

Navy, Nonprofit Organization Partner to Protect Submerged Historic Properties

Effort Seeks to Prolong the Preservation of Significant Sites in Northern Mariana Islands

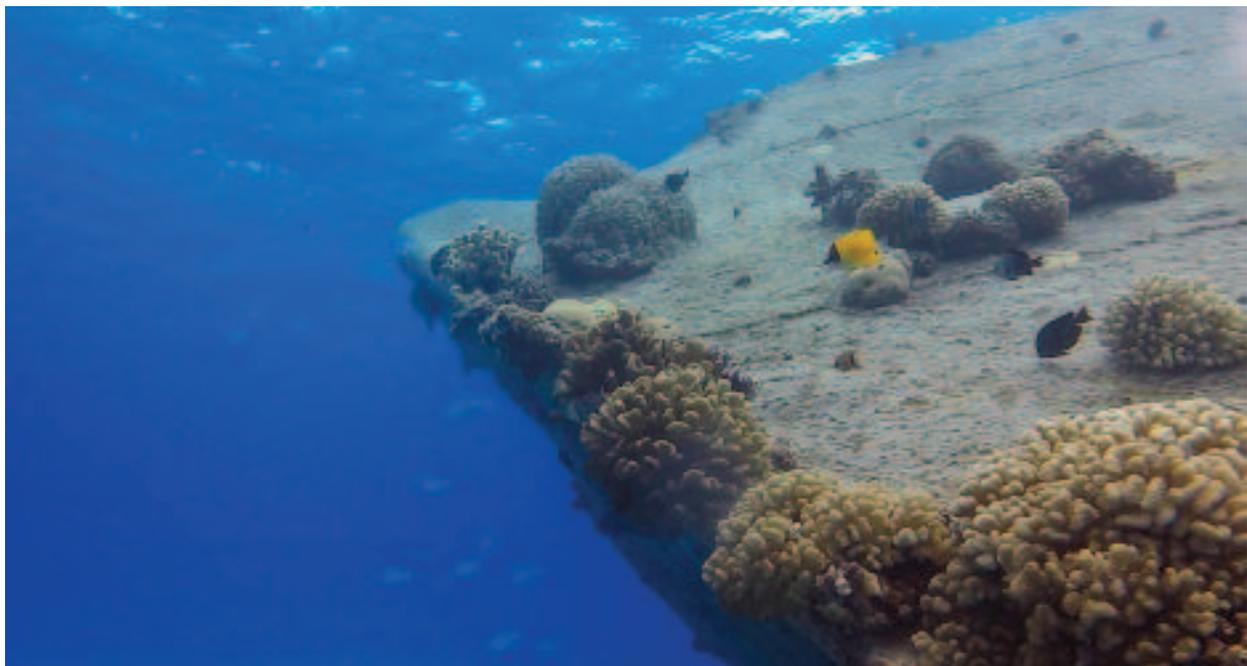
COMMONWEALTH OF THE Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Joint Region Marianas (JRM) cultural resource managers worked with a nonprofit organization to find ways to prolong the preservation of submerged historic properties.

A 16-member team from the nonprofit organization Ships of Exploration & Discovery Research, Inc. funded by a National Park Service American Battlefield Protection

Program grant, conducted two weeks of field work in the waters off of Saipan and Tinian.

The goals of the project were to obtain corrosion data of known submerged wrecks around Saipan. These data will help to:

- Find ways to prolong the preservation of these significant historic properties which have become habitat for marine species.



The bow of a Japanese merchant ship referred to locally as Chinsen (Japanese for “the shipwreck”). It is most likely the remains of the Shoan Maru, in the Saipan Lagoon in the CNMI.

The Basics About American Battlefield Protection Program

The ABPP promotes the preservation of significant historic battlefields associated with wars on American soil with a primary focus on land use, cultural resource and site management planning and public education.

