

STOP PROPOSED WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN THE U.S.

TEN STEPS TO SUCCESS

The thirty-six applications for UNESCO World Heritage Sites pending before the Office of International Affairs of the National Park Service in Washington are cause for serious concern. The United States is a party to the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which means that, depending on the intensity of interest of preservationists, the leaning of the Administration, or possibly the inclination of the courts, the designation of a World Heritage Site could be exploited to stop development of private property in the broad vicinity of the protected site. Preservationists have successfully exploited World Heritage Site status to stop development of a non-polluting mine within a large unofficial buffer area around Yellowstone National Park. We can expect that an alleged threat to habitat, a remote possibility of watershed impact, or even a change in the distant viewshed from the World Heritage Site will be used to try to stop development in surrounding areas. Private property rights and national sovereignty are threatened by any new designations to be added to the 20 World Heritage Sites that already exist in the U.S. This is a time for citizens to go to work to prevent the proposed sites from being formally accepted by the National Park Service before UNESCO in Paris receives the final list to be designated over the next decade. The organizations that have proposed the designations have a system in accordance with UNESCO guidelines to obtain support for their applications. We must systematically oppose them. During recent years, other UNESCO designations have been stopped short, one at a time, in the U.S. as a result of citizen activism, and these can be stopped also.

EFFECTIVE CITIZEN ACTIONS

Taken alone or together, these actions are guaranteed to start things rolling. You may actually achieve success within several months if you or others do the necessary follow-up!

1. Seek Out Local Officials.

Contact your local town or county supervisor or board member to express opposition to the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site in your area. Find out whether the official has already written a letter of support and, if so, ask that the official write a new letter asking that the previous letter be withdrawn.

2. Follow-up with Local Officials.

Send a letter of opposition to the local official, enclosing written material, such as PRFA's Position Brief, "New Wave of UNESCO World Heritage Sites Proposed." Ask the official to let you know when he sends a letter of opposition to the designation and to give you a copy of that letter.

3. Get Documentation.

Obtain a copy of the application to the National Park Service to designate the World Heritage Site. View the application over the Internet or, preferably, telephone the office of your Representative in the U.S. Congress to request a copy of the application. Always speak to the same aide, if possible, at the congressional office.

The official in charge of the application process at the National Park Service is:

Stephen Morris, Chief
Office of International Affairs
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
Stephen_Morris@nps.gov
(202) 354-1803

4. Write a Letter to the Editor.

Write a letter to the editor in opposition. Type the letter and keep it within the newspaper's word limit. When it is published, send a copy to both of your State Legislators and to your Representative in the U.S. Congress.

5. Ask Your Friends to Help.

Persuade friends to also write letters to the editor in opposition.

6. Contact Your State Legislators.

Telephone your two representatives in the State Legislature—your State Senator and Member of the Assembly/ House of Representatives—to express your opposition.

7. Follow-up with Your State Legislators.

Your goal should be that one of your legislators write a letter to the National Park Service asking that the application be cancelled and withdrawn. You should obtain a copy of this letter.

8. Follow-up with Your Representative in Congress.

After making an appointment, visit your Congressional Representative, either in the district office or in Washington, D.C., to express your opposition to the designation and ask that the Representative write a letter to the National Park Service that the application be withdrawn. Bring copies of short items of documentation for your position, published letters to the editor, and, especially, all letters from legislators and officials who have written in opposition.

9. Get Help from Organizations and Friends.

Ask organizations to which you belong and friends to write to the Member of Congress in opposition to the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site.

10. Obtain the Final Letter.

Ask your Congressional Representative that, when successful, he or she give you a copy of a letter from the National Park Service affirming that the application has been rejected or withdrawn.

Please see other side

SUCCESS WORTH SEEKING AGAIN

Official 1995 U.S. Government Letter Stating that Application for a UNESCO Designation has been Withdrawn

The letter below from the Wendy R. Sherman, Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs of the United States Department of State, to the late U. S. Representative Gerald B. Solomon stating that the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development had withdrawn its application for nomination of the Catskill Mountains Biosphere Reserve was a great victory for grassroots property owners, the late New York State Senator Charles D. Cook, and Rep. Solomon. This 1995 letter was written in the context of this being the first application for a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation that had even been withdrawn. It is even more important that the current round of UNESCO World Heritage Site applications be stymied, considering that, unlike Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage Sites are protected by a treaty to which the United States is a party.



United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

JUL 17 1995

Dear Mr. Solomon:

Thank you for your letter of June 9, 1995, concerning the application submitted by the Catskill Center for Biosphere Reserve designation.

The Catskill Center's application for nomination as a biosphere reserve was withdrawn per their request on May 30th and will not be presented to the U.S. Man and the Biosphere Program National Committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Wendy R. Sherman
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure: Catskill nomination withdrawal letter

The Honorable
Gerald B. Solomon,
House of Representatives.

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