

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES**  
**STATE COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT STANDARDS**

**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**  
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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Historic Resources maintains the State Collection Management Facility for archaeological collections at 2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia. Archaeological collections are unique in that once a site has been excavated it has been destroyed and the collections remain the only tangible resource left for examination. The department's mission is to make the irreplaceable archaeological collections available for research and study, exhibit them for the education of the public, and house all collections in archival materials within a safe environment. Also managed by the department are the documentary materials (field notes, photographs, maps) associated with archaeological sites. In order to provide strong research, education, and exhibit outreach to the public, collections representative of all geographical areas and occupation periods in the state are accepted from archaeologists and private collectors. Collections should not be subdivided and stored in multiple locations, and associated documentation should be stored in the same repository as the artifacts.

## TRANSFERRING COLLECTIONS

All archaeologists working on projects in Virginia may submit their collections to the department for management. Collections shall be accepted through either donations or long-term loan agreements (see Appendices A & B). In order for a collection to be accepted, it must have been collected, excavated, or acquired in a professional and ethical manner. Collections will not be accepted if the objects were taken in violation of local, state, or national laws. All collections that are accepted must be from Virginia or relate directly to the history of Virginia. Although priority is given to scientifically recovered collections of good provenience, material of unusual quality lacking contextual information may be accepted.

Normally collections will not be accepted if the owner has placed restrictions that would prevent, restrict, or guide the research, exhibit, or management of the collection.

Transportation of the collection to the Department is the responsibility of the donor. To avoid loss or damage, hand delivery of collections is preferred. The Department should be notified at least 48 hours prior to delivery. The donor is not released from responsibility of the collection until an inspection of the collection has been performed and the collection management fee is paid in full.

### **Management Fee**

The management fee is \$350 per box (as Hollinger's Standard Record Storage Box of acid free corrugated cardboard 15" x 12.5" x 10") or \$200 for half-sized box (15" x 6" x 10") for artifacts and documentation. This one-time charge is due when the collection is accepted. Fee exemptions may include (1) collections donated by avocationalists, (2)

collections generated as a result of emergency investigations, or (3) research projects not related to mandated compliance projects, and DHR sponsored projects.

## COLLECTION PROCESSING

The following procedures for processing collections for long-term management should be followed in preparing artifact collections and documentation for submission to the Department. These standards are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Curation, 36 CFR 79. These standards should be used to guide the preparation of Virginia collections that are stored elsewhere. Associated documentation should accompany the collections. The disposition of a project's artifacts and records should be decided prior to initiation of fieldwork and in consultation with the Chief Curator.

### **Cleaning**

All artifacts should be cleaned. The only exceptions would be those, which might provide more information through specialized analysis in their unwashed state, e.g., blood residue analysis. Containers with either special artifacts or artifacts that require special care must be clearly marked, and any specific instructions must accompany the artifacts.

### **Conservation**

Artifacts should be preserved. Depending upon the context, degree and type of deterioration, research and exhibit value of the artifact, selected artifacts may need special conservation treatment. A professional conservator should perform artifact condition evaluations and, when appropriate, conduct the recommended conservation treatment. Archaeological artifacts that require consultation with a conservator include: wet material recovered from submerged or waterlogged sites, dry organics recovered from rockshelters, metals, extraordinarily fragile objects, and those composed of two or more materials. The department has a staff conservator who can provide technical assistance.

### **Cataloging**

DHR does not assign excavation unit numbers, lot numbers, or accession numbers to incoming collections. Artifacts should be sorted by provenience, material, and analytic category. Artifacts or batches of similar artifacts should be labeled with individual artifact numbers within their provenience. This number should be included in the artifact description for the catalogue submitted with the collection. The use of individual artifact numbers facilitates retaining sorts and locating specific objects for study or exhibit. Any artifact's occurrence that does not qualify for a site designation should be termed a 'location' (see *Guidelines for Archaeological Investigations in Virginia*) and the

artifact(s) may be given a 'location' number within that specific project. DHR does not assign location numbers.

## **Labeling**

Label all artifacts with the recommended ink (Indian ink or rapidograph), sealant (B-72), and, where contrast is necessary for legibility, white backing (acrylic paint or white B-72). The procedure should consist of a layer of sealant (B-72) followed by the white pigment when necessary, then the label numbers covered by another coat of sealant. (B-67 is the preferred topcoat as it decreases the chance of smearing).

Label artifacts in the most inconspicuous spot with the state site number, a number representing provenience, and an artifact number. Label all piece-plotted objects individually. For small collections (less than 200 objects) label selected artifacts. Polymers such as Bakelite, rubber, and plastics should not be labeled; secure them in labeled containers that also contain a label on archival material.

For larger collections, label all diagnostics. The following artifact types are examples of those that need not be individually labeled: artifacts too small to be labeled, slag, cinders, shellfish, non-human bone, fire cracked rock, flakes, window glass, nails, brick, mortar, and coal. These items can be grouped by material type within a provenience. These grouped or batched artifacts receive one artifact number. With other batched artifacts, label one artifact from the group with the site number, provenience and artifact number and place it in a plastic bag with the rest. The bag should be labeled on the exterior and also contain a Mylar, Tyvek, or acid free paper or card stock label with the same information.

## **Samples**

Large quantities of brick rubble, window glass, shell, etc. will not be accepted for curation. In general terms a statistically valid sample (ca. 100) of any particular shell species is needed from each component of a site. Selective sampling of other materials is recommended.

It is preferred that soil samples be processed before being submitted. Unprocessed (raw) soil samples may be submitted for curation only in consultation with Collections Section staff. Unprocessed samples, retained for back-up analyses, may require fumigation or freeze-drying.

All large and medium fractions of water-screened material should be sorted prior to submission. If the large quantity of fine fraction material makes complete sorting difficult/impractical/impossible, a statistical sample from various units of excavation should be sorted. Flotation samples should be placed in appropriate sealed containers according to fraction size and accurately labeled, e.g. 'flotation sample, light fraction, *context details*' or 'water screened sample, heavy fraction, *context details*'.

Radiocarbon samples and soil samples for chemical, phytolith and pollen analysis should be processed whenever possible before submitting collection for curation. Small special samples of charred material and soil that are submitted for long-term management and possible future analysis or testing should be clearly marked and packaged in appropriate sealed containers.

### **Selective Discard**

Certain types of bulk artifacts and artifacts with limited context or no context have questionable long-term research and exhibit value and thus may not warrant permanent management with the collection. These materials may include: fire-cracked rock, flakes, brick fragments, mortar, slag, coal, shell, artifacts designated as 'locations,' and 20<sup>th</sup> /21<sup>st</sup> century debris, especially artifacts less than 50 years old. In certain types of field recovery approaches, like controlled surface collecting, many of these items may be noted, counted, weighed, and left in the field. Recovered items that are slated for selective discard must be cataloged and analyzed. The collection's catalog must clearly identify and quantify the discarded materials. A project's principal investigator, in consultation with the Chief Curator, should employ the best professional judgment to decide what to discard. Factors to consider in reaching the decision to selectively discard materials include: archaeological context, the redundancy of the materials, and the item's research, education, or exhibit potential.

### **Packaging**

Place all artifacts in polyethylene, zip-lock plastic bags at least 2 ml thick. Bags 10" x 10" or larger must be at least 4 ml thick. Artifacts must be grouped and bagged by provenience, and separated by material type within the provenience. Sharpie pens should be used to label plastic bags. Oversized artifacts must be securely tagged with appropriate information.

Use archivally stable and acid-free materials for those items requiring special packaging.

If the artifact collection is large, key artifact classes (example: projectile points, personal items, glass ware, minimum vessels counts, etc.), including illustrated artifacts, may be pulled from the provenience material and bagged/boxed separately. If small collections of artifacts from different sites/projects are packed together in a box, these should be grouped by county; if they are from multiple counties, arrange them alphabetically by county.

