

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
MUSEUM PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PLAN  
January 2007

## **Fish and Wildlife Service Plan for Managing Museum Property Collections**

### I. Background

A 1990 Office of the Inspector General's (IG) audit found deficiencies in how Department of the Interior bureaus and offices were managing their museum property collections. Under the direction of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget (AS-PMB), the Department has undertaken a program to locate and account for museum property and initiate necessary preservation and protection measures. A Department-wide museum property committee has developed policy, guidance, and standards for bureaus to use in improving the care of their collections. Departmental guidance is found in 411 DM.

The Service is responsible for about 3.1 million objects (see attached table 1), including archaeological materials, artwork, wildlife mounts and specimens, World War II aircraft and equipment, historic objects and documents related to agency's history, and paleontological materials. Approximately 15 percent of the total number of objects is maintained by Service units, while the remaining materials are on loan to non-Federal and foreign repositories. The number and size of collections continue to grow as a result of cultural resource studies completed in response to the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. It is important to note that property seized and disposed of by the Service's Law Enforcement program is not covered under this plan. Seized property is managed under separate regulations and policies found under 50 CFR 12. Law Enforcement does communicate with the museum property program in those instances where a seized item is also considered museum property.

The FY 2006 FWS annual museum property summary report indicates that 107 FWS units are responsible for managing museum property and that collections are on loan to 213 institutions. Responsibility for museum property collections has been reported at all administrative levels, e.g., the FWS Washington Office, Regional Offices, field stations and administrative sites such as the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC).

The creation of the National Biological Service (and its subsequent transfer to the U.S.

Geological Survey as the Biological Resources Division) resulted in the transfer of approximately 900,000 objects, specimens and associated records. Ten Service units reporting museum property were transferred to the BRD in 1996. Collections affected by the transfer included natural history and historical collections maintained at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum and Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge. In 2004 a Museum Property Committee was formed at Patuxent to collect information about these collections. In 2005 several cubic feet of this material was transferred to NCTC for proper storage. The remainder is located at Patuxent and is continuing to be prepared for transfer to NCTC.

Service units reporting museum property completed a review of collections in 1991 to identify specific weaknesses and deficiencies in how collections were being managed. Information submitted by approximately 180 FWS units cited 14,932 deficiencies related to the management of museum property. This information has not been updated. Cited deficiencies include the lack of documentation and plans to account for and protect museum property, improper environmental conditions, and lack of staff expertise. The review did indicate, however, that many units meet Departmental standards in terms of certain requirements addressing physical storage space and fire security.

The survey and checklist information provided the basis for completing unit-specific Scope of Collections Statements (SOCS) and the timetables and funding estimates found in this document.

## II. Vision Statement and Long-Term Objectives

Given the breadth of its collections and number of units involved in managing museum property, the FWS efforts to meet Federal and Departmental standards will require work to be phased in over a long-term basis. The exact timetable for completing this work is largely dependant upon available funding and FTEs. While work to identify and assess the condition of FWS collections located in non-FWS facilities continues, priority is being placed on meeting legal mandates and protecting collections in the possession of offices. The program's major objectives are to:

- identify FWS museum property collections;
- create policies, procedures and standards for the management of museum property;
- assess the condition of collections, identify deficiencies and initiate necessary corrective actions;
- provide for necessary conservation of museum property and ensure its adequate use and storage;
- integrate the protection and use of museum property within the FWS mission and various program objectives, specifically for interpretation, research, and

education; and,

- develop a network of individuals and offices that are available to provide subject expertise and technical assistance to FWS units managing museum property.

### III. Accomplishments

Interim guidance on preparing museum property scope of collection statements was first distributed to FWS Regional Offices in 1992. All Service units responsible for managing museum property have completed Scope of Collection Statements. Where applicable, some offices have begun incorporating museum property planning needs into unit emergency and integrated pest management plans. One unit, the Desoto National Wildlife Refuge, has completed a comprehensive conservation plan for the Bertrand Steamboat Collection.

