The Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve – Building the Case for National Significance: A Cultural Resource Assessment
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Building the Case for National Significance:
A Cultural Resource Assessment

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The geographic location of the Ocmulgee River is a noteworthy feature of the North American continent. As the southernmost tributary flowing from the Piedmont to the Atlantic, it marks a major continental watershed. West of the Ocmulgee, all waters flow into the Gulf of Mexico. The middle course of the river crosses the eastern Fall Line, where a natural trade route by land intersects another by water. Here, the first American civilization, the Mississippian Mound Builders, erected the greatest ceremonial center in the Southeast. Here, too, pioneers would establish the city of Macon, and Georgia’s first railroad soon brought produce to that inland port.

When river traffic ceased a century ago, so too did development on the Ocmulgee between Macon and Hawkinsville. This economic retreat isolated the river and its flanking forests and swamps from the residential and recreational growth taking place along Georgia’s waterways. In this Ocmulgee Corridor, Man’s imprint was much reduced, leaving archaeological sites untouched and wildlife undisturbed.

Joining the effort to preserve this special environment, Mercer University is conducting academically rigorous studies that analyze the cultural and natural resources of the Ocmulgee Corridor. This report provides the US Department of the Interior the evidence that we have found for historic and prehistoric resources of national significance. We look forward to sharing our findings with the public.

Eric Klingelhofer, PhD
Project Director
This report culminates the efforts of individuals and groups unnamed in the preceding title pages, yet all of whom deserve my appreciation for their contributions. Foremost among them are Brian Adams and the other members of the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative who commissioned this cultural resource study. The ONPPI has worked tirelessly to bring the vision of a protected Ocmulgee River Corridor to reality. I owe a great deal of thanks to the Peyton Anderson Foundation for providing funding for this project. Without this contribution, our study could not have taken place. I am also grateful to Provost Scott Davis, Senior Vice President Bill Solomon, Dean Anita Gustafson, and the other administrators integral in facilitating this study at Mercer University. Additionally, I owe thanks to Jim David, Superintendent of Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, for his dedication to helping preserve the cultural resources of the region.

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Archaological site information and locations are protected by law. This report and the data contained within it are not to be shared with the public or individuals other than the intended recipients at the National Park Service. For reference, please see the following federal and state laws:

**Federal Laws**

National Historic Preservation Act, as Amended (Public Law 95-515) and Section 106
Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (P.L. 96-95)
Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (P.L. 101-601)

**State Laws**

Archeological Exploration, Excavation, or Surveying (OCGA 12-3-52).
Protection of Archeological, Aboriginal, Prehistoric, and Historic Sites (OCGA 12-3-620 to 622).
Notification of Department Before Beginning Investigation or Disturbance of Site (OCGA 12-3-621 [b]).
Submerged Cultural Resources (OCGA 12-3-80 to 83).
Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (OCGA 36-72-1 to 16).
Notification of Law Enforcement Agency Upon Disturbance, Destruction or Debasement of Human Remains (OCGA 31-21-6).
When Public Disclosure is Not Required (OCGA 50-18-72[a][14]).
Georgia Environmental Policy Act (OCGA 12-16-1 to 8).
Cave Protection (OCGA 12-4-140 to 147).
State Archeologist (OCGA 12-3-53).
Criminal Trespass (OCGA 16-7-21).
1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Abstract

The Ocmulgee River corridor from the fall line into the coastal plain has an extensive history of human activity on the landscape. Within the counties of Bibb, Bleckley, Houston, Pulaski, and Twiggs, nearly nine hundred previously identified archaeological sites represent this rich cultural heritage along the river. Examination of site records and site spatial distribution reveals a significant number of these sites are suitable for national recognition and future conservation. Many of the documented resources are associated with events and themes of national significance. The sites’ quantity and quality, spatial characteristics, direct relevance to U.S. national history, and potential for future discovery of archaeological resources makes the Ocmulgee River Corridor a prime candidate for preservation efforts.

1.1.2 Introduction to the Ocmulgee River Corridor

The waters of the Ocmulgee River have flowed from the rolling hills of the piedmont through the coastal plain of Georgia for millions of years. As they carved valleys and filled bottomlands, these waters have supported an abundance of life in diverse forms. A significant part of that diversity has been the people who have existed around the river for thousands of years. Nowhere is this relationship between landscape and humanity more evident than along the stretch of river between the cities of Macon and Hawkinsville.

From ancient times to the present, the activities of the inhabitants within this area have intersected significant local, regional, and national narratives. Such a tremendous wealth of human experience has left its mark and record within the landscape, where it is readily available for those who look. At present, many are looking.

More recently, there has been an increasing awareness of, appreciation for, and desire to preserve the cultural resources within the Ocmulgee River basin. Local grassroots organizations, such as Save Oaky Woods and the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative, as well as national groups, like the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, have taken an interest in protecting the cultural heritage of the region.

1.1.3 Why Preserve Cultural Resources?

Before examining and assessing the resources specific to the Ocmulgee River corridor, it is beneficial to discuss why cultural resources, and archaeological resources in particular, should be preserved. An uncritical view of archaeological resources might appraise their value in terms of aesthetics, novelties, or objects of fascination. These qualities draw the eye of the public, a source of merit to be sure. Yet, a closer look reveals far more profound reasons to appreciate our nation’s archaeological resources.

From a scientific and historical perspective, archaeological resources shed light on periods of human existence otherwise poorly understood at present. Through the archaeological record, we can learn how past peoples engaged the environment. We learn of the technologies they developed and implemented. We also learn of the societal systems with which they operated. These types of information contain lessons applicable to our contemporary world. The lessons we can learn are dependent on the quantity and quality of resources we identify, preserve, and study. Unfortunately, these archaeological resources are non-renewable. Once destroyed or lost, they cannot be recovered. In this sense, they are precious.

The impact of archaeological resources on society often goes unstated. But their influence reaches deep. They serve
as a foundation for our collective heritage. They inform our cultural and national identities. Archaeological resources drive cultural narratives within local communities, regional populations, and at the national scale. We learn about who we are, where we have come from, and our own contemporary place within the ever-growing chain of human expression on the earth. Above all else, the preservation of archaeological resources provides both physical and cognitive spaces from which people gain perspective on what it means to be a part of the human family.
2.1 BACKGROUND

2.1.1 Geographic context

The area of study for this report comprises five counties surrounding roughly one hundred river miles of the Ocmulgee River: Bibb, Twiggs, Houston, Bleckley, and Pulaski. These counties cover an area of about 1,500 square miles. The larger cities of Macon, Warner Robins, and Hawkinsville are within this region. A major military base, Robins Air Force Base, is located along a significant segment of the western side of the river.

Several existing but non-contiguous state and federal public lands line the river corridor. These include Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, Echeconee Creek, Oaky Woods, and Ocmulgee Wildlife Management Areas, as well as the Flat Creek Public Fishing Area (Figure 2.1). The vast majority of these protected areas fall within five miles of the river.
Figure 2.1 5-County Study Area, with major areas of developed and public lands
The bounds of the study region capture a transitional zone in both geology and biology. The ancient Eocene shoreline, known as the Fall Line, marks the change from hilly Piedmont, to flat Coastal Plain. The Ocmulgee River flows through Fall Line Sandhills into clay-rich Red Uplands, creating unique ecoregions (Figure 2.2). Large floodplains, bottomland swamps, and rare ecological communities, such as blackland prairies, form in this transitional area (Edwards and Ambrose 2013). The diverse ecology in this region has supported the thousands of years of human activity on the landscape. A crossroads of ecological communities has become a crossroads of cultures.

**Figure 2.2** Ecoregions and Tributaries of the Ocmulgee River

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**Level IV Ecoregions**

- Atlantic Southern Loam Plains
- Coastal Plain Red Uplands
- Sand Hills
- Southerner Floodplains and Low Terraces
- Southern Outer Piedmont

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*Bond Swamp NWR with High Water Levels*

*Zephyranthes atamasca at Browns Mount*
2.1.2 Cultural Context

This report groups major cultural periods into the broad categories of ‘Prehistoric’ and ‘Historic.’ These terms are utilized for consistency with source documents and are defined by the absence or presence of written documentation. Prehistoric periods are those which we understand through archaeological and ethnographic research, while the historic periods are those for which we have written firsthand accounts. These two general terms correspond with the times prior to and after European arrival in North America. The term ‘pre-contact’ is synonymous with ‘prehistoric’ and is sometimes utilized. It should be clear that the periods and peoples designated ‘prehistoric’ do not lack history, significance, or complexity. On the contrary, the major duration and diversity of human occupation within the study area occurred during prehistoric times.

It should also be considered that the earliest periods of human history are not entirely discrete. The transitions from period to period, such as the Paleoindian to the Archaic, are often ambiguous. Type forms, dates, and defining cultural characteristics are subject to change as new evidence comes to light and the archaeological record becomes more defined.

