

CLASS III CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY OF EASTERN  
RIO BLANCO METROPOLITAN RECREATION AND PARK  
DISTRICT'S MEEKER FISH PONDS,  
RIO BLANCO COUNTY,  
COLORADO

Jody J. Patterson

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COLORADO

Jody J. Patterson

Prepared For:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
400 Rood Avenue, Room 224  
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501

Prepared Under Contract With:

Jones and DeMille Engineering  
1535 South 100 West  
Richfield, Utah 84701

Prepared By:

Montgomery Archaeological Consultants, Inc.  
Jody J. Patterson, Principal Investigator  
P.O. Box 219  
Moab, Utah 84532

June 10, 2019

OHAP Project No. RB.AE.R2

MOAC Report No. 19-011

## ABSTRACT

In May, 2019, Montgomery Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (MOAC) conducted a Class III cultural resource survey for the Town of Meeker's Circle Park fish ponds. The project area is located in and adjacent to Circle Park in Meeker, Rio Blanco County, Colorado (Figure 1). The inventory was implemented at the request of Mr. Wyatt Shakespear, Jones and DeMille Engineering, Richfield, Utah. The lead agency for the proposed undertaking is the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The legal description of the project area is: Township 1 N, Range 94 West, Sections 23 and 26. The project area is situated on land administered by the town of Meeker and Private Property.

The inventory of the Circle Park fish ponds in Meeker, CO. resulted in the identification of one historic archaeological site (5RB.8997). The site falls entirely within the boundary of the historic David Smith Ranch (5RB.3659), a centennial farm site. A Cultural Resource Re-Visitation Form was not completed for the ranch because none of the structures described for the 4,775 acres ranch are within one mile of 5RB.8997).

Site 5RB.8997 is a small hydroelectric powerhouse established sometime between 1902 and 1905 and used until at least the 1914. The site is not associated with events of persons significant to our past (Criteria A and B). Furthermore, the powerhouse does not embody any distinctive characteristics of type, period, or method of construction (Criterion C). The site is not likely to yield information important to the history of the region (Criterion D). Therefore, site 5RB.8997 is recommended as not eligible for listing on the NRHP.

The Class III intensive cultural resource survey of the Meeker's proposed Circle Park fish ponds resulted in the identification of one historic archaeological site (5RB.8997). Site 5RB.8997 is recommended as not eligible to the NRHP since it fails to meet any of the significance criteria. The environmental specialist, Wyatt Shakespear, with Jones and DeMille Engineering indicated that the site will be avoided by the proposed undertaking. Based on these findings, a determination of "no historic properties affected" is proposed for this project pursuant to Section 106 of 36 CFR 800.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....i

FIGURES ..... ii

Cultural Resource Survey Management Information Form..... iii

INTRODUCTION .....1

    ENVIRONMENT .....1

PREVIOUS WORK AND CULTURAL HISTORY .....2

    File Search .....2

    Cultural History .....3

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS .....3

FIELD METHODS.....3

INVENTORY RESULTS.....4

EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .....5

REFERENCES CITED .....6

APPENDIX A: .....8

FIGURES

Figure 1. Park Fish Ponds Cultural Resource Survey Project Area Showing Cultural Resources.....v

History Colorado-Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation  
**Colorado Cultural Resource Survey**  
 Cultural Resource Survey Management Information Form

**I. PROJECT SIZE**

Total federal acres in project	<u>0</u>	Total federal acres surveyed	<u>0</u>
Total state acres in project	<u>0</u>	Total state acres surveyed	<u>0</u>
Total private acres in project	<u>0.25</u>	Total private acres surveyed	<u>0.25</u>
Total other acres in project	<u>5.0</u>	Total other acres surveyed	<u>5.0</u>

**II. PROJECT LOCATION**

County: Rio Blanco  
 USGS Quad Map: Meeker, Colo. (1966)  
 Principal Meridian: 6th