Battlefield preservation enables current and future generations to better understand the connection between military conflicts and important social and political changes that occurred in American history. The ABPP provides professional assistance to individuals, groups, organizations and state and local governments interested in preserving historic battlefield land and sites associated with battles. The ABPP also awards grants to support preservation projects at historic battlefields as well as state and local governments seeking to acquire Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War battlefield land. Through these partnerships, the ABPP specifically enables communities near historic battlefields to develop local solutions for balanced preservation approaches for these sites.

The ABPP works with private landowners, battlefield friends groups, interested

community groups, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, local, state and tribal governments and Federal agencies. Battlefields are rapidly disappearing as urban and suburban development engulfs the landscape. The ABPP's "planning and partnerships" approach to battlefield preservation allows for the protection of significant battlefields that cannot always be preserved through public ownership. It is important that ABPP's preservation partners help to protect the battlefields in their communities in order for future generations of Americans to understand the important role the events that took place at these sites played in our nation's history.

ABPP Timeline

- **1991**
The ABPP was initially created by the Secretary of the Interior in 1991.
- **1996**
In 1996, Congress signed into law the American Battlefield Protection Act, which officially authorized the ABPP.
- **Since 1992**
The ABPP has awarded over 513 Battlefield Planning Grants, helping to

protect more than 100 battlefields in 42 states and territories.

- **Since 1996**
The ABPP and its partners have surveyed more than 650 battlefields in 16 wars.
- **Since 1998**
The ABPP's Battlefield Acquisition Grants have helped preserve land at 75 Civil War battlefields in 16 states.

For more information about the ABPP, visit www.nps.gov/abpp or send an email to abpp@nps.gov.

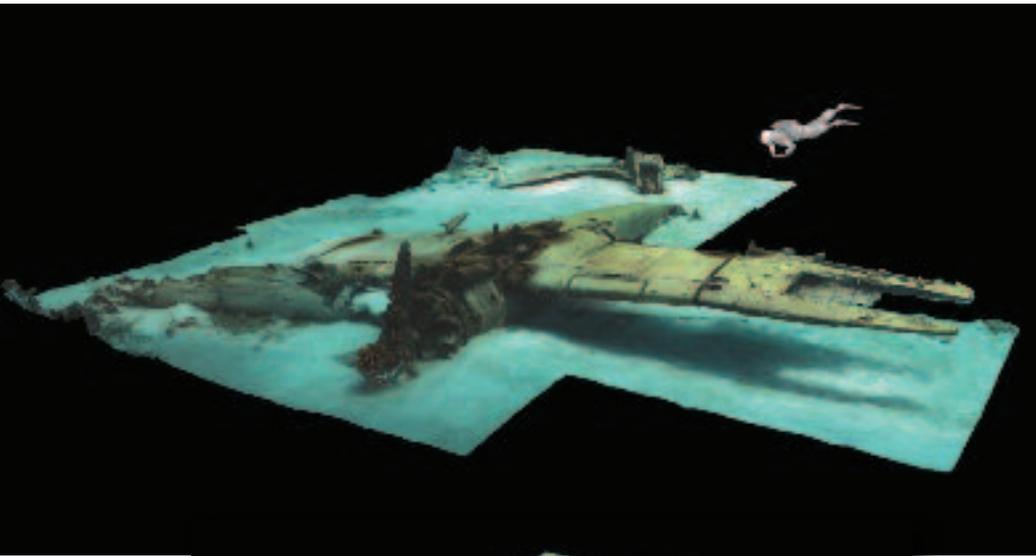


- Conduct archaeological assessments of the World War II landing beaches in Tinian for submerged cultural resources.
- Relocate and identify a pair of 18th century British anchors which may have belonged to HMS Centurion under the command of Capt. George Anson in 1742.

"This project was an excellent opportunity for JRM to demonstrate its commitment to protecting cultural heritage sites throughout the Mariana Islands," said Cultural Resource Manager W. Shawn Arnold. "It was a great opportunity to provide topside and technical support to a multinational team with some of the most renowned underwater archaeologists."