**Paleoindian (13,500 – 8000 BCE)**

Based on the archaeological record and DNA evidence, the first known inhabitants of the study region descended from populations in East Asia which spread into North America, eventually reaching the Southeast (Anderson 2012). These peoples have been generally considered nomadic hunter-gatherers, though new research is questioning this view. In the archaeological record, Paleoindian peoples are primarily associated with the Clovis points and lithic assemblages discovered across the continent. Clovis points are particularly dense within the Southeast (Anderson 1996). Several sites within the study region for this report have yielded in-context Clovis points.

Archaeologists have subdivided this period into the Early, Middle, and Late Paleoindian. Lithic type forms form the basis of these subdivisions. Clovis projectile points identify the Early Paleoindian. Cumberland, Redstone, Suwannee, Simpson, Plainview, and other types represent the Middle. Dalton type points identify the Late Paleoindian.

**Archaic (8000 – 1000 BCE)**

The Archaic period is marked by increased social interconnectivity, new adaptive subsistence strategies in the face of a changing environment, and the first appearances of monumental architecture. While it seems that Archaic period peoples continued a hunting and gathering subsistence strategy, archaeological evidence reveals the very beginnings of horticulture and plant domestication during this time-frame. The earliest ceramic forms found within the study region also date to the Archaic. Inter-regional trade took place, including the movement of soapstone vessels from the piedmont to the coastal plane for which the Ocmulgee River corridor is strategically placed as a crossroads of exchange (James C. Wagggoner 2009).

Like the other pre-contact periods, the Archaic consists of subperiods based on artifact typologies. While Late Paleoindian to Early Archaic artifacts are often closely associated, the Early Archaic has unique lithic forms; including Palmer, Kirk, and Big Sandy points. Beyond various lithic forms, ground stone tools identify the Middle Archaic. Other distinct lithic forms define the Late Archaic. But, it is also identified through both plain and decorated pottery that has been fiber-tempered. The Late Archaic is also represented by subcultures or phases characterized by particular artifact forms and their distribution. These include the Stallings Island culture and Tufts Spring phase.
Woodland (1000 BCE – 1000 CE)

Evidence dating to the Woodland period suggests increased social and political complexity. Woodland peoples established vast networks of trade and cultural exchange across North America. Swift Creek peoples in Georgia participated in this network (Williams 1998). Hunting and gathering subsistence strategies were still prevalent during the Woodland. But, it is during this time that an economic transition to horticulture took place. Settlements were scattered and typically situated in floodplains, like that of the Ocmulgee. People of the Woodland period constructed stone and earthen mounds, though not as prolifically as the later Mississippian.

Distinct cultures, phases, and their associated artifact types characterize the Woodland subperiods. Within the study region, Refuge and Deptford cultures represent the Early Woodland. Deptford extends into the Middle Woodland, during which the Swift Creek culture emerges. Burial mounds, exotic trade items, Swift Creek pottery, and a variety of other distinct ceramic forms characterize the Middle Woodland. Arrow points, Vining and Napier ceramic types, and flat-topped mounds signify the Late Woodland. The Late Woodland is also associated with the Weeden Island subculture.

Mississippian (1000 – 1500 CE)

During the Mississippian period societies became economically based on intensive agriculture. This new agricultural system centered on maize production. A shifting network of large polities supported by a hinterland of small villages and camps characterizes the settlement landscape at this time. Monumental mounds, plazas, and elaborate burials evidence a stratified socio-political system. As the name suggests, Mississippian peoples originated along the Mississippi River. Their culture spread eastward, and into the study region.

The Early Mississippian subperiod saw the arrival of the Mississippian peoples along the Ocmulgee River. The area surrounding the Macon Pleateau quickly became the site of a major political center. The Early Mississippian constructed large ceremonial and burial mounds and council houses, like those found at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and at nearby Brown’s Mount. Artifacts defining this period are grit and shell-tempered pottery forms. Examples include Bibb Plain, Napier, and Hawkins fabric-marked. Mound building continued on a lesser scale for ceremonial and residential purposes during the Middle Mississippian. The Savannah subculture and artifacts including Hamilton and Madison points identify this period. The Late Mississippian continued the traditions of prior Mississippian subperiods. Though, the large political center of the Macon Plateau had declined by this time. The Lamar culture represents this subperiod, along with Cowarts and Stubbs phases. During the Late Mississippian, the first contacts between Native Americans and Europeans took place.
Figure 2.3  Pre-Contact Cultural Timeline

CULTURAL PERIODS OF THE SOUTHEAST
prior to European contact

PALEOINDIAN
- Clovis Points
- Paleoindian People Skinning Bison
- Late Paleoindian Dalton Point

ARCHAIC
- Archaic Hunter Using an Atlatl
- Stallings Island Punctated Ceramics
- Incomplete Soapstone Vessels Carved from Outcrop

WOODLAND
- Hamilton Triangular Point, Twiggs County Georgia
- Late Woodland Domestic Scene
- Swift Creek Pottery Stamp Design

MISSISSIPPIAN
- Lamar Bold Incised Pottery
- Mississippian Mound Center
- Soapstone Bird Effigy Pipe, Ocmulgee
Early Historic (1500 - 1732)

The Early Historic period follows immediately after European contact with Native populations in the Americas. The first European accounts of life in the study region come from this time. After the conquest of indigenous populations on Caribbean islands and Mesoamerica, Spanish conquistadors and missionaries established themselves in Florida and ventured through the Southeast. Hernando De Soto led an armed expedition through the central portions of Georgia in 1540 and encountered numerous Native villages and chiefdoms. This band crossed the Ocmulgee; however, the exact location remains disputed. The Native peoples De Soto came into contact with in central Georgia were of the Late Mississippian Lamar culture. From the Spanish accounts, we know a great deal of their customs and society.

During the subsequent years, indigenous populations declined rapidly as a result of societal destabilization, political fission, disruption of food sources, and diseases brought by sustained European contact. The Spanish did not immediately settle in southeastern North America, but did establish a post along the Florida Coast in 1565 at St. Augustine. For the next 120 years the Spanish developed missions and presidios along the south Atlantic coast up to the Carolinas, including along the Georgia coast. Although they did not create any Spanish settlements in central Georgia, through trade and diplomatic missions, they had continual contact with the indigenous peoples of central Georgia, even after their withdrawal south of the St. Mary’s River into modern day Florida in 1686.

In the late 17th and early 18th centuries the French and the English joined the Spanish in the region (though not in central Georgia). The French began pushing down the Mississippi River in the 1670s from New France, eventually reaching its mouth in 1682. They followed up these expeditions by establishing trading posts/forts along the Gulf coast at places that became the eventual towns of Biloxi (Mississippi) and Mobile (Alabama). From these posts the French made contact with Native peoples through trade and diplomatic expeditions into the interior. Through these efforts they would have had at least indirect contact with the peoples of central Georgia.

The English moved into the region in the 1670s through the founding of the Carolinas and the settlement of Charles Town (now Charleston, South Carolina). Traders soon fanned out into the interior, interacting with central Georgia residents, although the settlements all remained relatively coastal well into the eighteenth century. In the 1710s a significant colonial war broke out, generally known as the Yamassee War, that created significant disruptions in Native populations along the coast and into the interior, prompting new indigenous tribal alliances (Corkran 1967).

With the establishment of English, Spanish, and French settlements along the periphery of central Georgia, the area that would become the colony of Georgia became what historians have long called “the Debatable Land”—occupied by indigenous peoples but surrounded on three sides by European settlements. By the end of this period, Native populations from the Chattahoochee River valley; and descendants of the Lamar culture coalesced at the crossroads along the Ocmulgee River and ultimately became the Muscogee or Creek people.
Colonial, Revolutionary War (1733 - 1789)

The English colony of Georgia was founded by the Trustees in 1733, and that founding set in motion new arrangements in southeastern North America. James Oglethorpe soon emerged as the leading Trustee (and the only one to ever come to Georgia). He visited the colony several times between 1733 and 1745 and generally exercised executive authority when in residence. Given his military background, he took a particular interest in Anglo-Indian relations and worked assiduously to develop peaceful, even allied, relations with the various groups of indigenous peoples who increasingly were being referred to and identified as “Creeks” (including the Yamacraw Indians located in the region of Savannah when Oglethorpe first landed.) Although much of the interior of the state of Georgia remained unsettled by Europeans during the colonial period and Revolutionary War, the colonial Georgian government and authorized traders established and maintained trading and diplomatic relations with the natives. As a result of the competing efforts of the French, Spanish, and English governments to gain dominance in the region, the Muscogee (Creek) and Cherokee populations during this time exercised a significant level of political agency in dealings with colonial powers. This dynamic dissolved after the removal of the French from the region in 1763 and the Spanish from Florida. Fairly soon, however, a new power – The United States – emerged in the region in the wake of the Revolutionary War.

