ANTHROPOLOGY SAMPLING REVIEW COMMITTEE
POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

SAMPLING REVIEW COMMITTEE:

In 1981, a departmental committee was organized to review requests to analyze specimens from the Department of Anthropology, National Museum of Natural History. The committee is composed of several curators, the Collections Manager, a conservator, and the Chair of the Department. Curators are selected based on the expertise required to properly evaluate individual sampling and casting requests.

SAMPLING AND CASTING REQUEST FORMS:

Anyone wishing to sample or cast an object from the Department of Anthropology (including staff) must submit a formal proposal describing the proposed research methodology, sampling or casting procedure, and expected analytical results. The researcher must also complete a Sampling and Casting Request Form, which summarizes the proposal.

Researchers should email both the proposal and the form to the Committee, c/o Esther Rimer.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Sampling and Casting Proposals are evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. The research proposal is sound;
2. The use of Smithsonian collections in lieu of others is justified;
3. The analytical methods proposed should yield the intended results, and are the least intrusive analytical means of obtaining those results;
4. The proposed analyst is qualified to perform the work;
5. The amount of sample and number of specimens requested is necessary to obtain accurate results;
6. Each specimen can be safely sampled or cast without damage or defacement or the preclusion of future study or analysis;
7. The degree to which any proposed destructive sampling affects the specimen is minimal;
8. Samples, if taken, will be returned so they can be retained for future use; and
9. The probability of receiving analytical results from the researcher is high.
DECISION

The Sampling Review Committee members review the proposals, and discuss them at the monthly Anthropology Collections Advisory Committee meeting.

The Committee may approve, table or disapprove any sampling or casting request based on the above criteria. Requests are generally tabled if Committee members feel they have insufficient information on which to base a decision. The Committee may request more information, research, or further analysis before a final decision is made. For example, the Committee may stipulate that the requestor obtain plausible results from the analysis of his/her collection to which they wish to compare our collections, before sampling or casting ours. The Committee may also modify the proposed sampling or casting methods.

While our goal is to approve or deny proposals within 4 weeks, be advised that the process can take longer, and plan accordingly.

PROCEDURES AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

Unless otherwise specified by the Review Committee, all researchers must adhere to the following standard procedures:

1. The researcher must photograph and/or adequately document the condition of each object before and after sampling, or prior to casting. Photographs documenting sampling must be of sufficient detail to discern the area that has been sampled. The researcher must send one copy of each photograph, properly labeled, to the Anthropology Conservation Laboratory (ACL) as soon as they are processed;

2. For sampling, the location of each sampling site will be determined by a Department conservator and/or curator, unless the Sampling Review Committee has previously specified the location. All samples will be taken under the supervision of a conservator;

3. The size of the sample will not exceed the amount specified by the Sampling Review Committee;

4. The researcher must send all analytical results, including raw data if applicable, to the ACL for permanent storage in the ACL records. All records, except published reports, will be kept confidentially, however, the name of a researcher may be given to others proposing to use our collections for similar research projects. In this case, the second researcher may be required to obtain analytical results from the first researcher before the latter request is approved.

5. Requests for additional samples or for additional casting for continued research will not be approved by the Sampling Review Committee until #1 and #4 above have been satisfied.

6. Any subsequent publications citing the analysis of departmental specimens must be sent to the Chair of the Sampling Review Committee for permanent filing in the ACL records.