

LA 37919 (AR-03-06-06-00826)  
APACHE WOODS

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Apache Woods was initially recorded by the NMSHTD (Koczan 1982) as a potential cobble mound and lithic artifact scatter occupying opposite sides of U.S. 180. The OAS conducted a testing program to determine the depth of the lithic materials and the extent of the cobble mound which was thought to represent a small Pueblo roomblock. Test pits were dug on the site and auger tests were placed within the major lithic artifact concentrations. Five of the test pits were situated within the potential cobble mound.

After testing was completed, it was evident that the cobbles had mounded as a result of roadbed clearing for the original highway. However, lithic artifacts were present on both sides of the highway to an approximate depth of 15 cm. One San Jose-like projectile point (short-barbed type) dating from the Middle to Late Archaic period (Irwin-Williams 1973) was recovered from the site surface. A few Alma Brown Ware sherds were also within the right-of-way.

Excavations by OAS isolated several areas of lithic concentrations, a possible hearth, and an area of charcoal-flecked soil (Fig. 2.84). Again, only a few Alma series sherds were recovered. No structural features were encountered. Two C-14 samples produced a date in the 1400s for the site, placing it into a likely Athabaskan period occupation, considering the almost exclusive presence of lithic artifacts. Site size is 115 m northwest-southeast by 70 m northeast-southwest and 8,050 sq m in area. About 65 percent of the site lies within the highway right-of-way.

Apache Woods sits diagonally across the road from LA 70189, Lightning Strike. This is a five or six-room pueblo of the Reserve phase located just outside of the right-of-way to the southwest. Numerous sherds lie within the highway corridor; however, the site does not seem to be associated with the lithic artifact scatter at Apache Woods. An Athabaskan-dated roasting pit was identified at Lightning Strike (see site description) and this may be part of the larger Apache occupation of the area.

Two other Athabaskan sites are located nearby, but at a higher elevation in the foothills of the San Francisco Mountains at .6 km and 1.0 km distance to the northwest. LA 37917 and LA 70188 both have Athabaskan components and are in a similar environmental setting, although

situated on sloping ridges rather than on flat terrain as is Apache Woods.

#### SITE SETTING

Apache Woods sits on level ground directly at the base of the mountain foothills of Prairie Point Peak at an elevation of 1,987.2 m (6,520 ft). The site is covered with yellow pine, pinyon, juniper, and scrub oak in fairly dense stands which are, however, interspersed with open areas (Fig. 2.85). Dry Leggett Canyon runs .6 km to the southwest of the site. It is intermittent, but can produce heavy flows during wet periods.

The ground surface is covered with heavy duff under trees and in bushy areas. Open areas are not covered and a modern car pull-out on the site is also open, although the surface there has been heavily compacted.

Wild game is plentiful in the area and resources such as piñon nuts and acorns are readily available. Agriculture could be pursued by site occupants if forest clearing was first implemented.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the almost exclusive presence of lithic artifacts, including a possible San Jose type projectile point, the site was expected to be a Late Archaic campsite with several hearths or pits. Comparison with several other Archaic sites on the project was anticipated to yield data on changing or differing mobility patterns of Archaic peoples through analyses of the various chipped stone assemblages. Kelly's (1988) biface reduction model was to be implemented. Tool use was to be examined for evidence of a variety of subsistence strategies. Floral and faunal remains should be recovered from the hearths or pits on the site providing important data on types of subsistence items utilized, seasonality of acquisition, and whether or not storage or long-range planning was evident.

Excavations have indicated that Apache Woods is an Athabaskan rather than Archaic occupation.

