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Helpful Article - Recording Your Finds

Ashley Deming

University of South Carolina - Columbia, deminga@mailbox.sc.edu

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Helpful Article- Recording Your Finds

By Ashley Deming

SDAMP cannot stress enough just how important the information is that you give us on your artifact report forms. The report forms serve as the simplest way to help you identify and report your information to us. The reports are also a great way for you to catalogue your own collection. This is an opportunity for you to value your finds even more and have a better understanding of what it is you are finding. It is our hope that each of you will treasure the importance of the artifacts you find and care for each of those items for years to come, passing on that tradition to the generations that follow.

There has been some confusion as to just what you should report on your artifact report forms. There is no object too small or too large to report. If it is important enough for you to pick it up off the bottom, it is important enough for you to report. Everything matters to archaeologists. We relish broken bits of pottery and bottles. If you find it, you should report it, no exceptions.

FYI, you are required by law (and the contract you signed) to file artifact report forms even if you have not been collecting or are only collecting fossils. If this is the case, you should tick the "No Recoveries Made This Quarter" box on the top of the report form and send it in. If you do not file your reports, we cannot renew your license.

Remember that you should be filling out an individual report form for each dive where you are collecting. For example, if you dive and collect three times a day for three days, you should be filing nine reports for those dives. This makes our jobs easier, but also helps you remember much more accurately what you found and where you found it.

When it comes to filling out your reports forms, there is no such thing as too much information. If you need to add extra sheets for info, by all means, include them. Be as specific as possible when describing your artifacts and the locations where you find them. Our records are exempt from the Freedom of Information Act, so we cannot disseminate your "sweet spot" information to the public. Include pictures, maps, drawings, or anything that will give us the most accurate information as possible.

When describing your artifact include things like color, length, height, and width, the type of material it is made of, if there is a design

or pattern and a description of it, the overall shape, if there is a glaze of the pottery, etc. These are all things that can help us and you identify your artifact correctly. Remember to write the number of pieces you find in the artifact report forms, do not just mark the space provided. We do not expect you to be experts in artifact identification. Keep it simple, but descriptive. A description like, "broken piece of old bottle" is not helpful at all. It would be better to write, "piece of 2"x1" green glass about 1/4" thick, possibly from an English wine bottle." If you are having difficulty describing your artifact, send a picture. Pictures are always welcome and make a great addition to our files. In this case, pictures are not worth a thousand words, but more like a million. Drawings are also great data. You can draw freehand or even trace your artifact. When sending a picture or drawing, make sure to include a scale with the image. For small artifacts you could use a penny, for larger items the use of a ruler is best. Many hobby divers have sent photocopies of their artifacts. This is a fast and easy way to record your collection. Should you recover something that is not on the artifact report form, include a separate sheet of paper describing the artifact(s).

Being a more responsible collector and reporter helps ensure that the history of the artifacts you find and the history of South Carolina can be accurately recorded and preserved for everyone to learn from and enjoy. The collecting and reporting you do helps to enrich the understanding of South Carolina's maritime past.



**Hobby Diver Report Photo
(Jimmy Moss Collection)**