New office to preserve archaeological heritage

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Helping to save the archaeological resources of central Ohio is the task of a new University office.

The Regional Archaeological Preservation Office will serve a 10-county area considered one of the archaeologically richest in the eastern United States.

Supporting the project are the University, the Ohio Historical Society and the Columbus Foundation.

The new regional office, one of 11 in the state, operates in the anthropology department as part of the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, a division within the Historical Society.

The region to be served from campus headquarters in 112 Lord Hall, includes the counties of Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Knox, Licking, Madison, Pickaway, Ross and Union. Directing the operations as acting preservation officer for the region is Carl J. Phagan, lecturer on archaeology.

To develop inventory

Work of the office will include developing an accurate inventory of the area's archaeological resources, carrying out a public information campaign and assisting offices and agencies of the region to comply with federal and state conservation legislation in planning land-use projects.

Field surveys also are planned as a part of the office's efforts to develop an up-to-date register of the region's resources. One such survey is likely to be undertaken in the central Scioto River valley.

"This area contains the archaeological remains of 12,000 to 14,000 years of Ohio prehistory," Phagan said. "Settlements, burial mounds, cemeteries and other relics of prehistoric peoples, including the Hopewell, Adena and Fort Ancient Indian cultures, are represented here.

"Many such sites in the past have been destroyed through urban expansion, farming, road construction and other development," he said. "These forces continue to threaten the preservation of important areas.

Office will assist

"We know that there are many citizens of central Ohio who are intensely interested in maintaining our archaeological heritage," he said. "The regional office will provide the necessary organization and assistance through which much of this work can be accomplished."

Phagan said the office would work closely with agencies and organizations throughout the 10 counties of the region.

"For example, we hope to talk with local planning agencies, county historical societies and both professional and amateur archaeological organizations. Schools, clubs, civic and service organizations and the general public may receive information on the program."

Information on state and federal preservation requirements also will go, he said, to agencies at various governmental levels and to firms involved in land-alteration projects.