

PRESERVING THE HERITAGE VALUE OF LANDSCAPES: PROMISING CONSERVATION TOOLS AND STRATEGIES TO MANAGE CHANGE

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Abstract

There is a growing recognition of the tangible and intangible heritage value of landscapes, as evidenced by the evolution in the World Heritage criteria. The geographic focus for heritage conservation has shifted from isolated sites to larger landscapes inclusive of rural and urban settlements. Often these landscapes have historical, cultural, and environmental value; cross political boundaries; and include a mix of private and public ownerships. With the recognition of heritage value has come a concurrent identification of serious threats including changing economies and land uses, suburban growth and impacts from rapid development.

This paper examines successful tools and strategies for conserving heritage values of large-scale, complex landscapes with a cohesive regional identity. Recent experience in the U.S. with 27 designated National Heritage Areas will be compared with similar experience in several other countries. We will also describe innovative participatory approaches that involve a diverse array of key stakeholders in identifying the heritage values and developing a shared vision for the future. These case studies confirm the importance of an inclusive, participatory, and democratic process in shaping a strategy that encompasses cultural traditions and socio-economic dimensions, conserves heritage values and strengthens the stability and sustainability of cultural landscapes.