The C-14 dates suggest an early Athabaskan date in the 1400s for the site. Other lithic artifact sites in the surrounding area have also proven to have Athabaskan

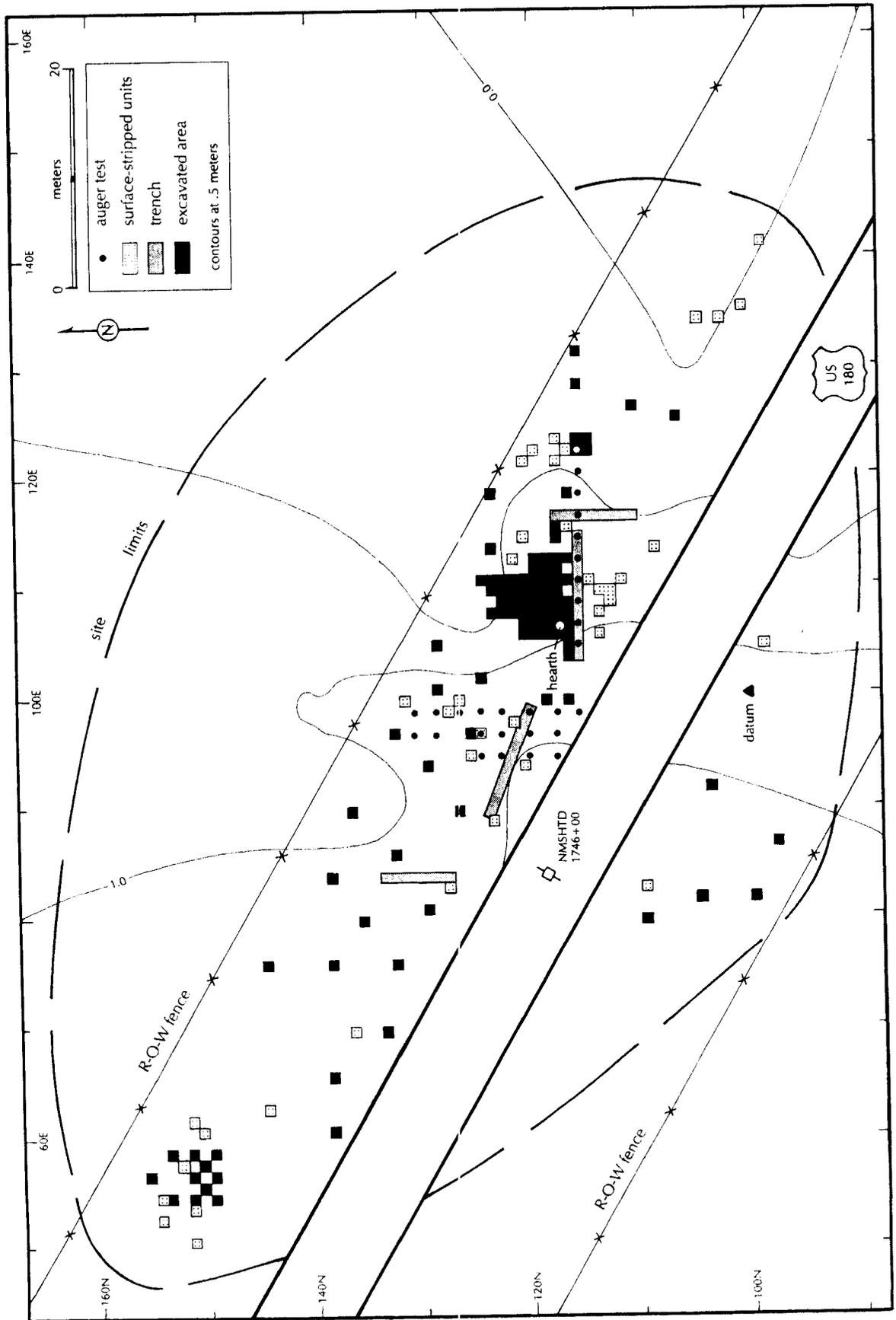


Figure 2.84. LA 37919, Apache Woods.

