

# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## Endangered Historic Places

*“America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places” are compiled annually by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Trust is a major partner organization of US/ ICOMOS. Here is a selection of sites that are currently endangered.*

### Mitchell Park Domes, Milwaukee

A Milwaukee landmark for generations, a unique engineering marvel, and a nationally significant example of Midcentury Modern architecture, the Mitchell Park Domes have been a center of community life and an international tourism destination for more than 50 years.



Fig. 1: Mitchell Park Domes (© Carol Highsmith, Library of Congress)

In 1958, Milwaukee architect Donald L. Grieb won a national design competition for the Domes, which were constructed between 1959 and 1967. His design featured three domes – the Show Dome, the Tropical Dome, and the Desert Dome – which contain a vast array of horticulture that one observer called “a zoo for plants.” Located in Milwaukee’s Mitchell Park, the Domes are one of the most recognizable landmarks in the adjacent Clarke Square neighborhood (one of the city’s most diverse areas) and are visited annually by nearly 250,000 people. The Domes are marvels of modern engineering featuring the world’s first “conoidal” – or cone-shaped – domes.

The future of the Domes is unclear, and County officials have previously considered demolishing one or more Domes. In summer 2019, the County-appointed Domes Task Force recommended a long-term plan that would rehabilitate all three Domes and reinvest heavily in Mitchell Park, but the County has not taken official action in support of a rehabilitation option. Inspiring, innovative architecture often requires equally creative solutions.

The Mitchell Park Domes need a thoughtful, long-term preservation solution that will ensure they remain a beloved Milwaukee icon for generations to come. Working closely with local partners including the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance and Save Our Domes, and with support from The Cultural Landscape Foundation, the National Trust is advocating for a preservation solution where all three Domes are rehabbed and reused, as a community resource, with programming and sustainable financial operations.

### San Francisco Embarcadero, San Francisco

The Embarcadero Historic District is the historic interface between San Francisco and its beloved Bay and a major economic engine for the Bay Area. The Embarcadero Seawall, which

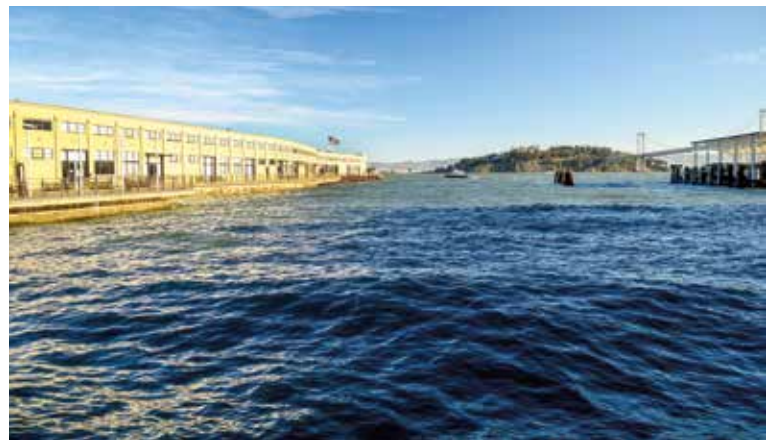


Fig. 2: San Francisco Embarcadero (© Tom Hilton)

supports the District, buffers major parts of San Francisco from Mission Creek to Fisherman’s Wharf, including all of downtown San Francisco and its public transportation infrastructure. Yet this remarkable historic place is facing major physical threats from earthquakes and sea level rise. A recent earthquake vulnerability study of the Embarcadero’s Seawall revealed greater than expected risk placing over \$1.6 billion in Port assets at risk. The Embarcadero’s buildings must also cope with climate change-related sea level rise; the State of California estimates sea level rise in 2100 to be between 3.4 (likely) and 6.9 feet (1 in 200 chance).

Engineering options are being identified to minimize the impact of these threats, but they will be costly. The estimated cost of needed seismic repairs is at least \$2 billion. When sea level rise is factored in, the cost is likely to double. The dual seismic and climate change threats require a coordinated local, regional, state, and federal response that embraces creative strategies that assure long-term resilience for the Embarcadero’s rich heritage.