Township	<u>1N</u>	Range	<u>94W</u>	Section	<u>23</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>SW</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>SW</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>SW</u>	<u>1/4</u>
Township	<u>1N</u>	Range	<u>94W</u>	Section	<u>23</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>SW</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>SW</u>	<u>1/4</u>
Township	<u>1N</u>	Range	<u>94W</u>	Section	<u>26</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>NW</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>NW</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>NW</u>	<u>1/4</u>
Township	<u>1N</u>	Range	<u>94W</u>	Section	<u>26</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>NE</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>NW</u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u>NW</u>	<u>1/4</u>
Township	<u></u>	Range	<u></u>	Section	<u></u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u></u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u></u>	<u>1/4</u>	<u></u>	<u>1/4</u>

**III. SITES**

Smithsonian Number	Resource Type				Eligibility				Management Recommendations						
	Prehistoric	Historic	Paleontological	Unknown	Eligible	Not Eligible	Need Data	Contributes to a District	No Further Work	Preserve / Avoid	Monitor	Test	Excavate	Archival Research	Other
5RB.8997		X				X			X						

**IV. ISOLATED FINDS**

Smithsonian Number	Resource Type			
	Prehistoric	Historic	Paleontological	Unknown

Smithsonian Number	Resource Type			
	Prehistoric	Historic	Paleontological	Unknown

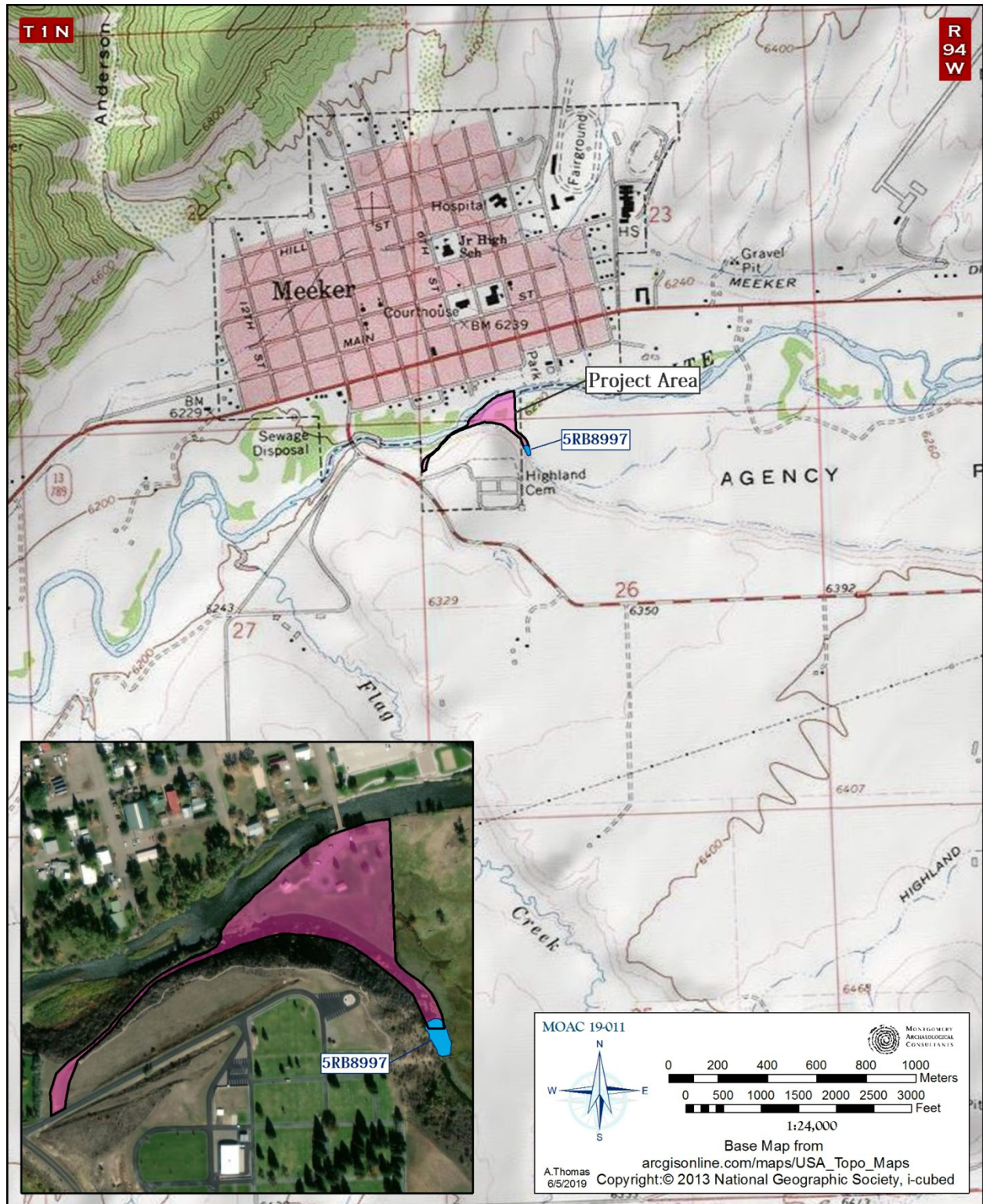
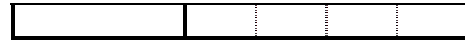