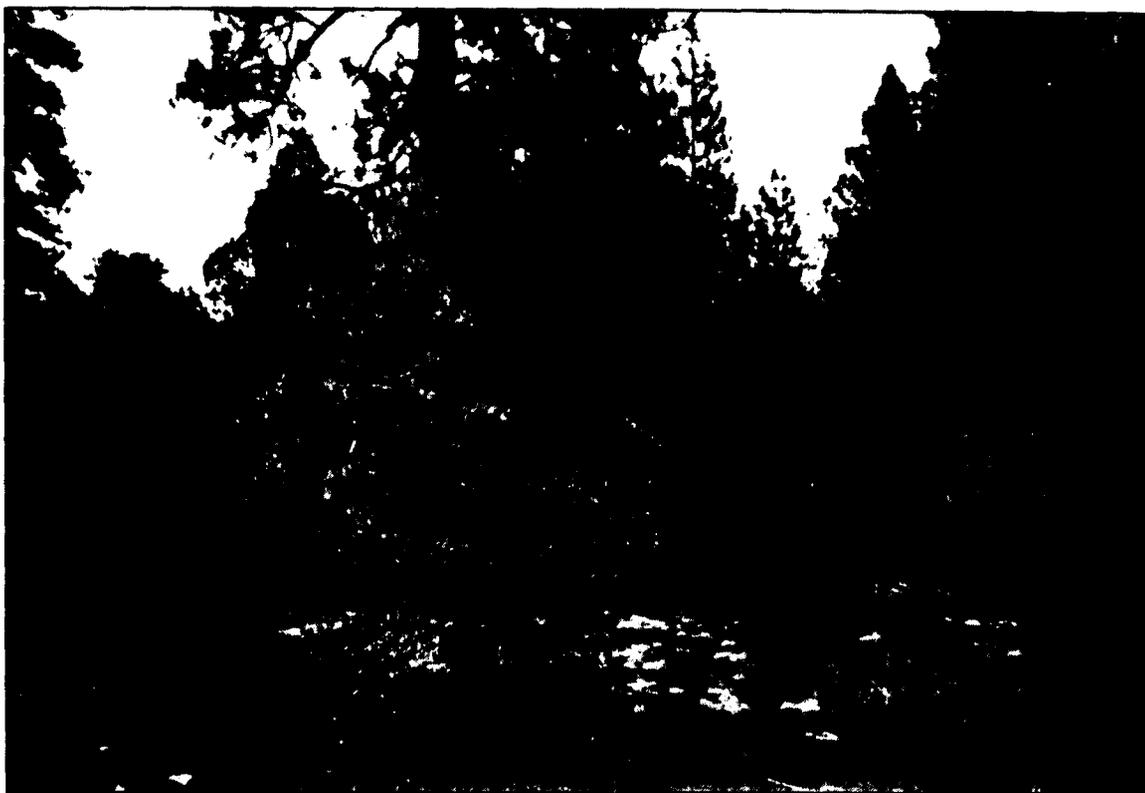


Figure 2.85. Apache Woods, within an open clearing, facing northeast.

components. This later date does not, however, negate the original research objectives. As stated for LA 37917 (Rocky Hill), Athabaskan and Archaic peoples had surprisingly similar subsistence adaptations, making the data recovery plan appropriate for either group.

#### EXCAVATION PROCEDURES

Ten 1-by-1-m test pits were placed over the site during the testing program, five on each side of U.S. 180 in areas of artifact concentrations and the potential cobble mound. Type of soil matrix, depth of cultural fill, and presence or absence of charcoal were noted. The average depth of the tests was 27 cm before reaching sterile soil. In addition, 31 auger tests were placed systematically within the highest density artifact scatters. A total of 74 artifacts were recovered from the test pits (70 lithic artifacts and 4 Alma Brown Wares). As a result of the testing program, several areas of lithic concentrations were identified and a possible hearth or pit was isolated at 10 cm in depth.

For the excavation of the site, datum was set at 100N/100E, using the same north-south and east-west baselines that were established during testing with a transit and stadia rod. Excavations began with 1-by-1-m grid units placed in the open areas between vegetative stands where artifacts were most visible. They were also con-

centrated in the area of charcoal staining observed during testing. Soil was excavated in natural levels until a non-cultural, sterile clay substrate was reached, usually a 5YR 4/4 (reddish brown) on the Munsell color chart. All dirt was screened through ¼-inch mesh.

