

FEDERAL POLICY TOWARD LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION

The Federal Government is responsible for providing leadership in preserving the Nation's prehistoric and historic cultural resources.

The Role of the National Park Service

The National Park Service serves as the lead agency for technical preservation matters for the Federal Government, and for State and local efforts. In order to improve the preservation of prehistoric and historic landscapes, it would be necessary for the National Park Service to focus more consistent attention on landscape preservation in its management of cultural resources, and coordinate landscape policies and programs with other agencies. For example, although NPS has a chief historian, a chief archaeologist, a chief curator, and a chief historical architect, it has no chief landscape architect. To assist in meeting prehistoric and historic landscape preservation goals, the National Park Service has identified 12 projects for standards and models. In focusing increased attention to historic landscapes, NPS could also emphasize the role of technologies in preserving prehistoric and historic landscapes.

In addition, the National Park Service is now considering how to preserve its own historic landscapes; it could intensify those efforts by singling out several landscapes to serve as preservation models for other agencies and for State and local efforts.⁸⁷ In the past, NPS has directed relatively few of its resources toward landscape preservation, compared to preservation of historic structures or archaeological sites. It could redress part of this imbalance by directing a greater portion of cultural resource funding toward landscape preservation. NPS managers need to be more aware of the value of preserving historic landscapes.

NPS could assist in this effort by making a greater effort to include consideration of pre-

*U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Technologies for Prehistoric and Historic Preservation*, OTA-E-319 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1986), app. F.

⁸⁷See for example, John Donahue, "Historic Landscaping," *National Park Service CRM Bulletin*, vol. 9, No. 2, 1986, pp. 1,8, which mentions briefly both landscape design considerations and technologies for reproducing historic trees.

historic and historic landscapes in their various publications. For example, the Preservation Briefs and Tech Notes, published by the NPS Preservation Assistance Division, now focus on the preservation of historic structures. The subject matter of these and other publications could be expanded to include recommendations on preserving landscapes. NPS could also exercise leadership and enhance its own landscape preservation effort by upgrading and highlighting the function of gardening and grounds maintenance as a crucial resource management role in the service. Finally, NPS could develop a self-study course similar to the one NPS developed for historic architecture.⁸⁸ This course is directed at a range of job classifications, and depending on previous knowledge and interest the employee could either update or increase his or her preservation skills.

Uniform standards for landscape identification and preservation need to be developed. NPS publications, *National Register of Historic Places Bulletin* 18, "How To Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes," and the NPS Handbook, "Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System,"⁸⁹ will assist the effort to develop standards for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. However, technical standards equivalent to those that have been generated for the built environment are also important and must be developed for landscapes.

The National Historic Preservation Act

Although the National Historic Preservation Act contains no impediment to the identification and preservation of landscapes, neither does it specifically mention them. Yet, most Federal agencies that hold and manage historic properties also

⁸⁸Hugh C. Miller, Lee H. Nelson, and Emogene A. Bevitt, "Skills Development Plans for Historical Architects in the National Park Service" (Washington, DC: National Park Service, May 1986); NPS gave a course entitled "Policies and Issues in Preservation of Historic Landscapes," Fredericksburg, VA, April 1986.

⁸⁹This publication will soon be published in a revised edition.

⁹⁰For example, see Sec. 101 (a)(l)(A): "The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to expand and maintain a National Register of Historic Places composed of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture."

manage prehistoric or historic landscapes. Not expressly naming historic landscapes as worthy of being identified and preserved allows the agencies to overlook landscape concerns in their preservation programs.

Many have suggested that it may be appropriate to amend the National Historic Preservation Act to include explicit reference to historic landscapes. Others have expressed concern that including explicit reference to historic landscapes will open the act to inclusion of other, more specific historic categories, or will subject it to unnecessary and harmful experimentation.

Terminology

The Federal Government could aid in the identification and preservation of significant prehistoric and historic landscapes by clarifying landscape terminology in the National Register, improving interagency information flow concerning historic landscapes, and focusing more attention on landscape preservation.

As noted in Issue A, the lack of consistent terminology constitutes a formidable barrier to identifying and preserving significant historic landscapes. In an effort to bring consistency to landscape preservation, the Historic Preservation Committee of the American Society of Landscape Architects has proposed landscape preservation terminology.⁹¹ This, and other similar efforts, should be examined carefully and consistent terminology developed and promulgated. However, such terminology should be clear and appropriately reflect the interests of a variety of disciplines that investigate landscapes. In other words, it should not be biased toward the thinking of any one professional group or discipline. In order to assist the procedure of nominating significant prehistoric and historic landscapes to the Register, it may be appropriate to include landscape terminology in the National Register categories as well as in guidelines developed for evaluating and nominating them.

⁹¹Patricia O'Donnell, "Proposed Landscape Preservation Definitions," ASLA Committee on Historic Preservation, 1984.

