

MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO

OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES

Addendum to Monitoring of Cultural Resources within
Segments of US 180, US 60, NM 12, NM 32, NM 36, and
NM 435, in Catron County, New Mexico

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ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) conducted a cultural resource monitoring program at several tree-thinning areas along the rights-of-way of federal and state highways in New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) District 6, Catron County, New Mexico. The work was conducted between December 15, 2003, and March 16, 2004. Many sites were field-checked, and records at the Archeological Records Management Section (ARMS) were reviewed. Of 168 archaeological sites examined, eleven required monitoring because of tree-thinning activities.

Of the eleven sites, nine were actually monitored during this period. Monitoring involved marking bound-

aries of sites with flagging tape to prevent vehicle trespass, skidding of downed trees, and piling of cut wood on the sites. However, two of the sites along NM 435, LA 124547 and LA 124548, were not monitored because of the postponement of tree-thinning in the area due to time limitations on Contract Task No. 4522-10. Tree-thinning activities were resumed on July 1, 2004, and resource monitoring of the two sites proceeded on July 1 and 2, 2004.

This report describes the results of monitoring at LA 124547 and LA 124548. It is an addendum to Archaeology Notes 337 (Oakes 2004).

NMDOT Project No. TPS-180-1(1)19, CN 3954.

Contract Task No. 4522-10.

MNM Project No. 41.742 (Catron County Tree Thinning)

NMCRIS No. 89109.

Gila National Forest special-use permit, expires December 31, 2004.

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INTRODUCTION

At the request of the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), the Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) completed a cultural resource monitoring program along the rights-of-way of portions of federal and state highways in Catron County, New Mexico. The NMDOT is thinning trees and clearing brush along these roads in compliance with federal guidelines. The monitoring of nine of eleven sites was completed between December 15, 2003, and March 16, 2004, by Yvonne Oakes (Oakes 2004).

A total of 168 sites were field-checked or reviewed

at ARMS before 11 sites were chosen for monitoring. The contractor was able to clear the land along the rights-of-way at nine of the site areas. Because of the time limitations of the contract, two sites along NM 435, LA 124547 and LA 124548, were scheduled for thinning at a later date (Fig. 1). The monitoring of the two sites was completed on July 1-2, 2004. The sites were marked with flagging tape, and an archaeologist was present during the tree-thinning activities. The sites were successfully avoided. Tree-thinning was completed by hand, and all branches and stumps were carried away from the area.

