U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Cultural Resources Program Highlights

BLM Alaska Fiscal Year 2025

Mission statement

The Bureau of Land Management sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Cover Photo

Circa-1940s dragline that was used in the Ruby Mining District, Alaska.

Suggested citation:

BLM. 2025. Cultural Resources Program Highlights: BLM Alaska Fiscal Year 2025. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office, Anchorage, Alaska.

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Bureau of Land Management - Alaska

Cultural Resources Program Highlights Fiscal Year 2025

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alaska State Office (AKSO) is responsible for managing the cultural resources program for its public lands in Alaska. The proactive component of the program is focused on the public surface estate, but also includes outreach and education efforts. The highlights reported here focus on BLM's proactive management of cultural resources, as well as its responsibilities under cultural resources authorities beyond Section 106 (National Historic Preservation Act) compliance requirements. Our proactive efforts support the BLM's core multiple use mission and furthered the Secretary of the Interior's priorities for FY2025. The administration's priorities supported by our work focus on surveying the land in support of energy and resource development (EO 14153 *Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential*), gathering new data about historic and archaeological sites in a region that is under-surveyed by helping the agency meet the goals of restoring and preserving American heritage (EO 14253 *Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History),* and identifying sites that embody the Nation's history, heritage, and outdoor traditions and can support access to public lands and waters for recreation, hunting, and fishing through better management of those resources (EO 14313 *Make America Beautiful Again*).

Stewardship is an important aspect of BLM proactive management of cultural resources, which include archaeological sites, historic buildings, National Historic Monuments, and traditional cultural places, as well as artifact collections housed in accredited museums. Effective management of these sites include a range of activities such as monitoring sites, protection, educating the public, collecting baseline inventory data, maintaining access to interpreted sites, maintaining stabilized ruins, tribal consultation, and managing collections to ensure they are accessible to tribes, the public and researchers.

This report focuses on highlights related to cultural resources management (proactive archeological surveys), museum collections management, and Tribal partnerships or consultations pertinent to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), cultural heritage, and museum collection. With the introduction of new NAGPRA regulations that went into effect in early 2025, BLM Alaska placed a priority on identifying the entirety of its responsibilities related to NAGPRA and repatriating ancestral remains and funerary objects to Tribal groups.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Robin O. Mills, BLM-AK Deputy Preservation Officer, at rmills@blm.gov or (907) 271-5510.

2025 Archeological Surveys in the Northeastern National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska

Over two weeks between July 2-9 and August 7-13, 2025, BLM Arctic District Office (RDO) archaeologist Joe Keeney conducted proactive archaeological survey and monitoring work focused in the northern National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). Keeney directed the work and was assisted by BIA archaeologist Irene Maxwell during the first week and BLM Anchorage Field Office (ADO) seasonal archaeologist Peyton Edelbrock during the second week.

Efforts focused on conducting proactive survey in unsurveyed areas along potential overland transportation routes near Teshekpuk Lake and the village of Atqasuk and widening the surveyed corridor around the often-used overland winter snow trail used by the North Slope Borough (the NSB Community Winter Access Trail). Crews would visually search for landforms and settings where identification of cultural materials would be likely and/or possible and would land at those locations to inspect the areas on foot or (in some cases) by low-level overflights. The crews also revisited previously documented sites near Umiat for monitoring and to update site data.

As most of the overall land area used for permits authorized by the BLM in the NPR-A relates to non-ground-disturbing activities (namely winter overland transportation and studies and camping in remote backcountry areas), the crews focused on surface sites, which are most susceptible to the types of activities generally permitted in the NPR-A without requiring prior archaeological survey. Subsurface sites are protected by the overlying sediments and vegetation and are less likely to be disturbed by overland transportation in the winter, especially when in permafrost and annually frozen soils.

In two weeks of work, the archaeology crews aerially surveyed ~128,900 acres in search of suitable areas for more intensive survey on-foot, of which they covered 150 acres total on foot. The crews revisited several known sites for monitoring and updating data and identified and recorded many new historic sites during this project. Notably among the revisited sites were remains of a US Navy seismic camp from the mid-20th Century, debris from a 1955 group of US Army surveyors, and two scatters of chert flakes. Notable new sites included a large wooden sled used to haul coal through the mid-1900's to Barrow (now Utqiaġvik) from a mine located near the modern village of Atqasuk, debris from the same 1955 group of US Army surveyors, and sites attributed to the US Navy's exploration efforts between 1944-1953 in then-NPR-4).

