

FRIENDS OF SIERRA ROCK ART

*** DOCUMENTING CHANGES AT YOUR PETROGLYPH SITE: HOW AND WHAT TO OBSERVE ***

v10/20

Taking detailed photos of panels and features, and existing graffiti, can be very helpful in observing and documenting changes in the future. The Nevada State Stewardship Program Coordinator suggests re-doing this every two years. Before a visit, carefully study the site record and previous monitoring forms.

A monitoring visit involves observing, and noting what you observe, at a rock art site. What is seen may be a change caused by natural processes and/or by human interaction. And importantly, an observation may be that a site has NOT changed; the fact that it is the same is also very important to record.

1. What do you see? Observe carefully:

A. Natural Changes: Look for change/no change at the site and note what you see.

Natural changes include:

1. Exfoliation (flaking/peeling of stone, particularly granite) from heat/freezing over the seasons. The process is usually continuous.
2. Movement of significant features (loose rocks/boulders/fallen tree limbs that have moved or changed over the seasons. Has a significant tree died/blown over? etc.
3. Lichen grows in many of these areas and continues to spread over time, sometimes covering petroglyphs.

An observation of no change might be applied to a particular area of the site that is of special concern.

B. Human Interaction: Look for change/no change at the site and note what you see.

Human Interactions include:

1. Defacing of a particular glyph by scraping/scratching/painting, which results in adding to, obliterating, or modifying it.
2. Removal of a glyph by stone cutting or chiseling.
3. Adding to the site by making new marks: names, smiley faces, suns, etc.
4. Damage caused by pressure or heat from actions such as driving over a site, building campfires, etc.
5. Other interactions caused by touching such as doing rubbing, using chalk or chemicals, etc.

2. What to do:

A. Natural changes:

Document change in writing and with photographs.

B. Human Interaction:

Observe carefully and look for any objects used to make the change (paint, spray can, nail, etc.). Also look for information related to who might have done this work: tire tracks, etc. Play CSI and look over the site carefully before you walk around and undertake your own activity.

Is there anyone else around at the time you find a human disturbance? If so, photograph any vehicles, license plates and/or people from a distance. Do not identify your activity and do NOT confront any person you may encounter.

3. How to record what you observe:

A. Writing and making notes

On your field copy of the site record note the exact location and type of activity. Written descriptions are very helpful. This information can be transferred to your monitoring report.

- B. Photographing (turn off the camera's GPS so no location information is imbedded in photos)
In photographing a damaged site do a landscape shot that provides context, a mid-range shot showing the panel or surrounding features, and a close up of the damage. In close up shots, be sure to add something that provides scale, a small ruler, a coin, etc.

We often arrive when the sun is high in the sky and there are few shadows to delineate petroglyphs. You can enhance the definition of your photo by using some type of shade (small umbrella/large hat are handy) or wetting the feature with water. Do not use any other substance/chemical that may cause an interaction. Do not physically interact with the feature by chalking, taking a rubbing, or otherwise applying pressure.

There is an interesting program you may purchase called D Stretch. It was developed by archeologist Jon Harman. He has a website called D Stretch. The cost is approximately \$20.

It is a software program that may be downloaded as an app to a cell phone or computer. The latter version has a few more features. Both programs provide ways to create more definition which often help you to "see" features that are in flat light. While it works best with pictographs (painted images), it can be useful with some petroglyphs.

C. Sketching

Most site records contain many drawings/sketches. If you can sketch the changes onto your field copy of the site record or another sheet of paper, with an explanation, and then transfer that to your monitoring report, that is most helpful. We all have varying levels of skill and degrees of accuracy at this type of depiction, but try to at least outline what you are seeing.

- D. Take a GPS coordinate or otherwise provide as precise a location as possible. In your monitoring report's photo log, when relevant, add GPS coordinates to photo notations.

4. When to take remedial action: Making your own changes.

- A. Complete all investigation and documentation before undertaking remedial action.

- B. If a concern at a site requires immediate notice to the US Forest Service and/or FSRA, call, text, or email the appropriate Forest Service archeologist or FSRA coordinator.

- C. If there is graffiti or another "addition" to the site, sometimes covering it with dirt or a rock will decrease its visibility and removes its example for others (newly scratched/peck rock especially shows up and gets attention). With a campfire ring, the ashes can be dispersed and the area covered with rocks to discourage future use. A log across a site feature can be removed. Etc. If someone has driven across a site, if possible, position a log or rocks or other such object in a way that discourages others from doing the same. Remove any rock cairns.

- D. If there is lichen or another natural process interfering with glyph, please leave as it is and report it. The Forest Service has its own experts if any action needs to be taken.