

Drought threatens Indian artifacts

December 20 2007

North Carolina officials warned that taking advantage of the drought to look for American-Indian artifacts on lake bottoms is against the law.

The extended drought has exposed acres of lake bed and reservoir bottom. While picking up souvenirs such as old fishing lures or lost watches is legal, removing anything from public land that could be of archaeological interest violates state and federal laws, The Raleigh (N.C.). News & Observer reported.

Ramie Gougeon, an archaeologist with a company that does surveys for the Army Corps of Engineers, told the newspaper he has seen signs of treasure hunters at the site where he is working. They are holes dug in the mud, often with old nails or other metal exposed, revealing that someone has been working with a metal detector.

Gougeon said that the amateurs make his life more difficult because his surveys end up with pieces missing. He compared it to what would happen if an archaeologist examined a house where thieves had made off with the good silver and china, leaving the paper plates.

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Citation: Drought threatens Indian artifacts (2007, December 20) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-12-drought-threatens-indian-artifacts.html>

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