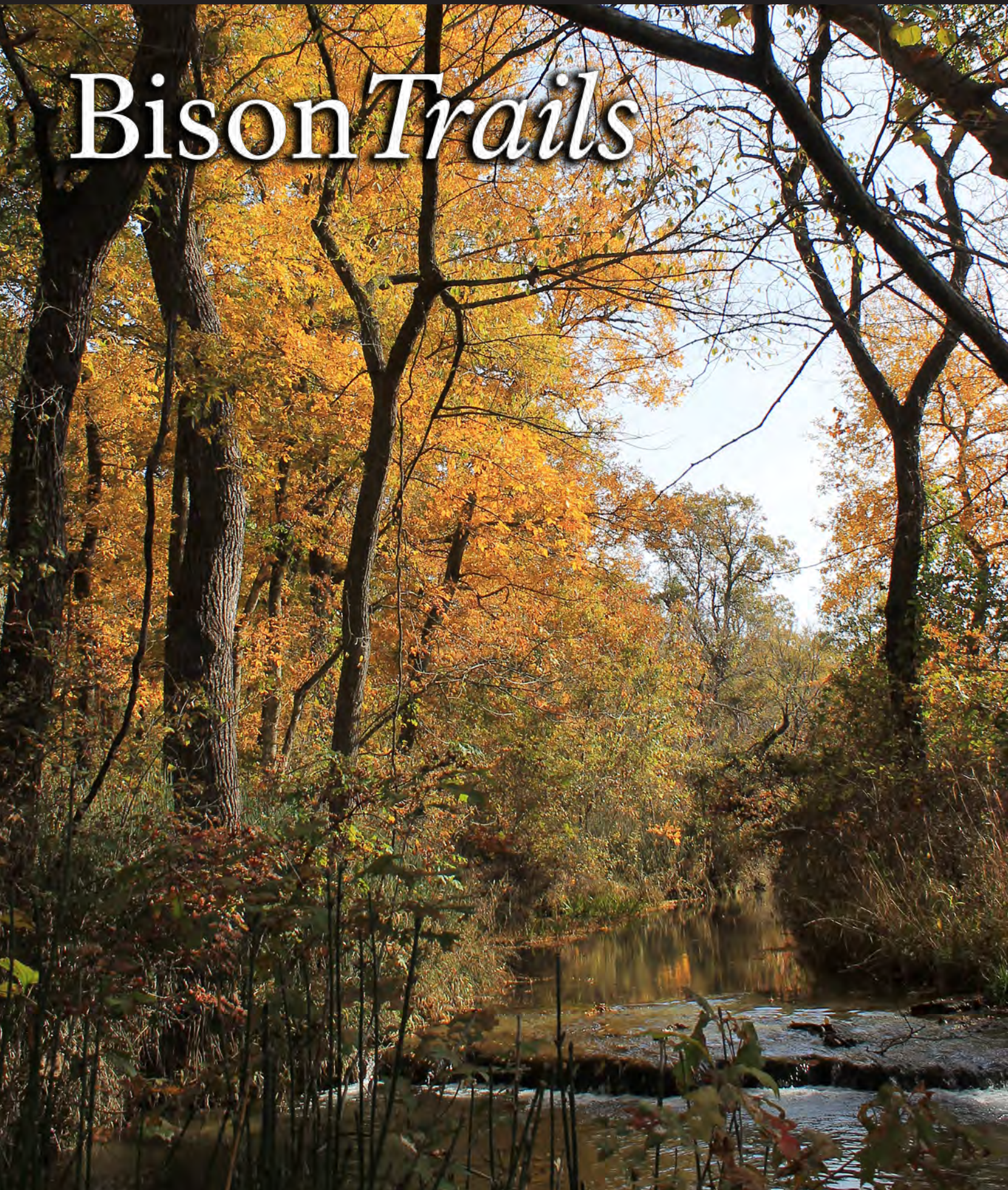




# Bison *Trails*





# From the Oklahoma State Coordinator

## National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior

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Bill Wright  
Oklahoma State Coordinator