Early Republic and American Expansion (1783 - 1821)

Following the American Revolution, westward expansion, removal treaties, and intermittent warfare marked US-Native relations for several decades. Additionally, when Britain returned Florida to Spain at the end of the American Revolution, the international competition returned. During the Confederation Period (1781-1787) the Americans largely took a “Conquered Nations” approach to Native tribal groupings, meaning that since Britain had ceded all territorial claims east of the Mississippi River to the United States, that tribes occupying that area had also been conquered and had forfeited their lands. Not surprisingly, Natives in the region rejected this assessment and warfare often resulted in the frontier regions. In Georgia, warfare remained relatively muted and instead diplomacy through cession treaties became the standard practice. Treaty followed upon treaty until the boundary of US Georgia stood at the Ocmulgee River after 1805.

At this point, the central portions of Georgia became an international crossroads for Euro-Americans and the Native nations. In 1806, Fort Hawkins was built near the Macon Plateau as a center of commerce, diplomacy, and military activity. During the War of 1812, a series of fortifications were built along the Ocmulgee River. These forts were built largely in response to the Creek War of 1813. While the Ocmulgee River corridor was not exactly a “front line” in the multifaceted conflict between various Creek factions and between some Creeks and the United States, tension and violence to the west gave rise to rumors of impending Indian attacks among the region’s white populace. By 1825, under pressure from American settlers, state, and federal governments, the Creek peoples of Georgia had been forced to cede their lands by the U.S. government. Following the Indian Removal Act, the majority of Creek people were eventually removed to present-day Oklahoma.

The physical geography of the Ocmulgee River corridor that attracted the original indigenous communities of the region also suited the interests of the new European American settlers. At the southern hub of the corridor, Pulaski County was established in 1808. The once thriving town of Hartford served as county seat until 1836 when it was moved across the river to
Hawkinsville. Bibb County was established in the area around Fort Hawkins in 1822 and the city of Macon chartered the following year. To this day, the towns of Macon and Hawkinsville serve as the northern and southern gateways of the Ocmulgee River corridor (see Figure 2.1).

During the early decades of the 19th Century these towns’ economies boomed due to their strategic location on the river. Before the construction of major railroad lines, boats transported raw materials, finished goods, and people between these interior towns and the coastal ports of Darien and Brunswick (Morrison 2003). Steamboats, logging barges, and pole boats traversed the river between Macon and Hawkinsville, making the Ocmulgee the economic and cultural artery which united the communities of the region.

_Growth and Depression (1872 - 1941)_

This period saw the rise of the southern textile and sharecropping economies. In Georgia, an almost equal proportion of emancipated slaves and poor whites made up the sharecropper population into the 1940s. During World War I, the area around Macon became another major center of military activity with the establishment of Camp Wheeler, a U.S. Army training center. After the Great Depression began in 1929, unemployment was a serious concern that ultimately caused many rural whites and blacks to relocate to industrial centers in northern states. During the 1930s and 1940s both federal and state economic relief programs were implemented, including the sponsorship of major archaeological excavations within the Ocmulgee River corridor.

_World War II to Present (1942 - Present)_

World War II brought much needed economic stimulation to the United States, including the areas in Georgia along the Ocmulgee. Camp Wheeler was utilized again as an infantry training ground, hospital, and prisoner-of-war camp. This period saw a shift from a predominantly agricultural economy to the rise of service industries in the region. During the Cold War, the former Warner Robins Army Air Depot was transformed into a major Air Force base, exemplifying the military-industrial complex of the time. Robins Air Force Base is now the area’s largest single employer and is critical to the regional economy.
Figure 2.4  Post-Contact Cultural Timeline

HISTORIC PERIODS OF THE SOUTHEAST

1500
1732
1733
1789
1790
1821
1822
1877
1878
1941
1942

EARLY HISTORIC
Late Mississipians Cooking Fish
Spanish Conquistador Hernando de Soto
View of Charles Town Harbor, Carolina 1690

COLONIAL ERA and REVOLUTION
James Edward Oglethorpe, Founder of the Colony of Georgia
Battle of Kettle Creek, Georgia 1779

EARLY REPUBLIC and AMERICAN EXPANSION
Fort Benjamin Hawkins, Georgia 1806-1810
Opathleyahola, Muscogee (Creek) Chief

ANTEBELLUM, CIVIL WAR, RECONSTRUCTION
Antebellum Cotton Plantation

GROWTH & DEPRESSION
YMCA at Camp Wheeler, Georgia 1917-1918
Family at roadside during the Great Depression, Macon, Georgia

WORLD WAR II to the PRESENT
Robins Air Depot Hangars
Downtown Macon, Georgia 1940s

BACKGROUND – Cultural Context
3.1 DATA AND METHODS

This report contains a survey and summary of archaeological sites within the study area. It also contains basic spatial analyses of archaeological resources. These efforts required an accurate and comprehensive database of archaeological sites. This section provides a basic description of the data sources and methods employed.

3.1.1 Data Sources

The Georgia Archaeological Site File (GASF) provided existing archaeological site information for the five-county study area. Curated by the University of Georgia, the GASF contains records for each documented archaeological site within the state. These files are accessed through Georgia’s Natural, Archaeological, and Historic Resources GIS (GNAHRGIS). Archaeological site location and information is protected by the Georgia Open Records Act (OCGA 50-18-72[a][14]) and other laws. Access is only granted to qualified archaeologists, researchers, and other professionals. Please see the note preceding site data in the appendix of this report.

The Georgia GIS Clearinghouse and the Atlanta Regional Commission Open Data and Mapping Hub were the sources for additional shapefiles. These include county boundaries, hydrology, conservation lands, geologic features, and other supplementary datasets. The U.S. Geological Survey provided Digital-Elevation-Model datasets.

3.1.2 Data Description and Limitations

The GASF is the basis of this report and is the most comprehensive dataset available for archaeological resources within the state. However, it is an imperfect record, and like all data, has inherent limitations. The quality of individual site files varies from record to record, which can be the result of numerous factors including clerical errors, misinterpretation of original written records, or missing original documents. Poor records are especially common for sites documented prior to the implementation of a computer-based system. For spatial analysis, it is vital to note that the geographic coordinates for each site are approximate. This is especially true for sites documented before the use of GPS tools.

Each site’s record contains at least one site file form containing the essential information for an individual site. These forms are completed and submitted to the GASF by the professional archaeologist documenting a given site. The quality of information provided in these forms depends on the professional interpretation and assessment of the individual archaeologist. Detailed reports from surveys and excavations of sites are not contained within the GASF. The GASF is updated as new sites are documented throughout the state. If a site is revisited, an additional site form is typically added to the site records. However, the updating of the site files depends on the manual entry of each new site, so the most recently documented sites may not yet be present in the GASF.

Despite the imperfections of the GASF, it remains the most vital source of comprehensive data for archaeological resources in the state of Georgia. The usefulness of the data it contains is of signal importance, especially when examining resources on a regional scale. For this report, efforts were made to mitigate the most glaring errors in the data, which is discussed in the methods section.
3.1.3 Methods

Through GNAHRGIS, basic site numbers, site names, and geospatial coordinates were obtained and compiled for each county within the study area (Figure 3.1). In order for the dataset to be utilized for any analytical purposes, a set of relevant attribute fields were generated. These fields include time-period, associated cultures, site type, National Register status, and preservation condition.

The site attributes were completed according to the site forms on record. To do so, each site record required individual examination. While this was necessary to obtain pertinent information for analysis, it also ensured some quality control for the dataset. The quality of each site record can vary as a result of the time the site was identified, the individual who documented the site, or possible curatorial errors. Individual examination of the site file records allowed identification of duplicate, erroneous, missing, or misinterpreted information.

Following the completion of the site attributes for each county, the resulting CSV spreadsheets were brought into a GIS environment for analysis and manipulation. Shapefiles for each county’s archaeological site data were also created and combined to form a geodatabase of site file data for the five-county area. The site file data was filtered and examined spatially according to basic attributes, such as cultural period, National Register status, etc. Using additional layers and buffers, site densities were assessed as well as site proximity to the Ocmulgee River and tributaries.
4.1 ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES

The following section examines the characteristics of documented archaeological sites of the five-county study area based on the geodatabase generated from GASF records. Site counts and typologies provide an overview for the resources within the Ocmulgee River corridor. For further contextualization of known resources, sites are then analyzed and represented spatially by a variety of significant attributes. This section concludes with an inventory of important sites, which are indicated by their eligibility for placement in the National Register of Historic Places.

While considering the data presented in this section, it is important to keep in mind some of the limitations of the data. Most site coordinates are approximate. Sites situated near boundaries have the potential to be misclassified. However, these instances are likely to be few and should not affect general trends in the data. The figures and descriptions of site data contained in this report are meant to generalize resource characteristics. It is not a goal of this report to represent archaeological site locations with precision.

