

**SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT
OCMULGEE NATIONAL MONUMENT
FY 1999**

Ocmulgee National Monument had an excellent Fiscal year 99. Good progress was made on several projects, and an excellent partnership established with a local business. We were able to increase our interpretation staff in order to improve our interpretive/educational programming and started work on a project to correct a major safety issue.

The park hosted a two-day Management Analysis in March. The Management Analysis team was chaired by Mark Corey a former superintendent of Ocmulgee. The park staff outlined a long list of issues. The park received some very good input on those issues and has been working at implementing the recommendations.

The park major event, the Ocmulgee Indian Celebration, was in danger of being canceled for the year due to lack of funds. The Ocmulgee National Monument Association had an off sales year and the visitation to the previous years celebration was off due to poor weather and major completion with an air show at Robins Airforce Base. The owner of Riverside Ford stepped forward to assist the park in fund raising to keep the celebration going.

External issues continued to consume a large part of the superintendent's time. The Fall Line Freeway and the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway continued as the major issues. The possibility of lighting along I16 was a new issue that appeared this year.

The Fall Line Freeway

The Fall Line Freeway issue continued with several meetings of the Federal Cooperating Agencies taking place. Numerous discussions were held on the routes and their relationship to the purpose and needs statement for the road. The Keeper of the National Register made an initial ruling on the east and west boundaries of the Traditional Cultural Property. This ruling was appealed by both the DOT and the tribes. The Keeper planned to make a site visit in early 2000 to assist in her final decision. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the independent tribal towns managed to get concurrence and support from numerous other tribes in their delineation of the TCP. It is anticipated the draft EIS and 4(f) studies will be out for review in early 2000.

The Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway

The initial ground breaking for the first stage of the Greenway took place in late 99. Discussions continued on the link between Central City Park and the Monument. The superintendent is sitting on the Technical Advisory Committee for the Greenway. The

superintendent passed on information on the bridge at Harpers Ferry that crossed the river there by attaching to the railroad bridge. Such a connection at Ocmulgee would be a very appealing link.

Lighting along I16

The superintendent noticed an article in the paper referring to plans to light I16 from exit 4 to exit 5. That includes the section that runs through the park and close to the Lamar mounds area. State Senator Brown was pursuing the issue. A meeting was held with Senator Brown, the Georgia DOT and Federal Highways Administration. The parks concerns about light pollution were discussed. It was decided to look at various options. A consulting firm was hired by DOT and meeting was held with them at the park. At this time no alternatives have been brought forward by DOT.

General Administration

FY 99 Budget

ONPS	\$610,100
ONPS No Year	19,000
VIP	1,000
Cyclic	
Rewire Quarters 2	25,000
YCC Program	8,800
VC terrace	264,000
Equipment Replacement	
Carry-all Club Car	5,000
Club Car	4,900
Fee Enhancement	
Construct bridge over railroad	350,000
GIS Baseline Data	
Computer and software	9,800
NAGPRA Consultations	19,000
Parks as Classrooms Grant	19,500

All accounts were within budget. The park received a \$70,000 base increase this year, the first such increase in over 15 years. The increase was based on improving our

interpretation of Native American cultures. It allowed us to hire a full time interpreter. The park also received funding from WASO for the replacement of the Voice Mail system. The previous system was not Year 2000 compliant and had been acquired surplus from Andersonville. Other special Y2K funding through region replaced two of our non-compliant computers. Due to a push from the Washington and Regional offices we used the majority of the park's no-year funds. Those funds plus regular ONPS funds that were available due to not filling the interpretive position for several months, enabled us to purchase a PA system and tables for the Indian Celebration and other events.

The \$350,000 fee demo project will enable us to correct a safety hazard that has existed since the park was first established. The current trail crosses an active railroad track and visitors, including school kids, have been observed climbing over and around parked trains. This bridge will go over those tracks and avoid that safety issue. In addition it will improve the trail for wheelchair use and for maintenance access.

Personnel

With the budget increase we were able to hire the first full time interpreter for the park in over 5 years. This position will be the major person to oversee our interpretive/educational programs. Throughout the year, three seasonal rangers and three seasonal maintenance workers were hired. Two of the seasonal maintenance workers resigned after a week due to the heat. There were two seasonals and one term employee who had their appointments converted for another period. The park participated in the YCC program again; five students were hired for the eight-week program. One of the seasonal rangers was hired using the STEP program. The park continued with an excellent diversity profile. The permanent staff is 73% minority and/or female.

Travel and Training

Park staff attended training courses to maintain certifications and get updates for law enforcement, PMIS GPRA and fixed assets. Division chiefs and the superintendent attended their respective division chief's conferences and various superintendents' conferences.

Property

Property was properly maintained. Inventories were made and all equipment was properly accounted for. Records were updated. A large backlog of items were surveyed and sold.

Resource Management

The park worked with Regional Ethnographer in initiating NAGPRA consultations with the various affiliated tribes. The park received funding to accomplish these consultations. This year a contract was issued for an individual to handle all the detail of setting up the

consultations that will consist of tribal representatives traveling to the site and also park staff traveling to meet with the tribes.

