



# The 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](http://www.nps.gov/chic), [www.nps.gov/okci](http://www.nps.gov/okci), and [www.nps.gov/waba](http://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.



Busy summer day at the Travertine Nature Center. (NPS)

## Recovery Act Project Improves Travertine Nature Center

Park Ranger Lauren Gurniewicz

Construction crews have started work to replace the heating and air conditioning system and roof of the Travertine Nature Center at Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the improvements will result in a more comfortable environment for employees and visitors and will greatly increase the building's energy efficiency.

The Travertine Nature Center was completed in 1969 as part of the National Park Service Mission 66 Program, which provided parks with much-needed infrastructure improvements. New roads, comfort stations, picnic shelters, administrative facilities, employee housing, maintenance yards, and visitor centers were built throughout the National Park system as part of the Mission 66 program. Over 100 visitor service facilities were designed

and constructed during Mission 66, which was carried out beginning in 1956 and ending in the late 1960s.

The Travertine Nature Center was constructed using materials similar to those used by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, but with a modern twist. Spanning Travertine Creek, the Nature Center's organic design is reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's style of design.

The facility has served as the park's primary visitor contact station and the hub of interpretive efforts for decades. The current work marks the first major building improvements since the Nature Center was dedicated in 1969 and will allow Chickasaw National Recreation Area to continue to host thousands of visitors each year, providing information, exhibits and programs.

# Chickasaw National Recreation Area

## In Brief

### Veterans Lake update

Construction work to rehabilitate the Veterans Lake dam and extend the Veterans Lake pedestrian trail was completed this Winter. Last Fall, park staff used the low lake levels during the construction as an opportunity to conduct a trash cleanup that resulted in three dump trucks of debris removed from the lake area! A formal ribbon cutting to celebrate the project's completion will take place in the Spring.

### TRT shares her Chickasaw experience

2009 Teacher-Ranger-Teacher (TRT), Amy Trenkle, traveled from Washington, DC to Denver, CO in November to conduct a poster presentation at the National Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference. Her presentation focused on her experience as a TRT at Chickasaw and how educators can incorporate the National Parks into the classroom. Way to go, Amy!

### Children's Fishing Clinic

In October park staff and volunteers held a children's fishing clinic at the Point Day Use Area on the Lake of the Arbuckles. Led by Park Guide Steffan Hakanson, the event was in partnership with the Sulphur Chamber of Commerce and the Oklahoma Aquatic Resources Education Program. The clinic was designed to give kids and parents a chance to experience the beauty of Chickasaw while learning about and participating in a popular outdoor activity with park rangers. Stations included Sportfish Identification, Fishing Ethics and Water Safety, Fishing Equipment, Knot Tying, and Casting. Forty participants put what they had learned into practice by fishing, with almost everyone catching a fish!

### Junior Ranger Ambassador

The park hosted its 2nd Student Conservation Association Junior Ranger Ambassador in 2010. Shelley Turner shared her enthusiasm and skills with young visitors for six months. Her previous volunteer experience at Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument prepared her for the internship. Shelley also attended a week-long Junior Ranger Ambassador training with fellow Ambassadors who worked at other national parks last summer. She staffed the Junior Ranger Station at Cold Springs Campground and created crafts and educational activities for young visitors. Shelley's experience culminated in a Junior Ranger Discovery Day in October. The day began with a nature walk and included a series of activities including owl pellet dissection, tree leaf identification, a springs activity, and story time.

## Platt National Park Nominated for National Historic Landmark Designation

Park Ranger Lauren Gurniewicz



### Cold Springs Campground Checking Station, completed in 1937. (NPS)

The Landmarks Committee of the Advisory Board of the National Park Service (NPS) voted unanimously to recommend that Platt National Park (Chickasaw's Platt Historic District) be designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL). The Advisory Board will consider the nomination at a meeting in April and will likely recommend the designation to the Secretary of the Interior sometime in 2011. If the designation occurs, it will not change the overall park name of Chickasaw National Recreation Area.

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Less than 2,500 historic places are considered to be of such high significance.

