



National Park Service

Cultural Resource Challenge



NPS CULTURAL RESOURCES ACTION PLAN
for 2016 AND BEYOND

*National Park Service Cultural Resources Stewardship,
Partnerships, and Science Program Mission*

Provide leadership for the protection and interpretation of the nation's heritage, guide a national historic preservation program that embraces national parks and heritage resources, engage all American peoples with the places and stories that make up their national identity, and serve as a model for the stewardship of cultural resources throughout the world.

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PRESERVING AMERICA'S SHARED HERITAGE
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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National Park Service Cultural Resources Action Plan for 2016 and Beyond

Full funding to accomplish all the goals of the *Cultural Resource Challenge* would require more than a \$200 million annual increase to the cultural resource budget lines of the National Park Service (Operations of the National Park Service, National Recreation and Preservation, and the Historic Preservation Fund). Although such an increase appears unlikely in the immediate future, the goals and strategies outlined in the Cultural Resource Challenge will be used to craft future budget increase requests, and will be tailored to take advantage of future administration or congressional initiatives in accordance with the following critical funding priorities.

- The Servicewide needs assessment conducted in 2011 showed that nearly half the NPS regional offices lack a professional in one or more of the basic cultural resource disciplines that serve park and partnership programs, that one in four national parks are devoid of any cultural resource expertise at all, and that in many parks untrained personnel are assigned cultural resource tasks as collateral duty.
- The Systemwide gap assessment conducted in 2011 revealed that over 70 percent of national park units do not have a complete set of baseline cultural resource information that documents the range and condition of its cultural resources and guides management decisions affecting those resources.
- The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created a National Historic Preservation Program, established a national network among the state, tribal, and local governments, and created the Historic Preservation Fund to enable them to survey, document, and preserve their cultural resources. But the Historic Preservation Fund has never been fully funded at the \$150 million level authorized. Rather, adjusted for inflation, it has decreased since 1980, while the number of participating tribes and certified local governments requesting service and assistance has ballooned.
- The 2008 National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) report revealed that nearly 46 percent (12,476) of 27,000 historic and precontact structures owned by the NPS are not in good condition; 2,811 of the most significant historic structures are in poor condition; 39 percent of museum collections are not housed in good condition; 45 percent of NPS collections (159 million items) are not catalogued; and over half (52 percent) of the documented cultural landscapes are not in good condition. Conditions have not improved since then.

Achieve a standard of excellence for the stewardship of the resources that form the historical and cultural foundations of the nation, commit at all levels to a common sets of goals, and articulate a common vision for the next century.

—National Park Service Cultural Resource Challenge



Uniforms from National Park Service museum collections enhance an interpretive program at the World War II Memorial on the National Mall (above). NPS / TONY DEYOUNG PHOTO

National Park System and the National Historic Landmarks and National Register of Historic Places programs of sites related to underrepresented groups and resource types, to raise awareness of important sites associated with underrepresented communities, to tell the stories that make up our diverse national identity, to promote understanding and sensitivity to issues of a contested past, and to identify candidates for a national system of parks and protected sites that fully represents the nation's cultural experience.

Until such funding is received, this action plan, as a subset of the *Cultural Resource Challenge*, focuses on opportunities presented by the upcoming NPS centennial in 2016 and the fiftieth anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act in 2016. Looking ahead to these anniversaries and beyond, the NPS will continue taking steps to ensure effective stewardship of the nation's heritage within available levels of funding and staffing.

Actions are organized under the goals of the *Cultural Resource Challenge* and are tied to and supportive of goals and actions of the NPS *A Call to Action* initiative. Although not all the actions listed can be achieved by 2016 with current levels of funding and staffing, representative actions will be reflected in annual NPS Cultural Resource Program work plans.

To better serve national parks and NPS partners, NPS cultural resource preservation efforts at the park, program, regional, and national levels will be aligned with the *Cultural Resource Challenge* goals. Available funding resources will be targeted towards the outlined action items to implement the Challenge goals, and critical staffing and funding priorities will be documented and prioritized. Sharing of resources, collaboration with other NPS and partner programs, and an interdisciplinary approach will all be emphasized as the NPS re-embraces the vision of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The *NPS Cultural Resource Challenge Action Plan* outlines what the NPS can do as we approach the one hundredth anniversary of the National Park Service and the fiftieth anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act. We aspire to do more, and invite all our partners to join us in the endeavor.

