

# Archaeology and Paleontology Council – News Alert

## FLORIDA HISTORICAL COMMISSION TO DECIDE FATE OF IMPORTANT PUBLIC POLICY

Attention Amateur Archaeology and Paleontology Collectors,

Responsible amateur prehistoric studies scholars urgently need to rally and help save a valuable public policy. Unless action is taken now, it is quite possible that the Isolated Finds Policy, which has added over 9,450 artifacts to Florida's archaeological record and led to significant additions to the state's Master Site File, will be permanently rescinded by the Florida Historical Commission during their May 21<sup>st</sup> meeting in Coral Gables. Despite overwhelming support from both professional and avocational groups to codify the policy and make it a program, it is in dire peril of abolishment.

### **Fossil Collectors and FPVP Permit Holders Beware!**

During discussions, representatives of the Amateur Archaeology and Paleontology Council learned that one of the commission members maintained that a modification or abolishment of the codified Florida Program of Vertebrate Paleontology, commonly known as the "Fossil Permit," would be necessary because, "Permitted fossil collecting on state land is just another way to remove artifacts." The FPVP program allows collection of vertebrate fossils on state owned lands, including but not limited to submerged lands. The AAPC views this as a clear example of an "anti-collector" bias that unfortunately exists among a few state government officials.

Our institutional critics continue to wrongfully group us with looters who illegally dig or collect artifacts at protected archaeological sites. There is a distinct difference between responsible interested members of the public who share information with professionals and the individuals who engage in illicit digging and never share any data. If the commission arbitrarily stereotypes us, and the IFP is abolished, then responsible individuals will be alienated and no information will be shared at all.

Very stringent laws currently exist relevant to illegal digging or surface collecting on state lands. Despite those laws, some state officials are frustrated by what they claim is a lack of effective enforcement. Their frustration has manifested into a misplaced discriminatory bias that has wrongfully spilled over onto the Isolated Finds Policy. In essence, abolishing the policy would only result in punishing the very individuals who have complied with the policy. Is that intelligent institutional stewardship?

The Florida Historical Commission must be encouraged not to abolish a mutually beneficial outreach activity like the Isolated Finds Policy. If they choose to do so, it will be an undeniable example of the how the involved public is being systematically pushed away through increasing restrictive legislation and rule making; adding validity to the rising belief that public archaeology is indeed being eliminated, and exclusively cloistered by institutional academia.

Please consider contacting the individual members of the Florida Historical Commission < <http://www.archaeologynet.org/IFF/fhclist.htm> > and recommend that they support the codification of the current Isolated Finds Policy, as recommended by the Florida Archaeological Council and many respected professional scholars throughout the state. To assure notification, we ask that you direct your correspondence to the eleven commissioners individually . . . and to State Archaeologist, Dr. Ryan Wheeler.

If the FHC instructs the Bureau of Archaeological Research to permanently abolish the Isolated

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Finds policy and does not replace it with a codified program, science will lose a valuable data resource and destroy the cooperative public spirit that it has taken decades to build. Presently, an IFP abolishment poses the single greatest threat to amateur paleontologists and fossil collectors since its codification. Logically . . . you're next!

Sadly, an abolishment decision would require IFP supporters to seek general repeal legislation, which could severely threaten existing cultural resource laws; a dilemma that the State of Alabama is now experiencing due to similar shortsightedness on the part of state institutional cultural resource officials.

For more in-depth information on the IFP issue, please take a moment to visit the Avocational Archaeology & Paleontology Council's web site at [http://www.archaeologynet.org/IFF/aapc .htm](http://www.archaeologynet.org/IFF/aapc.htm) . The AAPC web site offers numerous information resources, sample letters, contact information, a proposal for codification, and support documentation from respected professional and avocational scholars throughout the southeast. I implore you to write the FHC Commissioners, your State Legislative Representative and the State Archaeologist on this matter.

Time is short . . . your opinion counts when you use the power of letter writing!  
No single group has all the answers relative to cultural resource management . To end any avenue of legitimate investigation, discovery and recovery would be a disservice to the resource.

In closing I leave you with the following insightful quote from Albert Einstein . . .

"It is of great importance that the general public be given the opportunity to experience, consciously and intelligently, the efforts and the results of scientific research. It is not sufficient that each result be taken up, elaborated, and applied by a few specialists in the field. Restricting the body of knowledge to a small group deadens the philosophical spirit of a people and leads to spiritual poverty."

Sincerely,



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