SUBMERGED HERITAGE TRAINING

SUBMERGED CULTURAL HERITAGE TRAINING

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INTRODUCTION

USS Monitor

- Foundation of modern warships
- Wreck site was first National Marine Sanctuary
- and...
- Depth-charge during WWII damaging the stern armor belt.
Briefing Outline:

1) The importance of submerged cultural heritage
2) The laws governing submerged archaeological sites
3) Why raising artifacts is a bad idea
4) How to identify shipwreck sites
5) Considering non-shipwreck sites
6) Resources for further information
Submerged cultural heritage is the underwater legacy of physical artifacts of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.
IMPORTANCE OF SUBMERGED HERITAGE

Types of cultural heritage importance:

1) National Scale

2) Continent Scale

3) Global Scale
Underwater sites contain information about:

1) Trade
2) Warfare
3) Populations
4) Technology
5) Etc.
Shipwrecks are often graves and may contain unexploded ordnance and/or hazardous materials

Peter Johnson
SUBMERGED CULTURAL HERITAGE LAWS

- Law of the Sea
- Admiralty Law
- Abandoned Shipwreck Act
- Sunken Military Craft Act
- Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage
SUBMERGED CULTURAL HERITAGE LAWS

Law of the Sea defines zones of jurisdiction:

- Territorial Waters
- Contiguous Zone
- Exclusive Economic Zone

Tatjana Rosen, Encyclopedia of Earth
Admiralty Law establishes the laws of marine salvage
The Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1987 claims abandoned shipwrecks embedded in lands beneath navigable waters as the property of the U.S. government and turns them over to the states for management.

Each state protects its submerged cultural heritage differently.

Similarly, different nations have different submerged cultural heritage laws.

The most prudent option is to avoid moving or damaging submerged sites or artifacts unless such actions are required by a mission critical project.
The Sunken Military Craft Act protects all sunken military craft in US waters and US sunken military craft throughout the world. It prohibits any unauthorized disturbance whatsoever.
The United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage is designed to protect submerged heritage sites in international waters.
Even well-planned and executed attempts to raise submerged artifacts or shipwrecks can result in the destruction of the object.
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DAMAGE TO SUBMERGED HERITAGE

USS Cairo - raised from Yazoo River

1862

1964

Naval History & Heritage Command

Mississippi Agriculture and Industry Board
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DAMAGE TO SUBMERGED HERITAGE

1969

**Alvin Clark** - raised from Lake Michigan

1990

Kevin Crisman

Kevin Crisman
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DAMAGE TO SUBMERGED HERITAGE

Grape-Shot raised from Lake Champlain

As Made/Found

Without Conservation

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum
Submerged cultural heritage can be unintentionally but severely damaged by anchor drags, prop wash, explosions, and other activities that disturb the bottom.

It is important to be aware of potential submerged sites to avoid this damage.

Anchor Drag Scars
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IDENTIFYING SHIPWRECKS

Clearly Identifiable Shipwrecks

Parks Canada/Peter Waddell

Michael Krivor/NOAA-OER

UNESCO
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IDENTIFYING SHIPWRECKS

The Formation of a Wreck Site

Immediately after wrecking

300 years later

Florida Division of Historical Resources

Florida Division of Historical Resources
Some shipwrecks appear as piles of stone or pottery on the bottom.
Other shipwrecks appear as a scatter of artifacts.
It is impossible to tell if a shipwreck may hold the key to understanding questions about past cultures without studying the wreck. Consequently, it is advisable to be aware of submerged cultural heritage sites that are in and around an area of operation and to consider the potential impacts that an operation may have on these sites.
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IDENTIFYING SHIPWRECKS

Ship Trap, Turks and Caicos Islands
The oceans have risen significantly during the past 20,000 years and have submerged many sites.
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NON-SHIPWRECK SUBMERGED HERITAGE

Port Royal, Jamaica
a sunken city
If you can see old structures or know that there are archaeological sites on the shore it is likely that there will be submerged cultural heritage in the area.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Naval History & Heritage Command
www.history.navy.mil

National Park Service, Submerged Resources Center
home.nps.gov/applications/submerged

NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries
sanctuaries.noaa.gov

UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
www.unesco.org

Institute of Nautical Archaeology
inadiscover.com

Center for Maritime Archaeology and Conservation
nautarch.tamu.edu.cmac
SUMMARY

1) Submerged cultural heritage is an important part of our local and global histories.

2) Submerged cultural heritage is often protected by local, state, federal, and international laws.

3) Raising objects pieces of submerged cultural heritage, be they artifacts or shipwrecks, often results in the destruction of the object.

4) Explosions, anchor drags, and any disturbing of the bottom may damage cultural heritage sites, so it is important to be aware when there is a likelihood of sites.

5) Shipwrecks are a primary type of submerged cultural heritage, but submerged land sites and isolated artifacts may also be encountered.