

be obtained by writing Sacred Sites International at 1442A Walnut St. #330, Berkeley, CA 94709 or calling 510-525-1304. Membership information can also be obtained

Leonard and Nancy Becker are preservationists concerned with conserving historic sacred places honored by cultures around the world. They believe that the preservation of sacred sites fosters cultural and biological diversity and religious freedom.

associated with the religion of Pueblo Indians of the area; it is a National Monument and a fragile ecosystem. The site is the victim of urban sprawl with housing tracts across the street from the Monument's vast fields of petroglyphs filled with images of star beings, flute players and other spirits. A bond measure that would have funded the road was defeated in 2003 but vigilance is required because the road is graded up to the entrance of the park. Pueblo Indians have told Sacred Sites International that they will be forced to abandon the site for religious use if the road is ever built. The site would no longer be whole. Most of the sites adopted by SSIF are featured in Sacred Sites Newsletter (formerly Site Saver), a 10-page journal style publication, highlighting endangered sites, their Urgent Action Campaigns, book reviews and other sacred sites news. The publication is sent to members around the world and to grassroots groups for use in their preservation work. The newsletter has been distributed to decision-makers such as city council members, planning commissioners, state and federal U.S. legislators and international preservation organizations like UNESCO and ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites). The publication's articles have influenced decisions resulting in the preservation of sites by securing funding, leading officials to protect sacred sites from development and industrial exploitation, and creating wider media attention. The Newsletter is available at University libraries like Harvard, the University of California and Saint Lawrence University. The newsletter and a separate e-newsletter highlight urgent action letter-writing campaigns where members are asked to write to decision-makers encouraging the preservation of endangered sites. These campaigns have helped to save sacred groves of trees in India, prevented freeways through sacred fields of petroglyphs in New Mexico, and prevented an office park from being built adjacent to an archaeoastronomy site in Arizona.

The organization sponsors several onsite study tours each year for direct exposure to sacred sites and the cultures that have created them. Recent trips have visited Balinese Temples, Mexican ceremonial ruins, Hopi, Navajo, and Apache sites. Our small-group trips feature native guides and scholarly experts along with exposure to sacred arts like dance, basketry and pottery. Each study tour makes a donation for site and cultural preservation. Contributions have been made to The Friends of Moku'ula for the restoration of a Native Hawaiian sacred islet; to The Hopi Foundation to further the preservation of traditional Hopi culture; to the Labyrinth Project at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, California; and to Taksang Monastery in Bhutan for its restoration following a devastating fire.

MOST ENDANGERED SACRED SITES LIST Sacred Sites International Foundation is launching a new program that will generate a Most Endangered Sacred Sites List to be announced in the fall of 2004. The List will increase awareness of the range of threats that endanger sacred places and the need to preserve sacred sites representing different spiritual traditions throughout the world. The List will include both natural and built sites along with archaeological sites, burial and massacre sites. Inclusion on the Most Endangered Sacred Sites List is a way to educate the public about the history, culture and need for preservation of a site. It encourages an expanded awareness of diverse cultures, rituals and beliefs associated with sacred sites, and increases sensitivity to issues connected with site access and management. Educational programs could include controlled site visits, when appropriate, that could generate support for preservation. The Most Endangered Sacred Sites List may contribute to site preservation in three ways: raising public awareness through publicity, educating the public, and by providing new networking and technical opportunities. Through Sacred Sites International's network, a site might receive technical, architectural and legal assistance once a site has been included on the List. Having a site listed may increase media attention and public awareness. Volunteers, community efforts, and support from grass-roots organizations may all galvanize to preserve a site. The sponsoring person or organization may also receive positive publicity from local, national, and/or international media. Increased media attention may also help to leverage political interests of local representatives and lobbyists that support the preservation of the site. Sacred Sites International takes special care not to divulge specific locations of sensitive sites in order to protect the site from public and media attention.

Members of the public, organizations, and institutions are invited to submit nominations for the Most Endangered Sacred Sites List through the end of May 2004. The Sacred Sites International website, www.sacred-sites.org, has comprehensive information about the program including Nomination Guidelines, that lists types of sites that will be considered for inclusion and the most frequent types of threats that endanger sites. Examples of Sacred Sites are also found on the website and they serve as a guide to the kinds of sites that may be considered sacred. Built sites include churches, temples, shrines; natural sites include sacred rivers, mountains, trees and cultural landscapes; archaeological sites may include rock art, temple ruins, and megalithic monuments. The website also contains Nomination Applications or they may

SACRED SITES

International works to protect diverse Sacred Places
around the World

Nancy & Leonard Becker

MISSION AND PROGRAMS

Sacred Sites International Foundation (SSIF) of Berkeley, California is a nonprofit organization founded in 1990 to preserve natural and built sacred sites through public education, documentation, activism, on-site study tours. The Foundation has been working to further its mission by supporting the grass-roots efforts of domestic and international organizations wishing to protect such diverse sites as Tibetan Buddhist Temples in Mongolia, destroyed by the Soviets; a Hindu Temple in Bali, threatened by a proposed golf course and vacation development; and Mount Shasta, sacred to American Indians of Northern California, endangered by prospective ski developments near a sacred spring. Founders, Leonard and Nancy Becker, bring their expertise to SSIF with backgrounds in sociology, psychology and the history of art. The Beckers believe that preserving sacred places set aside for reflection, inspiration and healing will help create a better world and a more positive future by promoting religious, cultural and environmental diversity. Sacred sites are increasingly threatened in today's world by the pressures of sprawling development that puts housing and shopping centers in unlikely juxtaposition next to fragile sacred places. Mining and other industrial operations, including clean fuel like geothermal plants and wind farms often interfere with indigenous sacred sites that are part of larger cultural and spiritual landscapes. The effects of war tear apart churches, synagogues and mosques, leaving sacred space burned and gutted at times when spiritual solace is badly needed. Environmental pollution erodes the facades of temples and destroys the historic character of sacred places.

Sacred space is essential to healthy life and especially necessary in the fast-paced stressful environments that dominate many people's lives. The modern medical establishment is beginning to see the value of sacred space by recognizing the roles that prayer and meditation play in holistic healing. Many hospitals are recreating their chapels to feature spiritual space that is conducive not only to standard religious services but spaces that are equally suited for meditation and other rituals such as labyrinth walking. Deep healing can also come from communing with the natural world. Sacred space may be experienced in stands of ancient redwoods or next to the renewing flow of rivers and streams. We are reminded that the origins of healing were sometimes associated with holy wells and sacred springs. Many medieval cathedrals like Chartres in France were built over sacred springs that predated the existing sacred space. Sacred Sites International, in conjunction with a Dutch member, is seeking legal protection for a humble chapel in Belgium, The Chapel of the Fourteen Bunders, in a sacred place that has been repeatedly vandalized. This site, housing a much-revered statue of the Virgin Mary, is located near an ancient brook where the image was once found. The statue was originally attached to a beautiful oak tree and the brook never froze even in the dead of winter. The spot became a place of pilgrimage and miraculous healings especially for eye diseases. The Chapel was built to house the statue and the sacred history of the place reminds us of the curative power of nature.

The oral history of indigenous peoples is embodied in the natural abodes of their gods and spirit beings. Losing a sacred place or having a sacred site marred, torn open or occupied by industry means a loss of connection with the spiritual rhythms of their ancestors and the loss of religious freedom to access their sacred places in a pristine condition conducive to their religious practices. For the last fifteen years, Sacred Sites International has joined with Native activists and environmental groups in opposing a freeway-type road proposed for Petroglyph National Monument in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This site has long been