The superintendent traveled to Oklahoma to meet with representatives of the Creek Nation and the Independent Tribal towns to discuss the replacement of the steps on the Great Temple Mound. A representative from the regional office and the engineering firm that designed the options also attended the meeting. The options were to replace the steps in the current location, to go up the original ramp area or to move to the backside of the mound. It was determined that the preferred alternative was to relocate the steps to the back side to give a cleaner view of the mound from both the visitor center and the funeral mound. The tribal representatives also express the view that placing wood steps would be preferred over steel in order to keep a more natural feel to the area.

The railroad cut vista was cleared. All the trees were removed and grass planted. This should make it easier to keep that vista open in the future. Treatment of exotics such as kudzu and fire ants continued. Additional clearing of vegetation at Lamar was accomplished.

The park received funding to initiate a GIS database. This year the funds were used to purchase a computer and software to run GIS. A contract was issued to acquire some basic information to be entered into the system.

There was one small, approximately 3 acre, fire in the Drakes field area of the park. The fire started on the boundary and moved through the tall grass into the park. It was discovered at closing time. The park was assisted by Macon fire department.

Maintenance

Planning for the roof replacement continued in FY99. Difficulties in getting approved material and finding a certified applicator were encountered. Actual installation was delayed until the fall of 99. A contract was issued to replace the terrace. Combined with the roof project it is hoped that we will end up with a watertight building.

The YCC program continued this year. The five-person crew was able to work on clearing more of the boundary fence and work on several smaller projects to improve the condition of the park.

The maintenance crew operated short handed for much of the summer due to an injury to one the permanent staff and resignation of two seasonal employees due to the heat and difficulty of the work. Finding people willing to do the physically demanding work of clearing the mounds is getting harder each year. We continue to explore options on ways to get the mounds cleared.

Public Use

Visitation for FY 99 was 117,830. This was a small decrease from FY 98. This seemed to be due to the extremely hot weather over the summer and to reduced visitation at the Earth Day celebration. The visitor use survey showed we had a 93% satisfaction rating. The only negatives noted were the poor condition of the restrooms and museum due to the water damage. In FY00 the interior of the visitor center will have the plaster repaired, ceiling tiles replaced and will be painted. That should greatly improve the appearance of the facility and improve the overall satisfaction rating.

Interpretation

The interpretive program at the park made a step forward with the hiring this year of a full time interpreter. We were able to find a Native American interpreter to fill the position. The base increase that allowed us to do this was based on improving our interpretation of Native American cultures. Pam Darty entered on duty in July. Opportunities for the park to offer new programming have been expanded.

The park received a 19,500 Parks as Classrooms grant. This will result in a Georgia Heartland Heritage Book, Georgia Heartland Heritage Activity Guide and a Georgia's Heartland Heritage Teachers' Workshop Video. The grant also permitted us to bring "ambassadors" from the Creek and Seminole nations to go into the schools and give programs on their culture.

The park film that debuted last year was converted to DVD format this year. This improved the presentation and also allowed for us to close caption the film. Further improvements to the AV area will be completed with fee demo money in FY00.

The Indian Celebration this year was an unqualified success. When the local owner of Riverside Ford found that the Celebration was in danger of being canceled due to lack of funds he stepped forward to assist with fundraising. He made a substantial donation himself and succeeded in raising all the funds needed for the program. He also worked to insure we had excellent publicity for the event with well done posters and ads on the local TV and radio stations. The results were fantastic. We had an estimated 5,500-school kid out on Friday and an excellent crowd on Saturday. Sunday there were over 3,000 people out despite it raining all day. He has expressed his desire to work with us for the 2000 celebration.

Lantern Light tours continued as a popular program. Earth Day visitation was down due to weather and poor publicity. Over 3,000 students used the Discovery Lab. We continue to seek funding to upgrade that facility.

The park also received a donation from the owner of Riverside Ford to print a "slim jim" for placement in various information centers and other tourist areas. It was designed by

the staff and provides an excellent piece to direct people to the park. This will enable the park to keep the official brochure for use at the park.

The park updated its web site. The previous site only had the basic initial points as outlined by the "webmaster". The new site gives visitors an opportunity to take a virtual tour of the park and find out a great deal of information about the history of the park and its people. Various management documents have been posted on the site, as well as GPRA related items. There are links to other related sites and local attractions. Response has been very positive.

Law Enforcement

The park was unable to get its new law enforcement ranger into the necessary training in the FY99. Therefore with only one commissioned person patrols were fairly limited. There were no major enforcement actions. The Chief Ranger became certified and a firearms instructor. He provided numerous courses for other parks in our cluster.

Community Relations

Community relations continued to improve. The response to the need on the Indian Celebration was excellent. We made initial contact with the Macon Boys and Girls clubs to partner on a variety of programs. The Fall Line Freeway issue continued to be a divisive issue, fortunately the Greenway continues to bring 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, the Macon-Bibb County Convention and Visitor's Bureau and the Kiwanis Club of Macon. Other organizations include the Tourism Development Committee, Macon Arts Alliance, the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway Committee, and the Chamber of Commerce.

The park staff worked on their own time with other individuals and civic groups to build a Habitat for Humanities house for the park's custodial worker, Martha Chapman. The house was built at Central City Park during the State Fair. The house was later moved to its permanent location and most of the staff attended the house blessing ceremony.

Cooperating Association

The Ocmulgee National Monument Association had \$77,154 in revenue in FY 99. This was a 58% increase over FY 98. This increase was helped by an improved school group visitation. Also an improved Indian Celebration and a good Lantern Light Tour added to the increase. The Association continued with its excellent support of the park programs