

CEMVS-PD-C (1105)

27 October 1997

## MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Kennewick Man Remains: Review of Current Curation Conditions and Recommendations

1. On 23 October 1997, I was directed by Mr. Paul Rubenstein (CECW-AG) to meet him in Richland, Washington, to evaluate the curation status of the Kennewick Man remains and to provide any curation recommendations necessary. Ms. Teresa Militello, a member of my staff, accompanied me to Richland in order to accomplish this mission.

2. On 24 October, we met Mr. Rubenstein and Mr. Chip Smith (ASACW) at the Pasco, Washington, airport. We were introduced to LTC Donald Curtis (CENWW-DE), Ms. Linda Kirts (CENWW-OC), Mr. John Leier (CENWW-PL-ER), and other support staff. They accompanied us to the building in Richland, Washington, which currently houses the Kennewick Man remains. Repository staff members stated that the remains, or their packaging, had not been altered since their arrival. We performed our evaluation over the next two days, and I returned directly to Washington, D.C., on 26 October with Mr. Rubenstein.

3. The following outlines my major observations. A more detailed report will be prepared using data forms that MCX-CMAC applies to curation assessments nationwide.

a. Repository: The remains are housed in a large masonry structure that currently serves as a laboratory (ground floor) and administration offices (second floor). The structure has been engineered to withstand earthquakes and is in excellent condition.

b. Security: Security for the remains is excellent. To enter the main building, one must first obtain clearance and a visitor badge from the security office. To enter the building, one must be escorted by staff. All exterior doors are locked and controlled by magnetic key cards. To enter the curation room where the remains are housed, one must be escorted. Only five staff members have key card access to the curation room. Security is equal to or exceeds many top museums in the United States.

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c. Curation Room: The remains are housed on the second (top) floor of the building. The room is constructed like any modern office building and is in excellent condition. The room has  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plasterboard walls, solid core wood/particle door with steel frame, and standard zoned HVAC system.

d. Composition of Curation Room: The curation room serves a multipurpose function for the tenant. It houses (a) an archaeological archives, (b) a sliding three-part Spacesaver storage unit, (c) archaeological field equipment (e.g. shovels, augers, shaker screens, etc.), (d) boxed archaeological records, and (e) three desk/table work areas. The room is clean and professionally maintained.

e. Primary Container of Remains: The remains as maintained above are housed in a metal, locking Spacesaver shelving unit, which expands for use by hand crank. Only two staff members have keys to the Spacesaver unit. The metal shelves are mostly filled with boxed archaeological artifacts. The Kennewick Man remains are housed in a wooden box and kept on the top shelf of the Spacesaver unit.

f. Secondary Container of Remains: The secondary housing for the remains is a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood box held together with metal screws. The lid for the box is held in place by two strips of 1  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch gray duct tape. Furthermore, the lid had been sealed with evidence tape. The plywood box measures 23  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 13 inches. The box is solid but not the optimum storage container by any standard since plywood is not inert nor is it archival. Additionally, the box should, in the near term, be moved to the lowest shelf for safety purposes.

g. Tertiary Container of Remains: The plywood box has approximately two inches of non-archival, "egg-crate" foam padding on the bottom of the box. The skull is resting in one corner of the box and is covered with loose bubble packing. It was not enclosed in a standard polyethylene bag. All the long bones rest in the opposite corner from the skull. These elements are all appropriately housed in new four-mil, zip-lock polyethylene storage bags. The remainder of the post-cranial elements are all housed in the same brand of four-mil, zip-lock storage bags and are densely layered on top of the long bones and the skull. This dense layering occurs all the way to the top of the plywood box. This form of housing is not optimum for skeletal remains and should be remedied immediately by adding additional padding in between bags and throughout the box.

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- h. Recommendations:
- a. The remains should be inventoried, catalogued, and transferred to an appropriate professional primary container as soon as possible.
  - b. Construction of appropriate padding for the remains and particularly the skull, should be carried out as soon as possible to ensure minimal movement of the remains.
  - c. All associated records should be gathered, archived, and housed with the remains.
  - d. The remains and associated records, when properly housed, should be transferred to a lockable, fireproof cabinet.
4. In sum, the remains are not at risk in any fashion except in how they are currently packaged. This situation can be remedied easily. MCX-CMAC is prepared to accomplish this mission.

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