

natural landmarks (see § 62.6(b)). The Secretary will also report to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation any designated national natural landmarks that may be irreparably lost or destroyed by surface mining activity (see § 62.6(e)).

§ 62.4 Natural landmark designation and recognition process.

(a) *Identification.* Potential national natural landmarks are identified in the following manner.

(1) *Natural region studies.* The NPS conducts inventories of the characteristic biological and geological features in each natural region to provide a scientific basis for identifying potential national natural landmarks. The NPS is responsible for the completion of these studies, which are generally done by qualified scientists under contract. A study provides a classification and description of biological and geological features in that natural region and an annotated list of areas that illustrate those features. During a study, the NPS or any representative of the NPS may enter onto land only after receiving written permission from the owner(s) of that land, except when the land is publicly owned land and otherwise open to the public.

(2) *Other entities.* (i) Any public or private entity may suggest an area for study and possible national natural landmark designation. The entities include:

(A) Federal agency programs that conduct inventories in order to identify areas of special interest, for example, essential wildlife habitat, research natural areas, and areas of critical environmental concern; and

(B) State natural area programs that systematically and comprehensively classify, identify, locate and assess the protective status of the biological and geological features located in a State.

(ii) If an individual, agency or organization that suggests an area for national natural landmark consideration is not the owner of the area, written permission of the owner(s) is required to enter onto the PNNL to gather information, except when the land is publicly owned and otherwise open to the public.

(3) After receiving the suggestions from a natural region study and suggestions from other sources, the NPS determines which PNNL merit further study for possible national natural landmark designation. This determination is based on comparison with existing national natural landmarks in the natural region, the national natural landmark criteria (see § 62.5) and other information.

(b) *First Notification.* (1) Before a potential national natural landmark is evaluated by scientists as described in paragraph (c) of this section, the NPS notifies the owner(s) in writing, except as specified in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(i) This notice advises the owner(s) that the PNNL is being considered for study for possible national natural landmark designation and provides information on the National Natural Landmarks Program, including an explanation of the effects of national natural landmark designation as described in § 62.3.

(ii) The notice also provides the owner with available information on the area and its tentatively identified significance, solicits the owner's comments on the area, including any information on current or anticipated land use or activities that may affect the area's natural values, integrity, or other matters of concern, and informs the owner of the source of the suggestion for consideration.

(iii) The notice also requests owner permission to enter the property, unless the area is otherwise open to the public, so the NPS or its representative can conduct an on-site evaluation of the PNNL as described under paragraph (c) of this section, and advises the owner of the procedures the NPS will follow in considering the PNNL for possible designation.

(2) Before a potential national natural landmark having 50 or more owners is evaluated by scientists as described in paragraph (c) of this section, the NPS provides general notice to property owners. This general notice is published in one or more local newspapers of general circulation in the area in which the potential national natural landmark is located. The notice provides the same information

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listed under paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(3) During an on-site evaluation as described in paragraph (c) of this section, the NPS or any representative of the NPS will not enter onto land without permission from the owner(s), except when the land is publicly owned and otherwise open to the public. The NPS may complete evaluations of PNNL by using other information, including information that was previously gathered by other Federal or State agencies or gained from other scientific studies. The NPS notifies owners if areas are evaluated from existing information not requiring land entry.

(4) The described procedures for providing written notification to owners and receiving responses from owners about the first notification are the responsibility of the NPS and cannot be delegated to any representative of the NPS.

(c) *Evaluation.* (1) The NPS uses the national natural landmark criteria in §62.5 to evaluate the potential natural landmark. Potential national natural landmarks are evaluated on a natural region basis; i.e., similar areas that represent a particular type of feature located in the same natural region are compared to identify examples that are most illustrative and have the most intact, undisturbed integrity.

(2) Evaluations are done by qualified scientists who are familiar with the natural region and its types of biological and geological features. Evaluators make a detailed description of the area, including a proposed boundary map, and assess its regional standing using the national natural landmark criteria (see §62.5) and any additional information provided by the NPS. Evaluation reports must have been completed or updated within the previous 2 years in order to be considered by the NPS.

