

Congressional Support for Historic Preservation in 2009

National-level partnering preservation organizations respectfully request improvements to federal-level preservation funding and incentives for historic preservation activities in 2009, including: incentives for historic home rehabilitation, improved incentives for commercial historic rehabilitation activity, funding for historic preservation projects, and adequate funding for mandated historic preservation programs.

Make History Accessible to All

Convert paper records on historic resources into electronic form

Request

\$5 million in competitive grants to State Historic Preservation Officers to convert paper files, maps, and photographs to electronic databases and geographic information system files.

Background

For over forty years State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) have, as required by the National Historic Preservation Act, collected information on historic places. Federal agencies, project consultants and SHPOs need this information to review potential impacts of federal projects on National Register properties. This information exists on paper (forms, maps, photographs). In today's electronic age, paper records have many drawbacks – they are time consuming to search, can only be reviewed in one location, and deteriorate with use.

Many states do not have the financial resources to convert their paper records to digital formats. A competitive \$5 million grant program through the Historic Preservation Fund will provide the essential funding needed to advance this process.

Digital records benefit a multitude of constituencies, from individuals and communities devastated by natural disasters, to state and federal agencies, development project applicants and SHPOs.

State budgets are experiencing unprecedented cuts and departments are continually searching for cost saving measures. The State of Wyoming, one of the few states with digitized records, has documented over \$100,000 in annual savings based on reduced staff time finding historical records and costs associated with providing the information to project applicants.

Federal agencies and project proponents benefit because of desktop access to information, rather than traveling to the SHPOs to view the paper records. The Bureau of Land Management appreciates the value of electronic records. For a decade the agency has expedited its permit reviews by providing funding to digitize historic property records at select SHPOs.

Recent natural disasters have exposed the adverse consequences of the void in historic resources information. In the Gulf, in 2005 aid to victims and FEMA responses were delayed because digitized historic site locations were not available. The NPS detailed staff to do after the fact digitization of the location of historic places. The result of the work—on line access to maps of historic sites—led to a dramatic reduction in project reviews, from weeks to hours.



Ocean Springs, MS, 2008. Digital documentation is key to fast disaster recovery.

Preservation is Sustainability.

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions | 706.542-0169 | www.uga.edu/napc/ | National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers | 202.454-5664 | www.nathpo.org | National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices | 202.624.5465 | www.ncshpo.org | National Trust for Historic Preservation | 202.588.6000 | www.preservationnation.org | Preservation Action | 202.637.7873 | www.preservationaction.org