

636/D-45

**CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT FY 1997**

During FY 97 there were major changes in personnel at the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CHAT). Superintendent Marvin Madry retired and was replaced by Superintendent Suzanne Lewis. Long time Chief Ranger Ken Garvin transferred to the Southeast Regional Office and Sheryl Canada transferred to CHAT and began to rebuild the Administration Division. William J. Carroll was appointed as the Assistant Superintendent.

Under the leadership of Superintendent Lewis, the park refocused its limited resource management staff on adjacent land use issues. Open space surrounding the park is being developed quickly and park staff is taking a more assertive role in monitoring land use adjacent to park boundaries.

These efforts include: establishing a moratorium on land exchanges which may be detrimental to the long term health of park resources, drafting new legislation which increases the size of the park, partnering with The Trust for Public Lands to increase funding for land acquisition, and forging strong relationships with other groups concerned with the condition of the Chattahoochee River watershed.

As a part of this effort the park initiated the development of a Water Resource Management Plan.

In May, the park initiated a fee demonstration program. A \$2.00 daily and \$20.00 annual parking fee was established for all NPS parking areas. In an effort to reduce costs the park entered into a contract with Eastern National which began on October 1, 1997, to collect, count and deposit the fees.

The fee demonstration program authorizes the park to keep 80% of all revenue collected. These funds are to be spent on reducing Maintenance and Resource Management backlog and improving Interpretative and Educational efforts. The park staff identified 27 specific projects with an emphasis on trail maintenance and rehabilitation. Work on high priority projects will begin in 1998.

In fiscal year 1997 the park collected \$220,000 in fee revenue.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

The division experienced many personnel changes this FY. The long time Administrative Officer transferred and the position was filled by Sheryl Canada from the Western Archeological & Conservation Center in Tucson, AZ.

Two of the division's three support positions were terminated due to performance issues which seriously impact the workloads.

A major effort was undertaken to upgrade the division's computer equipment. Copy and fax machines were also upgraded.

MAINTENANCE DIVISION

Maintenance personnel performed many projects resulting in improved facilities and well maintained appearance of park resources.

Outward Bound, in partnership with the park, assisted in rehabilitating five rooms and the lounge area in the dormitory. A new dock and trail bridge was constructed at Sope Creek pond. Vegetation was eradicated at the Sope Creek Ruins.

An old and unsafe overlook was removed and a new dock constructed at the Island Ford unit. The trail around the Island Ford pond received extensive maintenance. The entire Island Ford trail system was cleaned.

Fee stations were designed and installed at all applicable units.

A selective herbicide was used to eradicate kudzu throughout the park.

The double wide Information Trailer located in the Paces Mill unit was removed and the area landscaped.

Extensive repairs were completed on housing unit #4. The storage area and carport were renovated.

During the month of April, major storm damage was sustained at the Island Ford and Powers Island units.

The exterior of the Maintenance and Ranger buildings located at the Island Ford unit were cleaned, scraped, caulked, and repainted.

At the Medlock Bridge unit the picnic area was refurbished and the boat ramp was re-supported with rip rap.

The Headquarters building located at Island Ford was relandscaped and burglar bars were installed on the windows.

At the Johnson Ferry North unit a trail bridge was removed and placed in another location.

Maintenance personnel worked with Boy Scouts to remove one trail bridge and replace it with a new one at the Island Ford unit. The Boy Scouts also planted numerous new trees throughout the park.

Maintenance personnel worked with Southeast Regional Office personnel in conjunction with the move to their new offices.

The storage barn at the Ranger Operation Center area received facer board and gutter repairs.

The Superintendent's office in the Headquarters building at Island Ford was patched and painted. New entrance gates were installed at both the north and south parking areas at Cochran Shoals.

At the Whitewater unit the parking area was relandscaped and new split rail was installed.

At the Gold Branch unit a large empty structure was removed and the area revegetated.

The security room located in the Operations building at Island Ford was extensively damaged when the sprinkler system was falsely engaged. The drywall ceiling was replaced and new light fixtures installed.

New orientation maps were installed in the bulletin boards at all units.

