



GEORGIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

February 13, 2024

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.

Chairman

Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator John Barrasso

Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
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Honorable Senator Steve Daines

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members,

We are writing to support the swift passage of legislation to create the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the 118th Congress, to express gratitude for the federal efforts to meet this moment after almost a century of civic advocacy, and to acknowledge that we are committed to continuing to fulfill the vision of this Park and Preserve.

Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF) is Georgia's oldest and largest member supported conservation organization. Founded in 1936, GWF has been integrally involved in virtually every significant conservation initiative in Georgia for almost a century. GWF is a proponent for the professional, science-based management of our wildlife and natural resources. Or as we like to say, we are "Keeping Georgia Wild."

The Ocmulgee River is a special place, recognized by the National Park Service as one of America's most important and significant wildlife habitat corridors, tribally significant landscapes, and archaeological sites with the

opportunity of creating the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. The legislation to create the Park and Preserve unit is carefully tailored to the recommendations of the National Park Service's Special Resource Study and has broad local support across varying fields, interests, and political ideologies.

Conserving the series of ecological and cultural assets as a National Park and Preserve is vital to the region. It will serve as a robust form of long term and stable economic development for the Middle Georgia region, enhance climate resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the tribal, state and federal land managers, and constitute one of the largest potential expansions of public hunting and fishing access in Georgia.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. Landowners in the corridor, following their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor, evidenced as common practices of co-management at other units around the country, demonstrate this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

Of significance to our specific mission, in addition to the Muscogee (Creek) cultural sites, the wildlife habitat along the Ocmulgee has also remained unspoiled. The opportunity for connectivity is uniquely possible because so many private and public parcels are already protected along the corridor. Included is the 6,500-acre Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, part of roughly 85,000 acres of contiguous swamp, the largest block of forested habitat in the upper coastal plain. The park sits on the banks of the Ocmulgee River on the Macon Plateau along the Fall Line, the edge of a prehistoric sea and geological boundary that separates the hills of the Piedmont and the flatlands of the Atlantic coastal plain.

Georgia Wildlife Federation was founded by hunters and anglers, and it is important for us to ensure that hunting and fishing are included as integral components of this initiative. Thus the designation of the Park and Preserve component. Where appropriate and where historic and cultural traditions allow, hunting and fishing will be integral to the Park and Preserve.

Further, the economic impact of the park and preserve cannot be overstated. A study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association estimates that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor. The study estimates that over the course of 15 years the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in tax revenue annually of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.

Lastly, one of the key economic engines of Middle Georgia is Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) in Warner Robins. This Park and Preserve will potentially offer a quality of life increase for the communities housed on base and those that live in the region. It will also allow partners to put land along the Ocmulgee flood plain near the base into conservation, helping stave off encroachment into flight pattern areas. Future development in the areas east of the base is important to protect against incompatible land use. Conserving undeveloped lands within the Ocmulgee River Corridor will help the base continue to fulfill our national security missions, which is vital to the economic vitality of the entire Middle Georgia region.

Land abutting Robins AFB is vacant and mostly undeveloped. Legislation creating the National Park and Preserve will potentially allow RAFB, and park partners to leverage the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program to protect the environs inside their REPI boundary and inside the expanded Preserve boundary. It is

for this reason that the Sustainability Plan for RAFB formally recommends the creation of the National Park and Preserve.

To continue the robust effort of creating full connectivity of the corridor, we fully support the passage of legislation during the 118th Congress to establish and create the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. By protecting this landscape, working with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation as co-managers of their ancestral homeland, preserving the diverse wildlife habitat, protecting and increasing access to public hunting, fishing, and wildlife habitat, and increases name recognition and thereby national and international prominence of this treasure, this legislation will finally allow the Middle Georgia, local and national conservationist, the hunting and angling, and Muscogee (Creek) communities to preserve the corridor for generations to come.

As stewards of the corridor, it is up to us to fulfill the vision of a fully connected and conserved corridor, but we cannot continue to do so without swift federal action from Congress. That is why we support the passage of federal legislation in the 118th Congress. Every year that goes by without action, we risk future development, lost cultural sites, and missed opportunities for significant economic development in the beloved region of Middle Georgia. As a region and partnership, we have been preparing for this moment and are ready to rise to the challenge of filling the proposed boundary.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Worley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Mike Worley
President and CEO
Georgia Wildlife Federation



1425 Market Blvd., Suite 530-324
Roswell, GA 30076
770-355-4002 | SoutheastTourism.org

February 15, 2024

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Chairman
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306 Hart Senate Office Building
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Georgia region, enhance climate resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the tribal, state and federal land managers, and constitute one of the largest potential expansions of public hunting and fishing access in Georgia.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. But as landowners in the corridor as well their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor, common practices of co-management at other units around the country, this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

In addition to the Muscogee (Creek) cultural sites, the wildlife habitat along the Ocmulgee has also remained unspoiled. The opportunity for connectivity is uniquely possible because so many private and public parcels are already protected along the corridor. Included is the 6,500-acre Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, part of roughly 85,000 acres of contiguous swamp, the largest block of forested habitat in the upper coastal plain. The park sits on the banks of the Ocmulgee River on the Macon Plateau along the Fall Line, the edge of a prehistoric sea and geological boundary that separates the hills of the Piedmont and the flatlands of the Atlantic coastal plain.

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As Macon's Destination Marketing Organization, Visit Macon is charged with creating economic opportunities for our small businesses and 4,500 hospitality workers through tourism. The addition of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve will enhance opportunities in tourism and small business for underserved communities throughout the region. Visitors to Macon-Bibb County spend over \$400 million annually to support business and our citizens. The economic impact of a National Park and Preserve will benefit all Georgians as well as strengthen the bond with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation that has been rekindled over the past decade.

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Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Monica R. Smith".

Monica R. Smith, CMP, CASE, CDME
President & CEO



TR 22-148

CLASSIFICATION: #15. CULTURAL AFFAIRS/HISTORY/MUSEUM

A TRIBAL RESOLUTION OF THE MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION SUPPORTING THE EXPANSION OF THE OCMULGEE MOUNDS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK TO FORM A NEW NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

Be it resolved by the National Council of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation:

WHEREAS, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is a federally recognized Indian Nation with a historic and continual government-to-government relationship with the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is the fourth largest tribe in the United States and represents over 91,000 Muscogee citizens throughout the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park is a National Park located in Macon, Georgia and was an important population center which has had 17,000 years of continuous human habitation, including millennia of Muskogean people; and

WHEREAS, the most recognizable features of the Macon Plateau are the Ocmulgee Old Fields, also known as the Macon Reserve, which include large platform earthen mounds and an earthen lodge council house built by Muskogean-speaking people more than 1,000 years ago; and

WHEREAS, the Macon Plateau region has been linked historically to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation through the Creek Confederacy, a grouping of diverse individual Tribal Towns who lived and thrived in the region until the United States sought additional lands, reserved in Article I of the 1805 Treaty of Washington, as the Old Ocmulgee Fields, to its final cession to the United States in 1826. The Macon Plateau has played an important part in interactions with European and American powers from contact until removal; and

WHEREAS, Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and the Ocmulgee River Corridor are part of the ancestral homelands of Muscogee people, and according to one of our oral histories, Ocmulgee was "the place where the Creeks sat down," and is known as the "Cradle of the Muscogee Confederacy" which holds the history and culture of our great Nation which has been significantly influenced by this sacred place; and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service, under the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized Ocmulgee as a National Monument in 1936 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966; and