4.1.1 Site Numbers, Typologies, and Spatial Characteristics

The entire study area contains 887 sites documented within the GASF. These are shown by county in Figure 4.1. Bibb, Houston, and Twiggs counties contain the bulk of known sites, each with over two-hundred sites. Pulaski County contains 114 archaeological sites. Bleckley contains the fewest with only 81 documented sites.

Figure 4.1 Individual County Site Counts
While sites are scattered across each county area (Figure 4.1), it appears that sites are most dense in areas adjacent to the Ocmulgee River and its major tributaries. A density analysis (Figure 4.4), reinforces this clustering of sites around waterways. Three areas with the highest concentration of archaeological sites are found along the river in Bibb County, Houston County, and at the boundary of Bleckley and Pulaski counties. Additional areas of lesser clustering are all found along the Ocmulgee or its tributaries.

To gain an idea of overall site proximity to waterways, two buffered zones were employed (Figure 4.3). The lands surrounding the Ocmulgee and its floodplain are less developed than the areas surrounding the tributaries. In some places the floodplain stretches a considerable distance from the river. Additionally, existing public lands extend from the river at least several miles, notably the Ocmulgee WMA and Oaky Woods WMA. Thus, a five-mile buffer is used for the Ocmulgee River to capture both archaeological sites and areas of conservation potential which are approximate to the river. Only a one-mile buffer zone was created for the major streams as they flow through areas of higher development. The application of these buffers revealed that 61% of all known sites fall within five miles of the Ocmulgee River. 63% of all known sites fall within one mile of the Ocmulgee River or one of its tributaries. 80% of all sites are located within either five miles of the river or within one mile of a major tributary (Figure 4.2).

These maps and numbers represent characteristics of the existing data. From a predictive modeling perspective, more archaeological sites are found near waterways than not as a pattern of human behavior. These site numbers and distributions, however, are not necessarily indicative of any inherent richness or lack of resources within a given area. Most sites have been identified through survey related to development or other land disturbing activities that required an archaeological assessment. The densest concentrations along the river fall within areas which require thorough archaeological surveys by law, such as RAFB and the WMAs (Figure 4.5). Simply put, the places where archaeologists have looked, are the places where archaeological sites have been found. Based on the overall site counts and distribution, it can be said with some confidence that there are many undiscovered or undocumented sites present within the Ocmulgee River Corridor.

Figure 4.2 Percentage of All Archaeological Sites Proximity to Major Waterways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>61%</th>
<th>63%</th>
<th>80%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within 5 miles of Ocmulgee River</td>
<td>Within 1 mile of Ocmulgee River or a Major Tributary</td>
<td>Within 5 miles of Ocmulgee River or 1 mile of a Tributary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.3  Archaeological Sites Captured by Waterway Buffers

Figure 4.4  Archaeological Site Density
Figure 4.5  Archaeological Sites Located within Government Managed Lands
Sorting and examining archaeological sites by their associated cultural period and site type provides additional insights concerning the cultural resources of the Ocmulgee River Corridor. Of the 887 sites within the study area, 508 (57%) are denoted as prehistoric, 203 (23%) are historic, and 155 (17.5%) have both prehistoric and historic components (Figure 4.6). The remaining 21 sites are found in the GASF with blank site forms or missing data. Nevertheless, these statistics make it clear that the overwhelming majority of archaeological sites within the region are prehistoric in nature.

These prehistoric sites can be analyzed in further detail by their cultural periods (Figure 4.7). Paleoindian sites are the least common, with only thirteen represented in the data. Archaic and Woodland period sites are most plentiful, each with around 200 sites. Mississippian sites total 109. As would be expected, prehistoric sites are found primarily along the Ocmulgee River and major streams (Figure 4.7).

Archaeological sites containing historic resources make up the minority of sites within the study area. Many of these sites are the locations of garbage deposits or other similar historic debris located during a survey, such as bricks, nails, or glass. However, others are more notable, those associated with former home sites, farms, cemeteries, or mills. Figure 4.8 provides a general sense of historic archaeological site distribution. With some outstanding exceptions, such as Fort Hawkins, the majority of these historic archaeological sites are of little significance when compared to the wealth of important prehistoric sites. The most important of these known historic archaeological sites have already been listed or recommended for the National Register of Historic Places, as indicated in the significant site inventory section of this report.

**Figure 4.6** Archaeological Site Counts by Major Time Period

- **23%** Historic
- **57%** Prehistoric
- **17.5%** Historic and Prehistoric Components
- **2.5%** Unknown

887 Sites
Figure 4.7 Prehistoric Site Counts by Cultural Period

- **Paleoindian** (13,500 – 8,000 BCE)
  - 13 Sites

- **Archaic** (8,000 – 1,000 BCE)
  - 207 Sites

- **Woodland** (1,000 BCE – 1,000 CE)
  - 196 Sites

- **Mississippian** (1,000 – 1,500 CE)
  - 109 Sites
Figure 4.8 Historic Archaeological Site Distribution
The archaeological sites of the Ocmulgee River Corridor can also be characterized by their types. Counts for archaeological site types recorded in the GASF are shown in Table 4.1. Problematically, the site types are not inherently discrete. They are based upon entries made by the professional archaeologist who completed each site form, and limited by basic record keeping efficiency. For example, a ‘mound’ site may contain burials without being typified as a ‘burial.’ Also, many sites contain more than one or two site type descriptors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airstrip</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Isolated Artifact</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifact Scatter</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>Isolated Historic</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick Pile</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Isolated Prehistoric</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lithic Scatter</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mill</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mound</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramic Scatter</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Push Pile</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cistern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quarry</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dam</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Railroad</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dump</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rock Dam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rock Shelter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Still</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furnace</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tavern</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grist Mill</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Trash Dump</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Cemetery</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Indian Scatter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Water Tank</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Scatter</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>Waterworks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Village</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Well</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homesite</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House/Structure</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>Missing Data</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the various site types, one of the most important as a cultural resource are mound sites. These pre-contact sites typically date to the Woodland and Mississippian periods. They are indicative of centers of relatively long term political, religious, and social importance. From a cultural resource management perspective, mounds are already symbols of the prehistory of the region in the mind of the general public, colloquially called ‘Indian Mounds.’ For these reasons, the fourteen mound sites documented in the GASF were examined as a whole (Table 4.2, Figure 4.9).

The preservation state of six of the fourteen is currently unknown. While some have been heavily disturbed, it is likely that most of these sites still contain valuable archaeological resources. Each of the documented mound sites within the Ocmulgee River Corridor is located in close proximity to the river (Figure 4.9). Many of these mound sites are highlighted in the following inventory of significant sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Number</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Cultural Periods</th>
<th>Preservation State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9BI1</td>
<td>Macon Plateau</td>
<td>Mississippian</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9BI2</td>
<td>Lamar Mounds</td>
<td>Mississippian, Historic Indian</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9BI3</td>
<td>Swift Creek</td>
<td>Woodland</td>
<td>Graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9BI4</td>
<td>Adkins</td>
<td>Woodland</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9BI5</td>
<td>Browns Mount</td>
<td>Mississippian</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9BI12</td>
<td>Stubbs</td>
<td>Mississippian, Woodland</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9BI14</td>
<td>Cowarts Landing</td>
<td>Mississippian, Woodland</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9BI16</td>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Mississippian, Woodland</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9BI128</td>
<td>Adele</td>
<td>Mississippian</td>
<td>Vandalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9PU1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Woodland</td>
<td>Razed and Redeposited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9PU3</td>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>Woodland</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9PU10</td>
<td>Sandy Hammock</td>
<td>Mississippian</td>
<td>Razed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9PU76</td>
<td>Hartford Mound</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9TW1</td>
<td>Bullards Mounds</td>
<td>Mississippian</td>
<td>Vandalized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.9  Mound Site Distribution
4.1.2 Significant Site Inventory

The following inventory contains the most significant sites within the study region. These sites were deemed significant because of the National Register of Historic Places eligibility status currently on record for each site. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 authorized the creation of the National Register of Historic Places. It operates under the National Park Service as the official list of historic and archaeological resources meriting preservation. National Register listing is a precursor to grants, tax-credits, and other funds designated for the preservation of our nation’s most valuable cultural resources. Resources eligible for the National Register must fulfill specific criteria. The National Park Service has set forth the criteria for eligible resources as follows:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The evaluation criteria for determining National Register eligibility have become a general standard for assessing the importance of cultural resources and thus National Register eligibility has been utilized to identify the most important sites within the study region of this report.

Fifty-six sites were found to be either Listed, Eligible, or Recommended Eligible for the National Register (Table 4.3, Figure 4.10). Sites which are ‘Determined Eligible’ or ‘Recommended Eligible’ are based on the assessment of the individual professional archaeologist who surveyed or documented each site. The majority of these evaluated resources fall into the ‘Recommended Eligible’ category. These sites contain rich resources but have not been definitively evaluated based on the NRHP criteria. Due to the sheer quantity of sites ‘Recommended Eligible’ (45), only a representative sample is discussed further in this inventory.

