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# DEFINING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE BOUNDARIES & PROTECTION STATUS

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# INTRODUCTION

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To ensure consistency in the way archaeological sites are recorded and spatially represented in the Provincial heritage register (PHR), the following standards are to be applied when defining archaeological site boundaries. Methods used to define archaeological site boundaries will be fully described in site forms and reporting.

## PROTECTED STATUS

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The PHR is mandated under Section 3 of the *Heritage Conservation Act* (HCA). Only archaeological sites that are protected under the HCA will be considered for inclusion in the PHR by the Archaeology Branch. Some exceptions where unprotected sites may be accepted for Borden number issuance are:

- Sites under federal jurisdiction that would be protected if they occurred on Provincial crown or private land.
- Unprotected sites of unique interest and significant heritage value that may warrant future protection or inclusion in another government register (note that the Heritage Branch may have other rules for defining historic place boundaries).
- Sites serving as a permanent location for displaced archaeological material that no longer warrant protection but should be kept on record.

Archaeological site boundaries in the PHR are accordingly defined by the presence of protected archaeological features or objects and must be drawn around HCA-protected archaeological features and objects only.

Other site impact management boundaries (*e.g.*, no work zones, flagged boundaries) may be discussed in site records and displayed on site maps, but the archaeological site boundary—defined per the requirements discussed here—is the primary boundary that will be represented in the spatial component of the PHR.

## LEGACY STATUS

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In the *Remote Access to Archaeological Data* (RAAD) application, the registration status of an archaeological site indicates whether a site is protected under the HCA. Sites are assigned Legacy status to indicate they are not protected, usually because they have been destroyed or they do not meet the criteria for protection under the HCA.

Archaeologists should recommend Legacy status, when appropriate, in a site form update. Detailed rationale must be provided. If uncertain, contact the Inventory Section at [archsiteform@gov.bc.ca](mailto:archsiteform@gov.bc.ca) to discuss prior to the site form update submission. The Inventory Section makes the final decision on all registration status changes.

### **Recommending Legacy status is appropriate when:**

1. The matrix containing subsurface archaeological materials has been 100% excavated, moved, or stripped down to bedrock or sterile deposits. Absolutely no physical evidence of archaeological materials is left.

2. An isolated find or small surface scatter is 100% collected and there is strong evidence suggesting that it was not *in situ*.
3. A CMT site has been removed during harvest activities and the site form update confirms that no cultural features remain.

**Legacy status is not appropriate when:**

4. Surface or subsurface archaeological finds are collected and all other subsurface tests in the area are negative. This kind of evidence suggests a low density of archaeological material, but it does not prove that the site is 100% collected or destroyed, regardless of the number of tests conducted.
5. A CMT site has been harvested and there is a possibility for cultural features to remain. As long as a possibility exists for CMT features to remain, the site will not be assigned Legacy status.

# DEFINING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE BOUNDARIES

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## NATURAL SITE BOUNDARIES

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*Natural boundaries* are those defined by the extent of a natural landform (e.g., knoll) or physical feature (e.g., river) where it can be reasonably deduced that the extent of archaeological remains is constrained by geomorphological site formation processes. Use the following guidelines:

- Professional judgment will be applied to determine whether a natural boundary or observed boundary is warranted, and thorough rationale will be provided in the site form.
- In general, natural boundaries are acceptable if the site size is roughly similar to the size that would be achieved by applying standard buffers to observed archaeological remains (see *Observed Site Boundaries*).
- The *Heritage Conservation Act* (HCA) does not protect areas of archaeological potential and Branch policy is to restrict protected site boundaries to areas with physical evidence; therefore, if the natural boundary is more than ~10% larger than the buffered observed boundary, then the justification you provide for the boundary must establish with near-certainty that physical remains exist throughout the entire extent of the natural boundary.
- If it is not possible to establish a near-certain presence of physical remains, then the boundary should be defined by applying standard buffers to observed archaeological remains, and the rest of the landform indicated on the map as an area of archaeological potential.

