

TAS Officers Agree on Structure to Develop Volunteer and Activity Opportunities

Throughout its history the Taos Archeological Society has prided itself in the number and quality of options its members have for involvement. During the “COVID break” we’ve had the opportunity to reflect on how best to continue the tradition and offer society members safe and varied opportunities for personal enrichment, contributions to science and the community and just plain fun. In December 2020, society officers agreed upon a structure for volunteer and activity development to accomplish just these ends.

Now your society has a process for new project development. It’s hierarchical so as to spread responsibility for planning amongst a wide variety of people and distinguish a difference between strategic and tactical efforts.

To start at the top, the **first tier**, we find a Volunteers and Activities Committee, with strategic responsibility. Phil Aldritt is at its head. It reports directly to the TAS officers with a purpose to promote and facilitate work of members as citizen scientists. The goals of this Volunteers and Activities Committee are several and defined in its charter, which can be viewed through a link below. The ultimate objective is to proactively address the purpose of the TAS specified in its bylaws through strategic efforts to expand opportunities TAS members have to learn and participate in archaeology.

The Volunteers and Activities Committee fosters task-development teams whose purposes are to focus on specific types of opportunities. These teams work as standing subcommittees that are the mid-level or **second tier** in our structure. Their work is both strategic and tactical in nature. Only one subcommittee, Collections & Laboratory Research, is currently chartered. Kurt Weidler leads this subcommittee. You can view this charter through a link given below. A wide range of other subcommittees are possible. Examples include archaeological fieldwork, tours, site rehabilitation, and public awareness/outreach. Task teams focus on development of opportunities

To the Membership of the Taos
Archaeological Society,

We hope this message finds you all safe and well.

Over the past year, a committee developed a charter to formalize our relationship with SMU-Taos and Picuris Pueblo. The Charter development team included Paul McGuff, Kurt Weidler, Paul Krispinsky and Cecilia Shields.

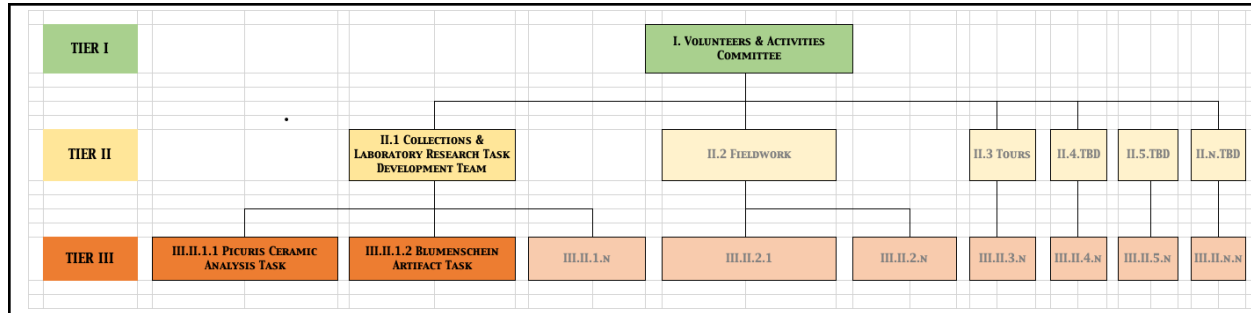
As you may already know many TAS members have been participating in ceramic analysis on an *ad-hoc* basis without a formal structure in place. Today we are happy to inform you that a formalized Charter to conduct ceramic analysis is signed and activated. In addition, an insurance policy is in place sponsored by TAS to protect volunteers engaged in TAS activities.

Attached please find the documents that were generated on behalf of TAS to conduct ceramic analysis.

Thank you. Take care and be safe,

The Officers of the Taos Archaeological
Society

in key areas. These task teams work to identify and define an explicit task or group of explicit tasks within the purview of their own charters. They are expected to identify prospects for TAS involvement in partnership with lead individuals, organizations and principal investigators and evaluate their potential for new volunteer or activity offerings. A critical part of this work is to carefully think through possible projects. These subcommittees ensure that TAS efforts are collaborative, safe, meaningful and, when engage the support of all interested parties.



At the base of the structure are specific task descriptions, which are the **third tier**. These tasks are the tactical or operational result of planning by the task development teams. Each mid-level task-development team may define one or several specific tasks. The results are task descriptions, and these are the outcome of the careful planning efforts of the task development teams. Each task has a Task Lead who is a TAS member volunteer. Tasks that involve the research of professional archaeologists also have Principal Investigators. One task is formalized at present: the Picuris Ceramic Analysis (Principal Investigator: Mike Adler. Task Lead: Mark Henderson). A charter for the Helen G. Blumenschein Artifact Collection Inventory (Principal Investigator: Jeff Boyer. Task Lead: Becky Quintana) is well into development at the time of this notice. You can expect many more as interest in our events increases.

You can view all three approved charters [here](#).

How did this come about?

By August 2020, a group of volunteers who were mostly TAS members had worked at Fort Burgwin for many years to analyze pottery artifacts from excavations at Pot Creek Pueblo followed by six years to analyze pottery artifacts from excavations at Picuris Pueblo. But they had done this work without formal approval of either the Society, Southern Methodist University or the people of the Picuris Pueblo, owners of the Picuris Pueblo collection. All parties had grown increasingly concerned about liability, artifact patrimony, health and safety, and consistency and preservation of the analytical record completed by volunteers. Of equal concern was a desire to spread responsibilities and manage for seamless transition if and when key participants need to move on before project completion.

During the period of COVID pandemic restriction, the volunteer group that had worked on the Picuris collection continued to meet remotely by videoconference. In late August 2020, after lengthy conversations on the need to formalize their volunteer project the “sherders,” as they called themselves, appointed a Charter Development Working Group to develop recommendations for a “charter,” a prescribed plan that all interested parties could accept. The Charter Development Working Group initially consisted of society members. Later because the task that initiated this process involves analysis of artifacts from Picuris Pueblo, Cecilia Shields the Picuris Pueblo was added as a contributing member to the group.

One problem faced by the charter development group was how to formalize its place within the TAS. The group made a recommendation for a three-tiered structure that allows for a clear path from the operations of the society leadership to specific society-sponsored tasks. They drafted three charters to go with the recommendation. The charter development team and the informal sherder group agree that the structure they defined for their purpose of placing the Picuris ceramic analysis task in context serendipitously is also broadly useful to the Taos Archaeological Society. Not the least useful aspect of this approach is that it allows for engagement of a wider pool of members in the future direction of the society. It also reduces the load on our hard-working officers. On December 18, 2020, the officers unanimously approved the recommendation submitted by the sherders and signed charter documents.

The officers and those of us in the Volunteer and Activities Committee, the Collections and Laboratory Research Task Development Sub-Committee, and the specific task groups welcome your involvement now and in the future. Specific open positions are listed here. We anticipate many more opportunities for your involvement as Task Development Sub-Committees grow in number and as these teams develop a range of new tasks to offer for member involvement.

Current open positions on Volunteers and Activities Committee:

- Co-chairperson
- TAS members at large

Contact Phil Alldritt

Open positions on the Collections and Laboratory Research Task Development Sub-Committee:

- Co-chairperson
- Member of Volunteers and Activities Committee at large
- TAS members at large

Contact Kurt Weidler

Open positions with the Picuris Ceramic Analysis Task

- Work Group Lead
- Safety Coordinator
- Quality Assurance/Quality Control Officer
- Task Participants, experienced and inexperienced.

Contact Mark Henderson

Phil Alldritt, TAS president: These charters are "...a model going forward for additional activities that TAS may decide to undertake."

Kurt Weidler, TAS member and chair of the Laboratory Research Task Development Team: "We are excited to help formalize new and existing activities that TAS members want to develop and share with other members."

Paul Krispinsky, TAS member of the Charter Development Team: "Developing these Charters has put in place clearly defined objectives and guidelines for many different projects and activities TAS can and has sponsored. The charters will utilize the knowledge and expertise of TAS members to develop and implement plans of these projects. I was volunteering to help analyze pottery artifacts from Picuris Pueblo for a couple of years before I realized it was not sponsored by TAS. Now with the Charter in place there is a structured plan to guide volunteers through this project while emphasizing the importance of these artifacts to the Picuris people."

Mark Henderson, TAS member and "sherders" guide: "TAS is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to "Conserving the archaeological and historical archaeological presence and evidence in North Central New Mexico." The strength of any organization is the effectiveness of its members to work together to take action. The best method I know of for people to work together for a common cause is to have documented guidelines available to everyone that establish policy and procedures. Developing, following and modifying a Charter for each organizational activity specifying who, what, where, when, how and why people are working together on a task are the best method I know to sustain an activity."

Jeff Boyer: "I applaud the sherders for realizing the need for more a formal arrangement with the Fort and Picuris and for instigating the process that has resulted in the committee, subcommittee, the Picuris task, and now the Blumy task."