

JUNE 2004

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOUND MAINTENANCE AND VISITOR USE AND ACCESS OF THE NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY MOUNDS

## FINAL REPORT



**PREPARED FOR:  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY  
ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, TENNESSEE**

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**EDAW**



**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
MOUND MAINTENANCE AND VISITOR USE AND ACCESS  
OF THE NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY MOUNDS  
FINAL REPORT**

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June 2004

#### Project Team

Gay Hilliard served as the consulting anthropologist on this project, conducted the fieldwork, and bore primary responsibility for all project documents. Michael A. Downs, Ph.D., served as the project director. John C. Russell, Ph.D., was involved in the initial project design.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><u>Section</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOUND MAINTENANCE AND VISITOR USE AND ACCESS OF THE NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY MOUNDS.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Research.....	2
Interviews.....	2
Maintenance Issues.....	2
Consultations.....	4
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NPS FOR ROUTINE MAINTENANCE AND VISITOR ACCESS OF THE NATR MOUND SITES .....	5
Maintenance.....	5
Visitor Use and Access.....	6
APPENDICES	
A    Natchez Trace Parkway Indian Mounds Tribal Contact Lists	
B    Consultation Meetings Agenda and Participant Packet	
C    Natchez Trace Mounds Tribal Consultation Summary	

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1: NATR Mounds by Visitor Access and Maintenance Schedule Category .....	3



# **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOUND MAINTENANCE AND VISITOR USE AND ACCESS OF THE NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY MOUNDS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Natchez Trace Parkway (NATR) Mounds Project has been undertaken by the National Park Service (NPS) in conjunction with EDAW, Inc. The objective of the project is to develop specific guidelines for routine maintenance and for visitor use and access of the pre-European contact American Indian-constructed mounds along the NATR that reflect tribal concerns as much as possible.

The NATR is located on the pre-contact and post-contact lands of the Southeast tribes. The NATR runs through the traditional lands of the Chickasaw at its northern end, the Choctaw along its central portion, and the Natchez at its southern end. Of these three groups, the Chickasaw and Choctaw remain as independent, federally recognized tribes, and both participated in the consultation process summarized in this report. Although the Natchez do not survive as a separate, federally recognized tribe or tribes, there are individual Natchez descendants among contemporary Cherokee, Creek, and, perhaps, Catawba and other tribes. The last identifiable political entity of the Natchez was incorporated into the Muskogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma. While the Natchez ceremonial town of the Creek Nation is now reportedly moribund, there have been recent efforts by some that identify themselves as Natchez to bring about direct repatriation of remains and cultural items. Under present laws, this is not possible. The interests of the present-day Natchez currently must be represented politically through the Creek Nation in accordance with government-to-government Indian policy.

The mounds along the NATR are potentially subject to the tribal consultation stipulations of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA); the National Historic Preservation Act; the Executive Order on American Indian sacred sites; and other federal laws, regulations, and agency policies. During the consultation process for this project, contact was attempted with a total of 23 tribes. Of the tribes successfully contacted, nine federally recognized Indian tribes have asserted cultural affiliation with respect to the mounds: the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, the Chickasaw Nation, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw, the Kialegee Tribal Town, the Shawnee Tribe, the Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, and the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana. Representatives of these tribes were contacted and invited to participate in consultations to offer input on mound maintenance, interpretation, and visitor access issues. (Contact information for each of the tribal entities is provided as Appendix A.) Representatives of three tribes, the Chickasaw Nation, the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, participated in the consultations. The input from these tribal consultations, together with information gathered from interviews with NPS staff to determine the feasibility of particular treatment approaches, is being used to formulate guidelines for care of the Indian mounds. A number of other tribes that were considered to have a potential interest in the project, but do not assert cultural affiliation with the NATR sites, were also contacted. None of these additional

tribes elected to participate in the project. A complete list of tribes contacted appears in Appendix A.

This report describes the research, field methods, and recommendations resulting from the interviews with NPS staff and consultations with the tribes.

## **RESEARCH**

Background information on the prehistory and history along the NATR was collected at the library at NATR Headquarters as well as from university libraries. Site records provided by Chris Miller, NATR cultural resource specialist, were helpful in becoming familiar with the prehistory of each site and in preparing the background history for the tribes. Research activities in Mississippi in May 2003 also included interviewing NATR staff members as well as site visits to photograph each of the mounds along the NATR. The photos were used to produce computer-generated enhancements depicting alternatives to the current mowing regime of the mounds. The slide enhancements were incorporated into the presentations at the tribal consultations to facilitate understanding of maintenance alternatives and to illustrate existing visitor access to the sites.

## **INTERVIEWS**

Interviews were conducted with NPS administrative and maintenance staff. Meetings were held with:

- Chris Miller, NATR Cultural Resource Specialist
- Ladonna Brown, Park Ranger
- Wayne Roberts, maintenance supervisor for the Tupelo District

NATR cultural resource specialist Chris Miller provided oral and documentary information on the archaeological background of the mounds, including site reports and copies of the interpretive text currently in use at the sites. Ladonna Brown, a park ranger at NATR Headquarters and a member of the Chickasaw Nation, offered her knowledge of the area's prehistory and history.

Wayne Roberts is the maintenance supervisor at the Tupelo District. Mr. Roberts was consulted to establish a baseline for the feasibility of maintenance alternatives and other issues related to mound treatment, such as mowing schedules, erosion control, and operator safety issues.

## **MAINTENANCE ISSUES**

Mr. Roberts, supervisor for one of nine NATR maintenance districts, provided useful information on NATR procedures and operations. These procedures include general

maintenance issues such as operator safety and site erosion as well as site-specific issues such as mowing mounds with very steep sides (e.g., Emerald Mound) and trespassing by off-road vehicles (e.g., at Pharr Mounds).

As a result of the interview with Wayne Roberts, all NATR mounds were organized into categories according to maintenance schedule and visitor accessibility (see Table 1). The mowing schedule of the mound sites by the NPS maintenance staff is site specific. Depending on the site, mowing takes place four times per year or two times per month, or no mowing at all occurs.

The maintenance or mowing regime for each of the mound sites is related to visitor access and the overall desired appearance of the sites. Four of the mound sites allow visitors to approach on adjacent paths or to take a paved path to the top of the mound; these mounds are mown once or twice a month, which produces a “park like” look. Two other mound sites are mown four times per year. One site features adjacent path access while the other has no access. Only one of the mound sites is unmown and has been allowed to return to a forested environment. There is no visitor access to this site. Table 1, which includes all NATR mounds, provides a tabular presentation of the various mound sites by visitor access and maintenance category.

**Table 1: NATR Mounds by Visitor Access and Maintenance Schedule Category**

Type of Visitor Access	Maintenance Schedule		
	Mown 1-2 times per month [M2]	Mown 4 times per year [M4]	No Mowing [NM]
Direct Access [DA] (paved path to top of mound)	Emerald Mangum	none	none
Adjacent Access [AA] (path along or near base of mound)	Bynum Boyd	Bear Creek	none
No Access [NA] (distance from viewing/ interpretation area discourages access or no access is permitted)	none	Pharr	Gordon

Note: All mounds should receive periodic monitoring for erosion, vandalism, or other damage.

Bushes and tree seedlings growing on the mounds are regularly cut to discourage the uplifting of potentially large root systems that could become a hazard to the cultural remains or items interred in the mounds. In the event that cultural remains or items are inadvertently exposed, the NATR cultural resource specialist is notified immediately by NPS maintenance staff.

The mowing schedule is subject to weather conditions and is rescheduled after heavy rains occur until the ground becomes dry enough to accommodate the heavy mowers. Mowing only in relatively dry conditions protects the roots of vegetation growing on the mounds.

Trees also present the potential for concern. It is possible that during a storm trees could be uprooted at the Bynum and Gordon sites and cultural remains or artifacts exposed. Large trees grow adjacent to the more northerly mound in the park-like setting at the Bynum site. There are also large trees on the Gordon Mounds. This site is not maintained and has been reclaimed by the surrounding forest.

John Ehrenhard, an NPS site stabilization expert from the Southeast Archaeological Center, was consulted regarding options for large trees growing adjacent to or on the mounds. Mr. Ehrenhard noted that, as a general rule, trees are not removed unless the root system of the tree is partially exposed and the tree is in danger of falling. The reason for this is that removal of the tree can potentially harm the delicate ecosystem at the site by changing a shade area to a sunny one and impacting subterranean moisture levels. Additionally, when a tree is removed the roots eventually rot, leaving negative space. This can result in surface and/or interior slumping of the mound and a shifting of interred cultural remains. Tree removal is also not encouraged on sites reclaimed by the forest, such as the Gordon Mounds. In general, according to Mr. Ehrenhard, site stabilization is not improved by tree removal with the exception of very large, partially uprooted trees.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

The NATR Mounds Project consultations were held at the NATR Headquarters from July 29 - 31, 2003. Representatives of the Chickasaw, Oklahoma Choctaw, and Chitimacha tribes attended the meetings (as official emissaries of tribal government under government-to-government federal Indian policy) as well as various NPS staff members. The participants received consultation packets that included the three-day itinerary of meetings and a map of the mounds along the NATR. The packet also included a workbook containing a section on the pre-European contact mound builders and a separate section for each of the mounds. Location and setting, site type, site integrity, and the archaeological investigations that have been undertaken were delineated for each mound. A copy of the consultation agenda and participant's packet is attached to this report as Appendix B.