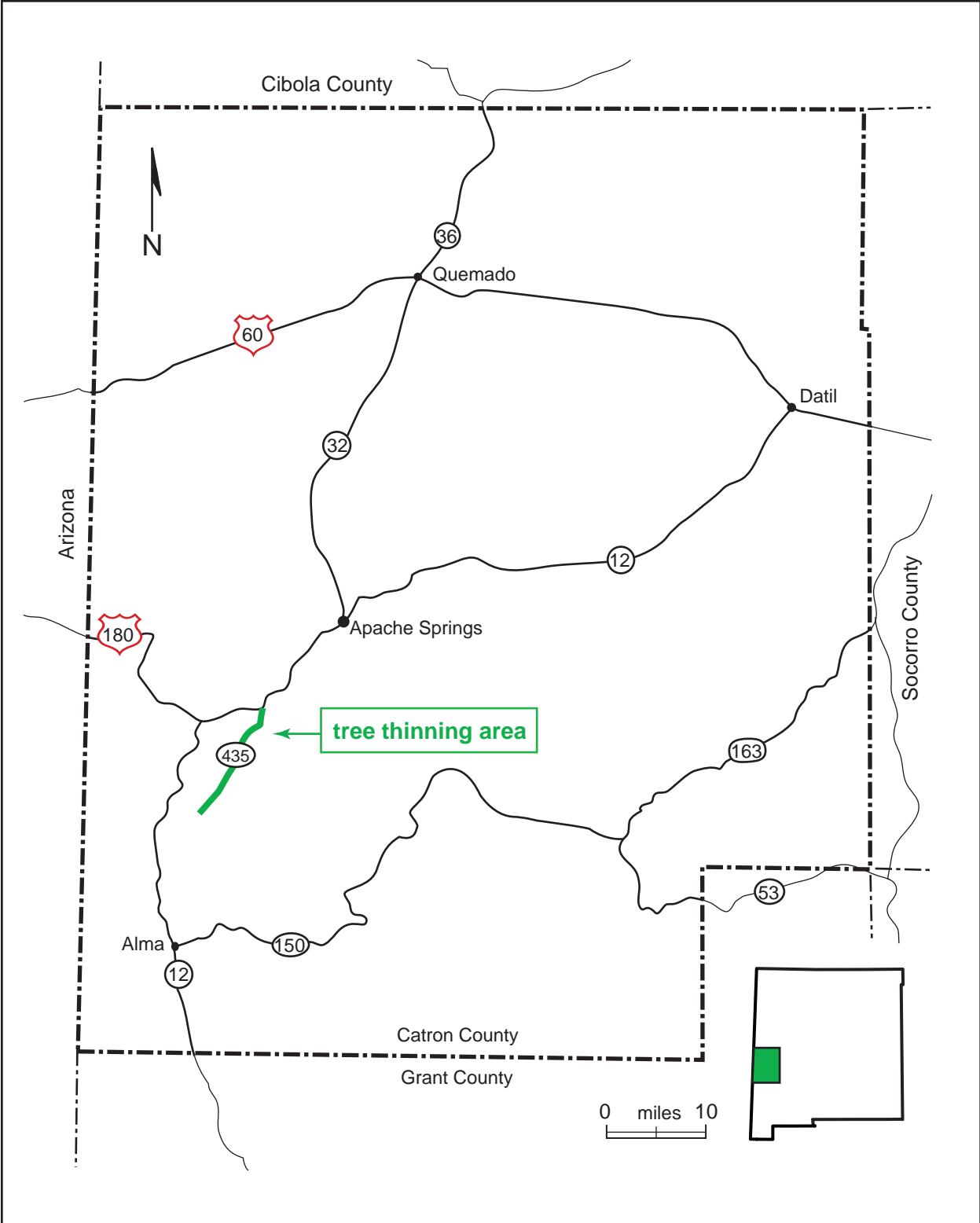


Figure 1. Project vicinity map.

SCOPE OF WORK

The NMDOT contracted a tree-thinning and pruning project along state and federal highways in Catron County. Prior to the work, the agency established a description of the work to be completed in "Contract Documents for the Construction of CN Project 3954/TPS-180-1(1)19." These specifications are quoted here to reiterate the parameters under which contractors and archaeologists were to proceed. Procedures that apply to archaeological work are italicized.

Recovery Zone

Defined as 40 ft from the white shoulder stripe in all areas. In these areas, all trees, brush, and existing stumps to be removed except willow, cottonwood, and box elder. All existing and new stumps to be removed to within 4" or less above ground level.

Thinning Area

Defined as the area from the outside edge of the Recovery Zone to the Right-of-Way fence or markers. In this area, all existing brush to be removed. All trees producing leaves to be pruned to variable heights between 5'-7' above ground. Trees to be spaced no closer than 30' to allow access by NMDOT maintenance equipment. Also, trees that shade roadways, creating icy spots in winter, that are in the right-of-way are to be removed.

Steep Slope Areas

Defined as areas having slopes steeper than 3:1 or behind existing guardrails. No equipment allowed off roadways in these areas. Equipment used will be mounted on exca-

vator/grade-all equipment allowing work from the roadway for a minimum distance of 30' slope distance from the shoulder stripe. All firewood and timber to be lifted out of area using appropriate lifting equipment.

Stacking

Firewood and timber to be stacked no closer than 30 linear ft to the shoulder stripe. All equipment to be rubber-tired or tracked to minimize ground disturbance.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resource sites noted will be treated as steep slope areas with no equipment allowed off of the roadway in these areas.

Additional specifications that pertain to cultural resources are listed under "Environmental Commitments," Sheet 9, in the above document. These state:

1. *An archaeologist will be present for all tree-cutting activity at all archaeological sites designated for protection. No skidding will be allowed at these locations and any wood stacking locations will be inspected by the archaeologist. The contractor will contact the Environmental Section to coordinate this activity and obtain a list of site locations that require monitoring.*

2. *Trees located within site boundaries will be cut to ground level and no removal of tree roots will occur at these locations.*

RESULTS OF MONITORING

Eleven sites were originally scheduled for cultural resource monitoring. Yvonne Oakes of OAS met with Bob Fisher of Elkhorn Construction, the thinning contractor. They agreed that two-day advance notice would be given to OAS before thinning on archaeological sites that were scheduled for monitoring. Sites would be marked with blue flagging tape, and a list of the eleven sites along with “begin” and “end” milepost locations was provided to Elkhorn Construction. Because of previous difficulties with notification procedures, the requirements were revised for this undertaking. The contractor was required to give three days notice to the archaeologist and the NMDOT before beginning work on archaeological sites. This procedure was effective during the current project.

