

MESA PRIETA PETROGLYPH PROJECT

PETROGLYPH RECORDING

Since 2002, the Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project personnel have been training volunteers to record petroglyphs. A full day class for volunteers introduces them to the scientific process of documenting the petroglyphs. Volunteers are taught how to use a GPS to record the location of each boulder with petroglyphs, digital photography is demonstrated and the specifics of how to measure a petroglyph are taught. Each petroglyph is drawn and categorized using Design Element Categories that are used in New Mexico for Rio Grande Style Petroglyphs. New trainees are required to complete the full day class and a total of 4 mentored days in the field. Prior to committing to training, candidates are requested to accompany a recording team and mentor in the field to experience the severity of the terrain, observe what the recording teams do and appreciate the commitment to recording with MPPP. The Recording Coordinator oversees the classroom and field training and assigns volunteers to areas on the Mesa to work.

Teams work in groups of two, three or four and are requested to work a minimum of once a month, although several teams are out weekly. Each team is assigned a prescribed area or provenience to survey and record all the petroglyphs they find in that area. Currently teams are working in proveniences of about 20 acres each. Archaeological features other than petroglyphs found on the mesa are also recorded. All equipment is provided for the teams and is stored on site on the mesa. Volunteers are required to check in and check out with the MPPP office when they go to work on the Mesa and inform the office of the physical location of their field work.

Once a team has completed the recording of a provenience, a team member notifies the Recording Coordinator and material is collected from the storage area. The original photographs are immediately saved in several areas on office computers. All finished work is reviewed for completeness and quality. Photos are compared to the drawings, categories are reviewed, and all the photos are named for the area they represent. Material that is not usable such as poor quality photos is requested to be redone by that team.

Once the review process is complete, the Project Archaeologist again makes backups of the photos, scans all the work sheets and stores the information in several places.

All of the data collected by recorders are entered into the MPPP GIS-linked database for archival purposes and is made available for qualified researchers and others with reason to access the information.

To date, some 60,000 petroglyphs have been recorded on Mesa Prieta and in the immediate surrounding area, and 10-12 teams are now working on a 6000 acre parcel of private land. The goal of the Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project is to record all the petroglyphs and other human made features on the mesa.