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Malaga Island, Isles of Shoals: Collection Assessment & Re-Curation of Archaeological Research

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Mentor: Nathan D. Hamilton, Associate Professor of Archaeology

Introduction

The University of Southern Maine conducted two seasons of archaeological excavation at Malaga Island in 1991-1992. The field school was an American and New England class directed by Faith Harrington, PhD (Figures 1-3). The island exhibited significant 17th century activities associated with an early New England cod fishery. Earlier pre-contact deposits revealed Native American use during the Ceramic Period circa 1000 BP. This research focused on processing curated soil samples, constructing a digital catalog and database, and properly curating the excavated material. Several specialized analyses included smoking pipe stem & bowl analysis for dating deposits and application of X-Ray Fluorescence analysis of sediment for chemical patterns of select elements. The site was recently mapped to a detailed orthophoto map (Figure 6), highlighting excavation area and ecology.

Table 1: Distribution of select data in catalog by unit and transect

Analysis

Samples obtained in the ISAP and curated at the University of Southern Maine contained in eight bankers boxes were inventoried and utilized to construct a catalog and a digital database (see Table 1). Artifacts were assigned to defined material culture and faunal categories. The sample numbering 4736 include a dominant well preserved faunal sample of bird, fish and mammal as well as shell bivalve and univalves. A significant sample (n=666) of white and regular ceramics exhibited catalog and database patterns of select elements. A strong cluster of dates with adequate samples (white) suggest 1633 early 17th century occupations.

Figure 7. Distribution of redbow and white-smoking pipes in the four excavated units. A strong cluster of dates with adequate samples (white) suggest 1633 early 17th century occupations.

Figure 8. Side-ditched huts excavated at Malaga Island during the 1992 ISAP field school.

Figure 10. Distribution of materials recovered in flotation samples processed from Malaga Island and the 1992 ISAP field school.