## OBSERVED SITE BOUNDARIES

*Observed boundaries* are those determined by the horizontal extent of archaeological remains observed on the ground surface, in exposures, or through subsurface testing. In general, observed boundaries will be drawn to tightly capture the known extent of archaeological remains; they should include a modest buffer to mitigate spatial and investigative error. See specific buffer requirements in table below. Buffers will be uniformly applied to observed features (*i.e.*, same distance in all directions), resulting in a curvilinear shape; arbitrarily drawn shapes (*e.g.*, square, rectangle, triangle) will not be accepted for site boundaries defined on the basis of observation. The following standards must be applied:

Subsurface tested sites	When a site is comprised of at least two positive subsurface tests, and extent has been identified by a series of negative subsurface tests, the site boundary will be drawn around the nearest negative test. In the absence of negative tests, apply a 5 m buffer to positive tests.
Surface features and artifacts	When site extent has been identified by surface features ( <i>e.g.</i> , petroforms, rock art) or multiple surface artifacts with no evidence of subsurface cultural material, the site boundary will be established as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On provincial Crown land, apply a buffer no greater than 5 metres.</li> <li>• On private land, apply a buffer no greater than 1 metre.</li> </ul>
<5 m sites	To ensure polygon visibility within GIS and online mapping applications, no site boundary will have a width less than 5 m. Isolated finds, sites consisting of a single positive subsurface test, and other sites measuring less than 5 x 5 m on the ground will be represented by a circle with a diameter of 5 m.
Sensitive sites	If site significance or sensitivity ( <i>e.g.</i> , human remains, rock art) warrants a larger buffer for protection from direct impacts, the site form will describe the buffer and provide a justification.
Trails	Trails are represented by a linear polygon with a width of 10 m, unless a wider protection corridor has been established through a designation process under the HCA or in a heritage trail management plan. Do not combine trails with other site types; due to their linear nature, trails must be recorded independently.
Wrecks	Site boundaries for shipwrecks and plane wrecks are defined by applying a 1- to 5-m buffer to the extent of the wreckage. Do not combine wrecks with other site types; due to their unique nature, wrecks must be recorded independently. Shipwreck clusters will receive one Borden number per vessel.
CMTs	See CMT section below.

Note that although a buffer is an *arbitrary* extension of a site boundary, the boundary type is still Observed (not Arbitrary) because the boundary is *primarily* based on observed remains; Arbitrary site boundaries are described in the next section.

## ARBITRARY SITE BOUNDARIES

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*Arbitrary boundaries* are those that reflect artificial or administrative boundaries (e.g., property lines or rights-of-way), the presence of existing disturbance or developments (e.g., roads), or project area limits. Boundaries are arbitrary when the whole or original site area likely extends beyond the area you have assessed. Arbitrary site boundaries should only be applied when the site boundary cannot be defined by natural limits or observation.

## CMT SITE BOUNDARIES

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CMT site boundaries are based on observation of features and are defined as follows:

- CMT site boundaries are drawn around individually protected features only. Protected CMTs are CMTs that pre-date AD 1846 and CMTs that *may* pre-date AD 1846, per HCA Sections 13(2)(d) and 13(2)(g).
- CMT site boundaries must not be extended to capture unprotected (known to post-date AD 1846) CMTs, regardless of their proximity to other protected CMTs. However, it is expected that post-1846 CMTs will sometimes be captured within the boundary drawn around the protected CMTs. Such captured post-1846 CMTs are considered part of the site because they fall within the protected boundary; they must therefore be included in site forms, site maps, and CMT tables.
- To inform CMT boundary decisions and prevent future duplication of effort, post-1846 CMTs located outside of the protected site boundary, if recorded, should also be included on site maps and in CMT tables, but it must be clear that they do not fall within the protected site boundary; it is recommended that CMT tables have a separate section at the end for this purpose.
- CMT site boundaries are defined by buffering each CMT centre point by 10 m (so a single standing CMT will be a 20 m diameter circle). Other site impact management buffers (*e.g.*, wind-firm buffers, expanded protection areas requested by client or First Nations) may be applied and displayed on site maps, but the primary site boundary submitted for inclusion in the PHR will use a 10 m buffer.
- See *Combining and Splitting of Observed Features* (below) to determine whether a cluster of CMTs should be recorded as one or multiple sites.
- To ensure the above CMT boundary requirements are met, differentiate all CMTs on site maps as (1) *pre-1846*, (2) *post-1846*, and (3) *undated/undetermined/inferred pre-1846* (choose an applicable term). Buffer the protected CMTs (pre-1846 and possible pre-1846) by 10 m, then connect the outer extent of the resulting circles to form your site boundary.
- Refer to [Bulletin 15 Permits and Archaeological Site Boundaries](#) for information about permitting requirements when harvesting post-1846 CMTs within a protected site boundary.