## Ashley River, South Carolina

As one of the most iconic places in the South Carolina Lowcountry, the Ashley River Historic District illustrates the Palmetto State's layered cultural heritage, from its colonial beginnings in the 17th century through the mid-20th century. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this nationally significant area

damage the historic landscape and forever alter the integrity of this key piece of our nation's history. The National Trust, along with the City of Charleston, have brought a lawsuit to challenge this purported annexation.

In addition to the National Trust's participation in the ongoing litigation, the National Trust and its partners – including the Drayton Hall Preservation Trust, Historic Charleston Founda-



Fig. 3: Ashley River, South Carolina (© Courtesy Middletown Place Foundation)

is traversed by the centuries-old Ashley River Road – thought to be the oldest road in South Carolina still in use today. A moss-draped live oak tree canopy draped over the 11.5 mile stretch of the Ashley River Road preserves its historic character and takes visitors back in time. This historic district is also home to two National Historic Landmarks – Drayton Hall (a National Trust Historic Site) and Middleton Place. In addition, the historic district includes former Native American trade routes, slave settlements, cemeteries, rice fields, phosphate mining camps, archeological sites, remnants of small tenant farms, and post-Civil War settlements formed by African Americans – all which help tell the full history of this area.

Despite the historic significance of the Ashley River Historic District to both South Carolina and the United States, a portion of the historic district is under threat. Annexation of approximately 2,200 acres by the City of North Charleston could lead to zoning changes, likely ushering in intensive development (along with increased traffic, noise, and other impacts) that could irreparably

tion, Preservation Society of Charleston, Open Space Institute, Middleton Place, and the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League – are seeking additional, permanent ways to protect the Ashley River Historic District through initiatives such as conservation easements or increased buffer areas along the historic road.

## Puerto Rico

Back-to-back hurricanes in late 2017 took a heavy toll on Puerto Rico's rich architectural heritage, especially along the southern coast where wind tore off roofs, windows and doors, and days of rain flooded these structures from above and below. An inventory of hurricane-damaged historic resources funded by the National Trust and undertaken by local partners indicated nearly 2,000 damaged historic structures in eleven of the island's twelve historic zones.

Since then, many of these sites have continued to fall further into ruin as a result of delayed repairs, ongoing exposure to the el-



Fig. 4: Puerto Rico, house destroyed by a hurricane in 2017  
(© Parala Naturaleza)

ements, and repeated storms. Municipalities and property owners who attempt to stabilize and repair these properties on their own have been met with further challenges: difficulties obtaining materials, lack of skilled tradespeople, complications with insurance companies, and conflicting information on public assistance programs and compliance requirements. The effort needed to overcome these barriers has led some owners to abandon properties, leading to blight and public safety concerns.

These circumstances continue to be exacerbated by the delayed response of government agencies and promised federal recovery funding. On Capitol Hill, the Trust successfully advocated to substantially increase the budget for the federal government's Historic Preservation Fund to speed recovery of hurricane-damaged historic sites. At the same time, more than \$18 billion in federal dollars was allocated to HUD's Disaster Recovery grant program. However, in both cases little of these funds has arrived and been spent on the recovery projects so badly needed.

These problems were compounded when in the early days of 2020, the southwestern region of the island was hit by multiple earthquakes. Already weakened by delayed hurricane recovery work, many buildings experienced greater damage, and in some cases, complete loss. In the historic center of Ponce, Puerto Rico's second largest city, important monuments and dozens of buildings were damaged by three substantial quakes and hundreds of aftershocks. Several National Register-listed sites and prominent natural landscape features have been completely lost in the surrounding rural areas.

In addition to providing roof tarps for hurricane-damaged buildings, the National Trust continues to work closely with partners, local and federal agencies, and architectural professionals to facilitate stabilization and rehabilitation. The eventual restoration of the island's unique and irreplaceable cultural history is essential to Puerto Rico's recovery. Ongoing work is needed to hold government agencies accountable, help local groups secure funds for rehabilitation, support workforce training in preservation trades, and incentivize investment in the island's many historic zones as the foundation for a stronger, more resilient future.



