

March 4, 2024

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Compliance Manager  
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816 State Street  
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Taylor Lambrigger  
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**RE: 2023 Progress Update for the *Memorandum of Understanding Milwaukee County Institutional Grounds Froedtert Tract (MCIG-FT) Ambulatory Care Center Project WHS #07-0878 (47MI527)***

Dear Dr. Howe and Ms. Lambrigger,

I write to provide a summary and update on the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's on-going research, education, and long-term care efforts in support of its 2008 *Memorandum of Understanding with the Wisconsin Historical Society regarding Milwaukee County Institutional Grounds Froedtert Tract (MCIG-FT) Ambulatory Care Center Project WHS #07-0878 (47MI527)*.

To appropriately contextualize work completed in 2023, narrative accounts pertaining to each significant MOU provision have been carried forward from the 2022 MOU Progress Update. Accomplishments from the 2023 calendar year are indicated by a **bolded notation (2023)**.

I take each of the seven significant MOU provisions in turn:

*Stipulation 1: The human remains and associated artifacts may be subject to analysis and research by UWM.*

**In 2023, UWM made substantial progress regarding individual biological profiles (see below).**

UWM has facilitated analysis and research of the Milwaukee County Poor Farm Cemetery (MCPFC) population by the:

1. Preparation of individuals, their associated grave goods, and cultural items for long term care.

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- a. The initial accessioning of individuals involved extensive stabilization and conservation efforts, including mold mitigation, removal of adherents and organic matter, and the reassociation of skeletal elements with individuals.
  - b. Individuals were carefully re-housed in custom designed archivally stable containers and placed within a 36 CFR Part 79 compliant facility with restricted access.
2. Preparation of field records for long-term curation.
    - a. Entry of field records into the collection management information system.
    - b. Stabilization and rehousing of field records and photographs for long term curation.
    - c. Digitization of 1,873 cubic feet of analog records and photographs and storage in digital archives.
  3. Creation of a Geographical Information System database.
    - a. The database contains spatial data (intra-site provenience) that links to attribute data, such as osteological biological profiles.
  4. Development, implementation, and refinement of treatment protocols and analytical methods.
    - a. We created five manuals focus on general laboratory protocols and conservation: *Stabilization/Cleaning Protocol for Adult Skeletal Material*, *Stabilization Protocol for Juvenile Burial Matrix*, *Material Culture Processing and Stabilization Manual*, the *MCPFC Protocol Guide and Laboratory Manual*, and ***Manual for MCPFC Digital Data Entry (2023)***.
    - b. Five manuals detailing protocols for bioarchaeological analyses: *Adult Analysis*, *Juvenile Analysis*, *Commingled Analysis*, ***Nonadult Commingled and Mixed Burials (2023)***, *3D Scanning*, and *Burial Description Manual*.
  5. Development of biological profiles for each individual.
    - a. UWM is documenting age at death, biological sex (adults only), and pathologies for each individual, an important and necessary activity given the limitations of the biological profiles developed prior to 2008. The development of robust biological profiles is a prerequisite for generating provisional identifications.
    - b. **Substantial progress was made in 2023; biological profiles are now 79.3% complete (in 2022, profile completion stood at 65%).**

*Stipulation 2: UWM shall permit reasonable and appropriate research by students and other scholars from within and without UWM, shall grant reasonable and appropriate access to the human remains and associated artifacts to students and other scholars from within and without the UWM, and shall ensure reasonable and appropriate access to all individuals who currently have ongoing research projects involving the human remains and associated artifacts. In all cases, the Anthropology Department at UWM shall determine what constitutes reasonable and appropriate access.*

**In 2023, UWM extended the research moratorium and further supported long-term care efforts.**

1. **UWM extended the research moratorium for new research relating to non-NAGPRA related human remains (and associated cultural items) to June 30, 2024.**
2. UWM established a research access protocol to assess reasonable and appropriate research access to the population for all researchers and students (internal and external to UWM). Oversight and decisions are made through the ARLC Internal Advisory Committee.
3. Prior to the research moratorium, external researchers have been provided access to the MCPFC population.
  - a. UWM hosted the Midwest Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology Association meeting (2017) to foster inter-institutional research initiatives and collaborative efforts.
  - b. Visiting scholars conducted research on the MCPFC population.
4. Internal researchers and students have been provided access to the MCPFC population.
  - a. UWM Student work to date includes eight Ph.D. dissertations and 11 Master's theses.
  - b. Support for Undergraduate Research Fellows (SURF) students facilitated long term care efforts for the population, including three students active in Spring 2023, three students active in Summer 2023, and three students active in Fall 2023.**

*Stipulation 3: UWM shall ensure that the human remains and associated artifacts are treated with the greatest possible respect.*

**In 2023, UWM continues to abide by the highest professional principles and standards.**

1. All work is guided by professional principles and standards including those of the American Anthropological Association, the Society for American Archaeology, and the American Association of Biological Anthropologists.
2. The protocols and manuals (noted above – Stipulation 1) ensure compliance with professional standards.

