

Cultural Resources Fact Sheet

What are Cultural Resources?

Cultural Resources are tangible remains of past human activity. These may include buildings; structures; prehistoric sites; historic or prehistoric objects or collection; rock inscription; earthworks, canals, or landscapes. These nonrenewable resources may yield unique information about past societies and environments, and provide answers for modern day social and conservation problems. Although many have been discovered and protected, there are numerous forgotten, undiscovered, or unprotected cultural resources in rural America.

The NRCS's Role in Protecting Cultural Resources

NRCS considers cultural resources in its conservation planning for the same reason it protects the natural resources — the soil, water, air, plants and animals — on your property. Keeping natural resources in balance helps provide the basis for a healthy and profitable farm environment; keeping cultural resources provides the basis for understanding our human past. The stewardship of these nonrenewable resources is an important link in the conservation ethic that underlies the NRCS mission.

Several Federal, State, and local laws have been enacted to preserve cultural resources. The most important of these is the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Under this and other legislation, Federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, are required to protect cultural resources.

Some Benefits of Cultural Resources

Cultural resources provide many useful benefits to people today. They —

- Expand our knowledge and understanding of history.
- Provide scientific data. Archeological sites for example, can provide information not available from historic records on droughts, floods, and erosion over thousand of years.
- Provide jobs during the renovation process. Preserving cultural resources may also stimulate other community improvements.
- Attract tourists, who bring money into the community.
- Provide information that will help solve conservation and natural resource problems. Some modern irrigation techniques, for example, are actually based on prehistoric methods.

Your Role

Every American has a stake in the protection of cultural resources. All of the protected and restored cultural resources that we enjoy today have one thing in common: some individual, group, or organization went to work to protect and preserve for future generations to come.

If you know of an undeveloped cultural resource, do your part to preserve our country's heritage. Contact a local historical society, museum, archeological society, university archeology (sociology, anthropology) department, or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office.

For More Information

- <http://www.saa.org> Home Page of the Society for American Archaeology
- <http://www.sha.org/> Home Page for the Society for Historical Archaeology
- <http://www.nps.gov/orgs/1345/whatwedo.htm> Site lets you discover your history and explore the past. These programs are all a part of the National Park Service and Links into the Past
- <http://www.achp.gov> Home page of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the governmental agency established to advise the President, Congress, federal agencies and the public on matters regarding historic preservation. Pay particular attention to the links to the Preserve America program and community awards.
- http://www.archives.gov/research_room/arc/index.html The National Archives and Records Administration Archival research page that will assist user in historical research in their holdings
- <http://www.nthp.org> Home page of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.