



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

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I am Dr. Kimball Banks, a Registered Professional Archaeologist and chairman of the Society for American Archaeology's Government Affairs Committee. The SAA thanks the Department of Interior hosting these listening sessions to gather public input on the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas (Atlas), a new tool designed to assist in the administration's America the Beautiful (ATB) initiative to conserve 30% of the nation's lands and waters by 2030. The Atlas could be a powerful asset in this effort, and we look forward to providing formal written comments in the weeks ahead.

We have two specific points to make. First, without an understanding and appreciation of our near and distant past, our knowledge of the present will be greatly diminished, and the society and culture that our children and grandchildren inherit will be much the less for it. Therefore it is imperative that every effort is made to ensure that the Atlas includes information on **cultural** as well as natural resources that have been protected by the ATB.

Second, with the above being said, some of the cultural resources that will be impacted by the ATB could be of a highly sensitive nature that should not be widely available in a publicly-accessible database. I am thinking in particular of Native American sacred sites, burial places, and other locations of tribal spiritual and cultural importance. Some confidentiality in Native American information will need to be maintained to ensure that the Atlas is not misused to violate sacred sites and landscapes.

We laud the goals of America the Beautiful and share its sentiment that American landscapes are precious and merit protection. Those landscapes include our cultural heritage, and we strenuously urge that the language of the ATB—and the contents of the Atlas—reflect these intertwined realities to the maximum extent practicable.