

**Sacred Sites Research, Inc.
Annual Report for 2021**

Sacred Sites Research, Inc. (SSR) had a successful year, but our organization was hampered by Covid with product delays and the slowdown in personnel in governmental agencies. The product delay was a slow delivery of a new portable x-ray fluorescence instrument so that we were unable to complete a funded project at a site west of Las Vegas, Nevada. We were also hampered by slow approval of projects to record sites on lands managed by the United States government. These issues aside, however, SSR did accomplish several important endeavors.

Two successful projects were coordinated from field camps. One was at Painted Canyon, Montana where the Boughton family allowed us to camp on their property and use their farmhouse as a base. This was extremely kind of them as we had few options for motels or campgrounds that would not have required long drives to get to the site.

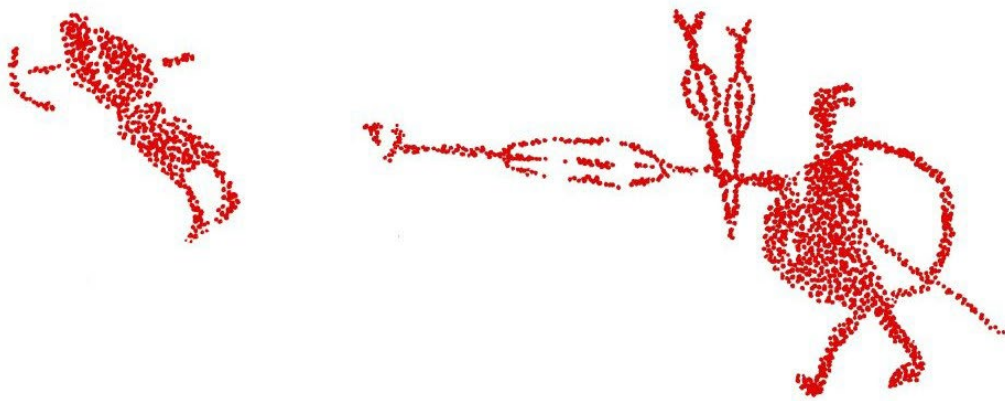
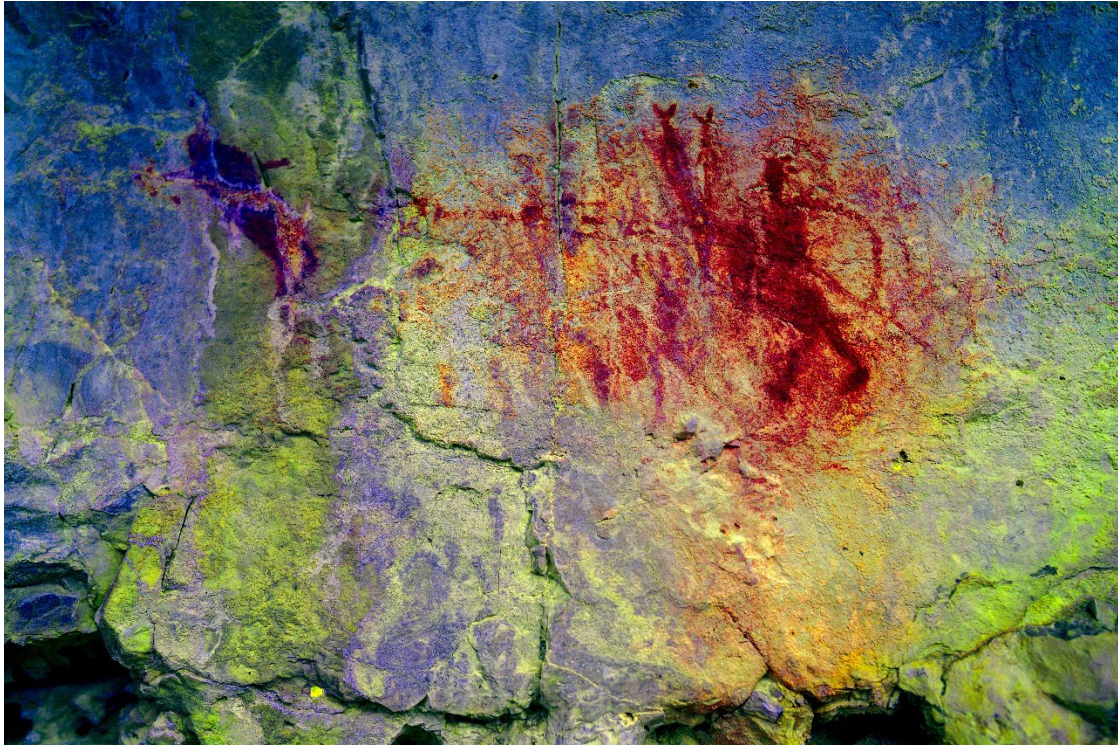
Since the Boughton family ranch house was within walking distance of the sites, we were able to accomplish recording at nine sites. Two of these sites --the Painted Coulee (24JT86) and the Alcove (24JT87) were especially significant. In addition to the full recording of these two sites, Dr. Karen Steelman from the Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center was able to obtain, process and date samples of the paint for plasma oxidation radiocarbon dates for figures at the Painted Coulee site and the Alcove site.