The participants visited the Bear Creek, Pharr, and Bynum mounds during the consultations, since these sites were located at a feasible traveling distance from the meetings at NATR Headquarters. Chris Miller and Ladonna Brown were present during site visits to provide background regarding the sites. Their knowledge and experience enhanced the participants' understanding of site-specific issues. Slides taken of the mounds and the computer enhancements depicting maintenance alternatives produced by the EDAW landscape architects facilitated the discussion that followed the site visits and focused the input of the tribes during consultations. The input for each category of consideration is included in Appendix C. Appendix C also includes the list of all participants.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE  
NPS FOR ROUTINE MAINTENANCE AND VISITOR ACCESS  
OF THE NATR MOUND SITES**

Below are the results of the consultations that to date have included the Chickasaw, Choctaw, and the Chitimacha tribes.

**MAINTENANCE**

1. It is recommended that the current mowing schedule be continued at all mound sites.
2. Scarring on some of the mounds has been caused by the blades on the tractor-powered mower. It is recommended that erosion and scarring be ameliorated by regular grass reseeding in these areas. Scarring is particularly evident at the Bear Creek, Mangum, and Emerald mounds.
3. It is recommended that areas where growing grass on the mounds is difficult because of deep shade be monitored to address erosion (e.g., the east side of the Bynum Mounds).
4. It is recommended that a fence be built between the county road and the east side of the Bynum site to prevent possible looting.
5. At the Pharr site it is recommended that bushes be cut down manually when the area is too wet to mow.
6. At the Pharr site it is recommended that the hay bales in the fields adjacent to the mounds be collected immediately after baling. (This field is leased by the NPS to a private entity for use as farmland.) If not possible, it is recommended that the bales be stacked neatly along the side of the field until they can be removed.
7. At the Pharr site it is recommended that the tribes work with the NPS on a plan to protect against illegal off-road vehicle traffic on the mound sites. No specific recommendations were offered during the brief consultation process, but participating tribes requested to remain involved in ongoing discussions to resolve these issues.
8. Trees growing on or near mounds pose a potential threat to cultural remains or cultural items. During the consultations, participants agreed that more information from a site stabilization expert should be sought to understand alternatives to this issue. Subsequently, John Ehrenhard, the site stabilization expert for the Southeast Archaeological Center, was consulted for information on the treatment of large trees on or near the mounds. Mr. Ehrenhard recommends no tree removal except when roots are uplifting and threatening cultural remains or artifacts (see earlier discussion under Maintenance Issues). The personal communications with Mr. Ehrenhard have not yet

been discussed with the tribes, but could be disseminated to the involved entities prior to future meetings or consultations.

## **VISITOR USE AND ACCESS**

1. It is recommended that the Southeast tribes have continuing meetings or consultations with the NPS regarding the cultural sites along the NATR.
2. It is recommended that a cultural sensitivity class be included in the orientation for new NPS employees. The purpose of the class would be to educate new staff members on cultural matters and facilitate the relationship between the maintenance and cultural departments. Tribal members offered to make themselves available to lead the class.
3. It is recommended that material at NATR Headquarters be available to explain the relationship between the mound builders and the modern sovereign nations of the Southeast and Oklahoma. Tribes could review text developed by NPS personnel for insertion into the existing NATR brochure provided to visitors.
4. It is recommended that the language on the interpretative signs at the mound sites be revised to reflect respect for tribal culture. Examples of derogatory language are “crude temple” at the Bear Creek site and “brutal ritual” at the Mangum site (specific objections to the interpretive text are listed for each mound site in Appendix C).
5. It is recommended that the large interpretive sign at the Pharr site be moved to a position near the existing interpretation under the shelter, in other words, north of the restrooms. The main sign would more likely be read by visitors in this location.
6. It is recommended that the interpretative signage at each mound site include an analogy of the mounds to churches and synagogues to educate visitors about the sacredness of the mound sites and to encourage appropriate behavior.
7. It is recommended that visitors be asked to refrain from climbing on the mounds or otherwise showing disrespect.
8. It is recommended that existing walkways or stairs to the tops of the mounds be removed as these encourage access to the tops of the mounds.
9. Unless requested by one of the tribes, prohibition of New Age or other ceremonies on any of the mounds or at the mound sites is recommended.

**APPENDIX A**

**NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY INDIAN MOUNDS  
TRIBAL CONTACT LISTS**



**NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY INDIAN MOUNDS PROJECT  
CONTACT INFORMATION;  
TRIBES ASSERTING CULTURAL AFFILIATION**

Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas  
Debbie Thomas, THPO  
Rt. 3 Box 640  
Livingston, TX 77351

Thlopthlocco Muscogee Tribe  
Charles Coleman, THPO  
Rt. 1 Box 190-A  
Weleetka, OK 74880

Chickasaw Nation  
Haskell Alexander, THPO  
P.O. Box 1548  
Ada, OK 74821

Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana  
Earl Babry, Jr., THPO  
P.O. Box 1589  
Marksville, LA 71351

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
Olin Williams, THPO  
Drawer 1210, 16th and Locust  
Durant, OK 74702-1210

Chitimacha Indian Tribe  
Jason Emery, Cultural Representative  
P.O. Box 661  
Charenton, LA 70523

Kialegee Muscogee  
Corky Allen, Tribal Representative/HP  
P.O. Box 332  
Wetumka, OK 74883

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians  
Kenneth H. Carleton, THPO/Archaeologist  
P.O. Box 6257  
Choctaw, MS 39350

Shawnee Tribe  
Rebecca Hawkins, THPO  
P.O. Box 189  
Miami, OK 74355



Natchez Trace Parkway Indian Mounds Project  
Contact Information:  
List of All Tribes Initially Contacted

LIST OF FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES MOST IMPORTANT FOR THE SOUTHEAST REGION OF THE  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (updated 8-7-01)

The following list consists of the twenty-five (25) present-day federally recognized tribes most likely to have an affiliation with one or more Southeast Region parks for purposes of consultation under NAGPRA and for other purposes.

Tribes are grouped here according to the historic tribes with which the modern tribes are usually identified. Tribal leaders are those named in the tribal leaders directory prepared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as updated on July 07, 2001. (Information on some tribes was further supplemented through telephone contacts.)

Prepared by:

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Ethnography and Indian Affairs  
Cultural Resources Stewardship  
Southeast Region  
National Park Service  
100 Alabama St., SW  
Atlanta, GA 30303

Updated by:

Jonna Hausser, Ethnography Intern (summer 2001)

ALABAMA/ALIBAMU

Clayton Sylestine, Chief  
Kevin P. Battise, Chairman  
<http://www.alabama-coushatta.com/>  
Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas  
Rt. 3, Box 640  
Livingston, TX 77351

Phone No: 936-563-4391                      Fax: 936-563-4397  
James Richardson, Tribal Administrator

Historic Preservation Officer and NAGPRA Representative:  
Debbie Thomas  
Phone No: 936-563-4391

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Tarpie Yargee, Chief  
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Wetumka, Okla. 74883

405-452-3987  
FAX 405-452-3968

Director of Cultural Preservation and NAGPRA Representative:  
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e-mail: eh@azalea.net  
Phone No: 918-683-2388

Consultant & Historian  
Alan Cook

#### CADDO

LaRue Parker, Chairman  
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P.O. Box 487  
Binger, OK 73009

Phone No: 405-656-2344                      Fax No: 405-656-2892

Historical Preservation and NAGPRA Representatives:

Robert Cast  
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Phone No: 405-656-2344 ext 245  
Museum Director:  
Wilson Daniku  
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#### CATAWBA

<http://www.ihs.gov/FacilitiesServices/AreaOffices/Nashville/catawba.asp>  
Gilbert Blue, Chairman  
Catawba Indian Nation  
P.O. Box 188  
Catawba, SC 29704

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Cultural Resources:  
Dr. Wenonah Haire  
Kathy Brown

Historic Preservation:  
Dr. Wenonah Haire  
Phone No: 803-328-2427

NAGPRA Contacts:  
Dr. Wenonah Haire  
Jackie Rice

#### CHEROKEE

Chad "Corntassle" Smith, Principal Chief  
<http://www.cherokee.org/>  
Cherokee Nation  
P.O. Box 948  
Tahlequah, OK 74465

Phone No: 918-456-0671 FAX 918-456-6485  
(OK Toll Free: 1800-256-0671)

Interim Cultural Resources Director:  
Gloria Sly  
Phone No: 918-458-6170

Historic Preservation:  
David Rabon  
Phone No: 918-456-0671 ext 2340

NAGPRA Representative:  
Dr. Richard Allen  
Phone No: 918-456-0671

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Leon D. Jones, Principal Chief  
<http://www.cherokee-nc.com/>  
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians  
Qualla Boundary  
P.O. Box 455  
Cherokee, NC 28719

Phone No: 828-497-2771 Fax No: 828-497-2952  
e-mail: [cherokeeinfo@cherokee-nc.com](mailto:cherokeeinfo@cherokee-nc.com)

Cultural Resources Director and NAGPRA  
Representative:  
James Bird  
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Dallas Proctor, Chief  
<http://www.uark.edu/depts/comminfo/UKB/welcome.html>  
United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians  
P.O. Box 746  
Tahlequah, OK 74465

Phone No: 918-456-8698 Fax No: 918-456-98771

Cultural Resources and NAGPRA Representative:  
Archie Mouse (Second Chief)  
Phone No: 918-431-1818

#### CHICKASAW

Bill Anoatubby, Governor  
<http://www.chickasaw.net/>  
Chickasaw Nation  
P.O. Box 1548  
Ada, OK 74821

