

Dear Representative _____,

Responsible amateur and avocational archaeologists and prehistoric studies scholars urgently need your help. 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Florida's archaeological record and led to significant additions to the state's Master Site File, will be permanently rescinded by the Florida Historical Commission during their May 21st meeting in Coral Gables.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.

Our professional 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 avocational and amateur archaeologists 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.

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 belief that public archaeology is indeed being eliminated, and exclusively cloistered by professional 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, I respectfully ask that you direct your correspondence to the eleven commissioners individually and to State Archaeologist, Dr. Ryan Wheeler.

Representative David Russell from Hernando Co. strongly supports codification, which when implemented would benefit the scientific community and bolster the general public's significant contribution to archaeological research.

If the FHC instructs the Bureau of Archaeological Research to permanently

abolish the Isolated 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.

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 cultural resource officials. For more 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> .

Sincerely,

NAME:

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

DAYTIME PHONE

EMAIL