AZSITE Consortium Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

May 5th, 2026
10:04 a.m. to 11:13 am

A quorum was obtained.

A. Call To Order (Cullen)

Meeting called to order at 10:04 am.

Committee members present:

Sara Cullen, Chair (2026), Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM) – State Agency Representative
Chance Copperstone, Burns & MacDonnell – Private Sector CRM Representative
Charles Webber, Kaibab National Forest (USDA KNF) – Federal Agency Representative

Members of the public present:

Gabe McGowan (AZSITE Manager)
Ellie Maria Renteria (AZSITE GIS Technician)
Allen Dart (Old Pueblo Archaeology Center)
Tim Goddard (ASM ARO)
Steve Swanson (Agave Archaeology)

B. Introductions

1. **Members of the AZSITE Advisory Committee were introduced**
2. **AZSITE Personnel were introduced**

C. Agenda Items

The Committee may consider or take action on any of the following:

1. **Discussion and Approval of 1st Quarter 2026 Meeting Minutes (Cullen)**
   a. *Motion to approve (Copperstone)*
   b. *Seconded (Webber)*
   c. *Approved (Unanimous)*

2. **AZSITE Finances & User Fees (McGowan)**
   1. McGowan discusses a letter (Appendix A) sent to the Arizona Board of Regents concerning the frozen AZSITE funds, and a response letter from University of Arizona CFO John Arnold (Appendix B). McGowan noted that further discussion between ASM and UA has indicated that the funds will be available past FY27 and there will be no further freezing of fiscal year carryforward balances.

2. This means the standing account balance at the beginning of FY26, $389,000 is now available to AZSITE. McGowan notes that AZSITE's total budget for FY27 is estimated at about $250,000, including personnel costs totaling about $210,000 for the Manager, GIS Technician, high school student worker, and a planned UA student worker. The remaining $40,000 is for operations including hosting and maintenance, as well as costs associated with the migration to ArcGIS Enterprise.
3. McGowan notes that, under the current fee structure, FY27 income is projected at around $250,000 as well. Given the standing balance of $389,000 now available once again, this presents an opportunity to reduce user fees while also continuing to invest in improving AZSITE. A fee reduction could be implemented as a reduction in the per-user cost, or as a volume discount. McGowan inquires with the Committee members about their opinions and experiences with the fee structure from their work.
4. Copperstone recommends an overall decrease in fees to be fair to all users, rather than benefiting only large companies having many users.
5. Cullen notes that the current fees are still affordable for agencies with one or several users.
6. Webber inquires about what income would be anticipated with a fee decrease, and whether a subsequent fee increase would be necessary.
7. McGowan notes that participation in AZSITE has increased even while fees have increased over the past several years. Based on the current participation levels, a modest fee reduction to the 2024 fee structure would result in income of around $230,000 per year, covering personnel costs and using the standing balance to cover some operating or development costs.
8. Webber notes that a rebate to users, rather than a fee decrease, could be an approach. McGowan notes that a more generous pro-rating policy for accounts requested during the year would be another way to save users money.
9. Copperstone notes that the prorating idea could be more beneficial than a fee reduction, as CRM firms are mainly interested in predictability in their expenses.
10. McGowan states that AZSITE will be reviewing and analyzing the fee structure and making a proposal to the Board at their July meeting.
11. Copperstone notes that adding an additional student worker beyond the one budgeted for FY27 would be more beneficial than reducing fees if it increases the rate at which ARO data get into AZSITE.

3. User Survey Results and Priorities (Renteria)

1. AZSITE conducted a user survey in February and March to identify AZSITE improvements projects prioritized by users and to see how users would prioritize these against a fee reduction.

2. Survey participation was up from the last user survey conducted in 2025 (79 responses).
3. Overall, respondents indicated improvements to AZSITE were a higher priority than reducing fees. 48% of respondents disagreed that fees should be reduced, 21% agreed, and 31% were neutral. When five potential improvement projects were ranked alongside a fee decrease in terms of priorities, the fee decrease was the item ranked last the most. A self-service data clip tool was the project ranked highest, followed by improvements to GIS layers.
4. Renteria notes that multiple comments noted that getting AZSITE as up-to-date with the ARO as possible should be the highest priority.
5. Cullen notes that this mirrors the perspective of the committee members, and that surplus funds in the AZSITE account should be directed to this end as much as possible.
6. Copperstone speculated that some respondents, based on specific comments that were highlighted, may still be conflating ARO fees with AZSITE fees. He also noted that making AZSITE as comprehensive as possible as a resource should include obtaining updated federal lands data where possible. Webber concurs.
7. Renteria notes that the current high school student worker at AZSITE sometimes works on non-ASM data, e.g. US Fish and Wildlife Service data, and that additional UA student workers could also be directed to work on non-ASM data. Copperstone agrees that bringing in data from other agencies is just as important as updating ARO data.
8. McGowan notes that there may be potential for AZSITE to fund a UA student worker to assist in ARO workflows that result in data being passed to AZSITE.
9. Copperstone moves that the Committee recommend the Board investigate additional student worker staffing, including the possibility of AZSITE funding an ARO student worker.
10. Webber seconds.
11. The motion passes unanimously.

