



National Park Service

Cultural Resource Challenge



PRESERVING AMERICA'S SHARED HERITAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Cover photo: High school students participate in an archeological excavation at Tumacacori National Historical Park. NPS PHOTO

Right: Civil War era Union Army belt buckle. WOODSTOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY / ROB WOOD PHOTO

National Park Service
Cultural Resource Challenge

PRESERVING AMERICA'S SHARED HERITAGE
IN THE 21ST CENTURY



OCTOBER 2013

To fulfill our responsibilities under the Organic Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Park Service must address the identification, documentation, and preservation of the irreplaceable resources that commemorate and illuminate the stories of our nation.



ICE PATCH ARCHEOLOGY AND PALEOECOLOGY GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

NPS PHOTO

Preamble

The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

—1916 *Organic Act*

The spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage; the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people. . . the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans.

—1966 *National Historic Preservation Act*

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service (NPS) and the 50th anniversary of the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), both the inherent promises and the threats to our cultural resources that inspired the Acts are still with us. The NHPA envisioned enabling “future generations a genuine opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the rich heritage of our Nation,” while observing that “historic properties significant to the Nation’s heritage are being lost or substantially altered, often inadvertently, with increasing frequency.”

Then, as now, the NHPA encourages “the Federal Government to accelerate its historic preservation programs and activities” and support the efforts of its partners in the National Preservation Program “to expand and accelerate their historic preservation programs and activities.”

The National Park Service Cultural Resource Challenge will support our parks and partnership programs and chart a course for addressing our most urgent needs and key challenges.



ELLIS ISLAND HOSPITAL STATUE OF LIBERTY NATIONAL MONUMENT

NPS PHOTO

Introduction

In fulfilling our mission to preserve the nation's cultural heritage, the National Park Service is the steward and manager of cultural resources within the units of the National Park System, as well as a leader in promoting historic preservation in communities large and small nationwide.

In the 21st century, the **Cultural Resources Stewardship, Partnerships, and Science Programs** of the National Park Service must

Provide leadership for the protection and interpretation of the nation's heritage, guide a national historic preservation program that embraces national parks and heritage resources, engage all American peoples with the places and stories that make up their national identity, and serve as a model for the stewardship of cultural resources throughout the world.

The magnitude of NPS stewardship responsibilities for the nation's heritage resources is both inspiring and daunting. The National Park System includes over **27,000** historic and precontact structures, **3,500** statues, monuments and memorials, an estimated **two million** archeological sites, and more than **159 million** museum objects and archival documents. The National Historic Preservation Program encompasses all federal agencies, **59** states and territories, **1,863** certified local governments, **565** American Indian tribes, **49** National Heritage Areas (NHAs), dozens of non-profit preservation organizations, and the general public.

Through NPS-supported partnerships, more than **88,000** listings on the National Register of Historic Places include almost **1.7 million** historic buildings; over **38,700** historic properties have been rehabilitated through the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, leveraging over **\$66 billion** in private investment and

creating **2.4 million** jobs; and **41,570** places have been documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey, the Historic American Engineering Record, and the Historic American Landscape Survey.

The cultural resources programs and responsibilities of the NPS reach into every park and virtually every community in the nation, yet staffing and funding have not kept pace with their growth, let alone to meet the new and significant challenges we now face.

Since 1997 there has been a loss of almost 30 percent of cultural resource management positions in our national parks, and the losses continue as parks and regional offices continue to tighten their belts. The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), which provides the primary support for the partnership programs with state historic preservation offices (SHPOs), has remained largely flat since 1980, resulting in a substantial decline in adjusted dollars. Funding for tribal programs through the HPF has not kept pace with the dramatic increase in participating tribes, from 12 in 1996 to 143 today. The elimination of the Save America's Treasures and Preserve America funding has significantly reduced the support for survey and treatment of our heritage resources both in national parks and in local communities across the country.

