

**U.S. Forest Service response to the
National Trust for Historic Preservation report
“The National Forest System: Cultural Resources at Risk – An
Assessment and Needs Analysis”**



**Written statement by Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief for National Forest System
May 15, 2008**

The Forest Service appreciates the opportunity to appear today with President Richard Moe of the National Trust Historic Preservation on the release of the Trust’s report, “The National Forest System: Cultural Resources at Risk – An assessment and Needs Analysis.” We especially appreciate the Trust’s constructive recommendations for strengthening the protection and enhancement of the diverse cultural resources in our national forests and grasslands that are of great importance to our Nation’s heritage.

The Forest Service Heritage Program was established in 1980 in response to Executive Order 11593 “On the Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment”. The early years of our Heritage Program concentrated on survey and improving the inventory of a relatively small number of cultural resources on national forests and grasslands. Since that time we have identified a continuously growing number of cultural sites and have established measures for their protection. Our job gets bigger every year as we identify more sites. The number of sites is growing faster than the funding and staffing needed to fully care for them.

Today, the Forest Service manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands across the country. We have made great progress in identifying nearly 350,000 heritage assets in the national forests system, with over 56,000 of those sites determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. We have a number of nationally significant historic properties and archeological sites listed on the National Register, including Chimney Rock Pueblo near Pagosa Springs, CO that many consider a World Heritage Site. This has been a tremendous accomplishment by a dedicated professional workforce and agency beset by constrained budgets due to dramatic increases in wildfires throughout the last decade.

In response to the [Preserve America](#) Executive Order in 2001, the Forest Service re-focused its Heritage Program to make cultural resources available to the public by improving accountability for managing heritage assets, promoting heritage tourism and building partnerships. We have been successful in leveraging our available resources to make significant gains in heritage tourism and partnerships with communities for both economic development and long-term preservation of heritage assets. The Interlaken Resort project on the San Isabel NF in Twin Lakes, CO is a fine example and product of this effort to *Preserve America*.

In February 2008, the Forest Service received the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) Federal Preserve America Accomplishment Award. We are particularly proud of this award that recognizes our volunteer citizen program Passport in Time, model partnerships for historic use, and implementation of the Preserve America Summit recommendations.

I was pleased to see the Trust's report noted that the Forest Service, "perhaps more than any other federal agency" has taken measures to identify the places and structures important to its own history and has actively sought to protect many of these, including ranger stations, fire lookouts, cabins, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps, and historic trails that tell the story of more than 100 years of Forest Service history. That's a great compliment, as was the Trust's commendation for the professionalism and dedication of Forest Service Heritage Program staff.

We very much appreciate the Trust's efforts and expense to conduct this study and provide us with insights on the work that still needs to be done. We will carefully consider each recommendation of the Trust, and some of that response has already started.

We are updating Forest Service policies and direction to field managers to ensure compliance with the many laws that govern archeological and historic preservation. We plan to publish these updated policies in the Federal Register next month. By the end of 2008 we will complete a companion procedures Handbook detailing methods for protection of these important resources. We are also updating or clarifying policies in other program areas such as Travel Management and finalizing database development for reporting that will provide full accountability of our heritage assets.

We will look very closely at Trust's recommendations to adopt the National Historic Preservation Act Section 111 language to broaden the Forest Service Special Uses Permit authority to allow for the leasing of historic buildings. With this authority the Forest Service and its partners could greatly expand opportunities for adapting historic buildings for public use, improving maintenance and access.

We also recognize the opportunity to move toward an increased partnership with the National Trust by developing national and local agreements to help us implement these recommendations.

Again, we thank the National Trust for Historic Preservation for its interest in the Forest Service's Heritage Program and look forward to a strengthened partnership working toward our shared goal of protecting and enhancing the public's enjoyment of these precious assets.