Figure 1. Collection of intact wooden (empty) dynamite boxes from seismic exploration in the Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4 (now NPR-A) between 1944-1953. BLM Photo.

Figure 2. 55-gallon Union Oil Co drum from a US Navy Seismic camp between 1944-1953. The drum style dates to approximately 1912 and exhibits signs of repair and reuse—an uncommon find among the thousands of drums throughout the NPR-A. BLM Photo.

Figure 3. Sled for hauling coal from a coal source in the modern-day village of Atqasuk to Utqiaġvik (then-Barrow). Mining began in 1943, and the Barrow community and US Navy there relied on coal for producing power and heat until the 1960s when they switched exclusively to locally produced natural gas. BLM Photo.

Figure 4. Sample of a cluster of 55-gallon drums. Associated with winter seismic camps or fuel depots, from US Navy exploration in the Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4 (now NPR-A) between 1944-1953. The markings on the drums inform about manufacturer, date of manufacture, contents, and purchaser. BLM Photo.

BLM CCSC Archaeology & Paleontology Education Programs

This year, the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center in Anchorage, Alaska, delivered 20 youth education programs focused on cultural resources and paleontology, reaching 899 students. Highlights included the Fossil Days event, where 100 Anchorage School District students explored how fossils form and why these resources are significant. Afterschool programming introduced the work of paleontologists and what fossils can teach us about the past. Another featured program engaged University of Alaska Anchorage Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) students in learning about Campbell Tract's role as an important aviation resource during World War II and the stories tied to that era. These hands-on experiences fostered appreciation for Heritage program resources and encouraged stewardship of public lands.

Figure 5. Students work together to uncover fossils during the Fossil Days Event at BLM Campbell Creek Science Center. BLM Photo.

Figure 6. Students work on making a replica of a carbon print fossil during the Fossil Days Event at BLM Campbell Creek Science Center. BLM Photo.

Figure 7. Middle school students from the UAA ANSEP middle make a presentation in the Yupik language about their connections, sharing their cultural connection and Traditional Ecological Knowledge about BLM Alaska managed resources. BLM Photo.

Figure 8. Students dig for fossils at the annual BLM Alaska Outdoor Week event on Campbell Tract. BLM Photo.

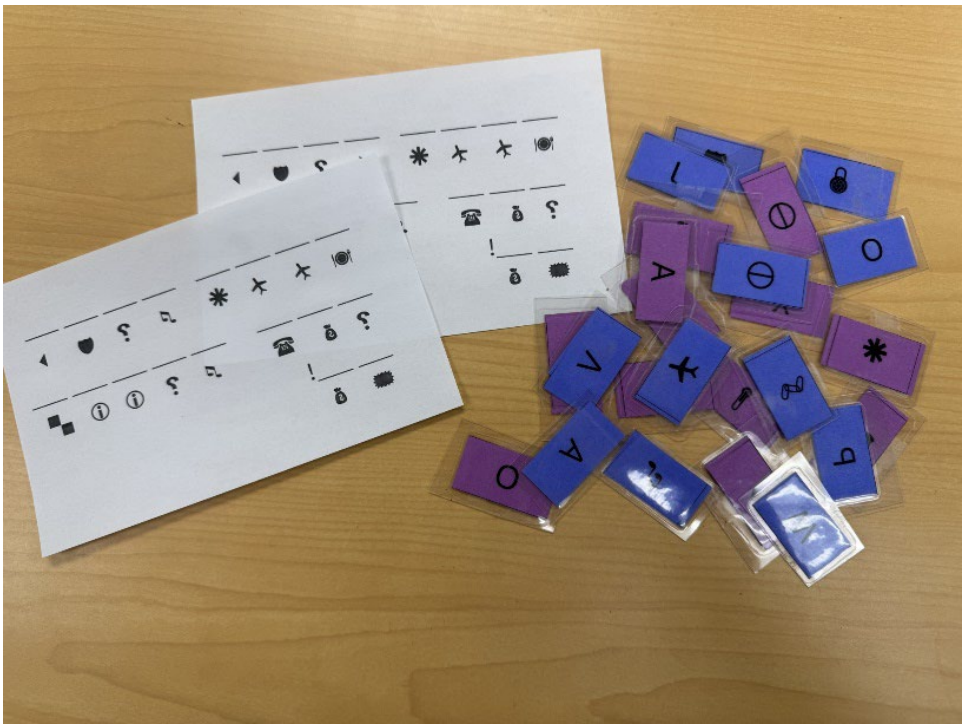

Figure 9. Code breaking activity for a WWII program for UAA ANSEP students to explore archeological resources on Campbell Tract and how Alaska Native languages were used during WWII for military codes. BLM Photo.

