

U.S. WORLD HERITAGE TENTATIVE LIST: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Introduction

As a signatory to the [World Heritage Convention](#), the United States of America participates in the deliberations that lead to cultural, natural, and mixed properties being inscribed on the [World Heritage List](#). These properties, known as World Heritage Sites, are the most outstanding examples of the world's cultural and natural heritage.

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.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks of 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 Office of International Affairs of the National Park Service is the responsible staff-level program office.

The World Heritage List as a whole 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.

What is a World Heritage Tentative List?

A Tentative List is a 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.

The World Heritage Committee has issued [Operational Guidelines](#) asking participating nations to provide Tentative Lists, which aid in evaluating properties for the World Heritage List on a comparative international basis and help the Committee to schedule its work over the long term. The [Operational Guidelines](#) recommend that a nation review its Tentative List at least once every decade.

Why and by whom is a new U.S. Tentative List being prepared?

The U.S. Tentative List 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 so as to meet the World Heritage Committee's December 2004 request that the Tentative List allow for no more than two nominations per year by any one nation, at least one of which must be a natural nomination (excluding potential emergency nominations not at present foreseen). It is reasonable to expect that 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.

The [National Park Service Office of International Affairs](#) (NPS-OIA) and the [George Wright Society](#) (GWS) are working cooperatively to prepare a new U.S. Tentative List. After various reviews and approvals, NPS-OIA will forward the list through the Secretary of the Interior to the U.S. Department of State for submittal to the World Heritage Committee.

In summary, 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, during the next 10 years. It is expected that the new U.S. Tentative List and the process used to develop it will generally resemble the model of [Canada's recent Tentative List revision](#).

Inclusion in the U.S. Tentative List will not affect the legal status of a property in any way. Even if the property is subsequently inscribed in the World Heritage List, only U.S. Government laws and regulations will apply to it.

What are the expectations of the World Heritage Committee for the new U.S. Tentative List?

The end product of this effort, the new U.S. Tentative List, should meet the expectations of the World Heritage Committee as well as U.S. legal requirements, because the new Tentative List should include recommendations that will permit as many as 20 nominations by the United States to the World Heritage List, consisting of no more than two nominations per year (at least one of which must be a natural area nomination).

The new Tentative List is intended to serve for at least the next decade, although its use would be excluded during any years when the United States is serving as a Member of the World Heritage Committee, because the United States has pledged that it does not intend to initiate any nominations during such service. Because the United States was elected to a 4-year term on the Committee in October 2005, the earliest nominations from the new Tentative List, consistent with that pledge, can be prepared in 2008. They will be submitted no later than February 1, 2009, and scheduled to come to the Committee for consideration in June 2010.

What are the criteria used by the World Heritage Committee to select World Heritage Sites?

To be included on the World Heritage List, a site must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one of the ten selection criteria enumerated below:

- i. represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- ii. 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;
- iii. bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- iv. be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- v. 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;
- vi. be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- vii. contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- viii. 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;
- ix. 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;
- x. contain the most important and significant natural habitats 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.

The protection, management, authenticity and integrity of properties are also important considerations in their selection for inscription on the World Heritage List.

The criteria are explained further in the [Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#) which, besides the text of the Convention, is the main working tool on World Heritage issues. The criteria have been regularly revised by the World Heritage Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept..

What are the legal prerequisites and other requirements for a U.S. site to be considered for inclusion in the new Tentative List?

The National Park Service proposes to use a two-step process to prepare the new Tentative List.

First, willing owners or their representatives will be asked to express their interest by completing an **Application**, expected to be distributed in early fall 2006, that will be used to determine whether their properties meet the legal prerequisites for World Heritage nomination and otherwise appear to be likely candidates, such as whether or not they appear to enjoy stakeholder support and are in categories of sites that are unrepresented or less represented in the World Heritage List.

