



**WORLD
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FUND**

**WORLD MONUMENTS FUND ANNOUNCES MORE THAN
\$15 MILLION USD FOR CLIMATE HERITAGE SOLUTIONS WITH
LAUNCH OF MAJOR INITIATIVE
AS WELL AS NEW PROJECTS SLATED FOR 2024**

New Initiatives Redouble Climate Adaptation Efforts and Prioritize Historic Preservation as a Key Defense against the Effects of Climate Change

Projects Include Rehabilitation of Traditional Nepalese Water Systems to Help Communities Threatened by Water Insecurity

New York, NY, January 17, 2024 — World Monuments Fund (WMF) today announced an ambitious set of projects to address the greatest threats facing humanity and cultural heritage sites around the globe, with a special emphasis on adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change. The creation of a new Climate Heritage Initiative, which builds upon years of WMF's work at the nexus of climate and heritage, comes as the latest figures by UNESCO estimate that one in six cultural heritage sites are threatened by climate change.

Aspects of WMF's Climate Heritage Initiative slated for the upcoming year include adapting historic gardens to changing climates and building a global network of coastal heritage sites to share expertise related to the challenges of sea level rise, storm surge, and erosion. Using heritage infrastructure to tackle water insecurity is another major priority, with projects to rehabilitate traditional water storage and conveyance systems in India, Nepal, and Peru.

Traditional Water Management Systems

The UN predicts that by 2050, urban water demand will increase by 80%, with 2.4 billion people in cities facing water scarcity.¹ Meanwhile, in rural communities, changes in seasonal rainfall and overextraction of groundwater are putting strain on water used for irrigation and grazing. Traditional water management strategies and infrastructure, some of which are at risk of being lost, can help communities adapt to environmental stresses in low-carbon ways.

- **Historic Water Systems of India** – Countless traditional water capture and storage tanks and cisterns across India have supplied reliable water for generations, but in recent decades, these systems have fallen into disuse. WMF conducted a country-wide survey of existing data on historic water bodies in 2023 before embarking on the first five sites—Rajaon ki Baoli, Taj Bawdi, Kundvav, Jaipur Baolis, and Wai Temples and Ghats—where rehabilitating historic infrastructure could have the most impact on the local community,

creating open spaces for community use. This project is undertaken in partnership with Tata Consultancy Services Foundation.

- **Hitis (Water Fountains) of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal** – Traditional water distribution systems composed of complex channels with often elaborately carved spouts continue to provide water for local communities across the Kathmandu Valley. Limited access to modern piped water compounded by its unreliability in the region makes the hitis an essential resource to large numbers of people. Unfortunately, rampant, uncontrolled development has often destroyed hiti infrastructure and interrupted the flow of water, while knowledge of maintenance techniques has also been lost in recent years. WMF will map and document select hitis and their infrastructure, enhance their capacity to provide reliable water, and provide key maintenance and conservation guidelines to be adopted by local governments in order to keep the water flowing. World Monuments Fund's work at the Hitis of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal has been made possible, in part, by support from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation; the U.S. Embassy Kathmandu; the Watch Committee of World Monuments Fund; American Express; Iron Mountain; and Tianaderrah Foundation / Nellie and Robert Gipson.
- **Yanacancha-Huaquis Cultural Landscape, Peru** – A traditional Andean system of dams, channels, and retention ponds to store runoff for the dry season has existed since before the Incas. But crucial maintenance of the systems was disrupted during the colonial period, as well as twentieth-century modernization that employed non-traditional technologies and materials, causing a large portion of this important water source to fall into disuse. WMF is working with the Instituto de Montaña to rehabilitate these systems, reviving traditional maintenance skills amongst Indigenous peasant communities to ensure reliable access to water to irrigate agricultural terraces and supply this essential resource for daily use. World Monuments Fund's work at the Yanacancha-Huaquis Cultural Landscape has been made possible, in part, by support from The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust and American Express.

Cultivating Resilience: Innovative Conservation Strategies for Historic Gardens

Parks and gardens are uniquely vulnerable to shifts in climate, whether from increased flooding or longer dry spells, invasive pests, or new plant diseases. Identifying and targeting immediate risks to historic gardens will allow us to preserve valuable urban green spaces that counter the urban heat island effect, mitigate pollution, and provide places for recreation that support mental and physical health.

WMF has commissioned a landscape analysis of historic garden management in the face of climate change. Alongside France's École Nationale Supérieure de Paysage (ENSP), the manager of the Potager du Roi at Versailles, WMF will create a global hub to research and disseminate best practices for climate adaptation at historic gardens, with models developed at the Potager du Roi applied and tested at partnering gardens around the world. World Monuments Fund's work at the Potager du Roi has been made possible, in part, by support from the Gerard B. Lambert Foundation, The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, American Express, and Tianaderrah Foundation / Nellie and Robert Gipson.

Coastal Connections

Coastal zones are among the most dynamic and volatile environments on the planet. They also include some of our most treasured heritage sites. Sharing knowledge with communities and organizations who face similar challenges is the best way to adapt, learn, and build resilience.

