



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



United States
National Commission for
UNESCO



“WORLD HERITAGE—TAPPING THE POTENTIAL”

REPORT OF A SYMPOSIUM HELD JUNE 13-14, 2012
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

Hosted by the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy
University of Virginia



U.S. WORLD HERITAGE SITES-TAPPING THE POTENTIAL: OVERVIEW

On June 13-14, 2012, an invited group of interested parties took part in a symposium on U.S. World Heritage Sites at the University of Virginia. Monticello and the University together comprise the UNESCO World Heritage Site designated in 1987.

Since the World Heritage Convention is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the group believed it was both timely and important to discuss how to improve appreciation and understanding of U.S. World Heritage Sites. Enhancing the timeliness of the meeting was the release of the first-ever National Travel and Tourism Strategy by the federal government in May. Related issues included assessing the potential for enhanced networking and cooperation among the U.S. site managers, and developing strategies to promote the tourism benefits of enhanced international and domestic visitation at the sites.



The Rotunda at the University of Virginia, a U.S. World Heritage Site along with Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.

Sponsors of the symposium included the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the National Park Service (NPS), and the U.S. National Commission on UNESCO. A planning committee comprised of Robin Tauck (R Tauck and Partners), Katherine Slick (ACHP Foundation), Stephen Morris (NPS), and John Fowler (ACHP) organized the symposium, which was facilitated by Elizabeth Watson (Heritage Strategies). The full list of participants is appended to this report.

Included in the day and a half long event was an evening tour and reception at Thomas Jefferson's home of Monticello; a dinner at the historic Farmington estate that had 1803 modifications designed by Jefferson for the owner; a day long discussion on the campus of the University of Virginia; and a tour of the "Academical Village" originally designed by Jefferson in the center of the campus.

BACKGROUND PRESENTATIONS

A series of brief background presentations and papers sparked dialogue among the participants during an initial morning session. Stephen Morris (NPS) discussed background on World Heritage program, the list of current U.S. World Heritage Sites, and the status of the sites on the U.S. Tentative List being proposed for possible designation. Curt Cottle (Department of Commerce) summarized plans for implementing the National Travel and Tourism Strategy under an Executive Order signed by the President earlier this year. Randy Durband (Robin Tauck and Partners) offered a provocative overview of World Heritage inscription as a marketing and branding vehicle. Finally, Kimberly Gilmore (HISTORY) discussed the role that media partners could play in promoting awareness and knowledge of these places and the heritage they represent.¹ Several key written materials provided to the participants for reference are noted at the end of this paper.

¹ UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and HISTORY are partnering to raise awareness about heritage preservation worldwide. HISTORY will produce outreach materials, including teaching resources, e-newsletters and Public Service Announcements to air in the U.S. and around the world, reaching over 300 million households in over 150 countries. The Centre will cross-brand on HISTORY websites.

World Heritage Sites. The United States introduced the World Heritage concept as an elaboration and extension of the national park idea; it and related proposals were presented to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm and adopted subsequently by the General Conference of UNESCO forty years ago, in 1972. The result was agreement on a World Heritage Convention² or international treaty that established criteria, a nominating process, and other provisions for governing the identification, evaluation, nomination, and inscription of World Heritage Sites throughout the signatory countries. The U.S. was first to ratify the convention in 1973; there are now 962 listed sites from 157 countries.



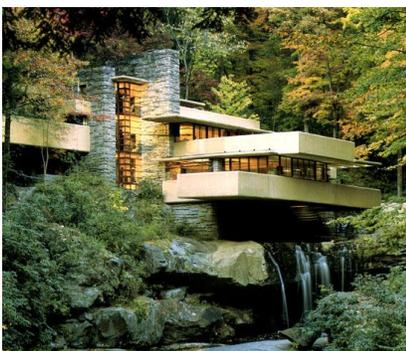
The Statue of Liberty, New York, inscribed in 1984

There are 21 sites in the United States, and 17 of these are National Park units or are co-managed by NPS. These include Carlsbad Caverns National Park and Chaco Culture, New Mexico (includes Aztec Ruins National Monument); Everglades National Park, Florida; Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona; Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina and Tennessee; Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii; Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Kluane/Wrangell-State. Elias/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini-Alsek, Alaska; La Fortaleza & San Juan National Historic Site, Puerto Rico; Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky; Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado; Olympic National Park, Washington; Redwood National and State Parks, California; Statue of Liberty National Monument, New York; Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, Montana; Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming and Montana; and Yosemite National Park, California.

