JULY - DECEMBER 2021 BULLETIN

Welcome to the U.S. National Park Service’s (NPS) International Program bulletin, a newsletter sharing summaries of notable international activities by the staff of the NPS during July to December 2021.

Over the past two years, the NPS has continued to adapt to the challenging conditions resulting from the global pandemic which constrained traditional methods of international conservation engagement. Like nearly all of our colleagues, we have become adept at any number of videoconferencing platforms and other forms of virtual collaboration. Following are brief notes about the ongoing cooperation between NPS staff and our international counterparts that occurred between July and December of 2021.

For NPS colleagues interested in how to become involved in international cooperation - https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/oia-get-involved.htm

Follow us on social media for these and many other NPS international activities - https://www.facebook.com/NPSInternationalAffairs and https://twitter.com/NPSInternation

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NPS Celebrates 60th Anniversary of the Office of International Affairs

In 1962, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, in response to growing demand for NPS advice and assistance from the global conservation and preservation communities, established the NPS Office of International Affairs (NPSOIA), the first program office in the U.S. federal government dedicated to international conservation. In the last 60 years, NPSOIA has helped coordinate NPS’s global activities and facilitated the two-way sharing of best ideas and practices between NPS and our international colleagues. Throughout 2022 we will highlight aspects of that history, as well as current NPS international work and plans for the future. For more info, see https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/NPSOIA-what-we-do.htm

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World Heritage Nomination Updates

One of NPSOIA’s major responsibilities as the staff office for the US World Heritage program is to guide and oversee the development of World Heritage nominations of US sites to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

For many years, the office has provided guidance to advocates in Ohio who were interested in nominating the **Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks**, a group of 8 sites nominated as a “series,” that collectively appears to justify World Heritage criterion (i) by demonstrating a masterpiece of human creative genius: a 2,000-year-old series of precise squares, circles, and octagons and a hilltop sculpted to enclose a vast plaza. They were built on an enormous scale and the geometric forms are consistently deployed across great distances and encode alignments with both the sun’s cycles and the far more complex patterns of the moon. The series also justifies criterion (iii) in providing testimony to its builders, people now referred to as the Hopewell Culture: dispersed, non-hierarchical groups whose way of life was transitioning from foraging to farming. The earthworks were the center of a continent-wide sphere of influence and interaction and have yielded exceptionally finely crafted ritual objects fashioned from raw materials obtained from distant places.

NPSOIA worked with both **Hopewell Culture National Historical Park**, which manages five of the sites, and the Ohio History Connection which manages the three others. The nomination, running to over 300 pages, was authorized by the Department of the Interior in 2018 and has now been officially submitted to the World Heritage Committee. It will be reviewed by the International Council on Monuments and Sites in 2022 and considered by the World Heritage Committee at its annual session in the summer of 2023.

Another nomination project was kicked off in August 2021 when the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Shannon Estenoz, authorized that the **Moravian Bethlehem district** in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania participate in a multi-country nomination of 18th century Moravian Church Settlements. The Bethlehem district is a mid- and late-18th century planned community created in conjunction with the larger Moravian congregation in Herrnhut, Germany. Bethlehem became the religious and administrative center of Moravian activities in North America. It consists of religious, domestic, and industrial components, reflecting the full scope of Moravian community life in a North American context. The nomination is proposed to include the Herrnhut site as well as Gracehill in Northern Ireland (U.K), as an “extension” of the Danish Moravian settlement, Christiansfeld, which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2015. No firm schedule has been set for completing the nomination dossier.

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Former NPS Director Shares Best Practices on Park Sustainable Financing with Georgia-Sakartvelo

Over the past three years, the NPS has recruited colleagues not only from within the Interior Department but also those officials with subject matter expertise who have retired from active duty. DOI and NPS are thankful for the contributions of former NPS Director Jonathan B. Jarvis, who produced a series of reports on sustainable park financing, beginning with an assessment of U.S. park finances and a survey of global best practices.

