



Submission Guidelines for State-Owned Archaeological Collections

(Revised July 13, 2022)

These guidelines are offered by the Office of the State Archaeologist (OSAC) to strengthen the statewide curation network. They list standard best practices for collections submitted to Colorado repositories under the authority of a State permit. While these guidelines apply to archaeological materials, they may also broadly apply to paleontological collections as well. Please be aware that individual State repositories may have more stringent requirements that will supersede those listed below.

Organization and Container Storage Standards

All archaeological and paleontological collections submitted must reference the official State of Colorado Smithsonian Trinomial Site Number. It is also assumed—with rare exceptions—that material collections to be housed have already been analyzed, and therefore artifact cleaning or fossil preparation, conservation, and inventorying have been completed. While specific guidelines are formulated by each repository, at a minimum each depositor should ensure the following common best practices.

1. Material collections must be accompanied by all documenting records (held-in-trust collection inventory form or substitute inventory “catalog”, a copy of the official receipt for deposit form, field notes, site forms, photos, maps, reports, formal deeds of gift, and other contracts or agreements preferably printed on acid-free archival paper). Photographic records (i.e., slides, negatives, prints) should be enclosed in acid-free polyethylene holders or sleeves. An explanation of the indexing method used to organize the boxed materials should also be provided. In addition to the secure hardcopies, documentation in digital format may also be submitted to the repository if they have the means to store these data, as well as an established policy for secure data archiving and migration. If the facility lacks these means then all the miscellaneous digital (non-required reporting) data should be submitted to OSAC.
2. All materials should be cleaned and preserved using appropriate reversible, nondestructive techniques. Documentation should include a record of any applied techniques performed on any artifact or fossil. Justification and repository approval should be provided for retaining any soil matrix adhering to any artifact for future analysis.
3. Specimens needing ongoing conservation should be separated and documented. Exceptional specimens should be noted. If ongoing conservation needs are anticipated, a plan should be drafted to address their long term conservation requirements.
4. All specimens or collections should be labeled or bar-coded individually in accordance with the cataloguing, and labeling systems of the repository. Since the State holds title interest in the items being deposited, our office should be consulted to determine labeling standards if the repository has not adopted formal standards for cataloguing and labeling.
5. Typically specimens should be individually labeled (with a reversible base coat and indelible stamp, India ink, bar-coded, etc.) with a site designation and field provenience. If specimens are too small to be numbered individually and/or for large groups of similar specimens are from the same provenience, then they may be put together in labeled, appropriately sized acid-free containers.

6. Acid-free fabric or acid-free paper tags should be appropriately affixed to perishable or fragile specimens that are not to be directly marked upon.
7. All artifact bagging must be done with archival quality plastic, rather than paper bags.
8. All boxed containers housing bagged materials must be stable and sturdy, in acid-free boxes and should fit the size/shape requirements of the collection. In our experience storage boxes are typically no larger than one cubic foot, but there will necessarily be exceptions.
9. Larger containers, such as acid-free storage boxes, should be labeled with permanent markers/ India ink or appropriately affixed printed labels on their exterior surfaces. Labels in or on containers should provide the following information: site designation, project name and date, provenience data, analytical group, and number of artifacts or specimen.
10. Following any artifact study, analytical categories (flaked lithic materials, groundstone, etc.) should be maintained but not disassembled from field provenience organization for housing the collection. For instance obsidian samples removed for specialized sourcing must be returned to their field provenience bag after the analysis has been completed.
11. A held-in-trust collection inventory list should accompany each collection. This inventory or “catalog” must accurately reflect the quantity of the material and the analysis and packaging order. Analytical group designations on inventories should correspond to those used in the final report and on packaging labels. This list should also be made available in an electronic format (such as a standard MS Excel spreadsheet) that is provided to both the repository and OSAC as part of an issued State Permit’s annual and final reporting requirements. Artifact/specimen quantities for annual and final reports should corroborate. Please refer to our office’s official receipt for deposit form and its attached inventory sheet example for minimum reporting categories.
12. The quantity of bulk samples (e.g., matrix, soil, burned rock) or redundant non-diagnostic materials to be curated should be discussed and agreed to by the repository prior to any acceptance (please see *The Guidelines for the Disposition of Non-Curated State Collections From a Research Lab or a Museum/Repository* for further guidance). The determination of acceptance should give comprehensive consideration to the potential of artifacts or specimens for future research and to the limited space for housing in most repositories.

Ownership Documentation

Private collections deposited at a State-Approved repository must be accompanied by a signed Deed of Gift or a similar document from the private landowner. The signed and dated document must indicate the owner’s name, legal address, other contact information, and indicate that the collection being donated is unrestricted and irrevocable. Note that private landowners or entities must negotiate directly with each repository for these agreements unless either through contract or assignment a consultant assumes the role of legal agent for the private owner. If the repository is a part of a subdivision of State government (City, County, local, district) and private ownership of that item(s) has been transferred to a non-Federal government entity then the State holds a title interest in that specimen/artifact. Unless requested by the State-Approved repository, permitted researchers collecting from non-Federal public lands do not need to provide ownership documentation. However it is the responsibility of the permitted researcher depositing collections to ensure the repository of the accurate ownership status of all specimens or artifacts deposited for curation.

(These guidelines will be subject to review by OSAC at least every five years)