Three sites are owned and managed by states, Indian tribes, or private entities, including Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Illinois; Taos Pueblo, New Mexico; and Monticello and the University of Virginia, Virginia. The final and most recent U.S. addition, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, is co-managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the State of Hawaii.



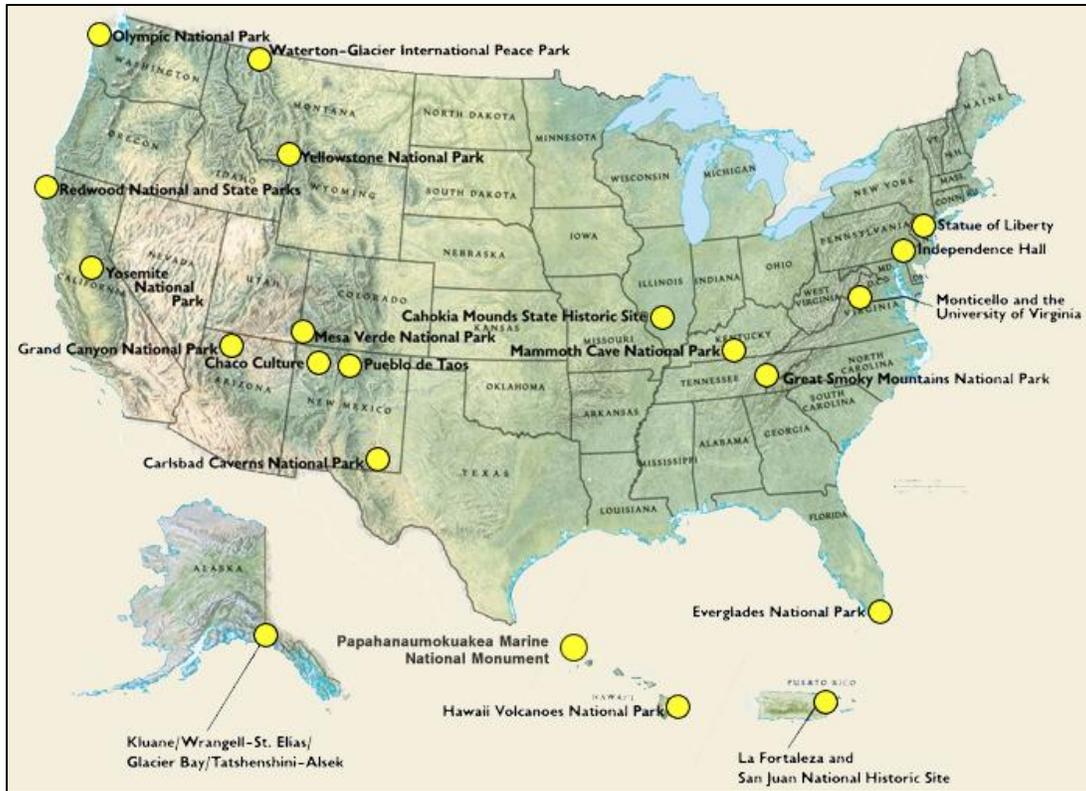
Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Illinois, a non-federal U.S. World Heritage Site



Three nominations from the U.S. are currently underway—Frank Lloyd Wright Buildings (Arizona, California, Illinois, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin); Poverty Point State Historic Site, Louisiana; and San Antonio Franciscan Missions, Texas. Current plans call for them to be reviewed by the World Heritage Committee in 2014 and 2015.