4. Florence Copper Mitigation Funds Projects (McGowan)

1. A proposed amendment to the Florence Copper Mitigation Programmatic Agreement states that "FC LLC shall contribute 5% of the total cultural resource management budget of the portion of the project on state lands to the Arizona State Museum for the purpose of improvement the AZSITE database, and funding up to 10 tribal government agency user accounts for one year."
2. McGowan states this will amount to roughly $30,000 per year, and that the funds are planned to be disbursed into a UA Foundation donation account, which limits UA overhead to 6% and avoids any potential carryforward freeze, though this is apparently no longer a concern.

3. McGowan notes that AZSITE Board Chair Mary-Ellen Walsh (SHPO) has noted that the amendment is likely to be finalized after a consultation period, and that ideally tribes would identify a project that the funds should be used for. Given that this consultation is ongoing, and that the tribal preservation office representative to this Committee has not yet been appointed, he feels there is not much to discuss at this time.
4. Copperstone inquires if the South32 grant funding for tribal government AZSITE accounts is still going on. McGowan states that the funds obtained in 2024 have been fully allocated. There is an opportunity for a second round of funding, but AZSITE has been waiting on AACD to complete the application. AACD previously served as the applicant because they could receive the funds with no overhead. McGowan notes that if the Florence Copper funds come through, they may be a replacement for the South32 funds in terms of subsidizing tribal access to AZSITE.

5. Next Generation AZSITE Entry Module (McGowan)

1. McGowan states that as part of AZSITE's move to an ArcGIS Enterprise GIS portal, discussion around the next generation of the AZSITE entry module has begun. This includes discussion with ASM personnel. The two primary approaches that have been identified are Esri's Survey123 platform, which could be integrated more fully with the GIS portal, and Quickbase, which would be integrated more easily with ASM's workflows and offers more advanced document templates.
2. McGowan notes that a priority is to avoid forcing users to duplicate effort in the tool.
3. McGowan inquires with the Committee members about their experiences with the current entry module, or experiences with other state systems and their distributed data ingest tools, and if these inform on any features they would like to see in the AZSITE entry module.
4. Copperstone states that the NMCRIS submission tool works well. It involves submitting data directly from the mapping application.
5. Cullen notes she has not been able to use the AZSITE entry module because her agency is not fully licensed with Microsoft Access.
6. Webber states that the Forest Service has a Heritage Mobile application that contractors can download, use offline in the field, and then upload once they are back online. He notes that he would recommend staying in the Esri platform rather than Quickbase. He also recommends that individuals that are not AZSITE users be permitted to conduct data entry on this application.
7. Cullen notes that DFFM has a similar application that is a Field Maps application used to record in real time in the field.
8. Renteria inquires who at a CRM firm actually completes the AZSITE entry module. Copperstone states that most firms have a designated person, usually a lab director, doing those entries.

9. Copperstone notes that most firms are probably using Survey123 already in their fieldwork, and he would recommend that as the platform.
10. McGowan inquires if the NMCRIS GIS data submission is a file attachment, or an in-app parsing of the geospatial data.
11. Copperstone states that he believes it is a file upload, and then there is a review process at the agency.
12. McGowan asks if there is a template or specific format for these uploads.
13. Swanson is called to speak by the Committee. Swanson notes that the NMCRIS system allows you to choose multiple file types (shapefile, KML/KMZ, etc). When you choose a file, it will display on the map for the submitter but is not incorporated into a layer until reviewed. Swanson notes that he can meet with AZSITE personnel to demonstrate. Webber states he can also meet with AZSITE personnel to demonstrate the Forest Service app.

D. Date and Time of Next Meeting

1. Cullen will poll the Committee members and set this meeting to be sometime in the weeks following the next Board meeting on July 16th.

E. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:13 am

F. Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to Mr. Doug Goodyear, Chair, Arizona Board of Regents, RE: Concern Regarding the Freezing of AZSITE Consortium Funds

AZSITE
ARIZONA'S CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

30 March 2026

Mr. Doug Goodyear, Chair
Arizona Board of Regents
2700 N. Central Avenue, Suite 400
Phoenix, AZ 85004

Via email: Doug.Goodyear@azregents.edu

RE: Concern Regarding the Freezing of AZSITE Consortium Funds

Dear Chair Goodyear:

On behalf of the AZSITE Consortium Board, I am writing to formally bring to your attention a critical situation regarding the management and accessibility of AZSITE funds currently held by the University of Arizona. Recent actions by the University of Arizona administration to freeze these funds have created an immediate and significant risk to the state's ability to comply with statutory mandates and support essential infrastructure development. The freeze is due to the University of Arizona's broader 2024-2025 financial crisis, however, AZSITE funds are restricted revenue (garnered through user fees) and should be insulated from general fund deficits.

