

Abstract

Test excavations were recently conducted at two archaeological sites along the Green River, located within the confines of Canyonlands National Park. The sites were selected for limited data recovery because they are located in the vicinity of heavily-used river corridor campsites, and further information was needed to ascertain the sites' significance and treatment options. Site 42SA26111 is located adjacent to an established, reservation only, road-accessible White Rim campsite, and 42WN02658 is located at a popular "layover" camping area for river runners traveling the Green River.

Testing at site 42SA26111 confirmed that it was occupied during the Late Formative period. Temporally diagnostic artifacts found during the earlier survey work include two projectile points, ceramic sherds (including Fremont, Mesa Verde and Tusayan wares), and a one-rod coiled sifter basket. A sample from the basket radiocarbon dated to Cal. A.D. 1290-1420, placing its manufacture during the late Pueblo III period or early protohistoric period. The two projectile points were a Puebloan Side-notched, Bear River Style, dating to the Late Formative period and an unknown side-notched point (Irwin 2006). During the current testing project, a Bull Creek projectile point was found in Test Unit 2; this type of point is usually found at sites dating from A.D. 1050 to 1300 (Holmer and Weder 1980). Groundstone recovered from a test unit within a rockshelter was submitted for pollen and starch analysis. This analysis indicated that the occupants used the groundstone to process members of the mustard family, grasses, or grass seed. Auger probes and the excavation of three test units did not indicate that there are buried cultural features. The site was likely used on a regular, intermittent basis as an activity (tool production) and food processing locality and for storage of tools.

Testing at 42WN02658 also indicated it was occupied during the Late Formative period. Evidence of this occupation includes a Cottonwood Triangular projectile point, cultural fill containing charcoal that dated to Cal A.D. 1030 to 1220, and a variety of ceramic sherds (corrugated ware, grayware, and undifferentiated whiteware). The pollen record was dominated by Chenopodium pollen, and indicated that food processing activities involved members of the mustard family, Chenopodiums, and grasses or grass seeds. Recovery of a large quantity of Zea mays pollen suggests that maize was also processed or handled, likely for ceremonial use. Macrobotanical studies suggest that a variety of wood, dominated by cottonwood, appears to have been burned as fuel in the structure. Also present in the record is evidence of saltbush, ash, juniper, probable pine, Douglas fir, serviceberry, and another woody member of the rose family as fuel, leading to the conclusion that residents used locally-available wood sources as well as river driftwood. Several uncharred faunal bone fragments were found reflecting meat processing activities within the single structure located at the site. The results of the testing project indicate that the site was used as a habitation, although the current data is not sufficient to indicate the size of the structure or the number of rooms. Auger probes did not reveal evidence of extramural features (such as roasting pits) or a midden around the feature. It may be that the probes missed any existing features, or that the habitation was used on a short-term basis. The small number of artifacts may also indicate a short term occupation, or may be the result of collecting by residents of a nearby historic cabin, or later by recreationists using the river and camping at this site.