Figure 1. Park Fish Ponds Cultural Resource Survey Project Area Showing Cultural Resources.

**For Official Use Only: Disclosure of Site Locations Prohibited (43 C.F.R. § 7.18)**



## INTRODUCTION

In May, 2019, Montgomery Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (MOAC) conducted a Class III cultural resource survey for the Town of Meeker's Circle Park fish ponds. The project area is located in and adjacent to Circle Park in Meeker, Rio Blanco County, Colorado (Figure 1). The inventory was implemented at the request of Mr. Wyatt Shakespear, Jones and DeMille Engineering, Richfield, Utah. The lead agency for the proposed undertaking is the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The legal description of the project area is: Township 1 N, Range 94 West, Sections 23 and 26. The project area is situated on land administered by the town of Meeker and Private Property.

The objective of the inventory was to locate, document, and evaluate any cultural resources within the project area in order to comply with Section 106 of 36 CFR 800, of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended). Also, the inventory was implemented to attain compliance with a number of federal and state mandates, including the Antiquities Act of 1906, the Historic Sites Act of 1935, National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, and the Historic Preservation Act of 1980.

Jody J. Patterson (Principal Investigator) and Adam Thomas preformed the fieldwork on May 31, 2019.

## ENVIRONMENT

In general, the project area lies at the extreme eastern edge of the Uinta Basin Section of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province. It is on along the flank of the Uncompaghre Uplift, a mountainous island that rose along the Colorado-Utah border beginning during the mid-Pennsylvanian geologic time period. The Uncompaghre Uplift is the westernmost geologic island of the present Rocky Mountains. At the time of the uplift, geologic strata included Precambrian sediments as well as later marine sedimentary layers. During the latter part of the Paleozoic era and the early part of the Mesozoic era, the marine sedimentary layers were completely eroded. Later Mesozoic strata accumulated, including the Chinle, Wingate Sandstone, Kayenta, Entrada Sandstone, Morrison, Burro Canyon and Dakota Sandstone Formations. Later deposits were eroded when the Uncompaghre Plateau rose to its present elevation (Chronic 1988:34,80-83).

The project area is located in a semi-arid continental climate regime, characterized by little precipitation and extreme evaporation as well as large diurnal temperature changes. Temperatures vary mostly with elevation, and to a lesser extent, local microclimate. Generally, summer temperatures range from lows of 45 degrees F to highs of 85 degrees. Winter temperatures range from 5 degrees F to 35 degrees F. Frost-free periods tend to range from 60 to 150 days. Annual precipitation ranges between 12 and 16 inches, and the surrounding mountains receive up to 20 inches.

Major topographic features in the immediate area include the Grand Hogback and Agency Park. Other features in the surrounding area include Meeker Dome, Rattlesnake Mesa, Powell Park, and, Buckskin Mesa. The primary water source for the project area is the White River, immediately to the north of the project area. The elevation of the project area averages 6170 feet AMSL along the banks of the White River. The project area lies in the Shale Desert and Sedimentary Basin ecoregion where vegetation



typically consists of salt brush, bud sagebrush, galleta grass, greasewood, and seep weed. Within the project area, the natural vegetation has been replaced primarily with sedges and grasses which have grown in wet fallowed agricultural land.