The legal prerequisites for World Heritage nomination are set out in U.S. law and in the [World Heritage Program Regulations \(36 CFR 73\)](#). 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:

- * Each property that is proposed 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)
- * All of the property's owners must concur in the proposal.
- * 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 just noted can be considered further for inclusion on the revised U.S. Tentative List.

Only sites whose owners submit, or authorize to have submitted on their behalf, complete **Applications** will receive full evaluation for final inclusion in the U.S. Tentative List. It is anticipated that the deadline for receipt of **Applications** will be around April 1, 2007.

Second, the National Park Service Office of International Affairs will notify owners of properties that appear, based on professional staff evaluation of the initial **Applications**, to be the most likely candidates for inclusion in the Tentative List. Depending on the number of responses received and an assessment of other factors, including the completeness and accuracy of the information submitted, those owners may be asked to correct or amend their original **Applications**. Joint revision of **Applications** may be recommended in some cases, if it is being suggested that some properties be grouped for inclusion together. 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. Any responses by owners who disagree with an initial decision by the National Park Service that their properties do not qualify for inclusion in the Tentative List will be provided to reviewers of the draft Tentative List for consideration.

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.

How does the new U.S. Tentative List differ from the existing U.S. Indicative Inventory of 1982?

The new U.S. Tentative List will be a list from which it is expected that 20 U.S. sites or groups of sites will drawn for nomination during the next 10 years or so. In addition to the Committee's current request for a new Tentative List, there are substantive reasons to prepare a new list. The process for creating a new World Heritage Tentative List will take advantage of developments during the last quarter-century, including revised criteria, evolving precedents, international comparative studies, and Tentative Lists prepared recently by other countries.

The U.S. Indicative Inventory (1982), although the precursor to and generally similar to the Tentative List, a term which it predates, is a more primitive yet more ambitious list of about 60 candidate sites that was drafted by a National Park Service working group in 1976-82, using the first version of the World Heritage criteria, which was then in force. The World Heritage criteria have been significantly revised since then.

The Indicative Inventory has also outlived its useful life. It is now considered by the World Heritage Committee and the World Heritage Centre (the Committee's secretariat) to be antiquated. It suffers from some serious deficiencies, notably:

* Although a process for amending the Indicative Inventory is outlined in the U.S. World Heritage Program regulations, only two sites were ever added to it; it is thus among the very first "Tentative Lists" submitted by any country and probably the oldest that is essentially unchanged. Approaches to the study of culture and views of the study of nature have changed in the last quarter-century and the sites may have changed as well.

* The working group in 1976-82 did not have the resources or the expertise to conduct any thorough international comparative studies to examine the merits of the properties before naming them to the Indicative Inventory. This was not a deliberate oversight, for a quarter-century ago, very few international comparative studies had been done and only

a handful of sites had been inscribed in the World Heritage List, providing almost no precedents for the application of the World Heritage criteria.

* Before including sites in the Inventory, neither in 1982 nor since did the National Park Service consult property owners or other stakeholders, such as State and local governments, to the extent that would be deemed appropriate today. In any case, after a quarter-century, a full review of owner interest is merited before including or retaining sites on a new Tentative List.

Will the sites on the Indicative Inventory of 1982 be automatically retained in the new Tentative List?

No. Their owners will have to apply for inclusion in the new Tentative List, as explained above.

Will consideration will be given to renominating World Heritage Sites under additional criteria and to extending their boundaries?

Although there is no blanket prohibition on doing so, it is rather unlikely that extensions and renominations of World Heritage Sites under additional criteria will be included in the new U.S. Tentative List. This is because, under the World Heritage Committee's *Operational Guidelines*, such major changes to World Heritage Sites are considered as new nominations. They would be counted against the limit of 20 nominations (of which at least 10 must be natural sites) that will be drawn from the new U.S. Tentative List.

