

THE WARM MINERAL SPRINGS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT**

Warm Mineral Springs, Florida 33596  
Telephone: (813) 426-9559

**WILBURN A. COCKRELL, Director**  
Barbara Cockrell, Manager  
Skip Wood, Dive Officer and  
Assistant Archaeologist  
Steve Koski, Assistant  
Archaeologist

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The prehistoric and historic periods of Florida's past are of singular and significant importance to the people of Florida and the world. People first came into the New World at some yet undetermined time during the Pleistocene, or Ice Age, almost certainly from Eastern Asia via the Bering Land Bridge. By 11,000 years ago, these people had certainly reached Florida during a time in which many forms of now extinct Pleistocene megafauna were still found in considerable numbers, as evidenced by research at Warm Mineral Springs and other sites. During the Pleistocene, sea level stands were considerably lower than today, although estimates for the relative sea level near the end of the Pleistocene range from 30 to 100 meters lower than present for the South Atlantic. Regardless of the exact level, it is known that humans and the floral and faunal forms with which they interacted were active in areas which are today underwater, both in coastal areas, and in now-inundated caves, springs, and lower areas. In addition to sites which were covered by these rising waters, there are prehistoric sites underwater in Florida which were deposited from areas on adjacent uplands; an example of this type site would be one of the numerous deposits of aboriginal ceramics in Florida rivers and springs (pottery technology was not introduced into North America until ca. 2-3000 B.C., or near the time at which the sea level reached approximately its present day level).

## II. HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

Since the beginning of the work by then State Underwater Archaeologist Wilburn Cockrell in 1972, the State-sponsored interdisciplinary Archaeological Project at Warm Mineral Springs has been one of the most productive underwater archaeological projects to date, both in terms of significant recoveries and in the development and execution of innovative techniques for recording and excavating these recoveries.