Nationally recognized reports have repeatedly documented these challenges over the past decade, most recently in the 2007 and 2008 reports by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), the 2009 findings of the National Parks Second Century Commission, and in the aptly titled "Imperiled Promise" report from the Organization of American Historians in 2011.

In addition to age-old threats such as wind, fire, and floods, recent years have seen the rapid advancement of new threats and challenges to the long-term preservation of cultural resources—climate change; national initiatives for sustainability, energy conservation, and improved disaster





Student Conservation Corps participants repoint the west wall of the 1870s Depot Tank Stagecoach Station at Petrified Forest National Park (above).

NPS PHOTO

Headstones and markers receive a cleaning on Volunteer Day at Vicksburg National Cemetery (opposite).

NPS PHOTO

response; and calls for continued relevancy to current and future constituents through our support for education, youth, and diversity programs—threats and demands that were unknown or not considered by the visionaries of 1916 and 1966.

The Second Century Commission and 2008 NAPA reports both called for a “Cultural Resource Challenge,” a major funding initiative similar to the Natural Resource Challenge that brought \$70 million in increased support for the improved management of national park natural resources between 2001 and 2008. The NPS and its preservation partners have also long advocated for full funding of the Historic Preservation Fund, which is funded through offshore oil and gas lease revenue from the outer-continental shelf, and whose annual appropriation has rarely exceeded even half of the authorized amount (\$150 million).

In an era of ever-tightening budgets, however, the prospects for major increases on the same order of the Natural Resource Challenge appear unlikely for the foreseeable future. Although nothing less than additional funding will help fully preserve America’s heritage for future generations, waiting for a comparable level of much-needed increases to address the issues that confront us now is NOT an option as we strive to meet our

stewardship and partnership responsibilities to preserve the nation’s shared heritage for future generations.

Instead, as the NPS looks ahead to the 2016 centennial of the National Park Service and the fiftieth anniversary of the NHPA, it is critical that the NPS take this opportunity to look forward and recommit to preserving the nation’s historic resources. The Cultural Resource Challenge provides focus for NPS stewardship and partnership responsibilities for America’s cultural heritage, builds on key programs, prioritizes the use of existing resources, and identifies critical actions that will best meet the needs and challenges confronting us in the 21st century.

The Cultural Resource Challenge commits the NPS to stronger advocacy for both parks and partnership programs and charts a course for addressing the most urgent needs and key challenges. This strategic plan identifies five goals that represent our most critical priorities while acknowledging that additional resources are not likely to be available to the NPS at this time. These goals and priorities are drawn from conversations with NPS leadership, field staff, and partners, as well as many past reports. The Challenge provides a strategy for moving forward in difficult times, but it is not intended to set aside or ignore the very real need for increased and sustained financial and programmatic support for the National Historic Preservation Program.

The goals and actions of the Challenge focus on opportunities the NPS does have to move forward within our existing levels or modest increases of support; they are designed to be aspirational, scalable, and collaborative. They are anchored in the NPS core values of stewardship, relevancy, education, and workforce, and support the NPS *A Call to Action*. As 2016 approaches, they reflect the need for the NPS to be more creative with existing resources and to align our efforts at all levels within the Service, to strengthen our relationships with current partners and identify new ones, and to ensure the NPS continues to be viewed as relevant to the major issues attracting resources and funding today. Only then can the NPS strive to meet the hopes and expectations of 1916 and 1966 for future generations.

The Cultural Resource Challenge will help the National Park Service to encourage, support, and share innovative ideas for research, interpretation, education, and preservation of heritage resources.



INTERPRETING ARCHEOLOGY HAWAI'I VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

NPS PHOTO

The NPS Cultural Resource Challenge

The nation's historic and cultural resources are the spiritual and physical reminders of the decisive times, people, and places in American history and culture. The National Park Service mission is to help preserve these places—both within the parks and in communities across the nation—as tangible, living contacts with previous and future generations.