Phone No: 580-436-2603 Fax No: 580-436-4287  
Cultural Resources Director and NAGPRA Representative:  
Rena Duncan  
Phone No: 580-332-8685

## CHITIMACHA

Alton LeBlanc, Chairman  
<http://www.chitimacha.gov>  
Chitimacha Indian Tribe  
P.O. Box 661  
Charenton, LA 70523

Phone No: 318-923-7215 Fax No: 318-923-6848

Cultural Resources Director and NAGPRA Representative:  
Kimberly Walden  
Melanie Aymond  
Phone No: 337-923-9923

## CHOCTAW

Gregory E. Pyle, Chief  
<http://www.choctawnation.com/>  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
Drawer 1210  
Durant, OK 74701

Phone No: 580-924-8280 Fax No: 580-924-1150  
1-800-522-6170

Cultural Resources Director and NAGPRA Representative:  
Terry Cole  
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B. Cheryl Smith, Tribal Chief  
Jena Band of Choctaw Indians  
P.O. Box 14  
Jena, LA 71342

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Cultural Resources Director and NAGPRA Representative:  
Christine North  
Phone No: 318-992-2727

Philip Martin, Chief  
<http://www.choctaw.org/>  
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians  
Choctaw Station  
P.O. Box 6010, Choctaw Branch  
Philadelphia, MS 39350

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e-mail: [info@choctaw.org](mailto:info@choctaw.org)

Cultural Resources Director and NAGPRA Representative:  
Thallis Lewis  
Phone No: 601-650-7331

COUSHATTA/KOASATI

Lovelin Poncho, Chairman  
Coushatta Indian Tribe  
P.O. Box 818  
Elton, LA 70532

Phone No: 337-584-2261

Fax No: 337-584-2998

Cultural Resources:

Leland Thompson  
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NAGPRA Representatives:

Leland Thompson  
Rayne Langley  
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Cultural Resources Director:

Leland Thompson  
Phone No: 337-584-1433  
e-mail: leland@coushattatribela.org  
Address: P.O. Box 967  
Elton LA, 70532

<http://www.ihs.gov/FacilitiesServices/AreaOffices/Nashville/coushatta.asp>

(See also Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas, under Alabama/Alibamu above)

(See also Alabama –Quasartee Tribal Town, under Alabama/Alibamu above)

Cultural Resources Director:

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CREEK/MUSCOGEE/MUSKOGEE

Lowell Wesley, Town King  
Kialegee Tribal Town  
P.O. Box 332  
Wetmuka, OK 74883

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Cultural Resources Director and NAGPRA Representative:

Dolores Herrod  
Phone No: 405-452-3262

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Perry Beaver, Principal Chief  
<http://www.ocevnet.org/creek/index.html>  
Muscogee (Creek) Nation  
P.O. Box 580  
Okmulgee, OK 74447

Phone No: 918-756-8700 Fax No: 918-756-2911

Historic Preservation Officer and NAGPRA Representative:

Joyce Bear  
Phone No: 918-756-8700 ext 602

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Eddie Tullis, Chairman  
<http://www.poarchcreekindians.org>  
Poarch Creek Indians  
5811 Jack Springs Road  
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Grace Bunner, Mekko  
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P.O. Box 188  
Okemah, OK 74859

Phone No: 918-623-2620 Fax No: 918-623-0419  
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Allen Harjo  
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(See also Alabama-Quasartee Tribal Town, under Alabama/Alibamu above)

#### MICCOSUKEE

Billy Cypress, Chairman  
[www.miccosukeetribe.com](http://www.miccosukeetribe.com)  
Miccosukee Indian Tribe  
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Miami, FL 33144

Phone No: 305-223-8380 Fax No: 305-223-1011  
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Steve Terry  
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#### NATCHEZ

(Contact Muscogee [Creek] Nation [see above])

#### QUAPAW

Tamara Summerfield, Chairman  
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#### SEMINOLE

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P.O. Box 1498  
Wewoka, OK 74884  
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Emman Spain  
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Mitchell Cypress, Acting Chairman  
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Tribal Historic Preservation Officer  
Dr. Patricia Wickman

NAGPRA Representative  
Billy L. Cypress

(See also Miccosukee Indian Tribe, under Miccosukee above)

#### SHAWNEE

James "Lee" Edwards, Governor  
Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma  
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Charles D. Enyart, Chief  
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For Cultural Resources and NAGPRA concerns please contact:  
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NAGPRA Representative:  
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TUNICA-BILOXI  
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Cultural Resources Director and NAGPRA Representative:  
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Phone No: 716-622-7061  
Cultural Resources Director:  
Richard Hill  
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NAGPRA Representative:  
Leo Henry  
Phone No: 716-622-7061

YUCHI

(Contact Muscogee [Creek] Nation [see above])

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CONSULTATION MEETINGS AGENDA AND PARTICIPANT PACKET**



**Natchez Trace (NATR) Mounds Project  
Consultations with the Southeast Tribes  
Hosted by the National Park Service and EDAW, Inc.  
Natchez Trace Parkway Headquarters  
Tupelo, MS July 29-31, 2003**

*Tuesday, July 29, 2003*

- |                 |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:00-9:30 a.m.  | Opening remarks and self introductions                                                                                                                                           |
| 9:45-10:15 a.m. | Distribute and discuss contents of consultation packets<br>Map of mounds<br>Background material<br>Images<br>Notes/Comments Sheet<br>Expense Report/Procedures for Reimbursement |
| 10:15-10:30     | Morning Break                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 10:30-11:45     | Discussion of the NATR Mounds<br>Background<br>Classification<br>Current access and maintenance practices<br>Maintenance issues and constraints<br>(Parkway Maintenance Staff)   |
| 11:45-12:00     | Discuss logistics of visits to<br>Bear Creek Mound<br>Pharr Mounds<br>(site visits scheduled for 1:30 p.m.)<br>Bynum Mounds<br>(site visit scheduled for Wed. 7/30 at 9:15 a.m.) |
| 12:00-1:30 p.m. | Lunch Break (free time noon- 1:30 p.m.)                                                                                                                                          |
| 1:30 p.m.       | Meet at NATR Headquarters parking lot<br>Drive (caravan) to Bear Creek Mound<br>Head North on NATR Parkway approx. 44 miles<br>to mile 310                                       |
| 2:15-3:00 p.m.  | Meet at Bear Creek Site<br>Interpretation by Chris Miller or Ladonna Brown                                                                                                       |
| 3:15 p.m.       | Drive to Pharr Mounds                                                                                                                                                            |

- 3:15 p.m. Drive to Pharr Mounds  
Head South on NATR approx. 23 miles  
to about mile 287
- 3:45-4:30 p.m. Meet at Pharr Mounds  
Interpretation by Chris Miller or Ladonna Brown
- 4:30-? Suggest visit to Chickasaw Village Site at mile 262 (approx.)

*Wednesday, July 30, 2003*

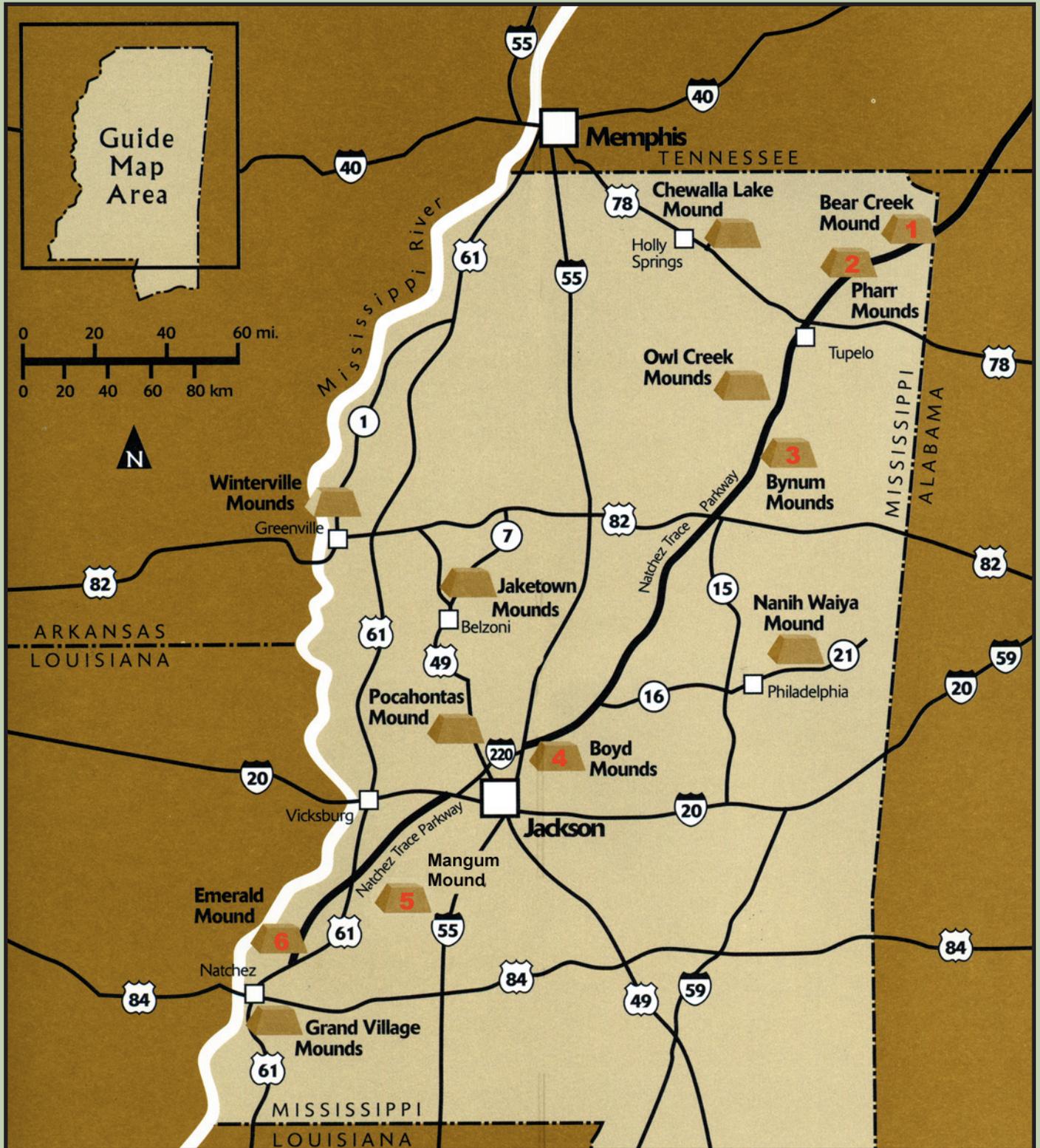
- 9:00 a.m. Meet in NATR Headquarters Parking Lot
- 9:15 a.m. Travel to Bynum Mounds  
Head South on NATR Parkway 34 miles  
to mile 233
- 10:00-10:30 Interpretation by Chris Miller or Ladonna Brown
- 11:15-1:00 p.m. Lunch Break (free time 11:15 - 1:00 p.m.)
- 1:00 Meet at NATR HQ Conference Room
- 1:00-2:30 Show slide images, discuss options, and document  
(tape record) input of the Tribes for:  
Bear Creek Mound  
Maintenance  
Visitor access  
Interpretation
- 2:30-4:00 Show slide images, discuss options and document  
(tape record) input of the Tribes for:  
Pharr Mounds  
Maintenance  
Visitor access  
Interpretation
- 4:00-5:00 Show slide images, discuss options and document  
(tape record) input of the Tribes for:  
Bynum  
Maintenance  
Visitor access  
Interpretation

