



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

July 28, 2010

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
B-376 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson:

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) strongly supports the Army Corps of Engineers' Veterans Curation Project, and urges the passage of legislation (H.R. 5282) that will allow the Corps to continue the important work of this program.

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 7,000 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.

The proper curation of archaeological materials is a vital component of effective historic preservation in general, and of the science of archaeology in particular. The standards for the curation of federal archaeological collections—those materials excavated from federal lands or under projects carried out with federal funding—are set forth in the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and accompanying regulations (36 CFR Part 79). These standards require federal agencies to place artifacts and the documentation associated with them in facilities that can properly care for these objects, and manage and preserve collections according to professional museum and archival practices. The Army Corps' Center of Expertise for Archeological Curation and Collections Management (MCX-CMAC), opened in 1995, handles the Corps' curation needs and provides expert guidance to other Department of Defense agencies.

Over the years, many federal agencies, including the Corps, have amassed an enormous amount of artifacts and associated records. Due to a shortage of funding, manpower, and regulatory-compliant storage space, however, the backlog of archaeological materials that need to be curated is substantial. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) contained a provision to help address the Corps' curation backlog while simultaneously giving wounded veterans the opportunity to learn valuable skills to aid in their future employment prospects. ARRA authorized \$3.5 million for the Veterans Curation Program, under which our wounded

veterans preserve, protect and catalogue the archaeological materials in the Corps' collection that await curation, while gaining important technical skills. The work is being carried out, under the guidance of the MCX-CMAC, in laboratories in St. Louis, Missouri; Savannah, Georgia; and Washington, D.C.

The Veterans' Curation Program is a valuable initiative. H.R. 5282, introduced by Rep. Barrow, will authorize \$10 million per fiscal year for this important effort. SAA understands the realities of the budgetary situation facing the nation, and that difficult choices on spending must be made. However, we believe a program that helps wounded veterans prepare for the future, while also bringing federal archaeological collections into compliance with the law, merits Congress' support.

SAA respectfully requests the swift passage of H.R. 5282, and appreciates your time and attention to this important issue.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret W. Conkey".

Margaret W. Conkey
President, Society for American Archaeology

CC: The Honorable James L. Oberstar
The Honorable John L. Mica
The Honorable John Boozman