Table 4.3  NRHP Eligible Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Number of Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Eligible</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined Eligible</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that this inventory is neither comprehensive nor fully representative of the significance of all resources present within the study area. 41% of sites documented have an ‘Unknown’ status for National Register eligibility. This is usually due to survey limits, and further testing of many of these sites could result in many additions to the National Register. A sample of important sites likely to be eligible, but that have an unknown National Register status concludes this inventory of significant sites.
Figure 4.10  NRHP Eligible Site Distribution
## Listed Sites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9BI1</th>
<th>MACON PLATEAU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Macon plateau map" /></td>
<td>The Macon Plateau site is the most prominent archaeological site within the region. It is the site of a major Early Mississippian polity, but artifact assemblages have been recovered from all major periods of prehistory and into early historic periods. Some of the best in-context Paleoindian artifacts have been discovered on the Macon Plateau. The site was also home to an early Carolinian trading post and was the birthplace and center of the Muscogee or Creek Nation. Major archaeological excavations were conducted here during the 1930’s sponsored by New Deal work relief programs. The site is currently protected as part of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9BI2</th>
<th>LAMAR MOUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Lamar mounds map" /></td>
<td>The Lamar Mounds site is located in the Ocmulgee river floodplain, surrounded by swampy areas. The Lamar Mounds is the type site for the Late Mississippian Lamar culture, though its use can be traced to earlier periods. The site consists of two mounds and a central plaza. The site has a unique spiral mound. It is currently part of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, but discontinuous with the main unit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis of Resources**

### Significant Site Inventory

- **9BI1** Great and Lesser Temple Mounds at Ocmulgee National Monument
- **9BI2** Historic Image of Spiral Mound at Lamar Mounds (National Park Service, Ocmulgee National Monument)
Fort Hawkins is located on a hilltop adjacent to Ocmulgee National Monument within the Fort Hill Historic District. It is the site of a military outpost established in 1806 that served as a diplomatic meeting place between the U.S. government, Georgia, and Creek Nation. The site contains a reconstructed blockhouse built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1938. Pre-contact components uncovered at the site date to the Mississippian, Woodland, and possibly the Archaic. The site is protected by the City of Macon.
This small 19th-Century site is comprised of the remnants of a brick water tower. The site has not been fully investigated and was left undisturbed. Presently, a gazebo stands directly above the site. The Overlook Mansion site is listed on the National Register for its association with the Cowles-Woodruff House. This antebellum Greek Revival home was constructed in 1836 and served as the home and headquarters for General Wilson during the federal occupation of Macon during the Civil War. The house was used as the campus for Stratford Academy. The house and property were listed on the National Register in 1971.

Myrick's Mill is the site of a historic grist mill which served the local community located on Big Sandy Creek in Twiggs County. The mill was in operation for at least 150 years and was visited by the Marquis de Lafayette in 1825. This mill and associated pond and dam were listed on the National Register in 1975.
Sites Determined Eligible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9BI164</th>
<th>AVONDALE BURIAL PLACE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formerly named the McArthur Slave Cemetery, the Avondale Burial Place is a 19th-century African-American cemetery. The cemetery was threatened by a transportation construction project. However, in accordance with environmental protection laws, the site was identified, documented, and excavated by archaeologists. In February 2012, each of the 101 graves were excavated and reinterred at Bethel AME Church in Byron, Georgia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9HT189</th>
<th>ELBERTA TOWN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site is located on land leased by Robins Air Force Base. While a scatter of prehistoric lithic debitage was identified here, the majority of archaeological resources recovered are related to the early township of Elberta. Elberta Township dates to the late 19th to middle 20th-centuries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9PU37 is a prehistoric site located near 9PU69 and 9PU57 within the Ocmulgee Wildlife Management and Public Fishing Area. A dense lithic and ceramic scatter is present here. Recovered artifacts date to the archaic and woodland periods. Swift Creek pottery was also recovered at this site.

9PU57 is a prehistoric site approximate to, and likely associated with sites 9PU69 and 9PU37 within the Ocmulgee WMA & PFA. Ceramic and lithic materials related to the Archaic, Woodland, and Early Mississippian periods were recovered. Two graves were identified, and likely date to the Swift Creek culture.

9PU69 is a notable prehistoric site which has yielded materials related to the Paleoindian, Archaic, and Woodland periods. The latest occupation dates to the Swift Creek culture. Dense lithic and ceramic assemblages were present. Additionally, two circular pit features were identified. This site is located in proximity to 9PU37 and 9PU57 within the Ocmulgee WMA & PFA and has the potential to contain other subsurface features.
This site contains a diverse assemblage of lithic and ceramic materials associated with the Archaic and Woodland periods.
Sites Recommended Eligible:

**9Bl128 - ADELE**

The Adele site is a Late Mississippian village site and mound complex. The site is located in the floodplain adjacent to the Ocmulgee River. It is comprised of thirteen mounds, most of which are low house mounds. Lithic and ceramic artifacts were recovered from the site. Notably, a complete pipe was among the assemblage. One of the mounds has been vandalized by looters, however most of the site has been preserved by alluvium. The site is situated on land owned by the Cherokee Brick Company.

**9HT55 - ECHECONNEE CREEK INLET**

This site is located on an upland terrace overlooking the Echeconnee Creek floodplain on land leased by Robins AFB. The site has yielded a large quantity of lithics and ceramics which date to some of the most significant phases of human occupation in the region. The Early, Middle, and Late Archaic diagnostics are present, as well as Early and Middle Woodland. Swift Creek complicated stamped ceramics have been identified from this site. There is also a Late Mississippian (Lamar) component. The latest use of the site dates to the Ocmulgee Fields or Historic Creek time.

**9PU20 - BIG TUCSAWHATCHEE**

This large site located along Big Tucswatchchee Creek contains a significant number of assemblages which date to the Middle Paleoindian, Early to Late Archaic, Early to Middle Woodland, and Late Mississippian. Various lithic and ceramic forms associated with these periods were uncovered. One feature was identified. The site limits are unknown and additional investigation should be undertaken.
9PU92 is a prehistoric site located within the Ocmulgee WMA and located on lands used as a seed farm. This site sits on a sandy rise planted with wiregrass in Pulaski County. The site was identified by surface artifacts and was investigated by the Historic Preservation Division. Deeply deposited artifacts were uncovered at this site. The earliest date to the Middle Archaic. Woodland and Mississippian periods are also represented. 9PU92 has been covered, and steps have been made for its preservation for future investigation.
Important Sites Likely to be Eligible:

The following sites were selected as a representative sample of those sites which are well-documented, contain outstanding resources, yet have not been assessed for National Register eligibility or their eligibility is unnoted in the GASF. This discrepancy between sites known to be important and their lack of evaluation or documentation regarding the National Register highlights the need for more thorough curation of resources within the Ocmulgee River Corridor. Beyond the samples below, many more sites are worthy for consideration for National Register listing. Future cultural resource conservation efforts will be critical for recovering the true richness of the Ocmulgee River Corridor.

**Brown’s Mount**

Brown’s Mount is a prominent geological feature which rises above the floodplain of the Ocmulgee River. Its summit is the site of a multi-component prehistoric archaeological site. A stacked stone wall and ditch, possibly dating to the Woodland, once encompassed the summit. The remains of an earth lodge and mounds dating to the Mississippian are also located at the site (See Williams 1993). Brown’s Mount is also the site of a historic cemetery and homestead. Most of the site is currently owned by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, there is a small portion of the mount which is privately owned and contains a portion of the archaeological site. These private lands were listed for sale as of early 2019.
The Stubbs site is a mound and village site located in Bibb County, within the Bond Swamp NWR. It was originally excavated by the WPA archaeologists in the 1930s. It contains components which date to the Early to Late Archaic, Early to Middle Woodland, and Lamar phase of the Late Mississippian. Swift Creek artifacts were recovered from the Stubbs site. The primary period of occupation seems to date to the Lamar culture. (See Williams 1992)

Originally excavated by WPA archaeologist Gordon Willey, Cowart’s Landing is found within Bibb County and is the site of a prehistoric mound and village. Periods associated with the site include Late Archaic, Early to Late Woodland, and Late Mississippian. Swift Creek, Napier, and Lamar ceramics have been recovered from the site. Steatite vessels fragments have also been uncovered at Cowart’s Landing.

The Bullards Mounds site is located on private lands within Twiggs County. The site is a village site made up of at least eleven low mounds. This village site dates to the Late Mississippian and seems to have been occupied for a short period of time. The site was excavated by Mercer University in 1988, 1989, and 1990. The site has been vandalized by looters since. (See Williams and D Evans 1993)
ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES – Significant Site Inventory

9BI12 Site Conditions at the Stubbs Site within Bond Swamp NWR
5.1 RESOURCES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

5.1.1 Definition of Significance and Criteria for Evaluation of Resources

While the resources found within this study area are directly tied to local and regional occurrences, they also embody and document widespread themes and events which took place on a national or even continental level. Across time, this region along the Ocmulgee River has been a literal and figurative crossroads of peoples, cultures, and events.

