

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22314



Mark Klaene
Site Operations Manager
Apache Point Observatory
P.O. Box 59
Sunspot, New Mexico 88349

October 31, 2017

RE: Section 106 Assessment of Effects for the Proposed Changes to Sacramento Peak Observatory Operations, Sunspot, Otero County, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Klaene,

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Division of Astronomical Sciences has identified the need to divest several facilities from its portfolio to retain the balance of capabilities needed to deliver the best performance on key science of the present decade and beyond. The Sacramento Peak Observatory in Sunspot, Otero County, New Mexico, is one of the facilities identified for divestment.

The decision regarding the potential changes to the Sacramento Peak Observatory is considered a federal undertaking and triggers compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). While engaging in Section 106 consultation under the NHPA, NSF is simultaneously producing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to identify potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed changes to operations.

On August 24, 2016, NSF formally initiated Section 106 consultation with the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division, which serves as New Mexico's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). You have requested consulting party status for the proposed undertaking as part of the Section 106 process. With this letter, NSF is enclosing the *Proposed Changes to Sacramento Peak Observatory Operations: Historic Properties Assessment of Effects* (CH2M HILL, 2017) for your information and review.

The Sacramento Peak Observatory is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as a historic district with 63 contributing resources. Under proposed Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4, historic properties that contribute to the NRHP-eligible historic district could be demolished. Therefore, NSF has determined that any of the proposed Alternatives for this undertaking would result in a finding of adverse effect under Section 106. The proposed Alternatives are summarized as follows:

Proposed Action Alternatives

Alternative 1 – Continued Science and Education-focused Operations by Interested Parties with Reduced NSF Funding

Alternative 2 – Transition to Partial Operations by Interested Parties with Reduced NSF Funding

Alternative 3 – Mothballing of Facilities

Alternative 4 – Demolition and Site Restoration

NSF will invite you to attend a Section 106 consulting parties meeting that will be scheduled in the future. The Section 106 meeting will provide an overview of the Section 106 process, review the proposed Alternatives and their anticipated effects on the historic Sacramento Peak Observatory, and discuss potential mitigation measures.

We look forward to working with you on the proposed undertaking. If you have any questions, please contact Elizabeth Pentecost at (703) 292-4907.

Regards,



Caroline M. Blanco
Federal Preservation Officer
Assistant General Counsel
Office of the General Counsel

Enclosure:

Proposed Changes to Sacramento Peak Observatory Operations: Historic Properties Assessment of Effects

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22314



OFFICE OF THE
GENERAL COUNSEL

December 12, 2017

Dr. Kevin Reardon
Associate Astronomer
National Solar Observatory
3665 Discovery Drive
Boulder, CO 80303

RE: Section 106 Assessment of Effects for the Proposed Changes to Sacramento Peak
Observatory Operations, Sunspot, Otero County, New Mexico

Dear Dr. Reardon,

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Division of Astronomical Sciences has identified the need to divest several facilities from its portfolio to retain the balance of capabilities needed to deliver the best performance on key science of the present decade and beyond. The Sacramento Peak Observatory in Sunspot, Otero County, New Mexico, is one of the facilities identified for divestment.

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NSF will invite you to attend a Section 106 consulting parties meeting that will be scheduled in the future. The Section 106 meeting will provide an overview of the Section 106 process, review the proposed Alternatives and their anticipated effects on the historic Sacramento Peak Observatory, and discuss potential measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate any adverse effects.

We look forward to working with you on the proposed undertaking. If you have questions, please contact Elizabeth Pentecost at (703) 292-4907 or envcomp-AST-sacpeak@nsf.gov.

Regards,



Caroline M. Blanco
Federal Preservation Officer
Assistant General Counsel
Office of the General Counsel

Enclosure:

Proposed Changes to Sacramento Peak Observatory Operations: Historic Properties Assessment of Effects