

The SAA submitted the following testimony at the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on National Parks hearing regarding the 'competitive sourcing' process being undertaken in the National Park Service. This process could result in some NPS archaeologists having to compete with private sector CRM professionals for work within the Park System.

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS**

July 24, 2003

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments on outsourcing at the National Park Service (NPS) for the record of today's subcommittee hearing.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research, interpretation, and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 6,600 members, the Society 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 make clear at the outset that it takes no position as an organization on the merits or drawbacks of outsourcing certain positions within the NPS Archaeology and Ethnography Program. It is crucial, however, that the possible effects of outsourcing decisions on the protection, management, and interpretation of archaeological resources within the Park System be given serious scrutiny. We are concerned that the process now underway for determining whether particular functions within the Archaeology and Ethnography Program are inherently governmental or not is proceeding without enough importance being placed on the question of future resource stewardship in the parks.

NPS is the steward of some of the most significant archaeological resources in the U.S.; by some estimates, there are as many as one million archaeological sites within the Park System. Many parks with important archaeological resources do not have on-staff archaeological expertise and are dependent on the regional centers for ongoing, day-to-day assistance in cultural resource management and compliance decisions. Additionally, other federal agencies, as well as state agencies and tribal preservation programs, sometimes depend on NPS archaeological staff, particularly in the regional centers, for specialized advice and expertise on a timely, as-needed basis. Archaeological resources are both subtle and fragile – familiarity with the resources of a particular region or set of parks, and institutional memory about previous work and preservation efforts and about past decisions and the reasons for them, are necessary components of good resource management.

Familiarity with NPS procedures, mission, and corporate culture makes NPS archaeologists particularly effective at working with park managers and fitting archaeological stewardship measures into the ongoing activities of individual parks. The A-76 process, however, specifically requires that activities involving NPS policy development be segregated from activities involved in routine archaeological resource

management. If implemented, this artificial separation between policy development and actual on-the-ground resource management could have serious negative implications for archaeological sites in the parks.

SAA is not suggesting that outsourcing, per se, is detrimental to archaeological resources. As an organization, we support outsourcing of archaeological compliance and research work by federal agencies when there is appropriate planning to ensure that the archaeological resources will receive the best possible management, interpretation, and protection. In fact, NPS already outsources substantial amounts of work, some to private sector firms and some through cooperative agreements with colleges and universities. The work that is outsourced through the cooperative programs provides the added benefit of training opportunities for students. If the competitive outsourcing model envisioned by the A-76 process were to be implemented, outsourcing through cooperative projects with colleges and universities would no longer be possible.

SAA strongly supports participation by a broad spectrum of professional archaeologists in developing innovative management strategies and cutting-edge research programs within federal agencies. The inclusion of archaeologists from academic institutions and private sector firms in archaeological resource management within NPS, whether through outsourcing or cooperative agreements, has been and can continue to be positive, both for the resources and for the agency.

We are concerned, however, that the current outsourcing studies have been conducted without input or review by the archaeological profession, and we question whether adequate consideration has been given to the potential effects of the decisions that are being made on the world class archaeological resources under the stewardship of the National Park Service.

Thank you for allowing SAA to testify on this important issue.