In order to assess the true national significance of resources documented within the Ocmulgee River corridor, a refined evaluation was employed for each resource. This evaluation was based upon the criteria outlined for the National Register of Historic Places as well as the qualifying categories used by the National Park Service when considering new park system units. The following five groups summarize these criteria:

A. Resources related to events which are associated, identified with, or contributed to broad patterns of national history.
B. Resources associated with the lives of persons significant to U.S. national history.
C. Resources which embody an outstanding architectural type, representative of a time, style, culture, or construction methods.
D. Resources which collectively comprise an entity with historic or artistic importance, or represents a way of life or culture.
E. Resources which have provided or are likely to provide important scientific information concerning new cultures and long term human occupation within a landscape.

The application of these categories to the documented resources of the Ocmulgee River corridor indicates six distinct subject areas of national significance:

- Indigenous Prehistory of the Southeast
- Muscogee Heritage
- Fort Hawkins and American Expansion
- Great Depression and Federal Work Program Archaeology
- Collective Significance and Scientific Value
- Suitability

The most obvious area of national significance begins with, the indigenous prehistory of the Southeast. Of particular note in this area are specifically Paleoindian to Archaic period resources, the Swift Creek culture present in the region, and the Mississippian period activity within the landscape. Also nationally important subject areas are Muscogee heritage and origins, U.S. political and military history relating to early American expansion, and the enormous scale of the Depression Era archaeological work within the corridor. In addition to these subject areas, a case for the collective scientific value of resources within the study region to our national history can be effectively made. Each of these areas of national significance are examined in the following sections.

Another aspect to consider for the resources within this study area is that of suitability. In line with National Park Service guides for assessing new park units, resources which are suitable are those that are not already adequately represented within the park system or preserved for the public by another land-managing body. A brief discussion concerning suitability concludes this section.
5.1.2 Indigenous Prehistory of the Southeast

When considering the wealth of resources along this span of the Ocmulgee River in terms of site counts, artifacts, and time periods covered, the bulk relate to the prehistory of the southeast. Prior to contact with Europeans, people existed within the region for at least 15,000 years before entering the written historic record. We know relatively little about the inhabitants of the southeast before European arrival. What we do know comes from the archaeological resources already identified and studied. The river corridor covered in this study contains a tremendous wealth of these resources covering all major periods of prehistory for the Southeastern United States. It is beneficial to examine the most outstanding resources individually to fully understand their importance on the national level.

Paleoindian - Archaic

The Paleoindian and Archaic resources of the study region are representative of cultures which were neither unique to the Ocmulgee River nor even the region, but were widespread across the continent. However, sites relating to these periods within the study region are invaluable sources of information about these peoples about whom we know so little. Even sites which have yielded few artifacts, or are yet to be fully investigated, are incredibly valuable. They are worth even more when assessed collectively, as discussed later in this section. The massive excavations of the 1930s on the Macon Plateau uncovered the first Paleoindian sites in the study area (Hally 1994). While not extensive, these sites “demonstrated that well-defined, stratified Paleoindian and Early Archaic deposits are present in the area of the national monument (Anderson 1996).”

Across North America, most Paleoindian artifacts have been collected on the surface or in disturbed contexts. This makes sites with preserved or well defined stratigraphic context especially valuable. Noteworthy Paleoindian sites found within the study area include 9BI1 (Macon Plateau), 9BI50, 9BI51, 9PU20 (Big Tucksawhatchee), and 9PU69. These sites sit geographically between larger Paleoindian presences in the Savannah River Valley and along the Gulf Coast. It is possible, if not likely, that this region of the Ocmulgee was a crossroads even during the earliest periods of human activity on the North American continent.

The Archaic presence in the landscape is more extensive than the Paleoindian, though our knowledge of these cultures is comparable in its incompleteness. The Archaic period is generally identifiable through diagnostic lithics made from chert. Sources of chert stone are not uniform on the landscape. But, sources exist in Houston and Pulaski counties. Proximity to quality chert would have been important to the settlement patterns of Archaic peoples (Elliott 2006). While Archaic lithic material dots the study region, some sites stand out. In Pulaski County, the Sandy Hammock site (9PU10) contains deep deposits of Archaic lithic production debitage (Elliot 2006:10).

While predominant, lithics are not the only diagnostic materials of the Archaic. Varied assemblages are common within the study region. These have contained soapstone vessels and slabs as well as some of the earliest forms of ceramics. Soapstone is present only in certain places on the landscape and is not present in the Coastal Plain, which makes this region along the Fall Line strategic for the movement of the material (Waggoner 2009). The Tuft Springs Sites 1 & 2 (9BI19, 9BI13) have yielded diverse assemblages from the Middle to Late Archaic and center on a mound (Elliot 2006:17). Mound building is an uncommon occurrence during the Archaic period. Other important Archaic sites include those along Sandy Run Creek (9HT8, 9HT7, 9HT37) and on Robins AFB (9HT40) in Houston County. The evidence
from these existing Archaic sites builds a strong case that this region along the Ocmulgee was thoroughly integrated into the wider Archaic world. The numbers and diversity of Archaic sites, the presence of artifacts like soapstone, and a potential Archaic mound site all point towards the importance of this region to the Archaic peoples (Anderson 1996).

Swift Creek Culture

During the Middle Woodland Period, the peoples inhabiting central Georgia, and specifically those living along the Ocmulgee River, were part of a far-reaching network of exchange, known as the Hopewell Interaction Sphere. Goods, ideas, and information were exchanged across a wide swath of North America, reaching as far as the Midwest and the Great Lakes. This exchange of goods, ideas, and customs took place between a diverse array of localized societies and cultures. Within Georgia and portions of neighboring states, the local culture is known as Swift Creek. It is from a single site along the Ocmulgee River that the entire Swift Creek culture received its name.

The Swift Creek site (9BI3) was first studied during the 1930s Works Progress Administration sponsored excavations, led by Arthur Kelly. Kelly was the first to note that the elaborately decorated pottery unearthed at Swift Creek represented a unique culture (Hally 1994). The pottery, which features abstract or geometric designs (shown in Figure 5.1 (Smith and Knight 2017)) was created by pressing a carved wooden paddle into the soft clay of a vessel before being fired. Theories suggest that the intricately carved paddles used to stamp pottery represent a broader woodcarving practice within Swift Creek culture (Williams 1998). Fortunately for present generations, the fire-hardened ceramics have endured. Unfortunately, the wood has not.

While Swift Creek pottery itself was surely traded, the technology and ideologies of the culture were also transferred and applied in locations involved in the Hopewell exchange sphere. Sites as far away as Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio have contained Swift Creek pottery. Within the study region, numerous sites have yielded Swift Creek cultural materials. The Swift Creek type-site (9BI3) is notable not only for giving the culture its name, but is an interesting village site centered on a mound. Monumental architecture, while present during the Woodland period, is not as widespread during this time compared to the later Mississippian. This suggests that the Swift Creek site was of some importance to the wider Woodland period world. Unfortunately the site has been heavily disturbed, and survey would be needed to determine how much of the site is intact. However, Swift Creek cultural sites of significance are found throughout the corridor, including 9PU69, 9PU37, 9PU57, 9BI12 (Stubbs Mound), and 9BI14 (Cowart’s Landing).
Mississippian

The distinctive mounds and earth lodge of the Macon Plateau are the most obvious and outstanding resources along the Ocmulgee which date to the Mississippian. The national significance of these resources is already known. They are now the central part of Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. The Mississippian polity which existed on this site (9BI1) dates to the Early Mississippian, and is often simply referred to as ‘Ocmulgee.’ The Macon Plateau site is likely the largest mound site in Georgia by area and one of the largest in the Eastern U.S. It is also one of the earliest major Mississippian presences in the Southeastern U.S. and was a considerable regional power at its peak.

Like other Mississippian polities, Ocmulgee maintained an economy based in the intensive production of maize. It had a defined social hierarchy, and participated in the Southeastern ceremonial complex. The Southeastern ceremonial complex was a set of cultural and religious motifs and practices which were pervasive across the southeast and neighboring regions during the Mississippian period. Despite these common markers of Mississippian culture, Ocmulgee was unique in some ways.

The massive mound construction and rise of Ocmulgee as a polity occurred during a relatively short time-frame. Within around 200 years the polity waxed and waned. Additionally, when compared to its contemporaries such as Etowah (King 2001) and Moundville, at its founding Ocmulgee seems to have exhibited a higher degree of distinct hierarchy and social inequality (Bigman 2012). However, over time, unlike other polities which moved to stronger unified power structures, Ocmulgee appears to have developed internal political rivalries (Bigman 2012; Bigman and Lanzarone 2014). This may have affected the longevity of the polity. Archaeological sites associated with the Early Mississippian Ocmulgee polity include the Macon Plateau (9BI1), Lamar (9BI2), Brown’s Mount (9B15), and the site of Fort Hawkins (9BI21).

The Mississippian presence on the landscape continued on after the decline of the Macon Plateau site but in less grand forms. There are few known sites dating to the Middle Mississippian, but by the Late Mississippian, local communities dotted the landscape (Williams 1993). These communities were a part of the Lamar culture. The type site for the Lamar culture is the Lamar Mounds (9BI2). The Lamar Mounds site is currently a discontiguous portion of Ocmulgee National Monument and contains a unique mound with a spiral ramp (Williams 1999). The Lamar peoples were the inhabitants of the area when the first Europeans arrived in the region in the 1500s. The Ocmulgee River corridor remained a crossroads of cultures during the Mississippian. In the Early Mississippian, it was the location of exchange and integration of Native cultures, but by the Late Mississippian, it had become a site for European and Native contact.
5.1.3 Muscogee Heritage

While it is unclear from the archaeological record if the inhabitants of the Lamar culture persisted into the 17th century along this section of the Ocmulgee River, it is clear that remnants of other Mississippian polities had coalesced and settled west of the Chattahoochee in present day Alabama. As a result of pressure from the Spanish and a desire to trade with the newly established English colony in Carolina, these peoples moved eastward. The English established and operated a trading post on the Ocmulgee Plateau between the years 1690 and 1715. During this time, Hitchiti, Muskogee, Westos, and Yuchi peoples lived in at least eleven towns along the Ocmulgee River (Jennings and Johnston 2018). It is to this place and time that the Muscogee (Creek) Nation traces its political origins. Known archaeological sites from this time are shown in Figure 5.2. Several decades later, the naturalist William Bartram recorded an accounting of the Muscogee arrival and settlement on the Ocmulgee:

If we are to give credit to the account the Creeks give of themselves, this place is remarkable for being the first town or settlement, when they sat down (as they term it) or established themselves, after their emigration from the west, beyond the Mississippi, their original native country. On this long journey they suffered great and innumerable difficulties, encountering and vanquishing numerous and valiant tribes of Indians, who opposed and retarded their march. Having crossed the river, still pushing eastward, they were obliged to make a stand, and fortify themselves in this place, as their only remaining hope, being to the last degree persecuted and weakened by their surrounding foes. Having formed for themselves this retreat, and driven off the inhabitants by degrees, they recovered their spirits, and again faced their enemies, when they came off victorious in a memorable and decisive battle. They afterwards gradually subdued their surrounding enemies, strengthening themselves by taking into confederacy the vanquished tribes (Bartram and Van Doren 1928).

These peoples were diverse in culture and language. However, Muskogee was widely spoke as a common language; and a shared Mississippian ancestry united Muskogee speakers. Practices originating in Mississippian culture, such as the ritual use of yaupon holly, matrilineality, and construction of low mounds showed and reaffirmed this collective identity. The common ancestry of the Muskogee-speaking peoples did not serve only to bond them one to another. Their ancestry tied them culturally, spiritually, and physically to the land. The mounds on the Macon Plateau, old fields along the Ocmulgee, and other sites previously inhabited by Mississippians, stood as tangible markers of Muskogean identity.

During the early 18th century, the Ocmulgee was a hub for the conflicts between the English, Spanish, and Native populations. The Muscogee peoples abandoned the Ocmulgee River by the 1710s as a result of the Yamasee War. After this conflict they retreated back west to the Chattahoochee River. Despite this, Ocmulgee remained a symbol of Muskogean identity. Over the next 100 years the Muscogee peoples maintained their claim on the Ocmulgee area, in particular the Macon Plateau, in the face of ever pressing American expansion. Not until the 1825 Treaty of Indian Springs and the ignored Treaty of Washington the following year did the Muscogee lose control of this site critical to their cultural, spiritual, and political identity.

After Creek removal from the Southeastern US in the 19th century, it was not until the establishment of Ocmulgee National Monument in the 1930s that the...
importance of the location to Muskogee peoples was reemphasized to the general population of the United States (Jennings and Johnston 2018). The Muscogee peoples had not forgotten the importance of the site, however. Indeed, the Muscogee (Creek) capital in Oklahoma was named in its remembrance: Okmulgee. The Muscogee or Creek peoples are now one of the largest and most diverse groups of indigenous peoples in the United States. Currently, there are approximately 80,000 enrolled citizens of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. In addition to Oklahoma, there are federally recognized tribes of Muskogee people in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas.

The relationship of Muskogee peoples with the Ocmulgee River corridor is ongoing. Following the establishment and implementation of the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), a new chapter of reconciliation has begun. Tens of thousands of artifacts, uncovered during excavations, have been filed for repatriation to Muskogee peoples and other associated descendants (NPS 2017a; NPS 2017b; NPS 2017c). In addition to artifacts, the remains of individuals exhumed during excavations at various sites in the region are being returned to their descendants. At least eighty individuals have been documented by the National Park Service, many of which came from sites outside of the current park system boundaries such as Stubbs (9B112) and Cowarts Landing (9B114) (NPS 2001a; NPS 2001b; NPS 2017d; NPS 2017e). In August 2017, at the wishes of their descendants 113 individuals were reinterr...
5.1.4 Fort Hawkins and American Expansion

Fort Hawkins stands on a hill adjacent to Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. Currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Fort Hawkins is a symbol of the frontier history of the region and tied to events at the local, regional, and national scale. Occupation of the hilltop begins during pre-contact times (9BI21). But, the fort was born out of the 1805 Treaty of Washington. The treaty ceded a large part of Creek lands to the U.S., except for the small area of the Macon Plateau. The fort bears the name of federal Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins.

During its peak, Fort Hawkins marked an international boundary and crossroads. The fort was an important place where the interests of the U.S. Government, the state of Georgia, and the Creek peoples converged. It acted as a meeting place for these three bodies. The fort facilitated the diplomatic, economic, and military policies between the governments. Through the War of 1812 and subsequent Creek War, Fort Hawkins was a major center for the movement of troops, including the mobilization of the Georgia militia following major battles in Alabama and Mississippi (Elliott 2007).

During the Creek War, General David Blackshear ordered the construction of ten new forts along the Ocmulgee, five falling within the area covered by this study. Fort Hawkins built on the high ground adjacent to the Ocmulgee Old Fields, anchored the line. In the summer of 1813, local militia built Forts Twiggs, Pike, and Mitchell on the east side of the river. The construction of Forts Telfair and Jackson in Twiggs County have not been confirmed. These wooden structures, ninety or one hundred feet square, featured eight foot-tall stockades, two blockhouses a piece, and garrisons of twenty or fewer, inclusive of officers. Blackshear also ordered the improvement of the River Road (previously an ancient Native road that followed the river) to facilitate movement and communication between the outposts.

While Camp Hope, near Fort Hawkins, served as a staging ground for American attacks on Creek towns, Blackshear’s forts played a significant role. And, as the United States swallowed up more and more Creek land, the need for the forts diminished. The American towns of Macon and Hawkinsville developed on the west side of the river, and the simple fortifications vanished, at least from the historical record.

Though the Blackshear forts were short-lived, Fort Hawkins remained in use until 1835, when the western line of U.S. expansion was pushing through the Midwestern states. Fort Hawkins continues to be an icon of the Macon area and research and curation is ongoing at the site. As for the Blackshear forts, only careful archaeological study, of the sort that would accompany the preservation of the Ocmulgee River corridor, will bring this chapter of history more fully to light. Further contextualization and significance of Fort Hawkins and associated forts along the Ocmulgee is found in dedicated reports written by Daniel Elliott of the Lamar Institute, and Matthew Jennings.
5.1.5 Great Depression and Federal Relief Programs

Though the resources found in the Ocmulgee River valley are inherently valuable, the work which has been undertaken to understand them has found its own significant place in our national history. The setting of this chapter in the history of the Ocmulgee River corridor is the Great Depression. Beginning in 1929, the Great Depression caused the unemployment of 15 million people in the United States by 1933. To combat these devastating economic conditions, newly elected President Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced work programs as part of his New Deal policies. In December of 1933, the federal government began funding archaeological investigations through the Civil Works Administration under the leadership of Arthur Randolph Kelly. Kelly, a Harvard educated archaeologist, brought a great deal of experience to the project having worked at other major sites, such as Cahokia (Hally 1994).

Between 1933 and 1942 various federal relief work programs sponsored the work. In April of 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) took over funding for the projects. In 1935, the Works Progress Administration became the primary managing body for the research. During this time the number of workers employed reached around 800 individuals, making it one of the largest projects of its kind in the country. After the establishment of Ocmulgee National Monument on December 23, 1936, a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was established in 1937 to develop the new park. This camp would remain until 1942 and marked the end of Depression-era relief program work.

The archaeological work done during this period was tremendous. The effort unearthed thousands of artifacts. The majority of which have yet to be fully analyzed. The initial focus of the project was the Macon Plateau (Kelly 2010).