Maintenance personnel removed hazardous trees throughout the park. The Cochran Shoals Fitness Trail received particular attention.

The overlooks located at Cochran Shoals were rehabilitated.

Seventeen picnic tables were repaired at the Island Ford, Cochran Shoals and Palisades Unit.

The fitness trail at Cochran Shoals was completely resurfaced. Two new culverts were installed.

The entrance area and a short portion of the entrance road located at Jones Bridge was prepared and a new sod surface was put in place. Wood chips were placed on a portion of the trail.

A new regulatory signing system was designed and installed at the Cochran Shoals Fitness Trail. Major emphasis was placed on Bicycles.

The overflow parking area at Columns Drive was resurfaced with M-10.

Ten picnic tables at Abbotts Bridge were anchored to ensure vandals would not remove from park site.

Quarters #5 was prepared for new occupant. Ceiling and bathrooms were painted. New window coverings were installed, and a door was repaired. Other minor repairs were performed.

Cyclic projects Completed - Upgrade security and Fire Systems
- Rehab Activity Trail

- Special Projects Completed (Not Funded)**
- Rehab Seasonal Quarters
 - Hazardous Tree Removal
 - Overlook Stabilization (CS)
 - Boat Ramp Island Ford
 - Outward Bound Projects
 - Regulatory signs (CS)
 - Relocate Bridge (J.F.N.)
 - Fill in Well Allenbrook
 - Rehab Entrance Jones Bridge
 - Medlock Boat Ramp
 - Remove Trailer Paces Mill

- Special Projects (Funded)**
- Eradication of Kudzu
 - Rehab Fitness Trail
 - Install Fee Stations
 - Dwelling Removal (G.B.)
 - Storm Damage
 - Rehab Overflow Parking (CS)
 - Rehab Roadway Abbotts Bridge

A donation of \$3,000.00 was provide to the park by the Atlanta Running Club for the continued maintenance of the activity trail.

Ground mowing continued to be labor intense during the summer months with 1216 acres mowed from April through August, 1997.

RANGER ACTIVITIES

Interpretation/Outreach

The year following the 1996 Olympic Games, the park recorded 2,957,698 visits. Personal contacts in interpretation rose to more than 12,000. There were fifteen private and public elementary schools, large groups of home schoolers, and numerous scout and summer school children participating in on-site studies of park resources. The success of these learning activities is reflected in the number of teachers who feel confident enough to utilize park resources and conduct programs themselves. Off-site programs included "Georgia's Native Americans," presented to fourth and eighth grade history classes.

The neighborhood homeowners associations near CRNRA's Geosphere Environmental Education Training Center are informed in writing of all park events. Copies of press releases are forwarded to these associations also. This information is often included in the associations newsletters. The park's environmental education coordinator telephones or meets with neighborhood leaders routinely to maintain good relations with park neighbors.

Through CRNRA's partnership with the Georgia PTA, the park is able to reach a large segment of the communities surrounding the park.

Every effort is made to speak to community organizations such as garden clubs, service groups, parent organizations, etc.

Twenty volunteers lead guided walks in the fall and spring. These walks occurred in various park units and cover both natural and cultural resources.

Six "traditional" campfire programs were enjoyed by nearly 600 persons.

Information Publications

Eastern National sales in 1997 fell about 40% from the previous year, but still represented a significant increase over pre-Olympic years. In addition, part of the sales decline could be attributed to the closing of the paces Mill Visitor Contact Station and a decrease in the number of teacher workshops at the park's environmental education center.

Environmental Education

The Geosphere Environmental Education Training Center at CRNRA continues to expand and strengthen partnerships, volunteer training and environmental education programs. Friends of Geosphere (FOG), the CRNRA's non-profit support organization accomplished a great deal during the year. FOG purchased a Resograph digital ink printing machine. This machine allows the park to print large volumes of high quality copies at a very low cost. The park has been able to print education materials, activity announcements, parking permit applications and other items at considerable savings. FOG volunteers continue to make possible the many educational programs and special events offered in the park. *The demand for and the popularity of the training programs and special events has increased considerably over the year.* The park's environmental education program continues to receive awards and recognition for leadership and excellence.

