



Foundation Document Overview

Effigy Mounds National Monument

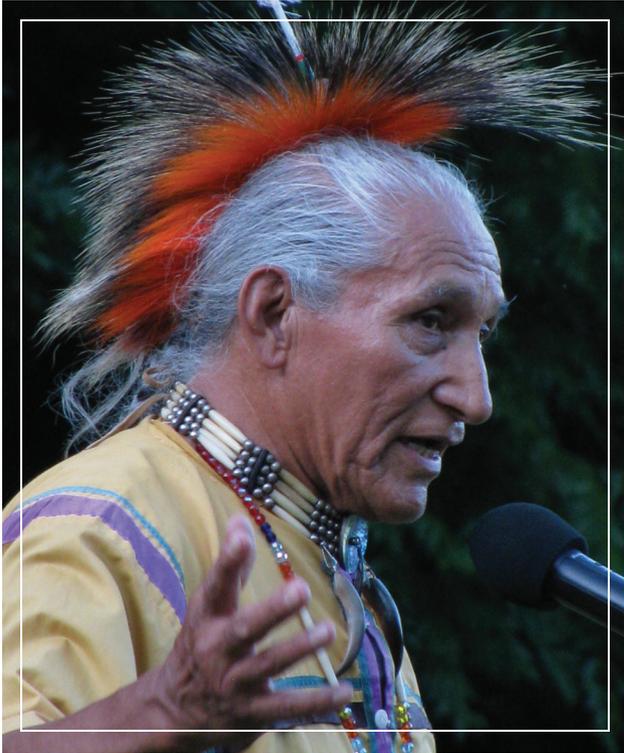
Iowa



Contact Information

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Purpose



EFFIGY MOUNDS NATIONAL MONUMENT preserves outstanding representative examples of significant phases of precontact Indian moundbuilding cultures in the American Midwest; protects wildlife and natural values within the monument; and provides for scientific study and appreciation of its features for the benefit of this and future generations.



Significance

Significance statements express why Effigy Mounds National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

The national monument contains nationally significant archeological resources comprising one of the largest concentrations of burial mounds in the United States, including some of the finest and best preserved examples of effigy mounds in their original forms. These cultural features provide an insight into the social, spiritual, and ceremonial life of peoples in this region prior to European contact.

The natural and cultural resources of the monument are intricately connected—the moundbuilding cultures were the result of the dynamic interface of people and their environment. The native vegetation communities associated with the moundbuilding era were the result of the topography and climate found in the geologically unique Driftless Area of the Upper Midwest. This environment produced microhabitats that support extensive flora and fauna diversity. This diversity attracted and sustained generations of American Indians.

The monument contains historic resources that represent European American settlement of the area and the displacement of historic American Indian culture. Conversely, early scientific research conducted in the monument during the late 1800s began the period of understanding and preserving the rich Indian culture.

The monument preserves and protects physical evidence of the cultural landscape, which documents the early and continuing scientific interest in the mounds and moundbuilding cultures. The monument's cultural resources and collections document the full breadth of archeological investigations in the monument, from early mound documentation and exploration to modern methods of archeological investigation that incorporate a variety of techniques and native perspectives.

The monument is identified by present-day members of the traditionally associated tribes as a sacred landscape.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

Archeological Sites and Moundbuilding Culture.

These resources include the primary archeological sites in all units of the monument, including all their features such as mounds, rock shelters, habitation sites, rock art, and associated artifacts, representing 1,800 years of the moundbuilding culture. While the Heritage Addition has not yet had a systematic archeological inventory completed, some mounds have been discovered in that area. The resources of that area are included as fundamental resources.