Former Director Jarvis followed up these reports with presentations of these findings. The objective of this presentation is to share a summary of the various budgetary and financial resources available to and utilized by USNPS. The goal is to recommend “best practices” for a sustainable financial investment in Georgia’s national park and protected area system that will ensure its ecological integrity and high-quality visitor experiences. Determining the actual annual needs for a base budget of a national park system is a complex process that must consider the number of parks, park size, natural and cultural resources, purpose, planning, visitation, infrastructure, staffing, and operations.

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DOI & NPS Undertake Greenland Tourism Assessment

The NPS National Tourism Program manager joined an Interior Department International Technical Assistance Program (DOI-ITAP) team that conducted an initial assessment of Greenland’s tourism sector, focusing on 3 popular tourist destinations: the capital, Nuuk, and its immediate surroundings; Ilulissat, home to the World Heritage Site Ilulissat Icefjord; and Southern Greenland, home to the World Heritage Site Kujataa, a cultural landscape celebrating Norse and Inuit farming culture. The U.S. Government is committed to helping Greenland achieve its goal of becoming the “new frontier for adventure tourism” and USAID is partnering with DOI to focus on building Greenlandic capacity to sustainably manage its cultural and natural resources through a variety of hands-on, government-to-government technical assistance workshops, professional exchanges, and educational programs.

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GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Chinese-American Contributions to Yosemite Receive Recognition

Over the past two decades, Yosemite National Park ranger Yenyen Chan has uncovered and endeavored to share with visitors the important role that early Chinese immigrants played in shaping the Yosemite that we know today. On October 1, 2021, a formal dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony was conducted to open the Chinese Laundry Building at the Yosemite History Center in Wawona. Park staff, Yosemite Conservancy officials, elected officials and staff, members of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, media, and park visitors joined the event. Speakers from the National Park Service included Park Superintendent Cicely Muldoon, Rangers Yenyen Chan and Adam Ramsey, Yosemite Conservancy President Frank Dean, and others. The Chinese Laundry Building, built in 1917, was restored and exhibits were installed telling the story of the building and the many contributions of Chinese immigrants to Yosemite National Park. For more information: https://yosemite.org/yosemites-chinese-history/

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Lithuanian National Parks & NPS Exchange Best Practices

In November, NPSOIA coordinated a webinar with the US Embassy in Vilnius, and the Environmental Technology Science and Health Officer based there. This was the third webinar for Lithuanian national park staff and included park staff from Estonia and Latvian parks. Restoration Ecology was identified as the subject that would be beneficial for these former Soviet Republics. Greg Eckert, the NPS Restoration Ecologist based in Fort Collins, presented on NPS’s program highlighting specific examples such as techniques for wetland restoration, invasive plant removal, and revegetation of native plants. The Head of Biodiversity Division for Protected areas in Lithuanian gave a presentation on Lithuania’s experience restoring natural habitats. The audience had many questions and there was a lengthy discussion resulting in both organizations gaining insights into challenges and best practices. NPSOIA looks forward to coordinating the next webinar with the Baltic national parks that will occur in March 2022.

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GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

NPS-Alaska Hosts South African Ranger
South Africa’s Kruger National Park experiences frequent rhino poaching, so SANParks - South African National Parks agency - is continually looking for best practices to combat this tragic situation. With that in mind, the NPSOIA worked with the US Embassy in South Africa to host Kruger Section Ranger Bruce Leslie in Alaska during October 2021 to learn how U.S. federal and state agencies combat poaching there. An NPS Special Agent coordinated ranger Leslie’s visit to Alaska and set up meetings for him with staff from the NPS Regional Office, Alaska State Troopers, FWS, and the Anchorage Federal Attorney's Office, as well as accompanying him on visits to Wrangel-St. Elias, Denali and Kenai Fjords national park units. NPS continues to collaborate with SANParks on this important issue along with other topics of shared interest.