The park's Environmental Education Coordinator was recognized by national Project WET with the 1997 Project WET U.S.A. Outstanding Contributor Award.

Working relationships also exists with all local clean and beautiful commissions, the Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Wildlife Federation, Americorps, ATT pioneers, Atlanta Outward Bound Ecowatch, Environmental Education Alliance, and Zoo Atlanta.

During the spring and fall, student field study programs were presented. Partners and FOG volunteers assist with these Quality Core Curriculum based 2-4 hour parks as classrooms programs.

Partnerships and Cooperative Activities

Rangers continued their partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources by providing an instructor as requested to teach Hunter Safety Classes.

The Ranger Division provided an instructor as requested to teach at the North Central Georgia Police Academy. This reaped the benefit of the Academy agreeing to teach a valuable course for the park which served as the park's 40 hour law enforcement refresher training.

Rangers Against Drugs (RAD), was taught at the park's partnership school. One Ranger participated in the RAD Instructor Workshop to improve the program.

Ranger supervisor instructed at University of Memphis Seasonal Ranger School.

Ranger staff continued to serve on the board of the Friends of Roswell Trail System.

A ranger was provided to assist Ocmulgee National Monument with their annual Native American gathering and festival.

Rangers continued to assist Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park and Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site when requested by providing personnel when possible.

Cooperative work efforts successfully continued with the Cobb County Rangers, Cobb County Dive Team, Roswell Fire and Rescue, Cobb K-9 Unit, Roswell Police Department, Forsyth County Fire and Rescue, Gwinnett County Rescue, Duluth Police Department, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the Corps of Engineers.

Corporate Sports and the park continued to develop a closer working relationship that involved working with the community bordering the Johnson Ferry sites.

Ranger participation in a USFS special operation in North Carolina by request.

Rangers started working with SARDOG, Search and Rescue Dogs of Georgia, providing training venues for the dogs and trainers. The dogs are on an on-call basis for use in the park.

SORBA, Southern Off Road Bicycle Association, continued to provide bike patrols along the Cochran Shoals Fitness Trail and the approved trails of Sope Creek with mixed reviews by the public. For the most part the patrol was very positive, making contacts within the bike community, registering bikes into the bicycle registration program, and providing an extra set of eyes and ears for the ranger staff.

In May, Rangers took over the management of the demonstration fee collection program at the park, pending completion of a contract between the park and Eastern National. Rangers set up the initial program, including accountability, filing, record keeping and deposit processing. In October, the program was turned over to Eastern National. The first year of this program was a

resounding success, \$220,000 was collected in five months, setting a high standard for subsequent years.

Visitation

The park did not experience a loss of life on the river. Many routine rescues were completed on the river this year, with three being a typical. Two involved the bridge pilings of Cobb Parkway near Paces Mill. The third rescue was on Sope Creek involving two kayaks. All three incidents involved very high and active water.

The park experienced three visitor fatalities this year. Two suicides and one heart attack.

Concession Operations

The 1997 Concession operation period was deemed an improvement by the Concessionaire, compared to the 1996 period. This was the wettest May and June that Chattahoochee Outdoor Center (COC) had experienced, resulting in very low visitation. July and August were dry and made up for some of the loss of revenue. A COC shuttle bus caught fire and was destroyed due to mechanical problems. Facilities were upgraded to meet health requirements. The fishing guide service was limited to one active fishing guide who had a successful season. The rental fields experienced high use, with children's soccer teams and adult sports organizations utilizing the fields numerous times per week through the year.

The Environmental Education Coordinator maintains a good working relationship with COC. Coordinated with COC management to provide educators with river corridor field study programs presented by rafting the Palisades section of the river. Five afternoon long programs were presented during the summer.

Visitor Protection

The Annual Law Enforcement Report is attached.

National Night Out Against Crime program was held at the Cochran Shoals fitness trail with good response from the public. Bike patrols were increased at the fitness trail, especially by the seasonal rangers.

Training

The park provided a 40 hour law enforcement refresher for protection rangers from the Atlanta area. This was in cooperation with the local law enforcement academy and was held during National Law Enforcement Memorial Week.