Platt National Park is considered significant because of its landscape architecture, architecture, and preserved environment. The landscape is a tangible example of one of the most intense master planning and conservation programs carried out



### Pavilion Springs pavilion and underpass steps, constructed 1936-1937. (NPS)

by the NPS. From 1933-1940 the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) used native stone to construct roads, trails, and recreational areas and planted native trees and shrubs to enhance the park landscape at Platt National Park.

Setting standards and supervising the work of the CCC under the NPS, landscape architects created a rustic architectural design for Platt that enhanced the park's natural resources and provided for recreational enjoyment of the resources.

Over 80 structures in the 848-acre Platt Historic District contribute to the historic landscape. According to the NHL nomination, "in few other national parks did the work of the CCC yield such transformative results and leave such a rich and lasting legacy." The exceptional design, workmanship, and setting in the Platt Historic District continues to attract visitors who enjoy the park's springs, streams, waterfalls, swimming holes, picnic areas, trails, and campgrounds.

To view the Platt National Park nomination visit [www.nps.gov/history/nhl/](http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/).

# Prairie Restoration Underway

Park Ranger Lauren Gurniewicz

Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, National Park Service Resource and Fire Managers have implemented a plan to restore native grasslands in Chickasaw National Recreation Area. In the summer of 2010, crews began a project to mechanically remove eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) from portions of the park. Trees over 5ft. in height were cut using chainsaws and the slash was left to dry in preparation for prescribed fire. National Park Service Fire Managers expect to carry out the prescribed fire this winter, as determined by land management objectives, weather, and fuel conditions.

Eastern redcedar, which is native to the state of Oklahoma, is highly invasive in the absence of fire. Before western settlement, the trees were found primarily in rocky soils, river and creek drainages, and near limestone outcroppings. Fires on the prairie, both natural and set by Native Americans, maintained a natural ecological balance and kept redcedar at bay. With the suppression of fire after western settlement, eastern redcedar has invaded rangelands as well as native prairie and savanna areas, like Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Millions of acres have been impacted by the redcedar invasion in Oklahoma.

In Oklahoma, eastern redcedar has displaced native plant and animal communities in prairies, shrublands, and crosstember forests, reducing biological diversity. Where wild areas and communities collide, eastern redcedar poses a fire danger, due to the volatile oils and long-range spotting potential.

The removal of eastern redcedar will reduce hazardous fuels, as the trees burn with a high intensity. Fire managers have also created defensible areas at the park's boundary that will allow firefighters to better protect both the park and the local community in the event of a wildfire in the future.



Park area after cutting of redcedar, slated for prescribed fire in Winter 2011. (NPS)

Fire is the primary force in maintaining healthy prairie ecosystems. Following the prescribed fires, the areas burned in the park this year will return to their natural state of mosaic grasses and savanna, with a combination of grassland and woodland in which trees are widely scattered. Park visitors will likely see an increase in wildlife as a result of the increased grassland habitat. The native grasses are highly adaptive to Oklahoma's climate and will withstand future fires and drought.

"I think visitors to Chickasaw NRA will be hugely impressed by the way that the Eastern redcedar reduction project has opened up views around the park," said Superintendent Bruce Noble. "We are also excited about related benefits that will result from fewer redcedars in the park like the improvement of wildlife habitat, conservation of water in the Arbuckle Simpson aquifer, and hopefully some reduction in the pollen levels that plague allergy sufferers in the area."

For more information about the National Park Service Fire Management Program, visit [www.nps.gov/fire](http://www.nps.gov/fire).



Park Guide Steffan Hakanson leading Children's Fishing Clinic (NPS)

## Chickasaw National Recreation Area

The park is named to honor the Chickasaw Indian Nation, who occupied this land prior to the establishment of the park. The partially forested hills of southcentral Oklahoma and its springs, streams, and lakes provide swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, camping, hunting, and hiking.