WHEREAS, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation adopted TR 95-10 (1995), identified the Ocmulgee Old Fields to be a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), based on Muscogee cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, lifeways, arts and connections to the social institution of our living community and tribal government; and

WHEREAS, the Keeper of the United States National Register of Historic Places concurred with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's designation of the Ocmulgee Old Fields Traditional Cultural Property as being eligible for listing on the United States National Register of Historic Places, marking the Ocmulgee Old Fields as the first TCP east of the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, the United States National Park Service, through the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park at Macon, Georgia, has contributed greatly to the preservation of the natural and cultural resources which includes an important part of the Muskogean legacy in the American Southeast through a long-standing stewardship for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of the Ocmulgee Old Fields region of the Ocmulgee River Corridor for future generations; and

WHEREAS, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 (Dingell Act) directed the Secretary of the Interior to complete a Special Resource Study to identify whether the Ocmulgee River Corridor from Macon to Hawkinsville, Georgia meets specific criteria to be recommended for potential inclusion as a new unit of the national park system; and

WHEREAS, the study area incorporates approximately 50 river miles in Bibb, Twiggs, Houston, Bleckley and Pulaski Counties, Georgia; all former ancestral homelands of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation; and

WHEREAS, the Ocmulgee River Corridor remains largely undeveloped and conservation is needed to retain the natural landscape, protect wildlife habitat, Native flora and fauna, threatened and endangered species and delicate ecosystems such as swamps, marshes, wetlands and blackland prairies, as well as, habitat restoration to bring back species and enhance biodiversity in the region; and

WHEREAS, the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative's (ONPPI) mission statement is "To advocate for the expansion of the Ocmulgee National Monument and its eventual integration into the larger network of public lands in the Ocmulgee River corridor south of Macon to form a new Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve. We seek

to preserve historical, cultural and environmental values, while simultaneously providing the economic and other benefits of a National Park to Middle Georgia and beyond”; and

WHEREAS, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation government remains committed to self-preservation, self-determination and the right of tribal governments to build and strengthen our own communities while striving to protect our sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation will consider tribal co-management and inter-governmental cooperation to increase public land management, enhance cultural and natural resource protection, expand educational outreach that includes tribal perspectives and insure coordination for future land use planning, recreation, long-term resource management and programmatic goals.


WHEREAS, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation supports the creation of the Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve located in Middle Georgia in order to preserve 80,000 acres in conservation under National Park and Preserve status.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation affirms that the area encompassing the Ocmulgee River, bounded by the northern perimeter of Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and by the southern perimeter of Hawkinsville, Georgia, as a continuous segment of the region that holds national significance contributing to the exceptional cultural landscape and cultural history of Muskogean people in the region.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation supports legislation to form a new Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve, participation in the National Park Service Special Resource Study, and supports the mission of the Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve Initiative. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation is ready to engage in a collaborative multi-agency co-management approach to preserve, manage and interpret the critically important historical, cultural and environmental resources in the Ocmulgee River Corridor, as well as, potential enhancements to promote river-based recreation, local tourism, hunting and fishing and public education in areas that do not adversely impact cultural resources in a new National Park Service unit.

ENACTED by the Muscogee (Creek) National Council on this **24TH** day of **September**, **2022**.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Speaker of the Muscogee (Creek) National Council has hereto attached his signature.



William Lowe, Speaker
National Council
Muscogee (Creek) Nation

CERTIFICATION

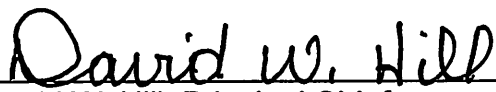
I, the undersigned, certify that the foregoing is a true extract from the minutes of the Muscogee (Creek) National Council comprised of Sixteen members with **Sixteen** members attending this meeting on the **24th** day of **September, 2022** and that the above is in conformity with the provisions therein adopted by a vote of **14** in favor, **1** against and that said Resolution has not been rescinded or amended in any way and the above is the signature of the Speaker of the National Council.



Alicia Stroble, Recording Secretary
Muscogee (Creek) National Council

APPROVAL

I, the Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, hereby affix my signature this **27th** day of **September 2022** to the above Resolution, **TR 22-148** authorizing it to become a Resolution under Article VI., Section VI., of the Constitution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.



David W. Hill, Principal Chief
Muscogee (Creek) Nation





Development Authority of the City of Jeffersonville & Twiggs County

P. O. Box 703 Jeffersonville, GA 31044 Douglas Chance, Chairman

February 13, 2024

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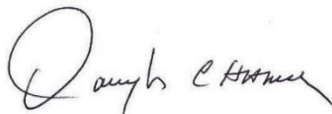
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Sincerely,



Douglas Chance
Chairman



Judith Sherling
Executive Director

Visit Macon, Inc.
450 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Macon, GA 31201
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President/CEO



804 Park Drive | Warner Robins, GA 31088

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Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Steve Daines

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members,

We are writing to support the swift passage of legislation to create the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the 118th Congress, to express gratitude for the federal efforts to meet this moment after almost a century of civic advocacy, and to acknowledge that we are committed to continuing to fulfill the vision of this Park and Preserve.

The Ocmulgee River is a special place, recognized by the National Park Service as one of America's most important and significant wildlife habitat corridors, tribally significant landscapes, and archaeological sites with the opportunity of creating the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. The legislation to create the Park and Preserve unit is carefully tailored to the recommendations of the National Park Service's Special Resource Study and has broad local support across varying fields, interests, and political ideologies.

Conserving the series of ecological and cultural assets as a National Park and Preserve is vital to the region. It will serve as a robust form of long term and stable economic development for the Middle Georgia region, enhance climate resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the tribal, state and federal land managers, and constitute

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478-225-9005

one of the largest potential expansions of public hunting and fishing access in Georgia.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. But as landowners in the corridor as well their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor, common practices of co-management at other units around the country, this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

In addition to the Muscogee (Creek) cultural sites, the wildlife habitat along the Ocmulgee has also remained unspoiled. The opportunity for connectivity is uniquely possible because so many private and public parcels are already protected along the corridor. Included is the 6,500-acre Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, part of roughly 85,000 acres of contiguous swamp, the largest block of forested habitat in the upper coastal plain. The park sits on the banks of the Ocmulgee River on the Macon Plateau along the Fall Line, the edge of a prehistoric sea and geological boundary that separates the hills of the Piedmont and the flatlands of the Atlantic coastal plain.

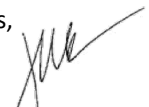
Further, the economic impact of the park and preserve cannot be overstated. A study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association estimates that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor. The study estimates that over the course of 15 years the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in tax revenue annually of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.

Lastly, one of the key economic engines of Middle Georgia is Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) in Warner Robins. This Park and Preserve will potentially offer a quality of life increase for the communities housed on base and the live in the region. It will also allow partners to put land along the Ocmulgee flood plain near the base into conservation, helping stave off encroachment into flight pattern areas. Future development in the areas east of the base is important to protect against incompatible land use. Conserving undeveloped lands within the Ocmulgee River Corridor will help the base continue to fulfill our national security missions, which is vital to the economic vitality of the entire Middle Georgia region.