Ruby Mining District Historic Inventory

The BLM's Central Yukon Field Office manages several Closed Excluded Unit (CEU) mining claims in the remote, roadless Ruby Mining District, located in Interior Alaska. The district's peak activity occurred between 1908-1918, when roughly 7,000 miners worked the creeks near Long and Poorman using drift and open-cut methods. Mining resumed in the 1930s-1970s with draglines to access deeper deposits, leaving behind a complex landscape of historic structures, features, and equipment that reflect Alaska's mining heritage and economic development.

Archaeological inventory in the district has been extremely limited. However, these federal claims are prioritized for conveyance to the State and require both archaeological inventory and hazmat assessment and remediation. Since 2023, the CYFO archaeologist and physical scientist have collaborated to inventory federal claims, aiming to distinguish historic features for preservation from hazardous materials requiring removal (e.g., leaking drums, lead-acid batteries).

Work in 2025 included pedestrian survey at Long Creek on 11 active and 29 closed federal mining claims (approximately 1,100 acres), and at Greenstone Creek on six closed federal claims (approximately 150 acres). Areas of the claims were targeted for pedestrian survey based on aerial imagery, historic maps, and mineral reports. This resulted in the identification of approximately 80 historic features across seven new historic sites. Due to a flash flood, several of the claims on the far side of Long Creek could not be accessed; this area has several mining features that are visible in aerial imagery and will need to be revisited. Planned work in 2026 includes collecting LiDAR imagery on the closed claims, which will help identify additional features and other target areas for pedestrian surveys.

Figure 10. A BLM physical scientist and volunteer document a circa 1916 Murphy diesel engine that was used for historic mining operations in the Ruby Mining District, Alaska. BLM Photo.

Figure 11. A BLM volunteer inspects mining equipment in a collapsed historic structure in the Ruby Mining District, Alaska. BLM Photo.

Figure 12. A BLM archaeologist inspects a historic structure near the old town of Long, Alaska. BLM Photo.

Figure 13. Circa 1940 dragline that was used in the Ruby Mining District, Alaska. BLM Photo.

Figure 14. A BLM physical scientist documents 55-gallon drums in the Ruby Mining District, Alaska. BLM Photo.

Campbell Tract SRMA Cultural Survey

Anchorage Field Office (AFO) Archaeologist Jenny Blanchard and a Student Conservation Association intern conducted an expanded cultural survey of the Campbell Tract Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) in 2025. The 730-acre SRMA contains site 49-ANC-01385, the Campbell Garrison WWII Historic District, which has been determined eligible for the NRHP. However, many artifacts have been identified outside the current site boundary over the years, so a site update was needed. The AFO SCA intern conducted archival research, indicating that there was a significant Cold War military presence on Campbell Tract, and provided evidence for expanding the period of significance beyond the current dates of 1942-1944. The intern also georeferenced WWII Army maps, to support more accurate, on the ground documentation of WWII features.

The crew also conducted additional surveys of Campbell Tract. The WWII features from historic maps were identified and mapped on the ground, and additional areas of Cold War activity were surveyed, with many additional features and diagnostic artifacts found, confirming significant 1950s military activity on the site. The BLM also received a permit from the Municipality of Anchorage to survey on land adjacent to Campbell Tract, to survey the georeferenced location of the WWII gate checkpoint.

Figure 15. SCA Intern Peyton Edelbrock excavates a shovel test in a Cold War feature on Campbell Tract. BLM Photo.

TLAD Land Transfer Cultural Surveys

GFO archaeologist John Jangala conducted cultural survey in the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District (TLAD), one of the densest and earliest concentrations of prehistoric archaeological sites in the Alaskan Interior. As part of the 2022 University of Alaska Fiscal Foundation Act, the University requested the conveyance of 7,042 acres of BLM-managed TLAD lands.