**Thursday, July 31, 2003**

- 9:00 a.m.** Meet at NATR Headquarters Conference Room
- 9:15-10:30** Show slide images, discuss options and document input of the Tribes for:  
Boyd Mound  
Maintenance  
Visitor Access  
Interpretation
- 10:00-11:30** Show slide images, discuss options and document input of the Tribes for:  
Mangum Mound  
Maintenance  
Visitor Access  
Interpretation
- 11:30-1:00 p.m.** Lunch break (on your own)
- 1:00-2:30** Show slide images, discuss options and document input of the Tribes for:  
Emerald Mound  
Maintenance  
Visitor Access  
Interpretation
- 3:00-3:15** Afternoon Break
- 3:15-5:00** Summary  
Finalize discussion



**THE NATCHEZ TRACE MOUNDS CONSULTATIONS  
With  
THE SOUTHEAST TRIBES**



Hosted by:

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE and EDAW**

**JULY 29-31, 2003**



**THE NATCHEZ TRACE MOUNDS CONSULTATIONS  
WITH THE SOUTHEAST TRIBES**

*Prepared by:*

EDAW, Inc.  
1420 Kettner Boulevard, Suite 620  
San Diego, California 92101

Gay Hilliard  
Consulting Anthropologist

July 2003



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
The Natchez Trace Mounds .....	1
The Mound Builders .....	1
The Mounds under the Jurisdiction of the Natchez Trace Parkway .....	2
Bear Creek Mound and Village Site (AAM4) .....	3
Location/Setting .....	3
Site Type .....	3
Site Integrity .....	3
Archaeological Investigations .....	3
Pharr Mounds (NAM4) .....	6
Location/Setting .....	6
Site Type .....	6
Site Integrity .....	6
Archaeological Investigations .....	6
Bynum Mounds (AAM2) .....	11
Location/Setting .....	11
Site Type .....	11
Site Integrity .....	11
Archaeological Investigations .....	11
Boyd Mounds (AAM2) .....	15
Location/Setting .....	15
Site Type/Description .....	15
Site Integrity .....	15
Archaeological Investigations .....	15
Mangum Mound (DAM2) .....	19
Location/Setting .....	19
Site Type .....	19
Site Integrity .....	19
Archaeological Investigations .....	19
Gordon Mounds (NANM) .....	24
Location/Setting .....	24
Site Type .....	24
Site Integrity .....	24
Archaeological Investigations .....	24
Emerald Mound (DAM2) .....	26
Location/Setting .....	26
Site Type .....	26
Site Integrity .....	26
Archaeological Investigations .....	26



## **THE NATCHEZ TRACE MOUNDS**

The following introductory section provides a context for the Natchez Trace Parkway mounds that are discussed below.

### **THE MOUND BUILDERS**

Human habitation of this region stretches back to the Paleo period (>10,000 years ago). Although the first people entered what is now Mississippi about 12,000 years ago, the earliest major phase of earthen mound construction in this area did not begin until some 2100 years ago. Mounds continued to be built sporadically for another 1800 years, or until around AD 1700. Archaeologists, the scientists who study the evidence of past human lifeways, classify mound building Indians of the Southeast into three major chronological/cultural divisions: the Archaic, the Woodland, and the Mississippian traditions. To date, no mounds of the Archaic Period (7,000-1,000 BC) have been positively identified in Mississippi; the mounds described herein all date to the last two cultural periods.

The Middle Woodland period (100 BC - 400 AD) was the first era of widespread mound construction in Mississippi. Middle Woodland peoples were primarily hunters and gatherers who occupied semi-permanent or permanent settlements. Some mounds of this period were built to bury important members of local tribal groups. These burial mounds are rounded, dome-shaped structures that generally range from about 3 to 18 feet high, with diameters from 50 to 100 feet. Distinctive artifacts obtained through long-distance trade were sometimes placed with those buried in the mounds. The construction of burial mounds declined after the Middle Woodland, and only a few were built during the Late Woodland period (ca. 400 AD - 1,000 AD). Woodland burial mounds that fall under the jurisdiction of the Natchez Trace Parkway can be visited at the Boyd, Bynum, and Pharr sites, all on the Parkway.

The Mississippian period (1000 AD - 1700 AD) saw a resurgence of mound building across much of the southeastern United States. Most Mississippian mounds are rectangular, flat-topped earthen platforms upon which temples or residences of chiefs were erected. These buildings were constructed of wooden posts covered with mud plaster and had thatched roofs. Mississippian platform mounds under the jurisdiction of the Natchez Trace Parkway, range in height from 8 to almost 60 feet and are from 60 to as much as 770 feet in width at the base. Mississippian period mounds can be seen at Emerald and Bear Creek sites.

Mississippian period mound sites mark centers of social and political authority. They are indicators of a way of life more complex than that of the Woodland and earlier periods. In contrast to the relatively simple, egalitarian tribal organization of most societies of the Woodland period, regional Mississippian populations were typically organized into chiefdoms - territorial groups with hereditary, elite leadership classes. Across the Southeast, the chiefdom system of political organization arose as a means of managing increased social complexity caused by steady population growth.

This population growth was sustained by agriculture - a revolutionary new means of subsistence that became an economic mainstay during the Mississippian period.

Mound construction was again in decline by the time the first Europeans came to this region in the 1500s. Epidemic diseases introduced by early European explorers spread between indigenous groups and possibly reached this area in advance of direct contact with Europeans. These diseases decimated native populations across the Southeast, causing catastrophic societal disruption. As a result, by the time sustained contact with European colonists began about 1700, the long tradition of mound building had nearly ended.

These mounds are protected because they are owned by state or federal agencies committed by law to their preservation. Most of the mounds in Mississippi, however, are on privately owned land. As a result, many mounds have been irreparably damaged or completely destroyed by modern development and looting. Indian mounds, therefore, are critically endangered cultural sites.

The *Moundbuilders*, was written by Keith A. Baca of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (1999).

**The Mounds under the Jurisdiction of the Natchez Trace Parkway**

Following is a background summary of all the mounds that fall under the jurisdiction of the Natchez Trace Parkway. The information was taken from the National Register of Historic Places.

The mounds are categorized according to their accessibility to visitors and the maintenance schedule carried out by the Parkway maintenance staff.

**Key for Mound Categories**

DA - Direct Access

AA - Adjacent Access

NA - No Access

M4 - Mown 4 times per year

M2 - Mown 2 times per month

NM - No Mowing



## **BEAR CREEK MOUND AND VILLAGE SITE (AAM4)**

(National Register of Historic Places 1988)

### **Location/Setting**

The Bear Creek Mound and Village Site is located in northeastern Mississippi in Tishomingo County on the west side of the Natchez Trace Parkway at milepost 310. The Bear Creek site is situated at the confluence of Cedar Creek and Bear Creek, which flow north into the Tennessee River.

### **Site Type**

The Bear Creek Mound is a platform mound with steeply sloping sides. The temple mound and village site were built in four stages between AD 1400-1600 in the Late Mississippian period.

