



January 27, 2016

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Secretary, Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell,

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) supports the Burns Paiute Tribe and our professional colleagues in expressing a deep concern for the protection of thousands of archaeological artifacts — and records detailing where more can be found — curated at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge which, despite its leaders being arrested, is still being occupied illegally by an armed group of protestors angry over federal land policy.

Founded in 1902, the AAA is dedicated to advancing human understanding and addressing the world's most pressing problems. It is the world's largest professional anthropology organization with more than 10,000 members, many of whom are archaeologists, in all 50 states as well as in many nations around the world.

More than 300 recorded prehistoric sites are within the Refuge, including burial grounds, ancient villages and petroglyphs. Some of the artifacts — including spears, stone tools, woven baskets and beads — date back 9,800 years. The artifacts and remains are claimed as ancestral by the Burns Paiute and are priceless to science and the tribe, which collaborates closely with archaeologists protecting its heritage. The problems with these artifacts being held hostage are numerous, and our fear is that they may be altered, destroyed, or sold illegally, despite their cultural and historical importance, and despite the legal protections they enjoy.

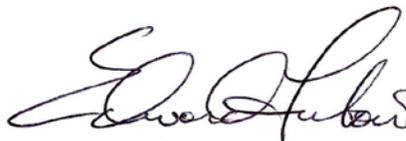
In an ironic twist, the protesters' actions are effectively undercutting the positions they claim to champion, and the public and private interests they claim to defend. We regard this illegal protest as a misguided and ill-informed action that disavows the federal government-to-government relationship with the Burns Paiute Tribe and threatens the legitimate public interest in understanding and preserving our shared human past.

These historical treasures help tell the story of all the peoples of the region and throughout the West who came before. We are hoping for a peaceful resolution with no further loss of life, and strongly urge you to protect these artifacts and prosecute the Malheur protestors if any artifacts or maps are damaged or missing.

Sincerely,



Alisse Waterston  
President  
American Anthropological Association



Ed Liebow  
Executive Director  
American Anthropological Association

Cc:

Oregon Governor Kate Brown

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Malheur National Wildlife archaeologist Carla Burnside

Burns Paiute Tribe Chairwoman Charlotte Rodrique