The upper 30 cm of soil was consistently a dark brown loam (7.5YR 3/2) with some rock and much root disturbance, which frequently created a mottled effect. All cultural material was found in this level. Soil, after this level, gradually changed to a compact reddish clay, which was culturally sterile. Four subsequent backhoe trenches were dug at the completion of the hand-dug excavations to insure that no cultural features were present, and revealed this same pattern of soil deposition. No subsurface features were found.

The testing and excavation programs within the highway right-of-way excavated 100 grids and surface collected 41 more. A total of 14.7 cu m of dirt was removed through hand-digging and another 17.9 cu m through mechanical removal for a site total of 32.6 cu m. Mean depth of excavation units was 13.8 cm.

#### CULTURAL UNITS

Excavations uncovered no structural features at Apache Woods, with the exception of a single hearth area. Subsurface charcoal flecking was sparse and occurred

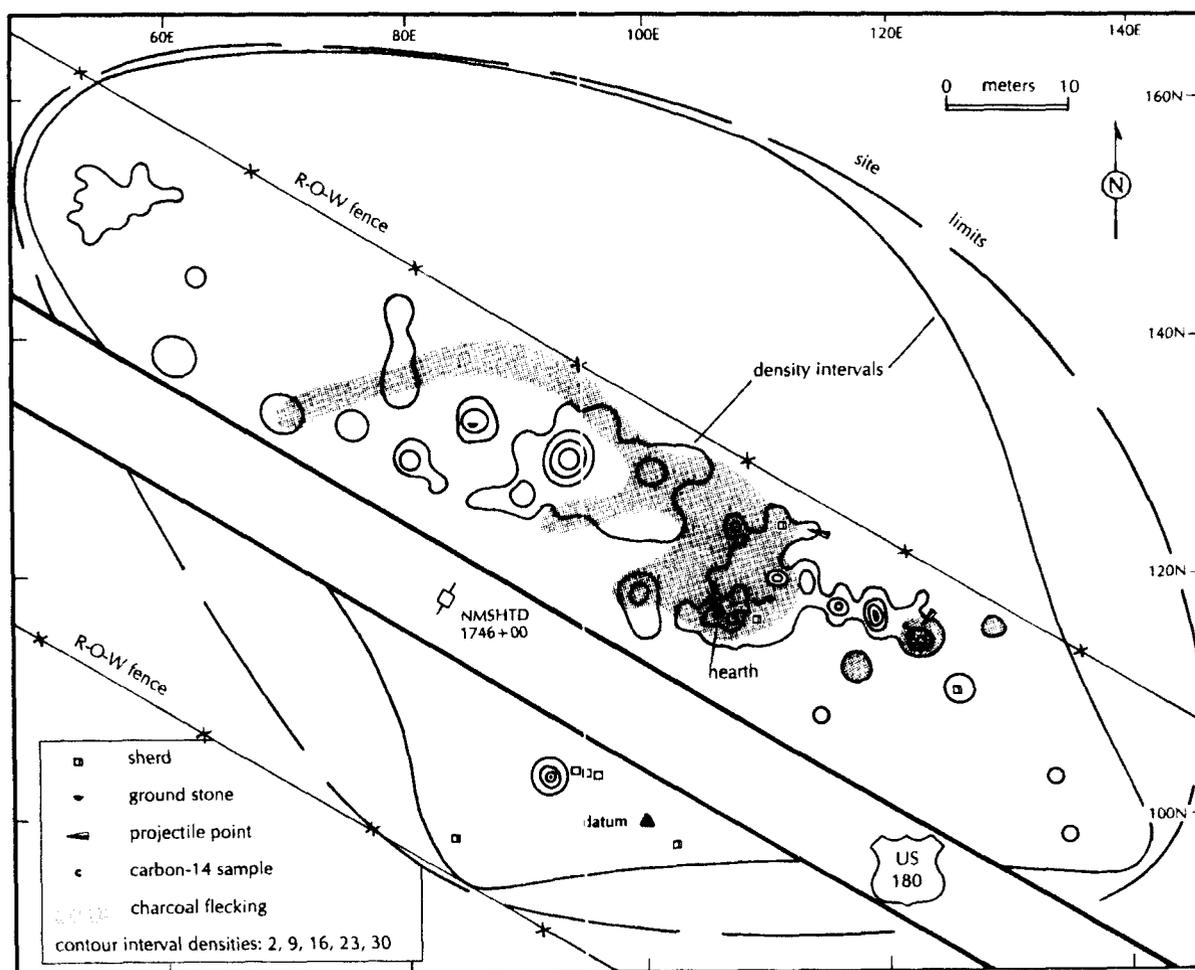


Figure 2.86. Artifact densities, LA 37919.

mostly at the southeastern end of the site. Two radiocarbon samples were obtained from this area (Fig. 2.86). A trace of charcoal tracks to the west from this charcoal concentration. The two C-14 samples were retrieved from the deepest part of the site, where excavations reached up to 55 cm below ground surface. However, no hearths or pits could be discerned in this area.

A possible hearth area was first identified during the testing program. It was located in a pull-out zone near the southeast end of the site (Fig. 2.86). The ground surface had been heavily compacted in this area and darkened soil and charcoal flecking occurred at only 6 cm below the surface. During excavations, no definitive hearth edging was found, as charcoal staining blurred into the surrounding soil. The stain measured approximately 28 by 23 cm. It had 4 cm of depth remaining and originally may have had more. Charcoal was not present in sufficient amounts to retrieve a radiocarbon sample.

Most artifacts were recovered from this southeastern area near the possible hearth and charcoal flecking. This suggests that site activities were focused in this section