Fig. 5: Tidal Basin, Washington DC (© Sam Kittner)

### Tidal Basin, Washington DC

The National Mall Tidal Basin, part of America's front yard, is a complex, iconic public landscape whose architecture and open space captures individuals and events that have defined our nation. Comprising some of our most renowned monuments, the Tidal Basin includes places of remembrance and reflection that tell the history of our nation. The Jefferson Memorial reflects America's earliest American ideals; the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial demonstrates our country's resilience; and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial highlights the struggle for civil rights we continue to face today.

But while this unique waterway connects disparate stories that span centuries of American history, the instability of the land underneath the Tidal Basin, daily flooding, and crumbling infrastructure threaten its sustainability and visitor enjoyment. To ensure the National Mall Tidal Basin can meet the demands of a changing modern environment, we need a bold, creative, and integrated approach that respects, enhances, and revitalizes the Tidal Basin. To do this, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has teamed up with the Trust for the National Mall to present the Ideas Lab. Unlike a Design Competition, which typically selects a winner with a conclusive master plan, the Ideas Lab is a platform for the exchange of solutions and approaches between designers, stakeholders, and the public. Results will be provocative and innovative, presenting cultural landscape opportunities in a new light, while tackling fundamental challenges in a comprehensive and respectful way.

Results of the Ideas Lab will be on view at a curated exhibition in Washington, D.C. in spring 2020 and available widely online. The results will showcase creative collaboration and design opportunities relevant for the Tidal Basin today and for generations to come.

### James River, Virginia

The James River flows through a landscape of cultural and natural resources of both national and international significance. The



Fig. 6: James River, Virginia (© Sam Kittner)

waterway is the site where historical events stretching back before the founding of the United States occurred, including:

- Serving as the center of the Powhatan Confederacy of Algonquian-speaking North American Indian tribes;
- The location of the first permanent English colony in America at Jamestown in 1607;
- The site where the first Africans in Virginia arrived in 1619 due to the transatlantic slave trade;
- An important transportation route and battlefield during the U.S. Revolutionary War.

The U.S. Congress has acted to protect and recognize the James River's many layers of history by including Jamestown Island as a part of Colonial National Historical Park and designating the James River as part of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail. Despite this, in 2013, Dominion Energy requested a permit to construct a transmission line across the river within the viewshed of Jamestown Island.

This type of project requires review under the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. The lead federal agency in this review process did not correctly apply these laws, which require that alternative projects be considered. Tens of thousands of people weighed in urging the agency to conduct a more thorough review and select an alternative that would avoid harm to the cultural landscape of the James River. Ignoring this public outcry, and using a more abbreviated review process, the agency permitted the transmission line project in 2017.

The National Trust and Preservation Virginia (the owner and steward of Jamestown Island) challenged this decision in federal court. While the litigation was pending, Dominion Energy rushed to complete construction on the project. In May 2018, the lower court issued a decision in favor of the project, which was appealed. The transmission line was completed and energized on February 26, 2019, but the appellate court issued a decision three days later finding that federal law had been violated and ordering the agency to more closely review alternatives by preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Despite this decisive legal win for historic preservation and the James River, the status of the already constructed project is still in limbo. Dominion Energy continues to argue to maintain the project in place. The courts have also declined to revoke the permit for the project prior to completion of the EIS. To maintain the integrity of the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, the federal agency must closely review alternatives, avoid favoring the already built project, and meaningfully consider public opinion in completing the EIS. This decision will set a precedent for either protecting, or further industrializing, America's founding river in the years to come.

### Rosenwald Schools, multiple states

Julius Rosenwald was a nationally significant philanthropist who helped transform educational opportunities for African American children during the years of segregation. The son of Jewish immigrants who fled persecution in Europe, he transformed Sears, Roebuck and Company into a retail powerhouse and acquired



Fig. 7: Mt Zion Rosenwald School (© NTHP)

great wealth during his successful career that he subsequently used for his visionary philanthropy. Rosenwald partnered with Booker T. Washington and African American communities across the South between 1913 and 1932 to provide funding for schoolhouses and related buildings – most often known as Rosenwald Schools – serving children who otherwise would have had extremely limited access to public education.

