

Rick Gonzalez, AIA
Vice Chairman

Reid J. Nelson
Executive Director, Acting



April 5, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

Acting as chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) during that position's current vacancy, I am writing to you regarding Executive Order 14008's directive that the Department of the Interior (DOI) report to the National Climate Task Force on steps that the federal government should take toward conserving at least 30 percent of America's lands and waters by 2030 (30x30 initiative). Established by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, the ACHP's mission is to promote the preservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of our nation's diverse historic resources, and to advise the President and the Congress on national historic preservation policy. The ACHP encourages DOI to address in its report the benefits of giving priority to conserving lands and waters that contain not only important and strategic natural resources but also significant cultural resources.

The NHPA established as policy that the federal government would encourage the balancing of modern societal needs with preservation of its historic places; be a national preservation leader; manage and care for prehistoric and historic resources under its control; and foster both nonfederal governmental and private preservation activities. Building upon this foundation, other legislation and Executive Orders have since added to the specific responsibilities of the federal government to promote preservation of cultural resources that reflect the nation's diversity and history. However, cultural resources do not exist in a vacuum, and many are integral to natural landscapes. Promoting conservation of lands rich in cultural resources as a fundamental part of the 30x30 initiative would support the goal of that initiative while also advancing the objectives of federal historic preservation law and policy.

Prioritizing the conservation of lands and waters containing important cultural resources would also advance the protection of traditional cultural landscapes and sacred sites of importance to Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. Such protection would help to fulfill the federal government's trust responsibility to Indian tribes as well as the requirements of the NHPA, Executive Order 13007, "Indian Sacred Sites," and other federal policy and regulations. The needed collaboration between federal, tribal, state, and local governments envisioned in the 30x30 initiative also suggests the importance of addressing tribal co-management of certain lands as an effective strategy for the protection of both natural and cultural resources. Accordingly, the ACHP fully supports the inclusion of sacred sites and landscapes in the federal government's implementation of the 30x30 initiative as a way to further the protection of such places.

Executive Order 14008 requires that DOI's report to the National Climate Task Force include proposed

guidelines for determining whether lands and waters qualify for conservation. I hope that DOI will include the presence of cultural resources as an important criterion supporting conservation. Doing so will have the dual benefit of advancing both the goals of the 30x30 initiative and the protection of our nation's cultural resources.

The ACHP stands ready to assist DOI in achieving these goals. Should you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me, or your staff may wish to follow up with acting ACHP Executive Director Reid Nelson at rmelson@achp.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Rick Gonzalez, AIA
Vice Chairman