State Historic Preservation Office

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Traditional Cultural Properties in South Carolina: Identification and Evaluation for Section 106

Introduction

Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP) are a subset of historic properties associated with the cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any living community. In this context, traditional refers to those beliefs, customs and practices of a living community that have been passed down through generations, usually orally or through practice.

TCPs can be related to spiritual beliefs, traditional practices, or stories important to a living (i.e. still extant) community. Often, TCPs are associated with Native American groups, but TCPs may be connected with any specific cultural group or community. South Carolina has many traditional communities associated with the history of the state, and different traditions and traditional places should be considered in planning federal projects in the state. Most TCPs are not readily identifiable to persons outside of the traditional community, making it critical to consult with interested parties and groups to identify and evaluate TCPs.

Consultation

To begin the process of identifying TCPs, consider the history of the area, including settlement patterns, land use, landscapes, and known cultural groups. Identify the people that may have additional information on cultural practices and traditions, such as local political leaders, historical society leaders, and community leaders (such as pastors, teachers, and business owners). Talk to local planners, the anthropology department of the local college or university, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) or the appropriate Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), if applicable. TCPs are best identified by consulting directly with members of a traditional community.

Identify the best practices for consultation, such as community meetings, individual interviews, or presenting the project to community leaders. Often, a form letter or a notice in the newspaper is not sufficient to identify consulting parties associated with TCPs. Identification of appropriate consulting parties takes legwork.

Identification and Evaluation

Once appropriate consulting parties are identified, consider what is needed to plan the project. Why are the sites significant to the community? What documentation is needed to determine if the TCP is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places? Consider using the experience and expertise of ethnographers, sociologists, anthropologists, and folklorists to assist in the identification of TCPs. While certain properties may be documented in the historic literatures or through previous ethnographic or archaeological studies, information on other properties may have only been passed down through generations by oral history or practice. For Indian tribes, knowledge of TCP locations may reside with tribal elders or traditional practitioners.

A property must be associated with a tradition at least 50 years old and meet the threshold of the National Register criteria to be a historic property under Section 106. Criterion A, association with events and broad patterns of history, tends to be the general criteria for TCPs, although TCPs can be eligible under other criteria.

TCPs are eligible for the National Register because of association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community. These beliefs and practices should be a part of the community's history and are critical to maintaining the cultural identity of the community. The National Register criteria, however, were not designed with the evaluation of TCPs in mind. Some TCPs, such as rivers or forests, may not have specific boundaries. It may also be difficult to categorize a TCP as a building, structure, site, object, or district. For Section 106 identification and evaluation, consider whether or not a specific boundary or category is necessary to treat the TCP as a historic property. Keep in mind that it is critical to listen to those who ascribe significance to the property to understand and evaluate the significance of the TCP.

TCPs must also have integrity to be eligible for the National Register. In addition to integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, TCPs should reflect integrity of relationship and condition. TCPs must have a clear connection to the culture's beliefs and practices associated with it. Depending on the type of relationship the TCP has to the culture, the integrity of condition may or may not adversely affect the TCP. For example, if a field of sweetgrass is still used for collecting materials for sweetgrass basket making, it would still have its association to the practice of the Gullah culture even if the field is surrounded by contemporary development. Remember, if the culture still ascribes significance to the place, even if the setting or other aspects of integrity have been altered, the TCP may still have integrity of relationship.

Documentation of TCPs should include a written description of the property; recordation on appropriate site file or survey card forms; photographs; maps; oral history interviews/transcripts; and any special challenges presented in collecting the information and determining its eligibility for the National Register. Evaluations should use the TCP guidance published by the National Park Service. Information collected can be kept confidential if it meets the criteria set forth under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Effects

When considering effects of a federal project on TCPs, it is important to be open and thorough in consultation with the cultural group. Project impacts should be clearly explained and should highlight potential impacts. Adverse effects to TCPs could include the elimination of access to the site; destruction of the property; the removal of control over the property; or the introduction of indirect effects, such as changes to the visual or auditory nature of the TCP. If the group associated with the TCP perceives an adverse effect to the property, this is an important consideration in assessing effects. Again, consultation is key.

Types of Traditional Cultural Properties[1]

- A location associated with the traditional beliefs of a Native American group about its origins, its cultural history, or the nature of the world

- A rural community whose organization, buildings and structures, or patterns of land use reflect the cultural traditions valued by its long-term residents

- An urban neighborhood that is the traditional home of a particular cultural group, and that reflects its beliefs and practices

- A location where Native American religious practitioners have historically gone, and are known or thought to go today, to perform ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional cultural rules of practice

- A location where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity

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[1] As defined in National Register Bulletin #38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties.

South Carolina Examples[2]

Religious Sites
- Horn Creek Baptist Church, Edgefield County
- Indian Fields Methodist Campground, Dorchester County

Cemeteries
- King Cemetery, Charleston County

Native American
- Fishdam Ford, Union and Chester Counties (Federal and state-recognized tribes)
- Altamaha Town, Beaufort County (Tribes with no official recognition)

Gullah
- Daufuskie Island Historic District, Beaufort County

African American
- Penn Center Historic District, Beaufort County
- The Green, Beaufort County

Hunting

Agriculture
- Pee Dee River Rice Planters Historic District, Georgetown County
- Galivants Ferry Historic District, Horry County

Sweetgrass collecting for basket-making

Clay for pottery
- Pottersville, Edgefield County
- Trapp and Chandler Pottery Site, Greenwood County

Fishing/shrimping areas
- McClellanville Historic District, Charleston County
- Bluffton Oyster Company, Bluffton Historic District, Beaufort County

Traditional food-gathering areas/association with foodways
- Coker Spring, Aiken County

Traditional medicine-gathering areas

Landscapes
- Ashley River Historic District, Charleston and Dorchester Counties
- Reedy River Falls Historic Park and Greenway, Greenville County
- Table Rock Mountain, Table Rock State Park Historic District, Pickens County

Rock art

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[2] These properties may not be specifically listed in the National Register as TCPs.

Urban neighborhoods associated with a specific culture
- ▪ Waverly Historic District, Richland County

Rural communities
- ▪ Pendleton Historic District, Anderson County
- ▪ Cedar Springs Historic District, Abbeville County

Further Reading

Places that Count: Traditional Cultural Properties in Cultural Resource Management by Thomas F. King

National Register Bulletin #38: *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*

National Register of Historic Places – *Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) A Quick Guide for Preserving Native American Cultural Resources*

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