Community Relations

Rangers provided programs in the community including topics such as: Fee Demonstration

Program, Role of a Ranger, Paper Mill Ruins, National Park Sites in Georgia, What to do at Chattahoochee River NRA, Rangers Against Drugs, and general park information.

Special Use Permits

Orienteering, filming, photography, canoeing classes, rowing regattas, runs, walks, press conferences, soccer teams, rugby teams and wedding permits were issued.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Water Related Projects

Resource Management (RM) obtained funding to conduct an Asian Rice Eel Study within the Bull Sluice portion of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. The purpose of the study is to determine the existence and scope of the exotic Asian Rice eels within the park. The National Park Service and researchers from the University of Georgia began the study this fall. Plans are to study the life history of the animal and conclude the population study by December 1998.

The park received the “Phase II-Final Draft, 1995 Storm Water Management Modeling Project.” This is a collaborative effort between the National Park Service and Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Water Quality Division, whereby data is collected and compiled to create a storm water model to assist in determining pollution loading into the Chattahoochee River.

Resource Management Specialist monitored projects for possible soil and sediment erosion control violations that were then reported to the responsible governmental officials for follow-up. The Kennedy Interchange Highway along Interstate I-75 was closely monitored and numerous visits with the site manager was undertaken to resolve problems.

The park engaged in dialog with other federal agencies in order to determine impacts to park resources relating to a Tri-State Water Compact, being studied by the states of Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. These discussions will continue through 1998.

Resource Management began the supervision of one individual conducting a plant Inventory and Monitoring Project for the park. The project began in 1997 and will continue through 1998. Its purpose is to inventory plants throughout the park for inclusion into the park database.

The park received and began to distribute maps that identified water quality related issues within the Chattahoochee River Watershed. These maps are a product of a collaborative effort between the CRNRA and U.S. Geological Survey, National Water-Quality Assessment Program (NAWQA). They identify 9 of the most serious problems related to urban development of the upper Chattahoochee River Watershed. This was the second and final year of the joint effort between NPS and the NAWQA Program.

GIS

Resource Management obtained funding to digitize all thirteen of the park's "blue line tract maps." These maps are topographic maps overlaid with park boundaries. These maps will be included in the park GIS database.

Land Issues

Along with Hedgewood Properties, Resource Management determined the layout of a 3.8-mile, multi-use trail system within the Bowmans Island unit of the park. Following management's approval, work began to finalize the Environmental Assessment and complete extensive archeological compliance surveys. Trail construction will begin in FY98. Resource Management and Ranger staff will closely monitor the erosion problems associated with the construction of the single-family subdivision in the same vicinity.

Work continued on the Indian Trail Land Exchange project. Specifics pertaining to land parcels to be exchanged and improvements to be made to NPS property were agreed upon. The exchange is expected to be completed by February 1998.

Rezoning of property adjacent to the Palisades West unit of the park became a pressing issue in 1997. Resource Management worked closely with the developers of "Overton," a multi-use development, which would effect the CRNRA. The park was able to win concessions from the developer to reduce water quality and quantity impacts, viewshed encroachment, storm water runoff and other items that benefit the resources of the park.

Roadway Projects

Resource management worked closely with Federal Highway and the Georgia Department of Transportation on the "Widening of Highway 9 Project" to mitigate impacts to park resources. This project was vetoed by the local municipality that once endorsed it and did not go forward.

In addition to this road project, the park worked with the city of Roswell to mitigate a road and bridge project adjacent to the Vickery Creek Unit. A second road widening project involved the Georgia Department of Transportation and the NPS at the Paces Mill unit. Resource Management worked to finalize landscaping, easement, and entrance locations involved with this project.

Boundary and Encroachments

Resource Management and an environmental partner worked together to redraw the park's authorized boundary. Land outside the authorized was examined for inclusion while land inside the existing boundary examined for deletion. Maps were then delivered to management for review.

Several encroachment issues were examined this year. Three illegal footbridges, constructed by park neighbors on parklands, were removed. One illegal fence and several other minor encroachments are in the process of being resolved.