

America's cultural resources, including archaeological sites and materials, constitute the physical record of the nation's past. They tell the story of the peoples who inhabited the land that is now the United States. A great deal of that physical record is contained within the boundaries of federally-managed land, and even more than that is protected by federal law. Over the decades, the federal government has rightly taken a leading role in protecting these irreplaceable resources so that future generations of Americans can know the story of those who came before us. It is a great responsibility, and there are thousands of dedicated individuals in numerous federal agencies who work very hard and take this responsibility very seriously.

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.

Unfortunately, over the past seven years we have seen a dramatic erosion in the effectiveness of many federal preservation programs, due in part to static or declining levels of funding, and a culture of benign—and not so benign—neglect by the current administration. At present, large portions of the federal preservation portfolio—including those programs dealing with archaeology—do not have the staff or funding necessary to carry out their responsibilities. They need substantial infusions of funding and staff in order to reverse the effects of the policy of recent years.

SAA understands that the President-elect is receiving requests for more spending for thousands of programs and initiatives. We also are cognizant of the economic reality of the times, and the daunting challenges that the new administration will face next year. Nevertheless, we feel that a dramatic course change is necessary if the federal government is to fulfill its preservation role.

The following is a description of the situation facing programs with direct oversight of archaeological resources on federal land, along with some suggestions on how to address the problems:

NPS Cultural Resources Programs

The National Park Service's 391 parks contain some of the most important natural and cultural resources, including many thousands of archaeological sites, in the nation. A great many of the parks were created specifically to preserve their cultural values. Working within the framework of federal historic preservation statutes, the Park Service's Cultural Resources Program and its dedicated staff have set a strong example for the nation in caring for these irreplaceable national assets.

NPS Archeology

- 391 National Parks comprising 84 million acres
- 2 percent (1.68 million) of acreage has been surveyed for archeological resources
- 68,327 identified archeological sites in the parks
- 43,669 sites have records in the Archeological Sites Management Information System
- 5 archaeologists in the Washington Administrative Service Organization
- @200 archaeologists in the regional offices, centers, and parks
 - One-quarter of these are in term (specific project) positions
- Current funding includes:
 - \$2.8 million for all WASO cultural resources staff and operations, including Archaeology Program
 - \$81.6 million for all cultural resources staff and operations expenses in parks, regional offices and centers, including Archaeology Program
 - \$2.3 million from Cultural Resources Applied Research for inventory activities

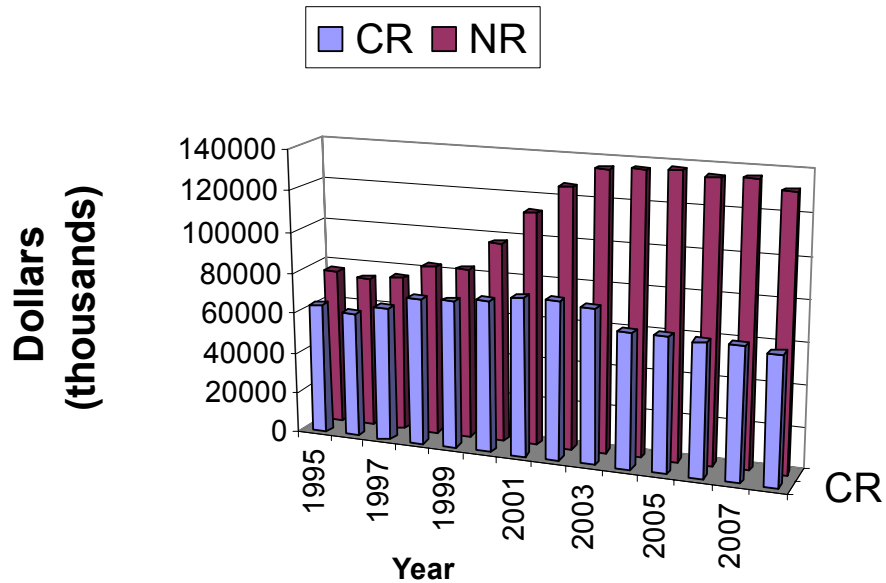
NPS Museum Management Program

- 123 million objects, artifacts, specimens, and archives
- Archives are 68 percent and archeological artifacts are 27 percent of collections
- 691 museum storage facilities in 295 parks
- Universities and other non-federal organizations also store items
- 7 staff in the Washington Administrative Service Organization
- Current funding includes:
 - \$2.8 million for all WASO cultural resources staff and operations, including Museum Management Program
 - \$81.6 million for all cultural resources staff and operations expenses in parks, regional offices and centers, including Museum Management Program
 - \$5.9 million in Museum Management Program