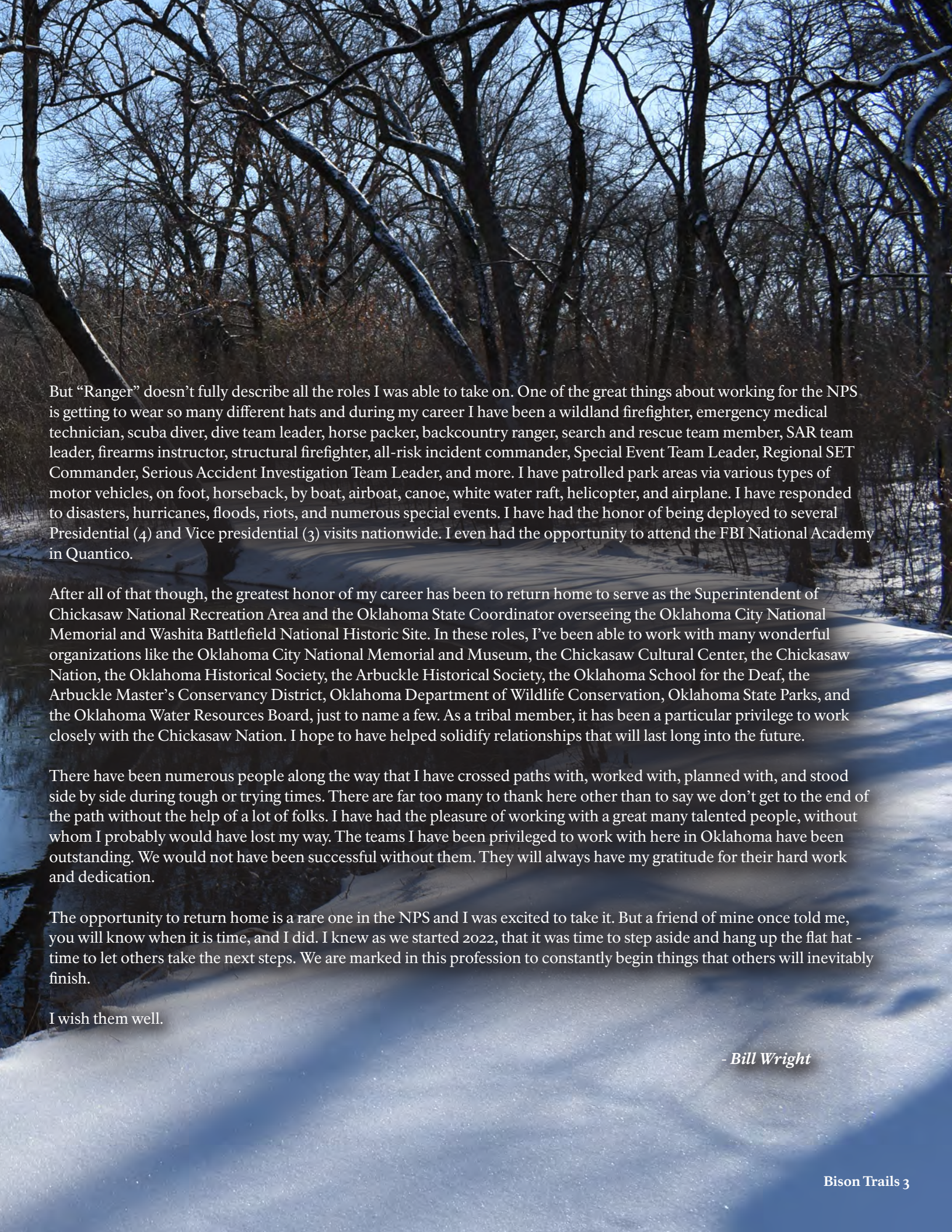
When we began to discuss the Fall edition of this magazine, Matt, the editor, told me he would give me extra space to recap my career since I will be retiring at the end of the year. I said sure and tried to wrap my mind around that concept. It was daunting to consider how to summarize a journey that started on Memorial Day Weekend in 1982 at Chickasaw National Recreation Area, spanned 11 positions in 9 different parks over 38 years, and has come full circle to end at that same park where it began. My interest in the National Park Service (NPS) started because of my grandfather. He was a Park Ranger at old Platt National Park (now Chickasaw NRA) for 30 years and my grandparents lived in one of the historic park housing units. When I stayed with them during the summers the park was both my backyard and playground. During this time my grandfather instilled in me a sense of purpose that comes from devotion to the special places the NPS is entrusted to protect. I also thought he was cool!

I wanted to be cool, too, though I didn't always feel that way at first. After four seasons at Chickasaw NRA as a fee collector in the campground and one season as a law enforcement ranger, I headed out across the country for my first job away from home at the Statue of Liberty National Monument. As I drove across the Verrazano Narrows bridge, between Staten Island and Brooklyn, I looked to my left and saw the New York City skyline, the Statue of Liberty standing prominently in the foreground. I asked myself, "What was I thinking coming here? I am just a hayseed from Oklahoma". I fully expected to be back home six months later, but by the time the season was over, my path was set. I never looked back. It would be 30 years before I returned home to Chickasaw NRA.