In addition, the World Heritage Committee considers only a limited number of properties each year, and already has decided that it will give priority to nominations that represent unrepresented or less represented categories of sites. This limits the prospects for an extension or a renomination of a listed World Heritage Site under additional criteria to be considered favorably by the World Heritage Committee in the short term. Since such proposals facing the possibility of lengthy deferral, it does not seem likely that it will be prudent to include them in the new Tentative List.

Nevertheless, subject to the cautions just discussed, an **Application** for inclusion in the new Tentative List of a proposed extension or renomination that enjoys strong owner and stakeholder support will not be dismissed outright, but will be considered on its merits.

What will be the roles of the NPS Associate Directors for Nature and Culture in preparing the new Tentative List?

The Associate Directors may be asked to advise the Office of International Affairs and GWS's contractor on how to respond to public inquiries about the Tentative List revision; on how to evaluate the units of the National Park System and other nationally important

Federal lands, as well as National Historic and Natural Landmarks, for inclusion; and on how to ensure that ethnic and minority cultural sites and indigenous peoples' interests in the national parks are suitably noted and considered.

The Associate Directors and their staffs will primarily render their advice through review of recommendations and findings in the new Tentative List and the accompanying Background Research Report, which will be prepared by the Society's contractor.

What formal explanatory meetings will be held?

NPS-OIA and GWS will organize and/or participate in explanatory meetings to acquaint both the international and U.S. national affiliates of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the Federal Interagency Panel on World Heritage, the U.S. National Commission on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and possibly other parties, including individual owners or groups of owners, as time permits, with the project and to further refine the process for preparation and submission of Tentative List **Applications**. In response to requests, NPS-OIA and GWS will also, time permitting, provide general advice to the preparers of **Applications**.

Will any Background Research Report accompany the new Tentative List?

The GWS contractor will prepare a Background Research Report on natural and cultural heritage that analyzes relevant factors and assesses completed **Applications** for individual potential U.S. sites in light of the newly revised World Heritage criteria (2004); the priorities of the World Heritage Committee's Global Strategy; studies of key international topics by ICOMOS, IUCN, and possibly other international organizations; and any feedback received from the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. This report will be modeled on the completed report that led to the revision of the Canadian Tentative List. The report will account for all properties for which complete **Applications** have been received by NPS-OIA. As noted above, only sites whose owners submit, or authorize to have submitted on their behalf, complete **Applications** will receive full evaluation for inclusion in the Tentative List.

Who will provide expert review of the Background Research Report and new Tentative List?

The Office of International Affairs of the National Park Service will prepare the draft Background Research Report and draft Tentative List in such a way as to facilitate review and recommendations thereon by NPS Associate Directors, the Federal Interagency Panel on World Heritage, the U.S. National Commission on UNESCO, or an expert subcommittee composed of representatives of the above groups and possibly other bodies, including those that request to do so. The Background Research Report will

facilitate the development of a proposal to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary's subsequent final review and decision on the composition of the U.S. Tentative List.

The U.S. national affiliates of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) will determine their roles in the review of these drafts, which will need to be consistent with their parent organizations roles' as the official Advisory Bodies that review and recommend to the World Heritage Committee whether it should accept nominations to the World Heritage List.

What is the Provisional Timetable for Preparation of the New U.S. Tentative List?

Submitted Application for OMB Approval	7/27/06
Anticipated OMB Approval/Distribute Applications	10/1/2006
Deadline for Receipt of Completed Applications	4/1/2007
Notification to Submit Second-Stage Responses	5/1/2007
Deadline for Second-Stage Responses	6/15/2007
Deadline to Finish Draft Research Report and Tentative List	8/1/2007
Expert Review of Research Report and Tentative List	8/1/2007-10/31/2007
Final Review and Clearance by Secretary of the Interior	11/1/2006-12/31/2007
Submittal of Tentative List to World Heritage Centre	12/31/2007
Deadline for Submittal of Tentative Lists to World Heritage Centre	2/1/2008

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