### **Boxes**

Place all artifact bags in acid free boxes (either standard 15" x 12.5" x 10" or half-sized 15" x 12.5" x 5" Hollinger corrugated cardboard) organized by catalog number for submission to the Department. Interior acid-free cardboard boxes may be used as containers and dividers for separate site collections or provenience. Material must be organized by provenience and/or appropriately grouped by material and packed with

respect to weight and fragility. No box should weigh more than forty pounds. Label all artifact boxes with site number, provenience, project name, project start date, and research institution, contractor, or individual.

## DOCUMENTATION

### **Ownership**

Ownership of the collection to be deposited with DHR must be clear. Artifacts that are removed from private lands in connection with a federal or non-federal action are generally the property of the landowner. Field records and photographs generated as a result of a federal action are the property of the federal government, regardless of the location of the archeological site. For donated or for long-term management, a copy of the ownership agreement or transfer letter must accompany the collection.

### **Field Record**

Prepare one stable copy of all original field archaeology documentation on acid free paper. Originals on acid free paper are acceptable. These should be organized and clearly labeled and submitted with the collection for management. For long-term storage large-sized maps, drawings, and charts will be placed by the department in flat acid-free files. Do not include material that is not directly pertinent to the field project, such as personnel and budget records, general research and report preparation notes and xeroxes, and rough drafts. Submit one copy of the final report.

### **Artifact Catalog**

Submit a hard copy catalogue of all artifacts that includes the name of the organization, project name, start date, site number, provenience, and artifact number.

### **Treatment Statements**

A statement indicating which objects received conservation treatment and a copy of the treatment record must accompany the collection. If conservation has not been completed, provide a list of those objects needing treatment. In order to maintain a stable, long-term storage repository, unstable materials that have not been conserved may be refused.

### **Photographs**

Submit all slides (Kodachrome is preferred) and/or black and white negatives, and contact sheets in archival material. Label the archival set of slides and prints with at least the state site number and provenience or subject. Prepare a catalogue of all photographic documentation with an explanation of the labeling information. Digital images, if submitted, should be in the form of uncompressed .TIF files. Film images are preferred, but, if digital images are submitted instead of film images, a hard copy of the digital

images at least 5" x 7" and resolution 300 dpi or better on archival paper must accompany the digital files.

### **Digital Records**

Submission of the artifact catalog, final report, scanned field records, and digital images on computer disks and CDs in addition to hard copy on acid free paper and photographic archives is requested but not required.

### **Labeling**

As indicated throughout this document, accurate, informative labels are required for individual specimens, containers, inventory forms, photographs, etc. The labels should include, where appropriate: site number, provenience, project name, project start date, and research organization, contractor, or individual.

## **HUMAN REMAINS**

In general, the Department of Historic Resources does not encourage the excavation of human remains, unless natural or human forces imminently threaten those remains. Procedures for the treatment of human remains and associated grave goods may vary depending on their state of preservation and the anticipated final disposition of the remains and the wishes of descendants or culturally affiliated groups. Treatment procedures, management or reburial must be established prior to initiating any excavation of human remains (see Permits Governing the Archaeological Removal of Human Remains). All burials deserve respectful treatment transcending even the care afforded to any other class of archaeological materials. Due to the deep cultural and emotional significance of human remains, the Department does not encourage the long-term management of human remains. Should temporary care be necessary prior to repatriation or reburial, the Department will provide protective storage. The Department may accept human skeletal remains, or samples thereof, for secure and long-term management only after consultation with lineal descendants or culturally affiliated groups. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

## **USE OF COLLECTIONS**

The Department of Historic Resources encourages the use of its collections for both research and interpretation by museums, universities and other qualified individuals and institutions. Collections may be used either at the department or through a transfer agreement depending on the needs of the individual or institution, and the condition of the collection.



The Chief Curator shall be contacted to make an appointment to view materials from any collection. For the study of larger collections, arrangements can be made for limited use of departmental lab space. The integrity of the data represented by these collections must be respected. No alteration of labeling information on or with the artifacts will be permitted. No resorting or redistribution of artifacts, or the physical alteration of the artifacts within these collections will be allowed, unless authorized by the Chief Curator.

