

FOR ALL MOONKIND™

In recognizing the existence of heritage sites on the Moon, the White House has confirmed the importance of balancing exploration with preservation. Tasked one year ago by the U.S. Congress to “[assess issues relating to protecting and preserving historically important Apollo Program lunar landing sites](#)” and artifacts, the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) recommended that measures be developed to protect “[footprints left by our early explorers](#).”

The OSTP [Report](#) relies heavily on [technical Guidelines](#) promulgated by NASA in 2011 to identify significant lunar heritage sites and discuss possible risks and preventive protocols. In so doing, it clearly recognizes the interim and voluntary nature of the guidelines. The Report rightly stresses that the Guidelines can only “inform lunar spacecraft mission planners interested in helping preserve and protect lunar historic artifacts and potential science opportunities for future missions.” They are neither mandatory nor enforceable.

Thankfully, many private companies, including our partners Astrobotic, PTScientists and TeamIndus, have publicly announced their intention to follow the Guidelines or otherwise affirmed their commitment to preserving our heritage in space. But our universal heritage deserves more than reliance on the beneficence of current and future space actors. There is a reason that national and international treasures here on Earth, like the Liberty Bell or Stonehenge are protected not by the promises of a few, but by fences, locks and guards.

The Report worries that “some states might see a U.S.-led attempt to protect space artifacts as a subterfuge for securing indefinite rights over lunar territory.” As such, the OSTP shies away from the negotiation of a new international agreement and offers, instead, four specific recommendations for protecting and preserving the Apollo lunar landing sites, all of which rely upon soft law and bilateral diplomacy:

1. Look for opportunities to leverage lunar missions by and with other Governments and commercial entities to assist in preserving and protecting Apollo lunar artifacts;
2. Continue discussions regarding lunar heritage site preservation with foreign space agencies as appropriate;
3. Investigate the feasibility of working with the international community to develop non-binding best practices for preserving and protecting lunar artifacts on a “reciprocal, transparent, and mutually beneficial basis”; and
4. Discuss the pros and cons of beginning international dialogue on the best ways to mitigate risks presented by future human and robotic exploration to the lunar artifacts of the United States and other countries.

To quote Apollo 12 astronaut and third human on the Moon, [Charles “Pete” Conrad](#), we offer a qualified “[Whoopie!](#)” There is no question that the simple fact the White House has formally

recognized the importance of preservation is an incredible win for our human heritage. But only time will tell if these recommendations will become commitments.

Rather than sit back and wait, [For All Moonkind](#) is continuing its effort to secure universal recognition and protection of our heritage in outer space, and in so doing, leading a shift in the paradigm of space exploration, utilization and development. We are the only organization in the world focused on creating an effective and enforceable system to manage and protect our common human heritage in outer space.

Our entirely [volunteer team](#) of space lawyers and policymakers are working to develop reasonable and practical protocols that will balance development and preservation and include systems to select, manage and study relevant sites. We seek to promote exploration and development while opening the debate on equally pressing issues of property and resource extraction.

The Apollo – indeed all the – lunar landing sites are truly the cradle of our extra-terrestrial civilization. And just as we have come together openly on Earth to protect heritage sites that confirm our unity and humanity, we must commit to do so in space. Our future depends on it.