



Oklahoma Update

National Parks in Oklahoma

National park areas are more than just pretty places, they are reflections of America as a whole, with a wide range of stories, experiences, and opportunities.

For more information or to plan a trip, please visit our official park websites at www.nps.gov/chic, www.nps.gov/okci, and www.nps.gov/waba

Chickasaw National Recreation Area

Oklahoma's oldest national park unit, Chickasaw National Recreation Area has been a refuge for outdoor traditions for over a century. Springs, streams, and lakes attract visitors to the park, named for the Indian nation from whom the United States purchased the land for the park in 1902.

For more stories and information about Chickasaw National Recreation Area, please turn to pages 2-3.

Oklahoma City National Memorial

The bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995, killed 168 people, and injured more than 650. The Memorial is a public/private partnership established to honor the memory of the victims, their families, the survivors, and their rescuers.

For more stories and information about the Oklahoma City National Memorial, please turn to pages 4-5.

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

The park preserves the site of the November 27, 1868, battle where the 7th U.S. Cavalry under Lt. Col. George A. Custer destroyed Peace Chief Black Kettle's Cheyenne village. Black Kettle and more than 100 Cheyenne were killed or captured. The controversial attack has been described as both a battle and a massacre.

For more stories and information about Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, please turn to pages 6-7.



Assistant Interior Secretary for Water and Science Anne Castle speaks at dedication of Blue River 'America's Great Outdoors' river project in Oklahoma. Castle joins NPS Oklahoma State Coordinator Bruce Noble and other dignitaries in planting a native tree near the stream.

Assistant Interior Secretary Dedicates Blue River Project

Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science Anne Castle dedicated Oklahoma's Blue River on September 21st as an "America's Great Outdoors" river project.

Castle joined representatives of Chickasaw National Recreation Area, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Chickasaw Nation in planting a 12-foot native burr oak on the edge of a riverside meadow in the conservancy's Oka' Yanahli Blue River Preserve in south-central Oklahoma.

The 141-mile river, one of the state's few

remaining free-flowing streams, is a project in President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative. The program seeks to set a community-driven conservation and recreation agenda for the 21st century by encouraging projects that reconnect people with nature and strengthen local economies through outdoor recreation and tourism.

Other speakers included Joy Nicholopoulos, Fish and Wildlife's Southwest Region deputy director; Jona Tucker, director of the Oka' Yanahli Blue River Preserve;

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Chickasaw National Recreation Area

From the Oklahoma State Coordinator

Blue River Dedication continued:

Stephen Greetham, chief general counsel to the Chickasaw Nation Division of Commerce and the tribe's special counsel on water and natural resources, and Amy Ford, president of Citizens for the Protection of the Arbuckle Simpson Aquifer.

The Blue River project is part of the America's Great Outdoors Rivers Initiative, which aims to enhance waters for recreation and stream restoration with federal agency support of community conservation. Three Interior bureaus are involved: the Park Service (Chickasaw National Recreation Area), Fish and Wildlife Service (Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge) and U.S. Geological Survey (Oklahoma Water Science Center).

Outdoors enthusiasts enjoy abundant opportunities on the Blue River, including fishing, kayaking, canoeing, camping, hunting and hiking. Besides focusing on the river's recreational and tourism qualities, the project envisions watershed-protection measures to benefit natural resources at Chickasaw, Tishomingo and the Blue River Wildlife Management Area.

"We look forward to continuing the conversation with Oklahomans, as the stakeholders in the Blue River, about the common goals we all share in enjoying and preserving this important resource," said Bruce Noble, Oklahoma state coordinator for the Park Service and superintendent of Chickasaw National Recreation Area.

During the recent holiday season, I know that many of us took time to stop and take stock of the many blessings we have within our families, among our friends, as citizens of the great state of Oklahoma, and as Americans. When I think about the many things I feel thankful for, the great people I work with at Chickasaw National Recreation Area rank near the top of the list. If you asked me to prove how I know we have such an outstanding park staff, I would say just look at the numbers.

Every summer, the National Park Service works with the University of Idaho to conduct visitor surveys in all the national park areas across the nation. In 2012, 400 of these survey forms were distributed to Chickasaw National Recreation Area visitors during the month of July. 75% of that total, or 298 survey forms, were returned to the park. This is an extremely high percentage and provides us with very solid statistical data.

And what did we learn from the data? First and foremost, we learned that 96% of our visitors felt that the services, facilities, and recreational experiences provided in the park were either "good" or "very good". This tells me that the park is doing an excellent job in satisfying our customer base and ensuring that they are likely to return again in the future.

