

Inclusion and Negotiation: Interpreting Underwater Battlefield Sites for the Public

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Abstract

The development of a World War Two (WWII) underwater heritage trail focusing on the Battle of Saipan has recently been undertaken in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands on Saipan. This WWII heritage trail was formulated out of the interest of the local Historic Preservation Office's (HPO) desire to protect and interpret its underwater cultural heritage (UCH). Through a United States of America (U.S.) National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program grant in collaboration with a non-profit organisation and university program this trail was developed during 2009-2010 and launched in 2011.

The development of a heritage trail that interprets such a confronting, painful and tragic event for multiple culture groups is a difficult task. A balanced approach of interpreting battlefield heritage can only be achieved through the identification and inclusion of the various stakeholders and an awareness of what is being included, ignored or inadequately represented in the interpretation. Listening to the multiple stakeholders' views about the significance of such sites and incorporating those views into interpretive and management practices is key to an inclusive and shared interpretation of heritage. Further, an awareness and acknowledgment of the social and political context in which one is working is fundamental to understanding how practitioners negotiate the process of interpretation. As Logan and Reeves (2009:13) have communicated so well, "Heritage conservation is a form of cultural politics; it is about the links between ideology, public policy, national and community identity formation, and celebration, just as much as it is about technical issues relating to restoration and adaptive re-use techniques".

This paper provides an in-depth discussion on the process of developing a battlefield heritage trail. It will explore the theory and practice, the pitfalls and highlights, and the problems and solutions of interpreting and managing a battlefield site.

Introduction

The remains of the WWII Battle of Saipan, fought between Japanese and U.S. forces in June-July 1944, were recently the focus of a large-scale archaeological project. This project was directed by the non-profit organisation Ships of Exploration and Discovery Research, Inc. of Corpus Christi, Texas (Ships of Discovery) and Flinders University of Adelaide, South Australia. Funded through a National Park Service (NPS) American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP)¹, the project goals were three-fold: to refine current knowledge of the Battle of Saipan through the documentation and study of the associated submerged heritage sites, to increase public awareness of their historical significance and to stimulate the local economy through the development of a maritime heritage trail. This WWII heritage trail was formulated out of interest from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Island (CNMI) HPO desire to protect and interpret its

¹ This material is based upon work assisted by a grant from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior.

UCH, and the local government's desire to create sustainable, economically-beneficial heritage tourism products. These objectives were achieved through three archaeological field seasons that occurred in July 2009, February 2010 and June 2010, as well as, ongoing historical research and public consultation with stakeholders throughout the project period.

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Location and background

The Mariana archipelago is located east of the Philippines, north of New Guinea, and south-southeast of Japan (Figure 1). Saipan, the capital of the CNMI and the largest and most populated island, was the site of arguably one of the most strategic battles in WWII's Pacific Theatre. Saipan is 19 kilometres (km) long by 9km wide and is fringed by a barrier reef on its western side which creates a large lagoon. The lagoon is separated into three smaller ones, Garapan, Tanapag and Chalan Kanoa Lagoons, which range in width from 375 metres (m) to 3.5 km and in depth up to 14 m (Amesbury, *et al.* 1996). The clarity and consistently warm temperatures of the water make SCUBA diving in the lagoons possible year-round.

