

EXCAVATIONS AT WEST BENCH PUEBLO

VERMILION CLIFFS NATIONAL MONUMENT

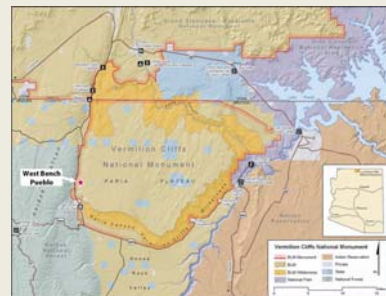
MICHAEL O'HARA
&
SARAH PAGE



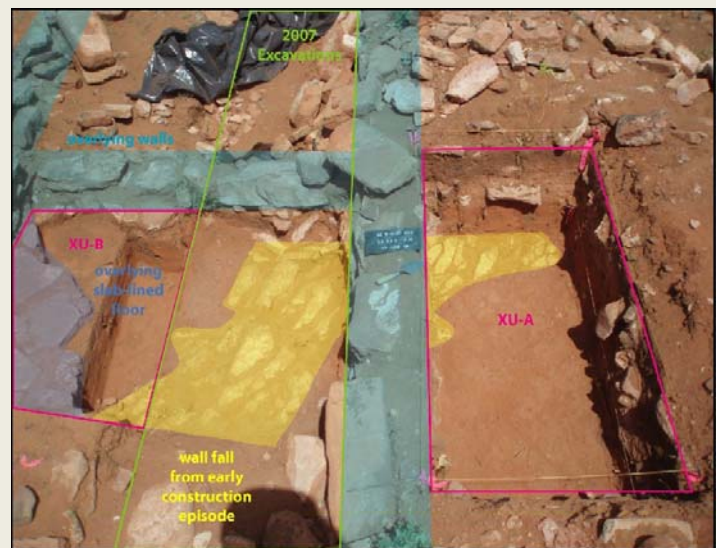
EnviroSystems Management, Inc.
Environmental Planning - Regulatory Compliance

MITIGATING PAST IMPACTS THROUGH EXCAVATION

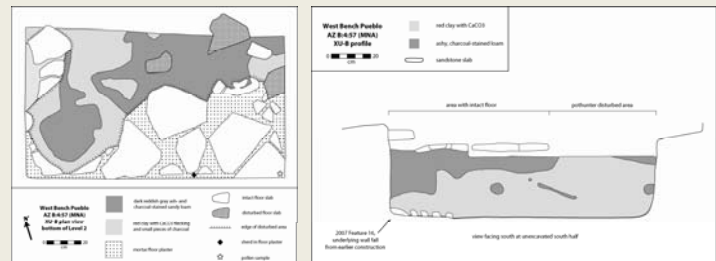
When first recorded in 1967 by the Museum of Northern Arizona's Paria Plateau survey, archaeologist Loring Haskell described West Bench Pueblo as having been "savaged" by vandals who had excavated in several rooms. The Bonelli Ranch road, later designated as BLM Route 1100, also cut through the site, climbing over the roomblock and passing through the courtyard. This road has since been re-routed around the site. In 2007, the Kaibab-Vermilion Cliffs Heritage Alliance sponsored test excavations at the site by BLM and USFS archaeologists to determine the degree to which significant archaeological data could still be recovered from these disturbed contexts. The results suggested that mitigation excavations in disturbed contexts could still recover data to address questions of site chronology and identify different occupational episodes. In 2008 and 2010, Northern Arizona University archaeological field schools conducted excavations in pursuit of these goals. These excavations that have shown that pot hunted contexts could be used to reveal adjacent undisturbed contexts and provide evidence about the occupational and construction sequence.



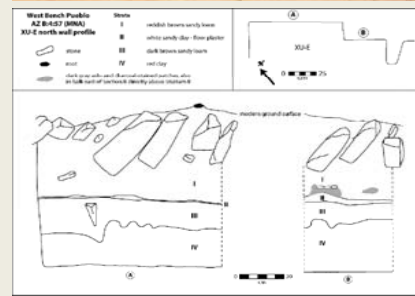
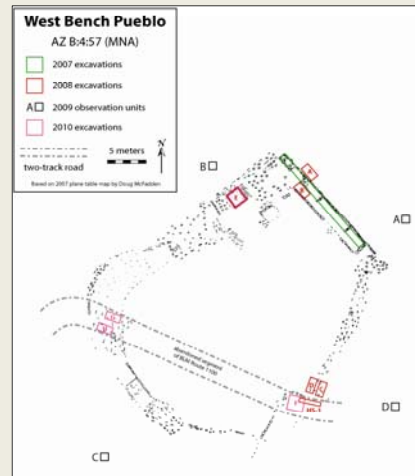
The NAU/KVCHA excavations also have demonstrated that where the road formerly crossed over the roomblock, wall fall had protected room fill deposits and floors from damage. Turkey eggshell was recovered from excavations within the road. Artifact analyses continue, and recovered materials include ceramics, flaked and ground stone, faunal remains, and soil samples for flotation and pollen analysis.



