United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

DIRECTOR'S ORDER #24: NPS MUSEUM COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

Approved: Mary A. Bomar
Director

Effective Date: 9-03-08

Duration: Until amended or rescinded.

This Director's Order supersedes Director's Order #24 issued August 21, 2000. It supplements NPS *Management Policies* and is augmented by procedures in the *Museum Handbook.*

1. Background and Purpose

The National Park Service is custodian in perpetuity of irreplaceable and priceless museum collections that include objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript materials (textual, electronic, cartographic, architectural, and audio-visual documents), representing cultural and natural resources in the United States, including but not limited to the disciplines of archeology, biology, ethnology, geology, history, and paleontology. NPS museum collections are park resources that are part of the natural and cultural heritage of the country and are collected, preserved, and interpreted for public benefit.

NPS museum collections inform and enhance every aspect of the NPS mission, from resource management and interpretation, to research and public accountability. Featured in exhibits, interpretation and education programs, films, and print and electronic publications, NPS museum collections are key resources for educators, students, researchers, park managers, park neighbors, and the general public. Accessibility of museum collections is a prime component of museum management.

The NPS *Management Policies* lay the foundation by which the NPS meets its responsibilities toward these museum collections. This Director's Order provides further policy guidance, standards, and requirements for preserving, protecting, documenting, and providing access to, and use of, NPS museum collections.

2. Authority for this Director's Order

Authority for issuing this Director's Order is found in 16 U.S.C. 1 through 4, and delegations of authority contained in Part 245 of the Department of the Interior Manual. Additional key related authorities are found in the Antiquities Act of 1906 (16 U.S.C. 431-433), the Historic Sites Act

of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467), the Management of Museum Properties Act[i] of 1955, as amended (16 U.S.C. 18f, and 18f2-3), the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.), the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (16 U.S.C. 470aa-mm), the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 U.S.C. 3001), the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 (16 U.S.C. 5901 et seq.), and the Departmental Manual 411 DM, Managing Museum Property.

This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the NPS and is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

3. Objectives

The objectives of this Director's Order, in conjunction with the accompanying *Museum Handbook*, are to:

- Ensure that NPS managers and staff have information on the standards and actions for successfully and ethically complying with NPS *Management Policies* on museum collections.
- Provide a means of measuring and evaluating progress in preserving, protecting, documenting, accessing, and using museum collections.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Associate Director, Cultural Resources

The Associate Director, Cultural Resources, with the assistance of the Chief Curator and the Park Museum Management Program (PMMP), has the following responsibilities:

4.1.1 Code of Ethics: Follow the Code of Ethics for the museum management program (see 4.1.2).

4.1.2 *Museum Handbook*: Develop, issue, and periodically update a *Museum Handbook* containing the information park managers need to know to comply with laws, departmental and Service-wide policies, regulations, professional standards, and a code of ethics applicable to museum collections management. Include in the *Museum Handbook*, as a supplement to this Director's Order, specific guidance for collecting, preserving, protecting (including security and fire protection), documenting, accessing, and using museum collections, clearly distinguishing between those actions that are mandatory requirements and those that are discretionary. Cite those laws, policies, and regulations in relevant sections.

4.1.3 Strategic Plans: Develop strategic plans and goals to improve and maintain the management of NPS museum collections Service-wide, consistent with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (31 USC 1115).

4.1.4 National Catalog: Maintain for management and public benefit a National Catalog of Museum Objects, consisting of electronic and paper catalog records, with accession and catalog data for all parks. Develop and maintain an automated collections management program (the Automated National Catalog System [ANCS+ and its successor]) for use by parks, centers, and offices Service-wide, as well as the general public.

4.1.5 Report Requirements and Analysis: Identify reports that are required annually, or at other times, to further museum collections management. Reporting requirements will be kept to the minimum necessary. Maintain, analyze, and report on data submitted by parks, centers, and regions, including: the Collections Management Report; the NPS Checklist for Preservation and Protection of Museum Collections; funding distributions and accomplishments; storage planning data; and other required reports and surveys. Maintain a current Service-wide museum collections storage plan based on regional storage planning data.

4.1.6 Annual Inventory: Review regional certifications of annual inventories, summarize and report certification results to the Service-wide property management officer, and take any necessary corrective action.

4.1.7 Museum Supplies, Equipment, and Technologies: Research products and facilitate park and center acquisition and use of appropriate supplies, forms, equipment, and technologies for management of museum collections.

4.1.8 Service-wide Initiatives: Develop and coordinate Service-wide initiatives, reviews, and funding to improve museum management.

