

Presentation 10: James M. Adovasio and C. Andy Hemmings

The Collapse of Clovis First and the Growth of Underwater Prehistoric Archaeology

Though known since the early nineteenth century, Clovis fluted projectile points did not become archaeological icons until the rise of the Clovis First peopling paradigm in the late 1950s and 1960s. According to this fatally-flawed model, the first populations who entered the New World arrived very late in the Pleistocene and spread with incredible rapidity throughout the length and breadth of the Americas. During their frantic journey, they killed off more than 50 species of Ice Age fauna. While this model held sway, there was no need to examine any terrestrial or subaqueous landforms earlier than the almost mystical Clovis horizon—because no one was here! The unraveling of Clovis First in the last 30 years has precipitated, not only renewed interest in heretofore ignored terrestrial landforms, but also, and especially, underwater landforms which were once dry land. This paper explores the relationship between the demise of Clovis First and the dramatic increase in prehistoric underwater archaeology over the past three decades.