

GUIDELINES CONCERNING ACTIVITIES DIRECTED AT UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE

(Accepted for implementation in Indian Waters by the Standing Committee of the Central Advisory Board on Archaeology, in its meeting held on 14th – 15th October 2004)

I. General principles

1. The protection of underwater cultural heritage through *in situ* preservation shall be considered as the first option. Accordingly, activities directed at underwater cultural heritage shall be authorized in a manner consistent with the protection of that heritage, and subject to that requirement may be authorized for the purpose of making a significant contribution to protection or knowledge or enhancement of underwater cultural heritage.

2. The commercial exploitation of underwater cultural heritage for trade or speculation or its irretrievable dispersal is fundamentally incompatible with the protection and proper management of underwater cultural heritage. Underwater cultural heritage shall not be traded, sold, bought or bartered as commercial goods.

These guidelines cannot be interpreted as preventing:

- (a) the provision of professional archaeological services or necessary services incidental thereto whose nature and purpose are in full conformity with the AMASR Act, 1958 and are subject to the approval of the Central Government;
- (b) the deposition of underwater cultural heritage, recovered in the course of a research project in conformity with the AMASR Act, 1958, provided such deposition does not prejudice the scientific or cultural interest or integrity of the recovered material or result in its irretrievable dispersal; is in accordance with the provisions of Para 33 and 34; and is subject to the approval of the Central Government.

3. Activities directed at underwater cultural heritage shall not adversely affect the underwater cultural heritage more than is necessary for the objectives of the project.

4. Activities directed at underwater cultural heritage must use non-destructive techniques and survey methods in preference to recovery of objects. If excavation or recovery is necessary for the purpose of scientific studies or for the ultimate protection of the underwater cultural heritage, the methods and techniques used must be as non-destructive as possible and contribute to the preservation of the remains.

5. Activities directed at underwater cultural heritage shall avoid the unnecessary disturbance of human remains or venerated sites.

6. Activities directed at underwater cultural heritage shall be strictly regulated to ensure proper recording of cultural, historical and archaeological information.

7. Public access to *in situ* underwater cultural heritage shall be promoted, except where such access is incompatible with protection and management.

8. Active cooperation in the conduct of activities directed at underwater cultural heritage shall be encouraged in order to further the effective exchange or use of archaeologists and other relevant professionals.

II. Project design

9. Prior to any activity directed at underwater cultural heritage, a project design for the activity shall be developed and submitted to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for appropriate peer review and obtaining the approval of the Central Government.

10. The project design shall include:

- (a) an evaluation of previous or preliminary studies;
- (b) the project statement and objectives;
- (c) the methodology to be used and the techniques to be employed;
- (d) the anticipated funding;
- (e) an expected timetable for completion of the project;
- (f) the composition of the team and the qualifications, responsibilities and experience of each team member;
- (g) plans for post-fieldwork analysis and other activities;
- (h) a conservation programme for artefacts and the site in close cooperation with the competent authorities;
- (i) a site management and maintenance policy for the whole duration of the project;
- (j) a documentation programme;
- (k) a safety policy;
- (l) an environmental policy;
- (m) arrangements for collaboration with museums and other institutions, in particular scientific institutions;
- (n) report preparation;
- (o) deposition of archives, including underwater cultural heritage removed; and
- (p) a programme for publication.

11. Activities directed at underwater cultural heritage shall be carried out in accordance with the project design approved by the Central Government.

12. Where unexpected discoveries are made or circumstances change, the project design shall be reviewed and amended with the approval of the Director-General, ASI.

13. In cases of urgency or chance discoveries, activities directed at the underwater cultural heritage, including conservation measures or activities for a period of short duration, in particular site stabilization, may be authorized in the absence of a project design in order to protect the underwater cultural heritage.

III. Preliminary work

14. The preliminary work referred to in Para 10 (a) shall include an assessment that evaluates the significance and vulnerability of the underwater cultural heritage and the surrounding natural environment to damage by the proposed project, and the potential to obtain data that would meet the project objectives.