Arnold had worked with Ships of Discovery when he was a graduate student at the University of Flinders in Adelaide, Australia. He worked with the organization on Battle of Saipan assessments and has kept in contact with the group ever since. When he learned of Ships of Discovery's plans to return to Saipan this year, he requested and received permission to work with the team.

"The Navy's policy is to integrate cultural resources management and protection in all aspects of planning, training, design and construction and execution of the Navy's mission," stated Regional Environmental Director John Salas. "It was timely and appropriate for our Region Cultural Resource Manager, Shawn Arnold, to participate in the Ships of Discovery project in the CNMI."



A 3-D model of the wreckage of a World War II-era Japanese Aichi E13A reconnaissance seaplane that is lying on the bottom of Tanapag Lagoon off Saipan. The model is one of several made of submerged artifacts in the CNMI made by a team from Ships of Exploration & Discovery Research using photogrammetry technology. JRM Cultural Resource Manager W. Shawn Arnold provided support to the project.

Ships of Exploration & Discovery Research and East Carolina University Maritime Studies

The first phase of the CNMI project was to collect corrosion data on 15 submerged heritage sites which include World War II airplanes, ships, landing craft and tanks. Some of the sites are part of the Battle of Saipan World War II Maritime Heritage Trail. The corrosion data collected provide a six-year comparison which will aid in learning new ways to ensure submerged heritage sites are protected from environmental degradation.

Three-dimensional (3-D) scale models of each site were produced using photogrammetry. The models allow researchers to study the sites in detail and present interpretive material to the non-diving public. While in Saipan, the team also documented a B-29 crash site near Mount Tapochau.

“The models are basically created by stitching a series of photos together and wrapping it over a wireframe,” Arnold said. “These models allow us to have baseline data with which to compare future models.” Each model takes approximately 24 hours to produce depending on the size of the vessel. In the future, the team may produce new models to be used for side-by-side visual desktop comparisons. The models can also be converted to print 3-D scale models.

On this endeavor and in the spirit of partnership, Shawn worked with the nonprofit organization funded by the National Park Service and the local CNMI Historic Preservation Office (HPO) to advance our common goal of the protection of submerged historic properties in the CNMI.”

Arnold’s participation in the project highlights the Navy’s commitment to continuing partnerships with resource agencies in support of the protection of cultural resources, according to JRM Conservation Management Lead Dana Lujan.

Battlefield preservation enables current and future generations to better understand the connection between military conflicts and important social and political changes that occurred in American history.

The knowledge gained from this experience will undoubtedly contribute to shape how the military operates in historically sensitive marine areas.

—Randel Sablan

During the Tinian portion of the project, swimmers swam transects offshore near Unai Babui and Unai Chulu. These beaches were utilized by U.S. forces during the World War II amphibious invasion of Tinian. The objective of the transects was to identify and locate anomalies identified during previous remote sensing surveys. While in the waters of Tinian, the CNMI HPO requested the team attempt to locate and identify two anchors historically documented to have been lost by HMS Centurion in 1742.

About 275 years ago, the crew of HMS Centurion was recuperating in Tinian from hunting Spanish galleons. On September 22, 1742, a typhoon threatened to destroy the ship. The crew jettisoned two of the ship's anchors to lighten the vessel and move it to a safe position.

The Ships of Discovery team located and divers, utilizing rebreathers, visually identified two British Admiralty anchors that appear to be of 18th century design in water depths well beyond recreational scuba limits. At this time, the anchors have not been positively identified as having belonged to

HMS Centurion. However, the British Royal Naval Society has been contacted in the hope of generating interest in recovering and preserving the anchors for future display.

