



(CLI) and Cultural Landscape Report (CLR). The classification system outlined should provide a means for documenting all the cultural and natural processes and physical forms that may exist in a given landscape. The system is flexible and must be applied to each landscape according to the type of landscape and the nature of its historical development. Not all landscapes will have the same physical character.

The recommended classification system presented in this text builds upon, and has many similarities with, earlier efforts. It addresses the diversity and scope of cultural landscapes in the national park system. To give this recommended system context in the cultural landscape preservation field, the text first presents an overview of the classification systems developed to date by the NPS, along with the terminology associated with the systems. The similarities and differences between the systems and the terminology used are described. Finally, based on the recommended classification system and terminology, the application and use of landscape characteristics and associated features in a CLR are described.

## CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS AND TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE FIELD

A review of the classification systems and their associated terminology indicates many commonalities. The recommended classification system presented in this text builds upon the following studies and publications:

- In 1984, *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System*, provided the first classification system. It identified

“landscape components” that can be used to identify, evaluate, nominate (to the National Register), and manage rural historic districts.

- In 1987, *National Register Bulletin 18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes*, presented a detailed list of “landscape features,” which focused on describing designed landscapes for nomination to the National Register. The list of features was provided for consideration in describing designed landscapes, but it was not intended to be a comprehensive classification system.
- In 1990, *National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* coined the term “landscape characteristics” as the title for the classification system outlined in the publication. *Bulletin 30* was largely a revision of the 1984 study, *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System*. The classification system of landscape characteristics was similar to the original list of “landscape components” in the 1984 study. However, *Bulletin 30* gave an expanded explanation of how various landscape characteristics could be meaningful in understanding the cultural development of rural landscapes, and it provided guidelines for their documentation.
- In 1996, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* identified “organizational elements” and “character-defining features” as a classification system for the treatment of cultural

## CHRONOLOGY OF CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

**1984**

### **Landscape Components**

Overall Patterns of Spatial Organization  
 Land Use: Categories and Activities  
 Response to Natural Features  
 Circulation Networks  
 Boundary Demarcations  
 Vegetation Related to Land Use  
 Cluster Arrangement  
 Structure: Type, Function, Materials, Construction  
 Small-Scale Elements  
 Historical Views and Other Perceptual Qualities

Source: *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System.*

**1987**

### **Landscape Features**

Spatial Relationships and Orientations  
 Land Uses  
 Natural Features  
 Circulation Systems  
 Landscape Dividers  
 Topography and Grading  
 Vegetation  
 Buildings, Structures, and Lighting  
 Drainage and Engineering Structures  
 Site Furnishings and Small-Scale Elements  
 Water Bodies, Sculpture, and Signs  
 Views and Vistas

Source: *National Register Bulletin 18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes.*

**1990**

### **Landscape Characteristics**

Processes  
 Patterns of Spatial Organization  
 Land Uses and Activities  
 Response to the Natural Environment  
 Cultural Traditions  
  
Components  
 Circulation Networks  
 Boundary Demarcations  
 Vegetation Related to Land Use  
 Buildings, Structures, and Objects  
 Clusters  
 Archeological Sites  
 Small-Scale Elements

Source: *National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes.*

**1996**

### **Organizational Elements and Character-Defining Features**

#### Organizational Elements

Spatial Organization  
 Land Patterns

#### Character-Defining Features

Topography  
 Vegetation  
 Circulation  
 Water Features  
 Structures, Site Furnishings, and Objects

Source: *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.*

**1997**

### **Landscape Characteristics**

Natural Systems and Features	Vegetation
Spatial Organization	Buildings and Structures
Land Use	Views and Vistas
Cultural Traditions	Constructed Water Features
Cluster Arrangements	Small-Scale Features
Circulation	Circulation
Topography	Archeological Sites

Source: *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques and Cultural Landscapes Inventory Professional Procedures Guide.*

landscapes. (The term, character-defining feature, dates from the 1978 publication of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects with Guidelines for Applying the Standards*, where the term was used to describe architectural qualities contributing to the character of historic buildings).