The more than 5,000 Rosenwald Schools, located in mostly rural areas in 15 states, were predominantly one or two-room structures and state-of-the-art for the period. They educated one-third of all African American children in the South during the years of segregation, producing markedly improved educational outcomes for their students and bringing a sense of hope and civic engagement to their communities. In 2002, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Rosenwald Schools to its 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list after research estimated that only 10–12 percent of the structures survive. The dwindling numbers of Rosenwald Schools sparked a continuing preservation effort to preserve the remaining schools and their stories for future generations. Efforts are underway to advance legislation (H. R. 3250/S. 1863) in the U. S. Congress that takes a critical first step to establish the first National Park Service site to honor a Jewish American, while also preserving a selection of iconic Rosenwald Schools.

### Shockoe Bottom, Virginia

Shockoe Bottom is an archaeological site in downtown Richmond, Virginia, that was a center of the nation's slave trade. Between 1830 and 1865, 350,000 people were bought and sold in Shockoe. Now mostly razed for parking, Shockoe nevertheless is considered sacred ground by Richmond's African American community, and is also considered to be a Site of Conscience by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. The National Trust's listing of Shockoe Bottom on its list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 2014 helped stop a plan to sacrifice Shockoe for a stadium entertainment district. Today, the National Trust is advocating for creation of an expansive memorial park that will marry commemoration, education, and equitable development.

To that end, the National Trust has completed a two-part study that quantifies the economic benefits of preserving and commem-



Fig. 8: Shockoe Bottom, Virginia (© Ron Cogswell)

orating Shockoe and, importantly, presents an innovative model for equitable development that ensures Shockoe will be an important part of Richmond's 21st century future. The report was commissioned by Preservation Virginia and Sacred Ground Project through a \$75,000 grant from the National Trust's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. Conducted with the Office of Mayor Levar Stoney and the City's Shockoe Alliance, the quantitative analysis was completed by Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Urban and Regional Analysis. The model for equitable development was created by Ebony Walden Consulting and an expert Resource Group, including Christopher Coes (Smart Growth America), Chenee Joseph (Historic District Development Corporation), Julie Nelson (Government Alliance on Race and Equity), Kennedy Smith (Community Land Use + Economics Group), and Khalil Uqдах (Cross Street Partners).

The quantitative analysis of Shockoe's heritage tourism potential concluded that the transformative and lasting impact of construction, on-going operation, and visitor spending represented a significant financial benefit to Richmond. Construction of a memorial park and museum, estimated at \$46.7 million, represents significant one-time impacts. Operations and visitor-related spending, estimated between \$32 and \$36 million, signify impacts that are ongoing and more impactful over time. Memorial park visitor spending, for instance, would generate between \$3.7 and \$7.7 million and support 43 to 85 jobs, depending on the mix of in-town and out-of-town visitors.

Public release of the National Trust's study comes at a critical moment when the City of Richmond and Shockoe stakeholders are engaged in an intensive dialogue about Shockoe's future. With community input, the City is drafting a Small Area Plan, the first of its kind for Shockoe, that will roll up into Richmond's Comprehensive Plan. This economic analysis, which emphasizes community engagement, inclusive land-use policies, and entrepreneurship, is intended to help inform public dialogue and influence the City's city planning. (Please find the study at <https://preservationvirginia.org/our-work/shockoe>.)

### Bears Ears, Utah

Located on federally-owned public lands in Southeast Utah, the Bears Ears cultural landscape includes archaeological sites, cliff

