

Sacred Sites Research, Inc.
2016 Annual Report

Prepared by Lawrence Loendorf, President, Sacred Sites Research, Inc.

Sacred Sites Research, Inc. (SSR) was incorporated near the end of 2010, so 2016 was our sixth full year of operation and it was a busy one with a combination of volunteer and sponsored projects. These efforts were funded through private contributions and contractual grants and partnerships with cultural resource management firms, state, and federal agencies, as well as, the cooperation of stewards of private, local, state and federal lands. In the process we made some amazing new discoveries that are significant to understanding rock art in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

In June, SSR teamed up with Mike Taylor of CultureWatch to sponsor a workshop on the relationship of Dinwoody rock art to other styles known as Early Hunting and En Toto Pecked rock art. The conference, named “Dinwoody Dissected” was held in Thermopolis, Wyoming where invited participants presented papers on various topics that generated discussion and debate. We also visited regional sites and socialized with local Wyomingites.



The “Dinwoody Dissected” wild bunch. Photograph taken in Sinks Canyon near Lander, Wyoming by William Elder.

Participants included Mike Bies, Julie Francis, Jim Keyser, David Kaiser, Linea Sundstrom, Mike Taylor, Jim Stewart, Lawrence Loendorf, Alice Tratebas, Larry Todd, Danny Walker and David Whitley. Glen Fredlund, Mavis Greer and John Greer, Diane Orr, Marit Bovee as well as Thermopolis locals, Barb Vietti, John Fish, Kevin Skates and Terry Wilson joined in the workshop.



Danny Walker and Mike Bies on the “Dinwoody Dissected” field trip to Sinks Canyon, Photograph by William Elder.

The end product is a publication of the various participants’ papers which is sponsored by CultureWatch and SSR and progressing well with a goal to have it out in the next five to six months.

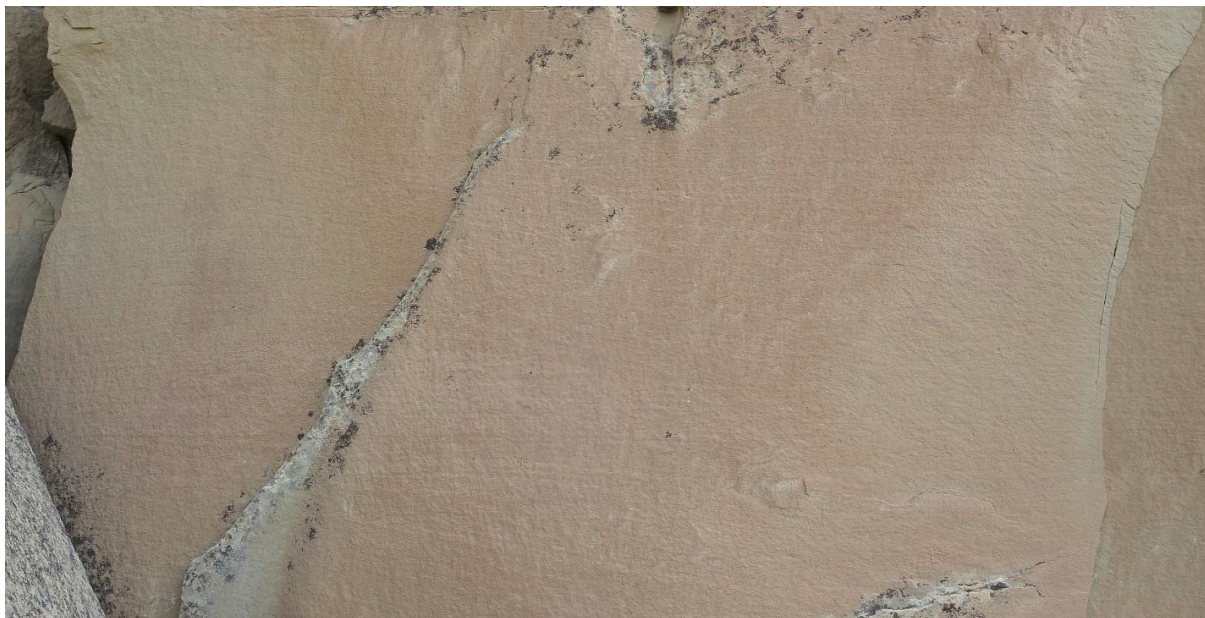
The Dinwoody Dissected workshop was a major effort for the past year, but SSR accomplished equally important research with a project in the Valley of the Shields (VoS).