Land abutting Robins AFB is vacant and mostly undeveloped. Legislation creating the National Park and Preserve will potentially allow RAFB, and park partners to leverage the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program to protect the environs inside their REPI boundary and inside the expanded Preserve boundary. It is for this reason that the Sustainability Plan for RAFB formally recommends the creation of the National Park and Preserve.

To continue the robust effort of creating full connectivity of the corridor, we fully support the passage of legislation during the 118th Congress to establish and create the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. By protecting this landscape, working with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation as co-managers of their ancestral homeland, preserving the diverse wildlife habitat, protecting and increasing access to public hunting, fishing, and wildlife habitat, and increases name recognition and thereby national and international prominence of this treasure, this legislation will finally allow the Middle Georgia, local and national conservationist, the hunting and angling, and Muscogee (Creek) communities to preserve the corridor for generations to come.

Regards,


Brig Gen John C. Kubinec, USAF (ret)
President/CEO

ALTAMAHA RIVERKEEPER

OCMULGEE | OCONEE | OHOOPEE | GOLDEN ISLES

Altamaha Riverkeeper

PO Box 4122

Macon GA 31208

2/14/2024

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

306 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.

Chairman

Subcommittee on National Parks

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*Ocmulgee Office -- P.O. Box 4122 • Macon, GA 31208
Altamaha Office - 127 F St, Suite 204, Brunswick, GA 31520
• 478-845-5370 www.altamahariverkeeper.org •*



ALTAMAHA RIVERKEEPER

OCMULGEE | OCONEE | OHOOPEE | GOLDEN ISLES

Conserving the series of ecological and cultural assets as a National Park and Preserve is vital to the region. It will serve as a robust form of long term and stable economic development for the Middle Georgia region, enhance climate resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the tribal, state and federal land managers, and constitute one of the largest potential expansions of public hunting and fishing access in Georgia.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. But as landowners in the corridor as well their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor, common practices of co-management at other units around the country, this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

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As stewards of the corridor, it is up to us to fulfill the vision of a fully connected and conserved corridor, but we cannot continue to do so without swift federal action from Congress. That is why we support the passage of federal legislation in the 118th Congress. Every year that goes by without action, we risk future development, lost cultural sites, and missed opportunities for significant economic development in the beloved region of Middle Georgia. As a region and partnership, we have been preparing for

*Ocmulgee Office -- P.O. Box 4122 • Macon, GA 31208
Altamaha Office - 127 F St, Suite 204, Brunswick, GA 31520
• 478-845-5370 www.altamahariverkeeper.org •*



ALTAMAHA RIVERKEEPER

OCMULGEE | OCONEE | OHOOPEE | GOLDEN ISLES

this moment and are ready to rise to the challenge of filling the proposed boundary.

Regards,

Fletcher Sams

Fletcher Sams

Executive Director

Ocmulgee Office -- P.O. Box 4122 • Macon, GA 31208
Altamaha Office – 127 F St, Suite 204, Brunswick, GA 31520
• 478-845-5370 www.altamahariverkeeper.org •





BRIAN KEMP
GOVERNOR

WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

May 8, 2024

The Honorable Austin Scott
U.S. House of Representatives
2185 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act

Dear Congressman Scott,

On behalf of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR), I am writing to express our support for the expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities afforded in the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act. As an agency committed to the stewardship of Georgia's rich natural, historic, and cultural resources, we find that the provisions outlined in this Act align with our mission and strategic goals.

GADNR appreciates the Advisory Council opportunity the Act offers the Department to assist with developing the management plan for the Preserve. GADNR supports expansion of the Preserve's boundaries to encompass transitional and upland habitats along the Ocmulgee River Corridor. This expansion is vital for the protection of diverse ecosystems that play a crucial role in maintaining biological diversity and ecological health in the region.

As the regulatory authority for hunting and fishing opportunities within the state, we would like to request that hunting and fishing be administered in the same manner as prior to establishment of the park and preserve.

Furthermore, the GADNR strongly advocates for the conservation and active management and restoration of high-priority and critical fish and wildlife habitats in this area. Active management and ongoing population monitoring are essential components to achieving these conservation goals. Such measures ensure that the Preserve operates effectively, maintaining the ecological integrity of the area while providing educational, recreational, and conservation benefits to the public.

We believe that the enactment of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act would represent a significant step forward in preserving a unique part of our state's heritage and natural beauty. It would not only safeguard the environmental and historical treasures within the

Preserve but also enhance the quality of life for all Georgians by providing increased opportunities for education, recreation, and tourism.


Thank you for considering our perspective on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Walter Rabon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "W".

Walter Rabon
Commissioner
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Cc: The Honorable Brian P. Kemp, Governor of Georgia



February 14, 2024

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.

Chairman

Subcommittee on National Parks
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Honorable Senator Steve Daines

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members,

On behalf of the Development of Houston County Board of Directors, I am writing to support the swift passage of legislation to create the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the 118th Congress, to express gratitude for the federal efforts to meet this moment after almost a century of civic advocacy, and to acknowledge that we are committed to continuing to fulfill the vision of this Park and Preserve.

The Ocmulgee River is a special place, recognized by the National Park Service as one of America's most important and significant wildlife habitat corridors, tribally significant landscapes, and archaeological sites with the opportunity of creating the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. The legislation to create the Park and Preserve unit is carefully tailored to the recommendations of the National Park Service's Special Resource Study and has broad local support across varying fields, interests, and political ideologies.

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The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. But as landowners in the corridor as well their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor, common practices of co-management at other units around the country, this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

In addition to the Muscogee (Creek) cultural sites, the wildlife habitat along the Ocmulgee has also remained unspoiled. The opportunity for connectivity is uniquely possible because so many private and public parcels are already protected along the corridor. Included is the 6,500-acre Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, part of roughly 85,000 acres of contiguous swamp, the largest block of forested habitat in the upper coastal plain. The park sits on the banks of the Ocmulgee River on the Macon Plateau along the Fall Line, the edge of a prehistoric sea and geological boundary that separates the hills of the Piedmont and the flatlands of the Atlantic coastal plain.

Further, the economic impact of the park and preserve cannot be overstated. A study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association estimates that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor. The study estimates that over the course of 15 years the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in tax revenue annually of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.

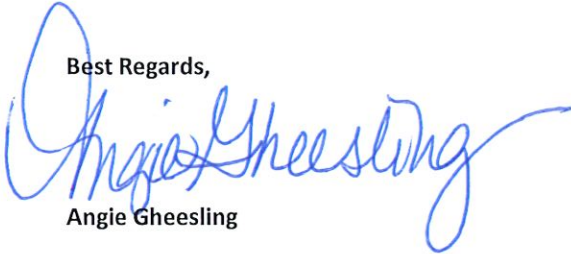
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Land abutting Robins AFB is vacant and mostly undeveloped. Legislation creating the National Park and Preserve will potentially allow RAFB, and park partners to leverage the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program to protect the environs inside their REPI boundary and inside the expanded Preserve boundary. It is for this reason that the Sustainability Plan for RAFB formally recommends the creation of the National Park and Preserve.

To continue the robust effort of creating full connectivity of the corridor, we fully support the passage of legislation during the 118th Congress to establish and create the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. By protecting this landscape, working with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation as co-managers of their ancestral homeland, preserving the diverse wildlife habitat, protecting and increasing access to public hunting, fishing, and wildlife habitat, and increases name recognition and thereby national and international prominence of this treasure, this legislation will finally allow the Middle Georgia, local and national conservationist, the hunting and angling, and Muscogee (Creek) communities to preserve the corridor for generations to come.

