



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Statement of the Society for American Archaeology For Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee House Committee on Appropriations

March 6, 2020

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) appreciates this opportunity to present its recommendations for Fiscal Year 2021 cultural resources program appropriations.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 7,500 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states as well as many other nations around the world.

SAA wishes to thank the subcommittee for its key role in supporting record levels of funding for cultural resources preservation in the FY2020 Interior Appropriations bill. The federal and federally-supported heritage protection programs covered in the annual spending bill carry out most of the historic and cultural resources conservation work in the nation. The benefits of this work cannot be understated. It is through these efforts that our shared heritage is preserved for future generations. It also contributes to the economic and social growth of our communities. The badly needed increases in the FY2020 bill will make a big difference in their efforts. We look forward to continuing this trend in FY2021.

National Park Service—Operation of the National Park System (ONPS), Cultural Resource Stewardship: \$120 million

NPS cultural resource stewardship activities within the ONPS provide the research, training, and management activities necessary to preserve and protect some of the nation's most important archaeological, historic, and cultural resources, both on site and in museum collections. The president's budget request for FY2121 proposes \$88.7 million for this function, a reduction of more than \$16 million from current levels. This is completely unacceptable. The challenges facing NPS in maintaining the integrity of these resources are great. The impacts on sites and materials from climate change, for example, are being felt now. With each year that we delay in addressing their effects, our heritage suffers and the costs to remediating those effects increase, if they can be remediated at all. Adding to the difficulty is a long-standing structural decline in NPS cultural resources staffing. In order to make a start in dealing with these situations, SAA respectfully requests a total of \$120 million for the Cultural Resources Stewardship component.

National Park Service: National Recreation and Preservation Cultural Programs: \$31.2 million

NPS National Recreation Programs are vital for the technical assistance and other support they provide for resource protection within parks, to other federal agencies, and to state, tribal, and private sector stakeholders. These programs assist communities in preserving their significant historical and archaeological properties. The archaeological component works to identify, document, and inventory archaeological resources in parks; produces archaeological technical and programmatic publications; implements regulations for protecting archaeological resources; and assists other agencies through program development and training. Within this function is the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) grants program, which provides the only funding available to Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, and museums to facilitate repatriation of culturally-affiliated human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony under NAGPRA. SAA is grateful to the subcommittee for allocating vital increases in both the NPS cultural programs and the NAGPRA Grants program in FY2020, and requests a total of \$31.2 million for FY2021. \$2 million would be assigned to NAGPRA Grants, a \$100,000 increase for that activity.

National Park Service—Historic Preservation Fund: \$150 million

The Historic Preservation Fund provides crucial support to state and tribal historic preservation offices and matching grants to numerous recipients to catalog and preserve historic resources. Without the HPF, the preservation system established by the National Historic Preservation Act—particularly with regards to the Section 106 system—simply would not function. SAA endorses the recommendations put forward by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, and others—a total of \$150 million for FY2021, which would be the first time in its history that the HPF would be funded at its fully authorized level. The amount would be apportioned as follows:

- \$61 million for the State Historic Preservation Officers;
- \$22 million for the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers;
- \$20 million for competitive grants to preserve the sites and stories of efforts to advance African-American Civil Rights;
- \$8 million for competitive grants to preserve the sites and stories associated with securing civil rights for all Americans;
- \$10 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- \$18 million for Save America’s Treasures grants;
- \$10 million for historic revitalization grants;
- \$1 million for competitive grants for underrepresented communities on the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks.

Bureau of Land Management--Cultural Resources Management: \$22 million

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers the nation’s largest public land area, but less than ten percent of the agency’s land has been evaluated for archaeological and other heritage resources. BLM cultural heritage staff archaeologists do an outstanding job, yet they face a huge backlog of inventories, stabilization projects, interpretive projects, and collections management projects. Just as important, these personnel are key components of the federal regulatory framework. Without adequate expert staff and appropriate resources to carry out Section 106 responsibilities, development projects such as pipelines, transmission lines, mines,

and solar and wind farms will at best be delayed, and at worst be subject to litigation from stakeholders who believe that cultural resources were inadequately addressed. This situation has been made demonstrably worse by the administration's insistence on moving most of the Bureau's headquarters staff to the West. Additional funding will be required to stabilize personnel resources and fill vacancies. To that end, SAA recommends a funding level of \$22 million, an increase of \$3.3 million over the current level.

Bureau of Land Management—National Landscape Conservation System: \$50 million

The National Landscape Conservation System's (NLCS) 36 million acres of National Monuments, Wilderness Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and other lands, contain an extensive and diverse array of the nation's archaeological and cultural resources. The funding needed to implement proper stewardship is still lacking. The NLCS contains places and landscapes that are visited by large numbers of people. While we are encouraged to see so many visitors enjoying the outdoors in their public lands, the traffic places nearby archaeological resources in jeopardy, unless adequate protections are implemented. SAA strongly supports an allocation of \$50 million for the program, an increase of \$6.1 million over FY2020. This increase will allow BLM to bring more personnel and effective management strategies to bear.