**Superintendent**  
Bruce Noble

**Chief of Interpretation**  
Ron Parker

**Mailing Address**  
1008 West Second Street  
Sulphur, Oklahoma 73086

**On the Internet**  
<http://www.nps.gov/chic/>



Follow us on Facebook

**Phone**  
580 622-7234

**E-mail**  
[chic\\_web\\_coordinator@nps.gov](mailto:chic_web_coordinator@nps.gov)

# Oklahoma City National Memorial

## Australian and American Firefighters Run to Remember

Park Ranger M. Tucker Blythe

On August 22nd – a clear, hot morning – firefighters from Australia and the U.S. stopped at the Oklahoma City National Memorial. The firefighters were participating in the “Tour of Duty,” a run to remember the victims and rescuers of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States. According to their website ([www.tourofduty.com.au](http://www.tourofduty.com.au)), the firefighters ran with a specific purpose: “Every step of this run is part of our statement, however humble, that their commitment to duty, to service, will never be forgotten.”

Around forty runners began their journey in Los Angeles on August 12. Running in teams in shifts, their route took them through cities like Las Vegas, New Orleans and Chicago, but one important stop for these firefighters was the Oklahoma City National Memorial.

The runners arrived at about 5:30 a.m., and throughout the morning they explored the Memorial grounds. Many of the runners

attended interpretive talks and/or chatted with NPS rangers on the site, but they also silently contemplated the meaning of the Memorial.

Park Guide Shannon DeMotte had only been working at the site for a couple of months when the runners arrived. She said, “Being here and reading about the bombing is very difficult. There is such sadness in the world, but these runners reminded me that there is also a lot of good. Some of the runners had just come off running a 6-hour shift. They didn’t stop to sleep. They came to the Memorial first instead of resting and that really impressed me.”

At noon, the runners and their support team gathered in the parking lot of the post office across the street from the Memorial. After prayers and a pep talk, bagpipes played and they began the next leg of the run. The runners were escorted out of the city by fire engines from the Oklahoma City Fire Department.



**Tour of Duty runners following OKC Fire Department engines near the Memorial. (NPS)**

On their way to NYC, the runners also stopped at another national park site, the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania. Their Tour of Duty came to an end in New York on September 11, completing 4,600 miles and a 31 day journey of remembrance.

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## New Lead Park Ranger Selected

Supervisory Park Ranger Skip Wheeler



**Park Ranger Tucker Blythe with visitors on the Memorial grounds. (NPS)**

After two-and-a-half years as a front-line interpreter at the Oklahoma City National Memorial, Tucker Blythe has been selected as the lead park ranger at the Memorial.

“Tucker comes to us with a great deal of NPS experience. He spent 10 years in various NPS interpretive and cultural resource management roles, and from his time at the Memorial, knows the resource and the issues here. He also spent time in the academic world and the private sector and brings that experience to the table as well,” said Superintendent Bruce Noble.

“I am excited to have been selected as the lead ranger. I have been honored to provide opportunities for visitors to connect with this important place, and I look forward to helping maintain and improve the level of interpretive services at the Memorial in the future,” Blythe said.

Blythe holds a Bachelor of Arts in Historic Preservation from Mary Washington College and a Master of Arts in Communication from Wichita State University. He lives in Edmond, Oklahoma with his wife and two step-children.

# From the Oklahoma State Coordinator

2010 was a remarkable year at Chickasaw National Recreation Area and 2011 dawns with much of the excitement and enthusiasm of the previous year. I am pleased to say that the park has experienced incredible progress on the following major projects:

1. Good weather has allowed the work on Veteran's Lake Dam to move forward at a rapid pace. This \$2 million project should be completed by the end of January, thus allowing this area to be reopened to the public for the first time since last summer.

2. The \$1 million project to complete the trail around the perimeter of Veteran's Lake is completed. Once the lake area is reopened, the public will immediately see what a wonderful addition this new trail segment offers to park visitors. I expect that visitation to the Veteran's Lake area will increase as a result of this great project.

3. The \$1.5 million venture to remove Eastern redcedar from approximately 5,000 acres within the park has been a tremendous undertaking, but is making fine progress. Weather permitting, prescribed fire will be utilized to burn the downed cedar during the winter months. This will involve about 40 National Park Service (NPS) fire fighters from around the country and will inevitably put a good deal of smoke in the air, but we are working hard to find a weather window that will minimize the impacts of this smoke on communities surrounding the park.

If that were not enough, the park has recently initiated a nearly \$1 million project involving the Travertine Nature Center. This project will result in total replacement of the building's heating and air conditioning system, a new roof, and improved energy efficiency due to better lighting and insulation. Despite the scope of this work, I anticipate only temporary closures of the Nature Center and minimal disruption to public use of that facility.