The VoS project was designed to record faded paintings using DStretch as an aid to making better panel drawings. The goal was to record four or five panels where we recognized from a previous site visit that DStretch would be useful.

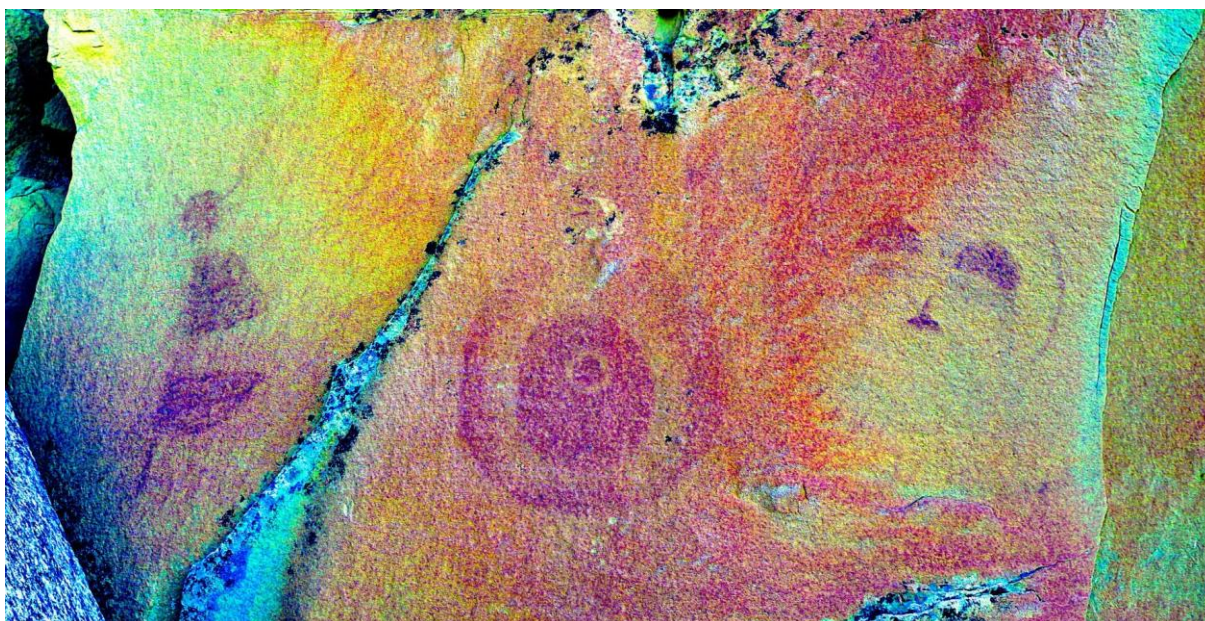
We found new details about every panel we recorded and in some cases the newly found figures add significantly to the explanation of the artist’s intentions. Even more exciting are the totally new panels that we discovered. Usually when DStretch is used, there is an indication of paint on the rock surface that DStretch enhances to make it easier to see. But with some of the discoveries at VoS there is almost no indication of paint on the canyon wall. The paintings would never be found without DStretch.

Another highlight of the project was Mark Willis flying a drone to make a map of the site. In the time we spent at the site we found a half-dozen new panels that added to the ones we already knew about but needed to re-locate. In all there are 30 known locations where rock art is found at VoS.

The VoS project was operated from a base in Red Lodge, Montana. Cobe Chatwood let SSR use the Rendezvous Lodge as a base of operations where most of the crew stayed, cooked and worked on field notes. In addition to Cobe the participants included Jon Harman, Laurie White, Greg White, Dave Kaiser, Terry Moody, Sylvia Diaz, and Mark Willis. Wendy Johnson helped for a day. Mark Baumler, the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer, and Marvin Keller, a retired archaeologist living in Red Lodge were able to visit and assist the project.

