



Archaeological Services

Chrysalis offers a full range of archaeological services including all phases of regulatory required work: surveys, excavation and forensic services

Cultural Resources Management (CRM) takes many forms, requiring a range of research services to investigate property or region's historic character and recommend preservation techniques. Government agencies review findings and recommendations based on their conformation to local, state, and federal law guiding historic preservation. Each project presents unique challenges, and Chrysalis develops a research plan tailored to every client's specific needs.

The research process for historic properties generally conforms to a general framework of investigation phases, described below. Not every project requires that all phases be undertaken; the information below is intended as a guide for understanding the basic processes involved in Cultural Resource Management.

Initial Environmental Review

In order to determine if the CRM process is necessary, applicants provide initial information to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) or the appropriate local agency (such as the City of New York - Landmarks Preservation Commission). This information generally includes the initial proposed action. The regulatory agency reviews this information and makes a determination on the potential effect of the proposed project, thus initiating the CRM process.

Phase IA Documentary Study/Cultural Resource Assessment

If the state SHPO or the appropriate local agency determines construction may impact buried historic structures or other historically significant cultural resources; if the project area is listed on the City, State, or National Register of Historic Places; or if the property falls within a City, State, or National Historic District area, the agency requires a Phase IA Documentary Study be undertaken. This limited study incorporates regional historical and site-specific information with the analysis of historic maps into a single report. The report makes recommendations regarding the potential that any significant buried historic remains may be uncovered or impacted during the proposed project.

Once the regulatory agency makes the initial determination that a Phase IA is required, the coordination is minimal. The CRM firm will produce the required Phase IA Report, which the contractor will approve prior to sending to the regulatory agency for formal approval.



If the report determines that there is no significant risk to the historic material, the cultural resource process ends at this stage.

If the report determines that there may be some significant historic material at risk within the project area, the next phase begins.

Phase IB Field Testing

Phase IB testing involves small-scale physical excavation to test the site's potential for harboring buried historic material. The CRM firm deploys a small team to excavate a limited number of Standardized Test Pits (STPs) and/or Units by hand, although the assistance of mechanical equipment may be required depending on the ground surface. This is done to determine if the materials remaining below ground are culturally significant beyond what the written record provides. Cultural materials may include architectural remnants, prehistoric and historic era artifacts, or human remains.

Prior to the commencement of Phase IB field testing, the contractor and regulatory agency review and approve a proposed testing protocol/plan of action developed by the CRM firm based on the results of the Phase IA and the contractor's proposed project plan. Only then will physical testing begin.

Once fieldwork is completed, time is required for laboratory analysis of the materials recovered. A general rule is that every one week spent in the field at least two weeks are required for laboratory work. During this process, artifacts are washed, analyzed, and recorded in a digital database. This information is then synthesized into the final Phase IB report, which must meet the approval of the local SHPO or government historic agency.

If the recovered materials are determined not to be significant, the cultural resource process ends at this stage.

If the recovered materials are determined to be significant, the next phase begins.

Depending upon the site history, monitoring by a professional archaeologist can, at times, occur in lieu of field testing. Monitoring requires that the archaeologist be in site during excavation portions of the construction project to ensure there is no disturbance to significant cultural resources. If the archaeologist determines there to be significant resources being impacted during the excavation, he or she may temporarily halt the excavation until a further determination of the nature of uncovered resources can be made.



Phase II Field Testing

Phase II testing employs wider excavation testing through a larger number of both STPs and excavation units. This is to better determine the extent of and nature of any buried culturally significant archaeological features.

Prior to the commencement of Phase II field testing, the contractor and regulatory agency review and approve a proposed testing protocol/plan of action developed by the CRM firm based on the results of the Phase IB and the contractor's proposed project. Only then will physical testing begin.

Once fieldwork is completed, time is required for laboratory analysis of the materials recovered. A general rule is that for every one week spent in the field, at least two weeks are required for laboratory work. During this process, artifacts are washed, analyzed, and recorded in a digital database. This information is then synthesized into the final Phase II Report, which must meet the approval of the local SHPO or government historic agency.

If the recovered materials are determined not to be significant, the cultural resource process ends at this stage.

If the recovered materials are determined to be significant, the next phase begins.

Phase III Mitigation

A Phase III Mitigation is a full archaeological excavation of the project area. Phase III work occurs only when all the other steps indicate that a major archaeologically significant site remains underneath the project area. Sites that proceed to a Phase III are often considered National Register eligible.

If a project proceeds to this phase, the site owners, the contractors, and the local SHPO or governing agency generally enact a Memorandum of Understanding and/or Agreement (MOU/MOA). This document outlines what type of work will be done, why, how, and the projected outcome. In addition, prior to the commencement of field excavation, the contractor and regulatory agency review and approve a proposed excavation plan of action developed by the CRM firm based on the results of the Phase IB and/or II and the contractor's proposed project plan. Only then will physical testing begin.

Laboratory work required will depend on the amount of materials recovered from the site. The final Phase III Mitigation Report cannot be approved by the local SHPO or governing agency without first having completed the laboratory analysis and any additional historic research that may be required.