

PALAU NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

1. Title: Historic Preservation Specialist III/ Registrar

2. Responsibilities

- Nomination and Registration of sites to the Palau Register of Historic Places
- Maintain the national list of historic sites eligible to be nominated to the Palau Register of Historic Places
- Monitoring permitted and non-permitted undertakings for compliance with historic preservation law.
- Preservation and protection of all documents, artifacts, and other materials with historical and cultural values held in the Register archive.
- Restoration of registered sites.
- Maintaining the Palau Research Library.

3. Background and Review

The Palau Register of Historic Places was developed under the Palau Historic Preservation Act (PNC 19) and is modeled after the U.S National Register. It is administered under the BCHP and is intended to serve as the official inventory of information regarding historical sites and tangible cultural properties, which are considered significant to the Palauan people, and thus worth preserving. The Palau Register includes not only those places of national significance, but also places of state and local importance. In effect, it is an authoritative guide whereby government officials, private groups, and ordinary citizens can indicate which properties throughout the nation should be protected from destruction or impairment. The Palau Register is also the legal instrument that ensures the registered properties of properties that may be eligible, threatened by public or private development, are subjected to comment and review in accordance with the procedures prescribed by law.

The Historic Preservation Act, which brought the Palau Register of Historic Places into being, was initially passed in 1978 as Public Law 6-6-19. Several years passed before the Palau Register was developed to the level of nominating and registering historic sites. In the early 1980's, Trust Territory documents and books to be maintained began arriving in Palau and most were distributed to appropriate government agencies for their own storage and use. Those that were not dispersed remain in the Register archive for reference purposes.

The primary goal of the Palau Register is to preserve significant historic and cultural properties through the means provided by Palau National Code (PNC) 19. More specifically, the Palau Register programs seeks to: (1) assess and record the history and achievements of the Palauan people as reflected in historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects; (2) aid Palauan states in the preparation of comprehensive preservation; (3) assist in preservation of the tangible reminders of history; and (4) extend all such properties a degree of protection by insuring compliance with procedures whenever and wherever the law applies. This process requires a recommendation of sites by the Register of the BCHP, approval by the Palau Historical and Cultural Advisory Board, and certification by the Keeper of the Register.

PALAU NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The Register has its own written procedures entitled the “Palau Register of Historic Places Manual” that describes all functions related to this section, including the purpose and authority of the Register, the role of the Technical Review Committee, the nomination process, and criteria for inclusion in the Register.

As followed in the manual procedures, the following criteria are used in evaluating a particular property for inclusion in the register:

Significant districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects are those that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and

- a) that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history, or
- b) that are associated with the lives of persons significant in Palauan history or culture, or
- c) that are associated with lyrics, folklore’s and traditions significant in Palauan culture, or
- d) embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or
- e) that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory and history.

Beginning in 1989, the first 14 sites were nominated and approved for inclusion in the Palau Register. As of August 2021, 190 sites had been nominated and approved for inclusion in the National Historic Register.

4. Currents Projects and Programs

In addition to continuing the necessary responsibilities related to nominating and registering sites to the National Historic Register, the Preservation Registrar, along with the BCHP staff, has been actively engaged in helping to organize and oversee restoration projects for a number of sites in Palau. Each year, in consultation with state government and traditional leaders, the BCHP selects several sites for future restoration. These sites are chosen because they provide an important source of information that is educational for both tourists and the Palauan people. Besides continuing the necessary responsibilities related to nominating and registering sites to the National Historic Register, the Preservation Registrar has been involved in helping to organize and oversee restoration projects for a number of sites in Palau. To date, 45 sites have been restored.

5. Priorities and Goals

There have been more than 4,000 historic and cultural sites identified in the Republic of Palau. In response to agency or individual nominations of sites, additional sites will continue to be identified until all sites with historical and cultural significance are surveyed and recorded. The priorities and goals for this section revolve around selectively nominating valuable and highly significant sited to the Palau Register, to conduct restoration of those sites, to organize the Register Archive, and

PALAU NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

to streamline the nomination process. Initial determination of eligibility is by the principal investigator or archaeologist when conducting survey in each of the states.

Another goal is to streamline the process of site nomination. A problem often exists in that there may not be enough information brought in by survey and oral history collection to help aid in the nomination and registration of the sites. This can result in an increased workload for members of the staff and many operations must either be repeated or extended. A more thorough, integrative research design would promote increased efficiency in gathering site information, and will inevitably increase the number of sites that are nominated to the Register each year.

Once the site has been nominated and placed on the Palau Register of Historic Places, restoration is then a major consideration. Although not mandated by law, it is in the best interest of the BCHP, as well as Palauans generally, to maintain and preserve cultural resources. This includes clearing away vegetation and restoring a site to its (near) original condition. This site rehabilitation program, developed in the mid-1990s, helps facilitate the enjoyment and education of the site by both locals and visitors. This will hopefully have the effect of increasing the number of site nominations to the Palau Register and motivate villages in every state to maintain their sites. In addition, another issue is that the majority of properties identified during survey are on private land. These properties, despite their significance, must have a land owner endorsement for the site to be registered.

Another goal is to continue the organization of the Register Archive and the Research library. This includes cataloguing books, documents, and cultural material, and organizing them into an interpretable cataloguing system. This facilitates information gathering and provides a way for researchers to easily examine site reports and other literary resources.

In the longer term, all historically and culturally significant sites in the Republic of Palau must be reviewed for nomination to the National Historic Register. This includes those sites that will be identified in present and future surveys. The preservation registrar also foresees focusing on educating the public about historic and cultural preservation as a priority for the future. Overall, it is a continuing goal to try and nominate around 10 sites per year.

In addition, other important priorities and goals for the Registrar section as defined by the staff at the BCHP are as follows:

- Seek out training on site evaluation, Section 106 procedures, landscape preservation, and management of traditional cultural places.
- With the assistance of the Public Education Section, conduct state visits to enhance awareness of cultural sites and to promote protection and preservation.
- Work with state government to improve and replace deteriorating and corroded interpretive signs.
- Digitize library documents and audio, video, and photo collections for the preparation of creating a searchable electronic database.
- Promote annual site rehabilitation and conservation projects.
- Update the Palau Register Manual.
- Promote continuous nomination and registration of significant cultural and historical sites.