My next job took me to Great Smoky Mountains National Park for a summer seasonal appointment to do horse packing for the hog eradication program. I wasn't sure what that meant, but I was all in. I spent the summer on horseback in the mountains dropping off supplies for the hog camps two days a week and working the front country at Cades Cove for two days a week. It was an amazing summer.

Over the next several years, I worked as a Park Ranger at Independence National Historical Park, which was my first permanent appointment with the NPS, where I lived in a historic townhouse two blocks from Independence Hall, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and Buffalo National River. I became a District Ranger at Big Bend National Park, and then Chief Ranger there, before going on to be Chief Ranger at three major, SES level, National Parks: Everglades, Great Smoky Mountains and Grand Canyon, the only person to date to have done so. Twenty-nine of my 38 years were spent in Law Enforcement.



A photograph of a winter forest. The ground is covered in a layer of snow, and the trees are mostly bare, with some snow on their branches. The sky is a pale blue. The overall scene is quiet and serene.

But “Ranger” doesn’t fully describe all the roles I was able to take on. One of the great things about working for the NPS is getting to wear so many different hats and during my career I have been a wildland firefighter, emergency medical technician, scuba diver, dive team leader, horse packer, backcountry ranger, search and rescue team member, SAR team leader, firearms instructor, structural firefighter, all-risk incident commander, Special Event Team Leader, Regional SET Commander, Serious Accident Investigation Team Leader, and more. I have patrolled park areas via various types of motor vehicles, on foot, horseback, by boat, airboat, canoe, white water raft, helicopter, and airplane. I have responded to disasters, hurricanes, floods, riots, and numerous special events. I have had the honor of being deployed to several Presidential (4) and Vice presidential (3) visits nationwide. I even had the opportunity to attend the FBI National Academy in Quantico.

After all of that though, the greatest honor of my career has been to return home to serve as the Superintendent of Chickasaw National Recreation Area and the Oklahoma State Coordinator overseeing the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Washita Battlefield National Historic Site. In these roles, I’ve been able to work with many wonderful organizations like the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, the Chickasaw Cultural Center, the Chickasaw Nation, the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Arbuckle Historical Society, the Oklahoma School for the Deaf, the Arbuckle Master’s Conservancy District, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Oklahoma State Parks, and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, just to name a few. As a tribal member, it has been a particular privilege to work closely with the Chickasaw Nation. I hope to have helped solidify relationships that will last long into the future.

There have been numerous people along the way that I have crossed paths with, worked with, planned with, and stood side by side during tough or trying times. There are far too many to thank here other than to say we don’t get to the end of the path without the help of a lot of folks. I have had the pleasure of working with a great many talented people, without whom I probably would have lost my way. The teams I have been privileged to work with here in Oklahoma have been outstanding. We would not have been successful without them. They will always have my gratitude for their hard work and dedication.

The opportunity to return home is a rare one in the NPS and I was excited to take it. But a friend of mine once told me, you will know when it is time, and I did. I knew as we started 2022, that it was time to step aside and hang up the flat hat - time to let others take the next steps. We are marked in this profession to constantly begin things that others will inevitably finish.

I wish them well.

*- Bill Wright*



## I've Got a Bite!

Ed Standefer, Park Guide

In 2022 Chickasaw National Recreation Area (CNRA) continued to expand its fishing focused programming from 8 in-person clinics to 15.

The park provides equipment, guidance from experts, and a beautiful location for people of all ages to learn to fish or expand their knowledge of all things fishing. The National Park Foundation has provided support to the National Park Service so that the park can offer these “guided” fishing experiences - something that usually comes with a significant price - for free. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation’s partnership with CNRA in clinics allows us to waive the need for a fishing license for the duration of each event. So, anyone of any age can participate without the need to purchase a license.

During a clinic, a Park Ranger provides participants with rods, reels, bait and teaches or coaches the participant on where and how to fish in the clinic location. Once a person catches a fish, they can either keep it or put it back (within the bounds of fishing regulations). If a person chooses to keep a fish, the Ranger will clean it and offer advice on care and cooking. We also work to promote safe fishing practices, like hook awareness, and generally answer as many “fishy” questions as possible.