National Survey of Prehistoric and Historic Landscapes

As noted previously, in 1984, with the support of NPS, the Historic Preservation Committee of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) began a national survey of designed historic landscapes. This project exemplifies the importance of the public/private partnership to historic preservation. The survey is being conducted through the ASLA, primarily by volunteers from many regions of the United States. The quality and completeness of the results therefore vary depending on the interest, degree of expertise, and available time of those volunteers. New Mexico has completed an initial comprehensive survey. Massachusetts has inventoried its Olmsted Parks and has established an office that is responsible for preservation of historic landscapes. Most other States have only just begun their surveys.

NPS could assume a stronger role in the survey effort, in order to assure timely completion of the survey and to standardize the information collected. Congressional oversight may be necessary to assure completion of this important project.

As noted in Issue C, too few U.S. landscapes have been inventoried to provide significant examples. An interdisciplinary team approach, in which anthropologists, archaeologists, architects, cultural geographers, and historians work together with landscape architects in conducting a broad-based survey of American landscapes, could result in a dramatic increase in the quantity and quality of documented historic landscapes.⁹²

The proliferation of microcomputers and minicomputers may improve the information flow among agencies. However, the lack of common standards for maintenance of databases among the agencies constitute a formidable barrier to achieving a national inventory of historic Landscapes.⁹³ Although the agencies are taking

⁹²Olmsted Historic Landscape Preservation Program: Guidelines and Criteria for Implementation (Boston, MA: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs, April 1985).

⁹³OTA, Technologies for Prehistoric and Historic Preservation, op. cit. ch. 5.

steps to coordinate databases, it is not clear how successful such coordination will be. Such coordination would greatly improve the efficiency of maintaining current information.

Olmsted Heritage Landscapes Act

It is crucial to increase public awareness of the value of significant historic landscapes if they are to be preserved. By focusing attention on the many landscape projects designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and his professional successors,⁹⁴ passage of the Olmsted Heritage Landscapes Act of 1987 (H. R. 17), an earlier version of which was introduced in the 99th Congress,⁹⁵ could materially aid the collection of information on all U.S.-designed historic landscapes. Among other things, the bill directs the Secretary of the Interior:

- to direct the National Park Service, with the assistance of other Federal agencies, State and local officials, and other interested parties, to prepare an inventory of all Olmsted heritage landscapes consisting of "a listing of all Olmsted heritage landscapes . . . and a technical evaluation of all publicly owned Olmsted heritage landscapes, and of all Olmsted heritage landscapes on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places;
- "in consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, [to] promulgate . . . guidelines for applying the Secretary's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects to historic designed landscapes;
- "provide technical assistance to other Federal agencies, State and local governments, private organizations and interested individuals, on the identification, commemoration, and preservation of historic designed landscapes;
- "conduct and submit to the Congress . . . a thematic study of historic designed landscapes . . . which would qualify as national historic landmarks;

⁹⁴Over three generations, the Olmsted firm, whose Brookline, MA, office is now a National Historic Site, managed by NPS, designed such parks as Central Park in New York City; Franklin Park in Boston, MA; and Prospect Park in Brooklyn, NY.

⁹⁵H.R.37—see House of Representatives Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs Report 99-148, 99th Cong., 1st sess.

- "encourage a compatible program for the use of the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts, as a center for research, fellowships, and related activities."

In the debate over H.R. 37 in the 99th Congress, some private owners of Olmsted properties expressed fear that passage of the Olmsted Act would have limited their ability to control disposition of these properties, and to develop them if desired.⁹⁶ However, H.R. 37 contained no provisions limiting their right to do so. The bill primarily sought to inventory Olmsted properties. Nevertheless, opponents were concerned that drawing attention to the historic nature of Olmsted properties would strengthen the hand of preservationists in opposing future development.

Having passed the House in June 1985, the bill was referred to the Senate, where it was amended and reported favorably by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Although the House accepted the Senate's amendments, the bill eventually failed to pass the Senate in the closing hours of the 99th Congress. H.R. 17, as introduced, is equivalent to the previous bill and contains the few amendments agreed to in the 99th Congress for H.R. 37 (included in the 99th Congress Senate version—S. 2091). It was referred to the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands on February 5, 1987.

Center for Preservation Technology

The Department of the Interior, which through NPS provides technical preservation assistance to Federal, State, and local agencies, could be directed to examine the benefits and drawbacks of a Center for Preservation Technology, and prepare a report on what such a center might contribute to the effort to develop cost-effective techniques, methods, and equipment for preservation, including landscape preservation. The Department of the Interior might choose several technologies or technology areas and explore

⁹⁶"Hospital Challenges Preservationists on Bill To Catalogue Olmsted Designs," *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1986.

how such a center could support the Department's current and projected needs for preservation technology.

