

Memorandum

To: Acting Area Manager

From: NRS/Archaeologist

Subject: History of elephant find and emergency excavation of same

On November 20, 1990 archaeologist Don Simonis of the Kingman Resource Area, Phoenix District informed me by telephone that a student in his community college archaeology class told him that one of his gem and mineral society friends had discovered and partially excavated a mammoth. Don made contact with these individuals through his student and paid a visit to the field location. Simonis indicated that the individual that found and partially excavated the mammoth was Dave Gordon. Mr Gordon is a member of the Lake Havasu Gem and Mineral Society. (b) (3) (A)

Both surface and subsurface are federally administered by BLM.

Both Mike Ford, prior Area Manager, and I have given talks to the Society and in particular in regard to the regulations pertaining gem and fossil collection. It is interesting that a local newspaper article identified George Hunter and Dave Gordon as the finders and excavators of a mammoth some 35 miles north of Lake Havasu City (Today News, Wednesday, Volume 8 Number 14, February 1, 1989, page 1 and 3 enclosed). Both Mike Ford and I gave talks to members of the Lake Havasu Gem and Mineral Society prior to or following this newspaper article. Both Hunter and Gordon were aware of regulations pertaining to fossil collection from these talks. In general, Society members felt that the regulations were unfair and restricted their freedom to hobby collect anywhere they chose and especially on federally administered lands. For this reason there has been tension between the society and our office. To my knowledge there was no attempt to contact our office about the mammoth find or to determine the ownership of the find spot. However, the finders did contact the University of Arizona for information and evaluation of their find, as per the newspaper article.

I inspected the find location on November 26, 1990 (b) (3) (A)

I estimated that the mammoth was probably 20,000 years old based on its geologic position in a Colorado River flood silt unit. Don Simonis had made contact with Doctors Larry Agenbroad and Jim Mead of Northern Arizona University in regard to this find. A field visit with these individuals was made on December 5, 1990. In addition Boma Johnson, Yuma District Archaeologist and Jenette Davis, Yuma

District Public Affairs Specialist also attended. Between November 26 and December 5, a vehicle drove near the find location and an OHV drove to the find spot as indicated by tracks. The site was visited again on December 13, 1990 with Ranger Rob Smith and there were no additional tracks or disturbance to the site.

At the December 5, 1990 field meeting the mammoth was examined by Agenbroad and Mead who concluded that a large portion of the mammoth appeared to be intact and was worthy of controlled excavation using a combination of archaeological and paleontological approaches, as there is the possibility of cultural association in the form of either bone or stone artifacts. Doctors Agenbroad and Mead agreed to supply graduate student labor from their classes with work to begin on December 13 with a completion date on December 16, 1990. It was believed that exposure, stabilization, and removal could be accomplished in this time frame. It was agreed by all present that the mammoth should be excavated as soon as possible to prevent further vandalism and potential loss of important fossil information as rumors of the find were circulating in the local community.

I have treated this situation as an emergency excavation and have authorized it as such. All field and lab supplies, as well as meals and camping needs would be covered by the NAU team. We have been asked to reimburse NAU for the cost of a metal storage cabinet for curation. This type of cabinet is required by National Park Service regulations. The estimated cost is \$700.00 and would be paid by 4331' program funds or other monies as determined by District Staff. After NAU provides us with the cabinet type we may be able to order it from GSA at a lower cost. We will authorize emergency excavation, laboratory evaluation, report preparation and curation through a BLM Group Volunteer Services Agreement issued by the Havasu Resource Area to Doctors Agenbroad and Mead. We will include the reimbursement costs for the storage cabinet or supply it through GSA. This procedure was recommended by Sue Richardson and Gary Stumpf at the State Office.

In terms of the information contained in the newspaper article about Dave Gordon and George Hunter excavating the mammoth, there are a number of items to consider. They made no attempt to contact BLM about land ownership, did not apply for a permit, did not work with BLM to excavate the mammoth, and as I understand it have kept a number of the bones. One second hand comment was that the tooth shown in the article had been sold to someone in Japan. We need to work with these individuals but not absolve them of unlawful actions. As we find out more about the location of the held bones we should write each of the individuals involved and request the return this government property citing regulations in support of this request. Law enforcement action and further investigation may be initiated in some form if the bones are not returned. We need to be stern but not strong handed in following this through and continue to collect

information so a case can be developed.

PGreen, 12/13/90
enclosure

1st weekend 12/13-14

2nd Fixed week w/NAU 2/8, 9, 10

Scheduled third weekend w/NAU 3/8, 9, 10