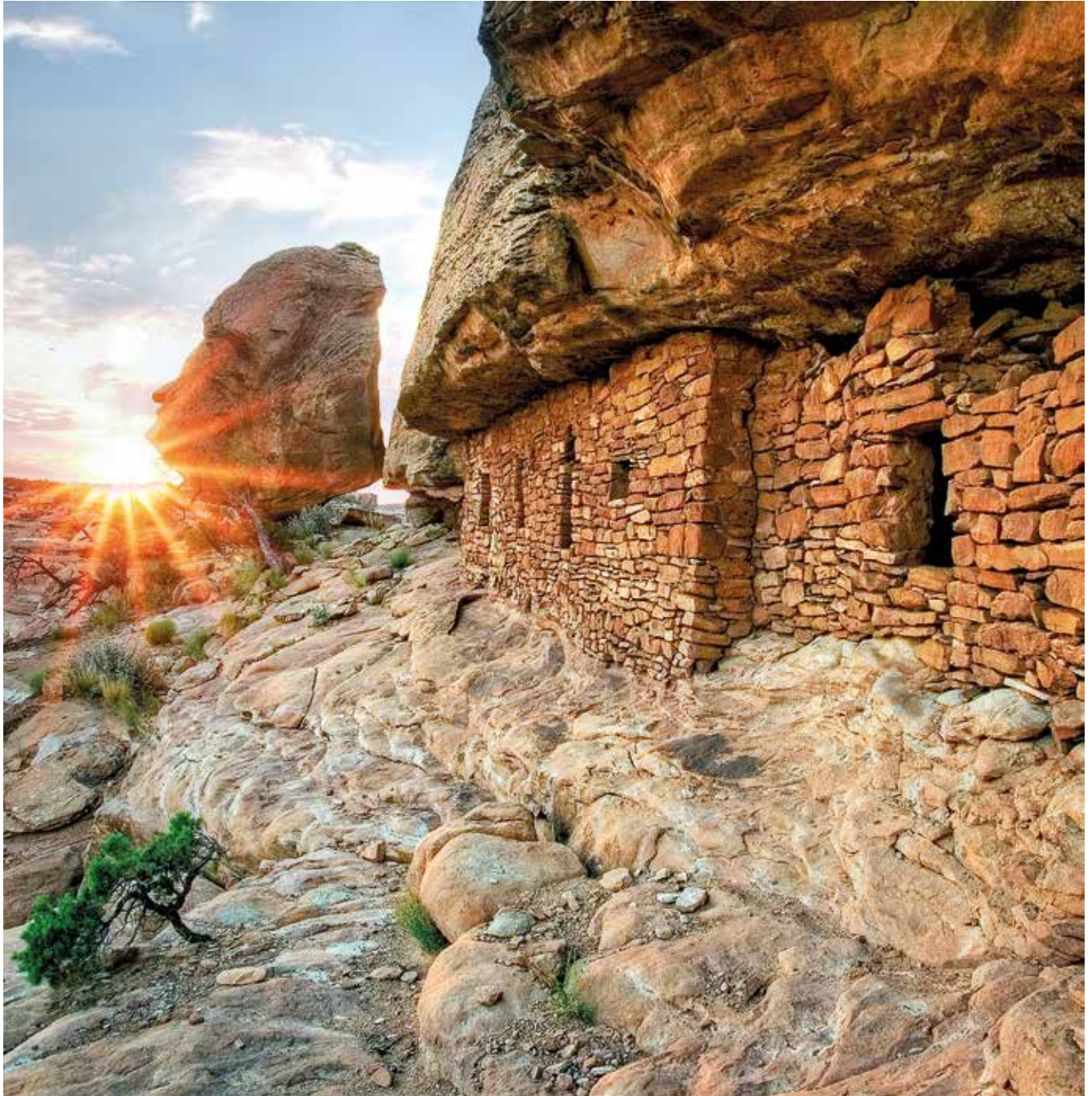


Fig. 9: Bears Ears, Utah (© Donald J Rommes)

dwelling, petroglyphs, and ancient roads that tell stories of diverse people over the course of 12,000 years. In an effort to better protect this landscape, the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ute Indian Tribe formed the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to formally propose a Bears Ears National Monument. Following requests from the tribes, numerous other organizations, and a robust public involvement process, President Barack Obama designated Bears Ears a national monument on December 28, 2016, protecting 1.35 million acres of land in one of the most significant cultural landscapes in the United States.

Unfortunately, on December 4, 2017, President Trump issued a proclamation to effectively revoke the Bears Ears National Monument and replace it with two much smaller monuments. This ac-

tion changed the conservation-focused management approach for more than a million acres – approximately 85% of the protected landscape – that include thousands of extraordinary archaeological sites, making them more vulnerable to looting, vandalism, and incompatible uses. The five tribes that make up the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other plaintiffs are actively challenging President Trump's unprecedented rollback of the monument's land area in court.

### Route 66, multiple states

Historic Route 66 stretches approximately 2,400 miles from Chicago, IL to Santa Monica, CA, passing through eight states and more than 300 communities. This vital transportation corridor



Fig. 10: Route 66, Mural (©David Kafer)

between the Midwest and southern California has endured as a symbol of freedom and mobility while epitomizing a new optimism that pervaded the nation's economic recovery following World War II.