### **Site Integrity**

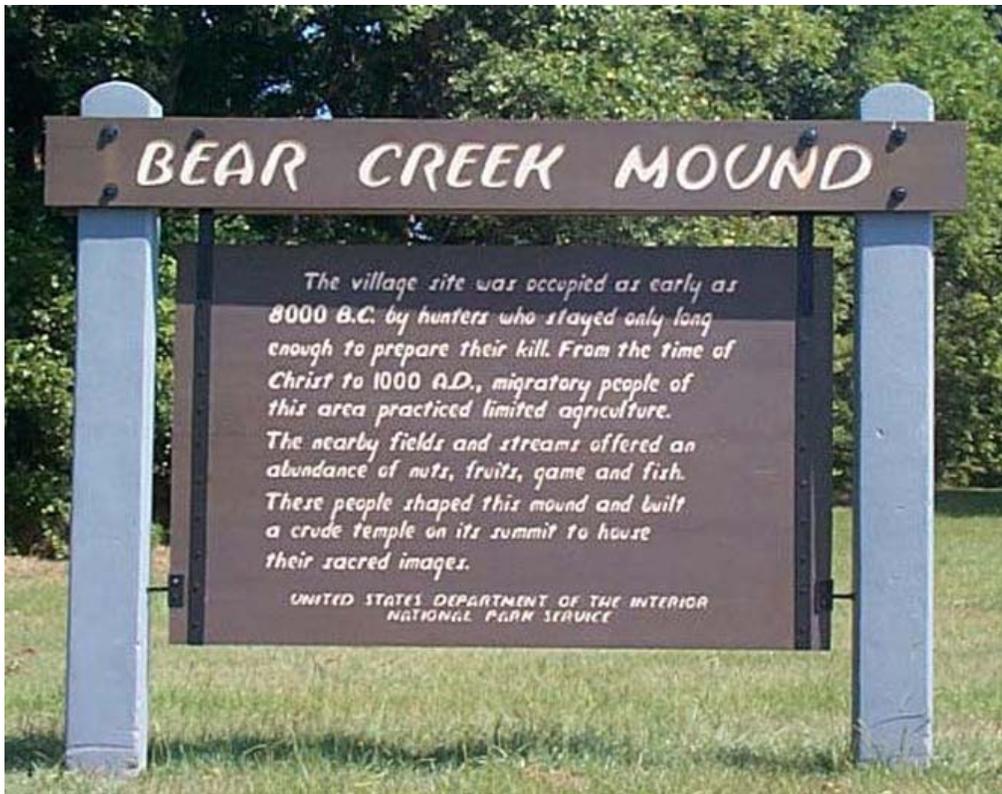
In 1950, the mound was surveyed and found to be 12 feet high, 100 feet in diameter, and 85 to 90 feet on a side.

In 1965, after damage due to farming, the mound was only 4 feet in height and measured about 140 by 180 feet. Heavy cultivation destroyed and spread the mound dirt, diminishing the height of the mound. The village site, located at the south and east sides of the mound, is approximately 350 by 450 feet.

### **Archaeological Investigations**

Excavations revealed evidence of Paleo, Early Archaic, and Woodland Era occupation previous to mound building. Repeated occupation over thousands of years was probably due to the rich resources in the area.

After acquisition by the Natchez Trace Parkway, a portion of the mound was excavated, which identified its construction phases. At the last of the four phases, which took place in the Late Mississippian period, burials were interred in the mound. A residence or temple is indicated by burned daub. Two rectangular dwellings, storage pits, postholes, and four burials were found at the village site. Diagnostic features include paleo projectile points and clay and sand-tempered Woodland phase ceramics. The mound was reconstructed to a height of about 8 to 10 feet.





**PHARR MOUNDS (NAM4)**

(National Register of Historic Places 1976)

**Location/Setting**

The Pharr Mound complex is located in northeast Mississippi at the headwaters of the Tombigbee River on the east side of the Natchez Trace Parkway at milepost 286.7. The eight mounds straddle the boundary between Prentiss and Itawamba counties.

The complex is situated in a 90-acre hayfield with cypress swamps on the east, west, and south. Bordering the mounds on the north are low hills covered in pine trees mixed with hardwoods.

**Site Type**

The eight conical burial mounds were constructed in the Middle Woodland period circa AD 1-200, although occupation occurred from the Late Archaic to the Middle Mississippian Periods.

**Site Integrity**

Modern agricultural activity has degraded five of the earthen structures in the mound complex. The remaining three reach 20 feet or more. Since acquisition by the National Park Service, no further cultivation has taken place. The eight mounds are mowed four times per year. No trees grow on the mounds as the mowing prevents reclamation by the surrounding forest.

**Archaeological Investigations**

In 1970, excavations were carried out on four of the mounds by the National Park Service. A small portion of the plaza area was excavated at the same time.

Archaeological investigation shows intermittent occupation of the site for mortuary rites and for the exploitation of seasonal resources. The ceramic artifacts include primarily cord marked, sand/clay-tempered pottery and a plain ware.

## **Interpretive Text for Pharr Mounds**

### **Pharr Mounds**

Pharr Mounds is the largest and most important archeological site in northern Mississippi. Eight large, dome-shaped burial mounds are scattered over an area of 90 acres (100 football fields).

These mounds were built and used about 1 – 1200 A. D. by a tribe of nomadic Indian hunters and gatherers who returned to this site at times to bury the dead with their possessions.

The United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service





# NOTES

## Maintenance

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## Visitor Access

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## Interpretation

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## **BYNUM MOUNDS (AAM2)**

(National Register of Historic Places 1989)

### **Location/Setting**

The Bynum Mound and Village Site is a little under 10 acres and is located in a park-like setting at milepost 232.4 to the east of the Natchez Trace Parkway. The site is about 28 miles south of Tupelo, Mississippi, in Chickasaw County. The site lies in the region of the Pontotoc Ridge area of northeastern Mississippi that divides the Mississippi and Tennessee River watershed.

### **Site Type**

Archaeological evidence indicates that the Bynum Mound and Village Site had three probable occupations. The first occupation (50 BC-AD 200) at the site was the moundbuilders with connections to the Middle Woodland cultures; the second was an earlier non-mound-building group (circa 3,000-1,000 BP), and the last was historic Chickasaw groups. This site consists of six mounds and a village site.

### **Site Integrity**

Degradation of two of the six Bynum Mounds, one due to cultivation and the other due to construction of a county road, is severe. Interpretive context has been disrupted from the six mounds and the village site. A third mound has been left untouched, while three of the mounds were excavated and two of these were reconstructed.

### **Archaeological Investigations**

Bynum Mounds was part of the survey program for the Natchez Trace Parkway in 1940. Bynum, because of its potential for public interpretation, and because the Parkway was planned to pass through the middle of the site, was acquired from Joe Bynum (for whom the site was named). Excavations in 1947-48 revealed exotic trade items that show contact between the Middle Woodland (1,000 BC- AD 1000) cultures and the Marksville groups of the Lower Mississippi River Valley. It is believed that trade in exotic burial goods was facilitated by a north-south prehistoric trail system that evolved into the historic Natchez Trace. Burials in pits and artifacts such as copper, shell, lithics, and pottery were found. Burial practices are similar to those at the Pharr Mounds. Remnants of a house structure were discovered within one of the mounds and remnants of six circular structures were found in the village area.

TEXTS FOR  
BYNUM MOUNDS TRAIL SIGNS

Illustration

SUMMER SHELTERS

1. Lean-to

In summer the Indians probably lived largely out-of-doors under temporary brush lean-to shelters. Most of their time was spent caring for their crops, hunting, and gathering wild plants, fish, and shellfish from the surrounding area. New winter homes were built as necessary before the winter months.

WINTER HOMES

2. Winter home

Three permanent house foundations, one 80 feet directly ahead of you, were discovered during archeological excavations. These were built by placing timbers upright in a circular pattern, weaving willows or reed stems into them, and finally plastering mud on the outside. Roofs were thatched with grass and bark with a center hole for smoke to escape.

BURIAL MOUNDS

3. None

When Indians occupied this site around A.D. 700, they built six mounds, four of which have since been destroyed by cultivation and construction. So common was the practice of building burial mounds for either cremations or intact burials that this southeastern culture period is known as the Burial Mound Period.



# NOTES

## Maintenance

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**BOYD MOUNDS (AAM2)**

(National Register of Historic Places 1989)

**Location/Setting**

The Boyd Mounds and Village Site is located in the Pearl River Drainage of the Jackson Prairie physiographic area of central Mississippi. The site is about 10 miles northeast of Jackson, Mississippi, along the east side of the Natchez Trace Parkway at milepost 106.90. The complex is situated on a terrace that overlooks the Pearl River.

**Site Type/Description**

The Boyd Mounds complex consists of six burial mounds and a small village site with occupation in the Late Woodland-Early Mississippian Period (AD 750-1250).

**Site Integrity**

The Boyd Site has been affected by cultivation that damaged most of the village area and greatly reduced three of the six mounds. The remaining mounds were excavated in 1963-64 by a Natchez Trace Parkway archaeologist. One of these mounds, the elongated structure described below, is accessible and interpreted for visitors.

**Archaeological Investigations**

The mounds and the village site were contemporaneous. Mounds probably varied between 30 to 50 feet in diameter and were about 6 to 10 feet high. Four of the mounds have been significantly affected by farming, while two are situated in stands of trees that exclude them from agrarian activities. The only mound with visitor access and interpretation is an elongated mound about 110 feet long, 60 feet wide and 4 feet high. It is actually two separate burial mounds enlarged by covering both mounds with earth, including the area in between, to make a single earthen structure. In the village area, evidence of a circular structure 50 feet in diameter was found during excavations. Diagnostic ceramics from the mounds and village site are indicative of both the Late Woodland and Late Mississippian periods.