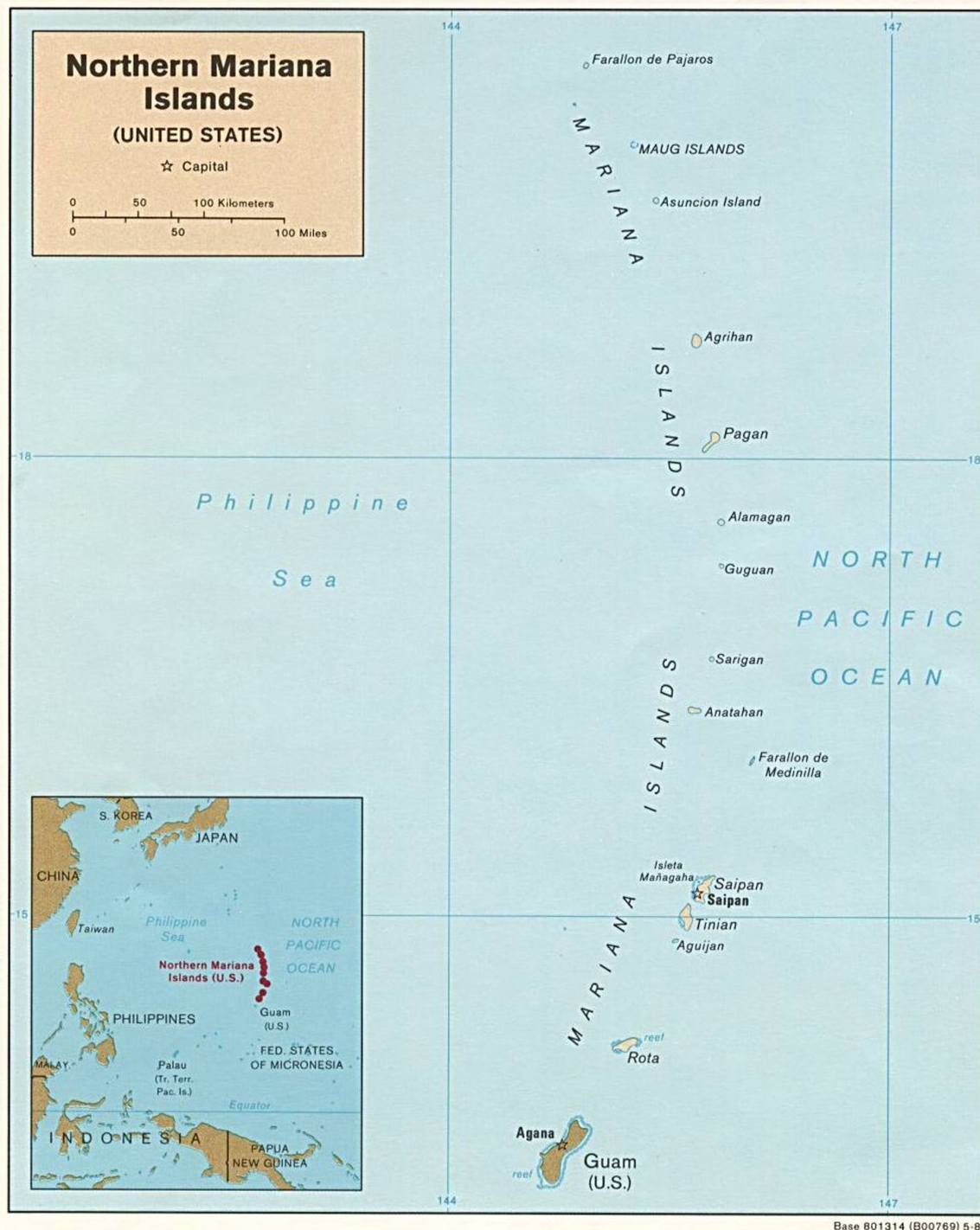


Figure 1. The Mariana Islands (Perry-Castañeda Map Collection).

Several submerged cultural heritage surveys and assessments have been conducted in the waters surrounding Saipan from 1979 to 2008 (Thomas and Price 1980; Miculka and Manibusan 1983; Manibusan and Miculka 1983; Miculka, *et al.* 1984; Pacific Basin Environmental Consultants 1985; Thompson 1984; Miculka, *et al.* 1990; Carrell 1991; Lord and Plank 2003; SEARCH, Inc.

2008a; SEARCH, Inc. 2008b; Carrell, *et al.* 2009). These surveys provided invaluable baseline data for identifying and conducting further research on sites to be included in the heritage trail. Particularly useful were the surveys and publications produced by the NPS (Carrell 1991), Southeastern Archaeological Research, Inc. (SEARCH, Inc.) (SEARCH, Inc. 2008a; SEARCH 2008b) and Ships of Discovery (Carrell, *et al.* 2009).