An archaeologist was present during tree-thinning activities at the two sites that required monitoring: LA 124547 and LA 124548. Trees were present in several areas at the sites. The archaeologist confirmed that trees were cut by hand equipment and that all trunks and branches were carried from the site and deposited in the bar ditches, where they were chipped by heavy machinery. The machinery did not enter the site areas and stayed next to the highway shoulder. As a result of these procedures, site integrity was maintained, and the sites were not damaged.

LA 124547

Site Type: Roomblock with probable kiva depression.

Ownership: NMDOT land acquired from private sources.

Location: NM 435, Milepost 4.3.

Background: LA 124547 was initially recorded by McGraw in 1998 (ARMS files) before the proposed right-of-way fencing of NM 435. The site consists of at least three mounds containing small roomblocks, one of which extends into the highway right-of-way (Fig. 2). An attached depression probably represents a small kiva. The mounds extend further to the north than previously recorded and cover an area of 75 m north-south by 30 m east-west (Fig. 3). Artifacts within the right-of-way are sparse. They include basalt flakes, one piece of obsidian, and a few Alma Plain, brown ware corrugated, San Francisco Red, and Three Circle Red-on-tan sherds. Two mano fragments were also seen. Approximately 18 rooms may be present on the site, which, based on architecture, seems to represent a small pueblo of the Reserve phase. The sparse surface artifact assemblage suggests prior collection, and a precise estimate of the site’s age cannot be given.



Figure 2. LA 124547, with roomblock cobbles in right-of-way, facing east.