Looking a little more closely at the survey data, I was pleased to see that 92% of our visitors felt that the quality of park restrooms was either "good" or "very good". This is very gratifying since that number had languished under 60% in recent years and the improvement in the

2012 percentage seems to be attributable to the significant amount of funding that the park has spent in recent years to add new vault toilets in the Veteran's Lake area and to upgrade the restrooms in the Platt District.

Other figures that caught my attention were 92% satisfaction for park walkways, roads, and trails; 93% for combined park facilities; 93% for assistance from park employees; 97% for outdoor recreational experiences provided in the park; and 92% for ranger programs offered by park interpreters. While we certainly aim for 100% satisfaction from the visiting public, a "perfect" score is just not realistic in a park like Chickasaw National Recreation Area that serves well over one million visitors annually. Although our numbers are less than perfect, they are very high and indicate the great pleasure that our visitors associate with their park experience.

The survey also includes some written remarks, not just statistical data. Those written remarks struck me as even more impressive. One person said, "I've been all over the world but I want to come here every year." Another commented, "I've been to thirty National parks around the western US and this is the best facility my family has been at. . . ." Yet another said, "Have been coming here for 60 years. Wonderful!" And finally, "Keep doing a superb job. It makes me proud to be an American." Wow! These comments are among the highest praise I can imagine.

There are many factors that create happy park visitors, but the common

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Restoration of 12th Street Fountain Wall Completed

Maintenance crews at Chickasaw National Recreation Area finished the restoration of the historic fountain wall located near the 12th Street entrance to the park.

The fountain was originally built in 1935 by members of the Civilian Conservation Corp Camp #808 during the Great Depression. The fountain wall is an integral part of the Platt National Park Historic District that was designated as a National Historic Landmark by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar during July of 2011.

Park Superintendent Bruce Noble commented, "We are pleased to be returning the 12th Street Fountain to its original historic appearance after an unfortunate traffic accident caused serious damage to the fountain in 2011."



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

A park named to honor the Chickasaw Indian Nation, the partially forested hills of southcentral Oklahoma and its springs, streams, and lakes provide swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, camping, hunting, and hiking.

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Emily Clark Given the Oklahoma Federal Executive Board Outstanding Community Service Award

Emily Clark of Chickasaw National Recreation Area received the outstanding community service award on May 7, 2012 at the US Postal Service National Center for Employee Development in Norman, OK. Emily was recognized for saving the lives of an entire family she found sleeping in their Sulphur, OK home during a fire that destroyed their residence. She discovered the fire while driving to her National Park Service office on the morning of February 6, 2012.

The ability to respond heroically to a life threatening situation is not simply a matter of being in the right place at the right time. It involves the ability to seize the moment and take action in a situation that is inherently dangerous and stress-producing. In taking these actions under very challenging circumstances,

Emily played a key role in saving the life of a family and performing a vital service on behalf of the community in which she lives and works. This award recognizes Emily's heroic deed, as well as the good work that all federal employees accomplish in order to make Oklahoma a better place to live and work.

The Oklahoma Federal Executive Board presents this award annually in honor of Public Service Week. The first week of May has been designated Public Service Week since 1985 by the President and Congress. It was established to honor the men and women who serve as federal, state, county and local government employees. In 2012, 102 people were nominated in 16 categories. These awards are presented to recognize outstanding work that civilian employees do to serve the public.



Emily Clark

Oklahoma City National Memorial

“New View Oklahoma” Visits the Oklahoma City National Memorial

Karena Minor

As an interpreter my job is to create emotional and intellectual connections with our visitors. At least that's what I was taught in college. Sometimes, unexpectedly, that role becomes reversed.

That is precisely what happened to me on November 9th, just days before Veteran's Day. That Friday I had the distinction of meeting veterans from VITAL (Veteran's Independence Through Adaptive Living) organized by New View Oklahoma. VITAL is a support group for blind and visually impaired veterans. Their visit to the Oklahoma City National Memorial was in honor of Veteran's Day to recognize those who lost their lives at the site of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. I was given the opportunity to be their guide for their visit to the memorial.

It can be easy to take for granted our sense of sight. My daily interaction with visitors depends on their ability to see. I am daily communicating to the public the location of buildings and the events of the domestic terrorist attack of April 19, 1995. As I spent time with the veterans on Friday November 9, I began to observe sunlight, color of the leaves, shapes and sizes of the grass, trees, gates, reflection pool, and the texture of the one hundred sixty-eight chairs. I needed to create a verbal image of the memorial, inspiring the

imagination of the veterans to picture the site. With these descriptive words the veterans challenged me to see the way they do.

