



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

November 15, 2013

John Francis, Ph.D.
Vice President
Research, Conservation, and Exploration
National Geographic Society
1145 17th St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Francis,

I am writing on behalf of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) to express our continued concerns over the National Geographic Channel's television show, *Diggers*. The SAA has been monitoring this show for more than year and a half. Mindy Zeder and I represented the SAA at the National Geographic Society and National Geographic Channel Meeting on Archaeological Preservation, Avocational Metal Detecting, and the Ethics of Archaeology on May 4, 2012. The SAA, along with the Society of Historical Archaeology, sent you a letter dated February 19, 2013, expressing our continuing concerns about the show. In particular, our letter stated the following:

“ . . . we urge you to feature professional archaeologists more prominently in future programs. We believe this would help drive home the historical and archaeological questions that form the core of each program, which at present is not as clearly or as well-presented as might be desired. Improvements might also be made in explaining decisions of where the protagonists are allowed to dig for objects and where they are prohibited from doing so – examples that may help avocationalists watching the program with sorting out such issues in their own metal detection activities. It would strengthen the show if more attention was devoted to explaining how and why the information obtained by the “diggers” is useful to not only to archaeologists, historians, and historical preservationists but primarily to the general public. All of these are core elements of archaeological practice and historical preservation. Finally, we hope that in future shows, more of your web content on archaeology and the ethical implications of archaeological material culture will become a central feature of the show.”

Our February 19th letter has gone unanswered. Our members—both professional and avocational archaeologists—feel that the National Geographic Channel has not lived up to their commitments to alter the show sufficiently to meet our principles of archaeological ethics. We have no choice then but to ask you to stop producing the show.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Altschul, Ph.D., RPA
President

CC: David Lyles, NGC