



AMERICAN LIGHTHOUSE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

POSITION STATEMENT

THE FUTURE OF HISTORIC OPTICS IN U.S. LIGHTHOUSES

Note: This ALCC position does not represent the views of the U.S. Coast Guard

American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee (ALCC): The ALCC was established in 1997 by individuals concerned with the preservation of America's historic lighthouses, and comprises professionals from a broad cross-section of disciplines who represent the growing lighthouse community in the United States.

INTRODUCTION

The ALCC recognizes the high historic and cultural value of Fresnel lenses to American maritime history and patrimony. Historic optics are one of the most defining characteristics of an established lighthouse. Removal of historic optics from lighthouses reduces the historic context of the optic and distorts the relationship of that optic to the light station from which it has been removed. Therefore, the ALCC believes that a priority should be given to retaining all historic optics in their historic context whenever possible. Further, the ALCC believes that it is in the best interest of the public for the federal government to retain ownership and be ultimately responsible for these historic optics. However, we also feel the federal government should make historic optics and related artifacts available to museums, historical societies, and other non-profit organizations which have the ability to maintain the lens and associated artifacts in optimum condition and in a secure and safe environment. Once a loan based on careful analysis of the entity's ability to properly maintain the historic optic has been established, a permanent loan to the entity should be granted.

POSITION I

Removal of Historic Lighthouse Optics Currently in Use as Aids to Navigation

The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee maintains that all historic optics currently in use in a lighthouse serving as an aid to navigation should remain in situ unless it can be documented that the historic optic or a portion of the lens is at risk of irreparable damage or total loss. The United States Coast Guard should show cause, in writing, to the respective State Historic Preservation Officer through the Section 106 Review process stating why the historic optic is at risk and relocation is required. The 106 Review should include but not be limited to:

1. A brief narrative description of the optic and its history at that site.
2. Photographic documentation of the optic, and a detailed narrative of the condition which merits consideration for its removal.
3. A cost analysis with documented and supported estimates of costs

for:

- a. Retaining the historic optic in place.
- b. Returning it as an active aid to navigation.
- c. Stabilizing to use the optic in place without returning it to use as an aid to navigation.
- d. Replacement system to be used as an active aid to navigation.
- e. Removal, transfer and storage of the historic optic.
- f. Restoring, insuring and exhibiting the historic optic.

Recognized and knowledgeable authorities on lenses and / or rotation mechanism repair and maintenance shall provide the cost analysis.

The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee recognizes that under some circumstances an historic optic may not be suited for conversion to "solarized" or more advanced technology. Our preference in such cases would be to keep the historic optic in place and install a more modern and/or replacement optic in another location on the light tower. The historic optic could be de-activated so as not to adversely effect the performance of the modern optic.

There have been cases where such replacement optics have been installed on a tower or pole near the existing light station. At some point in time, the status of the aid to navigation may change, which could result in the removal of the modern optic and the return to function of the historic optic as a private aid to navigation. A decision to remove an historic optic should not under any circumstances be based solely on economic concerns. The replacement tower or pole should be installed in a location and in such a manner as to not impact the view of the historic tower and which is acceptable to the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Where possible, the State Historic Preservation Officer or a designated representative should be permitted to inspect the lens and its location to determine on-site conditions as they relate to retention or removal of the historic optic. If it is determined by the State Historic Preservation Officer that continued use of the historic optic in its existing location places the optic in danger of damage or destruction, then the lens should be removed. In this case, the historic optic should be located in a safe and secure exhibit on the site of the lighthouse of origin or, that not being possible or prudent, made available to local museums, historical facilities and/or non-profit organizations which can demonstrate the ability, both technically and financially, to properly transfer, repair, exhibit, insure and maintain the historic optic.

Potential repositories should be notified of the availability of an historic optic and should be given a reasonable amount of time to request transfer of the historic optic and provide for its care and exhibition to the public. In addition, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall be notified and be provided a reasonable amount of time to respond prior to any transfer of the historic optic to another site. Transfer to regional or national museums shall only take place once the State Historic Preservation Officer has stated in writing that no local willing and capable or on-site museum, historical facility and /or non-profit organization, can be located within the area or state to assume responsibility for the historic optic.

It is understood by the ALCC that there are some situations in which it is in the best interest of the safety of the historic optic that they be removed from their historic setting and/or context. Examples might be remote offshore lights that have had an ongoing incidence of vandalism or locations which are exposed to extreme and threatening environmental conditions such as coastal erosion, storms, or other documented hazards.

POSITION II

Removal of Historic Lighthouse Optics Currently Not In Use as Aids to Navigation

The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee maintains that all historic optics currently not in use but still located in the lantern of the lighthouse for which they were designed, and assigned, should remain "in situ" unless it can be documented that this will place the optic at risk of loss or irreparable damage. The United States Coast Guard should show cause, in writing, to the respective State Historic Preservation Officer through the Section 106 Review process why the historic optic is at risk and is requested to be relocated. The 106 review should include, but not be limited to the same criteria cited in Position I.

