Partners for Archaeological Site Stewardship

Heritage resources on public lands belong to all of us. A new national nonprofit organizes volunteers to help protect our irreplaceable archaeological and historical sites.

The Partners for Archaeological Site Stewardship (PASS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that creates and sustains teams of volunteers to protect cultural resources on public and private lands throughout the US. PASS provides greater understanding and respect for historical and archaeological resources by providing the general public with responsible, hands-on participation in their protection. The goal is to develop greater cooperation between citizens and land managers, to the benefit of both, and to help preserve irreplaceable cultural resources. PASS is establishing a national network to raise awareness and funding to help protect and preserve our shared cultural heritage at the local, state, and federal level through advocacy, educational programs, and site stewardship.

Cultural resources, which include prehistoric and historic artifacts, features, locations, and landscapes, are important for many reasons. They are the material remains of past communities and cultures. Archaeological sites often document past lifeways that were not documented in the written record. The preservation of cultural resources is essential for understanding humanity in all its diversity. Cultural resources—artifacts, sites, and organized spaces—are tangible evidence and help make narratives real to visitors. Sites can be used to help us understand reasons for cultural change, integration, and conflict.

Site stewardship programs serve the public by helping to preserve prehistoric and historic sites. The programs also augment the efforts of land management agencies to meet their legal mandates under CEQA and Section 110 of NHPA.

PASS supports workshops to train volunteer site stewards for archaeological and historical sites. The volunteers monitor sites for damage caused by natural forces or human activity. The site stewards work hand-in-hand with archaeologists and land managers at the agency that has jurisdiction over the site. The volunteers record their observations in reports to the agency, identifying potential problems before more damage is done and when mitigation is less expensive. PASS supports activities that teach

Site stewards report their observations for the agency archaeologist. Photo by Chris Padon. Permission granted.
people to respect historical and archaeological resources, behave responsibly around them, and assist in their preservation. PASS supports efforts to share information, tools, and other resources that can improve site stewardship programs.

Most states have site stewardship programs, where public volunteers help protect cultural resources by observing and recording. They vary widely in terms of budgets, volunteer training, administration, and number of participants. PASS is the only organization that can reach across state lines to promote public participation in site steward programs. PASS can take advantage of regional and national grants to support site stewardship programs.

Specific activities include:

- Workshops to train volunteer site stewards.
- Workshops to train land managers and workshop leaders.
- Support for local efforts in site stewardship and site protection, such as workshop materials, videos, apps, workshop lesson plans, notebook reference materials, and other resources.
- A center for collecting and sharing resources and best practices for training, volunteer retention and recruitment, and public outreach in site stewardship programs.

- Publications, posters, pamphlets, social media, news media, and a web site to promote public preservation of cultural resources.
- Outreach to minorities, under-served groups, and Native American organizations.
- Leadership in virtual site stewardship, reviewing web sites and social media to guard against public exposure of site locations.

The inaugural Board of Directors consists of:
Colleen Delaney, Associate Professor of Anthropology, California State University, Channel Islands, Camarillo, California.
Beth Padon, Principal, Discovery Works, Inc., Long Beach, California.
Chris Padon, Principal, Discovery Works, Inc., Long Beach, California.
Cindy Stankowski, Executive Director, San Diego Archaeological Center, Escondido, California.
Jeni Umble, Pastor, Living Light of Peace, Mennonite Church USA and Church of the Brethren, Arvada, Colorado.

Site stewards visit their assigned sites on a regular basis to observe and report. Photo by Chris Padon. Permission granted.

Law enforcement officers often speak to the volunteers at training workshops. Photo by Chris Padon. Permission granted.