

Recent Fluted-Point Finds at Lake on the Trail, Harney County, Oregon

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Lake on the Trail, a large playa south of Riley, Oregon, has recently caught the attention of Burns District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) archaeologists because of the abundance of stemmed points and other early-Holocene artifacts present along its shorelines. The artifacts were noted during fire-rehabilitation surveys in 2001. Repeated trips to the location were undertaken as part of a systematic BLM effort to identify Paleoamerican sites on agency lands. They have resulted in the collection of numerous diagnostic artifacts attributed to Western Stemmed, Haskett, Great Basin Transverse, and fluted point typologies. Two fluted points collected at Lake on the Trail are the focus of this report. Both were found by BLM archaeological technician Dianne Ness.

Specimen 04-337 has a single flute scar on one face. (Figure 1.) There is no conclusive evidence of flute flake removal on the opposite face. It was surface-collected near the inlet where Big Stick Creek empties into the playa. There is no evidence of edge grinding or channel scratches on this artifact. The specimen measures 31.45 mm long, 25.44 mm wide, and 6.51 mm thick, and has a basal depth of 6.03 mm and basal width of 23.8 mm (Rondeau 2007). The point is made of Whitewater Ridge obsidian with a hydration measurement of 7.2 μ (Skinner and Thatcher 2005; Thomas and O'Grady 2006). Whitewater Ridge is a broadly dispersed obsidian source found in Silvies Valley, 90 km north of Lake on the Trail. Obsidian hydration measurements, less accurate than radiometric dating techniques, can be useful to gauge the relative age of obsidian artifacts. A measure of 7.2 μ suggests an early-Holocene age.

Specimen 04-368, collected on the northwestern shoreline, is considered to be a fluted-point variant because of its small size. It has been heavily reworked

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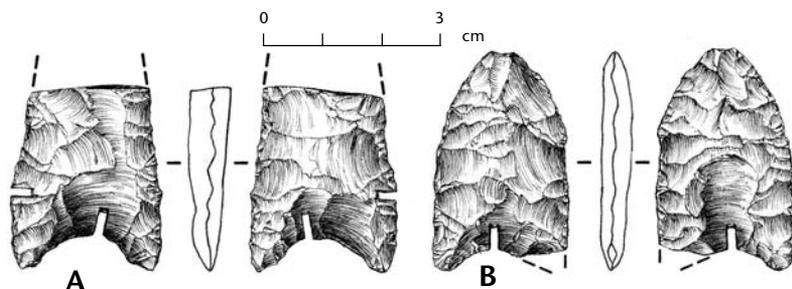


Figure 1. Fluted points from Lake of the Trail, Oregon. **A**, specimen 04-337, a fluted-point base; **B**, specimen 04-368, a nearly complete fluted point.

on both proximal and distal portions (Rondeau 2007). Edge grinding, present on the basal margin and one lateral margin, appears to have been removed elsewhere by pressure flaking. There is no evidence of channel abrasion. A single flute scar is present on one face. The opposite has a basal scar that may be an attempt at fluting through pressure flaking. It is 27.54 mm long, 22.99 mm wide, and 4.73 mm thick, has a basal depth of 3.94 mm, and a basal width of 23.0 mm. It is made of locally available Buck Springs obsidian and has a hydration measurement of 8.9μ (Skinner and Thatcher 2002). A hydration measurement of 8.9μ suggests an early-Holocene age.

Based on the BLM surveys, Lake on the Trail and nearby playas have elevated frequencies of early-Holocene artifacts compared with other non-lacustrine associated Burns District lands. Exploratory excavations and systematic pedestrian surveys are being conducted to identify site locations and evaluate their potential for stratified deposits.

References Cited

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