



WASTE REPORT for March 28, 2016

National Park Service X-Files Project

Honestly, we did not make this up and we did not find this one in *The Onion*; but someone must have gotten really excited about Fox's reboot of the *X-Files* because **The National Park Service is spending \$150,000 of taxpayer money to investigate supernatural events in Alaska.**¹

Yes, you read that right. Last month, The National Park Service announced a \$150,000 grant to Kawerak, Inc. (who has no cost-sharing obligation) to conduct a three-year study under the title, "Knowledge, Experience and Beliefs of the Supernatural Environment." By the way, **this is the same Park Service that reports it has an almost \$12 billion maintenance backlog.**²

You might think this is simply cataloging historical and traditional beliefs of indigenous peoples of Alaska. To be sure, part of the project is to conduct archival research, but there is more. According to the announcement, "The primary objective of this project is to investigate Bering Strait Inuit residents' beliefs and knowledge about **(and experiences with) the supernatural environment...**"

Experiences with the supernatural? Yes. In fact, according to the announcement, Kawerak is expected to, "**[d]ocument community members' personal experience with the supernatural...**"³ This will include community meetings where all ages are expected to participate (children are especially known for their insight and experience with supernatural events). In pre-award advertising for these meetings Kawerak noted this is meant to be a "**serious and meaningful**" **collaboration on the supernatural.** Serious, indeed, the advertisement also promises participants an honorarium.⁴

So, what constitutes supernatural? Well, "elements in and aspects of the environment such as **little people, unexplained lights, sea monsters, invisible sea birds, animals with transformative powers, a variety of other non-human persons, landscape features with special powers, and other similar phenomena as defined by participants.**"

In addition to direct funding, the Park Service has committed to help with logistical support including to, "**assist making agreements on using government housing,**" promoting the project on Facebook, and to "**have the project products translated into Russian.**"⁵ Back in the natural world, we know this project translates into more than 20 average taxpayers' total one-year tax liability.

Here There Be ~~Sea Monsters~~ Waste

¹ *Knowledge, Experience and Beliefs of the Supernatural Environment*; National Park Service, Washington, DC; March 2016. Award Number: P16AS00074

² *NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports*; National Park Service, Washington, DC; March 2016

³ *Knowledge, Experience and Beliefs of the Supernatural Environment*; National Park Service, Washington, DC; March 2016

⁴ *Knowledge of the Supernatural Environment*; Kawerak, Inc.; Nome, AK; October 2015

⁵ *Knowledge, Experience and Beliefs of the Supernatural Environment*; National Park Service, Washington, DC; March 2016