

OCMULGEE NATIONAL MONUMENT

OLD FIELDS BOUNDARY STUDY & ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

We want to hear from you!

To follow the progress of this boundary study and environmental assessment, and to share ideas and comments, visit the Boundary Study Website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ocmu>.

Address written comments* to:

Jim David, Superintendent
National Park Service
Ocmulgee National Monument
1207 Emery Highway
Macon, Georgia 31217

The comment period will be open until May 19, 2012.

**Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time.*

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The National Park Service (NPS) is examining whether certain lands in and around Ocmulgee National Monument (park) are appropriate to be included in a boundary expansion to the monument. The park was authorized by Congress in 1934 to protect "lands commonly known as the 'Old Ocmulgee Field,' upon which certain Indian mounds of great historical importance are located. The role of the Ocmulgee National Monument is to "present a story of many stages of prehistoric cultural development, emphasizing the influences of agriculture, the Mound Builder period, and the relationship of these various cultures to each other and to life today."

The enabling legislation envisioned a large park consisting of approximately 2,000 acres, but the park was created during the Great Depression. Local citizens could only raise enough funds to procure 678 acres by the time the park was established in 1936. Today, the park consists of 702 acres. The park is on the National Register of Historic Places. It and the remainder of the Old Fields represent a continuous record of human life in the Southeast from the earliest time to the present, and there is evidence of 17,000 years of human habitation. William Bartram, an eighteenth century naturalist and botanist, observed traces of mounds, terraces, and other evidence of settlements extending for fifteen to twenty miles along the Ocmulgee River.

The Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places determined in 1999 that approximately 14,000 acres of the Old Fields are eligible for the National Register as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) because of their historical significance to the Muscogee (Creek) people who were forced to abandon these lands when they were relocated in the early nineteenth century. The lands today are largely wetland, and owned by various landowners. Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge lies to the south of Ocmulgee National Monument and serves to protect part of the southern portion of the TCP. The refuge has also conducted its own boundary study, and can now acquire lands both north and south of its current boundary.

LEARN ABOUT THE BOUNDARY STUDY

A public scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, April 19, 2012, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Ocmulgee National Monument Visitor Center 1207 Emery Highway, Macon, Georgia 31217.

The meeting will consist of an open house with a short presentation at 5:30 p.m. NPS staff will be on hand to visit with you and answer your questions.



Jim David, Superintendent
National Park Service
Ocmulgee National Monument
1207 Emery Highway
Macon, Georgia 31217

FIRST-CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
PERMIT NO. G-83



PURPOSE OF THE BOUNDARY STUDY

The purpose of this action is to conduct a boundary study and environmental assessment (EA) to determine:

