Archaeological research into human use of the high elevations of Wyoming's Absaroka mountains has focused on big game hunting. However, although hunting has been an important component and prehistoric utilization of the high country, evidence for forays into elevations above 3000m in search of多数资源 has been accumulated as part of Colorado State University's Greybull River Sustainable Landscape (GRSLE) project. Three groups of mineral exploitation (Figure 1) are being investigated:

- Dollar Mountain Lithic Raw Material Source (Prehistoric)
- Gold Reef Mining District (Moderate Scale Historic)
- Meadow Creek Basin Mines (Small Scale Historic)

Dollar Mountain is a unique block of Paleozoic sedimentary rocks embedded within the Silurian volcanoclastic rock of the Absaroka. Preliminary documentation indicates that this high elevation/low material source area was heavily used during the Archaic. During 2003 and 2004 several workshop areas associated with this source were recorded and the glacial geology of the area has been the subject of a MA thesis (Rietze 2004). In addition to the evidence for human habitation, these sites also provide important information about past climates – particularly upper tree-line/temperature changes.

Archaeological models of prehistoric high elevation landscapes often emphasize big game hunting. Public perceptions of prehistoric alpine settings are of limited, low impact human-environmental interactions. Research at Dollar Mountain calls both of these views into question and have implications for both archaeological research and management policy for backcountry resources.

During the late 19th and very early 20th centuries, the central Absarokas experienced a period of hoped exploration for economically viable precious metals (primarily gold). While the remote mining district at Kerwin is relatively well known, there are also a series of other, more remote mining claims, adits, cuts, and cabins scattered through the backcountry. Although high success of these efforts resulted in profitable, long-term mines, the archaeological record of this period of exploitation provides a relatively high resolution look at very labor intensive activities at high elevations.

Three discrete pairs of mining cabins, mine adits are represented in the Meadow Creek basin, each representing what appears to be semi-autonomous small-scale prospecting activities. In addition to the record of mining, the mines also contain a series of archeological sites and signs associated with mining activities (shovel boards, etc.). Taken together, this group of historic and prehistoric sites allows investigation of multiple landuse patterns across a discreetly bounded landscape. While it seems obvious that the placement of adits themselves have no overlap with prehistoric site placement, it is of interest to note that the mining cabins are also located in places devoid of prehistoric occupation. On the other hand, the largest, multi-component site in the basin is also the setting for a permanent sheep camp. Unlike the mining cabins, the sheep camp and the large glacial moraines seem to have been positioned at a central, prominent (yet protected) spot that gives a good overview of the entire basin.

The earliest evidence of historic use of the Gold Reef area, which consists of what appears to be a cabin foundation and debris scatter was much closer to the basin floor and several little scatters that are the most recent placement of the cabins. As in Meadow Creek, in addition to the mining use of the Gold Reef area, it has also been used as summer pasture for sheep and also as the location of historic hunting camps, both of which also exhibit evidence of prehistoric use.

Survey of the Gold Reef area in 2003 showed no overlap between prehistoric and historic site placement. The historic legacy of the Gold reef mine is in the form of a mining shaft by M. J. Bartke.

While taken at face value, the observation that incongruence between habitation site selection by miners and other historic and prehistoric visitors to the high country seems to be evident and trivial. However, we are convinced that closer examination of these variations in landuse patterns can provide valuable insights into understanding less obvious distributional patterns exhibited in the prehistoric record.