4.1.9 Technical Information: Publicize and disseminate technical information on museum management, including conservation and archival collections management.

4.1.10 Information Access: Publicize NPS museum collections by developing and maintaining access to collections information through various media, including the World Wide Web and ANCS+.

4.1.11 Professional Qualifications and Training: Evaluate Service-wide professional competencies and training needs in museum management, and develop strategies, guidelines, and curricula to meet those needs. Coordinate training to address new technologies, programs, and initiatives.

4.1.12 Plan Review: Review draft park plans that receive Washington Office review, such as general management plans, for appropriate coverage of museum management.

4.1.13 Technical Assistance: Provide technical assistance and advice to park and center managers regarding acquiring, preserving, protecting, documenting, accessing, and using museum collections. Provide this assistance and advice at the request of regions.

4.2 Regional Directors and WASO Associate Directors with Museum Collections Responsibility

Regional directors (assisted by regional associate directors and regional museum support staff), and WASO associate directors accountable for museum collections, have the following responsibilities:

4.2.1 Code of Ethics: Follow the Code of Ethics for the museum management program in the *Museum Handbook.*

4.2.2 Plan and Performance Review: Use the strategic and annual performance planning processes, the park planning process, and the performance management system to ensure that superintendents and center and other managers meet their responsibilities to manage museum collections according to this directive. Review park plans for appropriate coverage of museum collections management, and to ensure consistency with NPS requirements. Review design and construction plans to ensure that museum preservation, protection, documentation (including information technology), and access requirements are met.

4.2.3 Technical Assistance: Provide technical assistance to parks and centers to assist them in meeting NPS museum management requirements, and in providing for access to and use of collections.

4.2.4 Staffing and Training: Evaluate museum management staffing and training needs, and develop and provide training to park and center staff. Regional directors will alert the Associate Director, Cultural Resources, about regional training needs that may apply Service-wide.

4.2.5 Plans, Priorities, and Reports: Develop plans and set priorities (including funding priorities) for managing museum collections based on all approved planning documents, including strategic plans, the Service-wide storage plan, and park Collection Management Plans, and information provided through Service-wide reports and requirements, including the Collections Management Report, NPS Checklist for Preservation and Protection of Museum Collections, and Automated Inventory Program. Review reports to ensure that parks and centers meet reporting requirements. Maintain current regional storage planning data, consistent with the Service-wide storage plan and standards, and submit data updates to the Associate Director, Cultural Resources.

4.2.6 Annual Inventory Certification: Annually certify to the Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Attention: Manager, PMMP, no later than **September 30** each fiscal year, that parks and centers have completed their annual inventories. Review park and center annual inventories and take any necessary corrective actions. Establish a regular schedule for parks in the region to submit the inventories. Approve exceptions to this requirement for extenuating circumstances, such as when collections are inaccessible during construction projects or after major natural disasters; or when non-NPS repositories have equivalent or more rigorous annual inventory procedures, those procedures are documented in a current repository agreement or repository loan

agreement, the repository annually reports inventory results to the parks with collections stored in the repository, and the results are reported in an addendum to the park superintendent's annual inventory certification and noted in the regional director's annual inventory certification.

4.2.7 Destructive Analysis and Consumptive Use: After careful review, if the benefits can be clearly shown to outweigh the resulting or potential damage or loss, approve destructive analysis of rare or highly significant objects, specimens, and archival items, and any consumptive use of museum collections.

4.2.8 Unconditional Gifts: Grant exceptions to the unconditional gift policy on a rare and case-by-case basis.

4.2.9 Delegation of Authority to Accept Donations: Delegate authority to accept donations of money and other personal property for the purposes of museum management to superintendents and center managers, as appropriate, and in compliance with NPS donations policy (see Director's Order #21, Donations and Fundraising).

4.2.10 Accreditation: Authorize parks to apply for accreditation by the American Association of Museums upon request from a park superintendent and recommendation of the regional curator.

4.3 Park Superintendents and Center Managers

Park superintendents, center managers, and others who manage collections (with the assistance of museum management staff) have the following responsibilities:

4.3.1 Code of Ethics: Follow the Code of Ethics for the museum management program in the *Museum Handbook.*

4.3.2 Standards: Meet museum management standards in the NPS *Museum Handbook* (Parts I-III) for:

- acquiring, preserving, protecting (including security and fire protection), documenting (including accessioning, cataloging, lending, deaccessioning), accessing, and using museum collections; and
- completing actions specific to archival and manuscript collections (appraising, arranging, describing, producing finding aids, and providing reference and duplication services).

