

HERITAGE

Monthly news update from the Office of History and Archaeology

State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources

January 2026

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Office of History and Archaeology News

Staff Updates: The State of Alaska currently has a hiring freeze in place and as of December 31, 2025, OHA has five vacancies. Until hiring waivers are approved and positions are backfilled, current OHA staff are in acting status: Sarah Meitl, Acting Chief, and Amy Hellmich, Acting Review and Compliance Coordinator.

Save the Date! OHA will be holding our annual workshop on **Friday, April 24, 2026.**

Contact Information: OHA encourages sending inquiries and requests to the email addresses listed below.

To send by email:

Section 106: oha.revcomp@alaska.gov

State Permits: oha.permits@alaska.gov

AHRS: oha.ibs@alaska.gov

Grants: ohagrants@alaska.gov

Surveys and Research: adam.brinkman@alaska.gov

General Inquiries: dnr.oha@alaska.gov

To send by USPS or other courier:

Alaska State Historic Preservation Office
c/o Office of History and Archaeology
550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1310
Anchorage, AK 99501

America250 Program: The America250-Alaska planning team has accomplished the following tasks to encourage broad, statewide participation:

- Launched Website: <https://america250.alaska.gov/>, from which all Alaskans can submit organization activities to the [online calendar](#);
- Spotlight state and national activities via Facebook: [America250Alaska](#); Instagram: [alaskaamerica250](#); and YouTube: (coming soon);

- Set up Email: america250@alaska.gov

America250 Traveling Exhibit: The Alaska Office of History and Archaeology has created a traveling exhibit, *Alaska's Fields of Dreams: America's Pastime in the 49th State*, for the America250 Alaska project. The exhibit consists of nine free-standing, 80" x 33.5" banners. The banners tell the history of Alaska Baseball, from the Indigenous version of the game to the Alaska Baseball League. Reserving the exhibit is free, except for shipping. To learn more, contact OHA's exhibit coordinator, Rachel Carraway, at rachel.carraway@alaska.gov.

Events

- January 27 – Rotary, Anchorage Petroleum Club, 11:30 am
- February 11 – Susitna Rotary, Everett's Restaurant, 6 pm
- February 26 – Anchorage Launch, Mountain View Library, 6:30 pm
- March 19 – Palmer Library, Time TBD
- March 26 – Cook Inlet Historical Society, Anchorage Museum, 7 pm

New Publications! Alaska's Field of Dreamers: America's Pastime in the Far North. To inquire about copies or learn more about America250-Alaska, please contact Katie Ringsmuth at katie.ringsmuth@alaska.gov.

Federal Legislation

HPF Funding

As Congress approaches its continuing resolution deadline of January 30th to prevent another partial government shutdown, the U.S. House bundled together legislative proposals for Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and the Interior and Environment Appropriations Act for FY26 in a multi-bill minibus. This minibus contains a proposal from the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) to allocate the following amounts (summarized via NCSHPO, 01/20/2026):

SHPO

\$62.15 million (equal to FY25 enacted)

THPO enacted)	\$23.75 million (increase of \$750,000 above FY25 enacted)
SAT	\$25.50 million (equal to FY25 enacted)
AA Civil Rights	\$24 million (equal to FY25 enacted)
Paul Bruhn enacted)	\$7.90 million (decrease of \$2,094,000 below FY25 enacted)
HBCU	\$11 million (equal to FY25 enacted)
Semiquincentennial enacted)	\$4.90 million (decrease of \$2,093,000 below FY25 enacted)
History of Equal Rights	\$5 million (equal to FY25 enacted)
Underrepresented Communities	\$1.25 million (equal to FY25 enacted)
Congressionally Directed Spending FY25 enacted)	\$15.59 million (increase of \$15.59 million above FY25 enacted)
Total proposed HPF: \$181,059,000	

The bill also proposes:

- A short-term, 1-year extension for the authorization of the annual deposit of \$150 million used to help fund the HPF.
- Largely maintaining funding for park operations at \$2.8 billion, maintaining NPS staffing levels, and requiring the hire, rehire, and retention of sufficient park staff to perform the agency's mission to protect cultural and natural resources and ensure visitor enjoyment and safety. It also requests that the Administration give Congress notice of any Reduction in Force (RIF) efforts.
- Funding ACHP at \$8.285 million.
- Providing \$15 million to the Semiquincentennial commission for use in commemorating via America250