## **Interpretive Text for the Boyd Site**

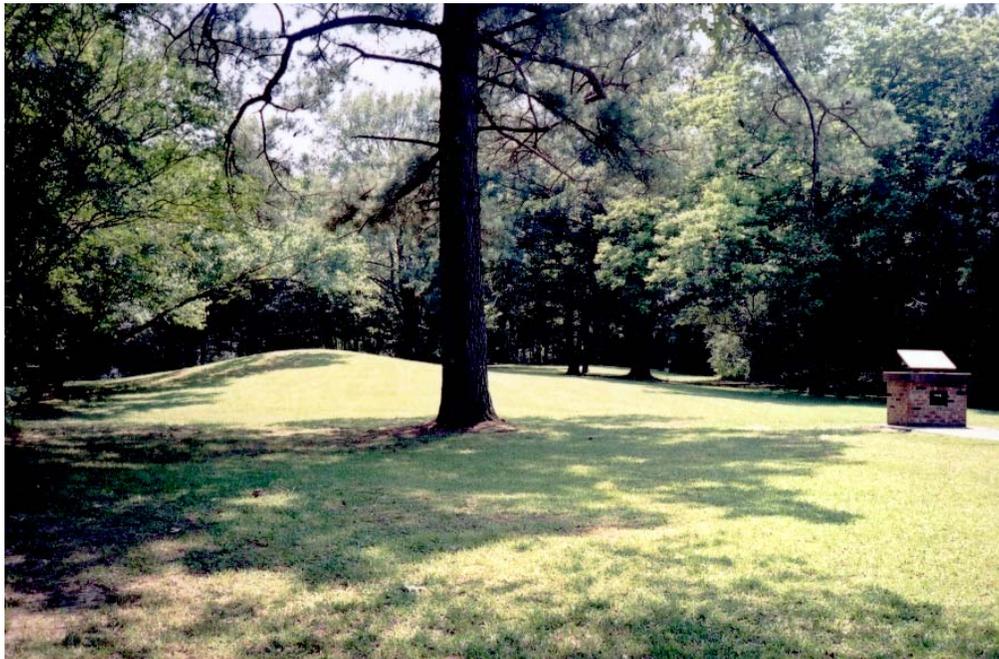
### **Boyd Site**

Archeologists tell us that there was a house here sometime around 500 A. D. and that the pottery found in the mounds was made before 700 A. D. Likely, the population was continuous over centuries with customs being handed from generation to generation relying on field, forest, and stream for food. The simple social system was probably based on the family and close relations.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

PARK Natchez Trace Parkway	CLASSIFICATION NO 951	NEGATIVE NO. 11682
SUBJECT Boyd Site routed interpretive sign	OTHER mp 106.9	NATIONAL ARCHIVES NO.
LOCATION Section 3-0 m/p 106.9	LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NO.	
PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS John Mohlhenrich, Chief Park Interpreter		
DATE TAKEN May 6, 1975		
REMARKS Record of interpretive sign		

NPS 10-30 (8/68) NATIONAL VISUAL INVENTORY C





**MANGUM MOUND (DAM2)**

(National Register of Historic Places 1974)

**Location/Setting**

The Mangum Mound is located on the south side of the Natchez Trace Parkway at about milepost 45. The Mound is across the Parkway from the historic site of Grindstone Ford in Claiborne County, MS. To the north of the mound lies a stretch of flat bottom land that extends three-quarters of a mile to the Bayou Pierre River. The area south of the knoll consists of the loess hill country that characterizes that part of western Mississippi.

**Site Type**

The Mound site is a late prehistoric burial ground on top of a natural knoll, near the border of the traditional lands of the Natchez and Choctaw Nations.

**Site Integrity**

The grass-covered knoll has been altered by cultivation, rounding the edges and contour of the mound.

**Archaeological Investigations**

Cultural periods include the Plaquemine culture near the end of the Late Prehistoric period (AD 1500), characterized by farming and foraging, and the so-called "Southern Cult." According to the National Register of Historic Places, the presence of cult objects, such as the copper plates found during excavations, indicates the spread of Southern Cult ceremonialism.

## **Interpretive Text for the Mangum Site**

### **Mangum Site ----- Grindstone Ford**

Traveling the Natchez Trace takes you back in time. Two layers of history that shaped the Old Natchez Trace can be seen at Mangum Site, as ancient burial ground and a vestige of late prehistoric culture, and Grindstone Ford the threshold between civilization and wilderness on the Old Natchez Trace.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### **Mangum Mound**

Excavation of this site tells us much about the people of the late prehistoric periods. The Plaquemaine culture included the ancestors of the modern tribes of Mississippi and Louisiana. It was a society with elaborate agriculturally oriented religious ceremonies.

From the burials on this mound we have learned that there was a high infant mortality and that upon the death of a chief, a brutal ritual was enacted in which his retainers were slain and buried with him.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



PARK	CLASSIFICATION NO.	NEGATIVE NO.
Natchez Trace Parkway	951	11326
SUBJECT	OTHER	NATIONAL ARCHIVES NO.
Mangum Mound routed interpretive panel.	mp. 45.7	
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NO.		
LOCATION		
Mangum Mound Parking Lot, Section 3-7		
PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS		
off m/p 45.7 Chief Park Interpreter John Mohlhenrich		
DATE TAKEN		
April 5, 1974		
REMARKS		
record of interpretive sign		





## **GORDON MOUNDS (NANM)**

(National Register of Historic Places 1977)

### **Location/Setting**

The Gordon Mounds Site consists of two mound remnants and a village site situated on a low terrace about 280 meters east of the south fork of Coles Creek in Jefferson County, Mississippi. The site is located in the Natchez Bluffs region, which is characterized by loess soils, rolling hills, and river and creek-bottom lands. The elevation is 105 to 150 feet above mean sea level. The mounds are separated by the Mississippi State Highway 553 trending east-west. The southern portion of the site is divided at milepost 20 by the Natchez Trace Parkway access connector road terminating at its intersection with Highway 553.

### **Site Type**

The Gordon Mounds Site was occupied as early as the Middle Woodland period (AD 100-400). It continued to be occupied, at least intermittently, through the Emerald Phase of the Late Prehistoric period about AD 1500-1650.

### **Site Integrity**

In 1950, the two mounds were about 6 feet high. Twenty-five years of farming on this mound and the adjacent village site left them severely affected. Subsequent to archaeological investigations by the National Park Service, the northerly mound was leveled and graded. The south mound remains and stands about 6 feet high and 80 feet in diameter. The edges adjacent to the Parkway and Highway 553 are mowed and contain several large pine trees. A second-growth hardwood forest now covers the south mound.

### **Archaeological Investigations**

Burials were associated with each mound. The northerly mound adjacent to the village site grew in stages with structures on top of each successive stage. The evidence suggests the mound grew by accretion beginning with a circular building and, subsequently, at least two rectangular buildings. The most southerly mound was a truncated temple mound with a presumed structure resting on the platform area. The Gordon Mounds and Village Site is situated in what was a densely populated region in the Plaquemine-Natchez period.

# NOTES

## Maintenance

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## Visitor Access

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## **EMERALD MOUND (DAM2)**

(National Register of Historic Places 1988)

### **Location/Setting**

Emerald Mound, a National Historic Landmark, is located 1 mile west of the Natchez Trace Parkway near milepost 10.3, about 10 miles northeast of Natchez, Mississippi in Adams County. The 8-acre earthen structure is situated in the loess hills zone. This zone lies east of the Mississippi River alluvial valley that rises sharply along the eastern edge of the floodplain.

### **Site Type**

The Emerald Mound Site dates to the late prehistoric Plaquemine culture (AD 1200-1680) and the historic Natchez culture (AD 1680-1730). The complex consists of a massive, platform mound 730 feet long and 420 feet wide with a height of about 30 feet, comprising the second largest earth structure in the United States. Two smaller secondary mounds were constructed on the western and eastern ends of a large plaza on top of the platform and are 29 and 10 feet in height, respectively.

According to the National Register, the platform mound had at least six additional secondary mounds probably placed at regular intervals that lined the north and south sides of the plaza.

### **Site Integrity**

All of the mounds at the Emerald Site have been affected by over one hundred years of intensive cotton farming and erosion. The sides of the platform mound have slumped 25 to 30 degrees from the perpendicular destroying all traces of a ditch that encircled the massive structure. By 1917, the six secondary mounds along the north and south sides of the great plaza had been destroyed by erosion. The 8-acre platform mound has lost about 10 feet of its original height.

The general well-preserved appearance of the site is due to an extensive stabilization by the National Park Service in 1955 following excavations by John L. Cotter, the Park's archaeologist. This effort included filling in eroded gullies and a pothunter's pit, straightening the sides of the platform mound, and installing wooden steps that lead from the plaza to the newly reconstructed summit of the west mound. Bermuda grass was planted to stabilize the top and sides of the mounds.

### **Archaeological Investigations**

The first archaeological observations at the Emerald Mound Site began in 1803-1804 and continued intermittently until the middle 1900s. As noted above, the Emerald Mound Site was a burial site and active ceremonial center with continuous occupation from about AD 1200 -1730. Scientific examination of the Emerald Mound Site in 1948 showed at least three occupations during which dirt was added to fill in the natural hill feature to create the platform mound. Large-scale construction began during the Foster Phase (AD 1350-1500). No historic period artifacts were discovered at the Emerald Mound Site suggesting abandonment before or near that time.

