

Managing Cultural Landscapes

Protected landscapes and cultural landscapes share much common ground: both are focused on landscapes where human relationships with the natural environment over time define their essential character. In protected landscapes, the natural environment, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem integrity have been the primary emphases. In contrast, the emphasis in cultural landscapes has been on human history, continuity of cultural traditions, and social values and aspirations. Yet in spite of the strong dichotomous tradition, recent experience has demonstrated that in many landscapes the natural and cultural heritage are inextricably bound together and that the conservation approach could benefit from more integration.

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Table 1. The dichotomy of culture and nature.

Adopted from Cronon 1995.

In natural resources preservation:

- There is increasing recognition that to protect species and their habitats, it is often important to encompass larger areas than have traditionally been protected. This increase in the size of areas of concern enhances the proximity to where people live and work.
- Ecological research has demonstrated the pervasiveness of human influence and illuminated an appreciation of the role of disturbance –either natural or human-generated – in shaping ecological systems. Both research and management experience illustrate that active intervention in certain situations may be required to sustain habitat for certain species.
- The recognition of the importance of incorporating people into conservation programs is increasing. In many countries throughout the world, the importance of working with local people and their cultural traditions in developing nature conservation programs is receiving increased emphasis.

In cultural resources conservation:

- The recognition of cultural landscapes is representative of the broadening of the definition and scope of cultural heritage. There is specific recognition of the potential natural resource values in cultural landscapes.

- The places of cultural interest may be large –hundreds or even thousands of acres. Cultural landscapes of this size would have tremendous potential to include important natural areas.
- As with nature conservation, there is a growing recognition that the values and priorities of people today are integral to resource evaluation and ultimately critical to the success of any conservation effort.

Protecting Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes give us a sense of place. They reveal our relationship with the land over time. Whether or not we are directly aware of their influence, landscapes have a profound effect on human life. The aesthetic, economic, and security values of our physical surroundings play essential roles in decisions about where and how we live.

Understanding the relationship between the environment and historic areas is critical for protecting resources and providing for the public's enjoyment. For example, although visitors to historic buildings tend to focus on the building and its interior appointments, the appearance of the surroundings, including various outbuildings, fences, and other structures, as well as plantings, contributes significantly to their understanding of the building's historical context.

In some respects, the management and preservation of landscapes is more complicated than historic structures because landscapes encompass a greater variety of elements, and include plants and structures as well as landforms. But more important, natural elements of landscapes are particularly susceptible to alteration and deterioration. Unlike historic structures, plants and trees can outgrow their space. In time, water may erode the soil and improper pruning and care of plants may hasten damage from disease and pests.

Landscapes are highly vulnerable. New agricultural practices, for example, can dramatically alter the look of the rural landscape. Changing agricultural economics, such as the move from the predominance of family farms to agribusiness, alter both traditional patterns of the land and the ways of life that produced the patterns.

Like other historic properties, America's landscapes are subject to loss and change through inappropriate uses, insensitive development, vandalism, and natural forces such as flooding.

To protect plant and animal species, managers need basic scientific information about their habitats, ranges, life cycles, and more. To protect the historic areas, managers need to understand people –those who establish, visit, support, cherish, use and (sometimes) abuse parks and resources.

Whether they are highly structured parks and formal gardens, or less structured farms, urban landscapes or roadsides, historic landscapes reflect U. S. cultural heritage.

Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes

Historic landscapes can range from thousands of acres of rural tracts to a small homestead with a front yard of less than one acre. Like historic buildings and structures, these special places reveal aspects of our country's origins and development through their form and features and in the ways in which they were used. In fact, almost every historic property has a landscape component. Imagine a residential district without sidewalks, lawns, and trees or an agricultural complex with buildings, but no fields, garden plots, or hedge rows!

Historic landscapes include residential gardens and community parks, scenic highways, rural communities, institutional grounds, cemeteries, battlefields and zoological gardens. They are composed of a number of character-defining features which individually or collectively contribute to the landscape's physical appearance as they have evolved over time.

Wise stewardship protects the character and or spirit of a place while recognizing history as change over time. Often, these changes also involve our own respectful modifications. The potential benefits from the preservation of cultural landscapes are enormous. Landscapes provide scenic, economic, ecological, social, recreational and educational opportunities that help us understand ourselves as individuals, communities and as a nation. Their ongoing preservation can yield an improved quality of life for everyone, and, above all, a sense of place or identity for future generations.

Definitions

Ethnographic Landscape-- a landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources. Examples are contemporary settlements, religious sacred sites and massive geological structures. Small plant communities, animals, subsistence and ceremonial grounds are often components.

Historic Vernacular Landscape-- a landscape that evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape. Through social or cultural attitudes of an individual, family or a community, the landscape reflects the physical, biological, and cultural character of those everyday lives. Function plays a significant role in vernacular landscapes. They can be a single property such as a farm or a collection of properties such as a district of historic farms

along a river valley. Examples include rural villages, industrial complexes, and agricultural landscapes.

Historic Site-- a landscape significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person. Examples include battlefields and presidential properties.

Historic Designed Landscape-- a landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition. The landscape may be associated with a significant person(s), trend, or event in landscape architecture; or illustrate an important development in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. Aesthetic values play a significant role in designed landscapes. Examples include parks, campuses, and estates.

Landscapes and Natural Resources

Nearly all designed and vernacular landscapes evolve from, or are dependent on natural resources. It is these interconnected systems of land, air and water, vegetation and wildlife which have dynamic qualities that differentiate cultural landscapes from other cultural resources, such as historic structures. Thus, their documentation, treatment, and ongoing management require a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach.