The borrower must secure permission from the department to photograph the artifacts for educational, publicity purposes, or for reproduction in any exhibit catalog or professional report. Special permission must be granted for reproduction of such artifacts in any media for purposes of sale. All displayed or reproduced artifacts must be credited to Virginia's Department of Historic Resources. A copy of any publications resulting from use of the collections should be deposited with DHR's Archives Section.

The department reserves the right to deny requests for use based on bona fide reasons deemed to be in the best interest of the collections and/or the Commonwealth of Virginia.

## LOANS

The Department of Historic Resources shall accept and examine all requests for loan of the collection(s). Qualified institutions and individuals shall submit their requests to the Chief Curator. The request shall specify the purpose, duration, location, and security precautions available for the loan. The Chief Curator may visit the site and review the security elements (see Agreement for Outgoing Transfers, Appendix C).

The department reserves the right to review any plans for exhibition and interpretation of loaned artifacts and to refuse approval of those plans which in the estimation of the Department would result in improper or inaccurate exhibition or interpretation of these artifacts.

## DISPOSITION

Selective removal of material from the state's archaeological collection may be appropriate. As stated earlier, certain types of redundant material with limited context have questionable long-term research and exhibit value and may be removed from the permanent collection. These materials may be removed from the state's archaeological collection under the supervision of the Chief Curator in consultation with the collections review committee and, whenever possible, with the principal investigator. Careful documentation of all dispositions should be maintained along with the original records pertaining to the objects being removed from the collection.

The options for disposal of archaeological objects\* include, in order of preference:

- transfer through donation or exchange to another repository for research or educational use.

- repatriation.
- physical destruction.
- return to rightful owner, e.g. in cases where donor was not the legal owner.
- public auction (seldom appropriate for archaeological objects recovered in CRM or research context).

*\*adapted from Sullivan and Childs 2003. Curating Archaeological Collections. AltaMira Press.*

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the Collections staff of the Department of Historic Resources  
2801 Kensington Ave.  
Richmond, VA 23221  
phone (804) 367-2323      FAX (804) 367-2972

Dr. Dee DeRoche, Chief Curator, (804) 482-6441  
Dr. Caitlin O'Grady, Archaeological Materials Conservator, (804) 482-6442

Appendix A

COLLECTIONS DONATION AGREEMENT

Name of Donor \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Collection \_\_\_\_\_ Site No. \_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby donate the collection named above to the Department of Historic Resources to become its permanent property. The collection will be administered in accordance with the DHR's established policies. The DHR has title free and clear to process and preserve the collection and to use the donation for research and education on an unrestricted basis.

I certify that this collection was ethically or legally obtained, and I hereby indemnify and hold the DHR harmless from any liability concerning the procurement of this collection from its original location.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Donor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title/Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Curator, DHR

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix B

AGREEMENT FOR INCOMING LOANS

Lender's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Loan \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Loan: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Site No. \_\_\_\_\_

Materials Loaned \_\_\_\_\_ See attached list.

Permission to process the materials for analysis

Processing may involve washing, numbering, mending, and/or conserving and will follow DHR Laboratory Procedures. Granted (yes or no): \_\_\_\_\_

Conditions Governing Loan

1. The Department of Historic Resources (DHR) will not alter or change the condition of the artifacts in any way, except with permission from the legal owner as granted above.
2. The DHR may utilize, photograph, reproduce, or loan the artifacts for any educational, cultural, or research projects. The DHR maintains the right to publish the findings of these projects.
3. The artifacts are loaned for the time specified on this form and will not be returned until said period is completed or upon 30 days notice.
4. The DHR shall, during the time the artifacts are in its possession or control, take all reasonable precautions to protect the artifacts from destruction by fire, or other casualty and disappearance by theft. The DHR shall have no financial responsibility nor shall the DHR have any obligation to insure the artifacts against damage, destruction or disappearance.

I certify that this collection was ethically or legally obtained, and I hereby indemnify and hold the DHR harmless from any liability concerning the procurement of this collection from its original location.

