

s e c t i o n f

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The National Park System has grown to include some 380 units since 1872, encompassing national parks, monuments, historic sites, trails, reserves, and other designations. Within this system, the National Park Service has a management mandate to provide for public enjoyment in a way that will leave resources “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” To help achieve this objective, through both policy and law, NPS has a clearly defined process for screening proposals for new park units. This process assures that only the most outstanding natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources are added to the National Park System by an act of Congress.

Proposals for new national park units may come from the public, state or local officials, Indian tribes, members of Congress, or the National Park Service. Studies are conducted in consultation with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies, and Indian tribes. In addition, public participation is critical. The public is to be invited to participate through informal contacts, workshops, meetings, tours, and opportunities to review draft documents.

To be eligible for favorable consideration as a unit of the National Park System, an area must meet the following criteria:

- Possess nationally significant natural, cultural, or recreational resources
- Be a suitable and feasible addition to the National Park System
- Require direct NPS management instead of protection by some other government agency or by the private sector.

If a unit under study meets these criteria, it can be added to the National Park System by an act of Congress. Congressional committees usually hold hearings on proposed additions to the

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Criteria for Parklands is a National Park Service (NPS) publication that defines the process and criteria used to screen proposals for potential new park units. Since the *Study of Alternatives* is funded by NPS, it must address these standards. Studies must also meet the legislative requirements of Public Law 105-391, the National Park Omnibus Management Act of 1998.



System and ask the Secretary of the Interior for recommendations. Legislation authorizing a new unit will explain the purpose of the unit and outline any specific directions for additional planning, (if necessary) land acquisition, management, and operations.

An addition to the National Park System is only one alternative. There may be other viable local, state, federal, nonprofit, or other management options to consider. The National Park Service also operates several programs that help others preserve natural, cultural, and recreational areas outside of the System.

The term “Affiliated Area” is frequently brought up in regard to the Ice Age Flood, and some clarification of the term is warranted. The *National Parks: Index 1997–1999* describes “Affiliated Areas” as follows:

In an Act of August 18, 1970, the National Park System was defined in law as any area of land or water

now and hereafter administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service for park, monument, historic, parkway, recreational, or other purposes.

The same law specifically excludes “miscellaneous areas administered in connection therewith”; that is, those properties that are neither federally owned nor directly administered by the National Park Service but which utilize NPS assistance.

The Affiliated Areas include a variety of locations in the United States and Canada that preserve significant properties outside the National Park System. Some of these areas have been recognized by acts of Congress; others have been designated national historic sites by the Secretary of the Interior under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. All draw on technical or financial aid from the National Park Service. The Ice Age National Scientific Reserve in Wisconsin is an example of an Affiliated Area.

The criteria to be used for designating an Affiliated Area stipulate that the sites must:

- Possess resources that have national significance, and these resources must support interpretation of the story.
- Need some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs.
- Document that a cooperative arrangement with NPS and adequate contributions from other sources will assure long-term protection of the resource, and be able to establish and continue a standard of maintenance, operations, public service, and financial accountability consistent with requirements of NPS units.
- Be managed by an organization with which the NPS has a formal cooperative relationship.