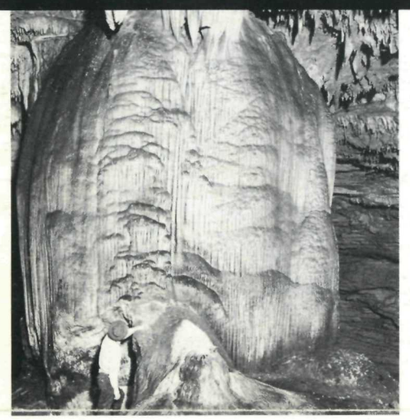
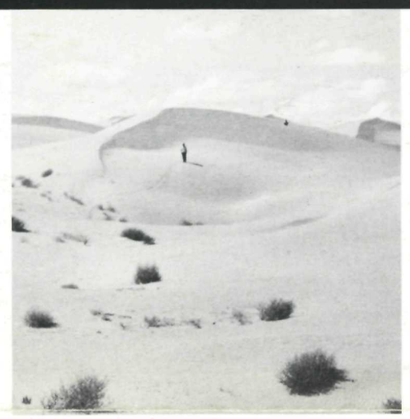
National Natural Landmarks

25th Anniversary
1962–1987

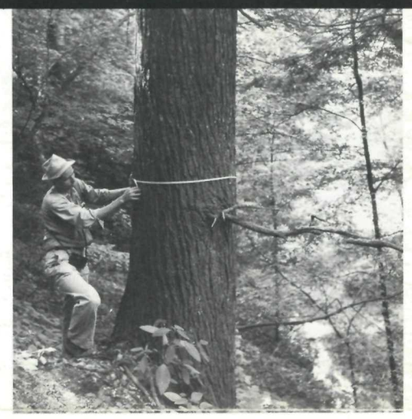
U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service