Museum property policies and standards were released in 1997 as part of the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual. These policies address guidelines for managing collections, environmental and security standards, data standards and reporting requirements and forms. The Service will continue to rely on the Department's two volume Museum Property Handbook for additional technical information and guidance on managing collections. This plan as well as the Service museum property policy (126 FW 1-3) is available on at <http://www.fws.gov/historicPreservation/mp/index.html>.

To coincide with the release of final policy and guidelines, the FWS developed a museum property software package for units to track accession, catalog and loan information. The database was developed using Filemaker Pro v.3 which is a standard software package employed by many FWS units to track operations and maintenance information. This system was transferred to an MS Access platform in 2004 and data entry continues. All FWS Standards and reporting requirements for museum property reflect current Departmental policies found in 411 DM.

Each Regional Director has designated one individual as a Regional Museum Property coordinator (on a collateral duty basis) to provide assistance to units and oversee the completion of program activities. None of the Regional coordinators has extensive training or experience in managing collections, although all possess a basic understanding of program objectives and standards for managing primarily archaeological collections. Regional coordinators have received, at a minimum, introductory training on the program's administrative and technical requirements and a few have attended an 80-hour curatorial methods training course.

Regional Offices have contacted various non-Service institutions to locate agency collections on loan. Inventories of these collections are pending, however, they are updated annually by the Regional Museum Property Coordinators.

The D.C. Booth Historic Fish Hatchery in South Dakota has begun an active effort to identify and accession collections for storage in its archives building completed in 1995.

The building contains offices and climate-controlled storage areas devoted primarily to the preservation of materials related to the history of fish culture. The facility's scope of collections statement was revised in 1997 to clarify and expand its role in maintaining Service collections.

The National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), opened in 1997, contains many exhibits on the history of the Service, the Department and other conservation events and people. A museum with permanent exhibits was opened at the end of FY 1998. The NCTC hired a curator in spring 1998 to manage collections and oversee the maintenance of exhibits.

In 2005, FWS launched its Museum Property workgroup, which consists of Regional museum property coordinators and staff from D.C. Booth National Fish Hatchery, NCTC, and DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge (Bertrand Collection). The workgroup meets as needed to discuss reporting requirements for museum property and to provide updates on collection status to the Washington Office.

In response to Section 5 of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), Service Regional Offices completed their inventory of collections that contain human remains and associated materials for possible repatriation to tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. An agencywide inventory was submitted to the National Park Service and the Secretary's NAGPRA Committee in March 1996. Regional Offices are continuing with efforts to communicate with Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations over the repatriation of collections. The Service's Historic Preservation Officer participated in a panel discussion at the January NAGPRA Review Committee meeting in Washington, D.C., on efforts to comply with the Act.

#### IV. Plan for Meeting Program Requirements

In order to meet legal requirements and Departmental policies, the Service will continue efforts to bring the agency into full accountability for managing and protecting its museum property collections over a 10-year period. Major program goals and objectives outlined below have been adopted from the Departmental Manual. Estimated target dates for completing specific museum property activities are based upon information compiled through museum property summary reports.

**Table 1 Major goals and status of the FWS Museum Property Program**

Goal	Task	FWS Repository	Non-FWS Repository	Status
<b>Develop Collections Management Guidance</b>	Distribute DOI museum property handbooks for use among applicable FWS units.	x		Complete
	Establish formal FWS museum property workgroup to provide technical assistance and guidance	-	-	Complete

	Release agency policy and guidance on museum property program	-	-	Complete
<b>Strengthen Curatorial Expertise</b>	Circulate museum property program information electronically	-	-	Complete
	Establish on-line training for FWS employees	-	-	On-going
<b>Establish Accountability for Museum Property</b>	Prepare and submit museum property survey report to DOI	x	x	Complete
	Develop cost estimates for cataloging museum property collections	x	x	On-going
	Comply with NAGPRA requirements	x	x	On-going
	Conduct annual inventory reconciliation	x	x	Annual
	Develop FWS museum property inventory forms and accountability standards	x	x	Complete
	Ensure that all applicable FWS units have a Scope of Collections	x	-	On-going
	Develop key control and written security measures and housekeeping procedure	x	x	Complete
	Establish Collection Condition Survey as official document for monitoring FWS collections.	x	-	Complete
<b>Identify Collections Management Needs</b>	Issue storage standards	x	x	Complete
	Provide funding estimates necessary to correct facility deficiencies			
	Asses storage conditions	x	x	On-going
	Complete 411 DM surveys	x	x	On-going
	Complete collections management plans	x	-	On-going
	Accession all FWS collections	x	x	On-going
	Stabilize condition of museum property	x	x	On-going
	Complete initial survey on non-FWS repositories to locate museum property	-	x	Complete
	Complete Regional inventory of non-FWS repositories	-	x	On-going
	Assess FWS units holding museum property	x		On-going