Falling Water, Pennsylvania, part of the pending Frank Lloyd Wright Buildings World Heritage Site nomination.

² *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO, November 16, 1972. The text of the convention is found at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>. General information about the program is located at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>. Information about U.S. participation and sites is found on the National Park Service website <http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/worldheritage/worldheritage.htm>



The 21 U.S. World Heritage Sites are spread across the continental U.S. and Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

National Travel and Tourism Strategy. Executive Order 13597, “Establishing Visa and Foreign Visitor Processing Goals and the Task Force on Travel and Competitiveness” was signed by the President on January 19, 2012. The Executive Order focused on supporting the travel and tourism industry in the U.S. and improving U.S. prospects for attracting and retaining overseas visitors as well as enhancing the domestic travel situation. As part of the Order, the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior were tasked with leading a federal task force to develop a National Travel and Tourism Strategy with:

...recommendations for new policies and initiatives to promote domestic and international travel opportunities throughout the United States with the goal of increasing the United States market share of worldwide travel.... Such recommendations shall include, among other things, strategies to promote visits to the United States public lands, waters, shores, monuments, and other iconic American destinations, thereby expanding job creation in the United States.

The overarching goal of the Strategy is attracting 100 million foreign visitors to the US by 2021 and an interagency Task Force was further charged with coordinating with Brand USA, a non-profit corporation established by the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 to promote travel to the United States³.

³ Brand USA was established to spearhead the nation's first global marketing effort to promote the U.S. as a premier travel destination. Its mission is to encourage increased international visitation and grow America's share of the global travel market. Brand USA is a non-profit, public-private partnership supported by private sector investment and \$100 million in federal funding from visa proceeds. Matching private sector funding is required to receive the federal funds and can be cash or in-kind investment.

The National Travel and Tourism Strategy includes a brief analysis of travel and tourism in the U.S. economy, travel and tourism and federal properties, the international and domestic markets, promoting the U.S., enabling and enhancing travel to and within the U.S., providing world-class customer service and visitor experience, coordinating across government, and conducting research and measuring results. The World Heritage Sites are specifically mentioned (p. 12), with the comment:

For instance, 21 World Heritage Sites are located in the United States. This designation is given by the United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization to signify sites around the world that are of outstanding universal value to humanity. As stewards of these valuable tourism assets, the government has a responsibility to ensure that they are managed as world-class tourist destinations.



Everglades National Park, Florida, a U.S. World Heritage Site cited as a world-class destination.

The strategy goes on to identify a series of related goals and strategies for pursuing them. Under the goal to “Provide a high-quality visitor experience for U.S. and international visitors to achieve high customer satisfaction and inspire repeat visits,” the strategy recommends improving visitor services at federally-managed sites in order to (a) showcase the American experience; (b) serve diverse audiences; (c) improve access; and (d) promote regional tourism. Several of the World Heritage sites were mentioned by name as examples of iconic destinations, without identifying them as World Heritage sites.

Brand USA has been tasked with promoting the United States, is working with federal and other partners in support of these goals. Brand USA operates two websites, an industry and partner site (www.brandusa.com) and a consumer website (www.discoveramerica.com). Current brief features on Grand Canyon National Park and Indian Pueblos of New Mexico on Discover America do not identify either the Canyon or Taos Pueblo as World Heritage Sites.