but left little physical evidence other than scattered lithic artifacts. Small clusters of artifacts do occur in other areas of the site, but are not associated with charcoal staining or cultural features. Better preserved portions of the site may lie outside of the highway right-of-way to the north.

## ARTIFACTS

A total of 711 artifacts were recovered from testing and excavations at Apache Woods. These include 698 lithic artifacts, 8 sherds, and 5 pieces of ground stone.

### Ceramics

All eight sherds collected from Apache Woods were Alma Brown Wares: five were plain and three were rough. These sherds have very broad temporal spans ranging between A.D. 200 and A.D. 1350 and as such are poor cultural markers. All but one were recovered from surface and topsoil contexts on the southeast edge of the

Table 2.28. Lithic Artifacts from Apache Woods, LA 37919

Cells: Count Row Percent Column Percent	ARTIFACT MORPHOLOGY							ROW TOTAL	
	Angular Debris	Core Flake	Biface Flake	Bipolar Flake	Tested Cobble	Core	Uniface		Biface
Chert	45	301	12			2		2	362
	12.4	83.1	3.3			6		.6	100.0
	40.2	54.7	46.2			66.7		50.0	51.9
Chalcedony	2	1							3
	66.7	33.3							100.0
	1.8	.2							.4
Luna blue agate	45	61		1	1				108
	41.7	56.5		.9	.9				100.0
	40.2	11.1		100.0	100.0				15.5
Obsidian	5	37	6					1	49
	10.2	75.5	12.2					2.0	100.0
	4.5	6.7	23.1					25.0	7.0
Igneous		2							2
		100.0							100.0
		.4							.3
Basalt	4	74	3			1	1		83
	4.8	89.2	3.6			1.2	1.2		100.0
	3.6	13.5	11.5			100.0	100.0		11.9
Rhyolite	10	57	5					1	73
	13.7	78.1	6.8					1.4	100.0
	8.9	10.4	19.2					25.0	10.5
Quartzite	1	13							14
	7.1	92.9							100.0
	.9	2.4							2.0
Quartzitic sandstone		4							4
		100.0							100.0
		.7							.6
Total	112	550	26	1	1	3	1	4	698
	16.0	78.8	3.7	.1	.1	.4	.1	.6	100.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

site. One sherd was found at 20-30 cm below the surface across the highway from the main body of the site in a deeper area of fill (Grid 104N/91E). This fill may be redeposited material from original highway construction activities similar to the potential cobble mound in this area. Or, because a Reserve phase roomblock (LA 70189) is only 0.1 km to the northwest, all of the sherds may easily have derived from this source.

