



E X E C U T I V E S U M M A R Y

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

An Economic Analysis of the Proposed Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve



Middle Georgia grassroots organizations have proposed the creation of an Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve that would consolidate the Ocmulgee National Monument with other public lands along the Ocmulgee River between Macon and Hawkinsville. To evaluate this proposal’s potential economic effects, a study was commissioned by National Parks Conservation Association, funded in part by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Economists at the University of Tennessee Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics used the IMPLAN economic model to generate growth projections over a 15-year period comparing a hypothetical “National Park & Preserve” against a “No National Park & Preserve” scenario. Their findings indicate that, if created by Congress, an Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve could have significant impact on the regional economy. *(See below.)*

A National Park & Preserve could lead to a

six-fold increase in visitation within 15 years and add \$206.7 million in annual economic activity, defining a new trajectory for middle Georgia. The majority of this economic activity—about 90 percent—would come from increases in visitor spending associated with a number of key activities: heritage tourism, bicycling, paddling, camping, fishing, wildlife watching, hiking, hunting, and horseback riding. Business sectors most likely to expand or multiply within the local economy include restaurants, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, vacation rentals, campgrounds, sporting goods outfitters, retailers, and tours/outing services.

The Ocmulgee Heritage Trail and Ocmulgee River Water Trail have even greater potential than currently recognized to be integral to a National Park & Preserve and serve as primary drivers of recreation-based economic activity. Macon and middle Georgia also possess several additional, often-underappreciated features that could add up to a suite of unmatched educational, recreational, and

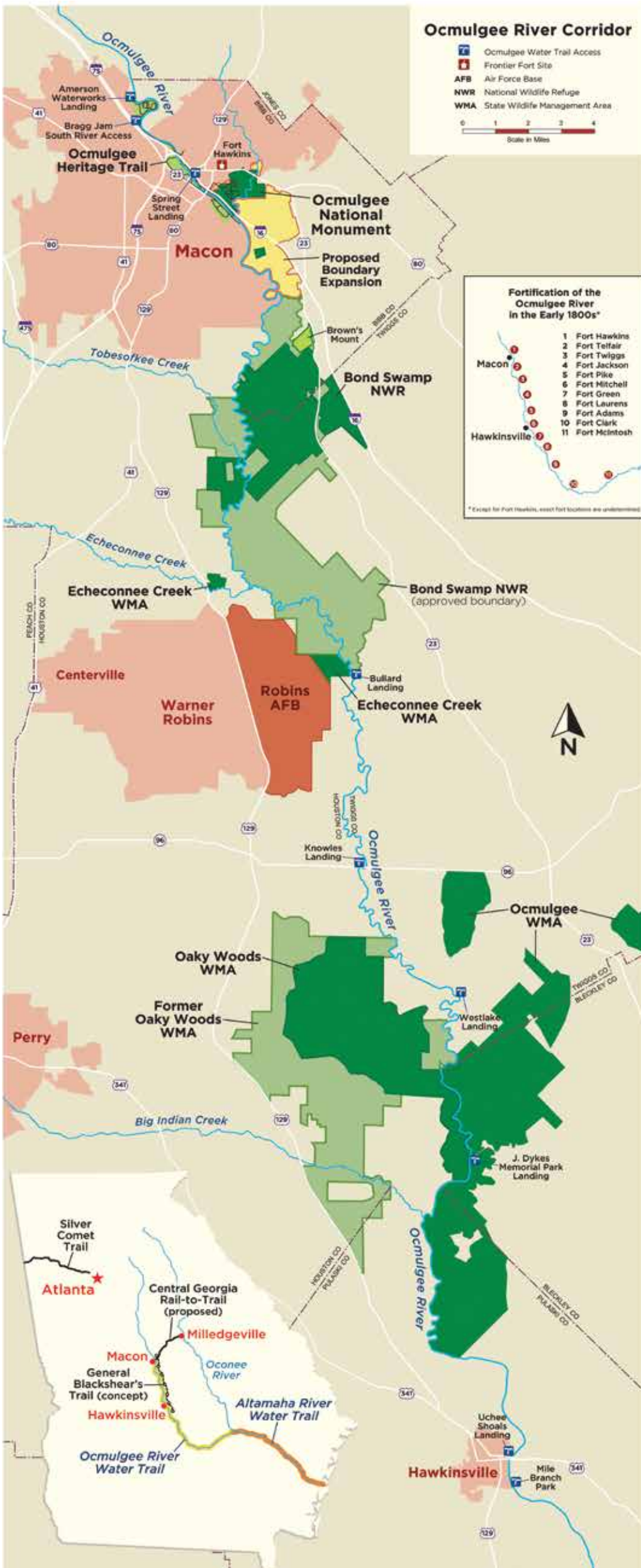
heritage tourism attractions coalescing around an Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve.

A growing body of research demonstrates that gateway communities near protected public lands, such as national parks, can cultivate competitive economic advantages over similar communities without such features. The key is to begin forging a long-term regional vision and to start systematically working toward it. Although creating a fully realized Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve could take a number of years, active and engaged communities can energize the process and hasten implementation. Nationwide, those gateway communities that actively promote, treasure, and cultivate their national parks and public lands reap the greatest benefits from them.

Top: Wetlands behind Great Temple Mound
 ©Hao Chen (Above L-R): Two Wood Storks, Ocmulgee National Monument ©Dan Vickers Alligator on a log ©Sharman Ayoub Ocmulgee River paddler ©Julian Buckmaster

Key Findings	Most Likely Growth Scenario with an Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve*	No Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve Scenario**	The Difference = Projected Annual Economic Gains from an Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve
Year 15 Projections (2016–2031)			
Annual Visitation	1,374,653	207,607	+ 1,167,046
Total Annual Economic Activity	\$233.4 million	\$26.7 million	+ \$206.7 million
Annual Labor Income	\$86.7 million	\$10.2 million	+ \$76.5 million
Annual Tax Revenue	\$33.5 million	\$3.7 million	+ \$29.8 million
Annual Jobs Supported	3,171	357	+ 2,814

* The National Park & Preserve concept would unite and link the Ocmulgee National Monument, Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, and the Oaky Woods, Ocmulgee, and Echeconnee Creek State Wildlife Management Areas. (See reverse side for map.)
 ** Under a No Park & Preserve scenario, the existing public lands would continue to operate separately.



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Ocmulgee National Monument Economic Impacts in 2015

Visitors:	155,387
Visitor Spending:	\$8.8 million
Jobs:	151
Labor Income:	\$3.4 million
Total Economic Activity:	\$10.8 million

For more detail about the economic analysis and references to information sources used in this report, download the full report and the companion technical study at: www.npca.org/ocmulgeereport

For more information, contact:
 Chris Watson, Ph.D.
 Senior Program Manager
 NPCA, Southeast Regional Office
 706 Walnut Street • Suite 200
 Knoxville, TN 37902
 865-329-2424, ext.24
 865-292-8811 (cell)
 cwatson@npca.org