In April and May of 2008, remote sensing and diver identification surveys in Saipan were conducted by SEARCH, Inc. The purpose of these investigations was to locate and identify archaeological resources inside and outside Tanapag and Garapan Lagoons. The remote sensing surveys including magnetometry and side scan sonar were broad in nature; however the focus of the historical research and diver identification was on WWII heritage. The surveys were intended to be a baseline inventory for future investigations to build upon and were funded through a historic preservation grant provided to HPO and administered by the NPS. A total of 1,543 anomalies were located, of which 142 were chosen for diver survey. According to the report of investigations, "The majority of identified anomalies represents material culture from WWII and offers a unique opportunity for Saipan to interpret its history through maritime heritage and dive trails" (SEARCH, Inc. 2008b:i).

In 2009, a comprehensive overview of the maritime history and archaeology of the CNMI was completed by Ships of Discovery (Carrell 2009). The project was undertaken as part of the CNMI's on-going efforts to meet its historic preservation and inventory mandates and also was funded through a historic preservation grant administered by the NPS. The maritime context document provided an in-depth discussion of the history of the CNMI from the pre-historic period to the present, and pulled together all of the currently available information on submerged cultural heritage sites in the islands.

Together these two projects provided the background information and emphasis for the development of a more intensive archaeological investigation and a public interpretation program for the WWII heritage. In fact, at the same time that SEARCH, Inc. was conducting the remote sensing project in 2008, staff and students from Flinders University were on the island working with the HPO to create a plan for developing a "maritime unit" within their existing program. In an earlier trip to Saipan in 2007, the HPO had voiced concerns about their lack of ability to manage submerged heritage (due to a lack of training in underwater archaeological techniques) and the pressing need to do so due to the amount of tourist divers visiting the WWII sites. They also were interested in developing a maritime heritage trail which would provide two favourable outcomes: developing a presence on the water as the agency charged with managing the resources and developing a heritage tourism product that could promote sustainable use of the already heavily visited sites. Thus the idea was formulated to develop a plan to accomplish a number of objectives that would assist HPO in better managing their submerged heritage. These objectives included:

- Training staff in underwater archaeological methods in order to create a team of diving archaeologists

- Conducting more intensive archaeological research and recording known and heavily visited sites
- Developing a maritime heritage trail for the purposes of creating sustainable heritage tourism

Training staff in underwater archaeological methods

The first objective was accomplished in January 2009 when Flinders University and HPO supported archaeological technician John Castro to travel to Australia and participate in the Flinders University Maritime Archaeological Field School in South Australia. Castro's extensive diving and archaeological background allowed him to participate as a supervisor in the two-week field school where he gained additional underwater archaeology experience. Next, training was held in July 2009 on Saipan for staff from several government agencies, including HPO, Coastal Resources Management (CRM), the NMI Museum of Culture and History, and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), as well as few local interested divers. A total of 20 diving and non-diving participants took part in the two day course (Figure 2). Based on the Flinders University's Underwater Archaeology Methods topic, it included classroom lectures, practical terrestrial exercises, a diving exercise and an intertidal exercise for those not SCUBA certified. The training was a great success and provided the agencies and locals with information about the importance of preserving underwater heritage.



Figure 2. 2009 training participants, Saipan, CNMI (J. McKinnon).

