



*Rivers and streams: The State of Iowa owns the channel bottom and streambanks up to the ordinary high-water mark for meandered rivers; beyond the high-water mark is a mix of public land and private ownership. The beds and banks of non-meandered rivers and streams belong to the landowner on either side.

Start of decision tree

1. I found an artifact, site, or fossil in **IOWA**.
 - If NO, IT'S FROM ANOTHER STATE OR COUNTRY go to Step 2.
 - If YES, go to Step 3.
2. This is not OSA's area of expertise. Please contact an archaeologist or institution from the area of the find. A list of state contacts is linked below. [end of decision tree]
3. On private or public land?*
- If PUBLIC LAND, go to Step 4.
- If SOMEONE ELSE'S PROPERTY, go to Step 5.
- If MY OWN PROPERTY, go to Step 7.
4. STOP! It is illegal to take artifacts from public land without a permit. Contact the local, county, state, or federal agency that manages this land. If you find an artifact on public land, **leave it** place, record the location, take a photo, and provide this info to staff. [end of decision tree]
5. Did you get **explicit** permission from the landowner to collect on their property?
 - If NO, go to Step 6.
 - If YES, go to Step 7.
6. **STOP!** This is illegal. Leave the artifact in place and contact the landowner. [end of decision tree]
7. Is the object stone?
 - If IT IS UNMISTAKABLY STONE, go to Step 8.
 - If NOT SURE, go to Step 11.
 - If YES, go to Step 24.
8. Is it unmistakably intentionally shaped by humans?
 - If YES, go to Step 10.
 - If NO OR NOT SURE, go to Step 11.
9. Do you think it's a fossil?
 - If YES, go to Step 10.
 - If NO OR NOT SURE, go to Step 11.
10. This is not OSA's area of expertise. Contact a paleontologist. [end of decision tree]
11. Do you think you see a face, animal, writing, or glyphs?
 - If YES OR NOT SURE, go to Step 12.
 - If NO, go to Step 13.

12. These are extremely rare on handheld objects. You may have a concretion. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist.
13. Does it have a distinctly round shape and fits in your hand?
 - If YES, go to Step 14.
 - If OR/AND, go to Step 15.
 - If NO, go to Step 17.
14. You may have a grinder. A cultural determination is not feasible without additional context. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist. [end of decision tree]
15. It is mostly rounded and has a distinct round hole or indentation that looks like a paint well or place for a nut?
 - If YES, go to Step 16.
 - If NO, go to Step 17.
16. You may have an omarolluk. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist. [end of decision tree]
17. If your rock doesn't fit the above descriptions, we may be able to identify it. **Email us**, watch the videos, or contact a geologist. [end of decision tree]
18. Do you suspect it might be bone?
 - If YES, go to Step 19.
 - If NO, go to Step 22.
19. Could it be human bone?
 - If YES, go to Step 20.
 - If NO, go to Step 21.
20. CONTACT LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT. Our office will be asked to consult if it is determined to not be of legal interest. [end of decision tree]
21. Is it unmistakably animal bone?
 - If YES, go to Step 24.
22. Do you suspect it might be ancient pottery?
 - If NO, go to Step 23.
 - If YES, go to Step 24.
23. Do you suspect it might be a historical object?
 - If YES, go to Step 24.
24. We can likely identify this item. **Email us** a photo of the object next to a ruler or item for scale and provide basic contextual information. [end of decision tree]

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Email the OSA: osa@uiowa.edu

Find an archaeologist in your state: <https://saa.org/about-archaeology/get-involved-locally>

Video: [Distinguishing Archaeological Artifacts from Natural Stone Objects](#)

Video: [Groundstone Tools vs Natural Stone](#)