



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

September 16, 1996

Lt. Colonel Curtis
District Engineer
Army Corps of Engineers
Walla Walla District
201 N. Third
Walla Walla, WA 99382-1876

Dear Lt. Colonel Curtis:

I am writing on behalf of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) regarding treatment of an evidently ancient human skeleton recently recovered from Corps of Engineers controlled property near Kennewick, Washington. With over 6,100 members, SAA is the largest organization devoted to the study of the archaeology of the Americas. SAA is also dedicated to the protection of archaeological sites and to the dissemination of information about archaeology to scholars and the general public.

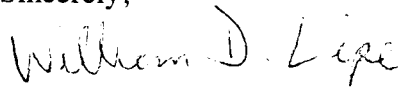
SAA understands that C-14 dating gives the Kennewick skeleton an age of roughly 9,000 years and that an early type of projectile point has been found embedded in a healed lesion on the skeleton. The discovery of human remains of this antiquity is very rare and such remains can be an extremely important source of information about the cultural and biological relationships of the earliest settlers of the New World. The relative completeness of the Kennewick skeleton gives it great potential to yield information about this early period in American history. Such information is of interest and value to the American public in general and to Native American communities throughout the U.S., as well as those in the Northwest.

SAA understands and supports the rights of Native American individuals and tribes under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA). SAA also recognizes that NAGPRA requires that the affiliation of human remains with a particular tribe or tribes be determined by the responsible federal agency on the basis of a full consideration of the evidence. Because of the antiquity of the Kennewick skeleton, systematic physical anthropological study will certainly be necessary to determine whether it can be affiliated with a particular tribe or group of tribes. A federal court ruling in Hawaii has recently confirmed NAGPRA's requirement that the determination of the cultural affiliation of human remains be based on systematic study of the remains and associated materials.

Lt. Col. Curtis
September 16, 1996
Page 2

Therefore, SAA requests that the Army Corps of Engineers fund a detailed anthropological study of the Kennewick skeleton, that the studies be done by highly qualified and reputable scientists, and that the scientific results of these studies be disseminated to the public. Such studies are required to meet the Corps' legal responsibilities under NAGPRA and to provide the American public with the benefit of the knowledge thereby gained.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William D. Lipe".

William D. Lipe, Ph.D.
President