In referencing the publications prepared by the National Register, it needs to be noted that the National Register allows a considerable degree of latitude in the way survey information is presented and organized in nominations. The classification systems outlined in the bulletins were presented to facilitate the evaluation process, but did not require that information about cultural landscapes be organized as such.

There is some overlap in the definitions of terms associated with the classification systems, partly because the terms originated at different times by different sources, and for discrete uses. For instance, the term "landscape characteristic" was conceived primarily to apply the National Register criteria to cultural landscapes so they could be evaluated and nominated as sites or districts to the National Register. The term "character-defining feature" was conceived to guide the appropriate treatment and management of historic structures (and later of cultural landscapes), so that features conveying historic character would be retained by treatment activities. The term "contributing or noncontributing feature" was conceived as a specific, quantifiable item that could be identified in the

field for the purpose of the CLI and National Register evaluation. In all these efforts, the evolution of terms was influenced by the type(s) of cultural landscape being addressed, along with the range of physical conditions to which the terms apply. (See *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Appendices*, "Appendix C: National Register Bulletins (nos. 18 and 30)," and "Appendix H: Treatment Policy, Guidelines, and Standards.")

## Landscape Characteristics

"Landscape characteristics" is the recommended term associated with the classification system in this text. It refers to the processes and physical forms that characterize the appearance of a landscape and aid in understanding its cultural value. The following general points apply to landscape characteristics and their use in CLRs:

- Landscape characteristic is defined as the tangible and intangible characteristics of a landscape that individually and collectively give a landscape character and aid in understanding its cultural value.
- Landscape characteristic is applied to either culturally derived and naturally occurring processes or to cultural and natural physical forms that have influenced the historical development of a landscape or are the products of its development. The appearance of a cultural landscape, both historically and currently, is a unique web of landscape characteristics that are the tangible evidence of the historic and current uses of the land.

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## TERMINOLOGY USED IN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION

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### **Character-Defining Feature**

“A prominent or distinctive aspect, quality, or characteristic of a historic property that contributes significantly to its physical character. Structures, objects, vegetation, spatial relationships, views, furnishings, decorative details, and materials may be such features.”

—*Cultural Resource Management Guideline, Release No. 5 (1997)* and *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes (1996)*

### **Contributing Feature**

“A biotic or abiotic feature associated with a landscape characteristic that contributes to the significance of the cultural landscape.”

—*Cultural Landscapes Inventory Professional Procedures Guide (1998)*

### **Contributing Resource**

“A building, site, structure, or object that adds to the historic significance of a property. A contributing building, site, structure, or object adds to the historic associations, historical architectural qualities, or archaeological values for which a property is significant because of the following: it was present during the period of significance; it relates to the documented significance of the property; it possesses historic integrity or is capable of revealing information about the period; or it independently meets the National Register criteria.”

—*National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form (1991)*

### **Landscape Characteristic**

“The tangible evidence of the activities and habits of the people who occupied, developed, used, and shaped the land to serve human needs. The beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and values of the people and processes that have been instrumental in shaping the land, and the processes are evident as physical components on the land.”

—*National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes (1990)*

### **Landscape Feature**

“The smallest physical unit that contributes to the significance of a landscape that can be managed as an individual element.”

—*Cultural Landscapes Inventory Professional Procedures Guide (1998)*

### **Landscape Unit**

“A discrete portion of the landscape which can be further subdivided into individual features. The landscape unit may contribute to the significance of a National Register property, such as a farmstead in a rural historic district. In some cases the landscape unit may be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, such as a rose garden in a large urban park.”

—*The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes (1996)*

### **Non-Contributing Feature**

“A biotic or abiotic feature associated with a landscape characteristic that does not contribute to the significance of the cultural landscape.”

—*Cultural Landscapes Inventory Professional Procedures Guide (1998)*

### **Non-Contributing Resource**

“A non-contributing building, site, structure, or object that does not add to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archaeological values for which a property is significant, because: it was not present during the period of significance or does not relate to the documented period of significance of the property; due to alterations, disturbances, additions or other changes, it no longer possesses historic integrity or is capable of yielding important information about the period; or it does not independently meet the National Register criteria.”