Radiocarbon dates for a standalone archer and a shield-bearing warrior with an atlatl who is pursuing a fleeing archer are 1700 years before the present. The amazing fact about these ages is they are in the time when the bow and arrow was replacing the atlatl. In other words, the date of 1700 years ago for the standalone archer is extremely early for bow and arrow use in Montana. The painting is almost certainly the oldest depiction of a bow user on the northern Plains.



Karen Steelman taking a sample from the foot of the stand-alone archer which is shown in DStretch on the right. Note the possible snowshoes the archer is wearing.

Because there is so much mineral coating over it, the atlatl is difficult to see but the figure is holding two extra darts or short spears. Nearly every other rock art example of an anthropomorph with an atlatl shows the figure with extra darts. This fact, and the radiocarbon age suggest the figure has an atlatl even if it not readily seen in the painting.



Upper DStretch photograph shows the shield-bearing warrior with the possible atlatl directing a dart at the fleeing figure. The fleeing figure appears to hold a bow and to have been struck with a projectile from the shield warrior.

A significant finding is the age of circa AD 300 for the shield-bearing warrior. The shield-bearing warrior motif is common on the northern Plains where it was generally thought to date to the Late Prehistoric period, sometime after AD 1000 prior to the dates obtained on this project.

A second project, at the South Ryegate site, was coordinated through the crew camping in the yard of Claire and Bruce McKnight. The McKnight's are the owners of an exceptionally good biographic rock art site. It has scenes of horses and tipi camps that are in excellent condition. A well-made bear is also a feature of the site.



Inked drawing of horse and rider approaching a tipi. The drawing is superimposed on a photograph of the rock surface. Note the horse is over a v-neck figure.



Large bear about 4.5 feet from nose to tail. The figure is abraded into the rock surface.

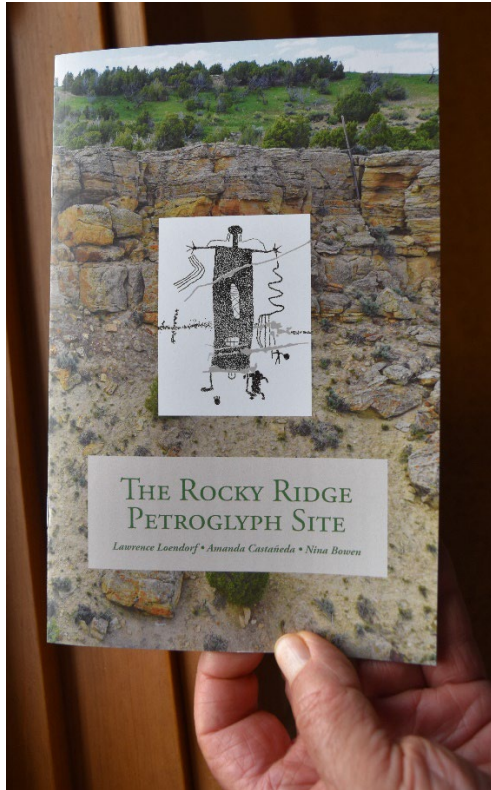
The report on the Fish Creek site was also completed during the year. Greg White finished inking the panel drawings which allowed Loendorf the opportunity to write the report. It was sent to the landowners and interested individuals. The Fish Creek site is not far from the South Ryegate site which makes it more remarkable that the images as Fish Creek are so different. We did find some incised figures at Fish Creek that have parallels at South Ryegate which is important.



A DStretch photograph of the main panel at the Fish Creek site. The unusual figures are not duplicated at any other regional rock art site.

Other work during the year included the completion of the Rocky Ridge report and producing it in a format for delivery to the landowners and interested researchers. Lawrence Loendorf delivered a zoom lecture on the site to the Utah Rock Art Research Association, one of the funders for the project. Working with Nina Bowen and Amanda Castaneda, Loendorf also wrote a public booklet on the site.

An important field undertaking was coordinated with the Archaeological Conservancy to record the cultural resources in four tracts of land they recently purchased from the Sunset Ranch, southwest of El Paso, Texas. The land tracts are known for the outstanding rock art. Mark Willis, Tim Graves and Juan Arias noted the locations of the numerous rock art panels and recorded all the associated cultural remains on the sites.



Mark Willis and Lawrence Loendorf made a virtual visit to the Tajo Arroyo site in New Mexico. The video was short, as required, but it was successfully viewed at the American Rock Art Research Association virtual meeting.

Lawrence Loendorf delivered six zoom lectures during the year. One was the keynote address for the Colorado Rock Art Association's annual meeting, which was virtual. He also published three refereed articles in national and international journals. Loendorf and Aaron Brien, the Crow Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, wrote the brochure to accompany the Wyoming Archaeology month poster. It is about a rock structure at the top of Grand Teton Mountain in western Wyoming. The poster will offer significant recognition for Sacred Sites Research, Inc.

Board member, Mark Willis was the author of four publications, and he presented or was a co-presenter of three lectures. Board member Amanda Castaneda had two publications in refereed journals, and she gave three lectures.

In sum, Sacred Sites Research, Inc. had a successful year, and we look forward to the coming year with several upcoming projects that have been delayed by Covid.