As stewards of the corridor, it is up to us to fulfill the vision of a fully connected and conserved corridor, but we cannot continue to do so without swift federal action from Congress. That is why we support the passage of federal legislation in the 118th Congress. Every year that goes by without action, we risk future development, lost cultural sites, and missed opportunities for significant economic development in the beloved region of Middle Georgia. As a region and partnership, we have been preparing for this moment and are ready to rise to the challenge of filling the proposed boundary.

Best Regards,



Angie Gheesling

Executive Director



Houston
Development Authority

Let's Reconnect. We are Houston.

Be Houston.

320 East Mission Parkway
Warner Robins, GA 31068

1-478-923-5470

www.houstoncountyga.net
gheesling@houstoncountyga.net



April 27, 2023

To: Members of Georgia's Congressional Delegation

Dear Georgia Delegation Members,

On behalf of our more than 47,000 members, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, is expressing its support for the passage of legislation to create the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve in the 2023, to express gratitude for the bipartisan federal efforts to meet this moment after almost a century of civic advocacy, and to express support for the blossoming tribal, nontribal partnership the middle Georgia region has with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation that is centered around the co-management of Georgia's first National Park and Preserve.

This admirable civic partnership of chambers of commerce, conservation, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, hunting and fishing advocates has been almost a century in the making, with chambers of commerce being intimately involved throughout the process. [In fact, the formal process of creating a National Monument out of the Ocmulgee Old Fields formally began in 1933, when the Macon Junior Chamber of Commerce purchased the sacred sites and requested they be protected.](#)

The Ocmulgee Corridor is a special place, recognized as one of America's most important wildlife habitat corridors, tribally significant landscapes, and archaeological sites with the opportunity of creating the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia.

Conserving the series of ecological and cultural assets as a National Park and Preserve is vital to the region. It will enhance resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the federally recognized tribe of purview, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the Department of Interior, protect and enhance hunting and fishing access, as protect private property rights in middle Georgia, and serve as a robust form of economic development for the Middle Georgia region.

An independent [study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association](#) and funded by the Knight Foundation, estimates that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor. The study estimates that over the course of 15 years after being re-designated a National Park and Preserve, the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in tax revenue annually of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.

The study estimates that the region should prepare for an increase of 1.16 million visitors annually and for the roughly \$76.5 Million dollar increase of annual labor income that could be generated by an influx of almost 3,000 jobs.

Macon, as the hub city of the region and the gateway to the current National Historical Park, has invested tens of millions of dollars in infrastructure projects to support the expected growth, incentivized a trail system that connects the city with the park, has donated hundreds of acres to the current historical park, and is actively investing and planning to be an even stronger partner and steward ahead of the Park and Preserve designation.

Another key economic engine of Middle Georgia is Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) in Warner Robins. This Park and Preserve will potentially offer a quality of life increase for the communities housed on base and the live in the region. These factors, among others, are why the [Middle Georgia Robins Air Force Base Sustainability plan formally recommends that Congress create the National Park and Preserve](#). The Park and Preserve is key to the success of this mission, which, in turn, is key to the economic well-being of the region.

All of these factors are vital to the long-term viability of the middle Georgia economy and as such the Georgia Chamber of Commerce proudly supports the creation of the National Park and Preserve. We urge support for this initiative and welcome you to urge Congress to act this year so that Middle Georgia can begin to reap the economic benefits of their stewardship of this important landscape.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "C".

Chris Clark
President and CEO
Georgia Chamber of Commerce

230 Peachtree Street NW
Suite 2275
Atlanta, GA 30303
tel 404.876.2900
georgiaconservancy.org

February 14, 2024



Attn:

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

PRESIDENT
Katherine Moore*

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

BOARD CHAIR
Virginia Harman, Cave Spring*

Honorable Senator John Barrasso
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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Honorable Senator Steve Daines
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
320 Hart Senate Office Building
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ADVISORY COUNCIL
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Braye Boardman, Augusta
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Ann Q. Curry, Atlanta
C. Edward Dobbs, Atlanta
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Hank Linginfelter, St. Simons Island
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Laura Turner Seydel, Atlanta
Ron Shipman, Macon
Jim Timmons, Atlanta

*Executive Committee Member

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Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katherine Moore".

Katherine Moore, AICP

President, Georgia Conservancy



113 Arkwright Landing
Macon, Georgia 31210
(478) 757-1211

GeorgiaMining.org

Our State, Our Resources, Our Future

To Whom it may concern,

The Georgia Mining Association supports the bipartisan Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Act and urges its passage in the 118th Congress. We have discussed the legislation's impact with our members and existing industry in the region and believe this legislation protects the private property rights of our members, as well as bolsters the overall quality of life and economy of middle Georgia. Further, we appreciate the partnership and consultation with the stakeholders who have worked on this legislation. We look forward to continued collaboration toward the shared goal of protecting middle Georgia's resources and economy for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Lee Lemke".

Lee Lemke
Executive Vice President
Georgia Mining Association



Mayor Pro Tem- Seth Clark
Macon-Bibb County Commission
District Five
700 Poplar Street
Macon, Ga. 31201

May 7, 2024

House Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Bruce Westerman – Chairman
The Honorable Raul Grijalva – Ranking Member
1324-A Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6201

House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands

The Honorable Tom Tiffany – Chairman
The Honorable Joe Neguse – Ranking Member
1328 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6201

House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs

The Honorable Harriet Hageman – Chairwoman
The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez – Ranking Member
1331 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6201

Honorable Chairmen, Chairwomen, and Ranking Members,

On behalf of my neighbors, my fellow citizens of middle Georgia, our parents and our grandparents, I, as Mayor Pro Tempore of Macon-Bibb County and Executive Director of the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative am writing to express my support for the passage of legislation to create the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve in 2024, to express gratitude for the bipartisan federal efforts to meet this moment after almost a century of civic advocacy, express support for the potential expansion of hunting and fishing accessibility in our region, and to express support for the blossoming tribal, nontribal partnership between middle Georgia region and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation that is centered around the co-management and creation of Georgia's first National Park and Preserve.

I have had the honor of leading the efforts to redesignate the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and its surrounding environs into Georgia's first National Park and Preserve for many years. Our efforts are a true, tribal, non-tribal, bipartisan and multijurisdictional partnership.

This admirable civic partnership of chambers of commerce, conservationists, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, hunting and fishing advocates has been almost a century in the making. In fact, the formal process of creating a National Monument out of the Ocmulgee Old Fields formally began in 1933, when dedicated citizens of this great community came together to purchase these important sacred sites with a mission to protect them for future generations and to use them as a foundational footprint to grow a conserved and protected landscape. And now, more than 90 years and tens of thousands of conserved acres later, we are that future generation asking Congress to finally designate



Mayor Pro Tem- Seth Clark
Macon-Bibb County Commission
District Five
700 Poplar Street
Macon, Ga. 31201

Georgia's first National Park and Preserve so that we can continue our civic charge to protect this landscape for the next generations.

The Ocmulgee Corridor is a special place, recognized as one of America's most important wildlife habitat corridors, tribally significant landscapes, and archaeological sites with the opportunity of creating the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia.