As you may be aware, the AZSITE Consortium—comprising the Arizona State Museum, the State Historic Preservation Office, Arizona State University, and the Museum of Northern Arizona—is the executive decision-making body tasked with managing the state's electronic cultural resources inventory established under Executive Order 2006-03. The AZSITE database is not merely an academic tool; it is a vital state asset used daily by state agencies, tribal nations, and private industry to ensure compliance with Arizona Revised Statutes regarding cultural resource protection, including the State Historic Preservation Act, 41-861 et., seq, and the Arizona Antiquities Act, § 41-841 et seq.

The current freezing of AZSITE's operational funds by the University of Arizona has resulted in the following critical issues:

- **Delays for Critical Development Projects:** AZSITE records searches are required for environmental and cultural permitting for road construction, utility expansion, and housing development. The inability to fund system maintenance and data entry is creating a bottleneck for project review across the state.
- **Failure to Deliver Contractual Obligations:** The funds in question are primarily derived from subscription user fees paid by the private sector and government agencies specifically for the use and maintenance of this system. These are not tuition dollars or

general university operating funds, and their freezing undermines the services that customer/stakeholders have paid for.

Without access to these funds, the Consortium cannot fulfill its mandate to provide a consolidated informational network of recorded cultural resources. This leaves the state vulnerable to legal challenges and potential loss of federal funding for projects that require timely cultural resource reviews.

AZSITE is hosted and managed by the Arizona State Museum (ASM,) which is a division of the University of Arizona (UA). The AZSITE Board has attempted to resolve this matter with the University beginning in June of 2025 with little success. The ASM Director, Dr. Patrick Lyons, has communicated our concerns to UA administrators many times since June of 2025, specifically the UA Office of Budget and Planning and the Office of Research and Partnerships (the UA unit to which ASM reports), and provided copies of the relevant state statutes and the executive orders associated with the services provided by AZSITE that are tied to these accounts. However, there has been no progress toward a solution. We are now requesting your office's intervention to ensure that these dedicated funds are unfrozen and remain available for their legally intended purpose: dissemination of critical information needed for compliance with Arizona's historic preservation laws and facilitation of residential, commercial, and infrastructure development statewide.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you or your staff to find a permanent solution that ensures the fiscal independence and stability of the AZSITE Consortium.

Thank you in advance for your leadership and attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

Mary-Ellen Walsh

Mary-Ellen Walsh, Chair

cc Mr. Chad Sampson, Executive Director, ABOR (Chad.Sampson@azregents.edu)
Dr. Suresh Garimella President, University of Arizona (president23@arizona.edu)
Dr. Patrick Lyons, Director, ASM (plyons@arizona.edu)
AZSITE Board Members (watsonjt@arizona.edu, Christopher.Caseldine@asu.edu, jburns@musnaz.org)

Arizona State Museum, P.O. Box 210026, 1013 E. University Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85721-0026

The AZSITE Board

Arizona State Museum
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

ASU
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Arizona State Parks

MUSEUM of NORTHERN ARIZONA

Appendix B: Letter to Mary-Ellen Walsh, AZSITE Consortium Board Chair, from John S. Arnold, University of Arizona CFO

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Business Affairs

BUSINESS AFFAIRS
Old Main
1200 East University Boulevard
PO Box 210021
Tucson, Arizona 85721
Ofc: 520-621-5977
businessaffairs.arizona.edu

April 6, 2026

Mary-Ellen Walsh, Chair
AZSITE Consortium
1013 East University Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85721-0026

Dear Chair Walsh,

Thank you for your March 30, 2026, letter alerting us to your concerns regarding funds within the Arizona State Museum provided through the AZSITE Consortium.

After reviewing the circumstances, we determined that there was an internal miscommunication. Upon becoming aware, my office initiated a process to rectify. That process was completed on April 1, 2026, and has resulted in approval for the Arizona State Museum to spend $379,000 in balances to support their efforts over the course of FY 2026 and FY 2027.

This should provide resolution to this issue, and we have used the opportunity to strengthen understanding around university processes with our colleagues at the Arizona State Museum, Office of Research & Partnerships, and Finance & Budget.

Thank you again for your diligent advocacy.

Sincerely,

John S. Arnold
Chief Financial Officer
The University of Arizona