

**SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT
OCMULGEE NATIONAL MONUMENT
FY 1998**

Fiscal year 98 was a very productive one for Ocmulgee. The park received some very good press coverage and got some well-deserved local recognition from several sources. Some progress was made on a couple of major issues facing the park.

A long term need for the park was answered this year with the installation of attraction signs along Interstate 75 and 16. The superintendent worked with a reporter on the Macon Telegraph staff and Representative Chamblis to raise public awareness of the lack of signs. Representative Chamblis and many others requested the GA DOT to provide the signs. Signs went in just before the I 75 -- I 475 spit and at the I 16 -- I 75 spit, to direct visitors to the park. New signs were also added on I 16 just before the exit for the park.

There were two major external issues that continued to consume a large part of the superintendent's time, the Fall Line Freeway and the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway. Both of these issues were very active with major activities related to them taking place.

The Fall Line Freeway

The Fall Line Freeway issue was very active with numerous meetings taking place. The National Park Service was officially named as a cooperating agency for the purpose of reviewing the EIS. Superintendent David was named as the point of contact for NPS on the project. There was one official meeting with all the federal cooperating agencies, including the FWS, EPA, and COE. There was also a well-attended public meeting held in January. There were to be other public meetings later in the year that did not take place. Discussions continued with the Creeks and other Native Americans on the east and west boundaries of the Traditional Cultural Property. The Fall Line issue led to a three day multipage newspaper story on the park, the Creeks, and the highway. The story was well done and was turned into a "Newspaper in Education" supplement that we decided to carry as a sales item. The park continues to receive many questions about the Fall Line and its route. It continues to be a very hotly debated local issue. The National Park and Conservation Association chose the issue as one of the major threats to the Parks nationwide with a story in their magazine.

The Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway

The Greenway became more of a reality with the city receiving River Care 2000 funding from the State of Georgia. Deputy Regional Director Dan Brown represented the Regional Director at a July 27th signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU placed the NPS as cooperator on the Greenway. Also in attendance were the Governor of Georgia and representatives of the USFWS, Georgia DNR, City of

Macon, Bibb County, Macon Water Authority and the Trust for Public Lands. Discussions continued on the possibilities of a second entrance into Ocmulgee as part of the Greenway. The interest has changed from the area of the Bibb Mill/Coliseum to the possibility of building a foot and bike bridge across the river. The desire is to link up the park with Central City Park. Issues related to security, interpretation, and fees remain but none of those appear to be insurmountable. Discussions also continued on the possibility of land that is acquired as part of the Greenway coming under the management of the NPS. A boundary adjustment would be necessary for that to occur. Since the area in question is part of the "Old Fields" and believed to be part of the original 2000 acres initially envisioned for the park, the acquisition seems to be a very worthwhile pursuit

General Administration

FY 98 Budget

ONPS	\$522,200
ONPS No Year	37,200
VIP	1,000
Cyclic	
GTM step study	13,900
YCC Program	8,900
Roof repair	177,800
Equipment Replacement	
Bush hog	3,000
Tractor	18,600
Ice maker	1,900
Storm Damage	
Hurricane Earl	8,213
Fee Enhancement	
Rehab AV	25,000
Hazardous Waste	
Remove Underground Tanks	68,000
Emergency Funding	
Storm Drain Damage	12,000
HVAC Compressor	10,000

All accounts were within budget. The park's aging infrastructure was beginning to show this year with the opening of the hole in the storm drain by the Great Temple Mound and the breakdown of the HVAC compressor. Remnants of hurricane Earl came through September 3 knocking down numerous trees throughout the park. The park was able to stay within budget and carry over a small amount for next year due to the L.E. position being vacant most of the year. Being short staffed continues to have a deteriorating effect on the staff. Employees have to wear many hats and to put in long hours just to keep up. The park continues to provide a quality experience for the visitor. However, it is due to the high quality of staff that they are willing to put in the extra time and effort needed to continue that level of service.