In the final stages of the development of the trail, two Heritage Awareness Diving Seminars (HADS) were run on Saipan in April 2011. HADS is a specialty course run through the three largest diver certification agencies in the world, NAUI, PADI and SSI, and is training intended for course directors, instructor trainers, instructors, dive masters, boat captains and dive shop owners. It was developed to provide diving industry professionals with a greater knowledge of how to proactively protect shipwrecks and other submerged cultural heritage sites (Scott-Ireton 2008). The goal of HADS is to increase awareness of the fragility of submerged heritage, teach proper anchoring, mooring and diving behaviour on such sites, as well as demonstrate the need for preservation of such resources for future generations and the economic benefits of heritage diving tourism. A total of 16 participants took part in the HADS training, including dive shop owners, the president of a local dive professional organization, boat captains, dive instructors and dive masters, U.S. Coast Guard staff, and a staff member from the NMI Humanities Council. This training was funded through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Pacific Region Grants Cooperative grant awarded to Pacific Marine Resources, Inc. (PMRI), a local non-profit organisation concerned with environmental and historical research and sustainability. This training was seen as a crucial element to the development of the trail and its sustainability. It aimed at educating the end users to protect the sites and educate their students and clients about using the sites appropriately.

Conducting more intensive archaeological research and recording known and heavily visited sites

In January 2009 Ships of Discovery applied for an ABPP grant for the archaeological and historical investigation of submerged WWII heritage and the collection of data for the development of a proposed maritime heritage trail. The planning for this grant application began in 2007-2008 and included a great deal of local consultation. Public lectures were given to gauge local interest, and meetings were held with several stakeholders including local divers and dive clubs, HPO, CRM, DEQ, NMI Humanities Council, and the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA). This consultation centred on the needs and wants of the community and government in terms of their heritage and a heritage tourism product. As a result, three agencies (HPO, CRM, and DEQ) pledged their assistance with the project provided funding was secured. Funding was announced for \$49,900(U.S.) in August 2009 and the project quickly began. HPO, CRM, and DEQ provided an invaluable amount of in-kind assistance during the project, including staff support both on and off the water, boats and vehicles, equipment and fuel. Their support was instrumental to the success and completion of the project.

Archaeological survey

The archaeological documentation survey took place within Garapan and Tanapag Lagoons, where most of the accessible shallow water WWII sites are located. The underwater surveys focused on locating and mapping individual

sites, groups of sites and artefacts relating to the pre-invasion, invasion, and post-invasion period. Most of these sites had been located and briefly recorded in previous archaeological surveys and were specifically targeted for potential inclusion on the heritage trail based on this knowledge. Twelve sites were subject to extensive archaeological survey; however additional unrecorded sites were encountered. These additional sites were cursorily recorded and basic details were collected for future investigation (Table 1.)

Table 1: Table of submerged or partially submerged sites recorded in 2009-2010.

Name of Site	Trail (Y/N)
Merchant Ship, presumably <i>Shoan Maru</i> /Chinsen (Japanese Shipwreck)	Y
Possible Auxiliary Submarine Chaser – Main Site (Japanese Shipwreck)	Y
Possible Auxiliary Submarine Chaser – Second Site (Japanese Shipwreck)	N
Sherman Tank 1 (U.S.)	Y
Sherman Tank 2 (U.S.)	Y
Sherman Tank 3 (U.S.)	Y
Landing Vehicle Tracked-(A)-4 (U.S.)	Y
Fishing base Landing Vehicle	N
Fishing base LVT	N
Landing Craft (U.S.)	N
Possible U.S. Landing Craft (in shoreline)	N
Barges (U.S.)	N
Barge near Japanese Lighthouse (U.S.)	N
Daihatsu Landing Craft 1 (Japanese)	Y
Daihatsu Landing Craft 2 (Japanese)	Y
Kawanishi H8K “Emily” (Japanese Aircraft)	Y
Aichi E13A “Jake” (Japanese Aircraft)	Y
Martin PBM Mariner (U.S. Aircraft)	Y
TBM Avenger (U.S. Aircraft)	Y
Navigational Marker (Japanese)	N

Visits to each of the sites listed in Table 1 included basic underwater survey recording (photographs, overall dimensions, general descriptions, site identification, site location and site condition). Some sites, particularly those to be included on the trail, warranted more extensive survey for the purposes of creating site plans and also collecting baseline data for future monitoring purposes. No archaeological excavation was conducted at the sites and no cultural materials were recovered.