Also, getting to meet these veterans helped me to understand how American sacrifice and bravery can extend beyond our service members. The victims, survivors, rescue workers, and children who were a part of the Oklahoma City bombing demonstrated this to the nation through their courage, resilience and hope to rise from tragedy and become strong again. I didn't really understand that their actions that April were an equal example of heroism until these veterans pointed it out to me.

On this Veterans Day through these veterans' eyes and valor, I too can see the Oklahoma City National Memorial more clearly.

The Bizzell Memorial Library

Matt Caire

Being a student at the University of Oklahoma (OU), I thought that I was familiar with the Bizzell Memorial Library, the school's main library. I have spent many hours in the Great Reading Room, and even have a favorite carrel on the fourth floor. Staff members at the library know me well. Until recently, however, I was unaware that the library represents a historical landmark listed in the National Register of Historic Places

(a program administered by the National Park Service).

The Bizzell, I learned, had an important part in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1948, George McLaurin, who held a Master's from the University of Kansas and taught at Langston University, applied for admission into OU's doctoral program in education administration. University officials admitted McLaurin - under certain conditions. The sixty-one year old McLaurin dealt with humiliating racial segregation. Instead of sitting among his peers in classes, university officials made him sit outside of classrooms; he listened to lectures from a desk in hallways. He ate in segregated areas and used separate restrooms, too. At Bizzell, he sat outside of the Great Reading Room, alone in an adjacent mezzanine.

McLaurin contested the legality of such treatment in *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*. His attorney, Thurgood Marshall, argued that OU's policies violated the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1950 the Supreme Court found that it was unconstitutional for public universities to offer different treatment to students because of their race. McLaurin's case became a legal precedent for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which overturned the separate but equal doctrine.

The Bizzell Memorial Library serves as a reminder to visitors of an unfortunate yet legally rectified episode in the country's history. In the library patrons can see the famous reading room or old decks, with their glass-bottom floor. They can also wander around the stacks in the library and see the variety of resources it offers to the public. My naïveté led me to assume that the Civil Rights Movement primarily took place in the deep south or urban centers. I realize now that this is inaccurate; Oklahoma has its own site with historical relevance.



Chairs with flowers



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Oklahoma City National Memorial was created to honor those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever by the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The memorial is a public/private partnership established so that the American public can honor the memory of the victims, their families, the survivors, and their rescuers.

Oklahoma City National Memorial

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

From the State Coordinator continued:

denominator is a great staff. Budget challenges have recently left the park with vacant positions and this means that existing staff must work even harder to provide a high quality experience to the public. These very positive visitor satisfaction numbers indicate the success that our park staff has had in serving our visitor population.

At the start of the new year, I want to take a moment to give my thanks to our great National Park Service employees not just here at Chickasaw National Recreation Area, but also at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Cheyenne, OK. I feel so fortunate to work with such a great bunch of people. We are lucky to have such an excellent National Park Service team here in Oklahoma and please take a moment to tell our employees that you appreciate their hard work if you have the chance.

Although the warm, dry weather this fall has contributed to our ongoing drought problem, we have recently received some much needed rain and the colder weather appears to have arrived. Still, we generally have plenty of nice winter days and I encourage everyone to visit their favorite Oklahoma national parks when the weather permits. We certainly appreciate all the positive support we received from the public during 2012 and I wish you and yours the very best during 2013.

Bruce Noble
Superintendent & Oklahoma State
Coordinator

The Future is in Our Youth

Mike Washington

How do we start to foster a sense of stewardship for our National Parks? One way to do it is through the education of our youth. There are many different ways to do this but I found out, through my own observations, if you connect well the children at your site, you are also making connections with the adults. That is why the Junior Ranger Program is a great way for kids to connect with the resource. In addition to the kids, connecting and learning about the site, I noticed how the parents, guardians, or grandparents get involved.

From the January through October of 2012 we swore in 715 Junior Rangers at the Oklahoma City Memorial. Now add in the Junior Rangers programs from Chickasaw National Recreation Area and Washita Battlefield National Historic site and you have future stewards of three different National Park Sites. If you want more information on the Junior Ranger Program or Webranger Program, please visit the nps.gov website, click on the teacher tab then click on the Junior Ranger or Webranger tab. To find out more about the Junior Ranger Program and to preview the Junior Ranger book for the Oklahoma City National Memorial visit the website at nps.gov/okci.



Park Guide Mike Washington and Jr. Ranger Luke

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site



Overlook Pavilion

The Overlook Receives a “Facelift”

In October, the overlook pavilion and two picnic shelters were renovated as part of the park’s on-going cyclic maintenance. Contractors replaced shingles on the pavilion and shelters, removed and replaced worn decking and refreshed the structures with a new coat of paint.