- The Cultural Resources programs and responsibilities of the NPS funded through National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) appropriation, such as the National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmarks, Historic American Building Survey, Historic American Engineering Record, Historic American Landscapes, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, Technical Preservation Services, and National Heritage Area programs, reach into every park and virtually every community in the nation. The demand for services far outweighs NPS capacity to respond, let alone to address new and significant challenges such as climate change and sustainability.
- The first goal of the NPS *A Call to Action* strategy includes identifying a national system of parks and protected sites that fully represents the nation's cultural experience. The NPS needs to assess the gaps in the



Goal #1: Provide leadership, support, and advocacy for the stewardship, protection, interpretation, and management of the nation’s heritage through scholarly research, science, and effective management.

Actions

- 1 **Complete** the analysis of baseline documentation needs, fully document these needs in the Project Management Information System (PMIS), and focus NPS research funding on reducing the identified gaps for all resource types.
- 2 **Reduce** the NPS cataloging backlog of museum collections, increase the number of sites that have undergone systematic archeological inventory, and increase the number of cultural landscapes that have undergone systematic recording in the Cultural Landscapes Inventory.
- 3 **Increase** monitoring of resource conditions and prioritize funding for preventive maintenance and stabilization of archeological sites, cultural landscapes, historic and precontact structures, and preventive conservation of museum objects.
- 4 **Collaborate with** the National Park Service Capital Investment Strategy by supporting park efforts to prioritize NPS maintenance activities to improve the condition of historic and precontact structures, sites and landscapes; integrate cultural resource issues into life cycle cost planning; and revitalize the historic leasing program.
- 5 **Support** park and partner cultural resource management by reviewing and updating NPS guidance (*A Call to Action Item 25*), such as *NPS-28: Cultural Resource Management Guideline* and guidelines associated with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.
- 6 **Collaborate** with NPS facilities management programs to enter maintained cultural resources assets into the Facility Management Software System (FMSS) and with pilot parks to update management categories for all resources on the List of Classified Structures (LCS).
- 7 **Establish** a national priority for cultural resource funding requirements for “transfer of knowledge.” For example, determine how research and technical guidance may be made accessible to multiple audiences from NPS managers and interpreters to teachers and visitors.
- 8 **Improve** collaboration with international heritage groups such as the U.S. National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) and other world heritage organizations and governments engaged in heritage conservation.



The Frederick Douglass Library Collection includes over 2,500 books, monographs, rare photograph albums, abolitionist newspapers, and other items that have been treated or require treatment (above). Assisted by the NPS Submerged Resource Center, management of Isle Royale National Park shipwrecks includes documentation, assessment, and preparation of nominations to the National Register of Historic Places (opposite). NPS PHOTOS



BROADWAY BLOCK

MAIN ST



Goal #2: Recommit to the spirit and letter of the landmark legislation underpinning the National Park Service mission, as expressed in the Organic Act, the Antiquities Act, the Historic Sites Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act, through which the American people have made clear their desire for the protection and preservation of our historic and cultural resources.

Actions

- 1 **Document** the need and goals for full funding of the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) and for increases to the National Recreation and Preservation Program to adequately support critical mandates of the National Historic Preservation Program.
- 2 **Update** and maintain NPS geographic information system (GIS) data on all resources included in agency databases, ensuring that the information will meet national metadata standards and be readily accessible to parks, program managers, and partners; develop a system to integrate data from the disparate systems used by states and tribes; complete the digitization of National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmark records.
- 3 **Conduct** a “usability” study to collect feedback from partners and audiences on how well current delivery systems and educational offerings of NPS heritage education programs meet their needs; identify recommendations for improvements through collaboration with parks and partners to expand existing NPS heritage education programs and place-based learning.
- 4 **Expand** HABS/HAER/HALS programs for the recordation of park, public, and private historic sites, structures, and landscapes for deposit in the Library of Congress.
- 5 **Ensure** that NPS research reflects the most current scholarship through improved accessibility to research, technical guidance, and databases associated with park and partner-based cultural resources and improved access to, and collaboration with professional societies, academic institutions, Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Units (CESUs) and other professional organizations.
- 6 **Increase** cultural resource representation and participation in urban national parks and programs through collaboration with NPS programs and partners, including the NPS Conservation Study Institute, to connect people to parks, increase park use, and help underserved neighborhoods that face historic and structural barriers to park access.
- 7 **Consolidate**, revise, and renew all cultural resource websites in the new nps.gov/history web framework; create/renew websites/shared platforms to support NPS professional networks within the National Park Service and with academic and preservation partners; develop thematic websites that provide linkages and context for parks with related resources.

