



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Statement of the Society for American Archaeology For Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee House Committee on Appropriations

April 13, 2021

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) appreciates this opportunity to present its recommendations for Fiscal Year 2022 cultural resources program appropriations. I am Joe E. Watkins, president of the Society.

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 nearly 7,000 members, 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. SAA has members throughout the U.S., as well as in many nations around the world.

SAA wishes to thank the subcommittee for its key role in supporting record levels of funding for cultural resources preservation over the past several years. The federal and federally-supported heritage protection programs included in the annual spending bill help carry out much of the nation's preservation activities that preserve and promote our irreplaceable historic, archaeological, and cultural resources for present and future generations. The following are the SAA's requests for key heritage programs in FY2022.

Department of Interior: Increased Archaeologist Staff: \$6.75 million

As noted in the Secretary of Interior's 2004-2007 report to Congress on the federal archaeology program, *"The Federal government has too few archeologists to support the Federal Archeology Program. Additional support for agency archeologists and archeological programs is necessary for Federal agencies to accomplish all of their responsibilities regarding the stewardship of Americans' archeological heritage."* What was true in 2007 is even more true today.

Federal archaeologists perform a large number of important tasks. These include, but are not limited to, surveys of land for historic and cultural resources under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); review of undertakings on federal land under Section 106 of the NHPA; protection of archaeological materials under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act; preparation of nominations of historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places; development of contracts or cooperative agreements between Federal agencies and private firms or universities; technical assistance on archaeological matters; coordination and management of volunteers helping to preserve cultural sites; curation of federal archaeological collections; and preservation of sensitive cultural and spiritual tribal objects under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Yet today's federal archeology workforce cannot meet all of its current responsibilities because that workforce continues to shrink. Due to attrition from retirement and transfers and these positions not being back-filled, archaeological staffing throughout the federal government is in fact approaching a critical low level. The table on page four demonstrates the significant erosion of staff capable of carrying out Section

106 compliance work and decision-making at the National Park Service.

In fact, the NPS has nearly **60 fewer** archaeologists on staff than it did in 2004. The losses are especially severe at the GS-12 level and above, where the archaeologists have the most experience and the highest levels of education, and thus are best able to oversee Section 106 reviews.

The situation is likely to get worse if new hires are not made in the very near future. Projects authorized under the Great American Outdoors Act, which the SAA and numerous other organizations strongly supported, will require a great deal of Section 106 investigation and mitigation, on top of the work that is already confronting department personnel. At present, Interior does not have a sufficient number of archaeologists on staff to carry out its current and future statutorily-required responsibilities. The SAA recognizes that correcting this situation will require a multi-year effort. As a start, we request an additional \$6.75 million in FY2022 to fill open NPS archaeologist positions.

National Park Service: National Recreation and Preservation Cultural Programs: \$33.5 million

NPS National Recreation Programs are vital for the technical assistance and other support they provide for resource protection within parks, to other federal agencies, and to state, tribal, and private sector stakeholders. These programs assist communities in preserving their significant historical and archaeological properties. The archaeological component identifies, documents, and inventories archaeological resources in parks; produces archaeological technical and programmatic publications; implements regulations for protecting archaeological resources; and assists other agencies through program development and training. The SAA requests a total of \$33.2 million for FY2022, an increase of \$2.34 million.

National Park Service—Historic Preservation Fund: \$150 million

The Historic Preservation Fund provides crucial support to state and tribal historic preservation offices and matching grants to numerous recipients to catalog and preserve historic resources. Local communities rely on these grants to attract tourism and promote economic development. Without the HPF, the preservation system established by the National Historic Preservation Act—particularly with regards to the Section 106 system—simply would not function. SAA endorses the recommendations put forward by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, and others—a total of \$150 million for FY2022, which would be the first time in its history that the HPF would be funded at its fully authorized level. The funds would be allocated as follows: \$60 million for State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs); \$24 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs); \$20 million for the Save America’s Treasures grant program; \$10 million for competitive grants for Historically Black Colleges and Universities; \$9 million for the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants; \$1 million for a competitive grant program to survey and document historic resources; \$19 million for African American Civil Rights Initiative Competitive Grants; and \$7 million for the newly established competitive grants programs to preserve the sites and stories associated with securing civil rights for All Americans.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)—Cultural Resources Management: \$21.8 million