## **Interpretive Text for the Emerald Mound Site**

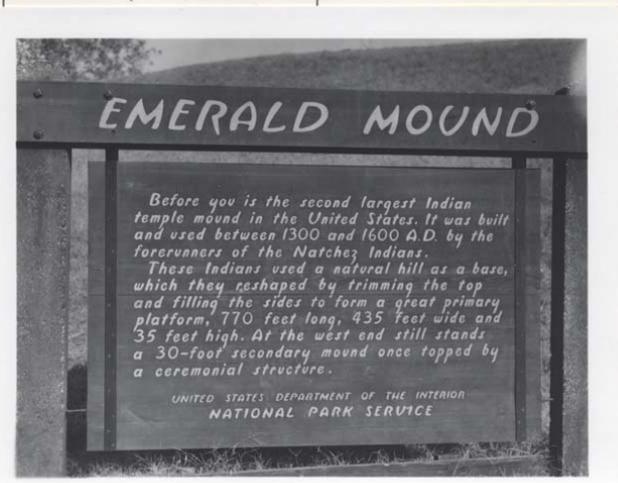
### **Emerald Mound**

Before you is the second largest Indian temple mound in the United States. It was built and used between 1300 and 1600 A. D. by the forerunners of the Natchez Indians.

These Indians used a natural hill as a base, which they reshaped by trimming the top and filling the sides to form a great primary platform, 770 feet long, 435 feet wide and 35 feet high. At the west end still stands a 30-foot secondary mound once topped by a ceremonial structure.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

PARK Natchez Trace Parkway	CLASSIFICATION NO. 951	NEGATIVE NO. 10987
SUBJECT Emerald Mound Marker	OTHER MP 10.3	NATIONAL ARCHIVES NO.
LOCATION		LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NO.
PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS Sec. 3-W m/p 10.3		
DATE TAKEN		
REMARKS		



NPS 10-30 (8/68) NATIONAL VISUAL INVENTORY





# NOTES

## Maintenance

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## Visitor Access

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## Interpretation

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**APPENDIX C**

**NATCHEZ TRACE MOUNDS  
TRIBAL CONSULTATION SUMMARY**



**APPENDIX C**  
**RESULTS OF THE NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY MOUNDS**  
**TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS FOR THE**  
**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**  
**TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI**  
**July 2003**

**Introduction**

The Southeast tribes were invited to a consultation at the Natchez Trace Parkway (NATR) Headquarters in Tupelo, Mississippi. Attending the meeting with the tribes were representatives of the National Park Service (NPS) and a consultant from EDAW, Inc.

The focus issues for this consultation included maintenance, visitor use and access of the mounds, and the signage/interpretation of the mound sites. Below are the comments, desires, and preferences expressed by the Southeast tribes during the three days of discussion and site visits.

General concerns and comments regarding the mound sites are listed first. Site-specific comments and preferences follow and are organized under the names of each mound site and include subheadings of *Maintenance*, *Visitor Use and Access*, and *Interpretative Signage*.

The tribes attending the meetings:

Rena Duncan, THPO, Chickasaw Nation  
Olin Williams, THPO, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
Jason Emery, Cultural Assistant, Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana

Also attending:

Gay Hilliard, Consulting Anthropologist, EDAW, Inc.  
Chris Miller, Cultural Resource Specialist, Natchez Trace Parkway  
Ladonna Brown, Park Ranger/Site Interpreter, Natchez Trace Parkway

**General Comments, Desires, and Preferences of Mound Sites**

1. The issue most important to the tribes participating in this consultation is to have continuing involvement with the NPS regarding the pre-European contact sites along the NATR. The consensus among the consulting tribes is that they have a responsibility as a people to protect their cultural properties through continuing involvement in the known issues that affect the mounds. This could be accomplished through additional face-to-face meetings with tribal representatives.
2. The tribes expressed a desire for the NPS to include a cultural sensitivity class in the orientation for new NPS employees. The purpose of the class would educate new staff

members in cultural matters and facilitate the relationship between the maintenance and cultural departments. Olin Williams of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma would be available to lead the class. Other tribal representatives would also be available.

3. The tribes commented that they believe it is necessary to have a plan in place to protect cultural properties within the mounds. For example, the Gordon Mounds are not maintained and have trees growing on them. The tribes expressed a concern that trees could be uprooted as a result of a tornado or other severe weather and could expose ancestral remains or cultural items. During the consultations, participants agreed that more information from a site stabilization expert should be sought to understand alternatives to this issue. Subsequently, John Ehrenhard, the site stabilization expert for the Southeast Archaeological Center, was consulted for information on the treatment of large trees on or near the mounds. Mr. Ehrenhard recommends no tree removal except when roots are uplifting and threatening cultural remains or artifacts. The personal communications with Mr. Ehrenhard have not yet been discussed with the tribes but could be disseminated to the involved entities prior to future meetings or consultations.
4. The tribes expressed a strong desire to have a pamphlet available at the NATR Visitors Center that explains the relationship between ancient indigenous bands, the tribes whose homelands were once in the Southeast, and the modern sovereign nations of the participating tribes in the Southeast region and in Oklahoma. The tribes would like the pamphlet to include a depiction of a traditional Indian ceremony taking place at a mound and plaza site.
5. The tribes commented that the interpretation of the mound sites generally needed an update (specific objections to the interpretive text are listed for each mound site below).
6. The tribes would like to have an interpretation at the mound sites that educates visitors to the fact that the mound sites are sacred and that the mounds are analogous to churches and synagogues. The preference is for the interpretation to include a request for visitors to show the same respect to the mounds as sacred places that is given to Christian and Judaic institutions. In other words, visitors would be asked to refrain from climbing on the mounds or otherwise showing disrespect and would be educated as to the reason for this.
7. The tribes expressed a desire to eliminate erosion and scarring wherever these conditions occur on the mounds by replanting grasses.
8. The tribes expressed the desire to prohibit New Age or other ceremonies on any of the mounds or at the mound sites unless requested by one of the tribes. (At this point in time, “tribes” includes the Chickasaw, Oklahoma Choctaw, and the Chitimacha tribes.)

### **Specific Comments for Each Mound Site**

Below are the site-specific comments, desires, and preferences of the participating tribes at the Tupelo consultations. The classification for each mound is also given below.

### **Key for Mound Categories**

- DA - Direct Access means that a paved sidewalk extends to the top of the mound, which encourages visitors to access the top of the mounds.
- AA - Adjacent Access means that a paved sidewalk takes visitors to an area adjacent to the mounds, but not to the top.
- NA - No Access. An example of a no access site would be the Pharr Mounds or the Gordon Mounds.
- M2 - The site is mown 2 times per month.
- M4 - The site is mown 4 times per year.
- NM - There is no mowing at this site.

### **Bear Creek Mound (AAM4)**

#### Maintenance Issues

1. The tribes request that the current mowing regime of four times per year be continued.
2. The tribes prefer to eliminate as much erosion as possible, perhaps by replanting grass seed in areas scarred by the mower.

#### Visitor Use and Access

1. The tribes expressed a strong desire for the interpretation to include a request for visitors to refrain from climbing or walking on the mounds.

#### Interpretative Signage

1. The tribes prefer that the phrase “time of Christ” be replaced with an AD date.
2. The tribes prefer the “crude temple” reference to be changed to something less derogatory.
3. They also suggest that the phrase “migratory, seasonal occupation” be used in the interpretation.

### **Pharr Mounds Site (NAM4)**

#### Maintenance

1. The tribes request that the hay bales left in the field around the mounds be stacked at the side of the property. The tribes commented that leaving the hay bales scattered throughout the field shows disrespect.
2. They approve of the current mowing schedule.
3. They request that the bushes on the mounds be cut back when the area is too wet to mow.

### Visitor Use and Access

1. Not an issue for foot traffic.
2. The tribes would like to work with the NPS on a plan to protect against off-road vehicles.

### Interpretative Signage

1. The tribes commented that bathrooms are extremely prominent and the large interpretive sign much less so. They commented that the major interpretive sign would be read more easily if it were moved from its present location to one that would encourage visitors to read it, i.e., closer to the sidewalk near the bathroom facilities.
2. The tribes would like to pique visitor interest in the existing interpretive signage within the shelter by placing a sign near the entrance to the shelter. Two locations suggested for this sign are (a) the outside wall of the bathrooms and (b) hanging under the roof of the shelter, just over the three interpretative tables. “Sovereign Southeast Cultures’ Sacred Place” is suggested for this sign.

### **Bynum Mounds (AAM2)**

#### Maintenance

1. The tribes had varying opinions about the trees growing near the mounds – to remove, which could cause significant impact or to leave where they are and risk the tree uprooting in a storm. Subsequently, John Ehrenhard, the site stabilization expert for the Southeast Archaeological Center, was consulted on this issue. Mr. Ehrenhard recommends no tree removal except when roots are uplifting and threatening cultural remains or artifacts. The personal communications with Mr. Ehrenhard have not yet been discussed with the tribes.
2. The tribes expressed concern about the erosion on the shady, east side of the mound. It may be difficult to encourage grass to grow there due to lack of sunlight. The tribes desire this area of the mound to be monitored to prevent erosion and reseeded as necessary.
3. A desire was expressed for a fence to be erected between the county road and the east side of the mound site to discourage access from that direction.

### Visitor Use and Access

1. A comment was made that the path at Bynum Mounds site is the appropriate distance from the mound.

### Interpretative Signage

1. There was a desire expressed by the tribes to change the text on the sign under the shelter that incorrectly states that cultural items from this site are in the Visitors Center at NATR Headquarters. (These items have been repatriated to the Chickasaw Nation.)
2. A desire was expressed that interpretation should include the three crops grown by the ancient peoples of this area to include the triad of squash, beans, and corn, known as the *Three Sisters*.
3. The tribes suggest “brush arbor” to replace “lean-to” in the interpretation to more accurately describe the pre-European contact summer houses.
4. While not suggested by the tribes, the term “nomadic” that appears on the existing interpretive sign is not as accurate as the term “semi-sedentary” when describing settlement/movement patterns of these peoples.