## **PREVIOUS WORK AND CULTURAL HISTORY**

### **File Search**

A record search was performed by Jody J. Patterson and online with the Colorado State History “COMPASS” website on March 25 and June 03, 2019. These consultations indicated that numerous cultural resource evaluations have been completed within the immediate project area.

In 1978 a cultural resource inventory for the Meeker Airport was completed. This inventory occurred in T1N, R93W Section 18, and in T1N, R94W, Sections 13 and 24. No cultural resources were identified during the survey (Wignall 1978).

In 1979, Colorado State University surveyed the West Divide Project in Garfield, Rio Blanco, and Mesa Counties (LaPoint 1979). Survey near the current project area occurred in T1N R94W, Sections 22, 23, and 24. No cultural resources were identified in proximity to the Meeker Fish Ponds local.

An additional survey related to the Meeker airport was completed in 1987 (Wignall 1987). The survey occurred in T1N, R93W, Section 13 and T1N, R94W, Sections 13 and 24. No cultural resources were identified.

In 1991, North Platte Archaeological Consultants surveys a proposed seismic line that passed through T1N, R94W, Section 22. No cultural resources were found during the survey (Frizell and Frizell 1991).

The following year, 1992, the BLM surveyed a proposed access ROW in T1N, R94W, Sections 14 and 15 (Rholl 1992). The survey worked failed to identify any cultural resources.

In 2000, Centennial Archaeology surveyed significant portions of State Highway 13, which passed north of the current project area in T1N, R94W, Section 23 (Sherman et al. 2000).

Also in 2000, Intermountain Archaeology completed an inventory for the Uintah Basin Communications Project, which included survey in T1N, R94W, Sections 22, 23, and 24 along State Highway 13 (Bernard 2000). No cultural resources were identified.

In 2001, the BLM surveyed a fuels reduction in T1N, R94W, Section 21 (Hadden 2001), in which no cultural resources were found.

In 2009, Reid Architects documented historic structures in the town of Meeker, Colorado (Reid 2009). The inventory resulted in the documentation of 18 structures in T1N, R94W, Sections 22 and 23.

Additional expansion of the Meeker Airport necessitated additional cultural resource inventory in 2010 (Richard 2010). The inventory occurred in T1N, R93W, Sections 7 and 18, and T1N, R94W, Sections 13 and 24. The inventory, completed by TRC Environmental, resulted in no cultural resources identified.

In 2011, Grand River Institute surveyed a 69-KV power line that crossed through T1N, R94W, Sections 21 and 22 (Davenport 2011). No cultural resources were identified in the vicinity of the current project area.

Starting in 2012, the BLM surveyed various portions of the Dorcas Jensen Ute Park Connector Train in T1N, R94W, Sections 14, 15, and 22 (Bowen 2012; Wolfe 2012; Ramirez and Bowen 2013). None of these surveys yielded any cultural resources.

## **Cultural History**

Previous investigations in the area indicate occupations predominately related to the ethnohistoric and historic periods. A number of regional overviews of varying details and scope have been published for the region. These include the Colorado Historic Contexts documents: *Colorado Historical Archaeology Context* (Buckles and Buckles 1984), *Colorado Plateau Country History Context* (Husband 1984).

## **STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS**

The objectives of the cultural resource inventory were to locate, document, and evaluate any cultural resources within the proposed project area. These objectives were accomplished by conducting an intensive pedestrian survey in order to identify surface indications of all cultural resources. The previous identification of prehistoric and historic sites in the area suggested a low possibility for prehistoric sites and a moderate probability for the presence of historic archaeological sites.

Previous work in the area has indicated the presence of prehistoric and historic sites within the alluvial bottom and ridges above the White River floodplain. The historic record indicates that in 1885 the town of Meeker was mapped with some of the military buildings constructed for the Cantonment on the White River purchased by settlers, hence forming the core of the townsite (Athearn 1988:8). The first settlers along the White River employed the bottomland for irrigated agriculture. In 1879, Nathan Meeker built several ditches across the river upland to grow crops. The General Land Office (GLO) maps dated 1886 and 1906 show an extensive canal system in the vicinity of Meeker (Athearn 1988:9). Named canals in this region include the Powell Park Ditch (originally named the Jordan Lateral) dating from before 1897; the Hay Bretherton ditch dug between 1891 and 1900; and the Pease Ditch which dates around 1895 (Rio Blanco County Courthouse Records). An examination of historic and modern aerial photographs indicates a large structure is present at the edge of the project area. It is expected that historic cultural resources dating from the settlement period up to 50 years ago could be found in the inventory area.