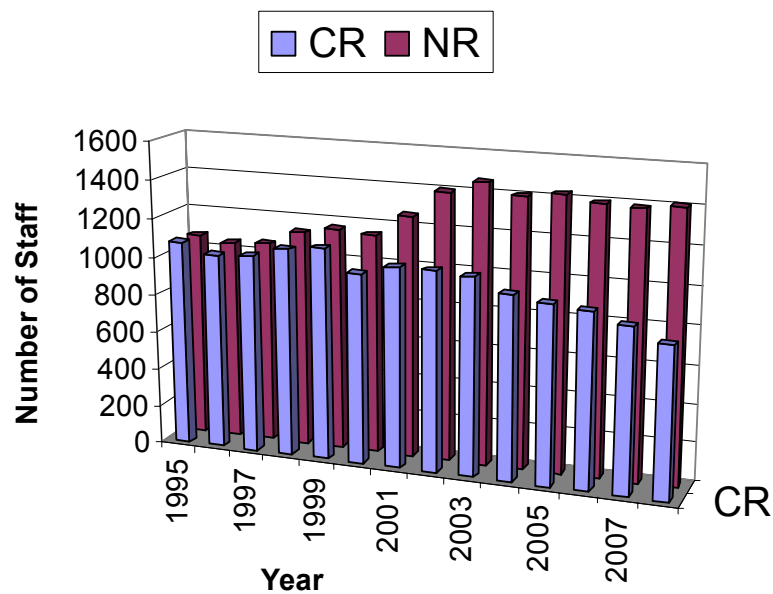
While NPS Natural Resources programs have seen sizable increases in funding and staff, cuts in Cultural Resources has degraded the latter's capacity to effectively preserve our heritage resources and successfully promote the nation's history and prehistory to the public. This degradation of the overall Cultural Resources Program has resulted in serious problems in the archaeology and museum management programs, as well. The loss of capacity comes from policy failures that stem from a lack of commitment to the agency's cultural resources mission. Unless there is a dramatic reversal in this trend, and a refocusing of initiatives within the cultural resources program, the current situation will worsen thereby endangering the agency's ability to carry out its stewardship responsibilities.

The following charts indicate the disparities in funding and staffing for Cultural Resources compared to NPS Natural Resources programs.

NPS Funding Levels CR vs. NR 1995 - 2008 (in 1995 Dollars)



NPS Staffing Levels CR vs. NR 1995 - 2008



The following are some of the most pressing problems facing the archaeology and museum management programs:

