



# VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## The Vermont Archaeological Society Electronic Newsletter

Greetings!

### Please Protect Archaeology in Vermont

The Douglas Administration, "making hard choices", has proposed modifying Act 250 requirements related to archaeological sites.

There will be hearings held around the state in the next few weeks. The VAS, and Vermont's heritage, need your help.

Please read on!

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*"It is the policy of the State of Vermont to protect significant archeological resources. In these challenging economic times, we want to focus limited resources on the most effective and efficient means to preserve them. We are exploring possible changes to the treatment of archeological sites under Act 250 and invite your comments and ideas."*

*"Please refer to the Division's website for background materials [www.historicvermont.org](http://www.historicvermont.org) Four public meetings are scheduled around the state and we invite your participation. We also welcome written and electronic submission if your schedule does not permit attendance at a meeting. Thank you."*

### Dates & Locations of Public Hearings



#### June 23, 2009

**Williston** - 5:00- 6:30 pm  
7928 Williston Road  
Williston, VT

#### June 25, 2009

**Rutland** - 12:00-2:00 pm  
GMNF Building  
Supervisors Office Conference  
Room  
231 North Main St. (RT 7)  
Rutland, VT

#### June 30, 2009

**St. Johnsbury** - 5:00-6:30 pm  
Regional Planning Commission  
Conference Room  
36 Eastern Ave.  
St. Johnsbury, VT

#### July 14, 2009

**Rockingham** - 12:00-2:00 pm  
Women's Club, Town Hall  
7 Square  
Bellows Falls, VT

Officers and Board

Please be sure to follow the link to "draft archaeology rules" to read the entire proposed amendment. Unfortunately, this link is in pdf format and cannot conveniently be reproduced here.

Dear VAS members:

There has probably been debate about how to manage and pay for historic preservation in general, and archaeology in particular, under Act 250 since the day it was passed. It appears that the most recent version of this debate has made its way down the administrative path farther than previous ones, and we are currently faced with an opportunity to comment on some "proposed rules changes".

Based on the language proposed for the rule change, it appears that there is a desire to dramatically limit field investigations under ACT 250 to only those areas that contain sites already listed on the State Register.

This may well mean that archaeologically sensitive areas, whether sensitive for precontact Native American sites, or early historic sites, will not be studied unless there is already a known site nearby. This would effectively "freeze" our knowledge of the past at what is already known.

In addition, the funding mechanism for field investigations is slated for change. Currently the burden falls on the developer or project proponent. Archaeologists and developers have long supported a fee structure that would underwrite these archaeological costs (similar to the system provided for natural resources). This would spread the burden across the whole applicant pool, and lend greater predictability to permit process costs for all applicants.

The present proposal has the District Commissions funding field studies, but does not say where the funding would come from (perhaps from an application fee, but this is not specified). Without explaining where the money would come from or how it would be administered, it appears to run the risk of setting up a competition between resource areas for the Commission's (no doubt limited) funds. They might, in other words, have to split existing funds between all the affected resource areas. Without any knowledge of how this would work (i.e., allocation criteria) or the composition of the Commission (do they know anything about archaeological sites?) it seems risky to support such a proposition.

The fact that the press release features the phrase "in these challenging economic times..." should be a red flag suggesting that the administration could be using the present, temporary economic crisis to roll back protection and preservation of archaeological resources.

2009

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It would be nice to discover that these proposed rules changes are, in fact, designed as a step forward for historic preservation in Vermont. The best way to find out and help assure that it is so is to participate in one of the public meetings, or submit your comments and questions about these proposed changes by mail or email.

Dates and locations of the public hearings are listed in the sidebar at [www.historicvermont.org](http://www.historicvermont.org)

*"As members of the VAS, part of our commitment is to support and promote conservation and preservation of threatened cultural resources. Therefore, I encourage those of you who can, to attend one of the meetings being held across the state. Your presence in and of itself would provide support. Your voice on this is doubly important. Please familiarize yourself with the regulations and let us or the Commission know your thoughts on these important issues for the future of archaeology in Vermont."*

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