

ArchaeologyX Paleo-Digger Grant 2025

Search for the First Americans

ArchaeologyX is seeking research proposals focused on finding deeply buried sites containing the archaeological remains of the First Americans, commonly known as the people of the Paleoindian cultural period. The winning research proposal will receive five days of deep archaeological testing with the Paleo-Digger Machine. The machine provides a method for identifying and delineating deeply buried archaeological deposits on sites where traditional excavation methods are cost-prohibitive. The grant award will be contingent upon completing a successful Kickstarter campaign initiated by Quemahoning LLC.

Submission Criteria

- Submissions must contain a written research design that utilizes the Paleo-Digger machine and method to identify and delineate Paleoindian period sites.
- The proposed project must be located on a site where Paleoindian period artifacts have been found or a location where there is a high potential for finding Paleoindian period cultural remains.
- The potential for finding Paleoindian period cultural remains must be in levels that exceed 1 meter in depth below the ground surface.
- The project proposal cannot be part of any compliance archaeology contract.
- The project proposal must provide the name and qualifications of the archaeologist(s) responsible for directing the research project.
- The project must be located within the 48 contiguous states of the United States.
- Include a preliminary schedule for completing the fieldwork and report requirements.
- Submitting parties must agree to the conditions of the crowdfunding campaign.

Who May Apply

Applicants may be any organization, group, or individual who has a vested interest in advancing First Americans studies through the application of scientific archaeological methods. These include regional, state, and local archaeological organizations, universities, museums, and students pursuing a master's or Ph.D. in archaeology or related field. Students must provide a letter from their thesis or dissertation committee expressing support for using the Paleo-Digger machine in their research. Cultural Resources Management firms may apply if the proposed research is grant-funded and not directly associated with compliance archaeology contracts. Groups of researchers formed for the specific purpose of pursuing the proposed research design may apply.

Grantee Responsibilities

- The applicant must have landowner consent to conduct archaeological excavations using the Paleo-Digger machine prior to submission of the proposal.
- The grantee is responsible for coordinating with Quemahoning in establishing a schedule for the field campaign.
- The grantee will be responsible for providing no less than four workers for screening soil, collecting artifacts, and recording excavation level data throughout the duration of the project. Six to eight workers are recommended for sites with silty or clay soils.

- The grantee will provide all necessary artifact bags, artifact tags, and data collection forms needed for the proper collection of artifacts and associated data.
- The grantee is responsible for all artifact analysis, report production, and artifact curation.
- The grantee has one year to complete the field project, beginning on the date of the grant winner announcement.
- The grantee must submit to Quemahoning within eight months after completion of the field project a final written report that includes a description of the research design, methods, results, and implications for future research.

Proposal Submission Deadline

Submit project proposals by **January 31, 2025** to: Brian Fritz, 116 E Englewood Ave, New Castle, PA 16105, or at brian@quemahoning.com. A confirmation email will be returned upon receiving your submission.

Kickstarter Campaign

The Kickstarter Campaign will begin February 14, **2025** and will continue for 30 days.

Grant Winner Announcement

The winning proposal will be announced on April **14, 2025**.

ArchaeologyX Paleo-Digger Grant Sponsor

Quemahoning LLC, owner of the Paleo-Digger machine and the ArchaeologyX YouTube channel, will donate to the winning proposal use of the Paleo-Digger machine and a machine operator for five consecutive workdays. Quemahoning will utilize a Kickstarter campaign to cover the costs associated with bringing the machine to the project site. The winning proposal will be selected by a committee composed of three members chosen by Quemahoning and all Kickstarter backers pledging at the \$100 and \$500 levels. Each member of the selection committee will have one vote. If the votes of the selection committee result in a tie, Quemahoning will cast the tie-breaking vote. Quemahoning will be responsible for initiating and administering the Kickstarter campaign.

Quemahoning retains the non-exclusive right to record, produce, and distribute video content of the archaeological project. Quemahoning does not claim ownership of artifacts and samples collected during the project. Quemahoning is not responsible for artifact analysis, artifact curation, or the production of archaeological reports associated with the research project. Quemahoning reserves the right to withdraw equipment and personnel from the project if significant unforeseen obstacles arise regarding access to the work site, landowner consent, or if conditions on the project site become irreversibly unsafe.

Questions and Additional Information

Questions and requests for additional information about the Paleo-Digger machine and the ArchaeologyX Paleo-Digger Grant should be addressed to:

Brian L. Fritz, M.S., RPA, GISP
Principal Archaeological Investigator
Quemahoning LLC
116 E Englewood Ave
New Castle, PA 16105 brian@quemahoning.com

Paleo-Digger Kickstarter Campaign 2025

Overview

ArchaeologyX Paleo-Digger Grant 2025: Search for the First Americans

Created by: Quemahoning LLC

Category: Publication/Academic

Location: New Castle, Pennsylvania

Goal: The funding goal will be determined based on the range of project proposals received. Projects located further from Quemahoning's base of operation or in remote and isolated areas will inherently have higher logistical costs.