15. The assessment shall also include background studies of available historical and archaeological evidence, the archaeological and environmental characteristics of the site, and the consequences of any potential intrusion for the long-term stability of the underwater cultural heritage affected by the activities.

IV. Project objective, methodology and techniques

16. The methodology shall comply with the project objectives, and the techniques employed shall be as non-intrusive as possible.

V. Funding

17. Except in cases of emergency to protect underwater cultural heritage, an adequate funding base shall be assured in advance of any activity, sufficient to complete all stages of the project design, including conservation, documentation and curation of recovered artefacts, and report preparation and dissemination.

18. The project design shall demonstrate an ability, such as by securing a bond / undertaking by the head of the institution, to fund the project through to completion.

19. The project design shall include a contingency plan that will ensure conservation of underwater cultural heritage and supporting documentation in the event of any interruption of anticipated funding.

VI. Project duration - timetable

20. An adequate timetable shall be developed to assure in advance of any activity directed at underwater cultural heritage the completion of all stages of the project design, including conservation, documentation and curation of recovered underwater cultural heritage, as well as report preparation and dissemination.

21. The project design shall include a contingency plan that will ensure conservation of underwater cultural heritage and supporting documentation in the event of any interruption or termination of the project.

VII. Competence and qualifications

22. Activities directed at underwater cultural heritage shall only be undertaken under the direction and control of, and in the regular presence of, a qualified underwater archaeologist with scientific competence appropriate to the project.
23. All persons on the project team shall be qualified and have demonstrated competence appropriate to their roles in the project.

VIII. Conservation and site management

24. The conservation programme shall provide for the treatment of the archaeological remains during the activities directed at underwater cultural heritage, during transit and in the long term. Conservation shall be carried out in accordance with current professional standards.
25. The site management programme shall provide for the protection and management *in situ* of underwater cultural heritage, in the course of and upon termination of fieldwork. The programme shall include public information, reasonable provision for site stabilization, monitoring, and protection against interference.

IX. Documentation

26. The documentation programme shall set out thorough documentation including a progress report of activities directed at underwater cultural heritage, in accordance with current professional standards of archaeological documentation.
27. Documentation shall include, at a minimum, a comprehensive record of the site, including the provenance of underwater cultural heritage moved or removed in the course of the activities directed at underwater cultural heritage, field notes, plans, drawings, sections, and photographs or recording in other media.

X. Safety

28. A safety policy shall be prepared that is adequate to ensure the safety and health of the project team and third parties and that is in conformity with any applicable statutory and professional requirements.

XI. Environment

29. An environmental policy shall be prepared that is adequate to ensure that the seabed and marine life are not unduly disturbed.

XII. Reporting

30. Interim and final reports shall be made available according to the timetable set out in the project design, and deposited in relevant public records.
31. Reports shall include:
- (a) an account of the objectives;

- (b) an account of the methods and techniques employed;
- (c) an account of the finds;
- (d) an account of the results achieved;
- (e) basic graphic and photographic documentation on all phases of the activity;
- (f) recommendations concerning conservation and curation of the site and of any underwater cultural heritage removed; and
- (g) recommendations for future activities.

XIII. Curation of project archives

32. Arrangements for curation of the project archives shall be agreed to before any activity commences, and shall be set out in the project design.

33. The project archives, including any underwater cultural heritage removed and a copy of all supporting documentation shall, as far as possible, be kept together and intact as a collection in a manner that is available for professional and public access as well as for the curation of the archives. This should be done as rapidly as possible and in any case not later than ten years from the completion of the project, in so far as may be compatible with conservation of the underwater cultural heritage.

34. The project archives shall be managed according to professional standards, and subject to the approval of the Central Government.

XIV. Dissemination

35. Projects shall provide for public education and popular presentation of the project results where appropriate.

36. A final synthesis of a project shall be:

- (a) made public as soon as possible, having regard to the complexity of the project and the confidential or sensitive nature of the information; and
- (b) deposited in relevant public records.