Through the Cultural Resource Challenge goals and actions, the National Park Service seeks to

Achieve a standard of excellence for the stewardship of the resources that form the historical and cultural foundations of the nation, commit at all levels to a common sets of goals, and articulate a common vision for the next century.



*Iron projectile point,
Grand Portage National
Monument. NPS PHOTO*

To meet this challenge, collaboration with all of our partners—within and outside of the Service—is critical to build a shared vision that embraces the full range of our responsibilities under the Organic Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. The NPS must reshape and rebuild its cultural resources staffing, share NPS expertise with others, and emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to managing resources. Strong leadership, vision, and communication is required from all involved—parks and partners as well as national and regional program leadership—to build and lead a reinvigorated, more effective, and unified nationwide system of heritage preservation.

The individual GOALS required to implement the Cultural Resource Challenge are:

- 1 Provide leadership, support, and advocacy for the stewardship, protection, interpretation, and management of the nation's heritage through scholarly research, science, and effective management.
- 2 Recommit to the spirit and letter of the landmark legislation underpinning the NPS mission, as expressed in the Organic Act, the Antiquities Act, the Historic Sites Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act, through which the American people have made clear their desire for the protection and preservation of our historic and cultural resources.
- 3 Connect all Americans to their heritage resources in a manner that resonates with their lives, legacies, and dreams, and tells the stories that make up America's diverse national identity.
- 4 Integrate the values of heritage stewardship into major initiatives and issues such as renewable energy, climate change, community assistance and revitalization, and sustainability, while cultivating excellence in science and technical preservation as a foundation for resource protection, management, and rehabilitation.
- 5 Attract, support, and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce, and support the development of leadership and expertise within the National Park Service.

The following pages describe strategic approaches within each goal that will guide the process.

Goal #1: Provide leadership, support, and advocacy for the stewardship, protection, interpretation, and management of the nation’s heritage through scholarly research, science, and effective management.



Archeological collections are rehoused at George Washington Birthplace National Monument through technical assistance provided by the NPS Northeast Museum Services Center. NPS PHOTO

Stewardship

The preservation of America’s special places is the focus of NPS responsibilities under the Organic Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. National Park Service efforts must address the identification, documentation, and preservation of irreplaceable resources that commemorate and illuminate the stories of our nation, including both cultural resources within the National Park System and hundreds of thousands of state, tribal, community, and privately owned historic and cultural resources throughout the nation. These efforts, and the staff and funding resources that support them, must be guided by consensus with the NPS and among our partners on our most critical priorities.

Of the 401 current national park units, nearly two-thirds are historical parks, sites, monuments, or memorials. In addition, all parks, recreation areas, seashores, and

other NPS units include historic sites, structures, landscapes, archeological sites, and museum artifacts. However, too many of the cultural resources of these sites are not well understood or protected. The same can be said of those historic resources worthy of preservation beyond park boundaries for which the NHPA established the National Register of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmarks programs, managed by NPS, to document and provide a measure of protection from adverse federal actions. Recent independent studies of NPS cultural resource management and partnership programs reveal significant deficits in the funding and staffing needed for both the NPS and our partners to support these basic stewardship responsibilities.

Our parks and partners need accurate, high-quality information and access to the expertise needed to make informed cultural resource management decisions.

Yet, 70 percent of our parks lack a full set of baseline cultural resource documents; many also lack cultural resource Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data layers. Baseline data include the identification and evaluation of historic properties to determine their significance and treatment needs. The same is true for archeological sites; many have been identified, but very few have been fully assessed. And, far too many museum collections and artifacts located in parks have yet to be cataloged so they can be of use to researchers and accessible to the public.

Beyond our boundaries, many important cultural resources are likewise not documented or protected by National Register or National Historic Landmark listings. National Register files have not been fully digitized to make them accessible to researchers, planners, and the general

Strategic Approaches

- Build cultural resource management capacity throughout the NPS to ensure that essential research, conservation, and treatment expertise is available to parks and partners to guide the protection and preservation of our shared heritage.
- Create integrated data systems that maximize the accessibility of our inventory, evaluation, documentation, and treatment information to support decision making by planners, managers, and other stewards of our cultural resources.
- Prioritize funding to support baseline research to identify, evaluate, document, catalog, interpret, and manage historic sites, structures, landscapes, archeological sites, museum collections, and traditional cultural properties.

