

National Park System Advisory Board 2013 Report

Task 3: Recommend National Natural Landmarks

The U.S. Secretary of the Interior established the National Natural Landmarks (NNL) Program in 1962 as part of a broad legacy of conservation programs. The program recognizes and supports voluntary conservation of outstanding geological and biological sites, regardless of ownership. Ongoing partnerships with public and private landmark owners allow participants to share information, solve problems cooperatively, and conserve outstanding examples of the nation's natural history.

Addressing the Task

To date, over 590 NNLs have been designated by the Secretary of the Interior. National natural landmarks are owned by a variety of land stewards, and participation in the program is voluntary. Each NNL is selected for its outstanding condition, illustrative value, rarity, diversity, and value to science and education. The National Park Service administers the program, reports on the condition of NNLs, identifies specialists to advise landmark owners on resource management, and advocates for the protection of designated sites. Benefits of NNL designation include the positive recognition and appreciation of nationally significant resources and the ability of public agencies and private individuals and organizations to make more informed development and planning decisions early in regional planning processes. In addition, some private owners of commercially operated NNLs may choose to recognize and emphasize the national significance of the areas for public information purposes.

Progress Report

The NPSAB NNL Committee continued its work to support the goals of the National Natural Landmarks Program by reviewing evaluation reports for proposed NNLs and forwarding recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior, increasing awareness of America's diverse natural history, and supporting the conservation work of NNL owners.

Ten sites were recommended for designation over the past two years, in addition to major boundary expansions at two existing NNLs. Eight new NNLs have been designated during this period. In addition, the NPSAB supported a 50th anniversary commemoration of the National Natural Landmarks Program and visited two NNLs in Colorado: the Morrison-Golden Fossil Area near Denver and Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs. These interactions highlighted the potential for the NPS to support connections with scientists and the public in appreciating and enjoying America's natural heritage. The NNL photo contest and the production of annual calendars continue to illustrate the beauty and diversity of the nation's NNLs, as well as the longevity of the NPS relationship with conservation partners. The NNL Program also reaches out to communities and children through booths and educational publications for *Bioblitz* events at NPS locations, including Rocky Mountain and Saguaro National Parks.

Priorities Through 2016

Strengthen the NNL Program as an effective mechanism for empowering local land stewards, encouraging scientific discovery, and increasing environmental awareness and community spirit. Goals include recommending additional NNLs to broaden types of represented resources, increasing recognition of NNL program benefits among the NPS and the public, and raising funds for evaluation of potential sites.

Follow Our Work

Learn more about the National Natural Landmarks Program at www.nature.nps.gov/nnl. Follow future work of the National Natural Landmarks Committee at www.nps.gov/resources/advisoryboardreport.htm.