

The Sage Hen Gap Fluted-Point Site, Harney County, Oregon

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The Sage Hen Gap site (35HA3548) is a fluted-point site on the northern perimeter of the Harney Basin. It is only the second site containing more than one fluted point recorded in Oregon. The site is located at the crest of a long draw between westerly uplands and the Harney Valley to the east. Buck Springs obsidian occurs naturally on site. The site also provides a panoramic view of the "gap" through which both animal and human traffic would have passed. The site was initially recorded in 1984 (Crespin 1984) and remained unevaluated until 2007, when Scott Thomas of the Burns District BLM relocated the site form. Sketches of one fluted point and one Black Rock Concave Base point prompted Thomas to make a site visit in February 2007, during which his crew collected two fluted points. In June, a fourth fluted point was

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found by BLM archaeologists and volunteers from the Oregon Archaeological Society (OAS).

A cooperative agreement brought the University of Oregon Archaeological Field School to the site in July and August of 2007. They excavated 6.15 m³ in the form of 24 probes and 5 test units (17 m²). Some 1,300 artifacts were mapped with a laser transit, and all formed tool fragments were collected. All artifacts were gathered from four collection blocks, resulting in a 4800-m² sample (approximately 20 percent of the site). During these operations, a fifth fluted point was found. A sixth fluted-point fragment was identified during analysis of the site lithics (Rondeau 2007). All six of the points are surface finds. All bear evidence of livestock trampling. The fluted-point base and concave-base point collected in 1984 have not been relocated to date.

The five fluted points collected in 2007 have been described by Rondeau (2007). Specimen 07-001, a concave-base fragment, lacks the blade element and a basal ear (Figure 1). It measures 36.87 mm long, 35.65 mm wide, and 6.53 mm thick, and has a basal depth of 8.1 mm and basal width of 31.04 mm. Single flute scars are present on both sides. A single guide scar runs adjacent to one flute, while guide scars are present on both sides of the opposite flute. Flute abrasions are noted on both sides, and edge grinding is present on portions of the basal and lateral margins. The point is made of Buck Springs

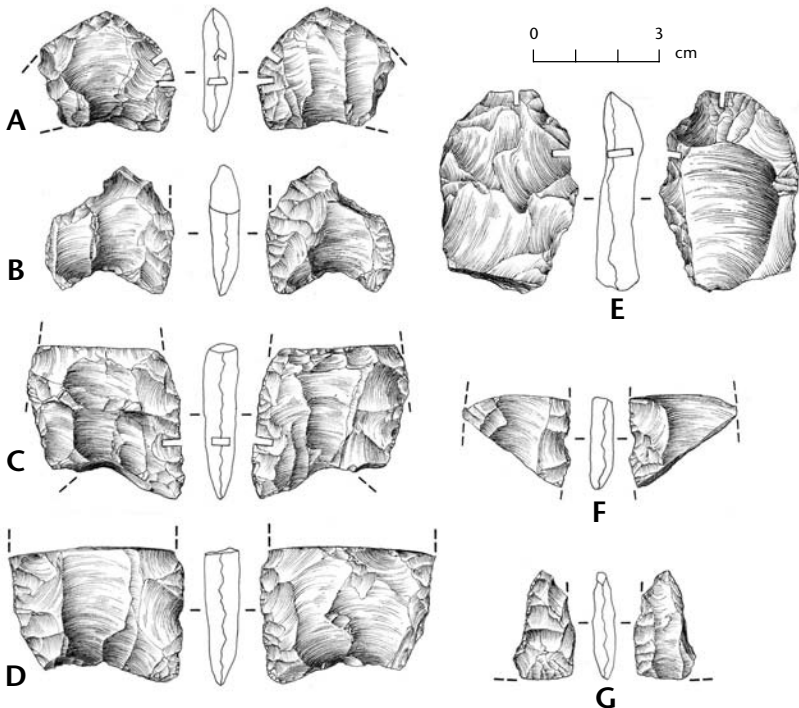


Figure 1. Fluted points (A–D, F) and bifaces (E, G) from the Sage Hen Gap site (A, 07-002; B, 07-298; C, 07-001; D, 07-297; E, 07-005; F, T-156; G, T-135). Illustration by Eric Carlson.

obsidian, with a hydration measurement of 9.7 microns (Skinner 2007). Specimen 07-002, which lacks both basal ears and much of the basal margin, measures 28.56 mm long, 32.11 mm wide, and 6.16 mm thick, and has a basal depth of 1.51 mm and basal width of 25.24 mm. The distal portion has been retouched into a blunt tip. One undamaged lateral margin has edge grinding. One side has a single flute scar; the other has two. No flute scratches are present. Big Stick obsidian was used, and the point has two hydration measurements of 7.3 microns (Skinner 2007). Specimen 07-297 is a large concave-base fragment with edge grinding on all margins and flute abrasions on both sides. It is 34.49 mm long, 41.74 mm wide, and 8.25 mm thick, and has a basal depth of 5.52 mm and basal width of 34.55 mm. A single flute scar is present on one side; the other side has two. The artifact has not been submitted for obsidian analysis. Specimen 07-298, a concave-base fragment, has visible edge grinding on only one lateral margin. It is 29.64 mm long, 30.14 mm wide, and 6.52 mm thick, and has a basal depth of 4.05 mm and basal width of 24.61 mm. Both sides of the biface bear single flute scars and channel abrasions. Specimen T-156, identified during the lithic analysis, is a triangular midsection fragment with single flute scars on both faces and scratches in the flutes that appear to be unintentional. It is 21.47 mm long, 25.96 mm wide, and 6.03 mm thick. One of the three sides is a lateral margin; the two other sides are breaks that culminate at a remnant portion of the opposite lateral margin. No edge grinding is present.

Rondeau (2007, 2008) identified other artifacts that can be associated with fluted-point sites. They include 2 fluted bifaces, 13 flute flakes, 3 graters, 10 bifaces with overshot flake scars, 12 biface overshot flakes, and 7 nodule overshot flakes. A stemmed point base, two Elko Series points, and a single arrow point midsection were also found. The relative absence of more recent cultural materials is intriguing, especially since obsidian, edible and medicinal plants, and nearby game corridors would still have been attractions at later times. Obsidian studies and other analyses are pending.

References Cited

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