THE 33rd GREAT BASIN ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 17-21, 2012

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Stateline, Nevada

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Application of Dendrochronology to Historic Charcoal Production Sites in the Great Basin, USA

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During the Comstock mining era of the late 1800s, forested lands in the North American Great Basin were utilized for charcoal production to fuel mining smelters and related industries. Archaeological studies within or near mining districts often include historical charcoal sites. Scant documentation exists for individual production sites, thus tree-ring science is used here to provide calendar dates and other information regarding this historical activity within the adjacent forests and woodlands. A summary of the dendrochronological approach to reconstructing historic charcoal production is presented here in the context of four recent studies. Included is the outline of a comprehensive strategy along with unique processing techniques. This approach provides archaeologists with precise temporal and spatial data that can be applied to such questions as the patterning and timing of deforestation, or differing technology among immigrant labor forces.

General Session 7: Historic Archaeology
Saturday 09:15 AM (Garden 1)