
Effectively Managing the Section 106 Consultation Process

Complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires careful planning, consultation with interested parties, and weighing of project alternatives to avoid or minimize damage to significant historic properties.

If you are involved in planning or approving Service restoration, construction, or other projects that may effect cultural resources, the following points will help in navigating the Section 106 review process:



Initiate the Section 106 process early in project planning. This allows maximum flexibility in designing projects to avoid impacts to significant sites. Make certain to involve your Regional Historic Preservation Officer as early in the process as possible.



The Section 106 process requires open, good faith consultation with Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, State Historic Preservation Officers, and other interested parties. Remember that the Service is, in essence, a “trustee” of many historic and traditional cultural sites on its national wildlife refuges and national fish hatcheries that are important to local communities and tribes.



The Section 106 regulations, 36 CFR 800, do not mandate an outcome or a determination that all historic properties be preserved. Rather, the review process is collaborative, seeking the input and perspectives of various parties to ensure that reasonable alternatives have been carefully examined and that important historic and cultural values are protected. The final decision on proceeding with undertakings rests with the Federal agency (FWS). Federal agencies have successfully integrated the Section 106 process into their agency missions for over 25 years. Rarely is a project stopped due to unresolvable conflicts with cultural resources.



Overall responsibility for complying with Section 106 cannot be delegated. The Service is responsible for ensuring that the Section 106 process has been completed satisfactorily for agency undertakings. For large undertakings involving multiple Federal agencies, it is acceptable to designate a lead agency for complying with the National Historic Preservation Act.



The Steps in the Section 106 Process

Define an undertaking: Under the terms of Section 106, the Service must determine whether it has an undertaking that could result in changes in the character or use of historic resources which are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (see page 7 of this chapter for legal and regulatory definitions of Undertaking).

Define the area of potential effects: If the proposed activity does constitute an undertaking, the Service must identify the geographic extent of the area which may be impacted by the undertaking, in other words, the area of potential effects (APE) (see page 8 of this chapter for the definition of APE and guidelines to determining it).

Identify and evaluate historic properties: By reviewing background information, consultation with SHPO and others, and conducting field survey for the APE, the Service considers the presence of any buildings, structures, archaeological sites, or sacred or traditional sites. Previously unevaluated historic properties must be evaluated to determine their eligibility for listing to the National Register.

