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Michael Ann Williams

Western Kentucky University, michael.williams@wku.edu

Kristen Clark

Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, Western Kentucky University


Eleanor Haskin

Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, Western Kentucky University

Rachel Haberman

Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, Western Kentucky University

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Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of Mammoth Cave National Park: A Progress Report

Michael Ann Williams¹, Kristen Clark¹, Eleanor Hasken¹, and Rachel Haberman¹

¹ Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, Western Kentucky University

Abstract

In fall 2015, the Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology at Western Kentucky University and the Kentucky Folklife Program embarked on an ethnographic overview and assessment of Mammoth Cave National Park, funded by the National Park Service and co-directed by Dr. Kate Hudepohl and Brent Björkman. The overall project will focus both on amassing and accounting for existing archival materials relating to the ethnography of the Mammoth Cave region, as well as conducting new ethnographic documentation of both tangible and intangible aspects of the culture of traditionally associated communities within the region. Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Field Methods, Applied Anthropology, Video Production, and Cultural Conservation have all been (or will be) engaged in various projects related to this grant. This panel will begin with an overview of the project by department head, Dr. Michael Ann Williams, and then will focus specifically on the cultural landscape survey being conducted this semester by graduate students enrolled in the Cultural Conservation course. The study area encompasses twelve USGS quads containing or bordering Mammoth Cave National Park. Six teams of students are studying two quads each. Each team will review all the records currently on file with the Kentucky Heritage Council, as well as other archival materials available at Mammoth Cave and other repositories. The students will conduct windshield surveys, document new structures and sites, update survey forms, and prepare study lists of potential National Register properties. Ultimately each team will prepare a summary report of cultural landscape resources for each quad and a final report will draw conclusions for the study area as a whole. After the project overview is presented by Dr. Williams, three graduate students will summarize the current findings for each of the twelve USGS quads and another student will provide a summary of the project accomplishments to date. Other team members will be available to provide answers to specific questions about individual structures and sites and the project's progress.