Person Authorizing Loan \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

State Archaeologist, DHR \_\_\_\_\_

Chief Curator, DHR \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### AGREEMENT FOR OUTGOING TRANSFERS

The following artifacts from the Department of Historic Resources collections are transferred to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

For the purpose of: \_\_\_\_\_

From the date of: \_\_\_\_\_ until: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of objects: \_\_\_\_\_ See attached listing for description.

#### **Conditions Governing Transfer**

1. Materials in the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) collections belong to the Commonwealth of Virginia or are maintained by the DHR through long term loan agreements with the owner and are available to qualified institutions for the purpose of exhibit or study. It is understood that these materials will be used in the best interest of the commonwealth; therefore, the DHR reserves the right to determine when a transfer of artifacts is warranted. Arrangements can also be made to study the collections at the DHR office in Richmond, Virginia.
2. The DHR reserves the right to review any plans for exhibition and interpretation of transferred artifacts and to refuse approval of those plans which in the estimation of the DHR would result in improper or inaccurate exhibition or interpretation of these artifacts.
3. The length of the transfer period will be determined by the Chief Curator after consideration of the recipient's interest and purpose. Transfers made by the DHR for period of three months or more are subject to recall by the DHR for its own purposes on notice of thirty days to the recipient.
4. The DHR will bill the recipient for all charges in connection with shipping or special packing incurred as a result of making this transfer. The transferred material shall be insured by the borrower at the value given against all risks for the full period of the transfer, including time in transit. The recipient must provide an indemnity agreement or insurance for insurable materials prior to the transfer. Damages, whether in transit or on the recipient's premises, shall be reported to the DHR immediately, regardless of who may be responsible. Should damage occur during transit, notify the carrier at once. Save all packing materials until the carrier or his agent has had the opportunity to inspect them. No action is to be undertaken to correct the damage without the DHR being notified and approving such actions.

5. It is understood that artifacts covered by this agreement shall remain in the condition in which they are received. They shall not be cleaned, repaired, retouched, or altered in any way whatever except with written permission by the DHR. Technical examination, particularly that which alters or destroys the artifact, must be specially approved by the DHR.
6. The recipient must secure permission from the DHR to photograph the artifacts covered by this receipt for record, educational, and publicity purposes, or for reproduction in an exhibit catalog or professional report. Special permission must be granted for reproduction of such artifacts in any media for purposes of sale. All displayed or reproduced artifacts must be credited to the DHR including any special wording as directed.
7. The DHR requires that certain conditions be met when collections are transferred for study and analysis:
  - a. If artifacts must be altered (i.e. mended or labeled) in order for analysis of the material to proceed, the recipient must use methods approved by the DHR. It is of utmost importance that such alterations be reversible. The DHR must approve the use of any catalog system applied to the collections.
  - b. When analysis of the transferred material is complete, the DHR must receive for its files, records documenting the research (including a description of methodology employed, data produced, and interpretations). If illustrations (i.e. photographs or drawings of transferred artifacts are made to accompany a report, the DHR require that the illustrated artifacts be indicated as such and maintained separately in the collection by figure or plate number so that these artifacts may be integrated into the DHR Study Collection.
  - c. The transfer of materials does not include permission to publish findings, analyses, or any written study that may result from examinations of the said material. Separate written application to publish must be made to the State Archaeologist specifying the nature of the intended publication. In any subsequent written report the source of the research material must be acknowledged.
8. Upon completion of the transfer period, the borrower shall return the materials packed in the same manner as received (i.e. with the same cases, packages, pads, wrappings, and other furnishings which ensure the organization and protection of the materials). Any changes must be specifically authorized in advance. The material shall be returned via DHR approved transportation. All costs for transportation connected with the transfer will be paid by the borrower unless other arrangements are made.

Receipt of the materials summarized above and described in the attached listing, all in good condition, is hereby acknowledged, and the conditions governing the transfer are hereby accepted.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Recipient's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title/Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Curator, DHR

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date