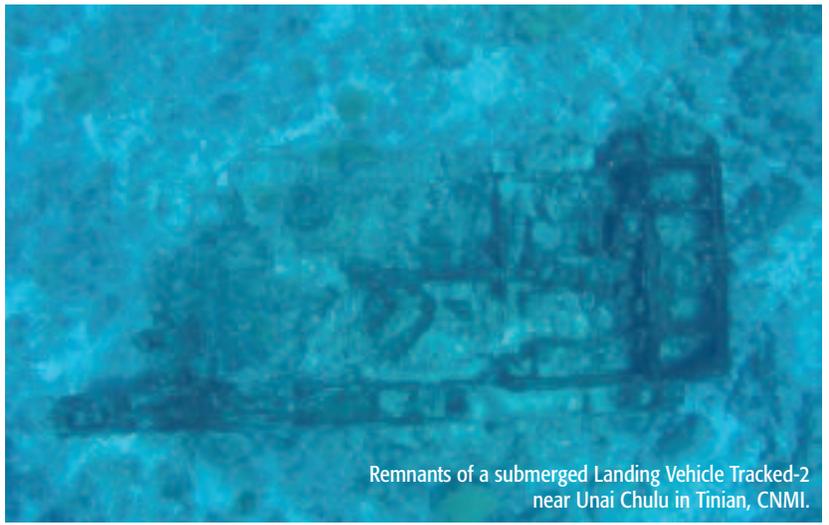
While traversing the Tinian coastline, team members also noted caves in the cliff line for archaeological assessment to ensure there will be no adverse effects from any proposed activities in the future.



An M4 Sherman tank near Oleai, Saipan, CNMI. The M4 was the most widely used tank by U.S. forces during World War II. Three of the tanks can be found in the shallow waters of western Saipan.



Dive tenders with the Ships of Exploration & Discovery Research team check on rebreather divers during a decompression stop at a depth of 50 feet in the waters off Tinian, CNMI.



Remnants of a submerged Landing Vehicle Tracked-2 near Unai Chulu in Tinian, CNMI.

For More Information

FOR MORE INFORMATION about Ships of Exploration & Discovery Research, Inc. visit www.shipsofdiscovery.org.

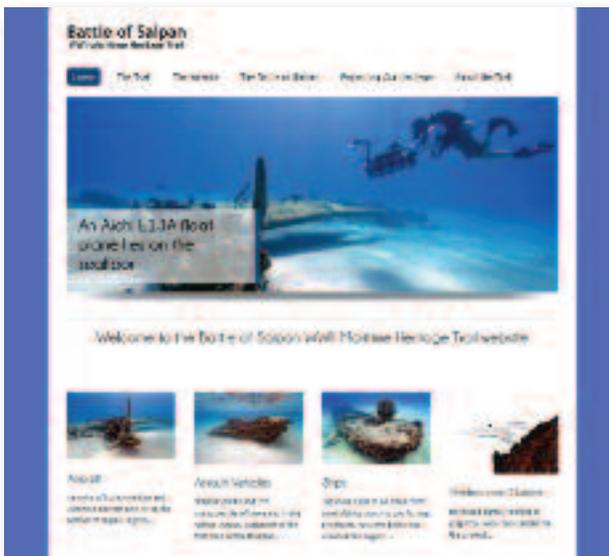


“The history of the CNMI includes the rich and diverse interaction between the indigenous people and visitors both in peace time and war,” stated Director of CNMI JRM Coordination Randel Sablan. “Historical writings, photography, personal accounts and other means contribute to a fascinating narrative for all to appreciate. This project focused on submerged and coastal historic resources in Saipan and in Tinian where the Navy is responsible, in coordination with other agencies, to

carefully manage historic resources in areas under its use. The knowledge gained from this experience will undoubtedly contribute to shape how the military operates in historically sensitive marine areas,” Sablan said.

“The more we know as a community the better we are able to protect and interpret these physical resources that remind us of our past and encourage further study,” said Sablan.

For more information, visit www.pacificmaritimeheritagetrail.com and/or www.facebook.com/shipsdiscovery. 



Catherine Cruz Norton
 Naval Facilities Engineering Command Marianas
 671-349-4053
catherine.norton@fe.navy.mil