(3) Completed evaluation reports are reviewed by no fewer than three peer reviewers, who are scientists familiar with the biological or geological features of the area or natural region. These reviewers provide the NPS with information on the scientific merit and strength of supportive documentation in the evaluation report. On the basis

of evaluation report(s) and the findings of the peer reviewers, the NPS makes a determination that:

(i) The PNNL does or does not appear to qualify for national natural landmark designation; or

(ii) Additional information is required before a decision can be made about the status of the PNNL.

(4) When a PNNL does not seem to qualify for national natural landmark designation, the NPS notifies the owner(s) as prescribed in paragraphs (b)(1) and (2) of this section.

(d) *Second Notification.* (1) When the Director determines that an area meets the criteria for national significance, the NPS notifies the owner(s) in writing, except as specified in paragraph (d)(2) of this section.

(i) The notice references the rules in this part, advises the owners of the procedures the NPS follows and of the effects of national natural landmark designation as described in §62.3, provides the owner(s) with a copy of the evaluation report, and provides the owner(s) with the opportunity to comment. The list of owners must be obtained from official land or tax records, whichever is most appropriate, within 90 days before issuing the second notification.

(ii) If in any State the land or tax records are not helpful, the NPS can seek alternative sources to identify the owners.

(iii) The NPS is responsible for notifying only owners whose names appear on the list.

(2) If an area has more than 50 owners, the NPS provides a general notice to the property owners. NPS will publish a general notice in one or more local newspapers of general circulation in the region in which the area is located. A copy of the evaluation report is made available on request. In addition, the NPS may conduct a public information meeting, if widespread local public interest warrants it or if requested by the executive of the local governmental jurisdiction in which the area is located.

(3) In addition, NPS notifies appropriate authorities, organizations and individuals. The notices reference these rules and advise the recipient of the proposed action, of the procedures

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the NPS follows, and of the effects of national natural landmark designation as described in § 62.3. Notice of the proposed action is published also in the FEDERAL REGISTER. NPS will notify:

- (i) The executive of the local governmental jurisdiction in which the area (PNNL) is located;
- (ii) The governor of the State;
- (iii) Other appropriate State officials;
- (iv) Senators and members of Congress who represent the district in which the area is located;
- (v) Native American tribal governments and native villages and corporations in the region; and
- (vi) Other interested authorities, organizations and individuals as deemed appropriate.

(4) All notified entities, including non-owners, have 60 days to provide comments before NPS decides whether the area meets the criteria for national significance. To assist in the evaluation of a area, comments should, among other factors, discuss the area's features and integrity. Information is also welcome on current or anticipated land use or threats that could effect the area. Any party may request a reasonable extension of the comment period when additional time is required to study and comment on a landmark proposal. The Director may grant these requests if he or she determines they are in the public interest. All comments received are considered in the national natural landmark designation process.

(5) Upon individual or general notification, any owner of private property within a PNNL who wishes to object to national natural landmark designation must submit a notarized statement to the Director to certify that he or she is the sole or partial owner of record and he or she objects to the designation. These statements will be submitted during the 60-day comment period. Upon receipt of objections to the designation of a PNNL consisting of multiple parcels of land, the NPS must determine how much of it consists of owners who object to designation. If an owner whose name is not on the ownership list developed by the NPS certifies in a notarized statement that he or she is the sole or partial owner of the area, NPS will take into account his or her

views about designation. In circumstances where a single parcel of land within a PNNL has more than one fee simple owner, an objection to designation of that property must be submitted by a majority of the owners.

(6) All described procedures for the notification of owners and receiving responses from owners in the second notification process are the responsibility of the NPS and cannot be delegated to any representative of the NPS.

(e) *Significance determination.* (1) NPS will review all documentation including, but not limited to, evaluation reports, peer reviews, and received comments. If NPS determines that a PNNL does not meet the criteria for national significance (see § 62.5), the NPS will notify the owner(s) in writing that their land is no longer under consideration for national natural landmark designation. If PNNL are owned by 50 or more parties, the NPS will publish a general notice as described in paragraph (d)(2) of this section. In addition, the NPS will notify in writing officials, individuals and organizations notified under paragraph (d)(3) of this section.