The Minibus, FY26 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, passed on 01/15/2026, with the Senate voting 82-15 and the House voting 397-28. This marks a \$12.159 million funding increase over FY25. Final bill language is still forthcoming and for those looking at the current bill text, the HPF topline number is incorrect (not reflecting the correct number of \$181.059 million that was listed and passed in the bill). The

final language also includes a one-year extension of the authorization for the annual \$150 million deposit used to help fund the HPF. The Interior appropriations bill is headed to the President's desk to be signed into law. More information on the bill and its language can be found here: [H.R.6938 - 119th Congress \(2025-2026\): Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026 | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)

With this, six of the FY 2026 appropriations bills are complete, and Congress is preparing to attempt passage of the remaining five ahead of the January 30th Deadline. However, procedural time is short, and a continuing resolution does remain on the table as a means to avoid another partial government shutdown.

White House Ballroom Lawsuit Updates

On Wednesday, December 12, the National Trust for Historic Preservation filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia seeking a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to immediately halt construction on the proposed White House ballroom: [National Trust for Historic Preservation Files Suit to Immediately Stop White House Ballroom Construction | National Trust for Historic Preservation.](#)

On January 8, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) heard an “informational” presentation from White House staff on the construction of the planned 90,000-square-foot ballroom, with an estimated project cost of \$400 million (double the original projection). This presentation offered the most comprehensive explanation to date regarding the complete demolition of the east wing of the White House, stating that there was “an unstable colonnade, water leakage and mold contamination.”

This meeting also had the project architect, Shalom Baranes, indicate that the White House is considering adding a one-story, 45,000-square-foot addition to the West Wing colonnade to restore “symmetry” with the imposing ballroom.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation made a statement in response to the meeting, which can be found here: [Statement on Today's National Capital Planning Commission Meeting | National Trust for Historic Preservation](#)

Judge Leon of the U.S. District Court of Columbia will preside over a hearing on January 22nd with regard to the Trust's motion for a preliminary injunction. The project itself is now

set to go before the Commission of Fine Arts on February 19 and to receive a final vote before the NCPC on March 5.

It should be noted that the Commission of Fine Arts has four new members, who were appointed by President Trump on 01/16/2026, filling vacancies from last fall with new members: James McCreary, Mary Anne Carter, Roger Kimball, and Matthew Taylor. More information here: [Trump quietly appoints 4 members to commission that will review his White House ballroom plan - ABC News](#).

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Notice

On January 6, 2026, HUD sent a letter notifying the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) of its intent to adopt the ACHP's December 2024 *Program Comment on Certain Housing, Building, and Transportation Undertakings* (Program Comment) to fulfill the Section 106 requirement for the covered undertakings. This notification applies to all HUD programs and regions nationwide.

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

President Trump Appoints New ACHP Members

Seven new Council members were appointed by President Trump and officially sworn into office on January 8 and 9. They include: Michael Boos, Jaime Gardner, Margaret Everson, Rick Gonzalez, Kyler Scherer, Mayor Robert Simison, and John Tahsuda III. The ACHP also anticipates swearing in two additional Council members before the end of January. More information on the new Council members can be found here: [President Trump Appoints New ACHP Members | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#)

Public Review Period Open on Proposed Program Comment for Army Warfighting Readiness and Associated Infrastructure

On December 18, 2025, the ACHP received a request from the Department of Army for a Program Comment to address the Army's warfighting readiness activities and its associated infrastructure. The ACHP must make a decision on this Program Comment by February 17, 2026. More information on the proposed Program Comment and the comment process for the ACHP in their decision-making can be found here: [Public Review Period Now Open on Proposed Program Comment for Army Warfighting Readiness and Associated Infrastructure | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#)

eLearning

ACHP announces that three of their eLearning courses are now back online! These include “What is Section 106?”; “What Now? Protecting Historic Properties During Disaster Response”; and “Section 304 and Confidentiality”. Visit the eLearning course webpage ([e-Learning Courses | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#)) to check out these updated courses.

