



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

March 2023 Government and International Government Affairs Update

Dear SAA Member,

You are receiving this update while the 88th SAA Annual Meeting is going on. I am greatly enjoying this opportunity to see so many archaeologists from all over the nation and the world, both old friends and new acquaintances. I am speaking with the leaders of other archaeological societies, and one topic that keeps coming up is the state of CRM here and abroad, and how we can help improve the training pipeline of new archaeologists for this essential work. The Section 106 consultations established by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) are the lynchpin of historic preservation in the U.S. Working within this NHPA framework, private sector CRM firms do the majority of archaeological work in the country today. These professionals ensure the timely delivery of many infrastructure projects, while simultaneously protecting our irreplaceable historic resources. Unfortunately, there aren't enough of CRM professionals and their workloads are growing with recent passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. The key to getting more students into archaeology programs in general, and CRM training in particular, lies in making changes to higher education: addressing the debt associated with earning archaeology degrees, and increasing both the number and breadth of CRM-related offerings in the curriculum. The SAA is working on both of these priorities.

Dan Sandweiss
President

Domestic Issues

The budget and appropriations season is now fully underway. The Biden administration released its proposed budget for fiscal year 2024 on March 9. It contains the following requests for key cultural resources accounts:

- BLM cultural resources--\$22.1 million, up \$2.1 million from FY 2023

- BLM National Conservation Lands--\$72.9 million, up \$11.3 million
- NPS cultural programs--\$44.1 million, up \$4.8 million
- HPF overall--\$177.9 million, down \$26.6 million
- HPF SHPO--\$62.1 million, no change
- HPF THPO--\$23 million, no change

Some of the provisions of the budget request, such as the proposed allocations for the NCL and the NPS cultural programs, are helpful and constructive. Others, including those for BLM cultural resources and the HPF, are insufficient to meet needs, especially given the high rate of inflation. On the HPF, the SAA joined many other preservation groups in a [letter](#) to Congress urging \$225 million for the Fund. The SAA also submitted its appropriations testimony to the House Appropriations Committee on March 17. It contains suggestions for robust spending for archaeological resources protection and staffing increases. You can read the testimony [here](#).

David Lindsay
Manager, Government Affairs

Federal Legislation

H.R. 1—Lower Energy Costs Act of 2023

Sponsor—Rep. Scalise (R-LA)

Status—passed the House on March 30

This bill is the House Republicans' marker on reforming the permitting process for energy and transportation infrastructure projects. It would require Interior to resume quarterly lease sales on federal lands, and a minimum of four annual offshore lease sales; require publication of 2023-2028 offshore oil and gas lease sales plans; end the existing moratorium on new coal leasing; codify the Trump administration's NEPA regulatory changes; end NEPA compliance for "non-major" federal actions (geotechnical investigations, transmission infrastructure upgrades, off-road vehicle use in existing rights-of-way, meteorological towers, geothermal exploratory wells, etc.); limit NEPA environmental reviews for lease sales to impacts directly related to extraction; enforce a 120-day deadline to file a claim on any final agency action subject to NEPA; end Section 106 compliance for activities on lands where the federal government owns less than 50% of the subsurface mineral rights; set NEPA review deadlines at one year for environmental assessments and two years for environmental impact statements. On March 28 the SAA joined a [letter](#) by the National Trust that outlined our opposition to the bill, and suggested alternative approaches to improve the federal permitting process.

H.R. 178—Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act of 2023

Sponsor—Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA)

Status—pending before the House Natural Resources and Agriculture Committees

The measure would require the Secretary of the Interior to establish renewable energy priority areas on public lands, and update the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (PEIS) for geothermal (issued October 2008), solar (issued July 2012), and wind (issued July 2005) to include those priority areas. The department would be required to coordinate with state, tribal, and local governments, as well as industry stakeholders, to ensure that priority areas are economically viable and that the undertakings would minimize impacts on habitat, recreation, cultural resources, and other uses. This bill was approved by the House Natural Resources committee in the previous Congress.

H.R. 356—Unleash American Energy Act of 2023**Sponsor—Rep. Jerry Carl (R-AL)**

Status—pending before the House Natural Resources Committee

This bill is a reintroduction of a similar measure from the previous Congress. It would “require a minimum of two oil and gas lease sales a year in the Gulf of Mexico and in the Alaska Region of the Outer Continental Shelf.” It would also prohibit any administration from imposing future moratoriums or delays on offshore oil and gas leasing.

H.R. 923—To prohibit the President from issuing moratoria on leasing and permitting energy and minerals on certain Federal land**Sponsor—Rep. Harriett Hageman (R-WY)**

Status—pending before the House Natural Resources Committee

Like H.R. 356 above, this measure would direct the executive branch to further develop domestic energy resources, in this case by preventing an administration from placing a moratorium on oil, gas, and mineral extraction activities on Federal land.