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International Dark Sky Association Recognizes More NPS Units
Nighttime views are among the critical park features the NPS protects. Night sky protection enhances qualities of solitude and undeveloped wilderness character that animals depend on for survival, park visitors seek for connections, and many cultural-historical parks require for preservation. In this regard, the NPS recognizes a naturally dark night sky as more than a scenic canvas; it is part of a complex ecosystem that supports both natural and cultural resources. Over the past six months, the International Dark Sky Association has recognized Cape Lookout, Curecanti, Lyndon B. Johnson, Mammoth Cave, Mesa Verde and Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park for their excellent stewardship of the night sky. For more information, https://www.darksky.org/our-work/conservation/idsp/ and https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nightskies/index.htm

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Managing Graffiti in National Parks
Based upon a request from Mwele Rock Art Site in Zambia, NPSOIA organized a webinar on how to deal with graffiti at rock art sites. Mwele staff gave an overview on the issues they’re facing and what they are doing to combat the issue. Following their program, Rachel Adler, NPS Architectural Conservator and Laura Martin, NPS Cultural Lead/Southeast Utah Group, provided a detailed overview on how the NPS works to discourage defacing petroglyphs or rock paintings and what steps it takes once damage has occurred. A discussion took place following the presentations with agreement that once COVID is over, further collaborative assistance between Mwele and the NPS is needed.

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GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Gettysburg Foundation Donation Connects Sister Park in Japan
In October 2021, a Civil War-era cavalry saber was unveiled at the Gifu Sekigahara Battlefield Museum to commemorate the opening of the museum. The Model 1860 light cavalry saber is a permanent donation from The Gettysburg Foundation, Gettysburg National Military Park’s non-profit philanthropic partner. It was presented to Gifu Prefecture Governor Hajime Furuta by the U.S. Chief Consul Matthew Senzer.

On behalf of Gettysburg National Military Park, U.S. Chief Consul Senzer expressed a wish for further development and prosperity of the sister park partnership between the Gettysburg and Sekigahara battlefields. Governor Furuta expressed his deepest gratitude for the original saber and said that it would be displayed at Gifu Sekigahara Battlefield Memorial Museum. He stated that the donated saber would strengthen the partnership which started at the World Battlefields Summit in 2016.
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NPS Underground Railroad Exhibit Connects Canada and the U.S.
During the 2021 International Underground Railroad Month the National Park Service supported and participated in the ‘North is Freedom’ virtual photo exhibit as part of a partnership with the Embassy of Canada and Slovak-Canadian photographer Yuri Dojc. The NPS and members of the Network to Freedom tell these stories of escape from the U.S. to Canada to demonstrate the significance of the Underground Railroad in the eradication of slavery as a cornerstone of the national civil rights movement. NPS also announced several awards, the newest Network to Freedom listings, and member accomplishments.

To visit the virtual exhibit, which will remain online until February 28, 2022, visit https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7b882b7c31b84835bfa4301bcb49abc2
For more on the Underground Railroad, visit https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/index.htm
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World Heritage Junior Rangers

World Heritage Junior Ranger Program - Not Just for Kids!

Every year we are contacted and thanked by kids from across America and around the world who have discovered our World Heritage Junior Ranger program online. Just before the 2021 Christmas holidays, the NPSNPSOIA staff received season's greetings and thanks from what we believe is our oldest World Heritage Junior Ranger, who hails from France. He sent us an update on the many sites that he has visited in his 70+ years with photos of the badges and patches that he has earned over the past 25 years while visiting our U.S. national parks. There really is no age limit to the enjoyment that our national parks bring to all visitors.

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International Volunteers Contribute to National Parks

Swiss Volunteer helps Everglades translate Cold War History

Nicole Malzacher, from Switzerland, applied for a virtual international volunteer-in-parks (IVIP) project at Everglades National Park to translate a brochure into German. To her surprise, it was not about nature, but about the Nike Missile Base that is now a remnant of Cold War history preserved in the park. As a native speaker with a background in applied languages and translation, Nicole was perfect for the project. Nicole heard of the project through a contact at Swiss Rangers Association where she had done translation work. She found time in her busy schedule to volunteer with Everglades, and the park was pleased with her help as it will help them communicate with German speaking visitors.

For more info: HM69 Nike Missile Base - Everglades National Park (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov)

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