4.3.3 Procedures: Follow procedures in the *Museum Handbook.*

4.3.4 Ongoing and Corrective Actions: Provide ongoing funding for recurring museum management functions and take appropriate action to correct identified preservation, protection, documentation, and access and use deficiencies, including programming for funding to correct such deficiencies. Complete Project Management Information System (PMIS) project statements that identify all preservation, protection, documentation,

access and use needs. Monitor projects to ensure conformance with preservation, protection, documentation (including information technology), and access policies and procedures.

4.3.5 Staffing and Training: Evaluate and address museum management staffing and training needs according to established personnel qualifications standards and Service-wide professional competencies.

4.3.6 Scope of Collection: Approve and keep current a Scope of Collection Statement to identify the scope of collecting activities and define the purpose of the collection. Ensure that the statement is consistent with natural resource and archeological permit conditions. Ensure acquisitions are consistent with the Scope of Collection Statement.

4.3.7 Collection Management Plan: Approve, keep current, and implement a Collection Management Plan to:

- evaluate issues of preserving, protecting (including security and fire protection), storing, documenting, accessing and using collections;
- address issues specific to archival and manuscript collections (appraising, arranging, describing, producing finding aids, providing reference and duplication services, and migrating electronic documents so that they remain accessible); and
- propose a strategy to address the issues, including staffing and cost estimates, consistent with park and Service-wide strategic and other planning documents, including the Service-wide storage plan.

4.3.8 Housekeeping Plan: Approve, keep current, and implement a Housekeeping Plan for every space that houses museum collections to ensure that housekeeping routines are sensitive to museum collections preservation needs.

4.3.9 Integrated Pest Management: Approve, keep current, and implement an Integrated Pest Management Plan that addresses the museum collections.

4.3.10 Emergency Operation: Approve, keep current, and implement a Museum Collections Emergency Operations Plan, as part of the park's Emergency Operations Plan and consistent with the National Incident Management System, identifying museum collection vulnerabilities to events (such as fire, earthquakes, and floods) and responses that will protect resources without endangering human health and safety. Ensure staff trains, practices, and prepares for emergency response. Assist other NPS areas and park partners, as authorized, in emergency response for museum collections. Assist other federal agencies, and tribal, state, and local governments in the event of a major disaster or emergency under the National Response Framework, Natural and Cultural Resources and Historic Properties part of Emergency Support Function #11.

4.3.11 Collections Hazards: Complete a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for all museum jobs that have an associated history of injury, illness, or death; or that require the use of

personal protection equipment, such as respirators; or that involve activities that are clearly dangerous, such as handling collections with mold, working with toxic or flammable chemicals, or operating heavy machinery. Notify collections users when collections may have been treated with potentially toxic substances consistent with Department of the Interior guidance at http://www.doi.gov/museum/.

4.3.12 Collection Condition: Monitor and record information about the environment in spaces housing collections and manage the environment to maximize preservation. Complete Collection Condition Surveys, as needed, to assess conditions in spaces housing museum collections, to record the condition of objects or groups of objects, and to determine treatment needs and priorities. Incorporate survey data in ANCS+ and in accession or catalog files.

4.3.13 Accession and Catalog Records: Accession collections upon acquisition to establish basic accountability. Catalog the collections immediately following acquisition, or have funding requests in place to catalog them in the near future. Survey, appraise, rehouse, arrange, and describe archival and manuscript collections and prepare finding aids. Develop park archival duplication and reference procedures. Have funding requests in place to address eliminating any archival processing backlog.

4.3.14 Collections Management Records Backup: Maintain a complete current backup of all electronic data at a location that is not vulnerable to the same catastrophic events as the computer workstation. In addition, submit the required annual backup to the National Catalog in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia (see 5.4).

4.3.15 Unconditional Gifts: Accept only unconditional gifts and bequests, and, where possible, obtain applicable copyrights and releases with acquisitions. Obtain regional director's approval for rare exceptions, on a case-by-case basis.

4.3.16 Project-generated Collections: Require project budgets to include funding for the initial management of collections that are project-generated. Initial collections management includes cataloging; labeling; conservation examination and treatment (including specimen preparation); housing and storage of objects and specimens; and organization and storage of project documentation, including appraisal, arrangement, description, finding aid production, and appropriate archival housing.

- Before starting, permitting, or contracting a project, specify in writing in the task directive, proposal, agreement, permit, or contract, the parties responsible, the designated NPS or non-NPS repository, the collections management tasks, and a time schedule for completion.
- Hold NPS project coordinators, permittees, and contractors responsible and verify compliance in completion reports and with park collection management staff.
- Fund subsequent ongoing maintenance costs of collections management from the operating base of the responsible park, center, or other repository.
- If project-generated collections cannot be accommodated in available or planned

storage space and new storage space is necessary, request modification of the regional storage planning data to accommodate the expanded collection. If interim storage is needed, specify in the project task directive the location of that storage, and state that it must meet NPS standards. Identify the funding source for interim storage.

- Strategically manage permit designations of and subsequent loans to non-NPS repositories to facilitate research and access while consolidating collections, as appropriate, to minimize the park's administrative workload.
- Ensure compliance with Director's Order #19, Records Management, in creation and management of resource management records.

4.3.17 Systematic Collections: Add collections made through systematic field inventory, monitoring, or research to the museum collection in accordance with collection permits and the Scope of Collection Statement. Collected materials not authorized for consumptive analysis remain federal property and will be accessioned, labeled and cataloged into the NPS cataloging system. House those collections associated with a single accession at the same repository to facilitate research and use. Superintendents may authorize housing of collections from the same accession at different repositories if by so doing preservation, research, and use will be improved. As appropriate, lend these collections for exhibit, research, conservation, and other approved uses.

4.3.18 Deaccession Records: Deaccession objects inconsistent with the Scope of Collection Statement. Complete Case Incident Reports, Reports of Survey, and deaccession actions when thefts, losses, and involuntary destruction occur. Complete deaccession actions in compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and other laws.

4.3.19 Collections Management Report: Annually complete the automated Collections Management Report (CMR) in cooperation with the PMMP (see 5.1) The report provides information on accessions, deaccessions, cataloging, backlogs of objects to be cataloged, use of museum collections, and total collection size. The report must include all collections, whether kept in park facilities, other NPS facilities, or in non-NPS repositories. Verify, sign, and file the CMR at the park by **January 15** (see 5.1).

4.3.20 Annual Inventory: Conduct an annual collection inventory on a regular schedule using the Automated Inventory Program (AIP) in ANCS+ and reconcile the results with existing accession and catalog records. Take any necessary corrective action. Certify the annual inventory and submit it to the regional director (see 4.2.6 for exceptions applicable to non-NPS repositories; and 5.3).

4.3.21 Checklist: Keep the NPS Checklist for Preservation and Protection of Museum Collections (Checklist) up-to-date in the Automated Checklist Program (ACP) in ANCS+ (see 5.1). The Checklist records information on preservation and protection conditions in parks and centers, identifies deficiencies, and provides estimated costs to correct deficiencies.

4.3.22 Conservation Treatment and Documentation: Provide conservation treatment required to stabilize or restore museum objects using the least intervention necessary to satisfy treatment goals. Document treatment of collections, record that information in ANCS+, and retain reports and documentation in accession or catalog files.

4.3.23 Cellulose Nitrate and Cellulose Ester Film: Identify cellulose nitrate and cellulose ester film, and take steps to preserve the visual information contained by duplicating the images onto polyester-based film. After inspecting the copies, evaluate and destroy the original film, or, in the case of original film with high artifactual, intrinsic, evidential, or associational value, provide for long-term storage according to the criteria in *Museum Handbook*, Part I, Appendix M, "Management of Cellulose Nitrate and Ester Film."

4.3.24 Access and Use: Promote access to cataloged collections for research, educational, and interpretive purposes through a variety of means and media, such as exhibits, interpretation and education programs, loans, publications, film and television, the World Wide Web, archival finding aid production and distribution, and posting of finding aids and repository-level guides for archival and manuscript collections in the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC).

- Ensure that access and use are consistent with the laws and NPS policies pertaining to Freedom of Information Act disclosures, copyright, privacy, publicity, obscenity and pornography, defamation, and resource protection.
- Document controlled access and use of collections and museum records with a researcher logbook, signed access policy statement, researcher registration, copyright and privacy restriction statement, and duplication forms.

4.3.25 Consultation: Consult with affiliated groups in managing collections, including Native American groups when managing collections subject to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

4.3.26 Preservation vs. Destructive Use: Manage objects to preserve their condition, including using reproductions when originals may be damaged by use. Authorize in writing destructive analysis of collections, except for rare or highly significant objects, specimens, and archival materials. Obtain regional director approval for destructive analysis of rare or highly significant objects, specimens, and archival materials and for any consumptive use of collections.