### Lithic Artifacts

The lithic artifacts comprise 98.1 percent of the total artifact assemblage (Table 2.28). Most material is locally available chert with Luna blue agate, basalt, and rhyolite also present. Core flakes are highly represented (78.8 percent) with much less angular debris (16.0 percent), suggesting that quarrying activities were carried out in fairly close proximity to the site.

One unidentifiable projectile point of chert was recovered from the site surface. Only the upper portion

remains. One other chert point was collected but subsequently misplaced. It was classified as a San Jose type (short-barbed) point dating from the Middle to Late Archaic period (Irwin-Williams 1973). Upon reexamination of the point in light of the Athabaskan period dates, it was apparent that it also could have been classified as either a Western Apache (Wills 1988:19) or a Chiricahua point dating from the Middle to Late Archaic. Because the point is not available for photo documentation, its cultural derivation remains in question.

### Ground Stone

Five pieces of ground stone were retrieved—two slab metate fragments and three pieces with an indeterminate function. The two slab metate fragments may be from the same artifact; both were found in the same grid (117N/106E). Two of the remaining three indeterminate pieces were from nearby grids. This area is immediately adjacent to the potential hearth and charcoal flecking,

strengthening the argument that this is an activity area. One piece of indeterminate ground stone was recovered in the middle of the site in Grid 130N/93E, away from artifact and charcoal concentrations.

#### ANCILLARY STUDIES

##### *Macrobotanical Remains*

One flotation sample from a test pit yielded charred poppy family seeds and one unidentified charred seed. At least one member of the poppy family has documented medicinal uses: to remove warts, reduce swelling and pain of sunburn, or as an antispasmodic (Moore 1989:93). However, such a small number of seeds could be present as a result of accidental charring, unassociated with any cultural use of the plants. Ponderosa pine and piñon were identified during the wood analysis. These woods would have been available locally for use as fuelwood by site occupants.

##### *Pollen Remains*

A pollen wash from a slab metate fragment found in Grid 117N/106E produced grains of pine, grass, and sunflower pollen.

#### DATING METHODS

The few ceramics recovered from Apache Woods are most likely not related to the main site occupation. They could easily derive from the nearby pueblo site of Lightning Strike. However, two C-14 dates were obtained from charcoal-flecked fill at the southeastern

end of the site. The two dates place the site into a 1400s time period with intercept dates at A.D. 1420 and 1490. The calibrated 1-sigma dates are A.D. 1390-1470 and A.D. 1440-1650. Three pieces of obsidian were also dated. All produced dates with a range between 870 and 300 B.C., considered too early for the site. Given the presence of about 700 lithic artifacts, a possible Western Apache point, and the C-14 dates, an Athabaskan occupation is indicated.

#### SITE INTERPRETATION

Apache Woods is somewhat of an enigmatic site. It had enough lithic material from which to draw conclusions about tool manufacture and artifact function; however, it did not have well-preserved cultural features that allowed for an interpretation of site structure. The possible hearth and charcoal-burned areas suggest a temporary campsite. The presence of ground stone indicates that at least minimal processing of subsistence items occurred on the site.

The C-14 dates in the 1400s together with the possible Western Apache projectile point strongly infer that this was an Athabaskan campsite, perhaps for the gathering of quarried stone material, piñon nuts, acorns, or the hunting of the abundant wild game in the area. There is not enough evidence, however, to support the conclusion that hunting was a major site activity. Seasonal use of the site is suggested by the presence of ground stone which, at campsites, is often used in the processing of seasonally available wild food items, such as piñon nuts and acorns. The lack of more hearth areas also confirms short-term usage, although other cultural features may lie outside of the right-of-way.