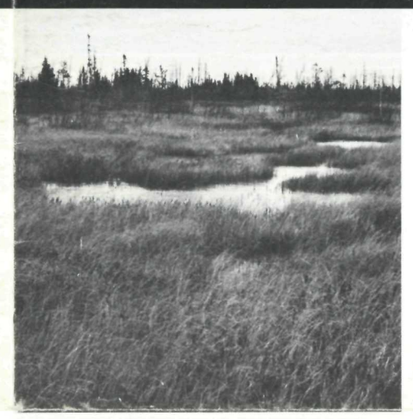
Wyandotte Cave, Indiana



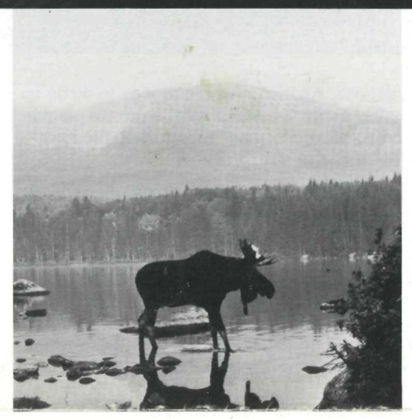
Imperial Sand Hills, California



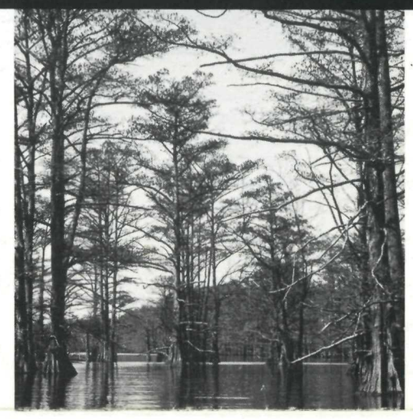
Big Walnut Creek, Indiana



Strangmoor Bog, Michigan



Mount Katahdin, Maine



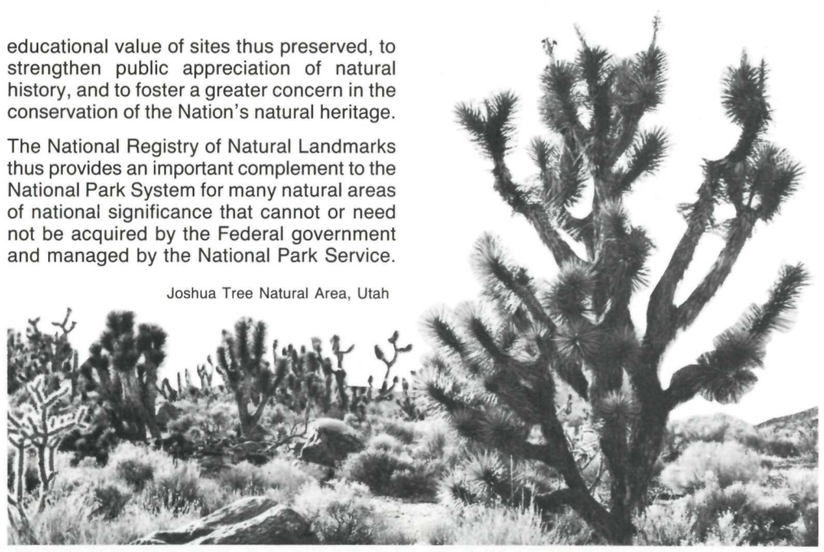
Horseshoe Lake Nature Preserve, Illinois

National Natural Landmarks are areas representing the best examples of the ecological and geological features composing our Nation's natural history. Areas such as Diamond Head, Hawaii; Okefenokee Swamp, Georgia; and Rancho La Brea, California, along with other equally significant but lesser known areas across the country, are listed in the National Registry of Natural Landmarks, published by the National Park Service. More than 600 of these areas, showing the great diversity of this country's natural environment, have been designated by the Secretary of the Interior since 1962.

The National Natural Landmarks Program was established to help identify and encourage the preservation of these significant areas. The objectives of the program, which is administered by the National Park Service, are to encourage the preservation of sites illustrating the geological and ecological character of the United States, to enhance the scientific and educational value of sites thus preserved, to strengthen public appreciation of natural history, and to foster a greater concern in the conservation of the Nation's natural heritage.

The National Registry of Natural Landmarks thus provides an important complement to the National Park System for many natural areas of national significance that cannot or need not be acquired by the Federal government and managed by the National Park Service.

Joshua Tree Natural Area, Utah



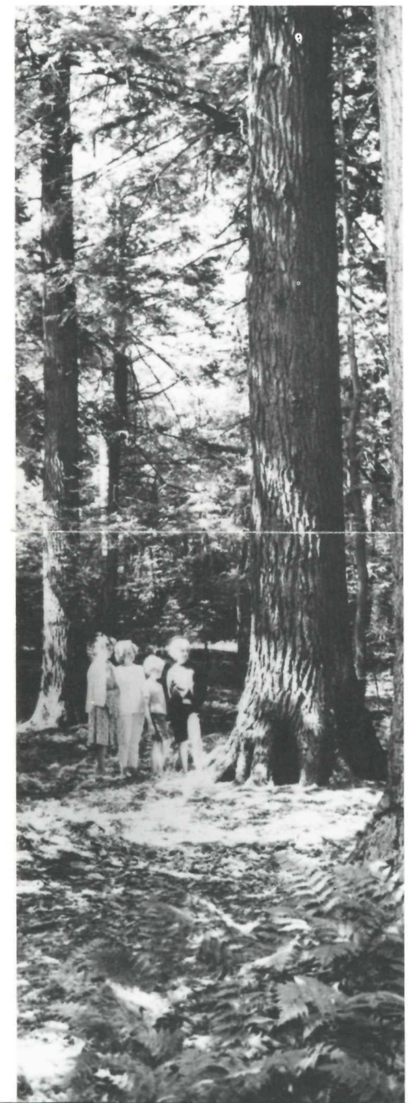
The Designation Process

The National Park Service sponsors studies of the 33 natural regions of the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Federated States of Micronesia. Each study provides a classification and description of the major ecological and geological features of the region, as well as an inventory of sites best representing those features. The National Park Service also considers significant sites recommended by other Federal and State agencies and interested individuals.