Parks and partnership programs need accurate, high-quality information and access to the expertise needed to make informed cultural resource management decisions.



San Ildefonso pottery, Bandelier National Monument. NPS PHOTO

public. National Park Service guidance for the documentation and treatment of cultural resources needs to be updated to reflect new scientific research and technologies.

Enhanced collaboration with academic and professional programs and organizations is essential to support our research, documentation, and interpretation programs. And, if the NPS is to reestablish and maintain an international leadership role in the stewardship of cultural resources, the agency must also strengthen current relationships with heritage organizations and government programs abroad.

- Review and update NPS guidance for cultural resource identification, management, treatment, documentation, and mitigation.
- Improve collaboration with academia and professional organizations and other partners to ensure that NPS research and methodology reflect the most current scholarship and science.
- Improve and establish relationships with international heritage groups and world government organizations to support international cooperation for heritage preservation.

Goal #2:

Recommit to the spirit and letter of the landmark legislation underpinning the National Park Service mission, as expressed in the Organic Act, the Antiquities Act, the Historic Sites Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act, through which the American people have made clear their desire for the protection and preservation of our historic and cultural resources.

Honoring our Mandates

With the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, Congress mandated the identification and protection of historic resources so that they could be preserved as “a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people.” The NPS provides critical leadership and support to the National Historic Preservation Program.

Under the NHPA, a national network was established in the form of federal preservation officers for federal agencies, state historic preservation offices in each state, tribal historic preservation offices in participating tribes, and certified local governments (CLGs).

With NPS assistance, guidance, and funding, these partners in the National Historic Preservation Program undertake survey, registration, and

documentation in order to recognize and protect their cultural resources.

Funding also can be provided to private sector historic preservation organizations who also are struggling to protect the nation’s resources, while tax incentives for income-producing properties promote historic rehabilitation and community revitalization of historic buildings in cities, towns, and rural areas. Such activities help to rebuild communities and provide sustainable alternatives to demolition.

Promised funding to assist the SHPOs, THPOs, CLGs, and private-sector organizations came with the NHPA, yet actual funding levels have never approached

what was promised. The work of NPS preservation partners is supported through the Historic Preservation Fund, which is funded through offshore oil and gas lease revenue from the outer-continental shelf. The annual appropriation has rarely exceeded even half of the authorized amount of \$150 million per year, and the NPS and its preservation partners have long advocated for full funding of the HPF.

The National Park Service is tasked with providing more than just funding in support of the National Historic Preservation Program, but also the leadership, guidance, and staffing assistance required to train, coordinate, and provide assistance to its many preservation partners. The existing levels of financial and programmatic support have eroded NPS ability to meet its responsibilities and address new challenges and threats.

As just one example, the NPS has the responsibility to document and record historic properties to the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Architectural and Engineering Documentation* and to oversee the national documentation program. Over the past decade or two, such documentation has been sadly neglected due to the lack of staffing and financial resources needed to carry out our responsibilities. The effect on the general public is the loss of hundreds of historic properties each year without any record of their existence.

The NPS provides guidelines and informational briefs that outline the documentation methodologies necessary for recording historic resources, as well as policies, guidance, technical assistance, education, and training on rehabilitation, materials conservation, and many other



*Eyeglasses,
Frederick
Douglass National
Historic Site.* NPS PHOTO



Limewash is applied to a slave overseer's house (with slave cabins in the background) at Kingsley Plantation, Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. NPS PHOTO

topics critical to the national preservation program. In challenging economic times, it is critical to continue to support the nation's historic preservation programs that preserve our shared heritage and to support community engagement and revitalization, jobs and training opportunities, sustainability, and energy conservation.

Strategic Approaches

- Support historic preservation legislation that embraces the heritage resources of our national parks and communities, and work with our partners to increase the resources and guidance required for preservation and improved public access to information.
- Document the need and critical priorities for advocating for full funding for the Historic Preservation Fund as established by the NHPA.

- Provide state historic preservation offices (SHPOs), tribal historic preservation offices (THPOs), certified local governments (CLGs), federal preservation officers (FPOs), government agencies, and others, training and technical guidance that connects them with the best practices available in preservation, documentation, and conservation.

- Improve and update NPS preservation guidance and access to information via websites and social media networks.
- Work with partners to develop a focused public education campaign to communicate and advance historic preservation values and the NPS role within the National Historic Preservation Program.

Goal #3: Connect all Americans to their heritage resources in a manner that resonates with their lives, legacies, and dreams, and tells the stories that make up America's diverse national identity.



Visitors join in a dance at the Indian Village at Jefferson Patterson Park, a partner with Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.
M. SHISLER PHOTO

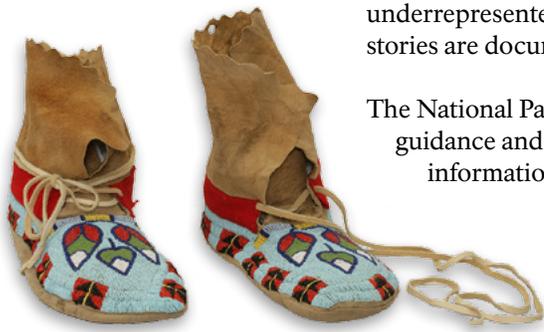
A Society Connected to Its Past

Education is a primary responsibility of the NPS, but that responsibility cannot be fulfilled unless and until NPS parks and programs tell the stories that reflect the diverse and complex contributions of all Americans. Understanding our shared history connects our personal experiences to our communities, to past events, and to current and future challenges. While the NPS mission is the preservation of places and objects of significant national, state, local, tribal, community, and human history, it must stay firmly rooted in the critical needs of the present—a relevant NPS must speak with the American people today, and walk with them into the future.

The United States has always been home to a diverse population. Each locality within our vast nation can be identified by specific regional and ethnic cultural and material expressions that make it distinct.

While many NPS units are dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of these sites, more work is required to identify and record information about them that fully reflects the diversity of the American story. It is especially important to incorporate the stories of communities that have been underrepresented in the national dialog.

Equally compelling and often overlooked are the difficult stories that, once told, can serve to promote understanding and sensitivity to issues of a contested past. Much of our existing interpretation requires reexamination to reflect more current scholarship and foster an understanding of the contributions of individuals and groups. The exploration of new historical sites and interpretive plans should include representatives from communities and people with a broad range of perspectives. The National Park Service can set a balanced course for the future by engaging



*Moccasins,
Nez Perce National
Historical Park.* NPS PHOTO

underrepresented groups to ensure their stories are documented and told.

The National Park Service must provide guidance and better access to its own information to help the private sector realize these goals. Partnerships with the private sector, as exemplified by the National Heritage Areas program, can provide support to regions and communities that share a common heritage and seek to preserve and promote their historic resources and help revitalize their communities.

Strategic Approaches

- Assess gaps in the National Park System and the National Historic Landmarks and National Register of Historic Places programs regarding sites related to underrepresented groups and resource types, and identify and implement strategies and initiatives for their inclusion.
- Expand and improve NPS support to Native American, minority, and other

underrepresented cultures involved in the national historic preservation programs and the preservation of their cultures.

- Support the passage of National Heritage Area program legislation and continued funding for NHAs, and provide them with increased assistance, evaluation, monitoring, and technical support.
- Disseminate NPS-supported research, discoveries, and information to the widest possible audience—NPS employees, educators, visitors, partners, communities, and the public—utilizing multiple formats and the most current delivery systems and technologies to provide the best access.
- Develop and promote programs that engage the next generation in historic preservation, history, and archeology programs that involve them in hands-on documentation and preservation of community stories and resources, providing jobs and developing leadership and life skills.
- Advance the NPS commitment to tell the stories of the difficult and tragic moments of our nation’s past, as well as celebrating American achievements.