The historic Beardmore Block in Priest River, Idaho, rehabilitated in 2009 using the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, was one of the first historic tax credit projects to achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold-level certification from the U.S. Green Building Council for its energy conservation and environmentally sustainable features (opposite). PHOTO COURTESY OF THE RUNBERG ARCHITECTURE GROUP

Goal #3: Connect all Americans to their heritage resources in a manner that resonates with their lives, legacies, and dreams, and tells the stories that make up America’s diverse national identity.

Actions

- 1 **Assess** gaps in the National Park System and National Historic Landmarks and National Register of Historic Places sites related to underrepresented groups and resource types, and identify and implement strategies and initiatives for their inclusion.
- 2 **Provide** toolkits, support, and guidance to communities with historic districts, Certified Local Governments, and communities within national heritage areas (NHAs) to assist partners engaged in the preservation of their stories and communities, and to elevate the importance of local stories that are part of America’s larger shared heritage.
- 3 **Develop** a “traditional skills” program within the NPS to preserve access to traditional trade practices and promote the preservation of traditional trade knowledge and preservation skills. Produce training manuals and technical briefs that support the efforts of the public and private sector to preserve and recover preservation trades and support programs such as Vanishing Treasures.
- 4 **Engage** indigenous and traditional communities, including their young people, in the identification and preservation of their heritage resources; involve at-risk youth from diverse and underserved communities in preservation trades programs to provide them access to broader work/life opportunities.
- 5 **Support** the passage of National Heritage Area (NHA) program legislation and continued funding to provide NHAs with increased assistance, evaluation, monitoring, and technical support.
- 6 **Continue** and expand NPS support of the Cultural Resource Diversity Program, Corps Network, National History Day, Youth Summits, Summer Recording Programs, 21st-Century Conservation Corps, and other youth program partnerships, as well as heritage education and science training classes targeted at K-12 students.
- 7 **Work** with NPS programs and partners to develop a plan for building greater capacity for inclusive and diverse educational products and services that allow all Americans to recognize their stories in parks and historic places throughout the nation.
- 8 **Work** with other NPS heritage tourism programs to provide information and guidance (such as travel itineraries) to states, tribes, and local communities on issues ranging from wayfinding to interpretation to promote the economic value of tourism and job creation, and to encourage parks and historic communities to adopt Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.
- 9 **Use** the upcoming 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act as an opportunity to celebrate and promote these programs to all Americans and future generations.



Trujillo Homesteads National Historic Landmark, an early Hispanic settlement in Colorado’s San Luis Valley, tells the story of differing Hispano and Anglo approaches to ranching in the 19th century (above). THOMAS H. SIMMONS PHOTO

Goal #4: Integrate the values of heritage stewardship into major initiatives and issues such as renewable energy, climate change, community assistance and revitalization, and sustainability, while cultivating excellence in science and technical preservation as a foundation for resource protection, management, and rehabilitation.