Route 66 is internationally recognized as representing America's love of the automobile and open road. As a Dustbowl migration route, a World War II strategic military route, and a vacation travel route, it has been celebrated in music, literature, television, movies, and popular lore.

Route 66 was found by the National Park Service (NPS) to be nationally significant in its 1995 Route 66 Special Resource Study and numerous buildings along Route 66 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Route 66 has been designated a National Scenic Byway in four states, including one segment that has been designated an All-American Road – the highest designation offered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Despite this historical significance, the Route 66 corridor and much of the idiosyncratic culture of independent businesses, kitschy roadside architecture, and unique attractions face economic decline and numerous preservation needs. Such risks prompted the National Trust for Historic Preservation to include Route 66 on the 2018 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. A permanent, long-term solution for preserving the legacy of Route 66, such as a national historic trail designation, would ensure this iconic symbol and its heritage will endure for future generations.

### Greater Chaco Landscape, New Mexico

Chaco Canyon was the center of a thriving society that flourished in the Four Corners region of the American Southwest from 850 to 1250 CE. The Chacoans and contemporaneous, affiliated Puebloan groups built hundreds of great house pueblo structures across the region and connected many of these places with kilometers of roads and other landscape features. This extensive ancient landscape is managed today by a variety of Federal, Tribal, and State agencies, as well as private owners. These places have deep spiritual and cultural importance to the Native peoples who are the descendants of the Chacoan people. Many sites associated with ancient Chacoan society are protected



Fig. 11: Greater Chaco Landscape, New Mexico (©JP 3)

within the boundaries of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Chaco Canyon, and several outlying great houses, are UNESCO World Heritage Sites that preserve the history and culture of the Pueblo people.

Despite the protections offered by Chaco Culture National Historical Park, however, many cultural and sacred sites lie outside the Park across the Greater Chaco Landscape and are currently threatened by the ravages of oil-gas development. Increased oil-gas development associated with the Mancos-Gallup Shale play in northwest New Mexico has been threatening fragile Chaco-affiliated cultural resources across a large portion of the San Juan Basin since late 2011.

The threat to sensitive cultural resources is heightened by several recent executive and secretarial orders from the current administration that aim to prioritize energy development on public lands by minimizing environmental and historic preservation considerations, which will further fragment and degrade the Greater Chaco Landscape. Rampant oil and gas development has resulted in the drilling of hundreds of new wells across the area, producing oil through the environmentally damaging process of fracking. In addition, hundreds of miles of access roads and pipelines now crisscross Greater Chaco and hundreds of hectares of land have been heavily impacted. Worst of all, the reasonably foreseeable development scenario for the Greater Chaco Landscape predicts up to 2000 new oil and gas wells and associated facilities over the next ten years. If this development happens, little will remain of Greater Chaco's fragile cultural landscape. Legislative efforts in the House and Senate, namely the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act (p. 1079/H. R. 2181), would provide a permanent withdrawal for approximately 316,000 acres of federal lands surrounding Chaco Canyon in recognition of the extensive and interconnected cultural resources across the landscape.

### Rassawek, Virginia

First recorded on John Smith's 1612 Map of Virginia, Rassawek was the historic capital of the Monacan Indian Nation and was the town to which affiliated Siouan villages paid tribute. Located at the confluence of the James and Rivanna Rivers in central Virginia, Rassawek contains deeply stratified archaeological deposits and is also a known burial site.



Fig. 12: Rassawek, Virginia (© Greg Werkheiser)

Rassawek is currently threatened by a water infrastructure project. The James River Water Authority, a partnership of Fluvanna and Louisa Counties, has planned a water intake, pump station, and pipeline that would damage several significant archaeological sites associated with Rassawek and the pre-Contact history of Virginia. These sites are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and they are of paramount significance for the Monacan Indian Nation.

The James River Water Authority has been heavily criticized for their decision to locate the project on Rassawek and for a variety of permitting and archaeological quality concerns. The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia has adopted a resolution asking for the project to be relocated, and several other state and local organizations have also spoken out. Rassawek has profound significance for the Monacan Indian Nation, other Virginia tribes, and the cultural patrimony of the United States.