Preserve the Past, Build for the Future Webinar Series

The ACHP is offering four free webinars this year as part of their “Preserve the Past, Build for the Future 2026” Webinar Series. More information and registration links can be found here: [Preserve the Past, Build For the Future Webinar Series | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#)

Asian & Pacific Island Americans in Historic Preservation (APIAHiP)

APIAHiP Awarded \$2.5 Million Grant to Launch National Placekeepers Fund

On January 13, 2026, the APIAHiP announced a \$2.5 million grant from the Mellon Foundation’s Humanities in Place program. This award will launch the Placekeepers Fund, a groundbreaking regranting initiative that will distribute \$500,000 annually for three years (totaling \$1.5 million) to community-led preservation projects across the United States and Pacific Island territories. The fund will also support APIAHiP’s continued growth, including staff expansion and public programming. The Placekeepers Fund will award grants in two categories: Designation and Planning Grants (up to \$25,000) and Preservation and Action Grants (up to \$100,000).

More information on this grant and its eventual launch can be found here: [📌 APIAHiP Awarded \\$2.5 Million Grant to Launch National Placekeepers Fund!](#)

Public Project Alerts

Section 106 large project consultation in progress:

- Graphite One Mine near Nome, USACE
- Safer Seward Highway, MP 98.5-118, DOT&PF
- Seward to Glenn Connection PEL, DOT&PF

- Chilkoot National Historic Trail Comprehensive Trail Plan, NPS
- Iditarod National Historic Trail Comprehensive Trail Plan Revision, BLM
- Cook Inlet LNG, FERC
- AK LNG, FERC
- Ambler Mining District Access Road, AIDEA
- West Susitna Access Road, USACE

Review and compliance agreement development for large projects in progress:

- West Susitna Access Road, DOT&PF
 - Programmatic Agreement
- USFS Heritage Program
 - Programmatic Agreement Amendment
- USFS Sustainable Cabins
 - Programmatic Agreement
- NPS Dyea and the Chilkoot Trail
 - Programmatic Agreement

For information on how to participate in the process, or on how to review and comment on the above projects, contact Amy Hellmich, amy.hellmich@alaska.gov.

Heritage subscription information

Heritage is produced by the Office of History and Archaeology, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Please send your comments, suggestions, and information by e-mail to dnr.oha.@alaska.gov, mail to 550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1310, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3565, or telephone 907.269.8700.

All issues are posted to our web site at dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/ and distributed to subscribers by e-mail. A paper copy can be sent to individuals and organizations that specifically request it.

To be added to the subscription list, please send an e-mail to dnr.oha@alaska.gov with “Heritage, subscribe” in the subject line.

If you do not wish to continue to subscribe to *Heritage*, please send an e-mail to dnr.oha@alaska.gov with “Heritage, unsubscribe” in the subject line.

Much like the OHA office, the Heritage Newsletter is entering a stage of transition. We are working on updating our mailing list and delivery system. We will have more information on the future of the newsletter and its delivery soon.

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Preservation calendar

2026

February 25 – ACHP Webinar: Preserving America’s Historic Music Venues at 2pm
EST: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

March 2-5 – 2026 National Historic Preservation Advocacy Week: [National Historic Preservation Advocacy Week 2026](#)

March 24 – ACHP Webinar: Preserving America’s Historic Main Streets at 2pm
EST: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

March 25-28 – Joint Conference: Alaska Anthropological Association and Northwest Anthropological Conference, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

April 24 – OHA’s Annual Workshop, Anchorage, Alaska.

April 28 – ACHP Webinar: Preserving America’s Revolutionary-Era Sites at 2pm EST: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

May 27 – ACHP Webinar: Preserving America for the Next Generation: Involving Younger People in Preservation at 2pm EST: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

June 27 – July 4 – Alaska’s Week of Dreams. For a complete schedule of events and other America250-Alaska programs, visit: [Home - America250-Alaska](#).

September TBD – Alaska Historical Society Conference

October 7-10 – Museums Alaska Annual Conference

2027

March 3- 7 – Sharing Our Knowledge conference, Ketchikan. For more information and volunteer opportunities, contact Joaqlin Estus at jmestus50@gmail.com