	Assess non-FWS repositories	-	x	On-going
	Update/replace museum equipment	x	x	On-going

Each management goal translates to a specific task that has an estimated cost for completion.

**Table 2 Estimated Costs for meeting Museum Property Performance Goals**

Task	Annual Museum Property Funds	Funds Expended since 1998	Accomplishments since 1998	Estimated Funds required to meet goals by 2009	Annual funding required to meet goals by 2009
Identifying Collections	25,000	206,000	c.15% of collections identified	1,167,050	389,016
Catalog/Re-house Collection	385,000	3,080,000	c.34% of the collection cataloged/re-housed	5,970,000	1,990,000

V. Program Oversight

Oversight responsibility for the program resides with the Assistant Director - Refuges and Wildlife at the national level. The Division of Refuges, Washington Office, has been delegated lead responsibility for providing overall direction and coordinating activities related to the program. Policy development and day-to-day program coordination are collateral duties of the Service's Historic Preservation Officer. Each Regional Director has designated one or more individuals to coordinate functions within their respective Regions and with the Washington Office. The Service also participates in the Department's Heritage Asset Partnership and Interior Museum Program Committee.

This plan will be reviewed annually by the Service's Washington Office, in consultation with Regional coordinators, to monitor progress in meeting plan objectives, task items, and funding needs. Information collected from updated museum property reports, checklists, and inventories required under 411 DM 3.3 will be used to update funding needs and revise the schedule for completing major project objectives.

VI. Program Funding, Staffing, and Training Needs

In FY 2006, \$385,000 from the Service's Refuge Operations and Maintenance Activity has been allocated to Regions as Arts and artifacts funding for activities directly associated with the Departmental program. Funding has been used for program oversight and coordination, compiling inventory information, providing technical assistance and purchasing equipment and supplies for field stations. Additionally, several Service units including the D.C. Booth Historic Fish Hatchery, the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge and the National Conservation Training Center receive additional operations and maintenance funding to maintain their collections, exhibits and

facilities.

No permanent full-time FTEs have been hired using available Arts and artifacts funding. The curator position at the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge was filled in FY 2006.

Based upon estimates developed by Regional Offices, an additional 13 FTEs are needed to fulfill the program's basic objectives and requirements. These positions would include a number of disciplines, including curators, archivists, collections managers, and museum and archival technicians. There are no plans to hire a full-time national curator to manage the program.

Data compiled from the 1991 museum property survey and the 1992 checklist indicate a number of program weaknesses in terms of planning for the preservation of collections and meeting museum property program standards. Regional plans, timetables, and cost estimates for bringing collections up to basic Departmental museum property standards have been used to create the accompanying table for all agency programs (Fisheries, Refuges, Law Enforcement, Ecological Services and Administration).

The Service does not offer any extensive formal training to its employees on museum property issues. Employees involved in managing museum property usually rely on NPS-sponsored training and courses offered by academic institutions to obtain skills. National and Regional coordinators will assist units in finding technical assistance for managing their collections when needed.

Future training needs are likely to vary from unit-to-unit depending upon the background of the individuals responsible for managing collections, the types of collections, and management deficiencies. Areas identified for future training emphasis are likely to include: museum property displayed in administrative areas; skills for assessing the unit's capability to store museum property; and, the management of natural history and biological collections. The Service is interested in exploring innovative, cost-efficient methods for training employees (either independently or jointly with other agencies) through circulation of technical bulletins and printed materials, various electronic media, or in combination with other related training courses (i.e., personal property management). Options for offering formal training through the Service's National Conservation Training Center have been discussed but not explored extensively.