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Robert Behre
Post and Courier, rbehre@postandcourier.com

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End of Archaeological Surveys Hides History, Some Say

**By Robert Behre
The Post & Courier**

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State regulators no longer require developers along South Carolina's coast to do routine archaeological surveys, and some say the state will lose an unknown amount of its history as a result.

The change -- which took effect during the past year -- stemmed from discussions between the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's Office of Coastal Resource Management and the State Historic Preservation Office.



The previous policy had led to the discovery of many historic sites, such as the village of Childsbury in Berkeley County, said L.M. Drucker, an archaeologist with AF Consultants in Columbia.

Childsbury was built around Strawberry Ferry Landing, a hub of Colonial commerce that once had a racetrack, free school, a tavern and doctors' and lawyers' offices.

All that remains above ground today is a chapel, but Drucker said her archaeological work in the mid-1990s found deposits of artifacts underground that ultimately helped thwart a housing development there and led to the state's purchase of the land.

"The coast is such a primary area for historic settlement and it's getting developed so much, it's a shame," she said of the change. "It's awful for the state to allow that much heritage to go down the tubes."

Only known sites protected -- The policy change has been in the works for a few years, prompted in part by developers' concerns about the application process, said Dan Burger, OCRM spokesman.

In the eight-county coastal zone -- Beaufort, Hampton, Jasper, Colleton, Dorchester, Charleston, Georgetown and Horry -- developers must obtain OCRM land disturbance permits.

They still must address archaeological sites if their property is known to contain any such sites on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. But they now may skip this step if there's no documentation. . . .

When DuPont expanded its plant in Berkeley County, OCRM didn't require a survey, but DuPont did one in anticipation, Dobrasko said. That peremptory survey found a significant site -- the slave quarters for Dean Hall plantation. Its excavation formed the basis for an exhibit at Cypress Gardens. [Read this full article at *The Post & Courier* online >>>].