Marketing of World Heritage Sites. Outside of the U.S., “World Heritage” is absolutely and unequivocally a valuable brand. Approximately 49% of designated sites are in Europe, and are recognized for their special nature by visitors as well as by travel agents and tour operators. This public awareness also translates into site managers investing in the best-known locations to provide outstanding visitor experiences, as well as in related print and electronic information and marketing materials. There need be distinctions made between cultural and natural sites for promotion and marketing purposes. International tourists will visit both types of areas and combine a variety of experiences in their travels. Of course, it is still problematic that, for example, while many people visit Machu Picchu (up to 2000 per day), relatively few people are aware of most other World Heritage Sites in Peru. World Heritage Sites need to be marketed and promoted as part of a larger strategy rather than in isolation.⁴



World Heritage marker, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, New Mexico

⁴ In celebration of the Convention’s 40th anniversary, Eastern National and the National Park Service’s Office of International Affairs have produced the new booklet “World Heritage Sites in the United States,” which highlights the 21 listed US sites. As part of Eastern National’s Passport To Your National Parks program and the Passport Commemorative Series, this booklet includes a block on each page for visitors to get their booklet canceled with a Passport stamp that records the name of the site and the date of the visit. Cancellations are free and are usually available at a park’s visitor center.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

As highlighted by the National Park Service and the background materials, World Heritage as such is not well known in the U.S. Most of the U.S. sites are units of the National Park System, and are much better known as National Parks rather than as World Heritage Sites. While their World Heritage designation is made known to the public through plaques and signage at the sites, this acknowledgment is quite understated. Most visitors are unaware that they are visiting a World Heritage Site. World Heritage status is often not highlighted in guidebooks or used in marketing or promotional materials by Convention and



The meeting in progress at Garrett Hall.

Visitors Bureaus (CVBs), tour operators, concessioners, and other partners. Some site managers may be reluctant to highlight or call attention to their site's World Heritage status due to past controversies over U.N. involvement or control. From a public awareness and marketing standpoint, the World Heritage label has not been used to maximum advantage in the U.S.

Some key questions for discussion that had been posed to the participants formed the basis for the remainder of the morning session as well as continued discussion in the afternoon:

- How do we provide World Heritage sites as a known, marketable asset to international promotion activities such as Brand USA?
- What would be successful public/private partnerships to promote World Heritage Sites and how would they engage with the private sector and federal, state, tribal, and local governments?
- What is required to develop the partnerships?
- What time frame(s) should we consider?
- How can World Heritage sites set and fulfill visitor expectations?
- What data will be gathered to understand progress and to assist in ongoing management/planning?
- Who will capture and coordinate data?
- Is there merit in creating a coalition of U.S. World Heritage sites, and if so, under what banner?

After the initial discussions, each participant was asked to state one question or issue to be addressed now or in the future. These questions were grouped into categories for further review and discussion:

- How can we briefly summarize the value of U.S. World Heritage sites to a variety of audiences?
- What is the call to action and is there common ground among this group for concerted action?

The remaining identified issues fell into the following broad categories:

- Marketing
- Organization
- World Heritage Site Experience
- Regional Cooperation/Identity

The World Heritage Site and prospective site managers present (Mark Esarey, Dan Kimball, Ann Taylor, Larry Turk, and Lynda Waggoner) offered their observations on what the status has meant or could mean for them from their different perspectives, including the way in which messaging affects travel decisions, visitor perceptions, and experience of the sites. Cate Magennis Wyatt (Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership) shared some thoughts about regional organization and cooperation from the perspective of a multi-state National Heritage Area corridor that contains one of the World Heritage Sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

It was agreed that participants should begin with straightforward, “quick-win” actions, including immediate collaboration with Brand USA to ensure inclusion of the U.S. World Heritage Sites as part of their developing promotional campaigns and activities. Related promotional materials, in the form of a “toolbox” for the voluntary usage of destination marketing organizations in and around World Heritage sites and tentative list sites might be developed in parallel with this effort. The “toolbox” would provide information and best practices for branding and marketing World Heritage sites and enhancing the visitor experience by better interpretation of the World Heritage status of the sites.

Two initial planning groups comprised of individuals who attended the June 2012 sessions will be formed and other organizations or individuals may be contacted for their interest in participating.

