



v1.1 internally approved August 2019

Note: this Standard will be subject to public consultation in Q1 of 2021 and may be revised beforehand

Standard on Cultural Resources

Introduction

UNESCO's definition of Culture (2002) is the 'set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs'.

Cultural resources embedded in belief systems and traditional lifestyles are often the most valuable aspects of a landscape / seascape for indigenous peoples and local communities. This WWF standard ensures that Cultural Resources are appropriately considered, respected and protected and their destruction, damage or loss is avoided.

The standard refers to 3 types of Cultural Resources:

1. **Tangible** - referring to material or physical cultural elements such as buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, sacred sites (e.g. burial sites), works of art, artefacts, and Cultural Landscapes (e.g. Satoyama in Japan).
2. **Intangible** – referring to immaterial cultural elements such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge, ways of life (e.g. nomadic, pastoral, tribal, etc.), value systems, language, worldviews and beliefs, rites and rituals, folklore and artistic expressions.
3. **Natural** – referring to natural elements that have important cultural and often spiritual values. These may include culturally and spiritually significant landscapes, seascapes, sites and species.

The difference between Cultural Landscapes and Culturally Significant Landscapes is that the former has been shaped and created by human activities and the latter are natural landscapes that are of cultural value to people.

Requirements

WWF will:

- Take care to fully understand the tangible, intangible and natural cultural resources of the landscape/seascape as perceived by indigenous peoples and local communities and, where appropriate, the cultural resources that are recognised in national legislation or under relevant international environmental/cultural treaties and agreements.
- Analyse the tangible, intangible and natural cultural resources in relation to project/programme interventions and assess potential negative impacts on these resources. This may include access to said cultural resources; involuntary changes in ways of life; exploitation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, etc.
- Inform project or program-affected parties of their rights under national law when a project or program involves the commercial use of cultural resources and arrange for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits.
- Avoid financing and/or implementing projects that could significantly damage or modify cultural resources (in particular, ways of life). Where appropriate conduct field-based surveys using qualified specialists to evaluate cultural resources and co-develop (with communities) feasible project alternatives that avoid negative impacts.

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- Avoid making decisions about important cultural resources without the full and meaningful engagement of the communities in question.

Mitigation Measures

- Where risk screening identifies that important cultural resources are at stake, and could potentially be negatively impacted, develop a clear and inclusive mitigation plan (i.e. a Cultural Resources Plan).
- Where risk screening identifies important cultural resources in the form of lifestyles and peoples whose lives and cultural practices are inextricably linked to nature, but who are not officially recognised as Indigenous, FPIC standards must apply (**see FPIC guidance**). Said peoples may include tribal, nomadic, hunter-gatherer and pastoralist (nomadic, semi-nomadic, transhumant) communities.
- Where the use of cultural resources is in conflict with conservation aims (e.g. endangered species used for traditional medicine or a major pilgrimage site within a protected area, etc.) specific, culturally appropriate, mitigation actions must be co-developed in accordance.
- Provide for the use of 'chance find'¹ procedures that include a preapproved management and conservation approach for cultural materials that may be discovered during project implementation.
- Disclose final mitigation plans as part of the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) for at least 30 days (45 days minimum or as agreed with Indigenous Peoples and other communities where FPIC applies) before the project concept is finalised, in a place accessible to key stakeholders, including project affected groups and Civil Society Organisations, in a form and language understandable to them.

¹ Chance-find means an archaeological deposit or other religious or ecological finds and features becoming exposed during earthmoving and ground altering activities associated with a project covered under this Act. <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/chance-find>