



## The World Heritage Convention in the United States: Roles and Responsibilities

### **UNESCO** – United Nations Educational Cultural and Scientific Organization

UNESCO is the umbrella organization, based in Paris, that provides staffing for the World Heritage Committee.

**UNESCO staff and its directorate do not make decisions on World Heritage nominations**, other than verifying that nomination documents are complete when submitted.

### **The World Heritage Committee**

The Committee is an independent body that operates with a secretariat (staff) provided by UNESCO. The Committee consists of 21 countries elected from among the over 160 countries that have signed the World Heritage Convention. Every two years, elections are held to replace half of the Committee. **The Committee makes all decisions on World Heritage nominations** at its annual meetings. Web site: [whc.unesco.org](http://whc.unesco.org)

### **ICOMOS** – International Council on Monuments and Sites

ICOMOS is the official “advisory body” to the WH Committee for cultural properties. **It evaluates nominations for cultural properties and makes recommendations to the WH Committee.** Its offices are in Paris and draws on an international membership of independent experts in various fields.

### **IUCN** – International Union for the Conservation of Nature

The official advisory body to the WH Committee for natural properties, based in Gstaad, Switzerland.

### **US/ICOMOS** – The U.S. national chapter of ICOMOS; each country has a national chapter.

**Its members are prohibited from participating in the ICOMOS review of U.S. nominations**, though they can provide subject-matter expertise to those preparing nominations.

### **The Department of the Interior**

Under U.S. Law, the Secretary of the Interior is responsible for the World Heritage program in the United States. This responsibility has been delegated to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. **The Assistant Secretary decides what properties to include on the U.S. WH Tentative List, what to nominate from the Tentative List, and when nominations are ready to be submitted.**

### **National Park Service – Office of International Affairs (NPS-OIA)**

Under Federal regulation (36 CFR73), the National Park Service provides staff support to the Assistant Secretary in carrying out the World Heritage program. **NPS-OIA manages the details of the World Heritage program, including advising on the preparation of WH nominations and the revision of the Tentative List, and representing the U.S. at meetings of the WH Committee.** <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/internationalcooperation/worldheritage.htm>

### **The Department of State**

**The Dept. of Interior coordinates with the State Department in communicating with UNESCO and representing the U.S. at World Heritage Committee meetings.** Both the Washington Bureau of International Organization Affairs and the U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO in Paris are involved.

### **Property owners**

Under federal regulation, property owners or their representatives are **primarily responsible for preparing World Heritage nominations when authorized** by the Assistant Secretary. By law, all property owners **must provide consent and document legal protection** of their property to the satisfaction of the Department of the Interior before WH nominations can be made.