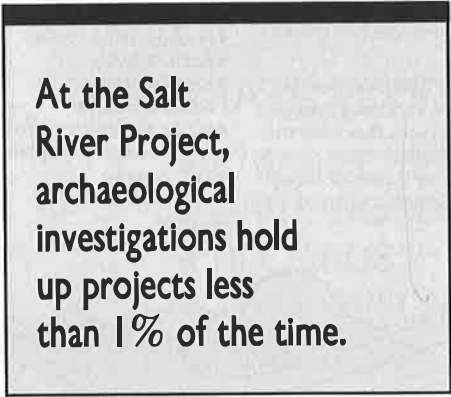
This discovery occurred through the enactment of a cultural resource policy that has helped shape the company's commitment to preserving archaeological and historical resources. SRP and a growing number of utility companies are concerned about preserving cultural resources for environmental reasons and because the remains represent previous human societies from which many present-day groups trace their ancestry.

Federal and Arizona state laws and regulations are designed to protect cultural resources. Yet, SRP's concern for cultural resources goes beyond the requirements through the company's approach to archaeological and historical sites.

SRP developed a cultural resource policy in the 1970s. This policy requires that we complete cultural resource clearances on our own land before construction begins. In addition, when our construction will

impact a known site on private land where no legal requirements will protect it, SRP gets permission from the landowner to complete any necessary archaeological excavation. Construction projects scheduled at a developer's request and located within a high sensitivity area for cultural resources also concern SRP. The utility notifies the developer of the potential for archaeological features and requests approval to complete the necessary collections or excavations to recover the important data.

Fifteen to 20 years ago, many companies perceived archaeology as a problem that could delay construction. To a large degree, this perception still exists. Yet, at SRP, archaeological investigations hold up proj-



At the Salt River Project, archaeological investigations hold up projects less than 1% of the time.

ects probably less than 1% of the time. When investigations do delay construction, problems stem from scheduling an inadequate amount of time for the archaeological work. Through proper planning, archaeological studies usually can be performed in a timely and beneficial manner.

When surveys are required to comply with federal or state regulations, project managers must budget the time that will be required not only to do the study but also

to process the reports through the proper channels. Preplanning and recognition of the resources are important elements of any project.

In the past, many companies have experienced the headaches of constructing around archaeologists' excavating sites along high-power transmission line rights of way. Costs for delays and extra movement of crews and equipment around these areas are quite high. Through better planning and communication, many of the problems and the high cost overruns could have been avoided.

Companies learned an expensive but beneficial lesson. In siting transmission lines now, engineers often change tower locations to avoid archaeological sites. This is possible because archaeologists perform cultural surveys early in the planning process for engineers planning tower locations. In addition, archaeologists now undertake and complete their studies prior to construction. Archaeologists can help engineers to design access roads so that by the time construction begins, no archaeological problems exist.

While cultural resources are important, utility company budgets generally are not set up for preservation. For both these reasons and because of SRP's concern about preserving the past, archaeological surveys increasingly are becoming an important factor in the preplanning phase of purchasing land and scheduling construction projects.

In addition to incorporating cultural resources within the preplanning phase, management is realizing that subsurface cultural resources sometimes will be found where there is no surface evidence.

Again, communication is a key factor in preventing a possible problem. Construction crews may be tempted to ignore subsurface archaeological discovery situations. Although they often perceive archaeological finds as interesting, construction personnel may view the situation as a nuisance and probably cause for a job to be delayed. While company policies may be strict as to reporting and stopping avoidance requirements, it would be unrealistic to argue that all archaeological discoveries are reported. To avoid losing information, archaeologists and construction crews need to reach a compromise without damaging the integrity of the resource.

When utilities undertake land-disturbing activities, the trenches often can boost the identification of archaeological remains. A

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