



NEWPORT RESTORATION FOUNDATION
Founded by Doris Duke



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New Collaboration Aims to Connect US Historic Preservationists to the Global Climate Change Conversation

Rising sea levels, the increasing frequency and intensity of storms, desertification and other intensifying impacts pose both obvious and unprecedented challenges to the cultural and natural heritage of humankind. A new collaboration announced today by US/ICOMOS and the Newport Restoration Foundation (NRF) is designed to better connect US historic preservationists to the global conversation around this unprecedented threat.

“Heritage is threatened by climate change but also a source of community resilience. American communities will benefit enormously from the increased international knowledge exchange this collaboration offers” said US/ICOMOS

Executive Director, Bill Pencek. Key goals of this Knowledge Community will include helping the US cultural heritage community benchmark itself against international best practices in areas like: monitoring and reporting; mitigation; and “corrective actions” like management, adaptation, and risk management.

The collaboration is designed to enhance US/ICOMOS’s existing Climate Change and Cultural Heritage Knowledge Community. The Knowledge Community offers web and social media–based tools for US historic preservation supporters and practitioners to share relevant international knowledge. The project was launched with support from the US National Park Service and the J.M. Kaplan Fund.

The new collaboration’s first project is a countdown of 22 cultural heritage #ClimateActions leading up to COP22 in Marrakech, Morocco (November 7–18, 2016). COP22 is the next round of UN climate change talks. The meeting is expected to attract thousands of government leaders, experts and stakeholders looking to build on 2015’s landmark Paris Agreement. Key agenda items for the historic preservation community include addressing damage to heritage within loss and damage calculations, preservation–based mitigation strategies like retrofitting historic buildings for energy efficiency, and the conservation and use of heritage amidst climate displacement.

The upcoming Marrakech talks “lent urgency to our efforts to connect the US domestic conversation to global work around climate change and heritage” said Pieter N. Roos, Executive Director at NRF. Rooted in its mission to conserve the heritage of one of the US’s most historic cities, the Rhode Island–based NRF has been a leader in encouraging US historic preservationists to address the impacts of global change. This new collaboration creates an international outlet for NRF’s successful Keeping History Above Water project (www.historyabovewater.org) which has focused on the nexus between sea level rise and coastal heritage.

“The impacts of climate change like sea level rise know no boundaries, which puts a premium on international collaboration among heritage professionals,” said US/ICOMOS Trustee Lisa Craig. As chief of historic preservation for Annapolis, MD, Craig helped launch the “Weather it Together” initiative designed to help her historic coastal city prepare for disasters like those associated with rising seas.

The Climate Change and Cultural Heritage Knowledge Community is an open source platform available at www.usicomos.org. Users who subscribe (for free) will receive notifications when new international climate change and heritage content is added to the site. The Knowledge Community also offers a new twitter feed, @usicomosClimate, an events calendar, and more. These tools are designed to build collaboration, breakdown cost and time barriers to international exchange, harness new technologies and leverage traditional face-to-face exchange programs.

US/ICOMOSClimate is one of six Knowledge Communities US/ICOMOS is launching as part of its KnowledgeExchange initiative. KnowledgeExchange is suite of web and social media-based tools to leverage existing programs like the ICOMOS network of scientific committees. The goal is to equip a wider circle of US preservationists with more international tools that will help them help solve the challenges their communities face, while showcasing innovation in US historic preservation for an international audience. Learn more by visiting www.usicomos.org/knowledgeexchange.

About the Sponsors:

Founded in 1968, the Newport Restoration Foundation (NRF) is a non-profit institution dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and maintaining Aquidneck Island's 18th- and 19th-century architectural heritage and the fine and decorative arts collections of Doris Duke in Newport. NRF also supports research and education in areas that relate directly to its collections and to issues of critical concern to the field of historic preservation.

The US National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) is part of the worldwide ICOMOS network of people, institutions, government agencies, and private corporations who support the conservation of the world's heritage. Since its founding in 1965, the mission of US/ICOMOS has been to deliver the best of international heritage conservation scholarship and work to the US domestic historic preservation dialogue while helping to share and interpret for the world the unique US system of historic preservation.