ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES AND PRIVATE PROPERTY: PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS AND INTERPRETATION

Can the public benefit from privately owned sites?

People are fascinated by archaeology, and one of the ways we can satisfy our curiosity to learn more about the past is by visiting archaeologi- cal sites. While some of the most important archaeological sites in Florida are located in parks and preserves, many sites are found on private land. Privately owned sites, however, can be made accessible to the public and enjoyed by everyone in a variety of ways that are compatible with private ownership.

Why give public access to archaeological sites on private property?

Archaeological sites connect us to those who lived before us. They remind us that we were not Florida’s first inhabitants, and that we share our history with other peoples. Archaeological sites help us understand that certain places deserve protection and stewardship for their cultural, scientific, and even spiritual significance. For property owners, providing public access can contribute to an appreciation of their community’s heritage, as well as support local tourism, and can even provide tax benefits for sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

What are some of the ways in which the public might access privately owned archaeological sites?

While not all archaeological sites are well suited to public visitation, others can be opened to the public in ways that are consistent with private ownership. Some options are listed here:

Scheduled Site Visits

Public access to an archaeological site can be planned to accommodate an owner. Visits can be frequent, say on a monthly basis, or infrequent, as in a seasonal event, or even simply upon request. In some cases, owners may arrange with local organizers, like museums and historical societies, to manage visitation.

Published Materials

Whether or not archaeological sites are opened to the public, they can be interpreted through a wide variety of published materials like brochures, pamphlets, walking guides, driving or cycling guides, historical narratives, videos, books, and newspaper and magazine articles.

There is a wealth of literature available on Florida's heritage.

For More Information

Publications


Internet Resources

Old City Cemetery: The Virtual Walking Tour
www.state.fl.us/cityth/public_works/occwchead.html

The Aucilla River Prehistoric Project: A Virtual Exhibit of the Florida Museum of Natural History
www.ilmnh.edu/natsci/vertnaleo/aucci/ arpr01.html

The National Park Service, Southeast Archaeological Center: Links to the Past
www.cr.nps.gov/soac/