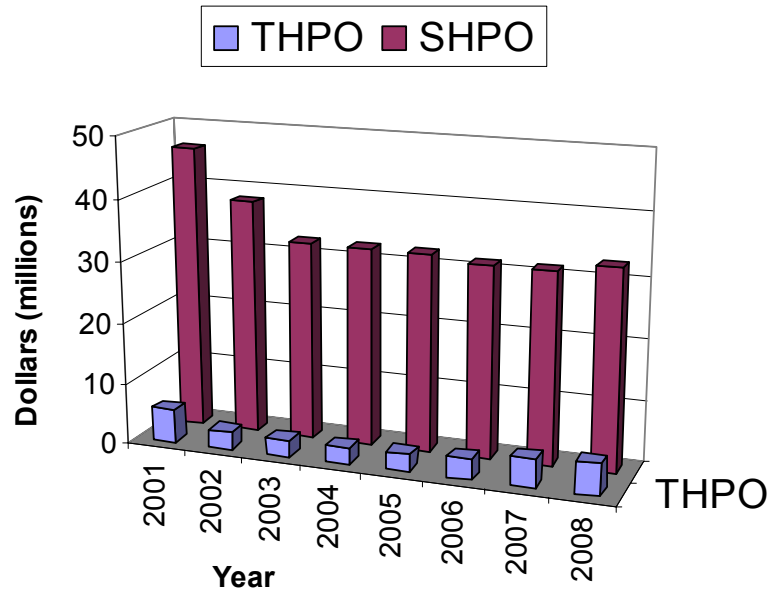
- Few parks have a dedicated archeologist—most are stationed at regional offices or the three archeological centers in Florida, Nebraska, and Arizona. This leaves many parks, including those with significant archaeological resources, without on-site professional archaeological management.
- One-third of the archeology program workforce will be eligible to retire in the next five years, greatly increasing the threat of further erosion in program capability.
- The archaeology program focuses too much time and money on site assessments, while research suffers and many significant archaeological resources go without needed care and management.
- A substantial backlog exists within museum program's cataloging effort. 56 million items remain un-cataloged.
- The backlog is exacerbated by the lack of highly-trained curatorial staff. Fewer than 100 GS-11 level curators work in the parks and their collection facilities.

The Obama administration needs to refocus the NPS Cultural Resources Program with a renewed commitment to innovation, science, education, high professional standards, and public outreach policies that achieve real world, on the ground, research, conservation and education results within the NPS. Increased funding, staffing and changes in organizational structure, if warranted, should all serve these policies.

Historic Preservation Fund Grants-In Aid Programs

The National Park Service also contributes to historic preservation beyond the boundaries of the National Parks themselves. Cultural resources are conserved through formal partnership programs with the states and tribes through the Historic Preservation Fund. The funds are used to assist state, local, and tribal governments in their historic preservation programs and activities. Unfortunately, funding for the State Historic Preservation Officers and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers has been flat or in decline in real-dollar terms over the past eight years.

THPO and SHPO Funding 2001-2008 (in 2001 dollars)



The new administration needs to substantially increase appropriations to the Historic Preservation Fund, which has seldom received its fully authorized amount. The SHPO and THPO programs are vitally important to national preservation efforts in both the public and private spheres.

Bureau of Land Management Cultural Resources

The mission of the BLM Cultural Resources Management program is to inventory, monitor, and protect cultural heritage sites and objects located in and on the 258 million acres managed by the Bureau. It also works closely with SHPO's on data sharing and Section 106 compliance issues, and manages a large volunteer program that greatly increases the effectiveness the Bureau's initiatives. Although the program received an increase, called the Cultural Resources Enhancement Initiative, in FY2007, that in part reversed a substantial decline in funding, the following chart shows how the appropriations for cultural resources are not keeping pace with inflation.

BLM Cultural Resources Management FY2003-2008



US Forest Service Heritage Resources

The Forest Service manages more than 190 million acres of forest and grassland in the continental US, Alaska, and Puerto Rico. The US forest system contains hundreds of thousands of identified historic and cultural resource sites, including numerous archaeological sites. USFS does not have a line item appropriation for heritage resource management. Heritage funding is part of the Recreation and Wilderness account, though the USFS budget justifications break out heritage expenses from the total. As the following chart indicates, both the Recreation and Wilderness account, and spending on heritage resource management, have been flat or declined in real dollar terms. Staffing levels are also inadequate. As a result, archaeological and other types of historic resources in the forest system do not receive the management and protection they need.

- Increase training for park museum personnel to bring curatorial staff in line with NPS professional standards
- Make revision of archival procedures a priority in order to reduce backlog in collections catalogue
- Increase funding for the Historic Preservation Fund and its grants-in aid programs
- Increase funding for BLM's Cultural Resource Management program
- Provide USFS heritage resources management with its own line item in the budget, and increase funding for the program
- Evaluate the federal preservation portfolio to determine if a centralization of the cultural resource programs throughout the various agencies would provide greater focus and efficiency

Sources:

National Academy of Public Administration report "Saving Our History: A Review of National Park Cultural Resource Management"

The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees

Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Years 2001-2008