Natural resources form natural systems that are interdependent on one another and which may extend well beyond the boundary of the historic property. For example, these systems can include geology, hydrology, plant and animal habitats, and climate. Some of these natural resources are particularly susceptible to disturbances caused by changes in landscape management. Many natural resources such as wetlands or rare species fall under local, state, and federal regulations, which must be considered. Natural systems are an integral part of the cultural landscape and must be considered when selecting appropriate treatment.

Landscapes in southwest Missouri

From the pre-settlement savanna of scattered oaks, prairie grasses and wildflowers, and open rocky glades to the geological wonders of sinkholes, caves, natural bridges and springs, southwest Missouri is rich in history. Nathanael Boone, Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill Hickock, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Langston Hughes and George Washington Carver all made homes in southwest Missouri. Springfield, Missouri was a stopover on the Cherokee Trail of Tears (since 1987, a National Historic Trail) and the birthplace of the famous Route 66. While camped at the James River in 1819, explorer Henry Schoolcraft said about the area that would become Springfield, "the country is the most extensive, rich, and beautiful, of any which I have ever seen west of the Mississippi River."

Historical and cultural landscapes face complex environmental management problems in this area. Some of the issues include impacts on native wildlife populations, significant vegetation changes, protection of state and federally listed endangered and threatened species, exotic invasive species, impacts from soil erosion – sedimentation, stormwater problems, and water quality problem impacts from adjacent and regional uses.

Why are landscapes so dynamic? Why does a landscape look the way it does? How did it get that way? How and why are landscape changes initiated, and what do the answers mean?

Students will be provided opportunities to experience and gain knowledge about common landscape features of the area including springs, caves, sinkholes, savannahs, and rocky glades and the management tools needed to preserve their integrity as well as methods used to generate public opinion in support of the preservation of cultural landscapes.

References

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Birnbaum, Charles A., author, *Preservation Brief 36*, Preservation Assistance Division, National Park Service, Washington D. C. , September 1994

Stokes, Samuel, N., et al, *Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1989

Kelso, William M., and Rachel Most. *Earth Patterns: Essays in Landscape Archaeology*. Charlottesville, VA. University Press of Virginia, 1990.

Tishler, W. H., "The Landscape: An Emerging Historic Preservation Resource," *The Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin 11, No. 4, 1979, pp. 9-26*

Kunst, Lisa A and Patricia M. O'Donnell, "Historic Landscape Preservation Deserves a Broader Meaning," *Landscape Architecture*, January 1981, p. 53

Ridout, Orlando, "Agricultural Change and the Architectural Landscape," *Centuries of Maryland Architecture, pp. 3-7*

Suggested Web-Sites for further information

Lesson Plans – The Evolution of Cultural Landscape

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/06/g912/cultural.html>

Preservation Seattle, September 2002

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/commnty/histsea/preservationseattle/preservationenv/defaultsept.htm>

The Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation

<http://www.ahlp.org/docs/about.html>

General Guidelines for Identifying and Evaluating Historic Landscapes (page down and download acrobat file)

<http://dot.ca.gov/ser/guidance.htm#Landscapes>

Preservation Brief 36: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscape <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/brief36.htm>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Why We Protect Our Past

<http://refuges.fws.gov/cultural/why.html>

Making Educated Decisions – A Landscape Preservation Bibliography

<http://www2.cr.nps.gov/hli/makedec.htm>

Human Causes of Land-Use Change

<http://www.ciesin.org/docs/002-105/002-105b.html>

What Are Cultural Landscapes

<http://www.icls.harvard.edu/language/whatare.html>

Natural Science and Cultural Landscapes (page down)

<http://www.icls.harvard.edu/current.html#lang>

Cultural Landscapes of the World

<http://whc.unesco.org/exhibits/cultland/landscape.htm>

Cultural Landscapes of North America

<http://www.uwec.edu/Geography/lvogeler/w188/mapusa.htm>

Cultural Landscapes as Classrooms

<http://www.tclf.org/classroom.htm>

Can Historic Properties Embrace a Landscape Continuum?

http://www.tclf.org/conf_papers/mission_impossible.doc

National Capital Commission – Cultural Landscapes
http://www.canadacapital.gc.ca/corporate/parks_heritage/heritage/cultural_landscape/index_e.asp

Cultural Landscapes as a Methodology for Understanding Natural Resource Management Impacts in the Western United States
<http://www.consecol.org/vol7/iss1/art12/>

Cultural Landscapes Charette (Australia)
<http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/docs/CLBackground9-03.pdf>
Watersheds and Cultural Landscapes: Sustainable Development through Heritage Areas <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/Proceed/watson.html>

Conservation Issues and Approaches for Dynamic Cultural Landscapes
http://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/publications/pdfs/Foster_JBiogeography_2002_Conservation.pdf

Issues Paper – Cultural Landscapes
<http://inetdocs.loudoun.gov/revisedcomp/docs/preservationpla /issues /culturallandscape/office2k/office2k.htm>

Organizations Active in Cultural Landscape Preservation

Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation
American Association for State and Local History
American Folklife Center
American Folklore Society
American Rock Art Research Association
American Society of Landscape Architects
American Studies Association
Association of Living History Farms and Historic Museums
Association for Preservation Technology
Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies
National Association for Olmstead Parks
National Council on Public History

National Park Service
Organization of American Historians
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Society for Architectural Historians, Chapter for Landscape Architecture and the Allied Arts
The Cultural Landscape Foundation
Trustees of Reservations (Massachusetts)