*Stipulation 4: UWM shall notify the public if and when human remains are identified so that descendants of identified individuals may know that such identification has occurred.*

**In 2023, UWM made progress with regard to the development of a protocol to respond to descendant claims and provide a mechanism to transfer archaeological individuals to descendants.**

1. Identifying individuals and reuniting them with their descendants is an important goal of UWM's work. However, there are numerous challenges to identification:
  - a. Identifying burial marker tags that link an interment to the record entry in the burial ledger were physically removed from the cemetery in the late 1920s. In advance of the construction of the nurse's residence in 1928, all tags were removed and the fence marking the cemetery was dismantled.
  - b. The burial ledger does not reflect a complete record of everyone buried in the cemetery. The burial ledger records information for approximately 5,000

- individuals. This means that there are an additional two thousand people who were buried at the cemetery that are not recorded in the ledger.
- c. Individuals cared for at UWM represent only a small subset of the people once interred at the cemetery. The Milwaukee County Poor Farm Cemetery (Cemetery 2) was in use from 1882 to 1925 as the final resting place of over 7,000 individuals.
2. Given these limitations, UWM developed methods to allow for the preliminary identification of individuals by aligning three discrete data sets: biological profile, intra-site provenience, and archival data.
    - a. The biological profile provides age at death, biological sex, and, possibly, distinctive traits (such as pathology with skeletal indicators). As noted above, biological profiles are 79.3 percent complete.
    - b. Select areas of the cemetery have been associated with discrete time periods making it possible to match individuals (based on date of death) with specific graves based on intra-site provenience.
    - c. Archival records listing individuals buried at the cemetery include the burial ledger and death records. Both sources have been digitized and made searchable by a student research project.
    - d. This process has generated nine strong provisional identifications which are published on our website. Genetically, no one has been identified.
    - e. **Research to support provisional identifications is an ongoing process. In 2023, six archaeological individuals had identification options refined to fewer than 10 possibilities. Another two archaeological individuals had identification options refined to fewer than 20 options.**
  3. **In 2023, UWM continued development of a protocol to identify (and contact) descendants of provisionally identified individuals, consistent with professional standards and ethics. Additionally, UWM continued development of a process to allow the transfer of control and custody of identified individuals that is consistent with Wis. Stat. §157.70.**

*Stipulation 5: UWM shall work with descendants of identified individuals represented within the collection of human remains, if it becomes possible to identify a set of remains as a specific individual related to those descendants, to allow the descendants to obtain and rebury those remains.*

**In 2023, UWM established visitor hours and created a quiet room; identified NAGPRA cases and began the NAGPRA process; and responded to numerous community and media requests.**

1. As noted above, UWM continued development of a protocol to identify (and contact) descendants of provisionally identified individuals and a process to allow the transfer of control and custody of identified individuals that is consistent with Wis. Stat. §157.70.
2. **Visiting Guidelines are in place for the UWM Archaeological Research Laboratory Center (ARLC) Repository. A multi-use visitation and meeting space has been created in the ARLC Laboratory (2023).**

3. **Provisional NAGPRA cases have been initiated for several archaeological individuals within the 1991-1992 cohort (2023-2024).**
4. **MCPFC Project Director and ARLC Director/MCPFC Community Liaison fulfilled research and documentation requests for the MCPFC. The MCPFC Project Director completed a minimum number of 29 community and WHS research requests in 2023.**
5. **ARLC Director/MCPFC Community Liaison responded to media inquiries including:**
  - a. **WUWM (February 28, 2023) <https://www.wuwm.com/2023-02-28/milwaukee-county-poor-farm-cemetery-remains-genealogists-want-faster-action-from-uwm-and-others>**
6. **ARLC Director/MCPFC Community Liaison met with representatives of the Descendant Community of Milwaukee for a minimum of ten meetings or phone calls during 2023.**

*Stipulation 6: UWM shall develop a Website that makes the information about the human remains and associated artifacts available to a broad audience. This aspect of the final disposition is critical in giving those individuals previously buried at the MCIG-FT an ongoing voice in their community and providing the public with current information on any research and analysis undertaken on the human remains and associated artifacts.*

**In 2023, UWM substantially re-structured the website and now publishes names and dates of death for provisionally identified individuals.**

1. UWM maintains a website at: <https://sites.uwm.edu/milwaukee-county-poor-farm-cemetery/>.
2. **The website was restructured and substantively updated in 2023.**

*Stipulation 7. UWM shall continue its tradition of conducting the highest quality research and producing thorough and timely publication of the results of such research. Continuing this tradition of research and publishing excellence is key in affording the strongest possible voice to individuals represented from the MCIG-FT.*

**In 2023, the MCPFC Project Director was awarded \$116,000 in grant funding that has been applied towards identification and public outreach efforts.**

1. The population has been the basis of research for eight Ph.D. dissertations, one Ph.D. dissertation in progress, and 11 Master's theses at UWM as the degree-granting institution.
2. The population has been the focus of seven organized sessions (40+ individual paper presentations) at regional, national, and international conferences.
3. Research has been published in peer-reviewed books.
  - a. The Bioarchaeology of Dissection and Anatomy in the United States (Springer, 2017).
4. To reach the widest possible audience, research has been published in an open access format.

- a. **What's in a Name? Making Provisional Identifications at the Milwaukee Poor Farm Cemetery (<https://sites.uwm.edu/milwaukee-county-poor-farm-cemetery/mcpfc-stories/>) (2023)**
5. Faculty have submitted four proposals (budget value \$1.5 million) to the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.
6. A UWM internal grant was awarded 2017-2018 (budget value \$156,000) to support biological profile efforts.
7. **A UWM internal grant was awarded 2023-2024 (budget value \$99,000) to support biological profile efforts, additional Story Maps, and community programming development.**
8. **During the 2023 calendar year, \$17,000 in grant funding was awarded through UWM's SURF program.**

As always, if there are questions regarding this summary, please do not hesitate to contact us at [skfreire@uwm.edu](mailto:skfreire@uwm.edu) or at [haasjr@uwm.edu](mailto:haasjr@uwm.edu).

Sincerely,

Shannon K. Freire, Ph.D., R.P.A.  
Director, Milwaukee County Poor Farm Cemetery Project

Jennifer R. Haas, Ph.D.  
Director, Archaeological Research Laboratory Center

**Attachment 1: Memorandum of Understanding**