All cultural and natural features on and around the sites were recorded. Modifications, battle scars, presence of unexploded ordnance, identifying marks and any other features that may aid in the interpretation of the sites were detailed. An overall description of the site and its general environment (depth,

visibility, current and bottom composition) were also recorded. Cultural and natural impacts to the site were noted, including anchor damage, salvage, removal or movement of artefacts, and deterioration and scouring. Biological data including fish counts was also collected. Data about future access to the sites by the public, such as possible anchoring or mooring locations, was recorded and a reconnaissance of the surrounding area to search for associated sites and activity was conducted.

Developing a maritime heritage trail for the purposes of creating sustainable heritage tourism

The ABPP funding received for documenting and researching submerged WWII sites also included using that data to develop a maritime heritage trail in conjunction with HPO. This trail was conceptualized as part of a plan to aid in the preservation and protection of submerged heritage sites which were already being impacted through tourist visitation. By providing interpretive literature which outlined each site's history and importance, legal protection and proper etiquette for visiting such heritage sites, it was hoped that divers, snorkelers, and swimmers would be better educated and develop a greater appreciation for the heritage, thus avoiding impacting or harming the sites further.

Planning the trail included a great deal of local and international consultation. Several leading experts in the field of heritage trail development were sought to provide input into the planning. More discussions were had with the agencies charged with managing historical and biological resources; particularly useful were relationships with CRM and DEQ, whose focus is primarily the environment. These agencies provided investigation permits and worked alongside the project staff to develop a program for placing moorings on all the sites for use by boaters and tour operators – a necessity for reducing anchor impacts to sites.

Discussions with local divers, dive shops, dive boat operators, and other tourism operators were held concerning their needs and wants in terms of access, the types of sites they would like to see on the trail and what products would best suit. These conversations were most useful in gauging diver and snorkeler interest and behaviour on heritage sites. The trail was not intended to be exclusive to divers so sites particularly close to land that could be accessed by swimmers and snorkelers were also selected. The demographics of diving tourists were also sought from the MVA, who suggested that the products be printed in Korean and Russian, in addition to the already planned printing in English, Japanese, Chamorro, and Carolinian.

Trail Products

The end results of the fieldwork include the production of a 180-page, detailed report on the activities of the fieldwork and development of the trail (McKinnon and Carrell 2011). Nine underwater guides inclusive of site plans, site descriptions, access information, and a conservation message were produced on

100% waterproof, 100% recyclable, 100% tree-free paper (Figure 3). Each of these has a small hole punched in the corner so a lanyard can be attached.