Rare Habitat for Flora and Fauna. The monument contains habitat for an assemblage of plants found nowhere else in Iowa and rare in the region. This habitat includes both the transition zone of several vegetation communities found in the eastern hardwood and prairie ecosystems and microclimates produced by north-facing slopes and the influence of the river valley. The monument also contains habitat, including wetlands, for almost 300 species of birds, including nesting habitat for the red-shouldered hawk (a state listed species) and habitat for several other federal and state listed animal and plant species, including bald eagles, peregrine falcons, Higgins eye pearlymussel, purple fringed orchid, and jeweled shooting star.

Museum Collections. The monument's museum collections include original documents, photographic collections, and artifact collections that both document the important contributions of Ellison Orr and others to the early development of the science of field archeology relating to the moundbuilding cultures and support future scientific study and interpretation of paleontology, natural history, geology, history, and ethnology.

Cultural Landscape and Ethnographic Resources. The individual resources of the monument listed previously as fundamental and important resources—mounds and associated artifacts, native vegetation, and rivers—collectively form a cultural landscape. Tribes and NPS staff are pursuing a designation that would acknowledge the entire national monument as a traditional cultural property. Some natural resources present in the monument, such as medicinal and ceremonial plants, are also culturally important, contributing to the importance of the area to modern American Indian tribes.

Other Resources and Values

Effigy Mounds National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

Yellow River. The Yellow River is listed in the *Nationwide Rivers Inventory* and possesses outstandingly remarkable values.

Driftless Area Topography. The topography associated with the Driftless Area reveals 500-million-year-old limestone bedrock.

Mississippi River Bluffs. The exposed 400-foot bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River feature American Indian rock art sites, rock shelters that were important as habitation sites, and chert outcroppings that were locally important for making tools and weapons.

1840s Military Road. The monument includes a road built in 1840 by the military that connected Fort Crawford, Wisconsin Territory, with Fort Atkinson, Iowa, and a historic archeological site—the Jefferson Davis sawmill—that supported the building of Fort Crawford. These are some of the reminders of how early 19th century American Indian treaties involved the military in resolving “the Indian problem” and opened up the territories for U.S. expansion and settlement prior to the Mexican War.

Other Early American Historic Sites. Additional historic sites within the monument document early American use of the land for homesteading; agriculture; and economic, consumptive purposes, such as clamming, logging, and quarrying. These sites are tangible connections to the early western expansion of the United States.



Park Description

On October 25, 1949, President Harry Truman signed a proclamation that established Effigy Mounds National Monument under the authority of the 1906 Antiquities Act. This created the monument as part of the national park system to protect one of the best surviving collections of pre-European earthen mounds, featuring magnificent “Effigy Mound” formations, in the United States. The monument currently comprises 2,526 acres in northeastern Iowa in two counties: Allamakee and Clayton. It is divided into four units: North Unit, South Unit, Heritage Addition, and Sny Magill Unit.

Over 200 ancient mounds are preserved within the monument, 31 in the form of animals—the “effigy” mounds for which the monument was named. The people who built these mounds lived in what is today northeastern Iowa, southern Wisconsin, northern Illinois, and southeastern Minnesota. Throughout this region, they created effigy mounds of many different shapes and sizes, but at the monument, bird and bear mounds are the most common.

Effigy mounds were probably created for different reasons in different parts of the region—possibly serving as religious or clan symbols in some areas, being used to tell important stories, or for ceremonies in others. Some show evidence of fire, probably ceremonial, in the head, heart, or flank of the mound. Some tribal stories hold that the bear is the guardian of Earth and the bird the guardian of the sky. Perhaps the mounds were a means of connecting the people to the land and their spirit world and ancestors. Around 850 years ago, the building of effigy mounds ceased.

European explorers began arriving in the late 1600s. The fur trade among the Indians, French, British, and later Americans continued into the mid-1800s. The region experienced a large influx of Americans starting in the 1840s. Land with mounds was logged, plowed, and turned into farmland starting in the 19th and 20th centuries. Where once there were over 10,000 mounds of all types, less than 1,000 survived within 100 years. Efforts to protect the remaining mounds culminated with the establishment of Effigy Mounds National Monument.

