



Foundation Document Overview

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Georgia



Contact Information

For more information about the *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area Foundation Document*, contact: chat_superintendent@nps.gov or (678) 538-1200 or write to:

Superintendent, Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, 1978 Island Ford Parkway, Sandy Springs, GA 30350

Purpose



CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA preserves and protects the natural and cultural resources of the 48-mile Chattahoochee River corridor, from Buford Dam to Peachtree Creek, for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.



Significance

Significance statements express why Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Running along the Brevard Fault Zone, one of the oldest and most stable river channels in North America, the park's 48-mile river corridor features steep, rugged palisades, rocky shoals, sheer rock faces, and exposed geologic features that provide remarkable visual scenery.
- At the intersection of the southern piedmont and mountain habitats, the park is an ecological oasis within a densely populated region and contains more than 950 species of plants and a diverse assemblage of wildlife.
- Nestled in metropolitan Atlanta, the park features America's first designated national water trail.
- Cultural resources along the Chattahoochee River represent the continuum of human interaction over the past 10,000 years that is reflected in archeological sites, historic structures, and cultural landscapes that owe their locations to the natural features of the river corridor.
- Located in a narrow section of the upper Chattahoochee watershed, the river serves as the lifeblood of local and downstream communities, supporting a wide array of recreational, ecological, and human uses.
- The park constitutes an important outdoor recreation resource to an urban population numbering 5.7 million people in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Its waters and lands provide a diverse and abundant variety of outdoor recreation opportunities such as hiking, nature viewing, paddling, bicycling, boating, and fishing. These experiences are further enhanced by the park's scenic qualities, as well as opportunities for natural solitude and seclusion within relatively undisturbed forests, wetlands, bluffs, ravines, and open water areas.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Geology.** The Brevard Fault and the region's crystalline rock are responsible for the park's geological features, including the stability of the river's channel and its ridges, palisades, and cliffs.
- **Ecology.** The park provides critical terrestrial and aquatic habitats for many species of plants and animals. It is a rest and feeding stop along the flyways of important migratory bird species. The park is an important cold water fishery. Within the boundaries of the national recreation area are wetlands; several different types of botanical habitats; and many species of butterflies, salamanders, frogs, birds, and turtles.
- **Recreation.** A heavily used year-round recreation resource, the Chattahoochee River includes a diverse array of both land- and water-based activities. The park provides opportunities for adventure, solitude, boating, fishing, hiking, trail connectivity (to local communities), and connecting with nature. Anglers flock here in search of brown and rainbow trout, shoal bass, and striped bass, making it a fine urban tailwater fishery. Boaters, too, value the Chattahoochee River—in kayaks and canoes, tubes, and motorboats. A large number of outdoor enthusiasts visit to cycle, test their orienteering skills, join an educational program, hike on their own, or escape from the surrounding suburban scene.



- **Cultural Resource Complexes.** Within the boundaries of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area are many historic structures, archeological resources, and cultural sites, including the Allenbrook House and associated mill ruins, Hewlett Lodge and its immediate associated structures, rock shelters, Sope Creek paper mill ruins, the historic Hyde Farm, American Indian occupation sites, and several historic bridges (Settles, Jones, Rogers).
- **Ethnographic and Archeological Resources.** Fish weirs and nutting holes, gold rush sites, and Civil War encampments can be found in various locations within the national recreation area boundary.
- **Museum and Archival Collections.** Park collections include archives and American Indian, Civil War, and Hyde Farm artifacts (currently stored for Cobb County by written agreement).
- **The Chattahoochee River.** This includes uplands (nonwetlands in the park), flat water, whitewater shoals, and tributaries. The Chattahoochee River is the principal hydrologic feature of the park. The Secretary of the Interior has designated the river as the first national water trail. The river has been a part of the social and cultural life of neighboring peoples for the last 10,000 years.
- **Scenic Qualities.** The Chattahoochee River, with its steep, rugged palisades, rocky shoals, and diverse flora and fauna, contrasts with the surrounding Atlanta metropolitan area. The seasonal changes in vegetation provide rich variation and contrast throughout the year. As the tree canopy begins to fill in throughout the spring, the river appears to narrow. The views extend to previous periods in time through the remnants of historic mills and other sites including remainders of the Civil War. The river is a ribbon of green and blue in an urban landscape, a visual reprieve from the built environment of modern life.

Description

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area encompasses a 48-mile stretch of the Chattahoochee River and its bed between Buford Dam and the confluence with Peachtree Creek, as well as an authorized boundary including 10,000 acres of adjoining lands. In addition, the area of national significance includes a 2,000-foot river corridor and the 100-year floodplain. Approximately 5,000 acres of the park's authorized lands are under NPS ownership, as well as more than 2,000 acres of riverbed and tributaries. The park's 15 units run along the Brevard Fault Zone, a 320-mile-long geographic feature that forms the dividing line between the Appalachian Mountains and the Piedmont Plateau. Because the river is confined by the Brevard Fault, the river channel is one of the most stable and oldest channels in the United States.

The Chattahoochee River water is usually clear and very cold because the water enters the national recreation area from the bottom of Lake Sidney Lanier at Buford Dam, which is more than 200 feet deep at that location, where virtually no warming sunlight ever penetrates.

The park contains a rich assemblage of natural resources and evidence of a long history of human use, including approximately 200 archeological and historic sites. Beavers and muskrats live in burrows along the riverbank; foxes and raccoons make their homes in the hardwood forests; and chipmunks, squirrels, and rabbits are abundant. Turtles, snakes, salamanders, lizards, frogs, and toads are found in all the natural habitats along the river.

Cultural resources along the Chattahoochee River represent every period of human interaction with the natural environment over the past 10,000 years. The corridor contains prehistoric rock shelters, fish weirs, Indian occupation/campsites, Civil War earthworks, historic bridges, historic residences, farm buildings, and mill ruins.