4.3.27 Exhibits: Exhibit collections according to an approved exhibit plan, accompanied by maintenance instructions. Ensure that all exhibits meet the standards in the NPS Checklist for Preservation and Protection of Museum Collections. Develop and implement a rotation routine for environmentally-sensitive items. Develop online exhibits to expand access to collections while protecting them from the stress of exhibit conditions.

4.3.28 Objects in Historic Structures: Document furnishings that are exhibited in their associated historic structures with an approved Historic Furnishings Report. Consider the preservation requirements of both objects and historic structures when objects are on exhibit or in storage in historic structures.

4.3.29 Exhibit of Human Remains: Never exhibit American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian human remains or photographs, drawings or renderings, or casts of the remains. Exhibit non-Native-American human remains and photographs, drawings or renderings, or casts of the remains only in consultation with traditionally associated groups.

4.3.30 Distribution of Approved Reports and Plans: Ensure that approved research reports, such as Historic Furnishings Reports, are distributed according to the guidance/handbook associated with Director's Order #28, Cultural Resource Management. Maintain multiple copies of approved museum plans, as needed, in the park and submit one copy of each plan (including the Scope of Collection Statement) to the regional director; Park Museum Management Program, WASO; Park Cultural Resources, Attention: CRBIB, WASO; Technical Information Center, Denver Service Center; Harpers Ferry Center Library; and NPS archeological or preservation center, as applicable. Redact any sensitive or confidential data, such as security systems or certain locality information, before distributing reports and plans that may be accessible to the general public.

4.3.31 Accreditation: Consult with the regional curator and seek approval from the regional director before applying to the American Association of Museums (AAM) for accreditation. While accredited, parks may display a modest-sized AAM accreditation logo in a public place near the museum or visitor center entrance and on the park's web site in association with information about the collections. Seeking accreditation is optional but encouraged for parks with substantial museum operations.

5. Submissions and Deadlines

5.1 Collections Management Report: Parks and centers submit, via e-mail, data on research requests and noteworthy information, including noteworthy accessions and deaccessions, for the current fiscal year by **September 15** to PMMP. Using these data and data extracted from the park's catalog records (see 5.4), the PMMP prepares the CMRs and posts them on InsideNPS on or about **October 1**. Parks and centers review the CMRs and submit any corrections, via e-mail, to PMMP. Corrections to be included in data submitted for Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) reports and performance-based funding allocations must be submitted and accepted within one week of posting on InsideNPS. Other corrections should be submitted as soon as possible, but no later than **December 31.** Superintendents verify, print, sign and file the park's CMR by **January 15.** NPS uses CMR information for strategic planning and annual reporting, including reporting on NPS strategic operational plan Goal Ib2D consistent with GPRA.

5.2 Checklist: Parks and centers update their Checklist in the ACP by **September 15** to show changes as of the end of the current fiscal year. Parks and centers submit the Checklist as part of the National Catalog submission (see 5.4) and may update the Checklist at other times, using the ACP, by submitting it separately to the PMMP. The PMMP compiles and distributes regional and Service-wide reports. NPS uses Checklist data for strategic planning and annual reporting. Parks and PMMP use Checklist data to report on NPS strategic operational plan Goal Ia6 consistent with GPRA.

5.3 Annual Inventory: Parks and centers annually submit the inventory generated using the AIP to the regional director, according to a schedule that the region approves. The regional director certifies the completion of the inventories to the Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Attention: Manager, PMMP, no later than **September 30** each fiscal year.

5.4 National Catalog Submissions: Parks and centers annually submit to the National Catalog complete electronic backups of their ANCS+ natural history and cultural resource directories by **September 15**. The National Catalog prints and stores archival paper copies of the catalog records. The National Catalog prints and sends paper copies of catalog records to parks and centers upon request. This submission includes the Checklist (see 5.2) and data that PMMP uses to generate the park and Service-wide Collections Management Reports (see 5.1). Parks have the option to include the archives directory in the National Catalog backup. They may also submit, via the U.S. Postal Service or express carrier, a backup of images on CD.

5.5 Project Proposals and Funding Reports: In response to the Service-wide Comprehensive Budget Call, parks and centers submit museum collections project proposals in PMIS and include required museum collections program-specific information in PMIS or on optional forms. For projects funded in the previous year, by **October 31**, parks and centers provide accomplishment reports in PMIS and include required museum collections program-specific information in PMIS or on optional forms.

--- End of Director's Order ---

---

[i] Congress did not give this act a formal title. It is also known as the Museum Act.