

“Baboon Wildfire: Disaster and Recovery”

By

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In the summers of 2011 and 2012, there were a number of wildfires in the area between Cedar City and Minerville, Utah. One of those fires was called the “Baboon Fire”. This land was generally owned and managed by various US and State agencies including the US Forest Service and the BLM. These agencies contracted with William Self Associates, a contract archaeological service company, to survey the burned areas to ascertain the damage to known archaeological resources and to locate any new archaeological resources. They were asked to document any thing of archeological significance greater than 50 years old, including structures, phone lines, roads, and trash.

The area of interest lies in the eastern portion of the Great Basin and exhibits geology, flora and fauna typical of the region. It was known that this area was home to seasonal habitation by native peoples from about 3000 BC to 1800AD. The habitation sites were generally located at higher elevations in the “saddles” between mountain peaks and near washes and springs.

The group found a number of new sites and many artifacts including pottery and projectile points.

The pottery was identified as gray ware and painted pottery dated to the late P2 period from the Virgin Anasazi. Also found was pottery from the Sevier, Paiute, Shoshone cultures.

They also located a number of projectile points including “hubble” points from the desert archaic period and “desert side notched” points from the “formative” period of about 1200 AD. These items would not have located if it were not for the fire.

Other items found were grinding stones, and quartz “manuperts (sp?)” – Artifacts that are not local to the site – i.e. brought in by trade from other areas.

The area had be previously surveyed in the late 1980’s and Tommy said the group was surprised with the number of artifacts that were found after the fires.

Tommy als described some of the rock art sites. The symbols were typical of those from the eastern Great Basin including curvilinear, rectilinear designs, anthropomorphs, and quadrupeds. The rock art was located on basalt rock outcroppings with prominent viewpoints. The artist often used natural rock inclusions and features as part of their designs. The motifs were attributed as being from the archaic period, ancestral puebloan

Fremont, Virgin Anasazi and Paiute cultures. One unique image that he described was a “Fremont” style trapezoidal anthro with three hands.

Tommy said that the rock did experience some level of spalling due to he fires.

The preliminary conclusions are:

- Some new archaeological sites were identified
- More artifacts were located than anticipated
- There was some minor damage to the rock art due to spalling of the rock faced caused by the fires.

The final report from this work is currently being prepared.

John Mangels

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