The overlook pavilion and picnic shelters were built in the mid 1960’s by the Oklahoma Industrial Development and Park Department, a forerunner of today’s Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department.

Future improvements planned for the area include a new Overlook, Trail and Trailhead, adding Americans with Disabilities Act accessible picnic tables for each picnic shelter, revising cell phone tour/audio scripts, and adding stops along the current 1.5 mile interpretive trail.

Great Grandson of Sitting Bull Speaks at Washita Battlefield National Historical Site

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site held a special program on November 3, 2012 that featured Ernie LaPointe, the great grandson of the legendary Lakota leader, Sitting Bull. The presentation was held at the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site’s visitor center gallery. Approximately 80 visitors attended from local and surrounding communities, with some travelling longer distances from outside the area and state.

Mr. LaPointe, who spent many years authenticating his lineage through oral family history, ceremonies, DNA and genealogical research, recounted family stories and expounded upon his famous great grandfather’s life and legacy. He also explained the process in working with the Smithsonian Institution in repatriating several items from the Natural History Museum under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

LaPointe is currently working on a new documentary on Sitting Bull titled, “Sitting Bull’s Voice”. He has authored

a recent publication titled: “Sitting Bull, His Life and Legacy,” which is carried as a sales item at the Washita Battlefield NHS bookstore. This book reveals the rich oral history of his family and the stories of Sitting Bull’s childhood, and his reputation as a fierce warrior and honored leader.

Mr. LaPointe and his wife Sonja, visited the park last March, which prompted this special opportunity for a return visit and presentation. Park Superintendent Lisa Conard Frost stated “The Washita story is intimately connected with the story of Little Bighorn in many ways. It was a honor to have Mr. LaPointe speak about his ancestor, who is one of the most notable historical Native American leaders in our history.” She added, “Opportunities like this are rare and special. To have the ability to connect personally with a lineal descendant such as Mr. LaPointe is important to understand the full context and perspectives of stories that are historically significant.”



Great Grandson of the legendary Lakota leader Sitting Bull, Ernie LaPointe.

Fourth Annual Teacher's Workshop A Success!

On July 21, 2012 Washita Battlefield National Historic Site hosted its fourth annual teacher's workshop, entitled "A Window on our World." Partnering with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes (Tsististas and Hinono'ei), the Oklahoma Department of Education and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College, the workshop was designed so teachers might learn to incorporate Cheyenne and Arapaho viewpoints into their curricula.

Over 75 people, including 44 teachers from across Oklahoma, as well as one educator from Mississippi, attended the event. One teacher commented that in her 20 years as a teacher in Oklahoma

and in attending at least that many workshops, this was the first time that Native American culture had been incorporated so intimately. The park was honored to also have in attendance, Dwight Pickering, Director of American Indian Education for the Oklahoma Department of Education.

Cheyenne Chief Gordon Yellowman began the workshop with a traditional blessing, and led a program at the site's Native Garden. Also included in the day's activities were sessions chaired by staff from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes' Department of Education and led by Executive Director Teresa Dorsett. A traditional meal of corn soup and fry bread was enjoyed by all. The day ended with a Jingle Dress Dance demonstration



Teachers Workshop

by a young Cheyenne girl, accompanied by the Red Moon Drummers and Singers. Everyone was then invited to participate in a Native American Social Dance.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The park commemorates the November 27, 1868, attack where the 7th U.S. Cavalry under Lt. Col. George A. Custer destroyed Peace Chief Black Kettle's Cheyenne village. Black Kettle and over 100 Cheyenne were captured or killed. The controversial attack has been described as both a battle and a massacre.

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Lewis & Clark Then and Now: A Lasting Legacy

Cheyenne Public School students were treated to the "real deal" when Chickasaw NRA Park Guide, Chuck Lassiter came to speak to 3rd, 7th, and 8th grade classes who were studying the Lewis and Clark Trail.

Since Chuck had been a member of the 2004 – 2006 National Park Service Corps of Discovery II mini-mobile national park tour, sent on the road to commemorate the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition, classroom teachers Whitney Moore, Brad Thrash and Lori Barnett asked if he could come speak to their classes about his participation in commemorating this historical event. With humor and a top notch power point presentation, "Lewis & Clark Then and Now: A Lasting Legacy", Chuck brought the Lewis and Clark experience into their classrooms.



Park Guide Charles Lassiter talking to students from the Cheyenne Public schools

Chuck's visit to Washita is another prime example of the partnership opportunities that exist between Oklahoma's national parks.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Oklahoma Update Volume 4, Number 2

The Oklahoma Update 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, 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.