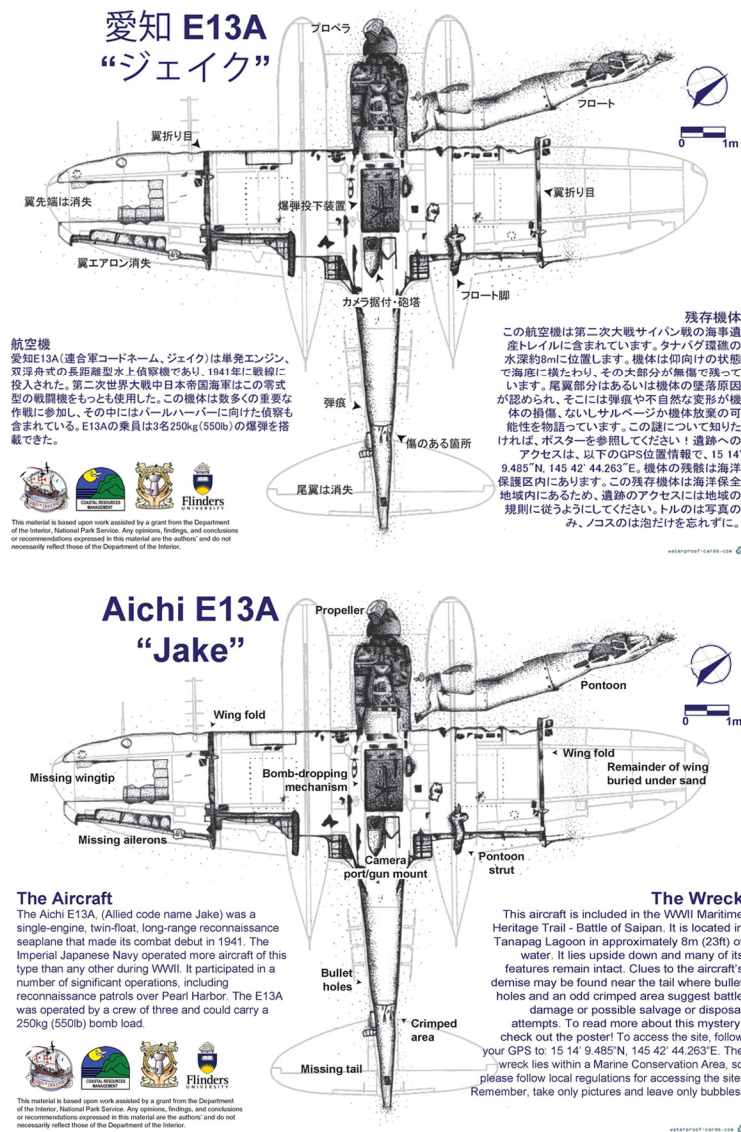


Figure 3. Aichi E13A dive guide (Ships of Discovery).

Four themed posters also were produced including: *U.S. Aircraft*, *Japanese Aircraft*, *Shipwrecks*, and *Assault Vehicles*. The posters are 18 x 24 inches and double-sided; the front includes a glossy photograph of a site and the back is populated with photographs as well as historical and archaeological information about the battle and the wrecks (Figure 4). The posters are inclusive of multiple viewpoints and include quotes of several culture groups involved in the battle (i.e. Chamorro, Carolinian, Japanese, etc.). They also include a message about the importance of protecting sites, examples of how divers impact sites through intentional and non-intentional behaviour, and specific information about the legislation that protects submerged sites. All products were

USS Yamato

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Pitfalls and highlights

The only solution to our concerns appeared to be inclusion, consultation, and negotiation. These three actions were called upon numerous times during the process of the grant. For example, at a public consultation and presentation fishers on the island expressed concerns that their rights to fish sites would be impinged upon as a result of the trail. In this case the answer was “no it would

not”; had it been “yes”, a great deal more consultation with stakeholders would have been necessary. At times local interest and support for the project waned and negative comments appeared on in the comments section of newspaper websites. One such comment appeared just prior to a public lecture that provided an update regarding the completion of the trail. The post related concerns of yet another entity scoring public grants to spend money on travel to the island with little results or products (*Marianas Variety*, accessed 12 April 2011). Following the public lecture and several reports on local television and newspapers in both English and Chamorro, the same username posted, “This will make a good addition to the WWII sites already toured by visitors on Saipan. Japanese and other divers will have an even better reason to choose the waters of the CNMI to scuba in...” (*Marianas Variety*, accessed 26 April 2011). This example simply demonstrates that the community has an interest their heritage and a right to be involved in these processes.

There is no doubt that there will be complications and issues that follow, such as finding funding for reprinting guides and posters. But steps have been made to alleviate such issues by providing the final artwork to multiple agencies on the islands and uploading the artwork to a website whereby it can be printed by anyone. Long-term monitoring and stabilisation of the sites on the trail will also be of concern. This will hopefully be addressed in another recently awarded ABPP grant which consists of conducting conservation surveys and the production of a management plan for long-term monitoring (American Battlefield Protection Program, accessed 20 September 2011). The list of questions and issues goes on, but in the end, as the situation stood, diving tourism activities related to WWII heritage were simply not sustainable. It is hoped that through the efforts of the local community, agencies, non-profits, and universities involved that the work conducted to record and interpret these sites will provide protection for them into the future.

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