



## NPCA Position on Legislation before the Committee on Natural Resources

November 19, 2024

Dear Representative,

Since 1919, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. On behalf of our 1.6 million members and supporters nationwide, we write to share our thoughts on select legislation ahead of a hearing in the Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands scheduled for November 19, 2024.

**H.R. 8182 – Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act:** NPCA **conditionally supports** this legislation to establish the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the State of Georgia. NPCA strongly believes that the current Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park is worthy of expansion and elevation to National Park status. However, we would like to work with the bill's sponsors and the Committee on several specific issues in the legislation as written.

Congressional approval of this designation would allow for co-management of a National Park System unit by a historically removed Tribe. At the same time, we acknowledge the lack of inclusion of other Tribes with a connection to this site. Given the significance of this proposed management structure, NPCA urges amendment of this bill to strengthen the Advisory Council (Section 5) by the addition of at least two members to include: 1) the President of the College of the Muscogee Nation – to advise on the training and development of tribal members to fulfill the hiring preference provision of the legislation (Section 4d) – and 2) the Assistant to the Director of the National Park Service, Native American Affairs Liaison –to incorporate high-level agency expertise on emerging co-management practices. NPCA would further urge that one of the Advisory Council seats dedicated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should similarly reflect high-level agency expertise on emerging co-management practices within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

While the Advisory Council is tasked with producing recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior on the creation of a co-management plan, we believe the bill should have a separate provision for the development of a co-management agreement between applicable tribes and the Park Service. Further, the bill should ensure opportunities for the public and interested organizations to comment on a draft management plan and a co-management agreement before they are finalized. Additionally, we are concerned about the provision in the bill requiring the Park Service to implement cultural resource interpretation at Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge as this approach may not comport with the Park Service's duties and mission. We are also concerned about the various provisions on military activities including allowing "tactical ground parties" and how this may conflict with visitor experience in the park unit. Lastly, NPCA recognizes and supports the desire of Twiggs, Houston, and Bibb Counties to fully participate in the establishment of the new unit.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,  
Christina Hazard  
Legislative Director

**NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION**

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