The BLM manages the largest and most diverse body of land in the U.S. These lands contain an enormous number of known and as-yet undiscovered cultural resources. To date, only 10 percent of BLM lands have been surveyed for cultural resources. It is important that the BLM be given the resources it needs to fulfill its statutory requirements to research, inventory and protect the cultural resources under its control. In the FY2021 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, the BLM cultural resources program received \$20.3 million. The SAA respectfully requests an increase of \$1.5 million, to an overall amount of \$21.8 million. This additional funding will enable BLM staff archaeologists to continue their work to survey the land, conserve archaeological sites and materials, and integrate cultural resources data through the National Cultural Resources Information Management System. While the

BLM is experiencing similar staffing shortages to those facing the NPS, perhaps of greatest concern is the longstanding disruption and dysfunction that occurred in the cultural resources program because of the reorganization of the BLM central office in Washington, DC., and the subsequent relocation of staff to Grand Junction, Colorado, and other offices in the West that resulted in the retirement or resignation of many staff members.

Bureau of Land Management—National Landscape Conservation System: \$65.1 million

The National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS), first established in 2000, now contains more than 37 million acres of National Monuments, Wilderness Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and other lands. They contain an extensive and diverse array of the nation's archaeological and cultural resources. The funding needed to carry out sound stewardship of the lands in the system, however, is lacking. Since 2006, when Congress provided \$65.1 million for the system, funding has declined repeatedly, to \$45.6 million in FY2021, in spite of the system expanding by more than 11 million acres. There has also been a significant increase in visitor traffic. In order to provide adequate management of these lands and the archaeological resources they contain, the SAA strongly supports an allocation of \$65.1 million for the program, an increase of \$19.5 million over FY2021. This substantial increase would restore the NLCS to its FY2006 funding level, and allow the BLM to bring to bear the resources necessary to carry out its mission.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Grants: \$2 million

As we've stated in previous years, the NAGPRA Grants Program serves a crucial purpose. The funding it provides is often the only resource available to Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, and museums to facilitate repatriation of culturally affiliated human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony under the NAGPRA statute. Unfortunately, funding for the Grants Program has usually fallen short of demand. In FY2019 the total number of grant proposals totaled more than \$3 million, while only \$1.65 million could be awarded. The amount of requests for FY2020--\$1.95 million--was smaller, possibly because of the COVID outbreak, and \$1.9 million in grants was awarded. The SAA believes that another increase in grant funding is needed, assuming an increase in requests in 2021 and 2022 as the pandemic eases. We request that the National NAGPRA Grants Program receive \$2 million for FY2022, an increase of \$100,000.

The SAA greatly appreciates your time and consideration of these important issues. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

NPS Count of GSEGRD	Years																Grand Total
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
GS-05																	
A*	3	9	8	4	8	5	2	2	3				4				48
S**	1	9	4	6	5	6	1	1	4				4				41
GS-07																	
A	9	34	20	22	21	12	9	5	5	10	12	8	9	1	1	4	182
S	5	35	25	18	16	9	8	6	8	10	11	12	10	1	2	1	177
GS-09																	
A	3	17	8	11	12	20	11	14	11	13	15	13	19	15	16	14	212
S	5	15	13	11	14	15	12	13	14	16	18	13	14	13	11	6	203
GS-11																	
A		1	2	6	4	3	4	7	5	5	6	9	10	7	10	5	84
S	1	6	4	9	5	4	2	7	4	3	11	6	8	9	9	7	95
GS-12																	
A		1		3	2	3		1	2		2	2	2	2			20
S		3	2	4	6	2	1	5	5	2	4	4	6	5	4	4	57
GS-13																	
A		1	1					1	1		1	1	1				7
S		4	6	2	2	4	2	3		2	1	1	1	2	1	1	32
GS-14																	
S				1		1								1	1		4
GS-15																	
S						1				2							3
A Count	15	63	39	46	47	43	26	30	27	28	36	33	45	25	27	23	553
S Count	12	72	54	51	48	42	26	35	35	35	45	36	43	31	28	19	612
Grand Total	27	135	93	97	95	85	52	65	62	63	81	69	88	56	55	42	1165

*Acquisitions—staff hires

Decrease of 59 archaeologists

**Separations—staff departures