To: Laura Phillips, Archaeology Collections Manager, Burke Museum
From: YOUR NAME HERE, TITLE, UNIVERSITY
Re: Request for analysis of a bird bones from SITE NAME, SITE NUMBER
Date:

I am requesting permission to analyze a sample of bird bones from SITE NAME, SITE NUMBER, a large pre-European contact era coastal village site in CITY, Washington. This is a pilot study for a larger collaborative zooarchaeological. This collaborative project has two main research objectives. First, we propose to evaluate the effects of abrupt and gradual environmental events (earthquakes, climate change, shoreline development) on local animal populations during the past 2,000 years. Second, we will apply existing economic and social-archaeological approaches to investigate human response to changes in the animal food base and more general environmental events. Sequences of animal records from different households of varying social rank with overlapping periods of occupation will be studied, thus offering the opportunity to understand how social factors (social status, access to resources, household organization, economic specialization) influenced household response to environmental change.

The pilot study is designed to demonstrate that the site's exceptional excavation records and well-preserved animal remains will allow us to address our research questions. The sample we have chosen for the pilot study will target analysis on one 2 x 2 m block section of the site (Area A4; Units 17, 18, 19, 20), which includes intramural and extramural deposits associated with House Structure 1. Radiocarbon ages from nearby test units suggest at least 1,200 years of human use, overlapping in time with at least two known earthquake events; and the sample of faunal remains is large (greater than 25,000 bird, fish, and mammal bones), with sufficient numbers of specimens by layer to allow study of faunal change over time. Analysis of this area will generate specific knowledge about the contents of the site; provide more accurate estimates of the time required to analyze the larger sample; and allow us to demonstrate the feasibility of tracking fine-scale change with existing field records.

While on loan, the bird bones will be stored in locked curation quality cabinets in my archaeology lab at the University of XXXX. Nobody will have access to the specimens except for myself, and a small number of responsible, well-trained undergraduate anthropology majors who will be assisting in the analysis. There are at least 5300 bird bones in the sample, which will be identified as specifically as possible (hopefully to family, genus or species level) using comparative specimens on loan from the Ornithology Department at the Burke Museum and my personal specimens. Further taxonomic analysis may be conducted during summer 2012 at the Ornithology Department of the Burke Museum to refine the preliminary identifications. Each unique bone will be removed from the "lot" bone bag for the analysis and will be placed in an individual archival bag along with an acid free label identifying the complete catalog and provenience information. Therefore no labeling of the bone should be necessary, and no additional catalog numbers will be needed. Only one specimen will be removed from its bag for identification at a time, to eliminate the possibility of provenience mixing. Surface modifications may also be recorded (e.g., cut marks, burning), but no destructive analyses will be undertaken. When the analysis is completed, results will be integrated with the fish, shellfish, mammal and geoarchaeological analyses, and will eventually be incorporated into the larger proposed zooarchaeological project (pending future financial support). Results will be presented at professional conferences and published in academic journals.