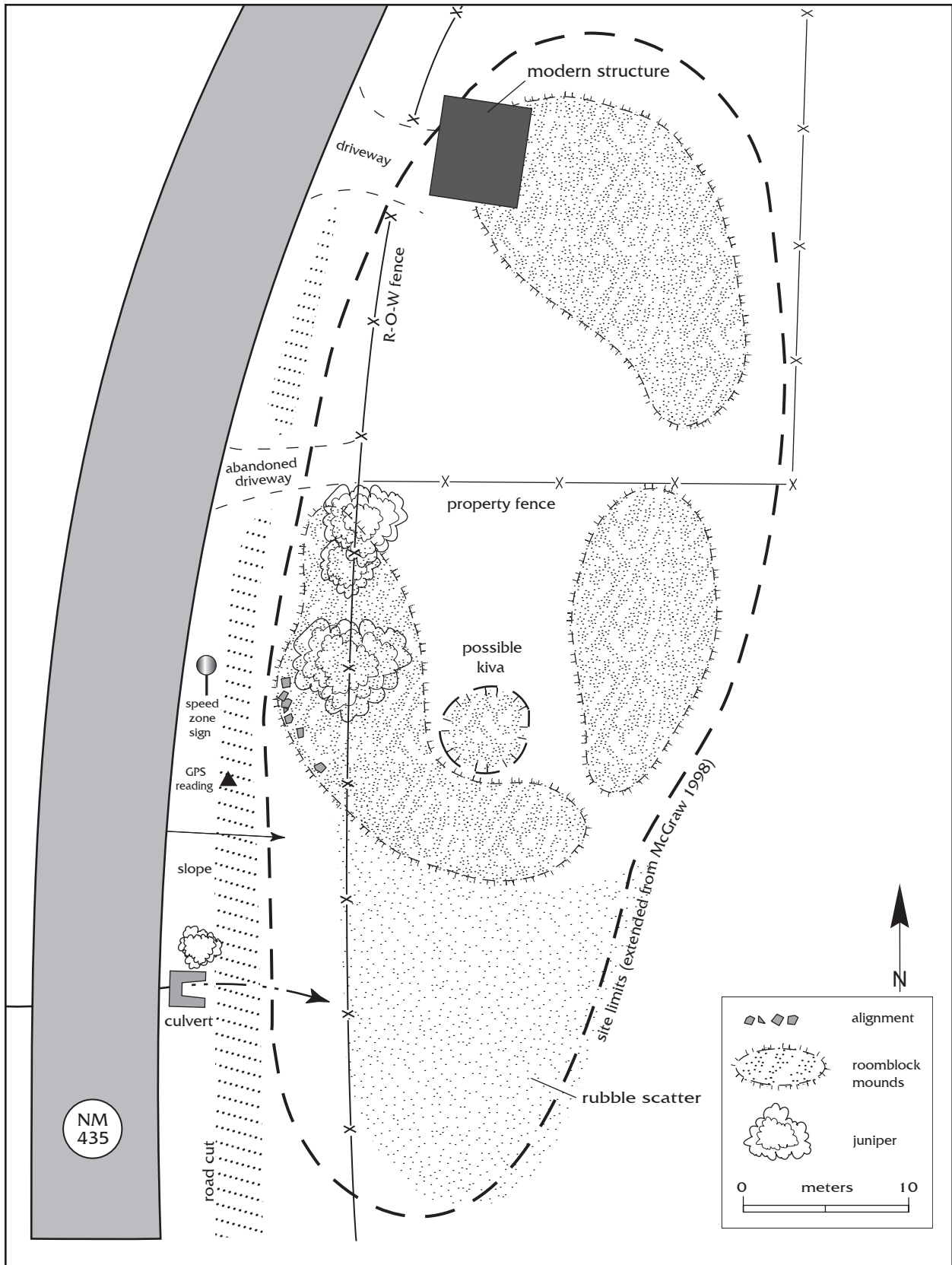


Figure 3. Plan map of LA 124547.

Effects of Tree-thinning Project: Branches were cut from one large tree, and several small trees were completely removed from the site by the tree-thinning crew. The archaeologist was present during the cutting. Removed branches were carried to the side of the highway and piled in the bar ditch. The site was not damaged as a result of thinning activities.

LA 124548

Site Type: Lithic and sherd artifact scatter.

Ownership: NMDOT land acquired from private sources.

Location: NM 435, Milepost 4.9.

Background: LA 124548 is mostly a lithic artifact scatter. Only two sherds were found at the base of a steep slope within the right-of-way of NM 435 (Fig. 4). The site was first recorded in 1998 by McGraw (ARMS files). According to McGraw, the site extends upslope for about

25 m. Oakes did not investigate this area while monitoring the site because it was outside of the project area. The site extends north along the west side of the road for 125 m and measures 35 m east-west. Artifacts are not continuous along the length of the site but extend into the right-of-way in four areas (Fig. 5). Lithic artifacts consist of fine-grained basalt flakes, some chalcedony, two flaked rhyolite tools, and a piece of obsidian. Two Alma Plain sherds were seen in Area 1 only. The site upslope from the right-of-way may contain a pithouse, based on the presence of two Alma Plain sherds, but it is possible that the site was used by nonceramic prehistoric peoples for hunting and gathering.

Effects of Tree-thinning Project: One to three trees were present in each of the four artifact areas. The archaeologist was present at each of the areas and confirmed that the trees were cut by hand and carried from the site to the edge of the highway (see Fig. 5). A chipper was operated at the edge of the highway. The site was not damaged by the tree-thinning activities.



Figure 4. Area 1, LA 124548, with cut branches along shoulder, facing northwest .