I, like many of my neighbors in middle Georgia, am an avid hunter and angler, dependent on public lands and a vibrant ecosystem to continue to grow the sport and accommodate its growth. The potential expansion of publicly managed hunting and fishing lands while protecting the autonomy of private property owners is a key factor in the proposal before you and vital to the identity of the region. It is also why this proposal enjoys the support of the largest collection of hunters and anglers in the state of Georgia.

Conserving the series of ecological and cultural assets as a National Park and Preserve is vital to the region. It will enhance resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the federally recognized tribe of purview, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the Department of Interior, protect and enhance hunting and fishing access, protect private property rights in middle Georgia, and serve as a robust form of economic development for the Middle Georgia region.

An independent study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association and funded by the Knight Foundation, estimates that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor. The study estimates that over the course of 15 years after being re-designated a National Park and Preserve, the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in tax revenue annually of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.

The study estimates that the region should prepare for an increase of 1.16 million visitors annually and for the roughly \$76.5 Million dollar increase of annual labor income that could be generated by an influx of almost 3,000 jobs. Macon, as the hub city of the region and the gateway to the current National Historical Park, has invested tens of millions of dollars in infrastructure projects to support the expected growth, incentivized a trail system that connects the city with the park, has donated hundreds of acres to the current historical park, and is actively investing and planning to be an even stronger partner and steward ahead of the Park and Preserve designation. Another key economic engine of Middle Georgia is Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) in Warner Robins. This Park and Preserve will potentially offer a quality of life increase for the communities housed on base and the live in the region. These factors, among others, are why the Middle Georgia Robins Air Force Base Sustainability plan formally recommends that Congress create the National Park and Preserve.

The Park and Preserve is key to the success of this mission, which, in turn, is key to the economic well-being of Macon-Bibb County and the region. All of these factors, as well as the reconciliation offered to our region through an authentic relationship with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, are vital to the long-term viability of middle Georgia and as such I proudly support the creation of the National Park and Preserve. I urge Congress to act this year so that Middle Georgia can finally begin the next chapter in their stewardship of this important landscape.



Mayor Pro Tem- Seth Clark
Macon-Bibb County Commission
District Five
700 Poplar Street
Macon, Ga. 31201

Thank you for your immediate consideration of this matter of great importance to our county, region, state and country. And thank you for your dedicated service to the United States of America.

God bless,

Seth C. Clark
Mayor Pro Tempore, Macon-Bibb County
Executive Director, Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative

The INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL of the FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES

A Resolution Supporting the United States National Park Services Expansion of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park to form a New National Park and Preserve

Resolution No. 22-21



Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief

WHEREAS, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes (ITC) is an organization that unites the tribal governments of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole Nations, representing approximately 815,000 Indian people throughout the United States; and



Bill Anoatubby
Governor

WHEREAS, the ITC strongly supports actions of its member Nations to preserve and protect historic properties, Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP) and sacred lands within respective ancestral homelands in the American Southeast; and

WHEREAS, the ITC previously supported legislation and the expansion of the Ocmulgee National Monument boundary in Resolution Number 14-31 (2014); and



Gary Patton
Chief

WHEREAS, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 (Dingell Act) redesignated the Okmulgee National Monument, established in 1934, as the "Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park" and expanded the park boundary by 2,100 acres; and

WHEREAS, the Dingell Act directed the Secretary of the Interior to complete a Special Resource Study (SRS) to identify whether the Ocmulgee River Corridor from Macon to Hawkinsville, Georgia meets specific criteria to be recommended for potential inclusion as a new National Park and Preserve; and



David W. Hill
Principal Chief

WHEREAS, SRS study area incorporates approximately fifty (50) river miles in Bibb, Twiggs, Houston, Bleckley and Pulaski Counties, Georgia, which are former Muscogee (Creek) Nation treaty lands ceded in the 1805 Treaty of Washington and the 1821 Treaty of Indian Springs; and



Lewis J. Johnson
Chief

WHEREAS, the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and the Ocmulgee River Corridor make up the Macon Plateau and Ocmulgee Old Fields, which include large platform earthen mounds and an earthen lodge council house built by Muskogean-speaking people more than 1,000 years ago; and

WHEREAS, the Keeper of the United States National Register of Historic Places concurred with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's designation of the Ocmulgee Old Fields Traditional Cultural Property (1995) as being eligible

The INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL of the FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES

for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, marking the Ocmulgee Old Fields as the first TCP east of the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, the Ocmulgee River Corridor remains largely undeveloped and conservation is needed to retain the natural landscape, protect wildlife habitat, Native flora and fauna, threatened and endangered species and delicate ecosystems such as swamps, marshes, wetlands and backland prairies, as well as habitat restoration to enhance biodiversity in the region; and

WHEREAS, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation affirms that the area encompassing the Ocmulgee River, bounded by the northern perimeter of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and by the southern perimeter of Hawkinsville, Georgia is a continuous segment of the region that holds national significance contributing to the exceptional cultural landscape and cultural history of the Muskogean people in the region; and

WHEREAS, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in Tribal Resolution TR 22-148 (2022), supports the expansion of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park to form a new National Park and Preserve; and

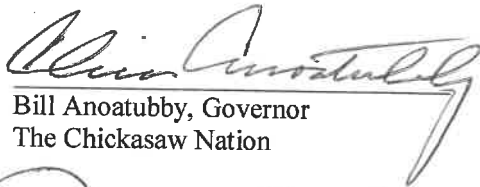
WHEREAS, ITC remains committed to supporting tribal co-management, self-preservation, self-determination and the right of tribal governments to build and strengthen our own communities while striving to protect our sovereignty.

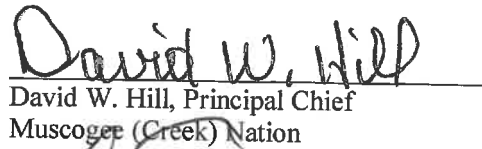
NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes hereby supports the creation of the Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve located in Middle Georgia in order to preserve 80,000 acres in conservation under the National Park and Preserve status.

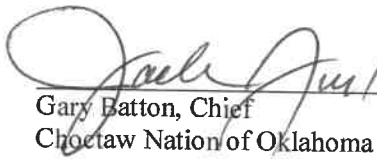
The INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL of the FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES

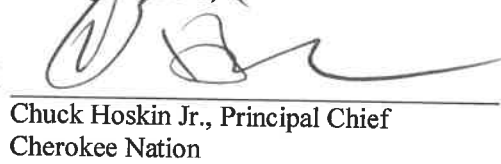
CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes meeting in Durant, Oklahoma on this 7th day of October, 2022, by a vote of _____ for _____ against and _____ abstentions.


Bill Anoatubby, Governor
The Chickasaw Nation


David W. Hill, Principal Chief
Muscogee (Creek) Nation


Gary Batton, Chief
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma


Chuck Hoskin Jr., Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation


Lewis J. Johnson, Chief
Seminole Nation of Oklahoma



February 15, 2024

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.