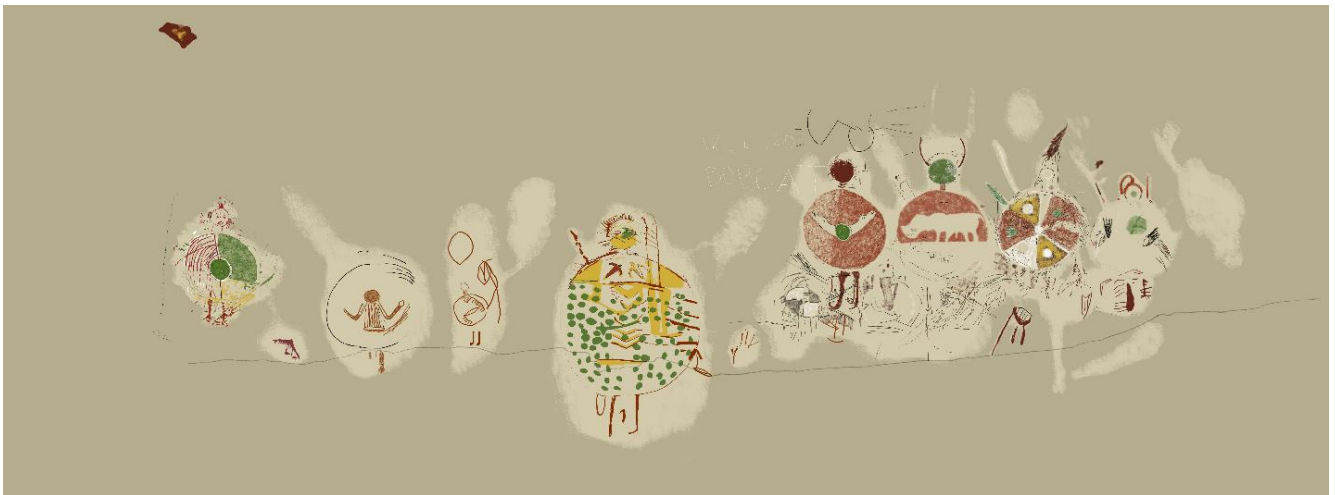


The upper photograph is of the sandstone wall at Valley of the Shields. The lower photograph is a DStretch photograph of that same sandstone wall. Once you have the DStretch image it is possible to find some very faint pigment on the canyon wall, but without that it would be nearly impossible to see the paintings.





Laurie White completing the field drawing at Locality 01-Panel 01 at Valley of the Shields. She uses a DStretch enabled camera to assist with the drawing. Once back at a computer she works on a Wacom tablet with extensive photographs, the field drawing, DStretch software and Photoshop software to produce the final panel drawing.

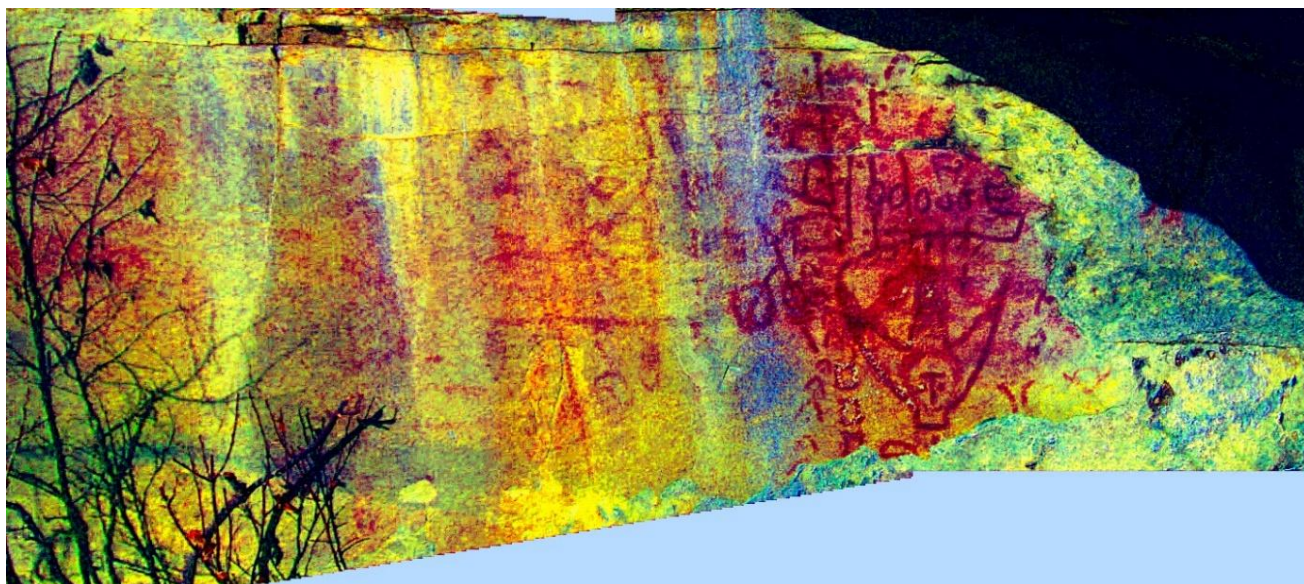


Final panel drawing for Locality 01-Panel 01, Valley of the Shields, Montana. Many colorful shield warrior figures are found side by side on the panel.