—*National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form (1991)*

- Landscape characteristics are categories under which individual features can be grouped. For example, the landscape characteristic “natural systems and features” may include such individual features as a ravine, valley, wetland, or cliff. The landscape characteristic “topography” may include such features as an earthwork, drainage ditch, or hill. The landscape characteristic “vegetation” may include such individual features as a specimen tree, woodlot, or perennial bed.
- Many landscape characteristics are common among cultural landscapes; however, not all categories of landscape characteristics occur in every landscape. Determining which landscape characteristics exist or did exist within the unique development of each landscape must be made, and only the landscape characteristics that exist or have existed in a particular landscape are identified in CLR.
- Landscape characteristics are valuable in understanding the evolution of a landscape’s appearance over time. They may not have retained integrity (that is, existed in a relatively unchanged state since the established period(s) of significance), and therefore may or may not contribute to the significance of a landscape. Some landscape characteristics may be completely lost, some may be recent additions. Understanding what remains and what was lost can influence the treatment of the landscape.
- Landscape characteristics exist primarily within the boundaries of a cultural landscape; however, it is important to identify the natural, cultural, and political context for every

landscape. The context provides an understanding of the relationship between the landscape characteristics and the broader environment within which they exist. The natural context includes the naturally occurring physical forms that have influenced the landscape’s development, such as dominant landforms, watersheds, native vegetation, water bodies, and wetlands. The cultural and political contexts include land use, zoning, legal restrictions, transportation, utilities, population, and political jurisdiction (state, county, city, village, or town).

## RECOMMENDED LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

This section recommends a classification system of landscape characteristics. The list of landscape characteristics does not necessarily apply to all cultural landscapes, but rather provides a basis from which the relevant characteristics for a landscape can be identified.

Landscape characteristics must be uniquely identified for each cultural landscape according to the type of landscape and the nature of its historical development. In addition, it is also important to recognize that the list of characteristics is not mutually exclusive. For example, vegetation, buildings and structures, and views and vistas often assist in defining the spatial organization of a landscape. Determining the relationship among the landscape characteristics identified for a property is important in understanding the history of a landscape and how it should be treated.

## Natural Systems and Features

Natural systems and features are the natural aspects that have influenced the development and physical form of a landscape. The following may be included:

- geomorphology: the large-scale patterns of land forms
- geology: the surficial characteristics of the earth
- hydrology: the system of surface and subsurface water
- ecology: the interrelationship among living organisms and their environment
- climate: temperature, wind velocity, and precipitation
- native vegetation: indigenous plant communities and indigenous aggregate and individual plant features

Examples of features associated with natural systems and features include ravines, valleys, watersheds, wetlands, and rock outcrops. (See Figure 1.)

## Spatial Organization

Spatial organization is the three-dimensional organization of physical forms and visual associations in a landscape, including the articulation of ground, vertical, and overhead planes that define and create spaces. Examples of features associated with spatial organization include circulation systems, views and vistas, divisions of property, and topography. (See Figure 2.)



*Figure 1. View of natural systems and features. Canyon de Chelly National Monument. (NPS, 1988)*



*Figure 2. Land use and spatial organization are made visible in part by field and crop patterns. Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve. (NPS, 1983)*



*Figure 3. Cluster arrangements are visible in this aerial view of outbuildings in this cattle ranch landscape. Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. (NPS, 1970)*



*Figure 4. Circulation is a prominent landscape characteristic of this Civilian Conservation Corps development. Scotts Bluff National Monument. (NPS, 1995)*

## Land Use

Land use describes the principal activities in a landscape that form, shape, and organize the landscape as a result of human interaction. Examples of features associated with land use include agricultural fields, pastures, playing fields, and quarries. (See Figure 2.)

## Cultural Traditions

Cultural traditions are the practices that influence the development of a landscape in terms of land use, patterns of land division, building forms, stylistic preferences, and the use of materials. Examples of features associated with cultural traditions include land use practices, methods of construction, buildings, patterns of land division, and use of vegetation.

## Cluster Arrangement

Cluster arrangement is the location and pattern of buildings and structures in a landscape and associated outdoor spaces. Examples of features associated with a cluster arrangement include village centers and complexes, mining, agricultural, and residential buildings and structures and the associated spaces they define. (See Figure 3.)