Chairman

Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator John Barrasso

Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Steve Daines

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on National Parks
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Chairmen and Ranking

Chair, Government and Military Affairs, Greater Macon Chamber Board of Directors



Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members,

February 15, 2024

The Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, the most significant, organized business community in Macon-Bibb County, Georgia, collaborates with other economic agencies to represent the vibrant community and economic interests of our Central Georgia region. On behalf of our 750 invested businesses and governing board, we are writing this letter to express our strong support for the swift passage of legislation to designate the Ocmulgee Mounds as a National Park and Preserve. This initiative, culminating from nearly a century of advocacy, presents a historic opportunity to boost economic development, preserve our nation's heritage, and protect our natural environment for future generations. We are committed to realizing the vision of this Park and Preserve and urge your support to make it a reality.

We encourage the swift passage of legislation to create the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the 118th Congress, to express gratitude for the federal efforts to meet this moment after almost a century of civic advocacy, and to acknowledge that we are committed to continuing to fulfill the vision of this Park and Preserve.

The passage of this legislation will create instant economic impact to Central Georgia, stretching from its urban gateway in Macon-Bibb County, Georgia, through neighboring, rural Twiggs County, to the Houston County border of Robins Air Force Base, the largest single-site industrial complex in Georgia.

The economic impact of the park and preserve cannot be overstated. A study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association estimates that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor, which includes these three Georgia counties. The study estimates that over the course of 15 years the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in tax revenue annually of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.



February 15, 2024

The impact and resulting expenditures will spur entrepreneurship, create jobs and transform underserved areas of rural economies.

This legislation is diverse and inclusive. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. The Nation remains landowners in the corridor, and we honor their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor. As common, inclusive practices of co-management at other units around the country, this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

The Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, as well as other local economic development agencies have met and will continue meet with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's economic development team, including the Nation's Secretary of Commerce and director of supplier diversity initiatives, to generate business investment, bridge workforce gaps and collaborate on strategic economic initiatives catalyzed by National Park status.

Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) will benefit from this legislation. This Park and Preserve will potentially offer a quality of life increase for the communities housed on Robins Air Force Base, as well as a workforce of almost 24,000 civilians, contractors and military members who live in the region. It will also allow partners to put land along the Ocmulgee flood plain near the base into conservation, helping stave off encroachment into flight pattern areas. Future development in the areas east of the Base is important to protect against incompatible land use. Conserving undeveloped lands within the Ocmulgee River Corridor will help the Base continue to fulfill our national security missions, which is vital to the economic vitality of the entire Central Georgia region.



February 15, 2024

Land abutting Robins AFB is vacant and mostly undeveloped. Legislation creating the National Park and Preserve will potentially allow RAFB and park partners to leverage the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program to protect the environs inside their REPI boundary and inside the expanded Preserve boundary. It is for this reason that the Sustainability Plan for RAFB formally recommends the creation of the National Park and Preserve.

The legislation to create the Park and Preserve unit is carefully tailored to the recommendations of the National Park Service's Special Resource Study and has broad local support across varying fields, interests, and political ideologies. It will serve as a robust form of long term and stable economic development for the Central Georgia region, enhance climate resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the tribal, state and federal land managers, and constitute one of the largest potential expansions of public hunting and fishing access in Georgia.

To continue the robust effort of creating full connectivity of the corridor, we fully support the passage of legislation during the 118th Congress to establish and create the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. By protecting this landscape, working with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation as co-managers of their ancestral homeland, preserving the diverse wildlife habitat, protecting and increasing access to public hunting, fishing, and wildlife habitat, and increasing name recognition and thereby national and international prominence of this treasure, this legislation will finally allow Central Georgia, local and national conservationist, the hunting and angling, and Muscogee (Creek) communities to preserve the corridor for generations to come.



February 15, 2024

The Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce supports the passage of federal legislation in the 118th Congress. Every year that goes by without action, we risk future development, lost cultural sites, and missed opportunities for significant economic development Central Georgia. As a region and partnership, we have been preparing for this moment and are ready to rise to the challenge and great privilege of being home to one of America's greatest treasures, our country's next National Park and Preserve.

In conclusion, the designation of the Ocmulgee Mounds as a National Park and Preserve represents a critical step toward sustainable economic development, conservation of natural and cultural resources, and the strengthening of our community's quality of life. We stand ready to support this transformative project and respectfully call on your leadership to ensure its passage during the 118th Congress. Together, we can safeguard this treasure for future generations while unlocking the potential for significant economic and environmental benefits.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this vital issue. We look forward to your support and to welcoming a new chapter of conservation and prosperity in Central Georgia.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jessica Walden'.

Jessica Walden

President & CEO, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Chrissy Miner'.

Chrissy Miner

**Chair, Government and Military Affairs, Greater Macon Chamber
Board of Directors**

February 14, 2024

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III

Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.

Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
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Honorable Senator Steve Daines

Ranking Member
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U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members,

We are writing to support the swift passage of legislation to create the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the 118th Congress, to express gratitude for the federal efforts to meet this moment after almost a century of civic advocacy, and to acknowledge that we are committed to continuing to fulfill the vision of this Park and Preserve.

The Ocmulgee River is a special place, recognized by the National Park Service as one of America's most important and significant wildlife habitat corridors, tribally significant landscapes, and archaeological sites with the opportunity of creating the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. The legislation to create the Park and Preserve unit is carefully tailored to the recommendations of the National Park Service's Special Resource Study and has broad local support across varying fields, interests, and political ideologies.

Conserving the series of ecological and cultural assets as a National Park and Preserve is vital to the region. It will serve as a robust form of long term and stable economic

2024

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Lillie Battle
Administrative Assistant & HR Coordinator
Torri Roberson
Data Coordinator
Raymond Simmons
Maintenance Personnel

COUNSEL OF THE AUTHORITY

Kevin T. Brown
Seyfarth Shaw, LLP

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2024

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AUTHORITY****Kevin T. Brown***Seayfarth Shaw, LLP*

development for the Middle Georgia region, enhance climate resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the tribal, state and federal land managers, and constitute one of the largest potential expansions of public hunting and fishing access in Georgia.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. But as landowners in the corridor as well their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor, common practices of co-management at other units around the country, this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

In addition to the Muscogee (Creek) cultural sites, the wildlife habitat along the Ocmulgee has also remained unspoiled. The opportunity for connectivity is uniquely possible because so many private and public parcels are already protected along the corridor. Included is the 6,500-acre Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, part of roughly 85,000 acres of contiguous swamp, the largest block of forested habitat in the upper coastal plain. The park sits on the banks of the Ocmulgee River on the Macon Plateau along the Fall Line, the edge of a prehistoric sea and geological boundary that separates the hills of the Piedmont and the flatlands of the Atlantic coastal plain.

Further, the economic impact of the park and preserve cannot be overstated. A study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association estimates that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor. The study estimates that over the course of 15 years the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in tax revenue annually of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.

Lastly, one of the key economic engines of Middle Georgia is Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) in Warner Robins. This Park and Preserve will potentially offer a quality of life increase for the communities housed on base and the live in the region. It will also allow partners to put land along the Ocmulgee flood plain near the base into conservation, helping stave off encroachment into flight pattern areas. Future development in the areas east of the base is important to protect against incompatible land use. Conserving undeveloped lands within the Ocmulgee River Corridor will help the base continue to fulfill our national security missions, which is vital to the economic vitality of the entire Middle Georgia region.

Land abutting Robins AFB is vacant and mostly undeveloped. Legislation creating the National Park and Preserve will potentially allow RAFB, and park partners to leverage the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program to protect the environs inside their REPI boundary and inside the expanded Preserve boundary. It is for this reason that the Sustainability Plan for RAFB formally recommends the creation of the National Park and Preserve.