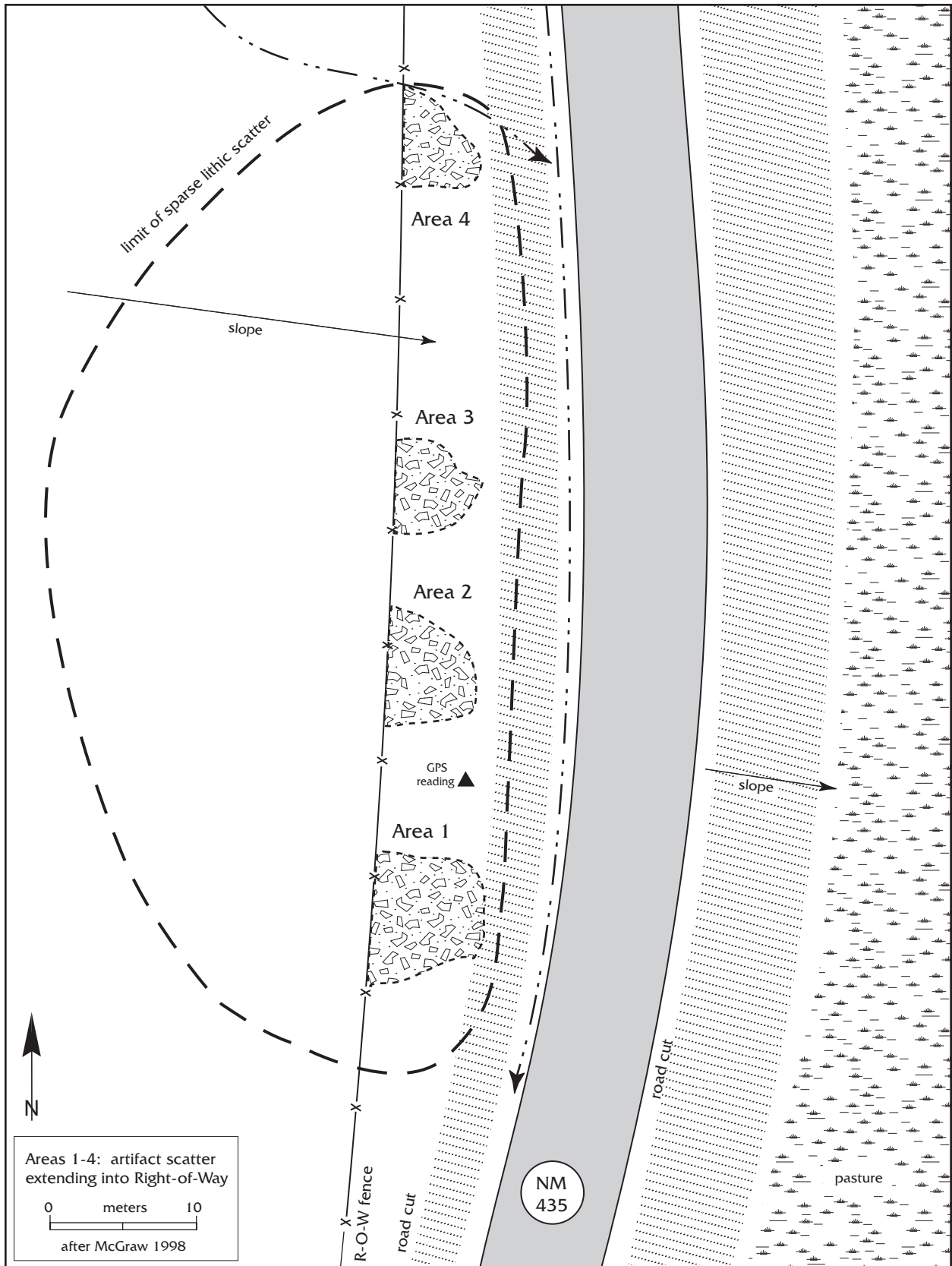


Figure 5. Plan map of LA 124548.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

The OAS monitored tree thinning at two archaeological sites, LA 124547 and LA 124548, along NM 435 in Catron County for the NMDOT. The work was carried out within the right-of-way of this roadway by Elkhorn Construction of Reserve, New Mexico. The contractor notified the NMDOT and the OAS in advance, and an archaeologist was present when trees were being cut. The archaeologist first defined the boundaries of the sites with flagging tape. The thinning crew then used hand equipment in all areas of cultural manifestations at the two sites. Branches and trucks that were cut by the crew were carried by hand to the side of the roadway, where a chipper disposed of them. The mulcher was not employed in the site areas. As a result of these procedures, the integrity of the two sites was maintained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

During this phase of the cultural resource monitoring along federal and state highways in Catron County, notification procedures by the contractor were carried out as required by contract specifications, and the entire process proceeded smoothly. It is essential that an archaeologist be present when tree-thinning activities are carried out on any highway rights-of-way because flagging can be lost or go unnoticed. There is a tendency to skid or drag cut timber across the landscape during tree-thinning, and an archaeologist should be present to be sure that this does not occur at archaeological sites. Monitoring by an archaeologist is also necessary to ensure that the public does not drive on archaeological sites to retrieve cut wood from off-site areas after the thinning crew has left the area.

REFERENCES CITED

Oakes, Yvonne R.

2004 *Monitoring of Cultural Resources within Segments of U.S. 180, U.S. 60, NM 12, NM 32, NM 36, and NM 435 for Tree Thinning in Catron County, New Mexico*. Archaeology Notes 337. Office of Archaeological Studies, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe.