

MONTANA'S SHARED HERITAGE

Fifth Biennial Report on the Status, Condition, and Stewardship of Montana's State-owned Heritage Properties

2020 State Agency Heritage Stewardship Report from the The Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO); and the Montana State Historic Preservation Review Board (Board) Submitted to the Governor of Montana and the Montana State Legislature (Education Interim Committee) SEPTEMBER 2020

FINDINGS

The agency reports yield several patterns of agency practice, as follows:

1. Heritage preservation is part of each agency's legal mission and mandate—though not always acknowledged.
2. Early evaluation of undocumented properties with heritage potential and early, thorough consultation between an agency, the SHPO, and where possible, local preservation officers, improves heritage stewardship and agency planning.
3. A single agency employee with designated heritage oversight and responsibility for consulting with SHPO improves an agency's planning and heritage stewardship performance. If that individual has preservation credentials and training, heritage outcomes improve more. Reliance on out-of-agency consultants weakens an agency's knowledge of its own heritage properties.
4. Ongoing use of historic buildings increases the likelihood of sustained heritage stewardship. Unused state-owned buildings and unmonitored archaeological sites experience significant deterioration and looting.
5. Currently, agencies focus more on designated heritage properties than on inventory and evaluation of potential heritage properties.
6. More education, training, funding, and interaction with private and public agencies helps state agencies find more creative and affordable solutions to improve heritage stewardship.

BEST PRACTICES

While historic preservation efforts vary among state agencies, examples of successful preservation efforts continue to emerge and serve as guidance for all agencies. The agency reports revealed the following best practices:

1. *Reporting*—Montana State University provided the most coherent inventory of the status, condition, and future prospects for buildings in their care.
2. *Expertise*-- Montana State Parks, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation illustrate the benefit of historic preservation trained employees within an agency—with improved consultation as well as care of heritage properties.
3. *Training*-- Montana State Parks' annual Bannack Preservation Institute teaches hands-on preservation skill, accomplishes needed preservation work, and improves staff appreciation of heritage resources.
4. *Re-Use*—Heritage property rehabilitation and re-use saves money and preserves heritage

PURPOSE

The 2011 Act by the 62nd Montana Legislature that amended the State Antiquities Act and required this reporting explained its overarching purpose as follows:

WHEREAS, hundreds of heritage properties have been entrusted to the state of Montana, the state's agencies are responsible for maintaining those properties on behalf of the state's citizens; and

WHEREAS, these properties are in danger of disappearing or falling into a state of disrepair from which they may never recover; and

WHEREAS, preserving and maintaining heritage properties is important not only for fostering a sense of identity and community, but also for the economic benefits to be realized through reusing buildings, attracting tourism, and revitalizing downtown areas; and

WHEREAS, regular assessment by state agencies on the condition of the heritage properties under the agencies' care will help ensure the state's ongoing stewardship of these valuable resources.

properties. The Law Enforcement Academy (Justice) demonstrates that in its ongoing use of the historic Mountain View School for Girls in Helena.

5. *Early and meaningful consultation*—The Parks Division of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation all consult with SHPO in a timely and thorough way.

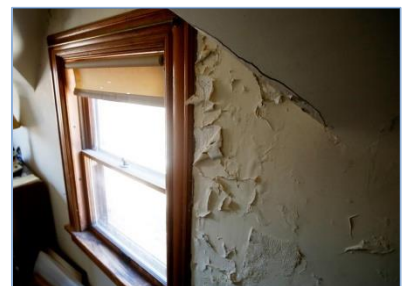
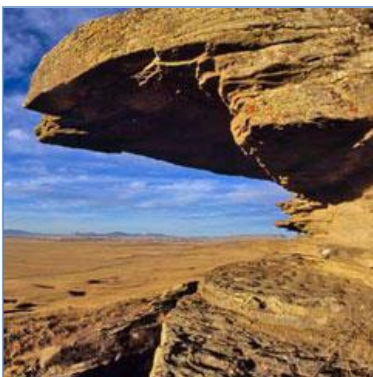
RECOMMENDATIONS

SHPO and the Board have seen improvements in the reporting process and in agency stewardship since reporting began in 2012. To build on agencies' positive stewardship efforts, SHPO and the Board offer the following recommendations:

1. SHPO and the Board should meet with agencies to discuss each agency's report, upcoming projects, and expectations for consultation under the Antiquities Act.
2. SHPO should create online training materials that explain the Antiquities Act and the resulting identification, evaluation, treatment and consultation process.
3. SHPO should establish programmatic agreements with certain agencies that summarize consultation under the Act, establish efficiencies in consultation, and outline expectations that SHPO and the agency can have for each other.
4. Agencies should identify a single heritage stewardship contact/liaison and where possible, employ staff with cultural resource expertise and training.
5. Where available, agencies should consult with local historic preservation officers and local historical societies for guidance and possible funding sources.
6. Heritage stewardship occurs best when agencies proactively identify, evaluate, and care for historic resources, especially when strategic plans exist.
7. Funding for a comprehensive survey of unevaluated state-owned historic and pre-historic properties (> 50 yrs. old) would help state agencies meet more of their Act requirements and help assess deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs.

OUTCOMES

1. During July and August, SHPO staff and the Board met with 11 of the 12 agencies that own heritage properties. The 12th agency is in the midst of staff transition and will meet in late October. SHPO and the Board will have an additional meeting with the State A&E Division to discuss that division's role in assisting agencies through consultation under the Act.
2. SHPO is developing programmatic agreements with five agencies that own and directly manage a large number of buildings. These include: MSU, UM, Montana Heritage Commission, Corrections, and the Department of Administration.
3. SHPO is creating an online tutorial on the Antiquities Act and how stewardship and consultation under the Act occurs best. This will be online for use on demand.



We invite you to browse a story map chronicling agencies' heritage stewardship reporting at:

[Montana's Shared Heritage](#)