

Frequently Asked Questions

U.S. Tentative List/Nomination to World Heritage List

What are World Heritage sites?

World Heritage Sites are the most outstanding examples of the world's cultural and natural heritage. Countries apply to have a site inscribed on the World Heritage List. An international World Heritage Committee approves or rejects the proposals, advised by international councils of experts. UNESCO administers the overall program, monitoring the sites, but cannot select or manage them. As a signatory to the World Heritage Convention, the United States participates in the deliberations that lead to cultural, natural, and mixed properties being inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Convention recognizes and encourages protection of sites around the world with "universal" cultural or natural heritage value.

Why is it important that sites be listed?

A listing elevates local and international awareness about the site's value, further encourages communities to protect and invest in their preservation, and increases potentially beneficial tourism to the site. In any country, foreign visitors customarily put more money into the local economy than domestic tourists. (Tourism, however, should be managed so as to protect and maintain the site.)

How many World Heritage Sites are there?

Currently, there are 830 World Heritage Sites in 138 countries. Cultural sites number 644 and natural areas 162. There are 24 mixed sites that were nominated for both nature and culture. In the United States, there are 20 World Heritage Sites, 8 of which are cultural and 12 natural. There are more natural sites listed in the United States than from any other single country.

Who manages the program?

The Department of the Interior, through the National Park Service, conducts the U.S. World Heritage Program, including selecting and submitting nominations to the World Heritage List.

The World Heritage List as is managed by a World Heritage Committee made up of representatives from signatory countries, supported by a secretariat, known as the World Heritage Centre, which is based in the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris.

Is being added to the United States' Tentative List the same as being added to the World Heritage List?

No. Being on the Tentative List only means that a site appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the List of World Heritage and that the US intends to nominate it— it does not guarantee that a site will eventually be listed. The World Heritage Committee, not the US, makes the final decisions on which sites are designated as World Heritage Sites.

What is a Tentative List?

A Tentative List is the national list of natural and cultural properties that appear to meet the eligibility criteria for nomination to the World Heritage List. It is an annotated list of candidate sites which a country intends to nominate within a given time period. In order to be nominated to the World Heritage List, a property must already have been included on a country's tentative list.

The World Heritage Committee has asked each participating nation to provide a Tentative List by evaluating properties for the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Committee recommends that a nation review its Tentative List at least once every decade.

The U.S. Tentative List under development is expected to serve as a guide for a decade (2009-2019) of U.S. nominations to the World Heritage List. The Tentative List will be structured to meet the World Heritage Committee's request that allows for no more than two nominations per year by any one nation, at least one of which must be a nomination of a natural area.

The new U.S. Tentative List will be a relatively short list of sites that have been proposed for consideration by their owners and that have been carefully examined for their potential to meet the legal requirements for nomination by the United States as well as the revised World Heritage criteria. The number of individual sites included in the new Tentative List may be significantly larger than 20 to permit discretion in selecting nominations and because some sites may be grouped together as a single nomination.

Will inclusion on the Tentative List affect the legal status of the property?

Inclusion in the U.S. Tentative List will not affect the legal status of a property in any way. Even if the property is eventually inscribed in the World Heritage List, only U.S. laws and regulations will apply to it. All that UNESCO can do is file comments on nominations. World Heritage Committee members can list a site as "in danger," but even then, the country usually has to agree. The Committee may even delist a site, but has never done so.

What is the Process for Developing the U.S. Tentative List?

The National Park Service is using a two-step process to prepare the new Tentative List, starting with willing owners or their representatives being asked to express their interest by completing an application. Completed applications will be used to determine whether their properties meet the legal prerequisites for World Heritage nomination.

In addition to satisfying one or more of the World Heritage Committee's criteria, U.S. law requires that all three of the following requirements be met:

1. Each property must previously have been determined to be nationally significant for its cultural values, natural values, or both (i.e., formally designated as a National Historic Landmark, a National Natural Landmark, or as a Federal reserve of national importance, such as a National Park, National Monument, or Wildlife Refuge).
2. All of the property's owners must concur in the proposal.
3. It must appear likely that the owners and the Department of the Interior will be able to agree on and present full evidence of legal protection for the property at the time of final nomination.

Only properties appearing to meet one or more of the World Heritage criteria and the three specific U.S. legal prerequisites can be considered for inclusion on the revised U.S. Tentative List. Sites included on the only previous Tentative List, which was compiled in 1982, must be resubmitted. Mound City, which is a unit of Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, was included on that original list.

