SITE

(prepared by the Nevada Archaeological Conservation (TAC), owner of the site south of Lovelock. Smith is an Associate Professor and Executive Director of the UNR Department of Anthropology’s Great Basin Paleoindian Research Unit.

“It (the proposal) lays out the reason why we are returning — to evaluate an old claim that the site contains a Clovis-aged occupation,” he said last week. “If that is correct, it would be a big deal. However, with the only information collected by the site’s original excavators, we have no way of knowing.

PRIVATE PRESERVE

To protect the site for such research, TAC bought 640 acres of private land in 2002 from the Pacific Gold Cord Corporation, said Cory Wilkins, Western Regional Director for TAC. Those interested in learning more about Leonard Rockshelter must contact the group and request a tour of the site.

Leonard Rockshelter is part of a series of caves and shelters in the Humboldt Range. Shelters and caves were eroded by the wave action of Lake Lahontan. Scientists say Lake Lahontan’s final highest level around 15,300 years ago then gradually receded leaving behind a cluster of prehistoric human occupation.

After guano miners found artifacts in 1936, Leonard Rockshelter was excavated in 1937 and 1950 by archaeologist Robert Heizer of the University of California, Berkeley. He unearthed a “modest assemblage” of stone, fiber and wooden artifacts including wooden atlatl foreshafts, obsidian flakes and projectile points. Obsidian flakes were recovered by Heizer from below a layer that contained no radio carbon dated to around 13,000 years ago. If the age of obsidian flakes and other material is confirmed, that could indicate the rockshelter was inhabited prior to that time during the terminal Pleistocene Epoch. The Pleistocene Epoch, otherwise known as the Ice Age, lasted from about 2.6 million years ago to 11,000 years ago and was followed by the current Holocene Epoch.

“By clear evidence of human occupation (e.g., obsidian flakes) does exist in a primary context below deposits dating to 13,000 years ago then the outstanding finding is the growing list of Clovis-aged (and perhaps, pre-Clovis) occupations in North America,” Smith said.

BEETLE SCIENCE

Leonard Rockshelter artifacts were some of the first to be radio carbon dated, a new research method at the time. Wooden foreshafts that served as part of a weapon system tipped with chert or obsidian projectile points were directly dated to around 7900 years ago placing them near the beginning of the middle Holocene Epoch. Smith said that it improved so new dates on sediment and artifacts should be more accurate than Heizer’s earlier estimates.

In his research proposal, Smith details the nature of the evidence he is looking for:

“The primary goal of our proposed work is to test the hypothesis that Leonard Rockshelter contains evidence of human occupation dat- ing to the terminal Pleistocene. Evidence needed to support this hypothesis includes artifacts or features of unquestionable human origin situated at the same depth or more than that of the site. Smith said his team will exca-

vate smaller increments of sediment in a trench and look for charcoal earlier by Heizer’s team. A large block of rock, from the cliff above the rockshelter, may be broken loose and washed down the hill by the construction of a new road that ground can be excavated, Smith says in his proposal.

GUARDIANS NEEDED

Meanwhile, Wilkins would like to recruit local volunteers as site stewards, to help him keep an eye on the place. Site stewards visit TAC preserves and report any threats to the sites. Vandals and theft can destroy unique evidence of ancient human history. The group’s objective is to preserve the Leonard Rockshelter and other sites for further research. “The site is frag- ile and can’t be treated the way you would a house,” Wilkins said. There can be big penalties for looting or damaging archaeological sites but they vary from state to state, he said.

Wilkins said he’s looking for more sites in need of protection. TAC buys archaeological sites on private property that would other-

wise be paved over and destroyed by modern development.

“Right now, my push is Great Basin archaeology,” he said. “We’re looking at anything before the challenge in Nevada is there’s so much public land. The BLM, Forest Service and other public agencies own 82 percent of Nevada so that limits private prop-
erty that’s for sale that has archaeo-

logical importance. There may be BLM property so BLM archaeologists manage that site.” Wilkins said he’ll give tours of Leonard Rockshelter upon request.

There are petroglyphs on layers of tufa “pillows” covering parts of the cliff above and fallen boulders below conceal dark chambers that could still hold undiscovered clues about the shelter’s former inhabitants.

As for how many animals will be seen at the auction. On June 2 and Oct. 20, 2018, at the BLM’s Palomino Valley office in Winnemucca, NV, 10-year-old animals and others who have failed to be adopted during three adoption events are offered to the highest bidders in online auctions. Animals not adopted or sold eventually end up at long-
term holding facilities when there’s space available, she said.

“Self at facilities that use the Corral makes it an easy horse to work with and you will have to take your time but she is so very athletic and smart that someone who has patience can go any direction with her and the training is through the trail ride to run across the line or maybe even some rodeo,” he said.

Wild horses have been trained for the line in dressage, rodeo and other horse events. Burros can be trained as pack animals and make good com-

ponent animals according to the BLM. The Online Corral is a work-in-

progress. Last week, due to a glitch in the system, some bidders were incorrectly told they were the high-

est bidders in the recent wild horse and burro auction.

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