



SPACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND SHUTTLE STACK RECORDATION ACTIVITY Frequently Asked Questions

RECORDATION & REGULATORY QUESTIONS

1. Are the orbiters listed on the National Register of Historic Places?

No. The orbiters were recently determined “eligible” for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a result of the Space Shuttle Program survey completed in 2007. The remaining elements of the shuttle stack are considered contributing resources to the orbiters per recommendations from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The stack is made up of the orbiter, one external tank, three space shuttle main engines, and two solid rocket boosters. Even though the elements are not formally listed on the National Register, NASA will treat them as if they were.

2. What regulations mandate this process?

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the implementing regulations to the act, 36 CFR Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties. NASA is required to comply with the act to identify and protect historic properties. 36 CFR Part 800 defines undertaking and adverse effects. Retiring the space shuttle orbiter is considered an adverse effect. Section 106 requires consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer/Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and Interested Parties. A mitigation plan and a Programmatic Agreement will be prepared and implemented for the adverse effects.

3. What does recordation mean?

Recordation is the process of capturing the status of historic property before any modifications and/or demolition activities can occur. This is accomplished by collecting photographs, drawings and archival files, and preparing a written history of the property to meet the Department of Interior’s Standards for Architectural and Engineering Documentation.

For the space shuttle orbiters and contributing elements, design phases – from concept development to retirement – will be documented; however, special emphasis will be placed on design and hardware evolution and the changes that occurred in response to the two shuttle accidents. Discovery has been identified as the “shuttle of record.” NASA will also document the ferry operations for the shuttle carrier aircraft; major design modifications and mission operations following the Challenger and Columbia tragedies; and retirement (decommissioning and safing).

Recordation is performed by qualified professionals meeting the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards.

4. Who are you consulting with on this undertaking?

NASA is consulting with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, the State Historic Preservation Officers from California, Texas, Alabama and Florida and interested parties designated by each State.

5. What level of documentation are you going to be performing?

NASA will perform a Level II Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) which has been approved by the Regulatory Agencies.

More information on this process can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/hdp/>.

6. Where is the documentation going to reside?

The HAER collection is maintained by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and will be available to future aerospace students and researchers. Final recordation products will also be made available through state repositories, museums, universities, libraries and appropriate Web sites.

7. Is the documentation open for the public to view?

Yes, it will be available at Library of Congress and other repositories.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Why are we ending the shuttle program?

In 2004, President George W. Bush announced a new exploration initiative, the Vision for Space Exploration. As part of this initiative, NASA will continue to use the space shuttle fleet to fulfill its obligation to complete assembly of the International Space Station and then retire the fleet by the end of 2010. Congress expressly endorsed the President's exploration initiative.

2. When is the Space Shuttle Program coming to an end?

The fleet is expected to retire by October 2010.

3. What makes up a Space Transportation System (STS) or "stack"?

An STS is made up of one orbiter, one external tank, two solid rocket boosters and three space shuttle main engines that are assembled and flight ready.

4. What is replacing the Space Shuttle Program?

The President's new direction for NASA is designed to spur innovation by investing in breakthrough technologies to help extend our reach beyond low Earth orbit. The plan also calls on significant investments to support the growing commercial space industry to provide access to the International Space Station and low Earth orbit.

5. What is happening to all of the property in the Space Shuttle Program?

Property that has future use for other programs/projects is being transferred to organizations within NASA. Property that has no identified use will be offered to the Smithsonian Institution under an existing Memorandum of Understanding. Any personal property that is not of interest to the Smithsonian will be disposed of through normal policies and procedures established by NASA and with the Government Services Administration (GSA). Certified museums will have a chance to request some of these artifacts through the Web site set up by GSA located at <http://gsaccess.gov/NASAWel.htm>.

6. Are the Smithsonian, NASA visitor centers and museums involved in the process?

NASA has an agreement with the Smithsonian Institution (dated Aug. 8, 2008) for the Smithsonian to be the primary curator for the management and preservation of NASA's historical artifacts. NASA will continue working with them and the GSA for disposition of excess and obsolete Space Shuttle Program inventory.

7. How are you going to tell the Space Shuttle Program story?

The Space Shuttle Program has been documented extensively throughout the years. Information on the program can be found in books, films, movies, Web sites and visitor centers. The recordation activity will further document the important details of the space shuttle orbiters and contributing elements (the external tank, solid rocket boosters and space shuttle main engines) for research by students and adults.

8. Can I get memorabilia from the Space Shuttle Program? If so, how?

Yes. Though government property cannot be given to the public, models and other commercial memorabilia are available at visitor centers, gift shops, and online stores through a variety of vendors.

9. Was an environmental impact statement completed on this undertaking?

Not specifically, but two agency-wide environmental documents were prepared after the retirement of the Space Shuttle Program was announced and the development of the Constellation Program was begun. In July 2008, the Space Shuttle Programmatic Environmental Assessment: Transition and Program Property Disposition was completed by NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center. The document can be found at www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/shuttle/main/pea.html.

The Final Constellation Environmental Impact Statement, managed by NASA Johnson Space Center, was completed in January 2008 and can be found at www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/constellation/main/peis.html.

ORBITER AND STACK QUESTIONS

1. What makes up the stack?

A stack is made up of an orbiter, one external tank, three space shuttle main engines, and two solid rocket boosters.

2. How many orbiters are left?

Three orbiters are left: Atlantis, Discovery and Endeavour. Enterprise, the orbiter used as a test vehicle, is currently on display at the Smithsonian.

3. Will one of the orbiters be displayed in a museum for future generations?

Yes, the three remaining orbiters will be displayed, but the decision has not been made as to who will be receiving the orbiters with the exception of Discovery, which will be displayed at the National Air and Space Museum, Udvar-Hazy Center. Enterprise, a test article, is currently on display at the Smithsonian.

4. What museums will get Atlantis and Endeavour?

The decision has not been made yet.

NASA issued a Request for Information (RFI) to obtain input on the community's ability to acquire and publicly display the space shuttle orbiters after conclusion of the Space Shuttle Program from educational institutions, science museums and other appropriate organizations . The RFI also seeks ideas on how these assets can best be used in the broad national interest to inspire the American public and students in particular.

NASA issued a follow-up 2010 RFI to convey information on a decrease in the cost of preparing and transporting an orbit – from \$42M to \$28.8M – and an adjustment in the delivery schedule – advancing it by six months. Responses were due by Feb. 19, 2010, and are being evaluated.

5. Can we buy pieces of the orbiters?

No, government property cannot be given or sold to the public. It must be disposed of through GSA.

6. When will a decision be made on the orbiters?

A selection date has not been determined.

7. Will the orbiters be disposed of safely?

Yes, NASA will ensure that all property is inspected and processed to meet safety, environmental and museum standards.