TxDOT EXCAVATIONS AT THE HARDEMAN MIDDEN SITE (41DN612)

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From April through June 2019, TxDOT and SWCA archeologists excavated the Hardeman Midden site (41DN612) on a terrace of Denton Creek. The site consists of a burned rock midden (BRM), a site type not common in this area, with an intrusive historic refuse component. Due to its buried context, potential integrity, preservation of faunal materials, and an accelerated project schedule, TxDOT recommended site 41DN612 de facto eligible for inclusion on the National Register for Historic Places (NRHP) based on Criterion D (likely to yield information important in pre-history or history).

This poster highlights the methods used during the excavations, challenges faced during the investigations, and preliminary results of archeological and geoarchaeological fieldwork.

**CHALLENGES**

Under an accelerated construction schedule, there was a time crunch to get the excavation completed. Unfortunately, we had to contend with numerous rain events and/or torrential warning delays. Every effort was made to protect the exposed cultural deposits, including covering the excavation block with a 150-pound plastic tarp (inadvertently creating what we affectionately referred to as “the Denton County Pool” that we had to drain via sump pump almost every week).

**RESULTS**

Features at the site consisted of the massive BRM and six additional burned rock features (e.g., dense clusters and isolated clusters) representing hearths, ovens, and other cooking features (Table 1). The BRM was identified within the Main Excavation Block ~2 feet below ground surface. It measured about 7 m north south, by 10 m east-west, and ranged from 24–44 cm thick. If the BRM was once present south of the Main Excavation Block, this portion was later destroyed during excavation of the historic-age refuse pit.

**STRATIGRAPHY/ CULTURAL COMPONENTS**

Preliminary geoarchaeological analyses identified five strata at the site (Strata IV-V). The midden occurs in Stratum III, correlating with the West Fork soil which dates within the last 2,000 years (Late Archaic to Late Prehistoric periods) (Abbott 2011). Six other burned rock features were identified in underlying cultural horizons interpreted to encompass the last 4,000 years (Middle to Late Archaic periods) (Abbott 2011).

**CONCLUSIONS / FURTHER WORK**

The vertical distribution of features and artifacts suggests isosable components can be defined in at least the lower portions of the site, but further distribution analyses will clarify this preliminary assessment. Subsequent investigations will include special analyses (e.g., chronometric dating and macrobotanical studies), analytic unit definition, research design, and final report completion.