

“Historic Preservation at Zion Nation Park”

by

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Amber VanAlfen is an archaeologist at Zion National Park. Her talk highlighted the laws, codes and regulations that must be met in order to proceed with any historic preservation project on federal land.

The overriding law governing historic preservation is the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. This act strengthened the 1906 Antiquities Act and the 1935 Historic Sites Act. The 1966 Act established the National Registration of Historic Places and how to administer these sites. Specifically, Section 106 of the Act detailed the administration of historic sites especially risk management and consultation with ALL parties that may be involved with the site including geologists, biologists, water managers, native peoples, etc.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) introduced another level of oversight relating to cultural resources and environmental resources. The levels of project review are:

- Environmental screening form
- Environmental assessment
- Environmental impact statement

The last two must be published in the Federal Register for Public Review.

The project terminology must be correct.

- Preservation means maintaining a site in its current condition.
- Rehabilitation means stabilizing a site to prevent further degradation.
- Restoration means the removal of “later additions” to bring the site to its original condition.
- Reconstruction means to rebuild the site with new materials.

Amber explained that the process involved in working with historic sites is complicated and that the process moves slowly. She stressed that this is what archaeologists must do in order to proceed with a project.

Amber discussed one of her projects – “Kolob Canyon Rehabilitation Project – Taylor Creek Cabins”. The project involved the rehabilitation of the Taylor Creek Cabins located on the middle fork of Taylor Creek.



The restored Arthur Fife Cabin on Taylor Creek

There are two cabins on Taylor Creek. Ranchers Larson and Fife built the cabins in the early 1930's. They were abandoned in the late 1930's and had over time fallen into disrepair. The project involved the stabilization of the Fife cabin.

Amber noted that the cabins were located in a "wilderness" area, where an entire new set of regulations applied. These included:

- No more than 6 people at the site at any one time (including the archaeologist)
- No wheeled vehicles (including wheel barrows)
- No motorized tools or other power tools (atv's, chain saws, etc.)
- No overnight camping

The project needed to be conducted by restoration specialists, using only hand tools. The crew needed to hike to and from the site daily (about a 5 mile round trip). They had to fall trees using saws and axes and form the longs to fit into the cabin using axes and other hand tools. They needed a special permit to bring some building materials to the site using horses. The entire project took two years to complete.

Some references:

<http://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2012/07/25/historic-cabins-being-restored-at-zion-national-park/#.Vlnb8IRYFBw>

<http://wchsutah.org/zion/fife-cabin.php>