Hands-on educational programs familiarize students with park archeological practices at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. NPS PHOTO

Goal #4: Integrate the values of heritage stewardship into major initiatives and issues such as renewable energy, climate change, community assistance and revitalization, and sustainability, while cultivating excellence in science and technical preservation as a foundation for resource protection, management, and rehabilitation.



Crew members remove a tree damaged by Hurricane Sandy at Saint Paul's Church National Historic Site, National Parks of New York Harbor. NPS PHOTO

Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century

Recent large-scale environmental disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the Gulf Oil Spill have demonstrated the need to be proactive in the development of plans to aid in the post-disaster recovery of historic properties, districts, and communities. These and other disasters have required the NPS to experiment with methodologies to meet the challenges encountered in the field to quickly identify and evaluate the condition of affected historic resources.

The National Park Service led the way in the development of GIS standards to establish locational data that is crucial in such circumstances. However, the NPS lacks the funding to implement these standards

fully in the parks and to continue to develop new standards and guidelines to address the emerging impacts upon the nation's historic resources.

Hundreds of thousands of historic properties are located in areas threatened by climate change impacts such as sea level rise, changes in rainfall, and permafrost melting. National Park Service natural resources programs have already begun to utilize scientific approaches to deal with such impacts on the environment, but equally vulnerable—and far less replaceable—cultural resources have not fully benefited from these approaches. Increased research and cooperation with natural resources programs and external partners, including federal agencies and



Red Cross button,
Maggie L. Walker
National Historic Site.
NPS PHOTO

state, local, and tribal governments with like responsibilities are needed to assess vulnerability and engage in risk assessment and disaster planning.

Climate change and environmental disasters are not the only threats to historic resources and to communities. Urban decay, neglect, and unplanned development are even more pressing threats. Incentives such as the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program that encourage the rehabilitation of historic structures are invaluable in revitalizing older communities and providing for sustainable development.

Increased funding and technical assistance is needed, as is the exploration of other incentives and strategies by which older communities can be made more vibrant, while at the same time creating much needed jobs in skilled construction and historic preservation. Rehabilitation and historic preservation can also engender pride that connects people to their communities and encourages heritage tourism, which in turn helps to drive economic prosperity.

A \$22 million rehabilitation of the Atlas Theater in Washington, DC, under the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program has helped spark economic revitalization of the city's historic H Street Corridor neighborhood.

MICHAEL MORAN PHOTO COURTESY OF ATLAS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



Strategic Approaches

- Cultivate excellence in technology, science, and scholarship as a foundation for management and preservation of cultural resources throughout the parks and the nation.
- Promote an interdisciplinary research approach to addressing critical resource management issues, including climate change, sustainability, ecosystem management, and GIS standards, through increased coordination between cultural and natural resource research and science programs.
- Update the guidance and bulletins that assist in applying the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and provide policy and technical guidance to parks and partners to reflect current issues, needs, and research.
- Work with the national preservation community, including other federal programs, to develop a proposal for the Historic Preservation Fund that would provide greater assistance to economically distressed areas, and those undergoing rapid urbanization.
- Continue support for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program as the largest and most successful federal program specifically supporting historic preservation, community revitalization, and job creation through historic rehabilitation.
- Promote the economic value of NPS parks, sites, and programs to communities through community revitalization, tourism, and job creation.

Incentives such as the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program that encourage the rehabilitation of historic structures are invaluable in revitalizing older communities and providing for sustainable development.



Achieve a standard of excellence for the stewardship of the resources that form the historical and cultural foundations of the nation, commit at all levels to a common sets of goals, and articulate a common vision for the next century.

