



MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION NETWORK

August 28, 2025

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
Governor's Office Contact:
Jen Flood | State Budget Office Director
Email: FloodJ3@michigan.gov

RE: Restore Funding for Cultural Resource Management and the Michigan Historical Center

Governor Whitmer,

I'm the Executive Director of the Michigan Historic Preservation Network (MHPN), a state-wide non-profit that supports the sustainability and economic viability of Michigan's historic places through advocacy, education, and direct action. I am writing with deep concern about the House of Representatives' decision to eliminate funding for the Cultural Resource Management program within the DNR, as well as the 33 percent cut to the Michigan Historical Center's budget.

More than 4.5 million acres of state land and 38,000 square miles of Great Lakes bottomland are under the management of the DNR. These lands contain archaeological sites. Some are known, while others remain to be identified.

Because of the \$1 million appropriation for Cultural Resource Management, DNR archaeologists have been able to support the department's core mission: the conservation, protection, management, use, and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations, while collaborating with state, federal, and tribal partners. Having archaeologists in DNR has created a culture of awareness within the department about the importance of protecting archaeological sites.

The Michigan History Center has a presence across the state. Nearly half a million people visit at least one of the Center's museum sites each year, including Hartwick Pines State Park near Grayling, Fayette Historic State Park, the Iron Industry Museum in the Upper Peninsula, and the Michigan History Museum in Lansing. Additionally, the State Maritime Archaeologist stationed in Alpena provides expertise and consults with citizens and public officials throughout the state.

These cuts eliminate the Michigan History Center's ability to interpret and protect Great Lakes shipwrecks and archaeological sites related to all people of Michigan. It would mean severely reduced services and fewer public and educational programs at the twelve Michigan History Museum System sites across the state. It would weaken the Center's ability to interpret and preserve the state's artifact collections and reduce assistance to communities with historical markers and heritage trails.

All of this work supports Michigan tourism and economic development. Investing in our history—in our historic sites and parks—is a sound investment. Without this funding, we will lose our past. Evidence of life in early Michigan will be damaged or destroyed, and the Michigan History Center will not have the capacity to interpret, teach, or exhibit what is already known.

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I encourage you to support these two budget items as the process moves forward. They are in Section 16-104, Lines 21 and 23 of the Executive budget and Section 104 of the Senate budget.

Sincerely,



Brenda Rigdon
Executive Director

Board of Directors
Michigan Historic Preservation Network