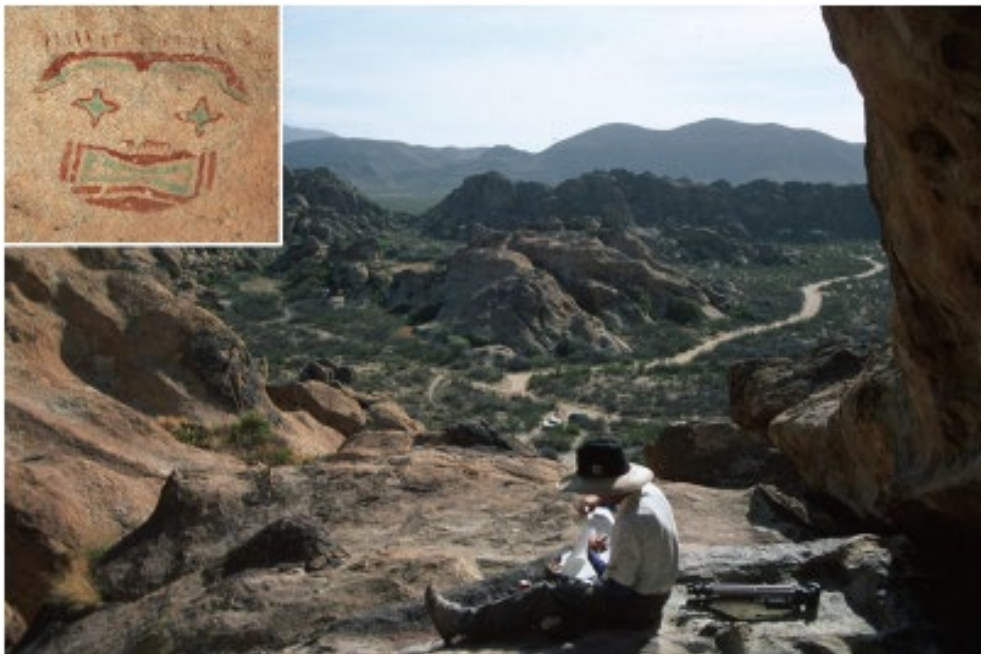

Name of Property: Hueco Tanks

City, State: El Paso, Texas

Period of Significance: Formative Period (1,800 - 550 B.P.)

NHL Criteria: 6

NHL Theme: I. Peopling Places
3. Migration from Outside and Within
4. Community and Neighborhood
III. Expressing Cultural Values
2. Visual and Performing Arts

Previous Recognition: 1970 - State Historical Park (now State Park and Historic Site)
1971 - National Register of Historic Places
1983 – official Texas State Antiquities Landmark

National Historic Context: I. Cultural Developments: Indigenous American Populations
B. Post-Archaic and Pre-Contact Developments
C. Prehistoric Archaeology: Topical Facets
1. Prehistoric Architecture/Housing
3. Prehistoric Social and Political Organizations
5. Prehistoric Arts/Handicrafts
10. Prehistoric Religion, Ideology, and Ceremonialism
11. Prehistoric Social Differentiation

NHL Significance:

- Hueco Tanks is the largest of Jornada Mogollon pictograph sites, both in terms of the distribution of Formative archeological deposits and the abundance of Formative period rock imagery.
- The site contains over 200 examples of masks or face-like pictographs, the largest concentration of painted masks in North America. Furthermore, Hueco Tanks is one of few Jornada rock imagery sites that include what has been referred to as the solid variety of Jornada style masks.
- The Jornada style rock imagery at Hueco Tanks shows distinctiveness and a higher degree of stylistic sophistication compared to other sites with such imagery. It represents an apex in the development of Jornada imagery, and is ancestral to the katsina belief system still practiced among Puebloan people today.
- Excavations at Hueco Tanks have produced rare examples of pitroom residential features and an even rarer example of a two-room pueblo. These features are representative of the Doña Ana phase of the Formative period and the pithouse-to-pueblo transition. There is a rather limited archeological record known for the Doña Ana phase. Hueco Tanks is the only site in the southern Jornada Mogollon settlement area that includes both significant Doña Ana archeological deposits and likely Doña Ana rock imagery.
- The number of Formative period interments at Hueco Tanks exceeds that of any other southern Jornada Mogollon site with the sole exception of Hot Well pueblo, El Paso County, Texas.
- Based on the rock art iconography at Hueco Tanks, the site likely was a rain shrine for the Jornada Mogollon inhabitants of the region, and a focal point in their spiritual landscape or cosmoscape. Similar to beliefs maintained by the Hopi and Pueblo people today, trails between Hueco Tanks and other outlying sacred places on the landscape were likely thought to form a communication link with the spiritual realm.

Integrity:

- Although some archeological deposits at Hueco Tanks have been impacted by erosion, surface collecting, and the construction of a large earthen dam during the land development era of 1956-1965, extensive intact archeological deposits remain. These deposits, including numerous artifacts and cultural features, extend to a depth of as much as one meter on some parts of the site. The large earthen dam, which stretches between North and West Mountains, never held water for extended periods and now serves as a visual barrier between the central basin area of the site and a handful of residences that have been constructed west of the state property.
- Rock imagery at Hueco Tanks has been exposed to both natural and human caused impacts, including the placement of graffiti and early attempts to remove that graffiti. However, new technologies have been used to analyze the composition of the Native American paints and those of the graffiti; in turn, the resulting information has been used to calibrate portable lasers for the removal/treatment of the graffiti. In addition, image enhancement technologies have been used to identify previously unknown, faded rock imagery or other traces of pigment. In 2017, 31 newly discovered locations with evidence of Native American pictographs or paint splotches were documented, including

seven panels that could be attributed to the Formative period.

Owners of Property: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Austin, Texas

Acreage of Property: 860.3 acres

Origins of Nomination: Because of its extensive assemblage of rock art, Hueco Tanks was designated as a State Historical Park (now State Park and Historic Site) in 1970. The site was subsequently listed in the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance in 1971, and was designated an official Texas State Antiquities Landmark in 1983. In 2016, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) initiated the Hueco Tanks NHL nomination process. The nomination was completed in 2018 by TPWD staff.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Designation will underscore the unique character and cultural importance of the Formative period rock imagery at Hueco Tanks, as well as the extensive archeological deposits from that period and the role that the natural landscape played in Jornada Mogollon society.
- Hueco Tanks has been recognized for many years as an important cultural resource, drawing numerous visitors to view the rock imagery and hike/climb the rugged terrain that has drawn people to the location for more than 10,000 years. Landmark designation will further bolster visitation and foster continued preservation of the site by enhancing awareness of the Jornada Mogollon people and their role in the cultural history of Hueco Tanks.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- None is known, though some people within the climbing community have uncertainty about what the designation might mean for their recreational activity at Hueco Tanks.
- NHL designation of the site enjoys the support of local residents, state and local politicians, site visitors, and the five Native American tribes that claim cultural affiliations to Hueco Tanks. In addition, the archeology/preservation communities are very supportive of this designation for the site.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of January 20, 2018):
Darrell Creel, Associate Professor Emeritus, Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin
Myles R. Miller, Program Manager, Versar, Inc., Springfield, Virginia
Jim Railey, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Archaeology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

Advisory Board Recommendation: