

A CALL TO ACTION ON CLIMATE IMPACTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE¹

Recognizing that cultural heritage² is a human right and that the changing climate puts some aspects of cultural heritage at additional risk; and

Recognizing that neither costs of addressing climate change impacts on cultural heritage, nor the knowledge we gain from understanding our cultural heritage, have been comprehensively addressed in climate policy responses at any level; and

Recognizing that addressing these gaps is critical to maintaining the vital legacy of cultural heritage and its ongoing contributions to the present and the future; and

Recognizing that an inclusive and informed network of organizations with a concern for cultural heritage, along with other interested parties, would advance the goals above;

We pledge to collaborate to help:

- Empower and support local, descendant, and traditional communities to maintain and preserve what they value, including intangible heritage and subsistence lifeways;
- Ensure cultural heritage voices and expertise are represented in climate policy discussion at all levels, from the local to the international;
- Share the data and information necessary to identify cultural resources at risk, assess the level of threat and prioritize actions;
- Share best practices and ensure that in tandem with the best available science they are incorporated into cultural resource management planning and decision making;
- Increase our own capacity to collaborate and share information wisely, efficiently, and without duplication of effort;
- Direct significant research efforts toward telling compelling stories that engage and inspire the public and their representatives;
- Increase public awareness of climate risks to cultural heritage and the array of potential solutions; and
- Attract the public and private resources necessary for climate disaster preparedness and community resilience.

We call on policy-makers and government decision-makers at all levels to support communities in planning for a resilient future, including making informed choices, and assessing the costs of action and failure to act.

We call on individuals and institutions around the world to collaborate with existing communities to maintain and preserve cultural heritage through support of a number of community empowerment projects. These projects will be models for how communities can successfully maintain their cultural heritage in the face of changing climate risks. We ask the international community to provide resources and implement policies that lessen the harm to cultural heritage. We challenge these supporters to unite and share these lessons to increase the likelihood that communities become more resilient worldwide.

We call on the cultural heritage community to develop an effective public communications campaign to build awareness and to mobilize action addressing the risks to our shared heritage.

We affirm our commitment to these goals.

We invite all individuals, organizations, and agencies to join us in this call to action.

¹ This call to action was drafted by representatives of over twenty local, national, and international organizations who came together at the Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, February 2 – 4, 2015, to consider strategies and develop an action agenda for preserving and continuing cultural heritage in a changing climate.

² Cultural heritage has been defined variously in international conventions and charters, and many countries have precise definitions codified in national laws. These definitions are similar in that they recognize the importance of tangible and intangible resources of value to people at local, national and international scales, but differ in specifics that fit the particular community of interest. While not endorsing any particular definition of cultural heritage, our Call to Action is applicable to all legal jurisdictions and communities of interest worldwide.

Signatories:³

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Jeff Altschul, President, Society for American Archaeology

Lucinda Brockway, Program Director, Cultural Resources, The Trustees of Reservations

Lisa Craig, Chief of Historic Preservation / Main Street Director, City of Annapolis MD

Tom Dawson, Research Fellow / Director, University of St Andrews / The SCAPE Trust

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Patty Ferguson-Bohnee, Clinical Professor and Director, Indian Legal Clinic, Arizona State University College of Law

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Queen Quet, Chiefess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation, Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition

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Glenda Simmons-Jenkins, Representative for Florida, Gullah/Geechee Nation

Bill Turner, Vice-Chair, International National Trusts Organisation

Anthony Veerkamp, Director, San Francisco Field Office, National Trust for Historic Preservation

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³ All have signed in their personal capacities. Affiliations are for identification purposes only. Participants were chosen to be representatives of various constituencies but not to be comprehensive.