

Site Record Submission FAQs

Q: How do I know if a resource warrants a state site number?

TDOA does not define a site by an arbitrary number of artifacts or other specific criteria. With six different physiographic regions, evidence of archaeological resources varies widely across the state. We generally leave it to the archaeologists in the field to determine what they feel constitutes sufficient evidence of an archaeological site, given the context and survey limitations.

That said, Site File Curators evaluate all site record submissions, and in some cases determine that, based on the information provided, a submitted site does not warrant a site number. Any time you are in doubt about whether a resource warrants a site number please feel free to contact us for a preliminary review prior to filling out the site record submission.

Here are some resources that typically do not warrant a site number:

Isolated Finds With the exception of temporally diagnostic prehistoric artifacts, isolated finds do not warrant state site numbers, though if the isolated find is near a previously recorded site or a newly recorded site that you are submitting please include the location on the site boundary map and a description in the “Relationships to nearby sites” narrative in the Supporting Documentation section.

Historic cemeteries TDOA records historic cemeteries as a component of historic sites, such as a church or farmstead, but they do not warrant a site number on their own. The Tennessee Historical Commission is in the process of creating a system for tracking historic cemeteries, but for now it is sufficient for our purposes to include their location and description in survey reports.

Stone fences or walls As with cemeteries, stacked stone fences or walls will be recorded as a component of a datable historic farm, but do not warrant state site numbers on their own.

Post-1950 Historic Sites TDOA does not record historic sites that lack sufficient evidence of pre-1950 occupation. This determination will be based on the evidence submitted by the site reporter.

Q: How are historic date ranges determined and what constitutes sufficient evidence of pre-1950 occupation?

TDOA records historic date range based on the period of likely occupation of a site, rather than the date range of artifact manufacture. The same evidence used to establish historic date range is also used to establish pre-1950 occupation. This can include:

- Historic maps, ownership records, or other archival documentation (images of, links to, or location of this documentation is required).
- Architectural evidence from a structure or structural remains showing pre-1950 construction techniques or architectural features (photos are required).
- In the absence of either of the above, a preponderance of demonstrably pre-1950 artifacts may suffice. This *does not* include artifacts that might have been manufactured before 1950 based on manufacturing date ranges (artifact list with date ranges required; photos may be requested).

Q: How do I update a previously recorded site?

Fill out the entire site record, making sure to select Previously Recorded Site as the Record Type. If the current investigation resulted in changes to items in the Cultural Affiliation and Site Type section, please fill this section out along with the corresponding Supporting Documentation. If not, this section can be skipped.

Please note that more recent investigations do not negate previous ones; thus site record updates are not intended to replace older site records, they add to them. For this reason, TDOA does not remove recorded site data such as site type, cultural affiliation, or historic date range unless it is determined that the previously recorded data is incorrect.

For example, if an Early Archaic site is revisited, but shovel testing finds only non-diagnostic flakes, those results would not change the cultural affiliation of the site to Undetermined Prehistoric. However, if reanalysis of the artifacts from the original investigation determines the temporally diagnostic artifact was misidentified, the cultural affiliation could be changed. A detailed explanation of this correction should be included in the narrative.

Similarly, TDOA will not revise a site boundary to exclude a previously recorded area unless it is clear the site was inaccurately mapped. TDOA will expand a site boundary if additional investigations show evidence that the site continues outside of the current boundaries. If you propose a revision to the site boundary a detailed description of the evidence as well as a map that supports your proposed revision is required.

Please contact a TDOA Site File Curator if you have any questions about what is needed for a particular site update.

Q: How long will it take to receive a site number?

Site File Curators carefully review every submission for accuracy and completion prior to assigning state site numbers. It is important to allow sufficient time for a thorough review when requesting site numbers. Here are some of the common reasons for delay:

Volume of Submissions Whether due to seasonal variation in the volume of archaeological work being done in the state or the influx of large projects with multiple sites, the volume of submissions can affect how quickly review and site number assignment is done. With large projects resulting in multiple recorded and/or revisited sites, site reporters might consider sending in site record submissions in smaller batches as they go, rather than waiting until the end of the project to submit all sites at once.

Incomplete Submission Evidence must be provided in the narrative to support basic site data selections made on the first two pages.

For example, photos of temporally diagnostic artifacts are required if you select any cultural affiliations other than Undetermined Prehistoric (this applies to Site Record Updates only if you are changing the cultural affiliation). Similarly, the selected historic date range must be supported with evidence such as historic maps, ownership documentation, or artifact lists.

Contradictory Submission The information provided in the narratives and uploads must match the basic site data selections. Contradictions commonly occur in historic date ranges that don't align with the description in the narrative or a map that doesn't match the description of the boundary.

Map Issues- A USGS topo map showing the site location and including a north arrow and scale is required with every site record submission. If that map is not at a scale that clearly shows the site boundary, an additional map is required.

A shovel test map on aerial imagery is not required, but can speed up the review process significantly. A map showing the site boundary on aerial imagery may be requested by site file curators, if needed.

Boundary Revision If site boundaries are not logical given the archaeological evidence, landform, context of the surrounding area, or level of investigation, site file curators may request the boundaries be revised.

Barring any of the above, site numbers will generally be assigned within ten days of submission receipt.

Q: How are site boundaries determined?

Whenever possible TDOA prefers to record site boundaries as submitted by the site reporter; however, site file curators will revise or request revision of site boundaries based on all evidence available to us. This evidence includes, but is not limited to, what is on the site record submission.

Here are some things to take into consideration when drawing site boundaries:

- Site boundaries should be based on archaeological and/or historic evidence, landform, context, and the expertise of the archaeologist in the field.
- Site boundaries should extend to *at least* the distance of a transect past the last positive shovel test, regardless of whether that places the site boundary outside of the survey area, and can be extended further if indicated by landform or context.
- If a historic site is related to a structure on historic maps, the site boundary should include the historic structure.
- For large historic sites such as plantations or industrial complexes (i.e. mines or manufacturing plants) every effort should be made to determine the historic tract boundary and that boundary should be used as the archaeological site boundary.
- Unless it can be shown that a previously recorded site was incorrectly mapped, revised boundaries cannot exclude any portion of the original site.

- Site reporters must include a detailed explanation of how the site boundary was determined for both new sites and updated sites for which a boundary revision is being proposed.
- Thoroughly documenting all factors in site delineation can avoid significant delays in processing submissions, but more importantly it will give future researchers the information they need to assess the accuracy of the data.

If you have any doubt about an appropriate site boundary for a new or updated site, please contact a site file curator for preliminary review prior to submission.

Q: How is the TDOA Site File related to the Tennessee SHPO?

The Site File is not part of the SHPO and is not involved in review and compliance; however, there are some aspects of site record submission that pertain to reporting guidelines. Here are some things to keep in mind when submitting site forms and writing reports:

- Site records for both new and updated sites must be submitted for review prior to submittal of draft reports to the TNSHPO. Reports that only include field numbers/names will not be accepted.
- Drafts of site records that have not been reviewed and finalized by a site file curator should NOT be included in the report. This applies to both new and updated site records. TNSHPO does not require site records to be included in survey reports, but if they are included they must be the final version.
- When submitting site records it is important to allow for sufficient time for a thorough review of and, if necessary, revisions. Site records should be submitted prior to or early in the report-writing process to ensure the report includes the most accurate site information.

For questions regarding reporting guidelines or Section 106 review and compliance, please contact the Federal Programs Archaeologist. Current Tennessee SHPO Standards and Guidelines can be found here:

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/environment/archaeology/documents/arch_TN_SHPO_2018.pdf