



First Coast Maritime Archaeology Project

"[The First Coast Maritime Archaeology Project 2007-2009 report] is the most comprehensive and complete example of a marine archaeology report that has been received by this agency. [The results of this project] have set a new standard for what can be accomplished by archaeologists working along Florida's waterfronts."

-- Dr. Roger C. Smith, State Underwater Archaeologist



Local high school students completing their certification dives at Alexander Springs. These students were certified as divers by LAMP instructors and subsequently participated in archaeological fieldwork.

The First Coast Maritime Archaeology Project (FCMAP) is a comprehensive program of archaeological research and educational outreach focusing on the maritime heritage of Florida's First Coast, and particularly that of St. Augustine, the oldest port in the United States, and its immediate surrounding region. The first phase of this project was carried out between July 2007 and December 2009 by LAMP after being awarded a Special Category Historic Preservation Grant through the State of Florida's Division of Historical Resources. While state funding is no longer available for this project, LAMP has continued to conduct fieldwork under the auspices of this project through the present day.

Meaningful archaeological research is the core work of this project. With the advantage of state funding, ambitious goals were set and met by LAMP archaeologists. During the original 2007-2009 phase of FCMAP, project staff completed 95 days of site investigation and/or excavation, 93 days of survey, 41 days of target testing, and 58 days of site monitoring. Site investigations included the terrestrial excavation of a riverine farmstead and wharf complex dating to the 18th and 19th centuries, and both the non-intrusive survey and excavation of a variety of shipwrecks located in both inshore and offshore environments. Over the duration of the project, 824 individual dives were completed for a total of 669.5 hours of underwater time, without a single diving-related injury or accident.



LAMP archaeologists and volunteers investigating an unidentified steamboat wreck in the shallows of Grimsley Cove in Crescent Lake, Flagler County.



LAMP interns, archaeologists, and Anastasia State Park staff recovered the broken keel of a shipwreck probably dating to the first quarter of the nineteenth century at the Blowhole Wreck site.

In addition to diving and terrestrial site investigations, over 300 linear miles in more than 25 search areas were surveyed with side scan sonar, magnetometer, and sub-bottom profiler. Offshore survey activities resulted in 128 magnetic, 4 sidescan sonar, and 181 subbottom profiler anomalies. More targets were identified in a number of inland waterway surveys. Target testing led to the discovery of one shipwreck and several possible sites, and many more targets were identified which will be tested in future years. 2007-2009 FCMAP activities led to the reporting of four new sites and the

updating of 12 site file forms.

The initial funded phase of FCMAP also sponsored a number of archival research trips to various archives across the U.S. and in London and Seville. This has resulted in a wealth of new documents related to the maritime history of the First Coast which are currently being organized and transcribed. Stored on the LAMP server are 5863 digital images (11.23 gigs) of British documents (Admiralty, Colonial Office, and Treasury records), 2171 images (12.31 gigs) of Spanish documents (most dating to the 16th century), and 1953 images (5.36 gigs) of 19th century U.S. documents (commerce, naval, and newspaper records). This represents as many as 19,974 pages, and much of the microfilm from Spain has not yet been digitized. Eventually all documents will be translated and made available to the public at LAMP's George R. Fischer Research Library.



In 2009 divers excavated a trench across a ballast pile offshore St. Augustine to expose hull timbers at the Steamship and Ballast Pile Wreck Site.



A Flagler College student assists in the documentation of the Blowhole Wreck keel.

The other fundamental aspect of this project is public archaeology. Whenever possible, members of the public are directly involved with FCMAP research. During the initial 2007-2009 phase of FCMAP, a total of 179 volunteers contributed 13,586.94 hrs. Dozens of these volunteers were divers, who underwent a training program and worked side by side with project archaeologists. The project was particularly committed to fostering the education of the next generation of archaeologists, employing 11 graduate and undergraduate interns from 7 universities across Florida, the U.S., and abroad. Three summer Field Schools were taught to a total of 18 students, accredited through Plymouth State University in New Hampshire and Flinders University in South Australia. In addition to education at the college level, the project sponsored 4 semesters of an underwater archaeology class at Pedro Menéndez High School in St. Johns County. Project staff taught a total of 95 students several times a week, and 38 of these students participated in a scuba certification class with opportunities to dive on historic shipwreck sites. Several of these students went on to volunteer as divers and in the laboratory after they finished the class. At the elementary school level, project staff designed and produced two complete "Travelling Sea Chests" designed to be shipped from school to school in order to reach great numbers of students across the state. FCMAP archaeologists also initiated a heritage boatbuilding program, which attracted participants of all ages, but particularly retired adults. They built 5 traditional wooden craft during the course of the project period. The project also sponsored two Symposiums and an ongoing lecture series, for a total of 263 presentations and public events reaching an aggregate audience of 9,721. In addition, an extensive amount of information was disseminated to an even wider audience through the project webpage and blog. Eighty-seven individual blog updates were published, often with extensive text, photos, and video, to share with the world the latest project activities. Finally, project staff hosted a documentary film crew who visited during the 2009 diving season, and production is currently underway on a documentary titled "The Search for the Jefferson Davis," which was released in 2011.



Teacher Ken Jones and students from the maritime archaeology class at Pedro Menendez High School learn conservation techniques by helping clean a corroded iron chainplate from a Vilano Beach shipwreck, under the tutelage of conservator Kathleen McCormick.

With state funding no longer available for a project of this scope, FCMAP's research and outreach activities have been scaled back but it remains an ongoing project and we implement field research each season. Since 2010, our primary research focus has been the excavation of the Storm Wreck, a late eighteenth century colonial shipwreck that was

discovered during a 2009 FCMAP remote sensing survey. The FCMAP 2010 field season research report was recently completed and is currently undergoing review by state archaeologists.

Click on the reference below to see the title page, table of contents, and introduction for the 2007-2009 final report:

[Meide, Chuck, Samuel P. Turner and P. Brendan Burke](#)

[2010 First Coast Maritime Archaeology Project 2007-2009: Report on Archaeological and Historical Investigations and Other Project Activities. Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program, St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum, First Light Maritime Society, St. Augustine, Florida.](#)