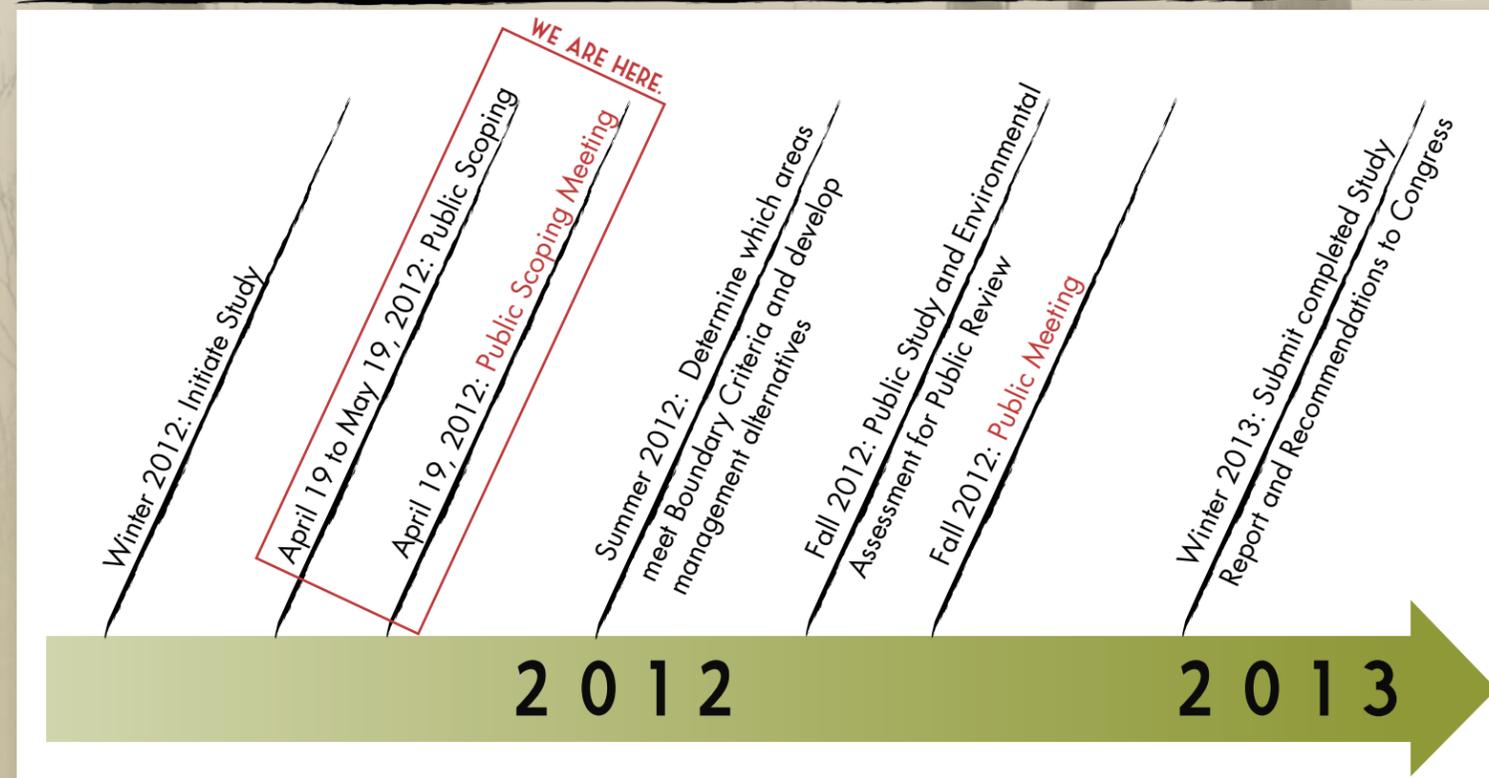
1. If a boundary expansion is appropriate; and if so
2. Which properties are appropriate for inclusion in an expanded park boundary.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

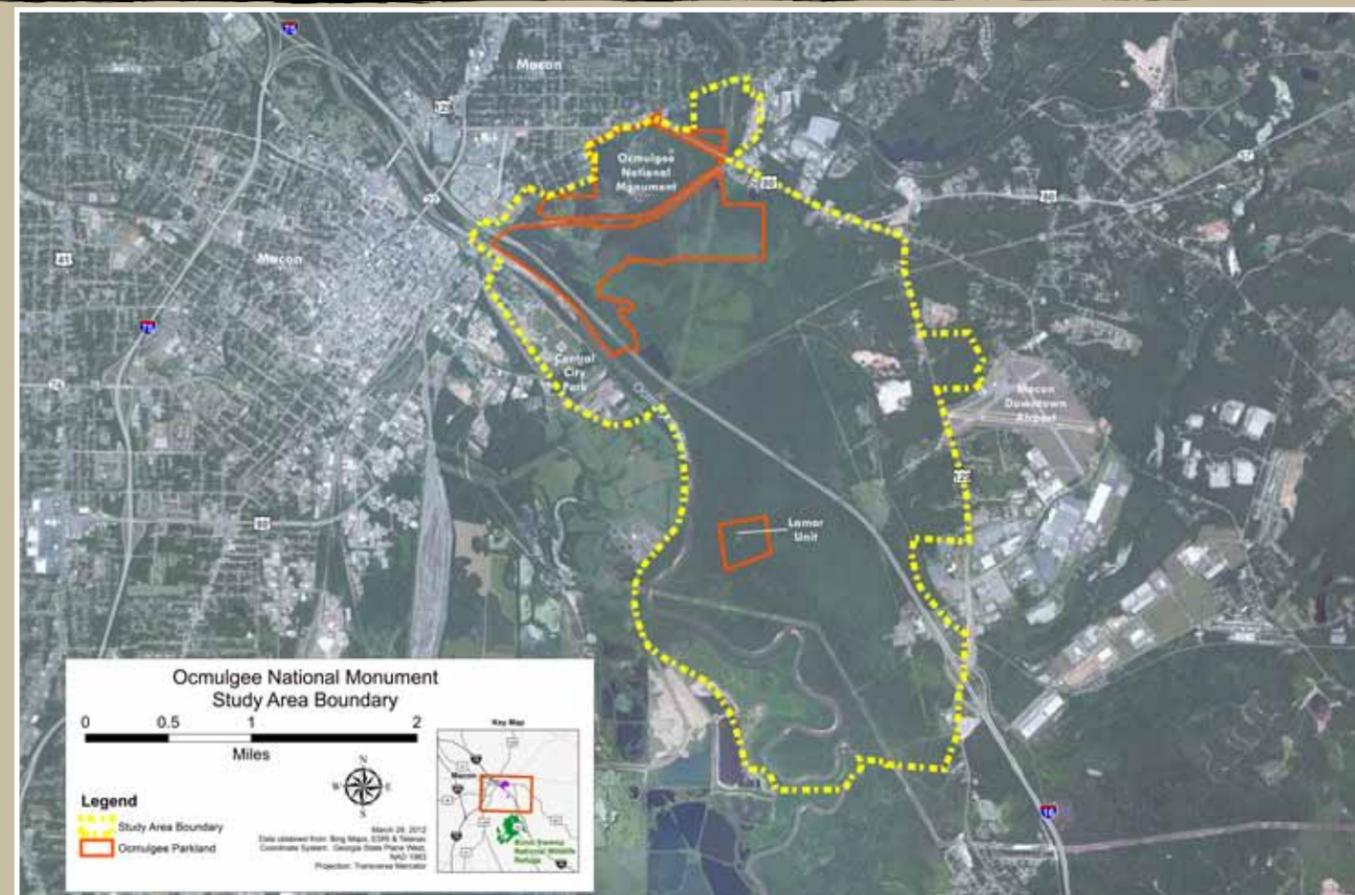
This boundary study is needed for the following reasons:

- The Archaeological Conservancy has received approximately 300 acres of land that it wishes to donate to Ocmulgee National Monument. The NPS cannot accept this land unless it has been found appropriate for addition to the monument and formally included in a revised boundary.
- There exist other culturally significant lands adjacent to Ocmulgee National Monument that may be appropriate for inclusion in a revised boundary.
- Certain other lands within the Ocmulgee Old Fields Traditional Cultural Property may warrant further protection via inclusion in Ocmulgee National Monument.
- It may be possible to provide a physical connection between lands currently owned by the NPS and the USFWS. Such a connection would create a protected corridor of public land and make it available for public use.
- A revised boundary could possibly protect the resources of Ocmulgee National Monument from further urban encroachment.

STUDY PROCESS, NEPA & SCHEDULE



STUDY AREA



WHAT IS A BOUNDARY STUDY?

A boundary study is undertaken to determine whether there are additional lands near an existing park unit that ought to be protected via inclusion in the park boundary. The NPS may recommend a boundary revision to:

- Include significant resources or opportunities for public enjoyment related to the purposes of the park;
- Address operational and management issues such as need for access, or the need for boundaries to correspond to logical boundary delineations such as topographic or other natural features or roads; or
- To protect park resources critical to the park's purposes.

In order to recommend a boundary expansion or change, the study must determine that added lands will be feasible to administer considering size, configuration, ownership costs, and other factors. It must also find that other alternatives for management and resource protection are not adequate.

This study will:

- Address whether existing park boundaries provide adequate protection of park resources.
- Evaluate each "parcel" under consideration (multiple parcels may be considered together as a single larger "parcel").
- Assess impacts on local communities and surrounding areas.
- Include consultation with affected local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, landowners, and local organizations.
- Estimate acquisition costs and statement of relative priorities.
- Account for other considerations, such as whether there are hazardous materials that would require mitigation, buildings that require management or other disturbances.

Once the study is complete, however, the process is just beginning. Congress must act on the recommended boundary changes before any land acquisition can begin or donations accepted.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

No boundary adjustment outlined in this study may be accomplished without authorization by the United States Congress. The implementation of action related to a boundary adjustment will depend on future funding and Service-wide priorities. The approval of a boundary adjustment does not guarantee that funding and staffing needed to implement the proposed actions will be forthcoming. Full implementation may be many years into the future.