Due to tribal interest from multiple villages and the local ANCSA Regional Corporation, the BLM conducted sample surveys on 331 acres of previously unsurveyed lands identified as having the highest archaeological potential within the selection area. The fieldwork resulted in the discovery of four new prehistoric sites and one new historic site. The crew also monitored the condition of three previously documented sites. The resulting site documentation and report will aid the State of Alaska's University Land Managers in making informed decisions regarding the management of newly acquired lands in this area.

As part of this project, the GFO archaeologist also spent a day with Alaskan high school students during a BLM Campbell Creek Science Center and Alaska Geographic-sponsored educational tour of the Tangle Lakes. Students hiked the BLM's esker ridge trails to explore the region's archaeological significance and later had the opportunity to practice atlatl and dart throwing, tools that were integral to Ahtna Athabaskan subsistence hunting in this area for thousands of years

Figure 16. SCA Intern in a bug net pointing to a cluster of lithic debitage in a wind eroded area. BLM Photo.

Figure 17. GFO Archaeologist taking notes at a TLAD lithic scatter. BLM Photo.

Figure 18. GFO Archaeologist teaching high school students about the archaeology of the atlatl and dart in TLAD. BLM Photo.

University of Alaska Museum of the North, Archaeology & Earth Sciences Departments' BLM Collections

The BLM and the University of Alaska Museum of the North (UAMN), in Fairbanks, Alaska, continue to work together to properly house and care for existing BLM-owned artifacts and fossils housed at that repository. BLM has more than 1,725 accessioned archaeology collections at UAMN, including 214,000 catalogued artifacts and specimens, and an estimated 85,000 more artifacts and specimens that have yet to be digitally catalogued. The UAMN Earth Sciences Department has the largest collection of fossils in Alaska, including Cretaceous dinosaurs & Ice Age mammals. About 1/3 to 1/2 of these collections come from BLM-managed land: more than 140 accessions from 1000 localities, including more than 20,000 specimens.

In FY2025, a new 5-year agreement between the BLM and UAMN's Archaeology Department was signed in late September 2025 at the end of the fiscal year (L25AC00463), which provides funding to UAMN to continue the work of bringing existing "legacy" collections up to modern curatorial standards. Work on legacy collections continued in FY2025 through July, when the old 5-year agreement expired. In FY2025, (1) 901 artifacts from the Kitnepaluk Site (XSL-00010), Gambell Archaeological District (XSL-00061), and the Mayughaaq Site (XSL-00002); (2) 9,000 artifacts from Siraagruk along the north coast of Alaska were rehoused; and (3) 2,514 artifacts from BET-00040, BET-00041, and BET-00042 were rehoused.

Figure 19. Tray of objects returned to Alaska from Switzerland in FY2024 prior to rehousing. These are from the Meregta site (XSL-00016) near the Native Village of Gambell on St. Lawrence Island. UAMN Photo.

Figure 20. Drawer of objects returned to Alaska from Switzerland in FY2024. These were rehoused, accessioned, and cataloged during FY2025 and are from the Gambell Hillside site (XSL-00001) near the Native Village of Gambell on St. Lawrence Island. UAMN Photo.

Figure 21. A box of collections from Siraagruk (WAI-00095) prior to rehousing. UAMN Photo.

Figure 22. A drawer of collections from the Siraagruk (WAI-00095) collection after rehousing. UAMN Photo.

NAGPRA Consultations & Repatriations FY2025

In FY2025, the BLM Alaska State Office program lead, Robin Mills, successfully brought four NAGPRA repatriation cases to closure, accounting for a minimum of 44 ancestral remains, 110 associated funerary objects (AFOs), and 69 unassociated funerary objects (UFOs) being repatriated to three federally-recognized Alaska Native tribes. The four cases involved: Native Village of Barrow (2 cases) (MNI= 43 ancestral remains; N= 45 AFOs; N=69 UFOs); Native Village of Kotzebue (N=65 AFOs), and the Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove (MNI= 1 ancestral remains).