## Circulation

Circulation includes the spaces, features, and applied material finishes that constitute the systems of movement in a landscape. Examples of features associated with circulation include paths, sidewalks, roads, and canals. (See Figure 4.)

## Topography

Topography is the three-dimensional configuration of a landscape surface characterized by features (such as slope and articulation) and orientation (such as elevation and solar aspect). Examples of features associated with topography include earthworks, drainage ditches, knolls, and terraces. (See Figure 5.)

## Vegetation

Vegetation includes the deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers and herbaceous plants, and plant communities, whether indigenous or introduced in a landscape. Examples of features associated with vegetation include specimen trees, allees, woodlots, orchards, and perennial gardens. (See Figure 6.)

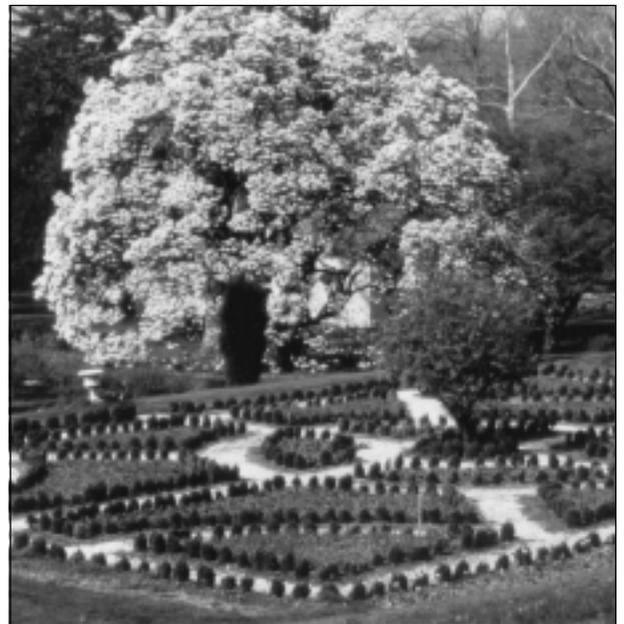
## Buildings and Structures

Buildings are elements constructed primarily for sheltering any form of human activity in a landscape. Structures are elements constructed for functional purposes other than sheltering human activity in a landscape. Engineering systems are also structures. Mechanical engineering systems may be distinguished from structural engineering systems as follows:

- Mechanical engineering systems conduct utilities within the landscape, such as power lines, hydrants, and culverts.
- Structural engineering systems provide physical stabilization in the landscape, such as retaining walls, dikes, and foundations.



*Figure 5. The reconstructed earthworks that form the Grand French Battery complex of Yorktown Battlefield are a feature of topography. Colonial National Historical Park. (NPS, n.d.)*



*Figure 6. Vegetation includes specimen plant features, such as the nineteenth century Saucer Magnolia in the background, and aggregations of plants, such as the Boxwood hedge outlining the pathways. Hampton National Historic Site. (NPS, n.d.)*



*Figure 7. Lover's Lane Footbridge is a feature associated with the landscape characteristics, buildings and structures, and circulation at the Presidio. Golden Gate National Recreation Area. (NPS, 1993)*



*Figure 8. Views are a significant landscape characteristic of the Blue Ridge Parkway. This is the view from Flat Top Mountain toward Grandfather Mountain. Blue Ridge Parkway. (NPS, c. 1940s)*



*Figure 9. Constructed water features, such as this water cascade, are a landscape characteristic of the historic designed landscape of Meridian Hill Park. Rock Creek Park. (NPS, n.d.)*

Examples of features associated with buildings include houses, barns, stables, schools, and factories. Examples of features associated with structures include bridges, windmills, gazebos, silos, and dams. (See Figure 7.)

## Views and Vistas

Views and vistas are the prospect created by a range of vision in a landscape, conferred by the composition of other landscape characteristics and associated features. (See Figure 8.) Views and vistas are distinguished as follows:

- Views are the expansive or panoramic prospect of a broad range of vision, which may be naturally occurring or deliberately contrived.
- Vistas are the controlled prospect of a discrete, linear range of vision, which is deliberately contrived.