Rock City, Kansas

Similar sites recommended for National Natural Landmark status are then evaluated comparatively in the field by natural scientists in order to determine which sites qualify for nomination to the Secretary of the Interior. When the Secretary agrees with the findings of the National Park Service about a site, it is designated a National Natural Landmark.

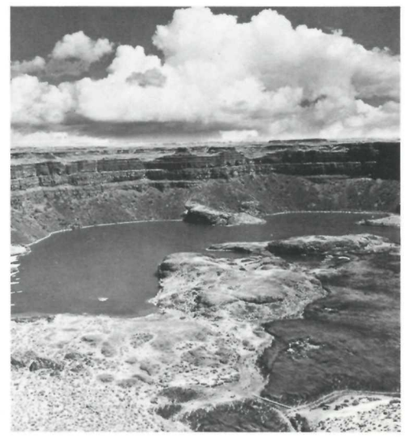
The National Park Service requests comments from property owners, managers, and all other interested parties throughout the evaluation and nomination process. All such comments and other information on a site's significance are considered in determining its eligibility for National Natural Landmark designation.



Determining National Significance

Sites determined to be one of the best examples of a natural region's characteristic biotic or geologic features are considered nationally significant. Department of the Interior standards used to make that determination include primary criteria, which consider the illustrative character and present condition of a site, and secondary criteria, which consider the diversity and rarity of additional features within a site, as well as its value for science and education.

Hearts Content Scenic Area, Pennsylvania



Grand Coulee, Washington

Aniakchak Caldera, Alaska

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Conservation of National Natural Landmarks

National Natural Landmark designation may be conferred upon sites under any land ownership. Designation does not change the ownership or management of a site, nor does it carry with it any regulations or restrictions regarding its use or future development.

Through designation, owners of National Natural Landmarks are encouraged to conserve the significant features located within their properties. They are therefore invited to enter into voluntary, non-binding agreements with the National Park Service to make this commitment by adopting basic conservation practices. An owner who chooses to do so is eligible to receive and display a bronze plaque and certificate formally recognizing the significance of the site.

The National Park Service regularly reviews the condition of National Natural Landmarks and, on request, advises owners on conservation practices. The National Park Service also prepares an annual report on those National Natural Landmarks that are damaged or threatened by some activity or natural phenomenon. The Secretary of the Interior sends this report to the Congress.

Information on National Natural Landmarks is regularly provided to interested public and private agencies and organizations to ensure that these sites are considered in planning decisions and not inadvertently damaged or destroyed through lack of knowledge of their existence or significance. For example, under the National Environmental Policy Act, Federal agencies should consider the existence and location of National Natural Landmarks when assessing the effects of their actions on the environment.

