



News Release

State of New Mexico

Historic Preservation Division, Department of Cultural Affairs

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Mexico Considers Designating Moon Landing Site a Cultural Property

Santa Fe — New Mexico is poised to become the second state to officially designate the artifacts left behind at Tranquility Base on the moon in its official registry of historic properties, the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division announced today.

The Cultural Properties Review Committee will consider a nomination at its April 9 meeting prepared by CPRC Vice-Chairwoman Beth O’Leary and students from her graduate-level Cultural Resource Management course at New Mexico State University and the Apollo 11 Preservation Task Force. On January 29, California listed the 106 objects left behind — they include a spacecraft lander, a U.S. Flag, THE LUNAR LASER RANGING RETROREFLECTOR, and other items that had to be jettisoned to lighten Apollo’s load for the return trip to Earth, along with SPACE BOOTS — on its Register of Historical Properties, working with O’Leary and the task force, which SUBMITTED the California nomination.

“Every state has a connection to the exploration of space,” O’Leary said “We feel that New Mexico has very strong and current relationship to space exploration especially Robert Goddard’s early launches in Roswell, the development of the V-2 rocket at White Sands Missile Range and the Spaceport in southern New Mexico.”

The New Mexico nomination states that the site is significant for its relation to the Cold War era, transportation and exploration. The landing on July 20, 1969, happened during a turbulent period in U.S. history marked by massive dissent against the Vietnam War, cultural and social upheaval and political assassinations. The moon landing united most Americans, and much of the world, over the marvel of the first two humans to set foot on the lunar surface. The footprints of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin still are visible on the lunar surface.

The California Register listing may have been the first time cultural resources not located on Earth were formally recognized in a State or National Register. But in 2006, New Mexico put the lunar landing site on HPD's New Mexico Cultural Resources Management System — a web-based inventory of state cultural sites — as Laboratory of Anthropology Site 2,000,0000 and commemorated the event with a plaque at the New Mexico Museum of Space History.

Earlier this year, O'Leary and task force member Lisa Westwood, of Chico State University presented their ideas to the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, an association of the nation's state historic preservation offices. The Apollo 11 Task Force set a goal of listing the moon artifacts on UNESCO's World Heritage List, which would officially acknowledge the universal importance of the Apollo 11 mission. They also plan to designate it a National Historic Landmark and have consulted with the U.S. National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites officials Katherine Slick, former New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer, and Neal Silberman.

The same task force with the addition of the NMSU students worked on the New Mexico nomination and includes the Lisa Westwood, ECORP Consulting Inc, Rocklin CA; Ralph Gibson, Placer County Museums, Auburn, CA; and John Versluis, Texas Heritage Museum, Hillsboro, TX. The NMSU Anthropology Graduate Students are Sahrah Bliss, Robert DeBry, Matthew Punke, Deneve Sam, Reagyn Slocum, AND Jaime Vela.

The students and O'Leary will make a formal presentation before the CPRC at the April meeting. O'Leary wanted to involve her students for the practical experience of working on a Register nomination. Because international law prohibits any nation from laying a claim to the moon, only the objects associated with the moon landing would be protected by the Register listing.

For more information on the Lunar Legacy Project, visit:
<http://spacegrant.nmsu.edu/lunarlegacies>.

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