What are the World Heritage Committee's criteria?

1. Represent a masterpiece of human creative genius
2. Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning, or landscape design.
3. Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.
4. Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.
5. Be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.
6. Be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.
7. Contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.
8. Be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.

9. Be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal, and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.
10. Contain the most important and significant natural habits for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Who can nominate a site?

Federal department and bureau heads in charge of federally designated sites (such as national parks, historic landmarks, wildlife refuges, etc.) can nominate sites, as can site administrators and other property owners. Strong public support for nomination of a site is needed. In Ohio, the Ohio Historical Society and Hopewell Culture National Historical Park are working together to prepare the nominations of significant archaeological sites in Ohio.

What sites are being considered for nomination in Ohio?

Serpent Mound, an effigy mound in Adams County, is being considered for nomination along with SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park in Dayton. Fort Ancient in Warren County, Newark Earthworks in Licking County, and the sites that comprise Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ross County have been grouped for consideration as a serial nomination of earthworks constructed by the Hopewell culture. They will be nominated under Criteria 1-4. We also understand that Dayton Aviation National Historical Park and community groups in Dayton are proposing the development of an aviation theme nomination.

What is the timeline for the process?

The deadline for receipt of applications by the National Park Service is April 1, 2007. Following an initial review of applications submitted, the NPS Office of International Affairs will notify owners of properties that appear to be the most likely candidates for inclusion in the Tentative List. Owners who are selected for the second step of the process should be notified around May 1, 2007, with an estimated deadline for their further responses of June 15, 2007. Owners whose properties are not selected for further consideration for inclusion in the Tentative List will also be notified of the results and provided with a statement of the reasons their properties were not included.

After various reviews and approval by the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks in accordance with the program regulations, the U.S. Tentative List will be forwarded through the Secretary of the Interior to the U.S. Department of State for submittal to the World Heritage Committee by February 1, 2008. An accompanying report will explain in detail how the sites included in the final U.S. Tentative List were selected.

Once on the Tentative List, what is the process for being added to the World Heritage List?

According to the World Heritage Operational Guidelines, countries are requested to wait for one year after submitting their tentative list before sending forward any nomination for a site on the tentative list. It is anticipated that the first U. S. World Heritage nomination of a site included on the new tentative list will be submitted by February 1, 2009 for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its annual session in 2010. During the period between submission of the nomination by the US and the Committee's review of it, the nomination will be evaluated by the appropriate advisory body—the World Conservation Union (IUCN) for natural sites, and the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) for cultural sites. The advisory bodies make formal site visits and consult with experts before giving their recommendation to the Committee as to whether a nominated site meets the eligibility criteria.

Where can I send letters of support?

By March 15, 2007 send them to: George M. Kane
Director of Facilities Management
Ohio Historical Society
1982 Velma Avenue
Columbus, OH 43211

Also send letters to your state and federal representatives:

Fort Ancient State Memorial

Congresswoman Jean Schmidt
8044 Montgomery Rd. #540
Cincinnati, OH 45236

State Representative Shannon Jones
77 S. High Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

State Representative Michelle G. Schneider
77 S. High Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

State Senator Robert Schuler
Statehouse
Room 221, Second Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Serpent Mound State Memorial

Senator Tom Niehaus
Statehouse
Columbus, OH 43215
Representative Todd Book
77 S. High St., 14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative Danny R. Bupp
307 N. Market St.
West Union, OH 45693

Congresswoman Jean Schmidt
8044 Montgomery Rd. #540
Cincinnati, OH 45236

Senator George V. Voinovich
FAX: 202-228-0501

Newark Earthworks State Memorial

Congressman Zack Space
137 E. Iron Ave.
Dover, OH 44622

State Representative Jay Hottinger
77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

State Senator Tim Schaffer
Statehouse
Columbus, OH 43215

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park

Congressman Zack Space
137 E. Iron Ave.
Dover, OH 44622

Senator John Carey
Statehouse
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative John Schlichter
77 S. High Street, 12th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215-6111

SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park

Senator Tom Roberts
Statehouse
Columbus, OH 43215
Representative Clayton Luckie
77 S. High St., 10th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Ohio Senators

Senator Sherrod Brown
FAX: 202-224-5516

Additional Questions?

Contact Dean Alexander at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, 740-774-1125, or Brad Lepper at the Ohio Historical Society, 614-297-2642.