



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

April 29, 2024

Honorable Senator Joe Manchin III

Chairman

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

Honorable Senator Angus King, Jr.

Chairman

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

Honorable Senator John Barrasso

Ranking Member

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

Honorable Senator Steve Daines

Ranking Member

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

Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members,

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

God bless,

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