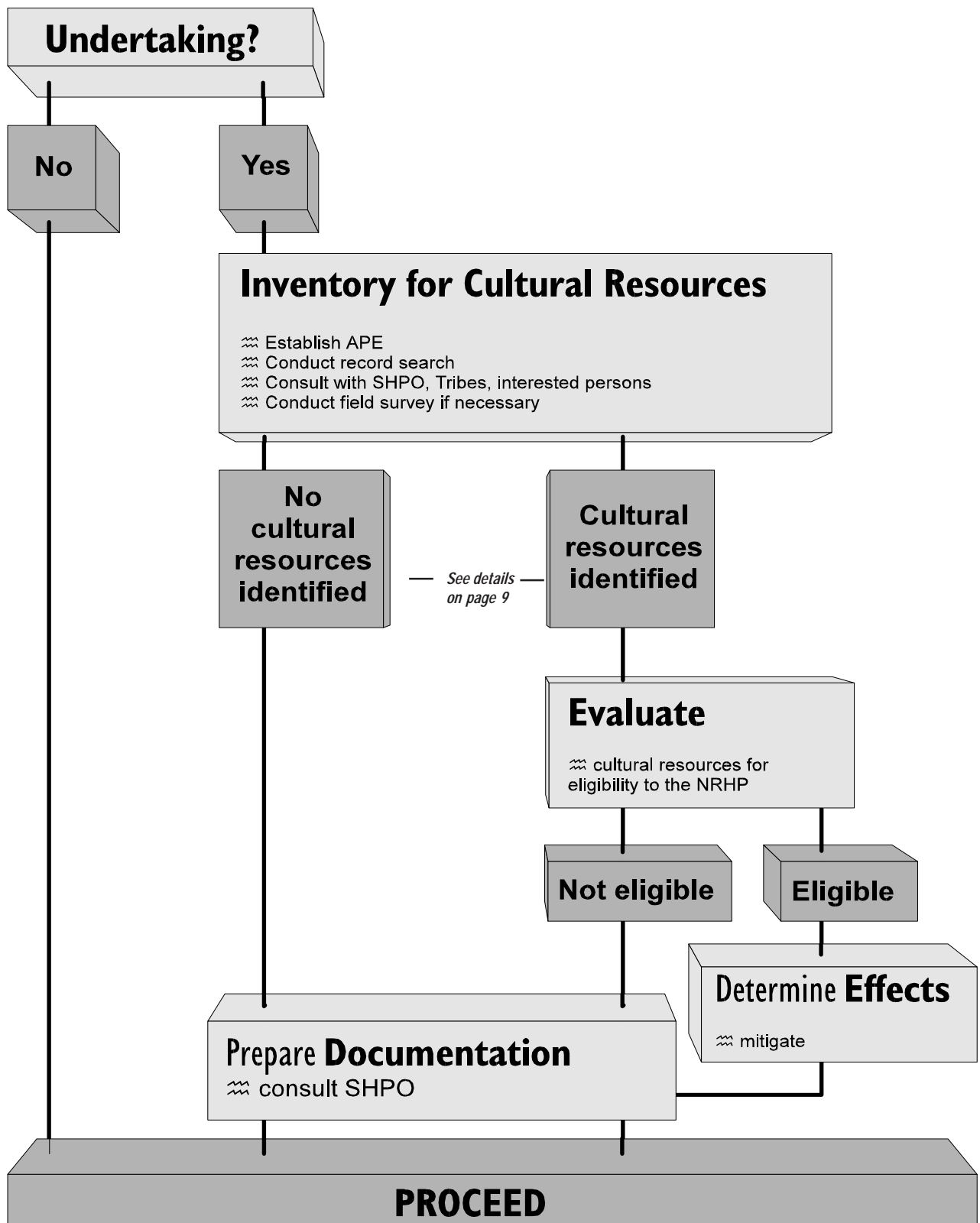
Assess effects: If listed or eligible properties are identified, the Service must assess the potential effects of the proposed undertaking on the resource. Working with SHPO and other interested parties, the Service determines that a) the undertaking will not effect historic properties-no effect, b) the undertaking will effect an historic property, but the effect will not be harmful- no adverse effect, or c) the undertaking will have a harmful effect on an historic property- adverse effect.

Consultation to Mitigate Adverse Effects: In the event of an adverse effect determination, the Service consults with SHPO and others to identify ways to mitigate the harmful effects of the undertaking. This consultation process should result in the development of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which identifies the steps the Service will take to reduce, avoid, or mitigate the adverse effect.

Council comment: The Service must provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) an opportunity to comment and participate in the development and signing of an MOA resulting from an adverse effect determination.

Proceed/Implement MOA: If the Service determines that historic properties in the APE will receive no effect or no adverse effect from the proposed undertaking, the project proceeds as planned. If an adverse effect determination has resulted in the development of an MOA, the Service may proceed with the undertaking under the terms of the MOA.

Diagram of the Section 106 Process





The Role of the Cultural Resources Staff in Section 106

Identification Process

Under NHPA, the Service must make a reasonable and good faith effort to identify historic properties before implementing an undertaking. The role of your cultural resources specialist(s) is to conduct this identification process and the subsequent evaluation, effect determination, and reporting in compliance with the law.

This responsibility rests squarely with the Federal Agency and cannot be delegated to another party except by written agreement. The agency can solicit the help of applicants, contractors, or others to carry out this work, but it is up to the agency to see that the work is carried out properly and to make appropriate use of the results.

Evaluation, Effect Determination, and Reporting

Upon completion of an **identification** effort in the Area of Potential Effects (APE), there are two possible outcomes.