Agency Actions

The ACHP met March 1 for its winter business meeting. You can watch a recording of the public session [here](#). The panel voted to approve the updated Policy [Statement](#) on Burial Sites, Human Remains, and Funerary Objects. The Council’s summer business meeting is scheduled for July 11-12 in Washington, D.C.

In other ACHP news, on March 12 Reid Nelson became the executive director of the Council.

The National Park Service is [requesting](#) public input on its revised "National

Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties" (TCP Bulletin). The Bulletin "provides guidance for identifying, evaluating, and documenting traditional cultural places (TCPs) that are significant in American history, architecture, engineering, archeology, and culture, at local, state, and national levels of significance." Comments are due by April 30, and the SAA will file a letter.

In The States

In Connecticut, the state house is considering a bill (HB 6756) that would allow municipalities to appeal determinations of the State Historic Preservation Officer "concerning the renovation or rehabilitation of an historic building or property" and require the state's Department of Economic and Community Development to issue a decision on the appeal no later than sixty days after a hearing. According to the text, in considering the appeal, the hearing officer will consider "the appropriate balance between historic preservation stewardship, economic development and rehabilitation." The SAA is closely following this issue.

In The Courts

On Friday, March 17, a magistrate judge denied the motion by the SAA, AIA, and AAA to intervene in the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments litigation. The judge held the three groups had similar interests to the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), which was approved for participation in the proceedings, and that the interests of SUWA would adequately represent those of the other three groups. In the decision, the judge said that the "interests [of the SAA, AIA and AAA] are similar, if not identical to, each other. It is hard to imagine a scenario where the SUWA intervenors' interests would be averse to the interests of the three remaining groups of non-profit organizations. Thus, the Court finds that the three remaining groups of intervenors have failed to overcome the presumption of adequate representation and deny their motions to intervene under Rule 24(a) . . ." On March 31 the SAA and the other groups filed an objection to the magistrate judge's decision with the U.S. district court in Utah.

Insight and Analysis

As part of an effort to improve the teaching of CRM-related archaeology and other heritage protection practices, Southern Connecticut State University is seeking federal assistance in creating a new master's program for cultural resources management. The SAA is proud to support this initiative, and will

seek to seek to foster similar proposals in other schools.

March 23, 2023

The Honorable Christopher Murphy
United States Senate
136 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murphy,

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) writes to strongly support the request by Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) for \$998,000 in fiscal year 2024 congressionally directed spending for the creation of a new master's program for cultural resources management (CRM). Establishing this program is a key first step in building a vibrant heritage preservation workforce, which in turn will ensure the protection of our priceless cultural resources and the timely delivery of needed infrastructure projects.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 5,500 members, the SAA represents professional and avocational archaeologists, archaeology students in colleges and universities, and archaeologists working at tribal agencies, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. The SAA has members throughout the United States, as well as in many nations around the world.

The preservation system established by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)—particularly with regard to Section 106 consultations—constitutes the “front line” in the effort to preserve our cultural heritage. Under that statute, project planners must take into consideration the impacts of federal and federally sponsored undertakings on historic resources eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The NHPA regulates the overwhelming majority of historic preservation and archaeological work in the United States today, and private sector CRM firms do most of this work. These professionals play a vital role in ensuring the timely delivery of infrastructure projects, while simultaneously protecting our irreplaceable historic resources. Their workloads are growing with recent passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. In order for those firms to function, they must have an adequate number of well-trained personnel. Effective heritage reviews enable Connecticut to preserve its unique history while facilitating necessary transportation and other infrastructure projects.

Unfortunately, CRM companies face a workforce deficit of nearly 700 archaeologists with enough qualifications to lead a Section 106 field survey, according to a recent industry study. This deficit will only grow as the number of federal undertakings increases with recent federal legislation such as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. Worse, our institutions of higher learning do not train enough archaeologists for careers in CRM. While the cost of higher education and the debt that goes with it deter many, another key reason is that traditional anthropology and archaeology departments simply do not emphasize CRM training.

With these urgent factors in mind, the request from SCSU is very timely. The funding, allocated through the Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), will start laying the foundation for a new era in CRM education and training in New England and beyond. Specifically, the money will go toward the hiring of both full- and part-time faculty to teach CRM archaeology, as well as foster student employment opportunities. Finally, it will allow the purchasing of equipment to facilitate remote learning. This expanded access will enable the program to reach out to potential students from traditionally underrepresented communities.

The potential benefits to Connecticut and the nation from a strong CRM labor pool, including the delivery of needed infrastructure and the preservation of our shared cultural heritage, make the proposed investment in the SCSU master's program in CRM a comparative bargain. We respectfully ask you to include the SCSU FIPSE proposal in your FY 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies request.

Sincerely,

Daniel H. Sandweiss, Ph.D., RPA
President

1111 14th Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005 USA

