

**AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AND
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC
REGARDING THE WRECK OF *LA BELLE***

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the French Republic (hereinafter, “the Parties”),

Considering that the vessel *La Belle*, which had been provided to Cavalier de La Salle, by the King of France in 1684 to establish a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi River, sank in 1686 in what is now Matagorda Bay, in the State of Texas of the United States of America;

Recognizing that the Texas Historical Commission, an agency of the State of Texas (hereinafter, “the Commission”), located the remains of *La Belle* in July 1995 and that the State of Texas is currently in possession of the hull of *La Belle* and its associated artifacts (herein, “the wreck of *La Belle*”);

Recognizing also the historical and archaeological importance of the wreck of *La Belle*, the site of the sinking, and the related documentation;

Desiring to preserve and conserve the remains of the wreck of *La Belle*, and excavation records as well as the site of the sinking in order to transmit to future generations the historical evidence of the exploratory mission of Cavalier de La Salle in what is now Texas;

Considering further that, to this end, cooperation in the field of research, preservation and display of the wreck of *La Belle*, in particular through the organization of exhibitions throughout the world, is necessary and that this can not be possible without a prior agreement on ownership of the wreck of *La Belle*, its use and any other legal issues of this nature;

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

1. At the time of its sinking, *La Belle* was an auxiliary vessel of the French Navy.
2. The French Republic has not abandoned or transferred title of the wreck of *La Belle* and continues to retain title to the wreck of *La Belle*.

Article 2

1. The French Republic does not desire the return of the wreck of *La Belle* to its territory.
2. The wreck of *La Belle* shall remain in the custody of the Commission for a period of ninety-nine years from the date of entry into force of this Agreement, which period shall be automatically renewed unless the Parties agree otherwise.
3. Artifacts may be placed on temporary loan for public exhibition as agreed between the parties to the administrative arrangement referred to in Article 3.
4. Artifacts in the custody of the Commission shall not be subject to seizure.

Article 3

1. The *Musée national de la Marine*, a public agency under the authority of the French Ministry of Defense, and the Commission shall negotiate and conclude, consistent with this Agreement, an administrative arrangement relating to the curation (including the security, storage, preservation and conservation), research, documentation, and exhibition of the wreck of *La Belle*.
2. The arrangement shall also provide for a regime applicable to publications relating to the wreck of *La Belle*.
3. Treatment and burial of human remains from La Salle's exploratory mission to Texas shall be as agreed between the Ambassador of France to the United States or his designee and the Commission.

Article 4

All activities and commitments undertaken under this Agreement by the Parties and any administrative arrangement entered into pursuant to this Agreement shall be contingent upon the availability of funds.

Article 5

1. This Agreement shall enter into force on signature and shall be of unlimited duration.
2. The Agreement may be terminated only by mutual agreement of the Parties.

DONE at Washington, D.C., on the thirty-first day of March, 2003, in duplicate, in the English and French languages, both texts being equally authentic.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
FRENCH REPUBLIC:

/s/ Paula Dobriansky

/s/ J-D Levitte