(2) When the NPS determines that a PNNL meets the criteria for national significance, the NPS determines whether any private property owners submitted valid written objection to designation.

(f) *Areas meeting criteria.* When the Director of NPS determines by all available information that a PNNL meets the criteria for national significance, but some private property owners submitted written objections to the proposed national natural landmark designation, the NPS maintains all this information about the area and which shall be available as part of the environmental analysis for any major federal action for purposes of NEPA which impacts the NNL or these other lands. Notice of this action is provided by the NPS to the owners as specified in paragraphs (d)(1) and (2) of this section and to officials, individuals and organizations notified under paragraph (d)(3) of this section. If some but not all of the property owners within a PNNL object to designation, the NPS will exclude the objecting properties and proceed with the process only if enough area remains of non-objecting properties to

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allow sufficient representation of the significant natural features.

(g) *National Park System Advisory Board.* (1) The Director of the NPS reviews the documentation of each area that meets the criteria for national significance. When the Director determines that the requirements of this part were met and that enough non-objecting valid private property owners exist to encompass an adequate portion of the nationally significant features, the Director submits the information on the area (PNNL) to the National Park System Advisory Board. The board reviews the information and recommends whether or not the land with consenting owners qualifies for national natural landmark designation.

(2) Notice of Advisory Board meetings to review national natural landmark nominations and meeting agendas are provided at least 60 days in advance of the meeting by publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER. The NPS also mails copies of the notice directly to consenting owners of areas that are to be considered at each meeting. Interested parties are encouraged to submit written comments and recommendations that will be presented to the board. Interested parties may also attend the board meeting and upon request may address the board concerning an area's national significance.

(h) *Submission to the Secretary.* The Director submits the recommendation of the Advisory Board and materials that the Director developed to the Secretary for consideration of the nominated area for national natural landmark designation.

(i) *Designation.* The Secretary reviews the materials that the Director submitted and any other documentation and makes a decision on national natural landmark designation. Areas that the Secretary designates as national natural landmarks are added to the National Registry of Natural Landmarks.

(j) *Third notification.* When the Secretary designates an area as a national natural landmark, the Secretary notifies in writing the landmark owner(s) of areas with fewer than 50 owners. A general notice of designated areas with 50 or more owners is published in one or more local newspapers of general circulation in the area. The Secretary

also notifies the executive of the local governmental jurisdiction in which the landmark is located, Native American tribal governments and native villages and corporations in the area, the governor of the State, the congressional members who represent the district and State in which the landmark is located, and other interested authorities, organizations and individuals as deemed appropriate. The NPS prepares the notifications and is responsible for their distribution. Notices of new designations are also published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(k) *Presentation of plaque and certificate.* (1) After the Secretary designates an area as a national natural landmark, the NPS may provide each owner who so requests with a certificate signed by the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the NPS at no cost to the owner(s). This certificate recognizes the owner's interest in protecting and managing the area in a manner that prevents the loss or deterioration of the natural values on which landmark designation is based.

(2) If appropriate, NPS may also provide without charge a bronze plaque for display in or near the national natural landmark. Upon request, and to the extent NPS resources permit, the NPS may help arrange and participate in a presentation ceremony. In accepting a plaque or certificate, owners give up none of the rights and privileges of ownership or use of the landmark and the Department of the Interior does not acquire any interest in the designated property. After a presentation, the plaque remains the property of NPS. If the landmark designation is removed in accordance with the procedures in § 62.8, NPS may reclaim the plaque.

§ 62.5 Natural landmark criteria.

(a) *Introduction.* (1) *National significance* describes an area that is one of the best examples of a biological or geological feature known to be characteristic of a given natural region. Such features include terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems; geologic structures, exposures and landforms that record active geologic processes or portions of earth history; and fossil evidence of biological evolution. Because