## COMBINING AND SPLITTING OF OBSERVED FEATURES

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This section discusses the combining and splitting of archaeological sites when archaeological remains in a shared vicinity are discontinuous, intersected by natural or arbitrary boundaries, sporadically observed, or otherwise separated. For the purpose of this section, *observed feature* broadly describes any discrete locale found to contain archaeological remains of any type, including an individual CMT.

Archaeologists must determine on a case-by-case basis whether multiple observed features will be recorded as one site or multiple sites, and whether site boundaries should be represented by one polygon or multiple polygons. In general, observed features separated by less than 10 m will be recorded as one site (*i.e.*, combined). Observed features will be combined or split according to the archaeologist's professional judgment, depending on the relevant factors of each case. The following is a sample of questions that should be considered:

- Are there privately owned, uninvestigated land parcels in between the observed features? Except in rare circumstances, site boundaries should not be extended across uninvestigated private property (although site maps should still indicate where the site is likely to extend).
- Are the observed features separated by distinct topography? If so, splitting may be warranted.
- Has the area between the observed features been thoroughly tested and assessed to be negative for archaeological material? If so, splitting or multiple polygons excluding the negative areas may be warranted.
- How significant is the potential for additional archaeological materials to be present in between the observed features? If high, combining may be warranted.
- Is there a difference in site type or date of occupation that calls for site splitting? Trails and shipwrecks should never be combined with any other site type. A CMT site adjacent to a much older shell midden may warrant splitting.

As a general guideline, observed features separated by more than 50 m will be recorded as separate sites (*i.e.*, split), only in the absence of the kinds of determining factors described above.

Your decision whether to combine or split observed archaeological features will determine whether you need to submit (a) a site form for a new site, or (b) a site form update. Splitting a newly observed feature from a nearby known archaeological site will result in a new site with a discrete Borden number. Combining a newly observed feature with a previously recorded site will result in a site form update for that known site.

Decisions to combine or split observed features must be clearly explained in site forms and illustrated in site maps. The Archaeology Branch has final authority over the combining and splitting of site boundaries; you are encouraged to resolve uncertainties by contacting the Inventory Section at [archsitereform@gov.bc.ca](mailto:archsitereform@gov.bc.ca) prior to submitting site forms.

## SPLITTING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IDENTIFIED WITHIN HISTORIC PLACES

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If you have observed archaeological remains within the boundary of a previously recorded *historic place*, then overlapping polygons with separate Borden numbers may be warranted. Contact the Inventory Section at [archsiteform@gov.bc.ca](mailto:archsiteform@gov.bc.ca) for guidance in this situation prior to submitting site forms.

## RECORDING RELOCATED MATERIALS

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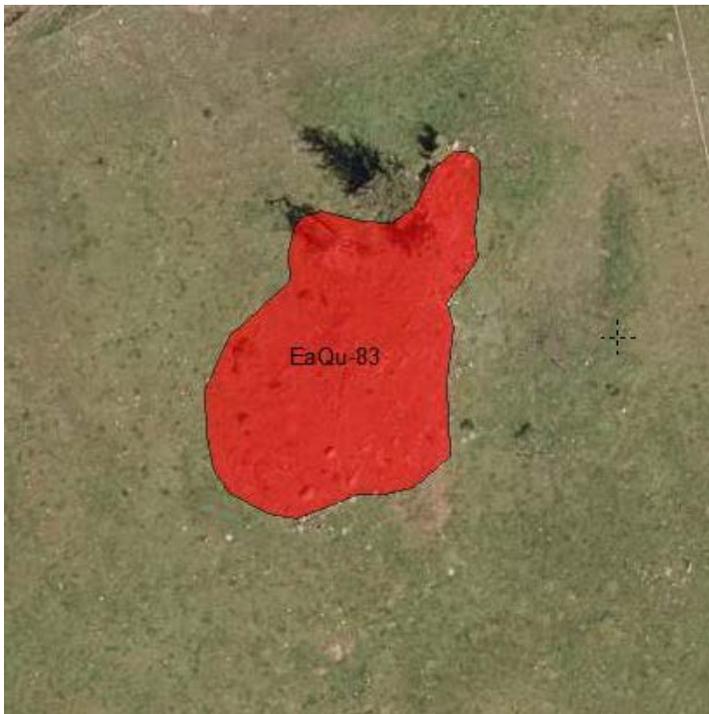
When archaeological materials, including human remains, have been reburied on or off-site, the source location and reburial location must both be clearly recorded. In most cases, the following rules will apply:

- If the reburial location is within 50 m of the source site, then the reburial location will be mapped and recorded as a component of that site. Create a separate polygon for the reburial location if it is located outside of the source site boundary.
- If the reburial location is over 50 m away from the source site, then a new site with a distinct Borden number is likely warranted.

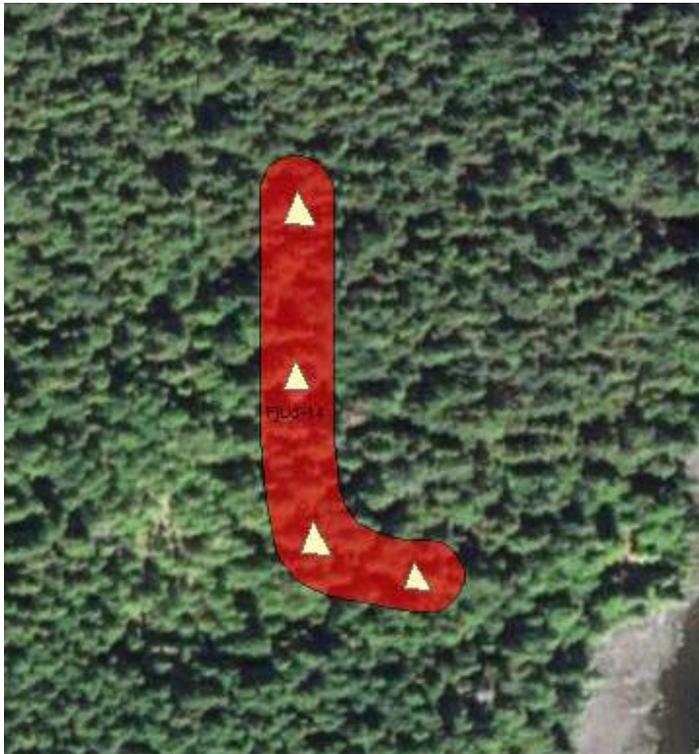
## SITE BOUNDARY EXAMPLES

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**NATURAL** - limits of the site are defined by landform (for example, an elevated area of bedrock with scattered cairns).



**OBSERVED** - limits of the site are defined by what has been observed and a buffer is applied to cultural material/features (for example, a 10 metre buffer applied to the centre-point of four CMTs).



**ARBITRARY** – limits of the site are defined by artificial or administrative boundaries (for example, limited by the extent of a private lot).



NATURAL AND OBSERVED – snapped to natural margins of shoreline, observed elsewhere.



NATURAL AND ARBITRARY – snapped to natural margins of knoll north, west, and east; arbitrary to south.



OBSERVED AND ARBITRARY – snapped to artificial boundary of one parcel; observed elsewhere.



NATURAL, OBSERVED, AND ARBITRARY – northern polygon is observed to north, east and west; arbitrary to south. Southern polygon is observed to east and west; natural to south; arbitrary to north.