In addition, the implementation of new NAGPRA regulations in early 2025 resulted in 18 museums providing museum statements to BLM Alaska for Alaskan collections they believed were controlled by the BLM. Of these, collections from 13 museums were ultimately determined to be BLM controlled, including: MNI=314 ancestral remains, N=545 AFOs, N=612 UFOs, 243,799 non-human burial artifacts, and 188 additional boxes of non-burial artifacts with an un-inventoried, unknown number of artifacts within them. From these collections, 75 separate initiate consultation letters were sent to 59 different Alaskan Tribes.

Paleontology Survey, Titaluk River, NPRA Alaska

Operating under BLM paleo permit AKAK106713794, University of Alaska paleontologists Drs. Pamela Groves and Daniel Mann surveyed by raft along the Titaluk River in the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska, from 27 June – 4 July, searching for Pleistocene fossils and other quaternary remains. They were dropped off and picked up by float plane. Over this time, they did not find any bones that were significant and worth collecting. They did collect 25 small sediment samples for sedaDNA analysis and six small samples of organic material for radiocarbon dating from an exposed section of the upper bluff at the Carter Section. The DNA samples will be analyzed at the University of Californian Santa Cruz and the radiocarbon samples at the KCCAMS facility at University of California Irvine after the DNA analysis.

Figure 23. The Carter Section on Titaluk River. Samples were collected at upper right. UAF Photo.

2024 HERITAGE PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT - BLM Alaska	
Identification	
Total number of proposed undertakings.	**110**
Literature reviews conducted by BLM or non-BLM.	**109**
Number of Class I Regional Overviews performed to standards in BLM Manual Section 8110.21A.1.	**0**
Number of undertakings on BLM and non-BLM lands for which Class III - Intensive Pedestrian Survey were completed.	**11**
Total number of acres of Class II Inventories completed on BLM-administered surface or Section 106 Undertakings.	**0**
Total number of acres of Class II Inventories completed on BLM-administered surface for Section 110 Comprehensive Program Work.	**128900**
Total number of acres of Class II Inventories.	**128900**
Total number of acres of Class III Inventories completed on BLM-administered surface for Section 106 Undertakings.	**199**
Total number of acres of Class III Inventories completed on BLM-administered surface for Section 110 Comprehensive Program Work.	**781**
Total number of acres of Class III Inventories.	**980**
Total number of cultural resources recorded on BLM-administered surface for which site or resource records were completed. Include only newly reported resources (i.e., updating or otherwise modifying existing site/resource records should not be reported).	**37**
Number of records scanned and/or digitized as part of the effort to populate NCRIMS.	**0**
Number of records that still need to be scanned and/or digitized as part of the effort to populate NCRIMS.	**0**
Number of Investigations entered into GIS and populated in NCRIMS in the reporting year.	**5**
Number of Resources entered into a GIS and populated in NCRIMS in the reporting year.	**8**
National Register of Historic Places	
Total number of BLM historic properties (buildings, districts, sites, objects, structure, traditional cultural properties) listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) during the reporting year.	**0**
Total number of cultural resources that were determined eligible for the National Register.	**6**
Total number of cultural resources that were determined not eligible for the National Register.	**0**
Total number of cultural resources that were recorded but not evaluated for eligibility for the National Register.	**28**
Protection	

Provide the following information for physical and administrative measures protecting cultural resources. Note that specific cultural resources may be counted in more than one protection measure if several measures are used. Only cultural resources that receive direct and site-specific protection should be included.	
Number of monitored cultural resources in stable condition	**26**
Number of monitored cultural resources noticeably deteriorating	**0**
Number of resources monitored.	**26**
Signing: Number of anti-looting/anti-vandalism signs installed specifically to protect cultural resources.	**0**
Fencing/Gating: Number of cultural resources enclosed or otherwise specifically protected by permanent fencing/gating projects.	**0**
Stabilization or Restoration: Number of cultural resources on which actions were taken to maintain them in their present condition and/or to arrest natural and human-caused deterioration.	**0**
Ongoing Protection Measures: Number of protection efforts or efforts directed toward maintenance or upkeep of existing protection strategies (e.g., number of damaged signs replaced, number of previously installed fences repaired, number of treatments maintained, such as reapplying mud to seal adobe walls or refilling holes dug by vandals).	**4**
Administrative Measures: Number of cultural resources protected by administrative measures taken for the express purpose of directly benefitting cultural resources (e.g., closure to off-highway vehicles and other use restrictions, withdrawal from mineral entry, ACEC designations). Count only known sites that receive protection from the administrative measure.	**0**
Effects	
Provide information for all undertakings or actions involving avoidance, minimization, mitigation and/or data recovery of effects on historic properties for the purpose of complying with the National Historic Preservation Act. The undertakings or actions may involve either BLM- or non-BLM-administered lands.	
Number of undertakings resulting in a No Historic Properties Affected determination.	**94**
Number of Undertakings resulting in a No Adverse Effect determination.	**12**
Number of undertakings resulting in an Adverse Effect determination.	**5**
Total number of historic properties where potential adverse effects of actions were avoided during the reporting year regardless of the reason for the avoidance (e.g. properties avoided by project redesign).	**7**
Number of undertakings involving non-BLM administered surface completed without pedestrian survey.	**27**
Number of Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) negotiated and signed during the year.	**0**
Number of Programmatic Agreements (PA) negotiated and signed during the year.	**1**
Total number of agreements (including Protocol) in effect during the year and authorized within your state (Only include multi-state agreements signed by your state's Authorized Officer).	**14**

Permits	
Total number of permit applications received.	**9**
Total number of permits in effect during the reporting year (including any that expired prior to or at the end of the year).	**21**
Permits issued under FLPMA.	**9**
Permits modified under FLPMA.	**1**
Permits issued under ARPA.	**0**
Permits modified under ARPA.	**0**
Number of permits issued to individuals.	**0**
Permits issued to consulting firms.	**9**
Permits issued to academic institutions.	**0**
Total number of permits under which work was conducted during the reporting year.	**9**
Total number of field checks conducted to assess permittee work.	**0**
Total number of ARPA notifications to Indian tribes or Alaska Native groups of proposed work (i.e., work to be done under permit, by agency, by permittee or under contract that may possibly harm or destroy properties having religious or cultural importance for the tribes). Report the number of individual actions for which Indian tribes were notified, not the actual number of tribes notified.	**0**
Public and Professional Outreach and Education	
Note: Units are not the same as quantity. For example, one new brochure is 1 unit, but the number printed (quantity produced) could be 1,000.	
Total number of BLM-sponsored or hosted public presentations (e.g., on-site or off-site, avocational meetings, community groups, classroom, fairs, etc.; should not include media presentations counted under K below).	**37**
Total number of people directly contacted by (or in the audience for) the above presentations.	**1230**
Total number of BLM-sponsored or hosted K-12 or youth group presentations (e.g., on-site or off-site, classroom visits, youth groups, science fairs).	**15**
Total number of students directly contacted by (or in the audience for) the above presentations.	**665**
Total number of presentations that use Project Archaeology materials.	**1**
Total number of collegiate field schools hosted.	**0**
Total number of college students in the above field schools.	**0**
Total number of professional conference presentations and articles published in professional journals by BLM personnel.	**1**
Total number of cultural resources for which public enhancement projects were completed. This includes on-the-ground measures which increase public awareness and appreciation for cultural properties such as interpretive signing, visitor trails, kiosks, brochures, CDs, and other media. Many of these measures may be done in conjunction with the other programs or through Section 106. ***List in your narrative the actual cultural properties for which these actions were completed by site name or number.***	**0**

Total number of educational or interpretive projects created (this includes curricula or lesson plans, artifact kits, loan trunks, and non-site specific museum or booth exhibits created). *List in your narrative the actual projects for which these actions were completed by project or site name or number.*	**0**
Total number of web pages published or updated.	**0**
Total number of popular media presentations and articles (e.g., press releases, magazine articles, radio or TV presentations, newsletters. Do NOT include public notices.).	**4**
Staffing	
We understand these numbers fluctuate through the year. **Populate only yellow cells.** Purple cells will autopopulate.	
Total number of Archaeologists	**6**
Number vacant at time of reporting	**1**
Total number of permanent, full-time 0193 Archaeologist positions	**6**
Number vacant at time of reporting	**1**
Total number of permanent, full-time 0102 Archaeology technicians	**0**
Number vacant at time of reporting	**0**
Total number of term or temp 0193 Archaeologists	**0**
Number vacant at time of reporting	**0**
Total number of term or temp 0102 Archaeology technicians	**0**
Number vacant at time of reporting	**0**
Total number of 0199 Pathways Archaeologists	**0**