Hard work also continues on the park's visitor center project. I understand that the community is frustrated about the fact that this project has yet to be constructed and I can assure everyone that park employees are most frustrated of all about this situation. However, we anticipate receiving NPS approval of this project in 2011 and that will clear the way for construction once funding becomes available. I will certainly pursue every opportunity—including partnerships—to secure funding to construct this much needed visitor center.

We see other signs of positive activity by the NPS as we look across Oklahoma. Washita Battlefield National Historic Site continues to develop as an increasingly vibrant destination. The park is on the brink of adding some major new exhibits to their impressive visitor center. At the same time, the recent tragedy in Tucson reinforces the unpleasant reality that domestic terrorism continues to be a major concern for this nation. This makes the story of the Oklahoma City National Memorial even more relevant as a place where the NPS plays an important role with our partners to convey a message of hope and renewal that will always prevail over the forces of terrorism. If you have not recently visited the Memorial and the moving museum located there, I encourage you to do so.

Despite all this NPS activity across the state, continued concerns about the national economy do not bode well for the federal budget. In addition, fears about rising gas prices raise questions about potential impacts to travel and the tourism sector of the economy. During these difficult times, we in the NPS will certainly do our parts to tighten our belts in an effort to support national economic recovery. This provides even more reason to be thankful for recent improvements made at Chickasaw National Recreation Area and hopefully will provide good reason for you to visit the park and other NPS sites in Oklahoma during 2011. We look forward to seeing you soon.



**Field of Empty Chairs (NPS)**

## Oklahoma City National Memorial

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.

Since 2004, the Oklahoma City National Memorial has been managed as an Affiliated Area of the National Park Service with the Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation owning and operating the Memorial and Museum and the NPS providing interpretive services at the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial.

**Superintendent**  
Bruce Noble

**Supervisory Park Ranger**  
Skip Wheeler

**Mailing Address & Phone**  
PO Box 676  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73101  
405 609-8855

**On the Internet**  
<http://www.nps.gov/okci/>

**E-mail**  
[okci\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:okci_superintendent@nps.gov)

**Partnership Organization**  
Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum  
620 N. Harvey  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102  
405 235-3313 or 888 542-HOPE  
[www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org](http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org)

# Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

## Breaking Ground for Native Garden

Chief of Interpretation Frank Torres

With the support of the Southern Plains Network Inventory and Monitoring Program via its Prairie Restoration Plan, Washita Battlefield broke ground for the construction of a Native Garden on August 26, 2010. The garden will contribute to the restoration of native processes and plants, renew life and maintain Cheyenne cultural traditions.

The garden was added as an outdoor exhibit along the Forest Service's interpretive nature trail around the perimeter of the Visitor Center / Administration complex at Washita Battlefield and the U.S. Forest Service Black Kettle National Grasslands. Designed by Park Guide Minoma Littlehawk and Southwest Oklahoma State University Student Conservation



L to R: Frank Torres, Dick Zahm, Cassie Springer, Chuck Milner, Lisa Conard Frost, and Cheyenne Chief Yellowman dedicate Washita's native garden. (NPS)

Association Intern Nick Barton, the garden layout is in the shape of a traditional Medicine Wheel with walkways around the Wheel laid out in buffalo grass. Within the Medicine Wheel's four sections there will be a variety of plants, shrubs and trees all used traditionally by the Cheyenne.

Chief Gordon Yellowman of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma said, "This sacred site will be powerful and effective. The life and plants will be renewed. I believe it is extremely important we follow and maintain the traditions of the Cheyenne way of life."