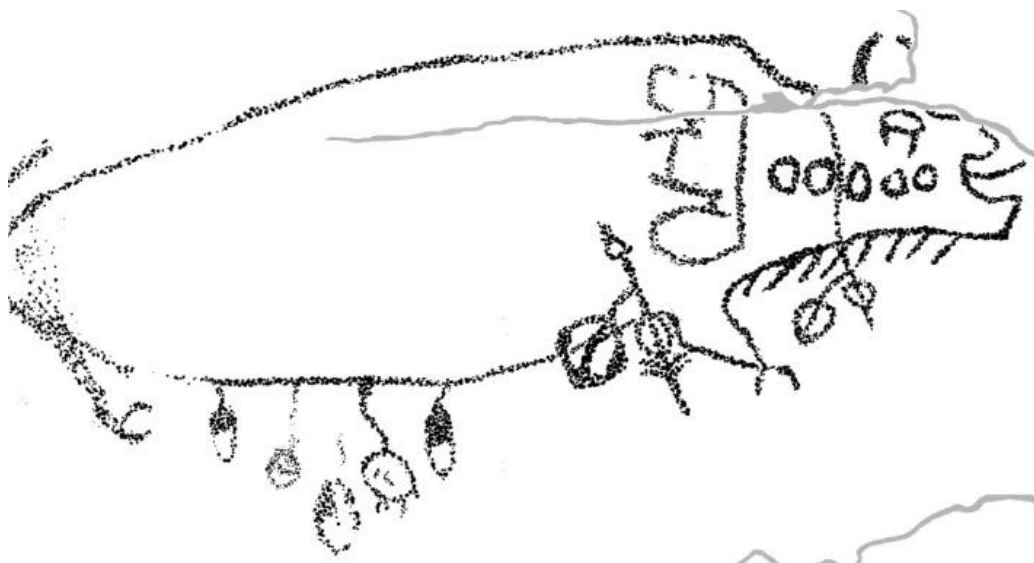
A second project based out of Red Lodge and the comforts of Cobe's Rendezvous Lodge was at the Comanche Creek site to the west of Billings, Montana. The site was originally recorded by Stuart

Conner in the 1960's and his photographs and illustrations from the site have been used by other researchers through the years. SSR plans were to re-locate the site and use DStretch on the faded panels of paintings to learn if any details might be revealed. Cobe Chatwood, Jon Harman, Dave Kaiser and Larry Loendorf constituted the crew who went to Comanche Creek.

The DStretch images at the site showed that the site is considerably more complex than originally believed. One complex panel has five or six layers of paintings on top of one another. The bottom or oldest painting is a large bison painted in red; it has abstract forms arranged in vertical series on top of it. The site also has tobacco plants, some that are quite similar to examples SSR recorded at the Tensleep Alcove in a prior project.



DStretch image of the new panel at Comanche Creek. The large bison is beneath the other figures at the site.



The underlying large buffalo at Comanche Creek Drawing is by Dave Kaiser based on a DStretch study.

A final project staged out of Red Lodge did not involve rock art. Instead, Colleen Winchell, Paula Loendorf, Sylvia Diaz, and Terry Moody worked to catalog artifacts for curation in the Billings Curation Facility. The effort started with a trip to Billings where David Wade, the head curator, worked with the team to teach them the process of sorting, labeling and packaging the artifacts for storage. The artifacts, collected in previous research at regional sites, were stored in the Loendorf garage. Now, thanks to the hard work of the curation crew, they are safely in a facility where others can have access to them.

Sponsored projects undertaken in 2016 by SSR are equally important. Both minor and major projects were completed. The most significant was undertaken in cooperation with Mark Owens and Stell Environmental archaeologists at Fort Carson Military Reservation, Colorado. The project was to record and evaluate seven rock art sites in the Turkey Creek National Register District. An important outcome was writing a context to evaluate the National Register qualifications for rock art sites in the Turkey Creek region. Five of the seven sites recorded are National Register eligible but there are still more sites to evaluate in future projects.

Mark Willis, Laurie White, Terry Moody and Larry Loendorf were the SSR personnel on the project. Mark did some amazing work with his drone, recording a site that is on the top of a rock with sheer walls that fall to the creek on two sides. Named the Precarious Motif site, the drone made recording it much easier.

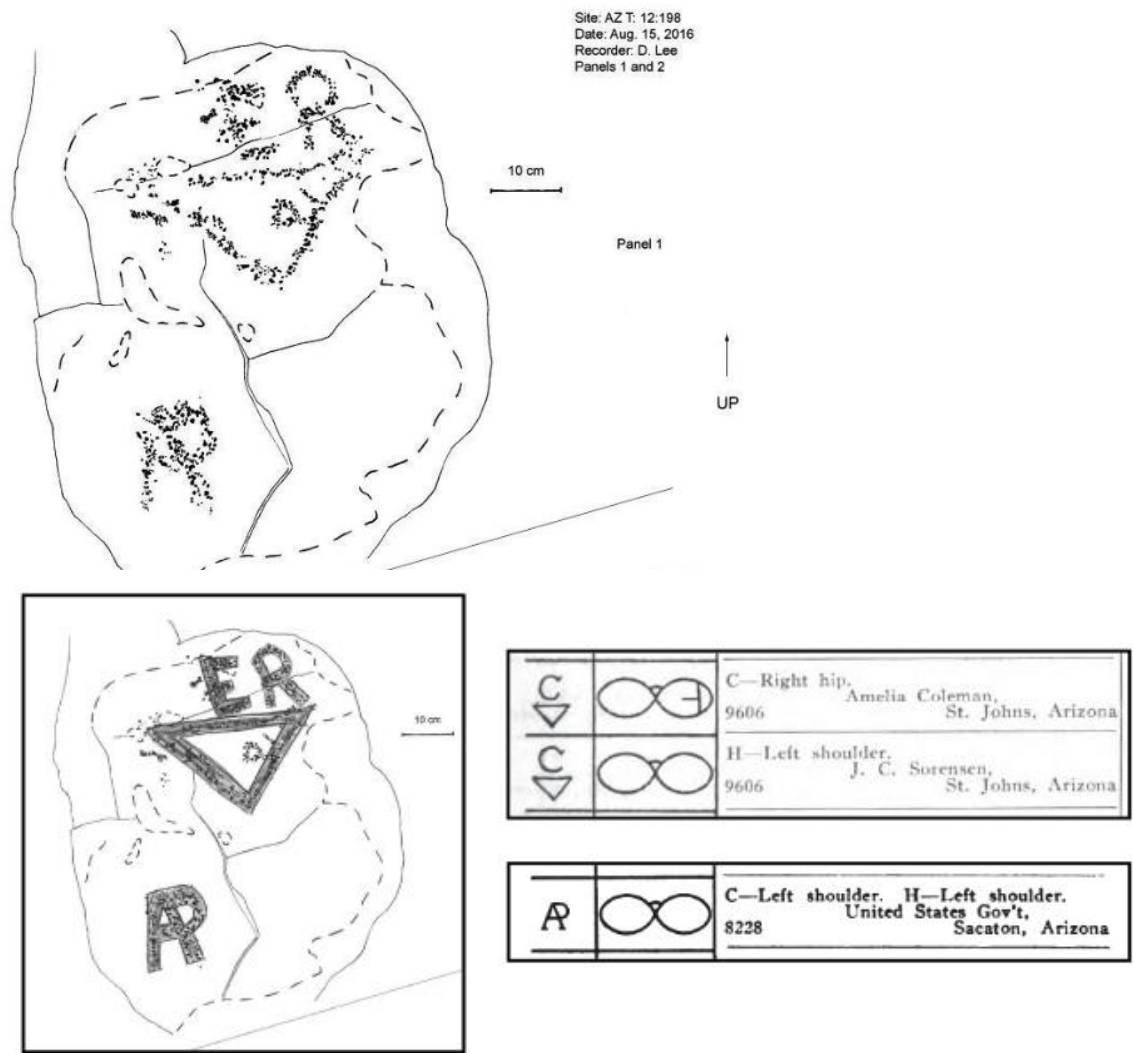


The Precarious Motif petroglyph is on the sloping rock surface where it must have been difficult to make. The UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) photograph is by Mark Willis. The incredible photographs are invaluable when trying to place a site in its setting.

Another project was completed in Phoenix, Arizona at a site near the proposed South Mountain (Loop 202) Freeway and adjacent to the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC). The GRIC Cultural Resource

Management Program secured the services of SSR with the assistance of Southwest Heritage Research to conduct this assessment and offer recommendations to protect the site. Larry Loendorf, Mark Willis, and David Lee worked with a GRIC crew and Andy Darling of Southwest Heritage to record the site. The site contains traditional Hohokam petroglyphs of lizards, anthropomorphs, spiral and concentric circle patterns. An unusual find was the livestock brands that apparently represent the Akimel O’odham tribes. The brand of AP in various configurations is for the Pima Agency or as tribal representatives named it the All People brand.

If the brand can be verified as a symbol of GRIC cattle or sheep herders, it could play a role in a land claim case. The current example is a case in point. The proposed highway will not destroy the petroglyph site, but the Akimel O’odham people have a strong claim to continued use of the site by the addition of their tribal brand.



Livestock brands pecked into the rocks at Site 198. The schematic drawing at the bottom left shows the detail of the All People or Pima Agency brand, as noted in the brand book on the right.

A final sponsored project was at Hueco Tanks, Texas. Hueco Tanks is well-known for its rock paintings. It is also one of the most popular free climbing locations in North America. Texas State

Parks, that manages the site, was concerned that some of the climbing routes were over rock paintings. So they sponsored a project to use DStretch on each climbing area to determine if there were any paintings which could not be easily seen with an un-aided eye. The project was carried out primarily by Versar-Geo-Marine archaeologists but SSR researchers Lawrence Loendorf and Laurie White visited the project in an advisory role.

Meetings attended in 2016 included the Montana Archaeological Society meeting in Great Falls, Montana, the American Rock Art Research Association meeting in Las Cruces, New Mexico and the Plains Anthropological Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska. Presented papers by Loendorf at the conferences were well-received.

In preparation for the Dinwoody Workshop, Larry Loendorf made a trip to Dead End Canyon on the China Lake Naval base in California. Several of the petroglyphs in Dead End Canyon have similarities to the large Dinwoody figures like the water ghosts. He also spent several days with Elaine Holmes in Las Vegas, Nevada. Elaine, Anne McConnell and Cherry Baker made visits to the amazing Pahrnatag sites where the petroglyphs also have affinities to Dinwoody. It was a great adventure.

In mid-summer, Anne Brown came to Red Lodge to visit Jean Owen. One day Cobe Chatwood, Larry Loendorf, Anne and Jean made a trek to the Caroline Lockhart Ranch site north of Lovell, Wyoming. It was a fun day.



Anne Brown, Jean Owen and Cobe Chatwood hiking up the trail from the Caroline Lockhart ranch house.

Publications During the Year:

Loendorf, Larry

2016 Vertical Series Rock Art and the Mehling Steatite Pipe. *Archaeology in Montana* 57(1):53-59.

Loendorf, Lawrence L., Karen Steelman, Mark Willis, and Myles Miller

2016 Old Painted Zig Zags in the Jornada Mogollon Region. *American Indian Rock Art* 42:107-114.
American Rock Art Research Association, San Jose, California.

One last minor thing that SSR did during the year was encourage and pay for a radiocarbon date on the Sheep Mountain net that was found cached in a dry cave southwest of Cody, Wyoming. Twenty-five years ago, George Frison radiocarbon dated the net to an age in excess of 9000 years. Many of us have wondered about contamination of the date, and SSR offered to support a second C14 date for the artifact.

The new date was considerably younger at an age in the Late Prehistoric Period. So now we are betwixt and between situations where we do not know whether the ancient date or the much more recent date is correct. So we need another date to confirm one or the other. More on this in the coming year.



Twisted juniper bark net that was found near Cody, Wyoming. The original dates for the net were more than 9000 years before present. A recent date, supported by SSR, was less than 1500 years before present. A new date is needed to confirm which is correct.

In sad news, I report the passing of Marion De Cruz who was a major supporter of SSR with her intellectual and monetary input. At my request, Marion would frequently read my reports, papers for publication and offer insightful comments. She was a brilliant woman who did not shy from criticizing my language or expression and always making for a better product. SSR misses her immensely.

In summary, SSR had an excellent year with successful projects and new adventures. We look forward to 2017 which promises to be as rewarding and busy.