

The Cultural Heritage Program: A Course for Managers

Module 8: Conclusion: Cultivating Excellence and Opportunities in the Cultural Heritage Program

We'll conclude this course by considering how to cultivate excellence and realize the opportunities presented by the cultural heritage program.

Training and Professional Development

Cultural heritage staff provide the expertise to ensure the quality of work and compliance with the applicable laws and regulations. To maintain their skills, and to work effectively with their professional colleagues outside of the BLM, specialists need to keep up with current knowledge, methods, standards, and issues. They can do so by attending training and participating in professional organizations and conferences.

The national PA emphasizes the importance of professional development through training, details, part-time graduate education, and other means. The Deputy Preservation Officer in the state office can provide managers with advice on training opportunities and how to locate assistance for scarce skills that aren't available at the local office. The Preservation Board supports the National Training Center in offering training through instructor-led and distance learning courses. The NTC has conducted the 8100-01 Course, called "Fundamentals for Managing the Cultural Heritage Program", several times and has developed a companion online course. The instructor-led, week-long course consistently receives high evaluations from participants and is open to managers, as well as specialists.

Training is essential to keep up with changes in information technology and evolving priorities in land management. In the 21st century, new BLM policy and direction focuses on landscape-scale analyses to enhance land use planning and review of such projects as renewable energy facilities. The goal is to develop regional mitigation strategies with monitoring plans to assess resource condition, changes, and effectiveness of stewardship measures. This direction will increasingly require cultural heritage specialists to use the best available science to assess resource conditions and trends, prioritize resource values, and identify areas for preservation as well as areas where resource values are low. Specialists will need to be increasingly fluent in GIS data management and analyses, as well as methods for modeling, valuing resources, and other challenges. Management will need to strongly support training and development for those who need to acquire or improve 21st century skills.

Memberships in professional organizations provide access to training opportunities and useful publications. Specialists can interact with their colleagues to share current knowledge, learn about advances in methods and techniques, and promote opportunities for research on the public lands. Training needs often can be met by attendance at regional conferences and workshops sponsored by professional organizations, many of which have minimal fees or other costs.

Opportunities in the Cultural Heritage Program

The cultural heritage program offers opportunities to protect fragile, irreplaceable resources that are at risk of damage or destruction from natural processes and human disturbance. These non-renewable resources are valued by scientists, Native American people and other descendent communities, and the public. Their values are recognized in federal laws and executive orders

that make the special management of these resources mandatory. Proper and timely management of the nation's cultural heritage by BLM also facilitates other uses of the public lands, including extraction, renewable energy, and other development activities that benefit local economies.

Both archaeology and paleontology provoke high levels of public interest. Among youth as well as adults, the widespread fascination with these topics can generate public support for the BLM and the cultural heritage program. Many citizens are interested in learning about and participating in archaeology and historic preservation, regardless of their particular social backgrounds or political views. They perceive compelling connections to their own lives and family histories.

The high level of interest in the cultural heritage program enhances the effectiveness of community relations. Communities benefit from heritage tourism projects that support local economies. Projects of public benefit, such as new hiking trails, are enhanced by the interpretation of nearby cultural resources. Historic properties can be linked to community histories through special events and celebrations, such as the annual Roundup celebration at the historic Empire Ranch in Arizona. National Historic Trails feature opportunities to combine recreation with education in the service of preservation.

Through its Heritage Education Program, the BLM has a strong record of engaging youth in interesting activities that highlight the values of cultural and paleontological resources and the need to protect them. These resources offer opportunities to support the youth programs sponsored by the BLM and the Department of the Interior, such as "Take it Outside" and "Hands on the Land." BLM youth programs stress the importance of stewardship, while providing opportunities for young people to participate in hands-on educational activities and volunteer projects. These experiences provide them with a head start to pursue careers in cultural and natural resource management.

Other BLM programs benefit from the interdisciplinary character of archaeology. Cultural heritage program specialists are interested in more than arrow points or ancient ruins. They've been educated to define how humans have used and affected their natural and social environments over long periods of time. They study how changing environmental conditions have affected the history of human adaptations and land uses. This has relevance to issues that we face today, including climate change. This "human ecology" aspect of the profession encourages information sharing and cooperation with other social scientists, geologists, botanists, wildlife biologists, and a wide range of disciplines. Interdisciplinary cooperation is the very basis of managing multiple land uses. Although their interests at times might seem obscure and arcane, cultural resource specialists play an important role on interdisciplinary teams engaged in resource management and land use planning.

In conclusion, thank you for participating in this training course. We wish you success in managing your cultural heritage program.