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Savannah River Archaeology Research

Fieldnotes from the Pampas: Update on the Uruguay Paleoindian Survey

By J. Christopher Gillam and Rafael Suárez

With grants from the Walker Institute of International and Area Studies (WIAS), R. L. Stephenson Archaeological Research Fund (RLS), and the Archaeological Research Trust (ART), a collections survey to document site location and component information on the earliest cultures of Uruguay is witnessing great support from local collectors and institutions in the region. The long-term goals of the project complement extant and ongoing research by Paleoindian specialists in Uruguay to recover artifact, site, and quarry information for each departamental or county in Uruguay, to refine the regional chronology, to continue the studies of Paleoindian point technology and morphological variability and stone tool typology initiated by Rafael Suárez, to use Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to record known site locations, and to integrate the information and GPS locations into a Geographic Information System (GIS) for data management, mapping, and analysis. These steps will facilitate cross-cultural comparison with South Carolina's own Paleoindian record and that of other regions in the

Americas and enable exploration of the peopling of the Americas problem from a North and South Atlantic perspective.

In the first year of the project, 35 new sites with late Pleistocene Fishtail and/or early Holocene Pay

modern Southeast Atlantic Coast. These sites were also located on interior lands during the late Pleistocene and early Holocene, when the paleo-shoreline was up to 120-km farther out to sea (Fig. 1). Pay Paso points are most frequent in northwestern and central Uruguay, suggesting a more restricted regional distribution than the preceding Fishtail type that occur throughout Uruguay and the Southern Cone of South America. To date, a total of 56 Fishtail and 20 Pay Paso points have been recorded from private and public collections within 12 of the 19 Uruguay departamentals. Approximately 70-percent of the late Pleistocene Fishtail points (n=39) were manufactured on silicified limestone

and 11-percent (n=6) on jasper. The raw materials preferred for making early Holocene Pay Paso points is remarkably different, with a greater frequency of silicified sandstone points (45%, n=9), and less frequent, but still significant, use of silicified limestone (35%, n=7). The remaining

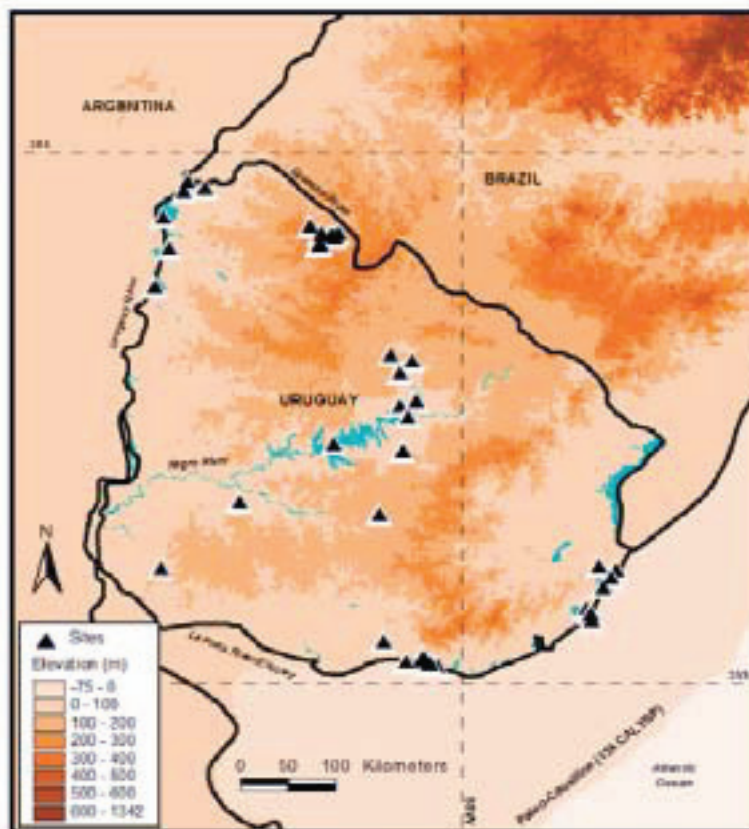


Fig. 1: Map of 35 newly documented late Pleistocene and early Holocene sites in Uruguay on the reconstructed paleo-landscape (13,000 CALYBP). (Map drawn by Chris Gillam)

Paso points, and quarries of agate, silicified sandstone, silicified limestone, and rhyolite were recorded (Fig. 1). These new sites supplement the 15 previously known sites from the region. Early Holocene Pay Paso points are apparently absent from ancient sites along the



Fig. 2. Chris Gillam recording a hearth-like feature on the bank of the Uruguay River. (Photo by Rafael Suárez)

Fishtail ($n=11$) and Pay Paso ($n=4$) points in the sample are made from expedient materials, such as quartz, rhyolite, and chalcedony.

Test excavation in February 2008 of one of several large hearth-like basin features encountered on the bank of the Uruguay River (Fig. 2) yielded charcoal, but no artifacts from the feature. The features are circular to oval in shape, varying in diameter with smaller sizes ranging from 15 to 25-cm in diameter, mid-sized features from 30 to 100-cm diameter, and large-sized up to 2-meters in diameter. Previously, AMS has dated two features from different stratigraphic units to ca. 8,400 and 2,900 years B.P. on an archaeological site of the Cuareim River. The features occur on paleosurfaces of the late Pleistocene, early Holocene, and mid-Holocene and will be studied further to verify their cultural

significance and associations. Future field research will include excavations at sites with good stratigraphy, such as Arroyo del Tigre (K87 site) where a previous date of ca. 10,400 ^{14}C yr BP was obtained, and ongoing documentation of private and public collections and site locations.

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Exhibit at Indiana Jones Movie

By George "Buddy" Wingard

On Saturday, March 24, 2008, employees of the Savannah River Archaeological Research Program (SRARP) presented a display at the Regal Cinemas in Augusta, Georgia on the opening weekend of the movie, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. Tammy Herron, Robert Moon, Megan Taylor, and I of the SRARP and Vivian McDiarmid of the Augusta Archaeological Society presented to patrons of the theater displays of Native American artifacts, outreach opportunities, and hands-on demonstrations. Nearly 250 people visited the display and showed an enthusiastic interest in the archaeological process.

The opportunity presented itself with the opening of the movie. With the main character being an archaeologist, the SRARP felt it would be the perfect tool to educate the public on the importance of archaeology. Although the character of Indiana Jones is an archaeologist, the audience rarely sees archaeology being executed in the movies, so the SRARP felt this would be a great opportunity to merge the two into an educational, yet fun exhibit.

Patrons to the theater were able to handle authentic artifacts, ask questions, and take handouts home with them about Native American prehistory and history of the local area, Archaeology Month posters, and flyers on upcoming archaeological field opportunities and events. The SRARP feels that the daylong event was well worth the time and effort in presenting the display. Uniting the display with the movie really allowed people to enjoy the fantasy on the screen but see for themselves the hard work that goes into saving important cultural resources in South Carolina and Georgia.