

Challenges in Preserving Underwater Cultural Heritage

Organizer

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Session Description

The preservation of underwater archaeological sites faces an ever-growing number of threats, both natural and anthropogenic. Climate change, with its accelerating impacts like sea-level rise, increasing water temperatures, ocean acidification, and extreme weather events, continues to reshape marine and freshwater environments, exacerbating the degradation of submerged cultural heritage. Meanwhile, human activity, including pollution, coastal development, and illegal salvage, poses further risks to these sites. In an era where the underwater cultural landscape is vast, yet resources for monitoring, protection, and mitigation are limited, the challenge of preserving this heritage has never been more urgent.

This session invites presentations addressing the multifaceted issues of underwater site preservation. We welcome contributions from researchers and heritage managers who are actively investigating the environmental and human factors contributing to the deterioration of submerged sites. Presentations may include current research on:

- The impacts of climate change and pollution on the preservation of underwater archaeological sites.
- Innovative technologies and methods used for risk assessment and the long-term monitoring of underwater sites.
- Case studies of projects and initiatives focused on protecting submerged heritage within limited time frames and budgets.
- The challenges faced by researchers and policymakers in prioritizing which sites to protect and how to navigate the logistical, financial, and ethical dilemmas that arise in heritage management.

Through this session, we hope to highlight best practices and strategies for risk management, while encouraging a dialogue around the urgent need for sustainable preservation solutions in the face of finite resources and the growing number of at-risk sites. By bringing together specialists in archaeology, conservation, policy, and environmental science, the session will aim to provide a comprehensive overview of how we can safeguard our shared underwater heritage for future generations.