Personnel

The Law Enforcement Ranger position was filled twice this year. The first person came in November 97 then left in March 98. The position was refilled in September 98. There were four new seasonals hired throughout the year, three seasonal rangers and one seasonal maintenance worker. There were two seasonals and one term employee who had their appointments converted for another period. The park participated in the YCC program for the first time since 1986. Five students were hired for the eight week program.

Travel and Training

Park staff attended training courses to maintain certifications and get updates for law enforcement, ANCS cataloging, and contract warrants. Division chiefs and the superintendent attended their respective division chief's conferences and various superintendent's conferences.

Master Ranger Flowers presented sessions at the Georgia SHPO workshop.

Property

Region provided funds to upgrade the parks computers so that all computers are Pentiums. The network was installed and Internet access was provided for all employees.

Property was properly maintained. Inventories were made and all equipment was properly accounted for. Records were updated.

Resource Management

Park Archeologist Abbott performed numerous shovel test on the "triangle" across from the main entrance. He did not find any prehistoric materials, however he did find some historic fill material. He also did testing of the holes that were dug for the new

interpretive signs. Most of those were also found to be in areas that were previously disturbed, possibly during the excavations of the 1930's.

Floating tiles were acquired from Robins Air Force Base. We hope to be able to use these in reopening the river trail. The trail has been closed since the 94 flood due to the change in hydrology. An area that was a creek is now a swamp due to water being backed up. We have requested assistance from region to look at what actions to take to return this area to its pre flood condition.

Three sides of the Lamar boundary were cleared. In addition we were able to identify and clear most of the boundary that lies north of Emery Highway. Due to the swampy conditions and difficulty traversing, much of that boundary was not well marked.

Maintenance

The Visitor Center roof continued to leak. DSC drew up plans to replace the roof with a raised roof structure with external down spouts. The SHPO found that plan to have a negative effect on the historic appearance, and would not sign off on that proposal. After negotiations, it was decided to proceed with another option. This will involve installing another membrane type roof but avoiding the internal drain system. A contract was signed in FY 98. Construction will begin in FY99.

The addition of a YCC program this year allowed us to clear large sections of the boundary fence. The five person work crew was able to work well together and accomplish a great deal. The program was very successful. We plan to continue with another YCC program next year.

A large hole opened along the road near the steps leading to the Opelofa below the Great Temple Mound. It was discovered that part of the drainage system for the road and parking lot had caved in causing the soil to give way. Additional funds were acquired to repair the drain.

The main compressor on the HVAC system broke down. It was not possible to replace the unit with a new one. Therefore, the unit had to be rebuilt in place. Additional funds were acquired from region for the repairs. The visitor center was without air conditioning for over a week with temperatures in the building reaching into the high 90s.

Public Use

Visitation for FY 98 was 120,816. This was a 6.2% decrease from FY 97. This was mainly due to drops in visitation at two major events, the Indian Celebration and Earth

Day. Both events were hampered by rainy weather. The extreme high temperatures in the summer may have also had a negative effect.

Interpretation

There were two major changes in the park's interpretative media made this year. In March the premier of the new film "Ocmulgee Mysteries of the Mounds" was held at the Visitor Center. The film was funded by the National Society of Colonial Dames of the State of Georgia. They also hosted and paid for the reception. Numerous local dignitaries and Deputy Regional Director Dan Brown were present for the unveiling. The local Board of Education TV station was presented a copy of the film and has continued to show it on a regular basis. The park received funds from the fee demonstration program to upgrade to a big screen TV and other items to improve the overall av program and auditorium. The project is still underway and will be completed in FY99.

The second media change occurred in September. The park installed four new interpretive panels, at the Visitor Center, Great Temple Mound, Trading Post, and the Funeral Mound. The panel at the Funeral Mound includes a touch panel that has a reproduction of the "sun disc" and "little man." We understand that this is the first such panel installed in any NPS site.

The Indian Celebration this year had increased visitation by the 4th graders, but reduced visitation on the weekend. This year all the schools were invited to attend at the same time instead of only Bibb schools in the morning. This resulted in over 5,000 students here at the same time. The weather, competition from the Robins AFB air show, and poor coverage by the local media had the weekend numbers down. Funds for FY 99 Celebration, and thus the Celebration its self, are in danger.

