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1974 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION ACT  
TO BENEFIT AMERICA'S PAST, SHARROCK SAYS

MISSOULA, Mont.--

The 1974 Archaeological Conservation Act, which was signed into law May 24 by President Nixon, "is perhaps the most important federal legislation enacted by Congress to preserve America's past since the Historic Preservation Act of 1966," according to Dr. Floyd W. Sharrock, chairman of the University of Montana Department of Anthropology.

Sharrock, who is director of the University of Montana Statewide Archaeological Survey, said the 1974 Act, which restructures federal support for the preservation of archaeological sites, was jointly introduced by Sen. Frank E. Moss, D-Utah, and Rep. Charles E. Bennett, D-Fla., and was cosponsored by Sen. Mike Mansfield, D-Mont., and Sen. Lee Metcalf, D-Mont.

Commenting on the new legislation, Sharrock said: "The 1974 Archaeological Conservation Act authorizes salvage of the nation's archaeological resources that are in danger of destruction by a wide variety of federal programs.

"Much of the nation's irreplaceable historical heritage is being rapidly destroyed as a result of a wide variety of public and private construction," Sharrock said.

Under provisions of the act, any federal agency may spend project funds to preserve scientific, historical and archaeological resources which may be destroyed by any construction activity.

Under the 1960 Reservoir Salvage Act which the new act amends, the National Park Service was authorized to salvage archaeological sites that would be destroyed in the building of major dams. The new act widens this program and includes all federal agencies.

Federal agencies now are authorized to spend funds for archaeological salvage, either directly or by contracting the work to an appropriate institution. Alternately, federal agencies may transfer funds, up to 1 percent of the project authorization, to the Secretary of Interior for administering the work.

Sharrock said the Secretary of Interior may carry out such work in a wide variety of federally related private or public projects which alter the terrain and result in loss of archaeological resources.

"Finally, the Secretary of Interior is directed to conduct such salvage work in any other circumstance where he finds archaeological resources are being destroyed by a federally-funded or federally-licensed project."

Commenting on the role of the Montana congressional delegation in passage of the new law, Sharrock noted that Mansfield and Metcalf deserve special credit for their consistent support and efforts in behalf of this law.

Rep. Dick Shoup, R-Mont., and Rep. John Melcher, D-Mont., also voted in favor of passage of the measure.

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