In addition to hosting clinics on many Saturdays throughout the summer, we conducted several targeted programs for specific audiences. These included a clinic for residents of the Oklahoma



A successful catch / NPS Photo

Veteran’s Center Sulphur location and two programs in conjunction with the Stratford Public School’s summer program. The summer school program focused on water and aquatic environments, so the fishing programs were a great reason to spend some time in an outdoor classroom. We wrapped up our “fishing season” with a classroom presentation for students at the Oklahoma School for the Deaf (OSD). We plan on getting some of those OSD students out fishing through our program this spring.

In all, our fishing programs reached approximately 200 people this year and many young people caught their first ever fish. The act of catching, holding, and potentially eating a fish they caught can be especially meaningful to folks that have never had that experience before. These connections between people and fish, humanity and nature are the moments our fishing clinics hope to emphasize.

If you would like to attend a program, bring someone to try and catch their first fish, or have an idea for a group we can connect with or further grow the program please give us a call at the Travertine Nature Center, 580-622-7234.



Participants at a Fishing Clinic / NPS Photo

# Hours and Hours of Service

## Ron Snavely, Recreation Fee Technician

When many people visit a national park site, they usually notice the park rangers wearing the green and gray. While the employees of the National Park Service may be noticeable by their uniforms, there is another group who is just as dedicated to making sure the park is protected and the visitor has a wonderful experience – our Volunteers-in-Parks.

Chickasaw National Recreation Area would like to give Special Recognition and a heartfelt thanks to three of our volunteers who have donated many hours to the National Park Service: Susan Snavely with over 15,000 volunteer hours, Mark Keiner with over 14,000 volunteer hours and Crystal Keiner with over 10,000 volunteer hours.

Chickasaw National Recreation Area has six campgrounds with over 400 campsites with both RV and tent camping. Our volunteer camp hosts work in the various campgrounds, are the eyes and ears assisting law enforcement, and provide information about our park to campers and visitors alike. Their duties include verifying camper reservations or payment for first come first served campsites. They are crucial in keeping the campsite, campgrounds, and park clean of trash and debris. Their interaction with campers provides for a good rapport and establishes the communication needed for the campers to have an enjoyable visit.

The job of maintaining the campgrounds in an acceptable manner could not be done without the volunteer efforts provided by our campground hosts. We salute all volunteers and thank them for the untiring efforts they provide.



Sue Snavely / NPS Photo



Mark Keiner / NPS Photo



Crystal Keiner / NPS Photo



# What's All the BUZZ About?

Julie Hoffman, Park Guide

The importance of pollinators in our landscape is an essential part of our everyday living. Pollinators are directly responsible for about 80% of the food on our plates. These vectors can take on many forms. Bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, bats or even those pesky flies we fan off our picnic snacks. There are 2,500 different species of bees in north America, 11,000 species of moths, 750 species of butterflies, as well as 45,000 types of beetles.

With those healthy numbers, one would think there are plenty of pollinators for all the crops, canola fields, almonds trees, and orchards in North America, but that simply isn't true. They are in trouble. We've heard of the demise of the rusty patched bumble bee being listed as endangered. The monarch butterfly is getting closer to becoming listed as an endangered species as well. Due to habitat loss and overuse of pesticides, the populations of many pollinators are on the decline. Being conscience about pollinators is vital. Use less pesticides, leave your lawn a little longer than normal, which means mowing less and who doesn't embrace that idea? Don't squish them! Let them go on about their business, after all they are providing food for us.

One of the most overlooked pollinators are the bees. After all they sting, right? Carpenter bees, sweat bees, bumble bees, and the European honeybee are all examples of various species of



A bee on a yellow flower / NPS Photo

bees that occur in North America. Each insect transfers pollen aiding in fertilization. The result is a fruit body /seed body. The honeybee is the only insect that produces food man consumes directly.

That's a lengthy invitation for all of you to visit Travertine Nature Center in Sulphur, Oklahoma, and check out our newly installed observation honeybee hive. You will also have an opportunity to visit with a ranger about what exactly is going on in the hive. I promise it'll be a sweet stop!

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## Seitz Selected as Chief Ranger

Megan Wilkins, Park Ranger

Chickasaw National Recreation Area Superintendent Bill Wright announces the selection of Kane Seitz to fill the Chief of Visitor and Resource Protection position at Chickasaw National Recreation Area. He begins his new assignment December 4.

“Kane has been a longtime employee of the park, and knows the park exceptionally well,” says Superintendent Bill Wright. “He also brings longstanding, positive relationships with our neighboring agencies with him as he moves into his new position as chief ranger.”