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To continue the robust effort of creating full connectivity of the corridor, we fully support the passage of legislation during the 118th Congress to establish and create the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. By protecting this landscape, working with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation as co-managers of their ancestral homeland, preserving the diverse wildlife habitat, protecting and increasing access to public hunting, fishing, and wildlife habitat, and increases name recognition and thereby national and international prominence of this treasure, this legislation will finally allow the Middle Georgia, local and national conservationist, the hunting and angling, and Muscogee (Creek) communities to preserve the corridor for generations to come.

As stewards of the corridor, it is up to us to fulfill the vision of a fully connected and conserved corridor, but we cannot continue to do so without swift federal action from Congress. That is why we support the passage of federal legislation in the 118th Congress. Every year that goes by without action, we risk future development, lost cultural sites, and missed opportunities for significant economic development in the beloved region of Middle Georgia. As a region and partnership, we have been preparing for this moment and are ready to rise to the challenge of filling the proposed boundary.

cannot continue to do so without swift federal action from Congress. That is why we support the passage of federal legislation in the 118th Congress. Every year that goes by without action, we risk future development, lost cultural sites, and missed opportunities for significant economic development in the beloved region of Middle Georgia. As a region and partnership, we have been preparing for this moment and are ready to rise to the challenge of filling the proposed boundary.

Regards



Robert E. Fountain, Jr.

Chairman



2024

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**COUNSEL OF THE
AUTHORITY**

Kevin T. Brown

Seyferth Shaw, LLP

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A RESOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO ADOPT THAT LEGISLATION KNOWN AS THE “OCMULGEE MOUNDS NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE ESTABLISHMENT ACT”

- WHEREAS:** The Ocmulgee Mounds in Macon, Georgia, contain evidence of over 12,000 years of continuous human habitation, and served as a central gathering point for native tribes throughout the region; and
- WHEREAS:** The handmade earthen mounds located along the Ocmulgee River served as meeting spaces, burial mounds, and other ceremonial sites that were central components of the occupants’ cultures and daily lives; and
- WHEREAS:** In the 1820s and 1830s, the inhabitants of these sacred sites were forcibly removed from their ancestral homes to the territory now known as Oklahoma; and
- WHEREAS:** The Macon-Bibb County Commission has made a conscientious effort to reestablish and build relationships with the descendants of those members of the Muscogee (Creek) tribe that were forcibly removed from the land now known as Macon-Bibb County; and
- WHEREAS:** In furtherance of those efforts, the Macon-Bibb County Commission has taken several measures to promote the efforts of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and its people in Macon-Bibb County, and to support their official interests, and to acknowledge the significance that the lands now constituting Macon-Bibb County have to its ancestors and to its people today; and
- WHEREAS:** The Middle Georgia Regional Commission identified the Ocmulgee National Monument as an important heritage resource in the 2010 and 2024 Middle Georgia Regionally Important Resources Plan citing its value as a significant archeological, historical, and natural resource for the world; and
- WHEREAS:** The Middle Georgia Regional Commission supported the work of the National Parks Conservation Association which evaluated the economic impact of a proposed Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve in 2017 determining that the designation as a Park and Preserve could add \$206 million annually to the middle Georgia economy; and

WHEREAS: The Middle Georgia Regional Commission supported the National Park Services to complete the Ocmulgee River Corridor Special Resource in 2023 which evaluated lands in Bleckley, Houston, Macon-Bibb, Pulaski and Twiggs Counties and determined that the area possesses natural and cultural resources that are nationally significant.

WHEREAS: Establishing the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park as the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and creating the Ocmulgee Mounds National Preserve, including the co-management of both by the tribe, would guarantee the preservation, and protection of the millennia of culture and relics contained in these sites for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations; and

WHEREAS: If passed, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission will be a member of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Advisory Council, which will advise the Secretary of the Interior in the development and implementation of a management plan for the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve; and

WHEREAS: The Middle Georgia Regional Commission understands and values the importance of working regionally to maximize the protection, educational and economic benefits of the Ocmulgee National Monument and Ocmulgee River corridor; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission reaffirms its commitment to promote the efforts of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and its people in Macon-Bibb County, to support their official interests, and to acknowledge the significance that the lands now constituting Macon-Bibb County have to its ancestors and to its people today.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission specifically urges the United States Congress to pass the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act, being House Bill No. 8182 and Senate Bill No. 4216 in the current session of the 118th Congress; and

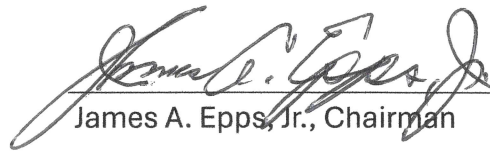
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission specifically urges President Joe Biden to sign the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act into law promptly upon passage by the Congress; and

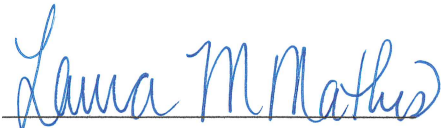
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to each member of the Congressional delegation representing the State of Georgia; to Speaker Mike Johnson of the United States Congress, to Vice President Kamala Harris of the United States, to United States President Joe Biden, to Principal Chief David Hill of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and to all others who might support the policies and positions adopted herein; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Middle Georgia Regional Commission grants the Executive Director and the Council Chair the authority to take any and all further actions necessary to carry out the intents and purposes of this Resolution.

Certificate of Passage

I hereby certify that the above and foregoing resolution was duly adopted by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission in regular session assembled on the 9th day of May 2024 and recorded in the official minutes of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.


James A. Epps, Jr., Chairman

ATTEST: 
Laura M. Mathis, Executive Director



February 13, 2024

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III
 Chairman
 U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
 306 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.
 Chairman
 Subcommittee on National Parks
 U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
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 Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members:

I am writing to support the swift passage of legislation to create the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the 118th Congress, to express gratitude for the federal efforts to meet this moment after almost a century of civic advocacy, and to acknowledge that we are committed to continuing to fulfill the vision of this Park and Preserve. NewTown Macon is a nonprofit founded in 1998 to revitalize downtown Macon, and designation of this park is a key tenet of our current strategic plan. The Ocmulgee National Park is not only well-deserved, it is the single greatest act available to Congress to cultivate Macon’s culture and economy for the next generation.

The Ocmulgee River is a special place, recognized by the National Park Service as one of America’s most important and significant wildlife habitat corridors, tribally significant landscapes, and archaeological sites with the opportunity of creating the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. The legislation to create the Park and Preserve unit is carefully tailored to the recommendations of the National Park Service’s Special Resource Study and has broad local support across varying fields, interests, and political ideologies. Conserving the series of ecological and cultural assets as a National Park and Preserve is vital to the region.



It will serve as a robust form of long-term and stable economic development for the Middle Georgia region, enhance climate resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes, offer an avenue for co-management between the tribal, state and federal land managers, and constitute one of the largest potential expansions of public hunting and fishing access in Georgia.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. But as landowners in the corridor as well their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor, common practices of co-management at other units around the country, this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

In addition to the Muscogee (Creek) cultural sites, the wildlife habitat along the Ocmulgee has also remained unspoiled. The opportunity for connectivity is uniquely possible because so many private and public parcels are already protected along the corridor. Included is the 6,500-acre Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, part of roughly 85,000 acres of contiguous swamp, the largest block of forested habitat in the upper coastal plain. The park sits on the banks of the Ocmulgee River on the Macon Plateau along the Fall Line, the edge of a prehistoric sea and geological boundary that separates the hills of the Piedmont and the flatlands of the Atlantic coastal plain.

