

2023 Section 3 EO 13287 Summary

US Fish and Wildlife Service



NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
REFUGE SYSTEM



Cover: Photo from Baca Ranch National Wildlife Refuge a rural historic landscape submitted for nomination to the National Register in 2023.

Foreword

Since our 2020 update reporting for Preserve America, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has made strides in many areas of its historic preservation program. Our staff has grown since 2020 with most Regions having at least 2 full time cultural resources staff members. Our Law Enforcement program has also added an archaeologist to assist with compliance for the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

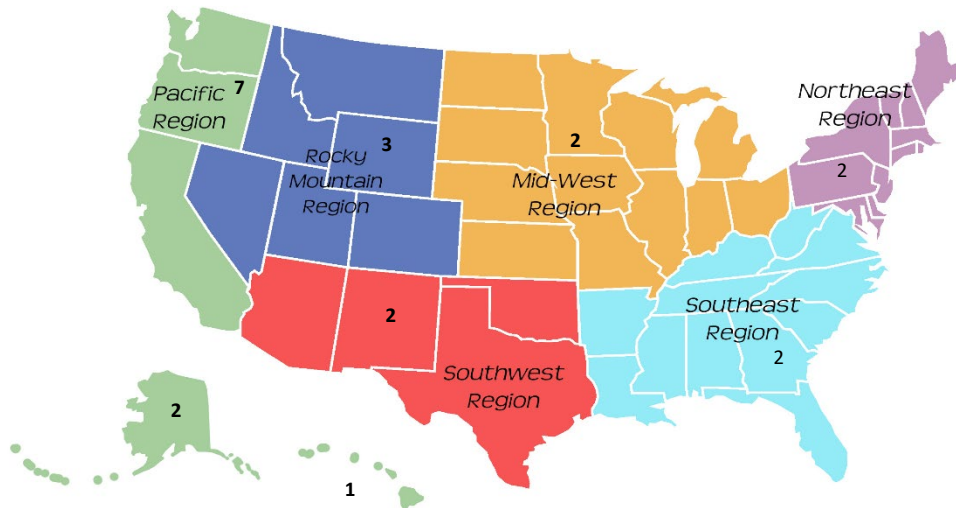


Figure 1. Number of Cultural Resources Staff per FWS Region

1. Identifying Historic Properties—describes our successes around the Service, describing projects from our Regions that have helped develop the historic preservation program among our staff and partners.

Priority Heritage Assets

The FWS Cultural Resources Program has long been wrestling with a better way to address the management and historic preservation needs of its historic building portfolio. DOI recently announced that 7% of all DOI assets are at least 50 years of age or older—a trigger for the agency to increase consideration of the historic significance of its facilities. To that end, between 2016 and 2018, the FWS Federal Preservation Officer (FPO), and a working group of Regional Archaeologists from throughout the Service, developed a protocol that establishes a process for elevating certain historic assets to **Priority Heritage Assets (PHA)**—historically important facilities that also offer tangible return on investment to their field stations.

From 2019-2022, the Service continued these efforts by investing \$385,000 (over the 4 years) in an agency-wide Assessment of National Register Eligibility (the first of its kind for FWS). As of July 2023, **1518** assets have been reviewed under this Eligibility; **140** have been determined eligible; **459** have been determined not eligible (with potential to re-capture seasoned building materials for use where needed in the FWS, or other agencies), and **803** have been determined potentially eligible to the National Register. Once complete, the program will look more closely at the potentially eligible assets to complete their final determinations. Eligible sites can move to the next level and be considered for PHA standing.

140 Eligible
459 Not Eligible
803 Potentially Eligible



2. Protecting Historic Properties—Historic Structures Identification and Reporting—describes our program statistics and policies and procedures that we have in place for ensuring the sustainability of Service historic assets. It also contains information on outreach via avenues such as monitoring of historic structures, use of historic structures, and training for staff and partners aimed at supporting the historic preservation program.

FWS Cultural Resources Program

Cultural resources (also known as historic properties or heritage assets) include: archaeological sites (both prehistoric and historic and their associated documentation), buildings and structures, landscapes, objects, and historic documents. As an agency of the Federal government, the FWS is responsible for, and committed to, protecting and managing these irreplaceable resources in a spirit of stewardship for future generations to understand and enjoy. A Cultural Resources Management (CRM) program was established in the 1970s to manage the rich array of cultural resources under its jurisdiction. Its primary goals are to:

- identify, evaluate, and encourage preservation of cultural resources
- manage museum property collections
- consult with a broad array of interested parties
- promote heritage education
- provide expertise to all FWS programs, including , Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration, Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Ecological Services and Office of Law Enforcement and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Internal Policies, Guidance, and Reporting for Cultural Resources

[614 FW chapters 1-6](#) provides policy for compliance with the NHPA as well as other cultural resource laws. This 2016 update replaces our previous policy that was issued in 1992.

[126 FW chapters 1-2](#) provides policy for the FWS museum property program. It outlines responsibilities under federal statute as well as DOI standards. A 2017 update replaced the previous policy issued in 1997.

National Historic Preservation Act

NHPA, specifically, Section 106, requires federal agencies to consider potential effects of their mission

related activities on cultural resources. These activities can range from the construction of a cell tower to creation of impoundments for duck habitat. In many instances, the Regional Historic Preservation Officer (RHPO) can provide information on the potential of these projects to impact cultural resources very quickly. In other examples, further research and consultation is required.

The Service RHPOs and, where applicable, their staff are the primary points of contact in each Region for cultural resource or historical/heritage asset related activities for both Service staff and external partners. They are the only staff in the Service who meet the pertinent Secretary of the Interior Standards, they serve as subject matter experts for their Regional Directors, who retain final decision authority as per Service cultural resource policy.

In addition to NHPA compliance, other areas within the purview of the RHPO includes:

- developing National Register data
- monitoring and use of Cultural Resources
- leading the Regional Priority Heritage Assets (PHA) effort
- reviewing and issuing Archaeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) permits and serving as the point of contact for any violations under this law.
- reviewing and issuing Paleontological Resources Preservation Act (PRPA) permits and serving as the point of contact for any violations under this law.
- Outreach—internal and external
- Training—internal and external.

2348 Total Historic Buildings
3 Active Maintenance
22 Interpreted buildings

Service RHPOs also assist non-Refuge programs engaged in activities that trigger Section 106. Some of the programs support the RHPO but many do not. Capacity to assist these programs varies from Region to Region.

Finally, a large part of their work focuses on consultation with Native American tribes. In many cases, cultural resource projects form the single largest consultation need for a Region. Consultation for Section 106 can sometimes be very complex, especially for non-Refuge programs that do not adequately understand their role with respect to Government-to-Government consultation.

Section 106 Reviews		Historic Buildings		Paleontology	
• completed this FY	1657	Total	2348	Sites recorded (Total)	387
• uncompleted this FY	303	Active maintenance	3	Permits	
Archaeology		Funding for Historic Buildings	\$19,000	• Application Received	0
Investigations this FY	206	National Register		• Permits issued	0
Acres surveyed		Listed	116	• Consultations	0
• FY	11366	Potentially eligible*	140	• Violations	0
• Total	13237	Eligible	803	• Arrests	0
	41	Ineligible*	459		
Sites recorded		National Landmarks	9		
• FY	184	National Monuments	8		
• Total	17272	Outreach and Visitor Experience			
Permits		Volunteer hours this FY	3103		
• Application Received	34	Interpreted sites/buildings	102		
• Permits issued	34	Youth			
• Consultations	1	Presentations this FY	4		
• Violations	0	Projects this FY	0		
• Arrests	0				

Table 1. Summary of compliance related information

3. Using Historic Properties (Successes, and Opportunities)—describes our successes and challenges in the long-term preservation and use of historic properties as assets and, if possible, as contributions to local economies and communities.

Successes--FWS Historic Preservation Award

The Historic Preservation Award was launched in 2016 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act and to highlight achievements in the care and stewardship of cultural resources through innovative use of funds, development of partnerships, and use of the resource to educate local communities. The program continues and provides a needed opportunity to illustrate the importance of FWS historic buildings and structures, many of which are an inextricable part of the communities in which FWS lands reside.

- **2016**--The first Refuge System Historic Preservation Award went to Lee Metcalf Refuge (Montana) for their nomination of the historic Whaley Homestead. The homestead is a 19th century landmark and has been an integral part of the Refuge’s message since it became part of the Refuge in the 1960s. Visitors and descendants of the Whaley family continue to visit the property and to advance the conservation mission of the Refuge system.



Figure 2 St. Marks Lighthouse/USFWS photo

- **2017**--Restoration work of the lighthouse structures at Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge (Maine)
- **2018**--A partnership between FWS and the St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., restored the St. Marks Lighthouse at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (Florida), a National Register-listed property transferred to the Service from the U.S. Coast Guard in 2013. The lighthouse was formally re-opened to the public in May 2018
- **2019**--Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge (Washington) was recognized for efforts to restore historic buildings like the Harnett-Sampson Barn and to interpret the history of the Refuge for surrounding communities.
- **2020**—Desert National Wildlife Refuge (Nevada) was recognized for efforts to work with the community, especially the Tribal community in the area. Effective consultation and the incorporation of Tribal input is an important and growing responsibility for FWS.
- **2021**—Seney National Wildlife Refuge (Michigan) was recognized for their focus on the many Civilian Conservation Corps structures in continual use on the Refuge.
- **2022**—Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Virginia) was recognized for efforts not only to preserve an important archaeological site on the Refuge, but also for its Co-Stewardship efforts with the Rappahannock Tribe.



Figure 3 Show Pool Shelter at Seney/USFWS



Figure 4. Rappahannock Tribal members describe the cultural landscape on the Refuge/USFWS photo

Opportunities—Growing FWS Priority Heritage assets

2023 will increase opportunities for additional focus on our historic asset portfolio through:

1. Growing the link between FWS Infrastructure Management Division and Cultural Resources programs;
2. Repositioning of funds specifically for completion of potentially eligibility assets identified as part of our National effort;
3. Increased Training for Facilities and Maintenance staff specifically aimed at historic building maintenance, repair, and restoration projects.