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LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO PROTECTING LUNAR ARTIFACTS AND HERITAGE SITES

**Abstract**

The advent of NewSpace, Google Lunar X-Prize and the discovery of lunar minerals of potential value to private companies has prompted concerns among historians and other stakeholders regarding the future fate of the Apollo era lunar artifacts and heritage sites. Some of these concerns were addressed with the release, on July 20, 2011, of NASA's Recommendations to Space-Faring Entities: How to Protect and Preserve the Historic and Scientific Value of U.S. Government Lunar Artifacts" and with the controlled crash, in December 2012, of NASA's GRAIL Ebb and Flow decommissioned space craft in an effort to preserve such areas. This paper intends to address the legal status of the lunar artifacts and the areas surrounding them, and the legal implications of NASA's 2011 recommendations from the perspective of the existing space law treaties, with references to the the related UNESCO world heritage site regulations, Antarctic Treaty Historic Sites and Monuments protection, and domestic archaeological laws.