Established in partnership with English Heritage, Coastal Connections seeks to create a global network of heritage professionals tackling similar challenges and to develop a series of reliable resources for coastal sites around the world threatened by the impact of climate change. These will include seminars, case study briefs, technical guides, blogs, and research bibliographies. The project uses Hurst Castle in the UK, a 2022 World Monuments Watch site, as both a case study and a center for knowledge exchange. Work on Coastal Connections has been made possible, in part, by the Paul Mellon Fund for Architectural Preservation in Great Britain.

Greener Glasshouses

Iconic works of Victorian design and engineering, the Palm House and the Waterlily House at London's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew possess a nineteenth-century heating system that is both inefficient and expensive to maintain. Reducing their carbon footprint would bring the buildings in line with Kew's 2021 Sustainability Strategy, which seeks to be climate positive by 2030. Successfully making such important historic buildings carbon neutral would be a major achievement, and as such, they have the potential to become models for the energy transitions of working historic buildings—not just in the United Kingdom but throughout the world. Ensuring the legacy of the Palm House will also safeguard the critical biodiversity it shelters; many of its species are endangered or even extinct in the wild and are being studied by scientists for possible applications in medicine, materials, and sustainable food production.

- **The Palm House and Waterlily House, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK** – Strategies used to minimize the carbon footprint of Kew's historic Palm House and Waterlily House will include fabric conservation, upgrades to the structure itself, more efficient heating systems, and integration of sustainable geothermal energy to make the historic glasshouses carbon neutral. Piloting these techniques will serve as a testing ground for other historic buildings at Kew and can also serve as references for similar structures around the world. WMF's work at Kew Gardens has been made possible, in part, by support from Hélène Marie and Jake Shafran, The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, Nora McNeely Hurley and Manitou Fund, and James and Clare Kirkman.

Climate change has long been a leading priority for WMF, but with these new efforts, the organization is committed to further leveraging its global reach to expand its impact, identifying needs, and exploring opportunities for climate change adaptation to be integrated into all new projects going forward. This includes conducting a basic evaluation of climate-related threats at each site and developing recommendations for adaptation methods and solutions (e.g., stormwater management, green energy options, green space integration and passive cooling).

To reinforce this strategy, WMF is appointing a Senior Director of Climate Adaptation to oversee these efforts across the organization. Dr. Meredith Wiggins, an archaeologist and environmental researcher whose past work focused on the intersection between natural and built environments, will assume her position in February 2024.

“While the magnitude of the threat posed by climate change to societies around the world is widely recognized, its particular impact on cultural heritage remains understudied,” says Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of WMF. “Our team is working hard to address the threats facing some of our most treasured places—and explore potential solutions that traditional buildings and infrastructure hold out for us in the present. At a time when shifting weather patterns and natural disasters continue to strike communities and strain the built environment, we feel that we as heritage professionals have unique and valuable expertise to share about cultivating resilience through preservation.”

“There's also a lot of traditional wisdom that has been captured over generations,” said Dr. Rohit Jigyasu, Project Manager at the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), during a panel discussion on heritage and climate change hosted by WMF. “Communities have always adapted to their context, and their context has always given them this challenge of changing environmental conditions.... If you look at vernacular architecture, a lot of it is really designed to control the climate in a very beautiful way.”

Advocating for more research into the impact of climate change on heritage was a key aim of de Montlaur's recent attendance at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP28. Prior to the conference, WMF joined a global call upon parties at COP28 to include the culture sector at the heart of climate policy.

Additional Priority Projects in 2024

In addition to WMF's Climate Heritage Initiative, several other priority projects will kick off in 2024. These projects cluster around the themes of crisis response and inclusive heritage, two of WMF's key priorities. Lastly, WMF will be continuing work at two legacy Global Heritage Fund (GHF) projects following the strategic affiliation between the two organizations last year. Kuanghan Li and Santiago Giraldo, formerly of GHF, have joined WMF and will continue managing these projects.

Crisis Response

- **Antakya Earthquake Heritage Sites - Antakya, Türkiye** – The ancient city of Antakya (formerly known as Antioch) was among the places most affected by the devastating earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in February of 2023. Following a scientific expedition to better understand the conservation needs of the city's historic fabric, WMF has identified two buildings— Antioch Greek Orthodox Church (also known as St. Paul's Church) and the Antioch Synagogue—upon which to concentrate its disaster recovery efforts. The multifaith composition of the sites is in keeping with Antakya's proud tradition of diversity and tolerance, which stretches from ancient times to the present day. WMF's work at Antakya Earthquake Heritage Sites has been made possible, in part, by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) and the U.S. Mission to Türkiye.