For example, remote sensing technologies, including spaceborne, airborne, and ground-penetrating sensors, have demonstrated their effectiveness for a variety of tasks related to the identification and analysis of prehistoric and historic cultural resources.⁹⁷ Airborne or spaceborne remote sensing instruments are especially useful in detecting variations of vegetation type over an area. However, the effectiveness of different remote sensing methods varies according to type of cultural resource and the conditions under which they are used.⁹⁸ A study by the Department of the Interior could assess the ability of a center for preservation technology to address the needs of the Department and other Federal agencies for support of advances in remote sensing technologies.

Education and Interpretation

Public education is an extremely important component of the preservation process, as most funding for historic preservation projects derives from the public, either through donations, taxes, or through entrance fees. In addition, public support and advocacy are needed to support inclusion and expansion of funds for historic preservation in Federal appropriations, which support historic preservation efforts in various Federal agencies, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and State grants administered by the SHPOS. Public education and research seek to answer the question: what can we learn from the past, as revealed in our material prehistory and history? Because the information conveyed by public education is directly tied to what we learn from the study of archaeological sites and historic structures and landscapes, and should be of the highest quality, preservation professionals have a responsibility to report their research findings to the public as well as to colleagues at professional meetings and in published articles.

⁹⁷Thomas Sever and James Weisman, "Remote Sensing and Archaeology: Potential for the Future," National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Earth Resources Laboratory, January 1985.

⁹⁸Technologies for prehistoric and Historic Technology, op.cit., ch. 3.

Historic cultural sites, buildings, and landscapes are milestones in our Nation's history. Public education is most effective when it helps the public understand and experience prehistoric and historic sites, structures, and landscapes in relation to cultural and political history. In representing events, people, and styles of life that affected or helped form our current values and beliefs, it evokes an understanding of our relationship to the past; it makes history live.

Accessible, clearly presented information about historic landscapes can help the public to understand, for example, that even a designed landscape may reflect broad economic, political, and social values, as well as the personal aesthetic values of its designer or patron. Information about prehistoric landscape sites can make the public more aware of the cultural and scientific achievements of Native America ns.⁹⁹

Among Federal agencies, the National Park Service (NPS) has a long history of public education concerning cultural resources, which grew out of its interest in interpreting natural settings and values to its park visitors.¹⁰⁰ Other agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management¹⁰¹ and the U.S. Forest Service also maintain interpretive staffs and develop interpretive materials. NPS sees cultural resource management and interpretation as complementary. "Interpretation communicates the significance and value of the resource to . . . 'the public'."¹⁰² Interpretation also assists in "developing support for preserving" the parks' resources, including cultural resources.¹⁰³ "The

⁹⁹See, for example, Ray A. Williamson, *Living the Sky: The Cosmos of the American Indian* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), for an extensive discussion of prehistoric structures and landforms that display evidence of Native American knowledge of the motions of the celestial sphere.

¹⁰⁰Barry Mackintosh, */interpretation in the National park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986).

¹⁰¹For example, the Western Regional Office of the Bureau of Land Management maintains a Cultural Resources Series that presents material both to professionals and laymen on the cultural resources of the region.

¹⁰²Cultural Resources Management (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, NPS-28), ch. 3, p. 34, August 1985. See also *Interpretation and Visitor Services Guide-line* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, NPS-6, August 1985).

¹⁰³"The Role and Responsibility of Interpretation in the National Park Service," position paper attached to Memorandum from William Penn Mott, jr., NPS Director, to NPS Regional Directors regarding Interpretation, Feb. 10, 1986.

preservation of the tangible evidence of this [our] past insures the preservation of the knowledge base. [It is] a base that can help us understand the fundamental relationships of men to each other and of men living in communities to their environment as a whole. Research results are an important part of the significance and value of cultural resources, and often form a part of NPS interpretive presentations.

The Federal Government, especially NPS, could enhance the public's understanding and importance of prehistoric and historic landscapes by including interpretive material on landscapes in the presentations park rangers give to the millions of park visitors each year. However, this would require NPS to develop additional interpretive materials.

Guidance to States

One of the most important functions the Federal agencies can serve with respect to prehistoric

⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

and historic preservation is to provide training to State and local preservation agencies and groups. As noted below in the section on *State and Local Landscape Preservation*, the States **could** benefit from access to information on carrying out landscape surveys. In addition, the extensive Federal experience with designing and using various kinds of databases would benefit the State Historic Preservation Offices,

Tax Incentives

Tax incentives have provided an incalculable boost to preservation of historic structures. One tangible way of imparting value to the preservation of historic landscapes would be to allow tax credits and incentives for their preservation and restoration. Current legislation permits historic preservation tax credits for buildings only. Participants suggested that local governments be encouraged to use combinations of zoning, scenic/historic easements, and property tax incentives to encourage landscape preservation, whether independent of historic structures or in conjunction with them.