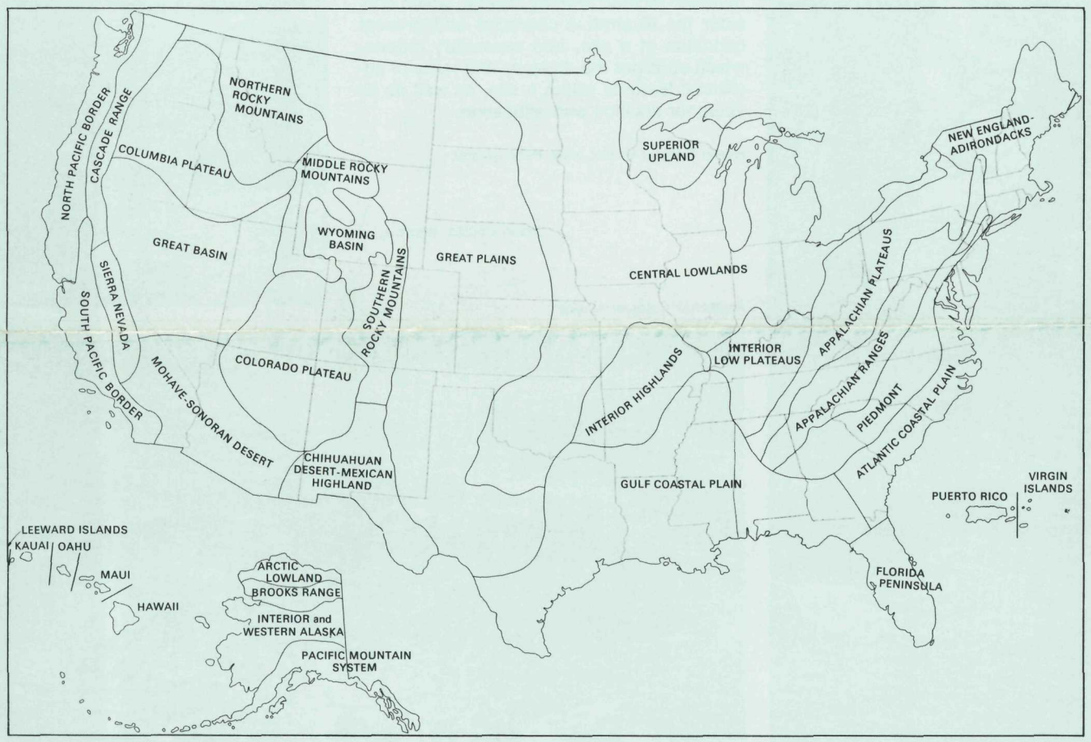
Mima Mounds, Washington

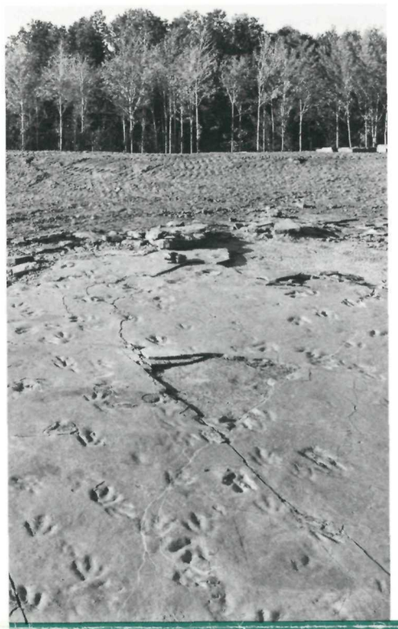
Map of physiographic regions

The National Park Service sponsors studies of each natural region. Each study provides a description of the ecological or geological features of the region and a list of sites best representing these features. Sites determined to be nationally significant are then designated by the Secretary of the Interior as National Natural Landmarks.

Natural Regions*

*Based upon Fenneman's (1928) *Physiographic Divisions of the United States.*





Dinosaur Trackway, Connecticut

Garden of the Gods, Colorado

For More Information

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the National Natural Landmarks Program, contact the National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, D. C. 20013-7127, or any other following Regional Offices:

North Atlantic Regional Office
National Park Service
15 State Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02109

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
National Park Service
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

National Capital Regional Office
National Park Service
1100 Ohio Drive, S. W.
Washington, D.C. 20042

Southeast Regional Office
National Park Service
75 Spring Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Midwest Regional Office
National Park Service
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

Southwest Regional Office
National Park Service
P. O. Box 728
Sante Fe, New Mexico 87504-0728

Western Regional Office
National Park Service
450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063
San Francisco, California 94102

Pacific Northwest Regional Office
National Park Service
83 S. King Street, Suite 212
Seattle, Washington 98104

Alaska Regional Office
National Park Service
2520 Gambell Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99503