Awareness/Education/Promotional Toolbox

The Awareness group will develop a strategy to include such activities as:

- An online promotional toolbox, including a consistent message and summary of the meaning and benefits of World Heritage status;
- Enhanced descriptive materials, potentially including video
- A new online and print guidebook featuring the U.S. sites and the tentative list of nominated places, and discussion of regional and thematic promotions
- Links to HISTORY programming
- Outreach to international tourism events such as USTA’s Pow Wow and the World Travel Market
- Links to USTA Attractions brief and Destinations brief, to draw potential travelers to the U.S. World Heritage website
- Submit specific action items to integrate with National Travel and Tourism Strategy

Brand USA Coordination

The Brand USA group will:

- Develop and present two or three “Big Ideas” for promoting U.S. World Heritage sites
- Explore the creation of regional itineraries for travel planning incorporating the sites
- Link with Brand USA to include a World Heritage section of their USA Guide
- Tie World Heritage into the Brand USA Facebook page

A Continuing Engagement. While the participants discussed creating a formal group to carry the ideas forward, the general consensus was that a less formal structure was suitable for the immediate follow up and that the working groups for the toolbox and Brand USA coordination should move forward. If during the process of pursuing these initial two strategies a formal structure appears desirable, then a coalition or advisory committee under the auspices of the U.S. Commission for UNESCO or the ACHP may be explored.



The meeting participants in front of the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, venue of the meeting.

PARTICIPANTS, “WORLD HERITAGE—TAPPING THE POTENTIAL”

World Heritage Site Managers

Dan Kimball, Superintendent, Everglades National Park
David Neuman, University of Virginia World Heritage point of contact
Ann Taylor, Executive Vice President, Thomas Jefferson Foundation
Larry Turk, Superintendent Aztec Ruins National Monument
Lauren Blacik, Aztec Ruins, Park Ranger, Aztec Ruins National Monument
Mark Esarey, Cahokia Mounds Site Manager
Lynda Waggoner, Director, Fallingwater, Frank Lloyd Wright nomination

Travel Industry

Robin Tauck, R. Tauck and Partners
Randy Durband, R. Tauck and Partners
Nan Marchand Beauvois, Senior Director, National Councils Relations, USTA
Kevin Kelly, Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts
Keri Hanson, Social Media & Marketing Manager, Brand USA
Steve Richer, Government Affairs Advocate, National Tour Association
Jane Govoruhk, Assistant International Marketing Manager, State of Virginia Tourism

Department of Commerce

Curt Cottle, Office of Travel and Tourism Initiatives

Department of State and US Commission for UNESCO

Eric W Woodard, Executive Director, U.S. National Commission for UNESCO

National Park Service

Jon Smith, Assistant Associate Director, Heritage Preservation Assistance Programs, Cultural Resources
Stephen Morris, Chief, Office of International Affairs
Jo Pendry, Chief, Commercial Services
Donald Leadbetter, Presidential Management Fellow

Other agencies, organizations or individuals with expertise in the area

Jonathon Tourtellot, formerly with National Geographic
Cate Magennis Wyatt, President, Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership
Katherine Slick, President, ACHP Foundation
John Fowler, Executive Director, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Ron Anzalone, Director, Office of Preservation Initiatives, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Kimberly Gilmore, Senior Historian, Director of Corporate Outreach, HISTORY (The History Channel)

Facilitator

Elizabeth Watson, Heritage Strategies

REFERENCE MATERIALS

UNESCO World Heritage Website: <http://whc.unesco.org>

National Park Service World Heritage Website:
<http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/worldheritage/worldheritage.htm>

U.S. World Heritage Sites, NPS Brochure (Color, 2004)

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<http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=295021>

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Profile of Overseas Travelers to the United States: 2010 Inbound, Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, U.S. Department of Commerce
http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/outreachpages/inbound.general_information.inbound_overview.html

“Presentation of World Heritage Areas: Comments on developing sustainable tourism practice in World Heritage Areas,” P.H.C. (Bing) Lucas, Vice-Chair, World Heritage, IUCN Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas, excerpt from World Heritage Managers

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