Lantern Light tours had 978 visitors. Earth Day visitation was down due to weather. The Discovery Lab was used by over 3,000 students. We continue to seek funding to upgrade that facility. An exhibit was installed at the Macon Mall to raise awareness of the park's resources. The Ocmulgee University was developed this year in cooperation with Georgia College and State University.

There has been a decline in school groups coming to the park. The lack of personal services for the groups is felt to be one of the contributing factors. The lack of a full time interpreter means many groups get a very brief introduction to the park and not much more. The increase in other sites to visit in the area and their increase in programs offered is also a contributing factor. Many schools have a limited number of trips and they have a larger number of choices on where to go. We plan to fill a new interpretive position in FY 99. That position will assist in expanding our interpretive offerings and working with schools to bring the students back.

Law Enforcement

The major law enforcement incident in FY 98 involved the investigation of theft from the donation box by a seasonal employee. In addition there was investigation of use by the park by a possible cult group. The staff checked out a possible environmental crime on the Archeological Conservancy property adjacent to the park. Regular patrols were held. With only one commissioned employee on staff most of the year patrols and other law enforcement activities were limited.

Land Acquisition

The Greenway effort continues to be a possible method for the acquisition of additional lands for the park. The Memorandum of Understanding that was signed this year stated that the NPS would lease and manage any lands that were acquired, if they were inside the authorized boundaries of the park. The regional office has given its support to the park for pursuing a boundary change to include those lands being examined for the Greenway. The areas being considered are lands that are part of the "Ocmulgee Old Fields." They are believed to be part of the original 2,000 acres referred to in the 1934 Authorization. Further action has been delayed due to the Fall Line Freeway. The lands being considered are in the direct path of the Eisenhower Parkway Extension. Discussions are continuing. This acquisition along with the Archeological Conservancy land would give the park a land link between the main unit and the Lamar Mounds unit. The acceptance of the Conservancy land is also being delayed until the outcome of the Fall Line route.

Community Relations

Community relations continued to be positive. There was good support shown for, and attention paid to, the park over the interstate sign issue. The local paper ran an editorial on the issue, calling it a "no-brainer." The three day newspaper coverage on the park and the Fall Line Freeway was excellent and did a good job of presenting the various sides of the issue. While the Fall Line Freeway issue continued to be a divisive issue, the Greenway succeeded in bringing many divergent groups together. Superintendent David presented programs about the park to numerous civic and other organizations. He also continued to represent the park on numerous organizations including serving on the Board of Directors for the Keep Macon-Bibb County Beautiful Commission, and the Macon-Bibb County Convention and Visitor's Bureau. Other organizations include the Tourism Development Committee, Macon Arts Alliance, the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway Committee, and the Chamber of Commerce. In addition the Superintendent was voted as Vice President of the Kiwanis Club of Macon.

The park received two awards this year for its efforts in assisting custodial worker Martha Chapman. The park employees made an extra effort to help Martha qualify for a Habitat for Humanities house. For that effort, and the day to day work with Martha, the park was recognized as the "Small Employer of the Year" by the Mayor's Commission for Disability Issues and as the "Employer of the Year" by the Deaf Awareness Committee.

Relations with the various Native American Nations and individuals remained strong. The park was visited by several members of the Creek National Council and members of the governing boards of several of the Independent Tribal Towns. Contact was also made with a Creek artist group in hopes of acquiring more items to sell in the gifts shop. Contacts with various groups of Cherokee and Seminole were continued, both to help with the Indian Celebration, and to discuss NAGPRA issues.

The park hosted the statewide meeting of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. An evening banquet was held under a tent in front of the VC.

Cooperating Association

The Ocmulgee National Monument Association took in \$48,783 in FY 98. This was a 25% decrease from FY 97. The major reason for the decrease appears to be the drop in school group visitation. Those groups normally will spend a fair amount in the book shop. Despite the reduction, the association still donated \$17,799 to park programs. Their percentage of return to the Service is usually one of the highest of all the Cooperating Associations across the country. Patty Ellis continues as the business manager and is a very strong supporter of park activities.