Seitz began his National Park Service career in 1999 as a seasonal fee collector at Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota. He went on to work as a law enforcement ranger at Theodore Roosevelt National Park and at Mount Rushmore National Memorial. He became a permanent law enforcement ranger at Theodore Roosevelt National Park in 2002. Seitz first came to Chickasaw National Recreation Area in 2007 as a field law enforcement ranger. He was promoted to field supervisor in 2012.



Seitz has a Bachelor of Science degree in Parks and Recreation Management from Northwest Missouri State University. He is also a 2002 graduate of the Basic Law Enforcement Academy at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia.

# Washita Battlefield

## National Historic Site

### Celebrating a 25th Anniversary

#### Kenny Points, Chief of Interpretation

During 2021 and 2022, park staff and stakeholders at Washita Battlefield NHS participated in a variety of activities to celebrate the park's 25th Anniversary. On November 13, 2021 Park staff hosted a celebration to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the park's designation. Members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, local stakeholders, and National Park Service employees came together to discuss the impact that the designation of this hallowed site has had.

Throughout the year, visitors had the opportunity to earn a 25th Anniversary Junior Ranger Patch as well a 25th Anniversary Challenge Coin. Visitors earned these mementos by learning more about the history of the site and culture of the people who were present here in 1868.

Student artists from across the United States interpreted the 25th anniversary theme "Working Towards the Future, Remembering the Past" by creating works of art. Their work was displayed in the Washita Battlefield Visitor Center from March 2022 through October 2022. Visitors to enjoyed viewing 71 pieces of artwork created by 334 students.

A once every-five-year celebration, Old Settlers Reunion, took place in April of 2022. This event offered park staff a grand opportunity to highlight the park in its 25th year. Park staff participated in a range of events including a fashion show, quilt contest, historic tent city, junior ranger activities, and a parade. The 25th anniversary themed parade float to second in the historic category. Park staff completed a new exhibit in the visitor center which highlighted accomplishments, staff, and facilities over the past 25 years. One panel shows the gradual transition from building space in Cheyenne, OK to the large offices and visitor center park staff currently occupy near the historic site.

Over the course of the past year park staff, visitors, and stakeholders have had the chance to celebrate and reflect on what has been achieved over the past 25 years. It is with great enthusiasm that all look towards what can be achieved over the next 25.



Supt. Young passing out medals / NPS Photo



# Local Youth Enjoy Camp Owa Chita

Kenny Points, Chief of Interpretation



Campers attempting a ropes course / NPS Photo

This year, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site once again hosted Camp Owa Chita, a summer camp for youth entering first through sixth grade. The camp ran from June 13th through the 18th. 30 kids from Cheyenne, OK and surrounding communities filled the available slots within days of registration opening. Activities centered around learning about the history and culture of people associated with the site filled the week-long schedule.

Campers designed their own winter counts which described events that have happened in their lives through the use of drawings. They also learned about and participated in traditional Cheyenne games. JR Lonelodge and his daughters visited the camp and performed traditional Plains Tribes dances. He described in detail the costumes they were wearing and the significance of various parts. After JR's performance the campers joined in and participated in a circle dance.

Scott Martin discussed some of the hardships faced by members of the 7th Cavalry in day-to-day life as part of the

Troop J living history group. Campers learned that the 7th would often ride for 40 miles in a day and had to eat things like hard tack while in the field. A historic tent was set up to show what members of the 7th would've slept in while in the field. The campers even participated in a stick pony relay.

Campers were grouped up and practiced teamwork during the ropes course. A set of several different obstacles designed to challenge and promote problem solving through teamwork faced the campers. They worked together and conquered the rope walk, river crossing, and plank walk.

The highlight for many of the campers were the water activities on the last day of camp. After a long week in the Oklahoma heat the campers were able to blow off a little steam by playing water balloon hot potato, water balloon toss, and participating in a squirt gun fight against park rangers and Superintendent Kevin Young. Due to the success of this event and demand for spots, National Park Service Staff are looking for ways to offer expanded participation in the coming years.



# Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Photos





## A Fair Share of Fun

Hailey Franks, Park Guide

What do funnel cakes, carnival rides, fried food, turkey legs, livestock competitions and the National Park Service have in common? The answer: they could all be found at the 2022 State Fair of Oklahoma!