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## 2nd Annual Teacher Workshop

Park Ranger Kathryn Harrison

For the second year, Washita Battlefield NHS sponsored a Teacher's Workshop- *A Window on Our World - Bringing Cheyenne and Arapaho Perspectives into the Classroom.*

Twenty three educators attended the one-day workshop which included presentations by Cheyenne Chief and Language Coordinator for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma Department of Education, Gordon Yellowman (The Cheyenne Horse Culture), Dr. Henrietta Mann, President of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College in Weatherford, Oklahoma (Perspectives on Education), Alden Whiteman, Vice President for Development and Planning for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College (The future of the Tribal

College), a panel discussion led by Charles Hines and Frank Mosqueda, teachers at the Riverside Indian School in Anadarko, Oklahoma, and Michael Bell of Yukon Middle School, who offered his personal perspective on the future of teaching the American Indian child from the viewpoint of a young native teacher. At the end of the day, Chief Moses Starr entertained and taught the teachers about Cheyenne cultural traditions.



Chief Moses Starr at teacher's workshop. (NPS)

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## Let's Move Outside!



Park Guide Christal Allen with Jamie Lear. (NPS)

Washita Battlefield is now one of 52 national parks across the country taking part in the Let's Move Outside Program, part of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* campaign to end childhood obesity within a generation. The purpose of the program is to get kids and their parents moving into America's great outdoors. The first recipient of a Let's Move Outside sticker was Jamie Lear of Perryton, Texas.

# Washita Honors Chief Hart

Superintendent Lisa Conard Frost



## Superintendent Lisa Conard Frost presents plaque to Chief Hart. (NPS)

On Saturday, August 28, 2010, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site hosted a memorable evening reception honoring Cheyenne Peace Chief, Lawrence Hart. Chief Hart's testimony at two Congressional hearings regarding the historical importance and sacred meaning of the site of the November 27, 1868 engagement was a contributing factor leading to the establishment of Washita Battlefield in 1996.

In addition to family and a host of friends from across the state and nation, guest speakers included Cheyenne Chief Gordon

Yellowman, Oklahoma Congressman Frank Lucas and Oklahoma Historical Society Executive Director Dr. Bob Blackburn, who paid tribute to Chief Hart's many accomplishments.

"It is hard to put into words what Chief Hart means to the NPS staff at Washita, and to this nation," said Superintendent Lisa Conard Frost. "His involvement in the establishment of the park, along with his continuing efforts to guide us in our interpretation of this sacred site certainly deserves recognition. It is an honor for us to show our appreciation."

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## Scouts Become Stewards

Park Guide Joel Shockley

Members of Troop 390 of Yukon, Oklahoma came to Washita to participate in the "Resource Stewardship Scout Ranger" program, a collaborative effort between the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and the National Park Service (NPS) commemorating the 100th anniversary of the BSA.

Eagle Scouts and NPS Park Guides Drew Hughes and Joel Shockley designed the ten-hour program which included a service project in addition to other requirements. The scouts picked up trash along Highway



## Park Guide Joel Shockley and members of Troop 390. (NPS)

47A, the park overlook area, and the U.S. Forest Service's interpretive trail around the perimeter of the Visitor Center/ Administrative building complex.



## Winter on the Washita River (NPS)

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### Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

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.

#### Superintendent

Lisa Conard Frost

#### Chief of Interpretation

Frank Torres

#### Mailing Address

18555 Hwy 47A, Ste. A  
Cheyenne, Oklahoma 73628

#### On the Internet

<http://www.nps.gov/waba/>

#### Phone

580 497-2742

#### E-mail

[waba\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:waba_superintendent@nps.gov)



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

**Chickasaw National Recreation Area**  
 1008 West Second Street  
 Sulphur, Oklahoma 73086

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**Oklahoma State Coordinator**  
 Bruce Noble

**Editor / Public Information Officer**  
 Lauren Gurniewicz

**Comments? Write to:**  
 Public Information Officer  
 c/o Travertine Nature Center  
 Chickasaw National Recreation Area  
 1008 West Second Street  
 Sulphur, Oklahoma 73086

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

## 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 NRA. This support includes conducting interpretive programs, increasing public awareness regarding the park and its mission, fundraising, and other volunteer activities. The group is a private non-profit organization (501c3) and membership fees for joining are tax deductible.

Anyone interested in becoming a member can send an email to [chic\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:chic_superintendent@nps.gov), or call 580 622-7220.

Friends of Chickasaw NRA  
 PO Box 199  
 Sulphur, OK 73086

### 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. If you would like to help, write to PO Box 323, Oklahoma City, OK, 73101, or call toll-free at 1-888-542-HOPE.