## **FIELD METHODS**

An intensive pedestrian survey was performed for this project, which is considered 100% coverage. The project area was loaded into a Trimble GPS unit. The interior of the project area was examined for cultural resources by the archaeologists walking parallel transects spaced no more than 15 meters apart.

Ground visibility was very poor. A total of 5.25 acres was inventoried on property owned by the Town of Meeker and on private property. No cultural materials were collected during this project.

Archaeological sites were defined as spatially definable areas with features and/or ten or more artifacts. Sites were documented by the archaeologists walking transects across the site, spaced no more than 3 meters apart, marking the locations of cultural materials with pinflags. This procedure allowed clear definition of site boundaries and artifact concentrations. Archaeological sites were plotted on a 7.5' USGS quadrangle, and photographed with site data entered on Colorado Cultural Resource Management Forms.

## INVENTORY RESULTS

The inventory of the Circle Park fish ponds in Meeker, CO. resulted in the identification of one historic archaeological site (5RB.8997). The site falls entirely within the boundary of the historic David Smith Ranch (5RB.3659), a centennial farm site. A Cultural Resource Re-Visitation Form was not completed for the ranch because none of the structures described for the 4,775 acres ranch are within one mile of 5RB.8997).

### Archaeological Sites

Smithsonian Site No.: 5RB.8997  
Temporary Site No.: MOAC 19-011-JP01  
NRHP Assessment: Not Eligible

Description: The site consists of a small stone foundation of unknown function, a powerhouse, a small dam, and a water supply canal. The powerhouse and dam were built ca. 1903 and abandoned in 1914. The dam served to retain a small pond of water covering 1200 sq. ft. The supply canal extends south and east of the structure approximately 0.9 mile to its origin at the White River. The structures at the site are all of the same re-enforced concrete construction. No artifacts were observed at the site.

Very little information could be found relating to the site in historical documentation. What little could be found came primarily from the Meeker Herald, the local town paper. The powerhouse and dam located immediately south of Meeker was built ca. 1903 sometime after Meeker Ordinance 71, which established the right to construct the facility, passed in 1902. The operator, Meeker Power, Heat, and Light, provided power to the city as well as individual costumers. Regular invoices were paid to the operator over the next decade. Between 1913 and 1914, the tax assessment of the company tripled, ultimately forcing the company to dissolve. It is probable that equipment and supplies were liquidated and the facilities abandoned prior to the company formally dissolving.

## EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Register Criteria for Evaluation of Significance and procedures for nominating cultural resources to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are outlined in 36 CFR 60.4 as follows:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of State and local importance that possess

integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association, and that they:

a)...are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

b)...are associated with the lives of persons significant to our past; or

c)...embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; or that represents the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

d)...have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Site 5RB.8997 is a small hydroelectric powerhouse established sometime between 1902 and 1905 and used until at least the 1914. The site is not associated with events of persons significant to our past (Criteria A and B). Furthermore, the powerhouse does not embody any distinctive characteristics of type, period, or method of construction (Criterion C). The site is not likely to yield information important to the history of the region (Criterion D). Therefore, site 5RB.8997 is recommended as not eligible for listing on the NRHP.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The Class III intensive cultural resource survey of the Meeker's proposed Circle Park fish ponds resulted in the identification of one historic archaeological site (5RB.8997). Site 5RB.8997 is recommended as not eligible to the NRHP since it fails to meet any of the significance criteria. The environmental specialist, Wyatt Shakespear, with Jones and DeMille Engineering indicated that the site will be avoided by the proposed undertaking. Based on these findings, a determination of "no historic properties affected" is proposed for this project pursuant to Section 106 of 36 CFR 800.

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**APPENDIX A:**

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5RB.8997 Site Forms