Traditionally, the National Park Service sets up a booth in the Bennett Event Center during the fair. In 2020 and 2021, the National Park Service did not participate due to the COVID-19 pandemic but returned with enthusiasm in 2022. Park staff and Volunteers from Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, and the Oklahoma City National Memorial engaged fairgoers about camping and recreation opportunities with the NPS in Oklahoma. The booth was set up as a small campsite, complete with a tent and chairs. Many kids found themselves crawling into the tent for a picture or a selfie.

This gave visitors the opportunity to learn more about how to plan like a ranger when visiting parks. Always have a plan, and a backup plan! Will you need reservations for a campground? Safety should be an integral part of your planning. And as always, leave nothing more than footprints. Visitors at the fair were able to learn all about the seven principles of Leave No Trace so as to better preserve, protect and enjoy their parks!

For some visitors, the camping tips were a bonus on top of their main goal. Some visitors made the trip to the booth specifically to get one of most rare Passport to Your National Parks cancellation stamps. The NPS Oklahoma State Fair stamp is only available during the 11 days of the fair and is put away until next year. So no matter what the reason for visiting the National Park Service booth, be it selfies, lessons or stamps, everyone had a fun time!

Leave no trace and plan like a ranger!



A park ranger talking with a visitor at the state fair / NPS Photo



State Fair cancellation stamp / NPS Photo

- NPS -



# Getting Back in the Classroom

Larry Toll, Education Outreach Park Ranger

This year, I had the honor of being selected as the new Education Outreach ranger. I have worked for the NPS at the Oklahoma City National Memorial since 2019, serving for over two years as a Park Guide before being promoted to Park Ranger in charge of education outreach in February 2022.

Beginning at the height of the school visitation season in the spring, I oversaw the Every Kid Outdoors (EKO) program that provides grant funding from the National Park Foundation to help fourth grade students from schools in Oklahoma to visit the Memorial. That is then followed-up by a school visit to the kids in their schools where they are given the free NPS Fourth Grade pass. I enjoy visiting schools and hearing the kids excitedly yell, “Ranger Larry is here! Ranger Larry is here!”

In addition to the EKO program, I have been working on developing curriculum, helping to link pre-K through college educators with national parks throughout Oklahoma and across the United States. “E-Resource cards” have been developed with links to NPS educational materials through the national website [www.nps.gov/teachers](http://www.nps.gov/teachers), as well as several national park sites that cover both natural and cultural resources. One of the things discovered in the development process is that many national parks created virtual tours during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those videos are provided in the e-Resource cards that are available to teachers.

Traveling trunks have also been assembled that contain animal skulls, bones and hides of bison and different animals. A traveling trunk for trees is in development. For each of these, a lesson plan is included for teachers to use in their classroom. This fall, the bison traveling trunk was used on a visit to kindergartners in Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Prior to coming to the Oklahoma City National Memorial, I had the opportunity to serve as a seasonal park ranger at Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield in Missouri. As a retired history professor with 30 years’ experience, I love my new career and enjoy working with school kids. They are fun, and I would rather work with kids than anyone else. They are full of enthusiasm and want to learn.



Ranger Larry teaching kids about bison / NPS Photo

For more information about the National Park Service in Oklahoma City’s Educational Outreach program, contact me at [larry\\_toll@nps.gov](mailto:larry_toll@nps.gov), or by phone at 405-609-8862 (office) or 405-520-6887 (cell).





**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

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## **BisonTrails**

**Volume 6, Number 2**  
 Fall 2022

*BisonTrails* is the official newsletter of the units of the national park system located in the State of Oklahoma.

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## *Support Your Parks*

### **Friends of Chickasaw NRA**

The purpose of the Friends of Chickasaw National Recreation Area is to promote public appreciation of and support for Chickasaw National Recreation Area. This support includes conducting interpretive programs, increasing public awareness regarding the park and its mission, fundraising, and other volunteer activities. The IRS has certified this group as a private non-profit organization (501c3) and membership fees for joining are tax deductible. Anyone interested in receiving a membership application can send an email to: [chic\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:chic_superintendent@nps.gov), or call 580-622-7220.

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### **Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum**

The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is a private non-profit organization, and does not receive any annual operating funds from the federal, state or local government. Museum admissions, store sales, the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon, earnings from an endowment and private fundraising allow the Memorial and Museum to be self-sustaining.

Valuable gifts of time, talent and treasure to the Memorial help change lives each and every day. Make your donation to the Memorial and volunteer your time. If you would like to help, write to PO Box 323, Oklahoma City, OK, 73101, or call toll-free at 1-888-542-HOPE.