However, the sites studied during this time cover a wider area than the current boundaries of Ocmulgee National Monument (Figure 5.3). Additional sites include Brown’s Mount, Swift Creek, Stubbs Mound, Fort Hawkins, Mossy Oak, Hawkins Point, Napier, Tuft Springs, Cowarts Landing, and Scott.

The archaeological research taking place along the Ocmulgee paralleled a wave of national-level interest in the history of the region. The 1934 World’s Fair in Chicago showcased a replica of the Macon Plateau due to the archaeological importance of the state of Georgia. In 1939 the conclusions of the congressional De Soto Expedition Commission published the potential routes the early explorer traveled throughout the Southeastern U.S. (Swanton 1939) bringing further attention to the region.
The archaeological projects taking place along the Ocmulgee during the Depression also relate to important socio-cultural developments in American Society. Teams made up of local African American women excavated the Swift Creek site (9BI3), among others, which significantly contributed to the understanding of our national prehistory (Williams 1998). This is noteworthy when considering the context of the Jim Crow Era South in which this work took place. While the relief programs originated on the federal level, they operated within local political systems, which were often rife with racism. On the national scale, between 1935 and 1941, merely 3 percent of all WPA work recipients were black women (Jones 1985). This team, comprised of about 40 women, were the only known black workers employed as excavators during the Depression-era work along the Ocmulgee.

In addition to these women excavators, the large-scale archaeological work taking place in central Georgia affected the lives of some of the earliest female archaeologists in the country. Traditionally a field dominated by male figures, women were integral to the archaeological efforts during this era. Isabel Garrard Patterson, while not trained as an archaeologist, was an outstanding advocate and public spokeswoman for scientific professional archaeology in the state of Georgia (White 1999). Patterson often visited the excavations taking place along the Ocmulgee. She worked and communicated closely with Arthur Kelly and other prominent archaeologists in the region. Patterson became a critical facilitator for gaining local and state sponsorship for the work, and ultimately the creation of Ocmulgee National Monument. Decades later, the Depression era excavations at Ocmulgee served as the launch pad for Carole I. Mason. Mason studied the artifacts uncovered by the WPA in the 1950s and contributed greatly to our current understanding of the site (Mason 2005). She is recognized as one of the earliest female professional archaeologists in our nation (White 1999).
The value of each individual resource identified in the study region is considerably less compared with their collective value as a cohesive landscape of cultural phenomena.

In the case of the earliest periods of human activity (Paleoindian or Archaic), thoroughly investigated and preserved sites are in short supply (Anderson 1996). Furthermore, if we are to truly characterize these cultures, a collective, regional perspective is required. According to Anderson and Sassman (1996): “To shed the shackles of parochialism, we must recognize the need for regional-scale studies of prehistory and to avail ourselves and our data to comparative studies. [...] We feel that such scales of analysis are critical to advance further the study of prehistory and that this is particularly true for the study of Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene populations, whose cultural systems were truly regional or subregional in scale.” Even the most insignificant of early sites offer the best opportunity for new insight on these cultures when thoroughly collected and examined together (Anderson 1996).

The counties covered in this study contain a substantial number of early sites which are simply documented or even noted to have value yet have not been fully investigated. The obvious scientific and public benefit of investigating these sites collectively is an increased understanding of these peoples at the local level. But, more importantly, the preservation and study of these resources as a whole will enhance the understanding of the human and environmental systems of which they were a part. By the same principle, the other periods of prehistory and history, while less murky than the Paleoindian or Archaic, benefit from a collective perspective.
6.1 CONCLUSIONS

As detailed in the resources of National Significance section of this report, the Ocmulgee River Corridor has been the setting for notable cultural and historic events which have influenced the course of American history. Sites along the Ocmulgee represent the earliest periods of human activity within the boundaries of the United States. Since those early times, a nearly continuous chain of human presence has transpired along these crossroads in the heart of the Deep South.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans and the later founding of the United States, indigenous peoples were shaping the land and developing cultures across North America. The Paleoindian and Archaic peoples, who spanned the entire continent, lived along the Ocmulgee. The camps and lithic worksites which dot the landscape of the Ocmulgee River Corridor, stand as a testament to their existence. Due to the murkiness of thousands of years of time, all evidence of these peoples is extremely valuable to the archaeological record. The sites found along the Ocmulgee are vital for our continued collective understanding of these early Americans.

Thousands of years after the Paleoindian and Archaic, the Swift Creek people of the Woodland period disseminated artistic styles, culture, and ideologies to the inhabitants of other regions of North America. Reflecting the current patchwork of American culture, the Swift Creek peoples maintained a local identity, but participated in a cross-regional sphere of shared culture, commerce, and cooperation. The type site for this culture lies along the Ocmulgee and many other sites within the corridor were once inhabited by people of the Swift Creek culture.

Ocmulgee National Monument is dedicated to the Mississippian monumental mounds occupying the Macon Plateau and the Lamar Mounds found within the Ocmulgee’s floodplain. However, the Mississippian presence is found all along the river corridor. Other important village and mound sites line the river and its tributaries. Though the Mississippian culture was not unique to the Ocmulgee river corridor, there was diversity among the Mississippian polities even within the state of Georgia. The Mississippian presence along the Ocmulgee was a unique expression of culture not found anywhere else in the United States. The influence of the Ocmulgee Mississippians continues directly to the present, as their descendants the Muskogee peoples attest.

The Muskogee peoples are an important part in the tapestry of American heritage. Their ancestral and political origins trace back to the Ocmulgee River and Macon Plateau. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma traces its formation back to the banks of the Ocmulgee. Unfortunately, the Muscogee peoples were removed from their lands within the Ocmulgee River Corridor. Only in recent decades has the heritage and connection between the Muscogee and Ocmulgee begun to be positively reestablished. Into the future, ensuring the protection of these sacred sites will benefit all people. The living Muscogee peoples should have their traditional lands preserved to them. In turn, non-Native Americans should be provided the opportunity to stand in these places and learn of Muskogee history and culture. Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park has already become a bridge for understanding and reparations, but the Traditional Cultural Property of the Ocmulgee Old Fields extends across a much wider area.

Intersecting Muskogee heritage and history along the Ocmulgee River, is a chapter of United States military and diplomatic history. After the First Treaty of Washington in 1805, which ceded Muscogee lands in central Georgia, Fort Benjamin Hawkins was established. The fort was located on the border of U.S. territory with the Creek Nation. At an international crossroads, it served as a vital center of trade and diplomacy. Later during the Creek War...
of 1813, fortifications were built along the entire length of the river. The preservation and curation of sites relevant to early U.S. expansion along the Ocmulgee will offer a needed perspective to the public. These resources can facilitate public understanding of the complex social, cultural, and political forces at play during the turbulent period of American expansion and Indian Removal.

One hundred and thirty years later, the rich archeological resources within the Ocmulgee River corridor became the center of another chapter in American history. During the Great Depression, federal work programs, including the WPA and the CCC, organized hundreds of workers along the Ocmulgee River. At present, these are some of the largest scale excavations to take place in the United States. In addition, themes of gender and race which deserve further examination and interpretation for the public played out during the course of the work along the river. Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park was a result of these Depression era efforts, though the scope of the work far exceeded the current bounds of the park.

Apart from the sites associated with narratives of national importance, hundreds of other sites sit throughout the river corridor. Their collective significance is tremendous, especially as a source for new research. From this perspective, a landscape of cultural resources is inherently more valuable than resources in isolation. And further, landscapes of cultural resources which are relatively undisturbed are extremely rare. The continuity of the undeveloped landscape containing important archaeological sites surrounding much of the Ocmulgee River is an uncommon occurrence, and should be protected as such.

Preserving the archaeological sites of the Ocmulgee River Corridor not only protects existing resources, but protects the many resources which currently lie unidentified. Considering the counts, density, and rich history of the area there are likely hundreds of archaeological sites not yet documented. Some of these unknown sites likely contain resources pertaining to areas of history not yet represented in the archaeological record. Examples of such resources might concern early river transportation or European contact with indigenous communities in the region (Blanton 2013). Interested community members have begun to note sites of interest, such as the probable 1856 wreck site of the steamboat, Charles Hartridge (Morrison 2003). The potential for future research and enrichment of our history is tremendous. But, this requires protection of the river corridor and further assessment.

As shown in the spatial analysis of this report, known archaeological sites are largely positioned in proximity to the river and its primary tributaries. Prioritizing the conservation of lands which buffer the Ocmulgee River would capture many of significance. Some groups are seizing this chance, such as the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative, which has proposed the preservation of much of this corridor. Preservation of any kind should be sought for these resources. It is evident that without comprehensive preservation and a managing body to facilitate research, most known sites will go unstudied. Many will be destroyed and a wealth of information will be lost. The Ocmulgee River Corridor presents a rare opportunity to preserve a landscape of archaeological resources which will enrich our knowledge of the past and bolster our American identity.
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