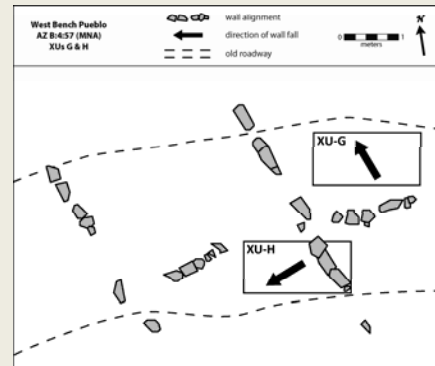
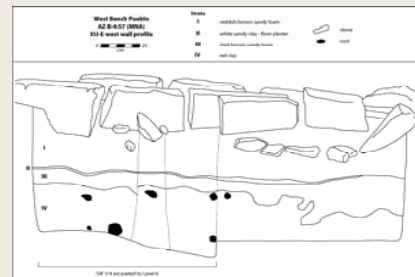
Excavation of XUs A and B in 2008 expanded on the 2007 evidence of an earlier construction episode underlying the northern end of the roomblock. Excavations revealed earlier wall fall beneath the slab-lined floor and masonry wall of the north roomblock (above). Largely sterile deposits were directly above the wall fall. These findings suggest the site saw cycles of use, abandonment, and re-use and renovation over several generations.



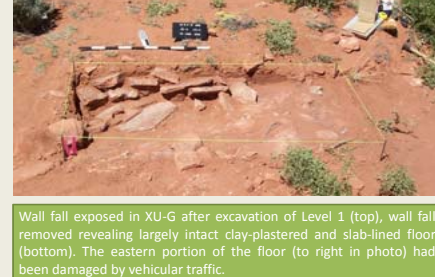
XU-B revealed intact portions of the slab-lined floor of a storage room (above, below left). The intact fill beneath this floor was exposed by pot hunter damage, and showed that the slab floor was built up on cultural fill and overlay wall fall from an earlier construction episode.



Excavation of XU-E in 2008 re-opened a vandalized area in the main roomblock to expose adjacent undisturbed deposits, revealing stratified deposits with wall fall sealing room fill (Strat I) above a clay-plastered floor (Strat II) that was built on top of charcoal-stained cultural fill (Strat III) overlying a largely-sterile substrate (Strat IV).



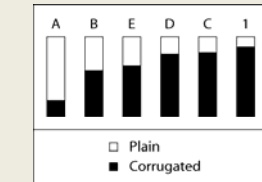
In 2008, XUs G and H were placed where the road formerly crossed the main roomblock. These units were intended to determine if there were intact deposits present within the roadway. Both were placed along the sides of the road in areas that appeared to contain wall fall.



Wall fall exposed in XU-G after excavation of Level 1 (top), wall fall removed revealing largely intact clay-plastered and slab-lined floor (bottom). The eastern portion of the floor (to right in photo) had been damaged by vehicular traffic.

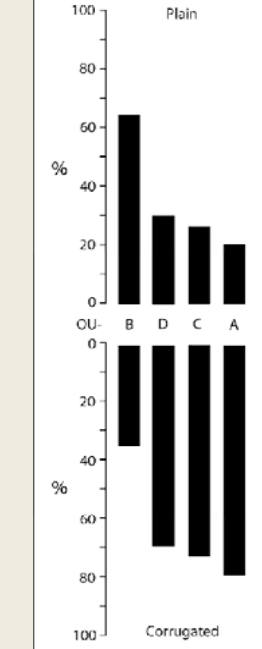


SERIATING GRAYWARES
Corrugated surface treatments were adopted after 1050, and became more common through time. As a result, the relative proportions of corrugated and plain sherds can be used to order ceramic assemblages in relation to one another.



Relative proportions of plain and corrugated sherds in excavation units

Selected Shinarump White Ware sherds from West Bench Pueblo, including Wahweap B/w, Wygart B/w, and Vermilion B/w

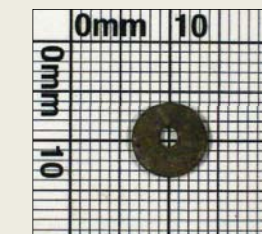


Relative proportions of plain and corrugated sherds in observation units placed in midden areas. Results indicate that Midden Area B has significantly different proportions, suggesting earlier deposition than the other three midden areas.

Selected Kanab Red Ware sherds from West Bench Pueblo, including Kanab B/r, Middleton B/r, and Nankoweap Polychrome



Kaibab chert Parowan Point (top left), petrified wood Mt. Trumbull Point (bottom left), and large, stemmed obsidian biface/knife (right)



Stone disc bead recovered from disturbed contexts in XU-E.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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