Boy Scouts assist the NPS in redeaubing the historic Old Ranger Cabin at Walnut Canyon National Monument. NPS PHOTO

Goal #5: Attract, support, and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce, and support the development of leadership and expertise within the National Park Service.

A Workforce to Help Us Succeed

The National Park Service must provide the funding, training, succession planning, recognition, facilities, and policies employees need to sustain their professional credentials and carry out their work with effectiveness and efficiency.

Lack of staffing throughout NPS cultural resource programs has reached critical levels such that the Washington headquarters (WASO), parks, and regions are unable to fulfill their obligations as mandated by regulation and law, leaving the nation vulnerable to the loss of historic resources and, ultimately, our cultural heritage. The NPS is the steward of many of the nation's most significant cultural resources, with additional responsibilities to guide the national historic preservation program, but it does not have the resources to accomplish fully these mandates.

Too often, as cultural resource professionals leave the NPS, their positions are not back-filled. Too many senior staff are retiring, with no plan in place for their replacement. In the meantime, too few frontline supervisors in parks and staff with cultural resources responsibilities as collateral duties receive adequate training in the preservation and management of cultural resources and the integration of natural and cultural resource management.

The National Park Service is often unable to retain workers representing the next generation who are often hired temporarily or through contract, despite the substantial investment in their training and their enthusiasm for the job. Lack of funding severely limits NPS investment in the current workforce through training and other initiatives intended to keep them current with the latest in historical research, recordation, and conservation technologies. Learning opportunities and engagement with academia and private sector and professional organizations must

also be supported if the NPS is to meet its federal obligations and stay up-to-date on current practices. The sharing of ideas and innovations between cultural resources programs, as well as between WASO, the regions, and the parks is crucial to a successful historic preservation program.

Strategic Approaches

- Identify and fill critical vacancies within parks, the regions, and WASO to ensure an effective and efficient program of cultural resource management.
- Develop a comprehensive Cultural Resource Career Academy curriculum to provide cultural resource management training to all park managers and staff with responsibilities for managing and preserving cultural resources.
- Develop a succession plan to fill needed vacancies that seeks to attract and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce, while providing training and advancement opportunities for existing staff to ensure the success of cultural resources management now and in the future.
- Develop a strong intake program as part of our short- and long-term succession planning to attract and retain highly skilled and diverse talent, with a focus on youth as the future stewards of the nation's past.
- Support NPS professional networks within the Service and with academic, professional, and preservation partners and encourage engagement, including attendance at professional meetings.
- Encourage, support, and share innovative ideas for research, interpretation, education, and preservation of heritage resources.
- Advance efforts to create an NPS workforce that reflects the diversity of the nation from entry level employees to senior leaders.



*Carved bird pin,
Manzanar National
Historic Site.*
NPS PHOTO

The Cultural Resource Challenge is an opportunity to refocus on and prioritize National Park Service stewardship responsibilities for historic resources, to build upon and expand key existing programs, and to add critical new capabilities that will best meet the needs for preserving our treasured cultural resources.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION FORT POINT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NPS PHOTO

For more information about the National Park Service
Cultural Resource Challenge go to:

www.nps.gov/history

Thanks to the many people from the National Park Service and its partner organizations who contributed to the Cultural Resource Challenge through timely, extensive, and insightful feedback during its creation and review.

The Cultural Resource Challenge takes both its vision and challenge from several previous studies which contained thoughtful recommendations for the improvement of our efforts and ability to identify and preserve the precious cultural resources which record and illustrate the history of our nation, its peoples, and our growing understanding of one another:

- *Back to the Future: A Review of the National Historic Preservation Program*, National Academy of Public Administration, 2007
- *Saving our History: A Review of National Park Cultural Resource Programs*, National Academy of Public Administration, 2008
- *Advancing the National Park Idea, National Parks Second Century Commission report*, 2009
- *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement*, National Park Service, 2011
- *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*, Organization of American Historians, 2011

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cultural Resources Stewardship, Partnerships, and Science



www.nps.gov/history