

Fostering Access to Underwater Cultural Heritage through Best Practices

The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage encourages the responsible access of the public to underwater heritage. Only who knows the heritage, cares about it.

To foster such access, the Meeting of Parties invited States Parties to the Convention to provide examples of Best Practices. The first examples have been approved and been designated by a special Label.

The designation has several advantages:

1. It increases the visibility of the accessible site or institution (for instance a museum);
2. It is a recognition for work well done and guides others to follow the example;
3. It sets a true sign in favor of responsible access; and
4. Designated access-providers can form a network and can cooperate better, for instance through exchanging temporary exhibitions.

How to be designated as Best Practice?

The Meeting of Parties invited States Parties to the Convention to provide examples of Best Practices. The examples have hence to be submitted through the Permanent Delegation of a State that has ratified the 2001 Convention. Upon proposal of a Best Practice example it will be reviewed and evaluated by the Convention's Scientific and Technical Advisory Body (STAB) with a view to designate the example as Best Practice, or not.



Fuerte San José el Alto (Mexico) - The Campeche Underwater Cultural Heritage Museum, designated as Best Practice in 2017

The following criteria apply:

- a. the heritage falls under the definition of Article 1 of the 2001 Convention or is less than 100 years of age, but is classified as underwater cultural heritage according to national law,
- b. the heritage is appropriately protected both legally and in practice; in particular, through the implementation of the Rules,
- c. responsible non-intrusive access is respected,
- d. the heritage has a framework to ensure sustainable management; and
- e. **a special and outstanding effort has been made** to make the site accessible to the public.

2. Best practices should aim at:

- a. encouraging responsible and non-intrusive public access to underwater cultural heritage in conformity with articles 2.5 and 2.10,
- b. increasing public awareness, appreciation and protection of heritage,
- c. promoting the Convention and the implementation of national juridical frameworks for protection,
- d. supporting scientific research in accordance with the Convention and the Rules and capacity-building in that regard, and
- e. the appropriate conservation of the heritage,

Please do include appropriate stakeholders, at local, national and international levels in the process of identifying Best Practices, and cooperate in their promotion and application.