### **Boyd Mounds (AAM2)**

#### Maintenance

1. The park-like setting is highly approved by the tribes.

#### Visitor Use and Access

1. The visitor access at Boyd Mounds site is thought to be appropriate by the tribes.

### Interpretative Signage

1. The preference of the tribes is to eliminate the phrase “simple social system,” which is thought to be inaccurate and derogatory. This could be accomplished by removing the word “simple” from this description.
2. The tribes desire to have the audio version of the interpretive text made available for comment. It is not in the database at NATR Headquarters.

### **Mangum Mound (DAM2)**

#### Maintenance

1. The tribes expressed a preference for the current mowing schedule to continue.
2. There is a desire for the erosion on the mound to be monitored by the park maintenance department and bare areas replanted.

### Visitor Use and Access

1. The tribes expressed a desire to have the sidewalk removed that encourages visitors to access the top of the mound. This strong preference was unanimous and is based on the idea that such visitor use is inconsistent with the sacred nature of the mound.

### Interpretative Signage

1. The tribes desire that the sentence that begins with “From the burials...” end after the phrase “high infant mortality.”
2. The tribes desire that the following sentence read: “Excavations indicate that upon the death of a chief, a ritual was enacted in which his retainers were slain and buried with him.”

### **Gordon Mounds (NANM)**

#### Maintenance

1. The tribes expressed a desire for the development of a plan to protect against falling or uprooted trees on the South Mound.

#### Visitor Use and Access

1. No visitor access. Not an issue.

#### Interpretative Signage

1. No interpretation. Not an issue.

### **Emerald Mounds (DAM2)**

#### Maintenance

1. The tribes expressed a desire to protect against erosion in scarring areas. This may be accomplished by reseeding the affected areas.

#### Visitor Use and Access

1. The preference was expressed for removal of the stairway to the top of the secondary mound located on west end of the primary platform mound.
2. The tribes desire to prohibit New Age or other ceremonial activities unless requested by one of the tribes. Interpretive signage may help discourage these activities.

## Interpretative Signage

1. The tribes expressed a preference for a sign at the bottom of the secondary mound asking for visitors to refrain from climbing, playing, or walking on the mounds.
2. There is a desire for the interpretive sign to read that in tribal traditions only specific individuals were allowed access to the top of the secondary mounds.
3. While not expressed by the tribes, it might be noted here that although the Natchez ceased to exist as a distinct tribe, some descendants survive to the present.

## **Results and Conclusions**

### **Maintenance**

It was recognized and appreciated by the tribes participating in the Tupelo consultations of July 2003 that the NATR staff is taking excellent care of the mound sites through regular monitoring and maintenance. The ongoing care and maintenance is of great importance to the tribes, who desire continuing input through future consultations with NPS representatives. Several other relevant points and recommendations are summarized below.

A crucial aspect of monitoring at the mound sites is site stabilization. It is recommended that the tribes be informed of the recommendations of the NPS site stabilization expert (see Maintenance, Page 4). A letter that includes this information should be sent in conjunction with consultation materials when future meetings are scheduled.

Compliance with the present procedures as outlined in the Native American Graves and Protection Act (NAGPRA) and reflected in NPS policy regarding any inadvertent exposure of cultural remains or objects should continue. It is recommended that these procedures be emphasized during the training of new staff members, particularly new employees within the maintenance department. It is also recommended that all the mounds continue to be monitored by the NATR maintenance staff for any scarring or erosion that may occur in an effort to protect cultural remains and objects. When these conditions are discovered, reseeded or other appropriate action is suggested.

Additionally, to the degree possible, prohibition of off-road vehicles should be enforced by NATR staff through regular monitoring of mound sites. Any erosion or damage from off-road vehicles found by the NATR staff should be addressed by the maintenance department through recontouring and other appropriate action.

### **Visitor Use and Access**

The tribes expressed concern regarding the language currently on the interpretive signs at the Bear Creek, Bynum, Boyd, and Mangum mound sites (see comments specific to each site, Interpretive Signage, Page 3). At present, when interpretive signs are old or damaged, the NPS replaces them with signs displaying updated, culturally sensitive text. It is recommended that the text on these new interpretive signs incorporate tribal input. It is also suggested that signs be

posted at mound sites prohibiting visitors from climbing, walking, sitting, or conducting any activities on the mounds.

Cultural sensitivity classes, perhaps facilitated by a tribal representative, are suggested for all NPS employees. It is also recommended that information in the existing NATR brochures available to visitors at NATR Headquarters be updated to include the relationship between the mound builders and modern sovereign nations culturally affiliated with the NATR mound sites. It is recommended that these and other relevant issues be addressed at future consultations with the tribes.

### **Future Consultations**

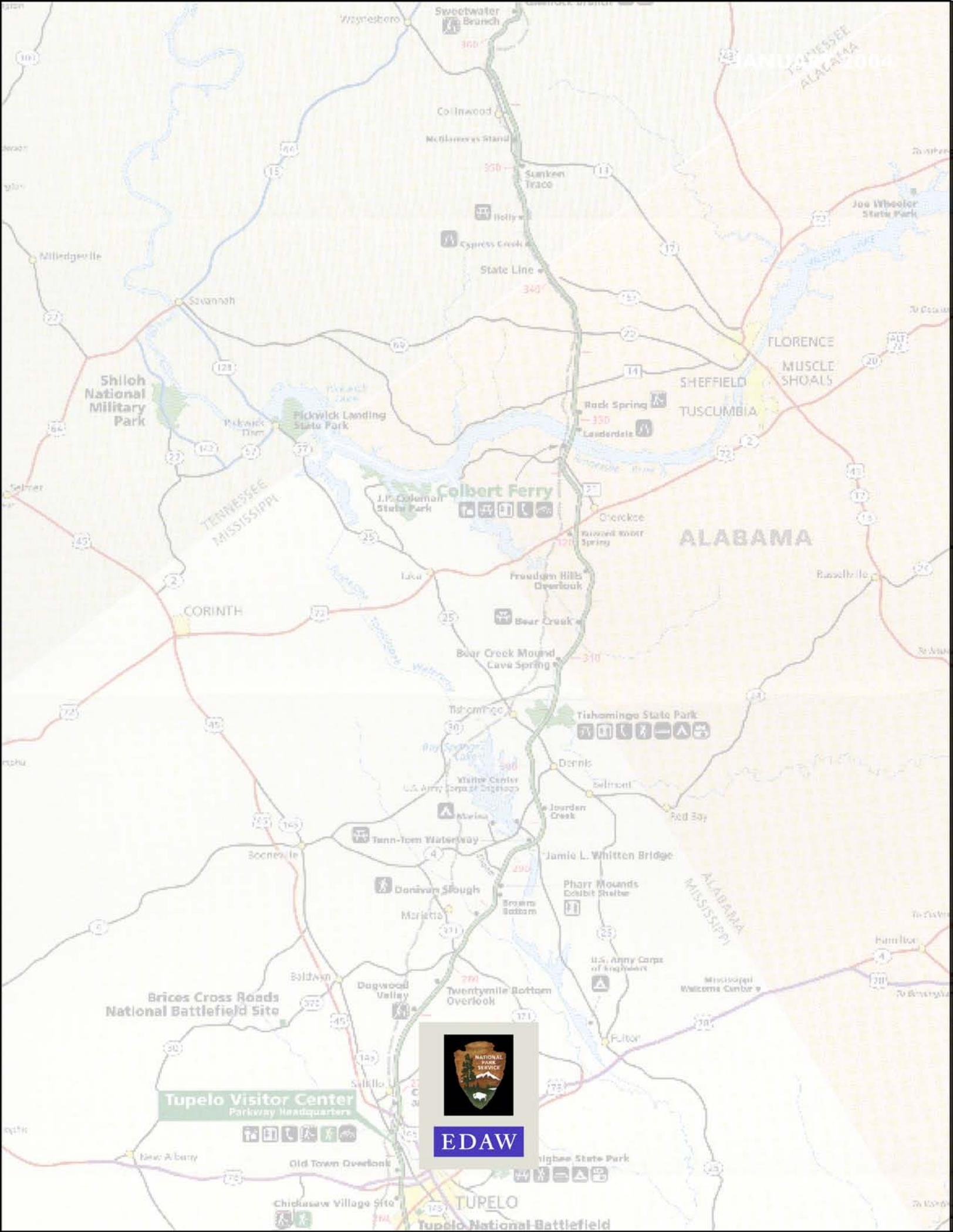
Not all of the issues for all of the mounds were covered at the Tupelo consultations. For example, tribes representing the southernmost sites of Mangum and Emerald mounds were not present, and those tribes that did participate in the consultations were not comfortable in offering suggestions, preferences, and comments about those sites. The input of Kenneth Carleton of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, for example, among others who were unable to attend, was considered critical to the discussion of those sites by the participating tribes. Consequently, discussion on the Mangum site was somewhat constrained and on the Emerald mound site, postponed entirely. However, the consultations were particularly successful in addressing issues regarding those sites in Chickasaw and Choctaw homelands that included Bear, Pharr, Bynum, and Boyd mounds. Moreover, a solid foundation was established for a productive and continuing dialogue between the NPS and the tribes.

Tribal input is important to the goals of maintenance and interpretation of the mounds and the visitor use and access to the mounds. Therefore, ongoing consultations with NPS representatives and the culturally affiliated tribes are strongly recommended.

Meeting Sign in Natchez Trace Mds. Maintenance Meetings.

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