Where possible the State Historic Preservation Officer or a designated representative should be permitted to inspect the lens and its location to determine on site conditions as they relate to retention or removal of the historic optic. If it is determined by the State Historic Preservation Officer that keeping the historic optic in its existing location places it in danger of damage or destruction, then the lens should be removed. If removal is necessary, the historic optic should be located in a safe and secure exhibit on the site of the lighthouse of origin or, that not being possible or prudent, made available to local museums, historical facilities and/or non-profit organizations which can demonstrate the ability, both technically and financially, to properly transfer, repair, exhibit and maintain the historic optic.

Potential repositories should be notified of the availability of an historic optic and should be given a reasonable amount of time to request transfer of the historic optic and provide for its care and exhibition to the public. In addition, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall be notified and be provided a reasonable amount of time to respond prior to any transfer of the historic optic to another site. Transfer to regional or national museums shall only take place once the State Historic Preservation Officer has stated in writing that no willing and capable local or on site museum, historical facility and/or non-profit organization, can be located within the state to assume responsibility for the historic optic.

POSITION III

Removal of In-Situ Historic Lighthouse Optics Based on Economic Concerns

The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee maintains that no historic optic currently in place in a lighthouse should be removed based solely on economic concerns of the United States Coast Guard. Any consideration of removing an historic optic from its existing location in a lighthouse--whether it is currently in use as an active aid to navigation or not--must be stated in writing to the respective State Historic Preservation Officer through the Section 106 Review process. The 106 Review should include, but not be limited to the same criteria cited in Position I.

The United States Coast Guard shall publicly notify state and local communities concerning plans to remove the historic optic due to economic concerns. Furthermore, the United States Coast Guard shall provide adequate time for state and local communities to hold public hearings, solicit public input, seek and provide independent consultants to review the request and raise funds to retain the historic optic in situ. It is the opinion of the ALCC that many local groups and entities would be willing to form partnerships with the United States Coast Guard in order to make possible the safe, continued operation of the historic optic in situ.

POSITION IV

Maintenance of In-Situ Historic Lighthouse Optics by Coast Guard Personnel

The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee believes that there are currently well trained Coast Guard personnel who could be assigned to inspect, document, assess, maintain, stabilize, restore and safeguard historic optics and their mechanisms currently located in lighthouses. These trained Coast Guard personnel are currently providing a high level of skill, concern, knowledge, appreciation, and expertise necessary for the protection and continued function of historic optics and their related mechanisms. These Coast Guard personnel have in the past trained, and could continue to train in the future, Coast Guard Auxiliary personnel to assume many preventive maintenance responsibilities. This is a cost efficient means for the Coast Guard to monitor the condition of historic optics and help ensure they are properly maintained .

With an increase in United States Coast Guard divestment of lighthouse properties, maintenance and restoration responsibilities have been delegated to various nonprofit, local, state and federal government entities, reducing the financial responsibilities of the Coast Guard. Due to this circumstance, the ALCC believes that funds could be provided by the United States Coast Guard to commit trained Coast Guard personnel for the purpose of providing preventive maintenance and repair to historic optics in situ, without unnecessary or unfair cost to the Coast Guard.

The ALCC wishes to work with the United States Coast Guard in locating and developing groups that will form a "partnership" with the Coast Guard and help to offset the cost of maintaining an historic optic in its original location in lieu of removal or replacement .

POSITION V

U. S. Coast Guard Insurance Requirement for Historic Optics on Loan

The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee maintains that the current Coast Guard policy requirements concerning the level of insurance for historic optics on loan to non-profit organizations are fair and realistic. The former Coast Guard policy requiring that non-profit organizations provide full replacement value coverage on historic optics on loan to them recently has been modified. No historic optic, which is badly damaged or destroyed, would be replaced, as it would compromise the significant historical value intrinsic to the artifact. The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee, and the lighthouse organizations they represent, believes that the Coast Guard's new policy regarding the percentage of repair or replacement of damaged prisms reflects present and up to date costs, and requires only up to 50% replacement of the historic optic. Entities in possession of historic optics should provide to the United States Coast Guard necessary documentation from a certified insurance carrier indicating that the historic optic on loan has been protected by reasonable and responsible measures against damage and destruction from trauma other than acts of God.

POSITION VI

It is the position of the ALCC that consideration of priority should be given for the return of historic optics to their place of origin contingent on its placement in a safe and secure environment. Furthermore, whenever possible, the historic optic should be returned to use as an aid to navigation.

CONCLUSION

The American Lighthouse Coordinating Committee and the lighthouse organizations it represents in the United States wish to establish an open and meaningful dialogue with representatives of the United States Coast Guard to address these positions and the concerns contained within.