## Constructed Water Features

Constructed water features are the built features and elements that use water for aesthetic or utilitarian functions in a landscape. Examples of features associated with constructed water features include fountains, canals, cascades, pools, and reservoirs. (See Figure 9.)

## Small-Scale Features

Small-scale features are the elements providing detail and diversity for both functional needs and aesthetic concerns in a landscape. Examples of small-scale features include fences, benches, monuments, signs, and road markers. (See Figure 10.)

## Archeological Sites

Archeological sites are the ruins, traces, or deposited artifacts in a landscape, evidenced by the presence of either surface or subsurface features. Examples of features associated with archeological resources include road traces, structural ruins, irrigation system ruins, and reforested fields.

## USE OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS IN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORTS

Landscape characteristics are a useful framework for preparing CLR reports because they provide a system for: 1) gathering, organizing, and understanding information about the site history and existing conditions of a cultural landscape, and 2) documenting the changing appearance of a landscape over time. Landscape characteristics can be used in all sections of a CLR, including the following:

- Site History
- Existing Conditions
- Analysis and Evaluation
- Treatment
- Record of Treatment

The organization of landscape characteristics throughout the sections of a CLR should be considered. A hierarchical or nested arrangement may be useful for organizing and emphasizing the interrelationships of landscape characteristics. The manner in which they are presented in a CLR may not be the order in which landscape characteristics are recognized and



*Figure 10. The gatepost of the Presidio Boulevard Gate is a small-scale feature of the Presidio landscape. Golden Gate National Recreation Area. (NPS, 1993)*

identified in the field. For example, it may be necessary to identify which landscape characteristics give structure to spatial organization, such as vegetation and topography, before spatial organization can be recognized and identified as a landscape characteristic.

## Site History

The site history describes the landscape through every relevant historic period until the present. Landscape characteristics are used as a system for organizing the documentation describing the chronological development of the landscape and recording the physical changes, events, and persons integral to the evolution. The appearance

of landscape characteristics over time is communicated graphically in a CLR through a series of period plans, in a narrative format, and in historical photographs and other documents.

## Existing Conditions

The existing conditions identify and describe the landscape characteristics that define the existing appearance and character of a landscape. Landscape characteristics are identified and documented during field surveys and through the use of site investigation techniques, such as tree coring, archeology, and aerial photograph analysis. Landscape characteristics are geographically located and their physical condition is assessed. Existing landscape characteristics are graphically documented in an existing conditions plan and in the narrative text of a CLR. Landscape characteristics are also documented in black and white photographs and color slides.

## Analysis and Evaluation

The analysis and evaluation compares the findings of the site history with the existing conditions to identify the landscape characteristics that retain integrity and contribute to the significance of a landscape. (Landscape characteristics that have existed since an established historic period are determined to retain integrity.) If not already determined, the analysis and evaluation section states the significance of the landscape (according to National Register criteria A-D), and the historic period(s) of significance.

## Treatment

Treatment prescribes how the landscape should be treated and managed, based on its significance, existing conditions, and use. Although the treatment of cultural landscapes is directed by policy, guidelines, and standards, knowledge of landscape characteristics as they existed over time influences the selection of a primary treatment and development of a treatment plan for the entire landscape. The extent of written evidence of the historic appearance of landscape characteristics is considered during treatment planning, and the physical condition of characteristics influences specific treatment. A treatment plan may be described in a CLR using narrative guidelines, a schematic drawing, or a detailed plan.

## Record of Treatment

The record of treatment is an appendix or addendum to a CLR that describes treatment activities in the landscape as implemented. Landscape characteristics may be used to organize the continued documentation of a landscape during the physical changes involved in implementing the treatment plan. A record of how treatment activities affected landscape characteristics is presented in a narrative description of construction work, “as-built” construction drawings, and photographs. These records become primary sources of the continued evolution of landscape characteristics and add to the archived historic records of a landscape.

In each section of a CLR, landscape characteristics provide a valuable framework for understanding and organizing the chronological development of a landscape, describing the existing conditions,

and outlining a treatment plan. Each landscape characteristic represents a broad category of processes or physical forms that interrelate and can be used to illustrate patterns through time.

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