Further, the economic impact of the park and preserve cannot be overstated. A study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association estimates that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor. The study estimates that over the course of 15 years the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in tax revenue annually of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.

Lastly, one of the key economic engines of Middle Georgia is Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) in Warner Robins. This Park and Preserve will potentially offer a quality of life increase for the communities housed on base and live in the region. It will also allow partners to put land along the Ocmulgee floodplain near the base into conservation, helping stave off encroachment into flight pattern areas. Future development in the areas east of the base is important to protect against incompatible land use. Conserving undeveloped lands within the Ocmulgee River Corridor will help the base continue to fulfill our national security missions, which is vital to the economic vitality of the entire Middle Georgia region.

Land abutting Robins AFB is vacant and mostly undeveloped. Legislation creating the National Park and Preserve will potentially allow RAFB, and park partners to leverage the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program to protect the environs inside their REPI boundary and inside the expanded Preserve boundary. It is for this reason that the Sustainability Plan for RAFB formally recommends the creation of the National Park and Preserve.



To continue the robust effort of creating full connectivity of the corridor, we fully support the passage of legislation during the 118th Congress to establish and create the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. By protecting this landscape, working with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation as co-managers of their ancestral homeland, preserving the diverse wildlife habitat, protecting and increasing access to public hunting, fishing, and wildlife habitat, and increases name recognition and thereby national and international prominence of this treasure, this legislation will finally allow the Middle Georgia, local and national conservationist, the hunting and angling, and Muscogee (Creek) communities to preserve the corridor for generations to come.

As stewards of the corridor, it is up to us to fulfill the vision of a fully connected and conserved corridor, but we cannot continue to do so without swift federal action from Congress. That is why we support the passage of federal legislation in the 118th Congress. Every year that goes by without action, we risk future development, lost cultural sites, and missed opportunities for significant economic development in the beloved region of Middle Georgia. As a region and partnership, we have been preparing for this moment and are ready to rise to the challenge of filling the proposed boundary. On behalf of our Board of Directors and Staff, I encourage you to pass this bill, and stand ready to answer your questions and comments. I am,

Sincerely,

Josh Rogers
President & CEO



The Nature Conservancy - Georgia
1270 Caroline Street
Suite D120 #357
Atlanta, GA 30307

Tel (404) 873-6946
Fax (404) 873-6984
nature.org/georgia

September 23, 2022

Senator Jon Ossoff
United States Senate
455 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock
United States Senate
388 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Sanford Bishop
United States House of Representatives
2407 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Austin Scott
United States House of Representatives
2417 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The Nature Conservancy greatly appreciates your efforts aiding conservation of the natural, cultural and historical treasures in the Ocmulgee River corridor of our state. We express our strong support for passage by the 117th Congress of legislation to create the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. TNC works in all 50 U.S. states and in 76 countries and territories. Our efforts have helped protect over 125 million acres of land worldwide and more than 400,000 acres in Georgia. We support protection and responsible conservation management of lands that provide important benefits to people and nature.

In Georgia, one of these important areas is the Ocmulgee River corridor, which runs through the heart of the state. The Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve would be a major advance for natural lands connectivity, which is so important to maintaining good habitat for both game and nongame wildlife. Establishment of the Park and Preserve will help conserve an area containing the largest forested habitat in Georgia's upper coastal plain.

This corridor is also of great cultural and historical significance to the people of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Designation of the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve will not only recognize the ecological and esthetic value of the area, but will also bring valuable resources to the preservation of a landscape that is so integral to the history and culture of the Native American mound builders.

The corridor currently provides a wealth of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, and its designation as a National Park and Preserve would provide increased tourism and other economic benefits to middle Georgia.

The area's largely forested and undeveloped landscape serves as a crucial buffer for the neighboring Robins Air Force Base (RAFB). Incompatible development of land adjoining a military installation can pose a threat to the base's military readiness. The U.S. Department of Defense operates a Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program at RAFB through which the base works with local partners to acquire and maintain land parcels near the base's air corridor in order to mitigate mission restrictions. Conserving undeveloped lands within the Ocmulgee River corridor will help Robins Air Force Base fulfill its national security mission.

Designation of the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve will be a major advance in creating full connectivity of the corridor. The Nature Conservancy supports the passage of legislation by the 117th Congress to create this first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia.

We thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nancy Clair Laird McInaney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Clair Laird McInaney
Chair, Board of Trustees
The Nature Conservancy in Georgia



FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III

Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator John Barrasso

Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.

Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Steve Daines

Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members,

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The Ocmulgee River is a special place, recognized by the National Park Service as one of America's most important and significant wildlife habitat corridors, tribally significant landscapes, and archaeological sites, now with the opportunity to create the first and only National Park and Preserve in Georgia. The legislation to create the Park and Preserve unit is carefully tailored to the recommendations of the National Park Service's Special Resource Study and has broad local support across varying fields, interests, and political ideologies.

Conserving the series of ecological and cultural assets as a National Park and Preserve is vital to the region. It will serve as a robust form of long term and stable economic development for the Middle Georgia region and enhance climate resilience for local ecosystems by preserving biodiversity hotspots, which are most effective in larger contiguous landscapes. In addition, the National Park and Preserve will offer an avenue for co-management between the tribal, state and federal land managers, and constitute one of the largest potential expansions of public hunting and fishing access in Georgia.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has been in consultation with the National Historical Park for years due to the significance of the ancestral sites inside the proposed boundary. But, as fellow landowners in the corridor with a long-standing commitment to the stewardship of the corridor, and with common practices of co-management at other units around the country, this Park and Preserve legislation would create a path toward co-management to be agreed upon by all land managers.

In addition to the Muscogee (Creek) cultural sites, the wildlife habitat along the Ocmulgee has also remained unspoiled. The opportunity for connectivity is uniquely possible because so many private and public parcels are already protected along the corridor. Included is the 6,500-acre Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, part of roughly 85,000 acres of contiguous swamp, the largest block of forested habitat in the upper coastal plain. The park sits on the banks of the Ocmulgee River on the Macon Plateau along the Fall Line, the edge of a prehistoric sea and geological boundary that separates the hills of the Piedmont and the flatlands of the Atlantic coastal plain.

Further, the economic impact of the park and preserve cannot be overstated. A study conducted by the National Parks Conservation Association concludes that the proposed National Park and Preserve will have a tremendous economic impact along the corridor. The study estimates that, over the course of 15 years, the region's municipalities can expect a collective increase in annual tax revenue of \$29.8 Million because of the projected \$206.7 Million of total economic activity generated from the Park and Preserve.

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As stewards of the corridor, it is up to us to fulfill the vision of a fully connected and conserved corridor, but we cannot continue to do so without swift federal action from Congress. That is why we strongly support the passage of federal legislation in the 118th Congress. Every year that goes by without action, we risk future development, lost cultural sites, and missed opportunities for significant economic development in the beloved region of Middle Georgia. As a region and partnership, we have been preparing for this moment and are ready to rise to the challenge of filling the proposed boundary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Dusenbury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "G" and a stylized "D".

George Dusenbury

VP of the Southeast