- **Teacher's House - Kyiv, Ukraine** – As part of the organization's broader efforts to safeguard Ukrainian heritage sites amid Russian attacks, WMF will restore the glass dome of Teacher's House, a Kyiv landmark that hosted the first parliament of the Ukrainian Republic in 1917. When rockets targeted an intersection just a few hundred meters from the building in October of 2022, the resulting shockwave knocked out the Teacher's House's doors and windows, including the building's iconic glass dome. WMF and its partners have already installed protective covering to prevent water damage to the exposed interior and will now replace the more than 500 m² of lost glass. WMF's work at Teacher's House has been made possible, in part, by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) and the U.S. Embassy Kyiv.
- **Phnom Bakheng - Siem Reap, Cambodia** – Historians believe that Phnom Bakheng was once the principal temple of the Angkor region, constructed over two centuries before Angkor Wat. Since 2008, WMF has been working alongside Cambodia's APSARA National Authority and UNESCO to develop and implement a conservation plan from the site, undertaking major restoration work to protect the site from water damage and address structural stability. The new phase of work will build on conservation efforts already underway on the western half of the complex and include a new certification program for experienced technicians. WMF's work at Phnom Bakheng has been made possible, in part, by the U.S. Department of State's Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) with almost \$4 million of financial support since 2004; the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust; Anonymous; Denise Gwyn Ferguson; Wendy and Robert Brandow; and Nora McNeely Hurley and Manitou Fund.

Inclusive Heritage

- **Fabric Synagogue and Jewish Heritage of Timișoara - Timișoara, Romania** – Once home to a large and thriving Jewish community, the city of Timișoara is looking to bring visibility to this underrecognized aspect of its past after being named European Capital of Culture in 2023. The local Jewish community and the municipality aim to turn the Fabric Synagogue, an extraordinary but long-abandoned house of worship, into a cultural center with the potential to revitalize the surrounding neighborhood. The project comes as WMF and UNESCO embark upon a major global initiative to catalogue Jewish heritage sites, announced in September of 2023. WMF's work at the Fabric Synagogue of Timișoara has been made possible, in part, by the David Berg Foundation and WMF's Jewish Heritage Program Endowment.
- **Bears Ears National Monument - Utah, United States** – A breathtaking landscape containing dwellings, traditional sites, and rock imagery dating back thousands of years, the area comprising Bears National Monument has long been the sacred land of several Tribes in the area. WMF is supporting efforts led by Indigenous communities and public lands managers to improve site management and enhance the visitor experience with lessons about respectful visitation and the significance of this rich living landscape. A new stage of the project will use Indigenous methods and stories to create more sustainable visitor management for the Sand Island Petroglyph Panel, a collection of rock imagery

that covers 100 yards of cliff face and is one of the monument's most-visited places. World Monuments Fund's work at Bears Ears National Monument has been made possible, in part, by support from Butler Conservation and by Nora McNeely Hurley and Manitou Fund.

- **Old Fourah Bay College - Freetown, Sierra Leone** – Old Fourah Bay College was the first Western-style university in sub-Saharan Africa and is a living testament to idealism and the power of education. Established in 1827, it produced many leaders of the independence movements in West Africa that helped end colonialism. But war and fire have left the historic building damaged and disused. WMF has been involved in its protection since 2021 and will soon enter Phase 2 of its plan, which includes major work to stabilize the building while conserving its historic fabric so that the building can once again be used. World Monuments Fund's work at Old Fourah Bay College has been made possible by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) and the U.S. Embassy Freetown.

GHF Legacy Projects

In 2023, following the strategic affiliation between GHF and World Monuments Fund (WMF), WMF took on Ciudad Perdida and Dali Dong Village as part of its project portfolio.

- **Ciudad Perdida - Colombia** – The remains of a remarkable pre-Hispanic city built by the Tayrona civilization around the seventh century CE were hidden from view by dense jungle overgrowth for four centuries before being rediscovered by looters in the 1970s, after which it was opened as an archaeological park managed by the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History in 1981. In 2019, GHF completed LiDAR scanning of the area funded by NatGeo TV, providing crucial tools to help archaeologists better understand the ancient structures and document future conservation efforts. GHF also partnered with the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History in 2008 and has worked closely with them on conservation, cultivating site management capacity, and developing locally managed visitor infrastructure, ensuring that tourism to Ciudad Perdida is sustainable. In 2023, WMF added Ciudad Perdida to its project portfolio after it announced a strategic affiliation with GHF and will continue work at the site under its own steam.
- **Dali Village - Guizhou Province, China** – Primarily home to members of the Dong ethnic group, Dali Village is a remarkable example of traditional vernacular architecture within a rural cultural landscape. But as a lack of economic opportunities increasingly drew young people to the cities, the survival of the village—and the craft knowledge necessary to maintain its iconic buildings—was in peril. In 2012, GHF began work documenting and preserving the village's stunning wooden buildings, work that will now continue under WMF. Another key element of the project is the maintenance of local textile traditions via the creation of a women's weaving cooperative, an effort that combines cultural preservation and economic development.

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About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places to enrich lives and build mutual understanding. For more than 55 years, working at more than 700 sites in 112 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through the World Monuments Watch—a biennial, nomination-based program—WMF uses cultural heritage conservation to empower communities and improve human well-being. In partnership with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide.

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