A project to fund archaeological excavations on a potential Paleoindian period site with five days of deep archaeological testing using the Paleo-Digger machine. Research proposals were submitted for <number> competing site locations. Backers contributing at the \$100 and \$500 levels will review the competing research proposals and will have one vote each on the selection committee. The funding will support the winning proposal.

Story

The Research Problem

Who were the first people in North America? When did they get here? Where did they come from? And how did they survive the harsh ice age conditions that stretched across much of North America from 11,000 to 20,000 years ago? These are the kinds of questions archaeologists are trying to answer by studying the stone tools and other artifacts that the First Americans left behind at their campsites. The most widely recognized Paleoindian period tool is the fluted stone spear point called the Clovis point, which is found across North America. Clovis points along with other associated stone tool types are collectively called the Clovis culture. However, there is mounting evidence that people were living in North America before the invention and widespread adoption of the Clovis point, possibly for thousands of years. Sites containing these pre-Clovis stone tools are exceptionally hard to find and identify.

The best-preserved Paleoindian period campsites are often buried deep in flood deposits along streams and rivers. In undisturbed flood sediments, older is deeper. Along our largest rivers, Paleoindian period campsites may be as deep as 20 feet (7 meters). Because these sites are so deep, they are very hard to find. Traditional archaeological methods using hand excavations commonly dig as deep as 5 feet (1.5 meters). Beyond 5 feet in depth, it becomes increasingly dangerous for workers unless the excavation pits are made wider or expensive wall-shoring devices are used to prevent the walls from collapsing downward and burying the archaeologists.

Research archaeologists very much want to find and study sites left by the First Americans, but the labor needed to reach these deeply buried sites makes this type of research

cost-prohibitive. If we want to find those elusive pre-Clovis sites, then we need a deliberate effort to find the earliest sites. Our best opportunities for identifying pre-Clovis sites are to dig down to the Clovis layers and then dig deeper!

A Solution

The Paleo-Digger is a machine that was specifically designed to find deeply buried archaeological sites, especially Paleoindian period sites. The machine is capable of efficiently digging test pits 52 centimeters (20 inches) in diameter to a depth of 7 meters (20 feet), by extracting and screening the soil in 10-centimeter levels. While operating this machine still presents significant costs, these costs are an order of magnitude less than comparable hand excavations. Using the machine eliminates the problem of sending workers down into dangerous test pits. Our principal goal is to find and delineate the deepest archaeological sites so that highly targeted hand excavations can be designed to maximize the return of information for the labor expended. Let the machine do the hard work of finding the sites so that archaeologists can focus their efforts on the best locations to dig.

Let's Make It Happen!

Quemahoning designed the ArchaeologyX Paleo-Digger Grant so that the wider archaeological community has an opportunity to directly engage in our effort to find the First Americans. By joining this project at the highest reward levels, backers will help to fund this research, but you will also have a voice in deciding which research proposal is selected for the grant. Quemahoning LLC, the owner of the Paleo-Digger machine, is donating the use of the Paleo-Digger machine and an operator for five consecutive workdays on the project site chosen by the selection committee. The selection committee will be composed of three members chosen by Quemahoning together with selection committee members who contributed to the project at the highest reward levels. A successful campaign will fund the logistical costs associated with the project, including travel costs, lodging, the cost of renting the skid loader needed to power the Paleo-Digger machine, and other costs associated with capturing the project on video.

Risks and Challenges

If archaeology was easy, then there would be no need for this grant program and Kickstarter campaign. All archaeological field projects come with some risks and challenges. Severe weather can temporarily suspend work, which can shorten the amount of available work hours. We do our best to mitigate and plan for equipment failure, but no mechanized system is foolproof. There is no guarantee that the winning project will find Paleoindian period sites or artifacts. Inviting project backers to participate in the selection process is an untested approach that may yield unexpected outcomes. However, we believe that giving the public a voice in directing archaeological research will collectively steer our research efforts toward the best possible outcomes.

Reward Tiers

\$5

As a contributor at this level, you will help support important archaeological research. Your support will be acknowledged on ArchaeologyX.

\$25

As a contributor at this level, you will help support important archaeological research. You will receive an ArchaeologyX patch and daily updates during the project. Your support will be acknowledged on ArchaeologyX.

\$100

As a major contributor, you will be invited to participate as a member of the ArchaeologyX selection committee for the 2025 Paleo-Digger Grant. As a committee member, you will receive a copy of the competing research proposals for your review. You will have the power to cast one vote for the proposal you believe is best qualified for winning the grant. You will also receive daily updates from the dig site. Your support will be acknowledged on ArchaeologyX.

\$500

As a VIP contributor, you will receive all the benefits of the lower tiers, plus an invitation to visit the site during the project. You will also receive a digital copy of the final archaeology report when it is completed by the project grantee.

FAQ

QUESTION: What if the Kickstarter campaign fails to reach its goal?

ANSWER: If the campaign fails to reach its funding goal, then no money is collected through Kickstarter. Quemahoning will reach out to the proposal submitters and discuss potential funding alternatives. If viable funding alternatives are found, then the three-member selection committee established by Quemahoning will choose the winning proposal.

QUESTION: If I contribute at the highest reward levels, am I required to serve on the selection committee?

ANSWER: Major contributors may choose to not serve on the selection committee and can choose to remain anonymous.