

Economic Impact of Prospective UNESCO World Heritage Site Designation: Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks

Executive Summary

Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs was contracted by The Ohio History Connection to provide an economic impact assessment of the prospective designation of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks as Ohio's first United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site (WHS). E. Brent Lane, a Professor of Heritage Economics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was engaged as a consultant to assist with the project.

Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks is comprised of seven monumental earthwork enclosures that were constructed by the ancestors of modern American Indians during Ohio's Hopewell culture period (100 B.C.-A.D. 400).¹ These earthworks are located at three sites:

1. Newark Earthworks State Memorial (Licking County, Ohio)
2. Fort Ancient State Memorial (Warren County, Ohio)
3. Hopewell Cultural National Historical Park (Ross County, Ohio)

RESULTS

Research from other World Heritage Sites has shown that the economic benefits of inscription begins even before a site's formal listing as the galvanization of effort required in support of inscription raises regional public awareness and visitor interest. Formal inscription contributes significant further benefits as awareness is gradually generated among additional national and international markets. Similarly, this study predicts that a 75-100% increase over 2016 visitation to these sites is likely to occur within three years post designation. We estimate that 75% of these new visitors will be day visitors and 25% will be overnight visitors. A 100% increase in visitors will yield 181 new jobs in the economy and \$12.5 million in economic output to the three counties where the sites are located.

Total Across All Sites: 75% Increase in Day Visitors and 25% Increase in Overnight Visitors				
Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	150.2	\$3,432,484	\$4,801,338	\$8,618,520
Indirect Effect	13.3	\$507,967	\$877,019	\$1,683,627
Induced Effect	17.9	\$649,441	\$1,294,689	\$2,219,266
Total Effect	180.9	\$4,589,890	\$6,973,045	\$12,521,411

The experience of recently inscribed World Heritage Sites has demonstrated the importance of strategically incorporating site inscription efforts within regional economic landscapes and development planning. With a concerted effort to follow through on the recommendations in this report, brand and market the sites, and develop tourism assets to attract high impact, cultural heritage visitors, an increase of 150-200% in annual visitation is within reason post designation. Such strategies recognize that the number of visitors to the site can be less important than the quality of the visitor stream. Therefore, Ohio History Connection, regional stakeholders, and other partners are encouraged to utilize the brand value generated from World Heritage Designation to target high value, heritage tourists to maximize the economic benefits of current and projected site visitation.

The study identified the key characteristics of such high value visitors to be addressed by communities hoping to capitalize on the economic potential of World Heritage Site designation. Overnight visitors generate three times the economic impact of day visitors. Heritage tourists bring more disposable income in pursuit of an authentic visitor experience than an average overnight visitor.



PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

World Heritage Designation empowers communities near these sites to capture even greater economic value, but this can only occur through self-determination to develop a tourism industry cluster sufficient to capture heritage visitors and offer them a unique, authentic experience. As such, efforts must be made to support entrepreneurial tourism efforts such as bed and breakfast start-ups, local restaurants catering to heritage tourists, and complementary tourism experiences for these visitors.

NEXT STEPS

To make the most of World Heritage and to benefit residents and communities, local residents members must be included in discussion and planning. We suggest holding community-based meetings to share the results of this economic impact study as a first step toward maximizing the World Heritage designation for both communities and visitors.

¹ Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. UNESCO Tentative Lists. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5243/>