Actions

- 1 **Review** current programs and increase NPS ability to respond to national emergencies affecting cultural resources. Develop user-friendly guidance for historic property owners addressing scenarios such as disaster recovery, distressed/vacant properties, navigating government assistance, and more.
- 2 **Collaborate** with other NPS Natural Resource programs on threats ranging from sea level change, increased fire and storm intensity, and changing precipitation patterns to define and inform an interdisciplinary approach to threat assessment and resource management for national park units.
- 3 **Complete** “State of the Park Reports” for 50 parks in collaboration with the NPS Natural Resources Program; use the “State of the Park Reports” to develop guidance and expand monitoring programs to detect, document, and respond to changes in cultural resource conditions.
- 4 **Develop** a proposal to create a pool of funds within the Historic Preservation Fund to provide assistance in the wake of disasters and to obtain early relief and assistance to affected areas while awaiting congressional relief funds.
- 5 **Work** with the national preservation community through the urban initiative to assess ways to provide greater assistance to economically distressed areas and those undergoing rapid urbanization.
- 6 **Promote** economic and community revitalization by encouraging private investment in the rehabilitation of historic buildings in older cities, towns, and rural areas through the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program.
- 7 **Provide** greater assistance and guidance in how historic properties can improve energy efficiency, incorporate sustainable features, and utilize the most current preservation methods and technologies, while maintaining their historic integrity.



A preservation crew repairs damage to the Little Kinnakeet Lifesaving Station after Hurricane Irene struck Cape Hatteras National Seashore in 2011 (above). NPS PHOTO



Goal #5: Attract, support, and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce, and support the development of leadership and expertise within the National Park Service.

Actions

- 1 **Complete** a Servicewide assessment of cultural resource programs and staff resources; establish baseline requirements for all programs and document and prioritize staffing needs.
- 2 **Update** the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards* for all major cultural resource management disciplines.
- 3 **Require** that NPS cultural resource programs are led and managed by professionals who meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards* and that cultural resource research is conducted in accordance with professional research standards and is overseen by staff that meets the *Secretary's Professional Qualifications Standards*, as required by Section 112 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- 4 **Develop** the NPS Career Academy to provide for career-long professional development for cultural resource professionals and workers across all major cultural resource disciplines, including the development of a clearinghouse for training opportunities.
- 5 **Develop** and implement a mandatory cultural resources policies and procedures training module for the NPS Superintendent Academy. The module should incorporate information about national historic preservation programs, including NPS relationships with American Indian tribes and the core principles of tribal consultation.
- 6 **Develop** a continuum of internship and work programs that target diverse communities and leads to cultural resource management careers, including expansion of current internship programs with Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESUs) and minority serving institutions (such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Native American and Latino serving schools); develop social networks for program participants and alumni to share experiences and opportunities.
- 7 **Support** expanded skill-sharing, details, and special assignments between parks, regional offices, and the NPS Washington Support Office (WASO). Establish cross-training and temporary details between cultural resource employees and others who impact cultural resources to expose employees and partners to experiences outside their normal job series and work environments.
- 8 **Work** with other NPS programs, community and technical colleges, union and trades groups, and professional associations to expand and enhance opportunities for preservation trades and crafts training for both NPS staff and partners.
- 9 **Continue** efforts to further refine allocation of staffing and funding resources to create the most efficient target organization based on ongoing workload analyses, reclassification of positions, and position management review processes tied directly to budget processes to guide future funding and staffing decisions.



Walls of West Ruin, constructed of shaped sandstone blocks set in mud mortar, at Aztec Ruins National Monument continue to deteriorate despite years of structural stabilization and preservation efforts (opposite). A student cleans a historic textile during a workshop at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site (above). NPS PHOTOS

The spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage; the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people. . . the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans.

—1966 National Historic Preservation Act



ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

NPS PHOTO

For more information about the National Park Service
Cultural Resource Challenge go to:

www.nps.gov/history

Thanks to the many people from the National Park Service and its partner organizations who contributed to the Cultural Resource Challenge through timely, extensive, and insightful feedback during its creation and review.

The Cultural Resource Challenge takes both its vision and challenge from several previous studies which contained thoughtful recommendations for the improvement of our efforts and ability to identify and preserve the precious cultural resources which record and illustrate the history of our nation, its peoples, and our growing understanding of one another:

- *Back to the Future: A Review of the National Historic Preservation Program*, National Academy of Public Administration, 2007
- *Saving our History: A Review of National Park Cultural Resource Programs*, National Academy of Public Administration, 2008
- *Advancing the National Park Idea, National Parks Second Century Commission report*, 2009
- *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement*, National Park Service, 2011
- *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*, Organization of American Historians, 2011

Back cover photo: Participants from the Pacific Northwest Preservation Field School at Olympic National Park rebuild the roof of a log trail shelter. NPS PHOTO

