Ocmulgee River Fosters Tourism in Pulaski County
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As part of its efforts to assist Pulaski County in developing tourism, the Archway Partnership is fostering an appreciation for the Ocmulgee River. The Ocmulgee River is a critically important aspect of culture, tourism, economic development as well as a vitally important natural resource for Pulaski County and its entire region. Pulaski County participates in the Ocmulgee River Water Trail Partnership, a multi-county partnership to promote the river for economic development. Through this organization, the need to enhance the visibility and viability of the Ocmulgee River and National Monument was identified.

In February 2014, oral history and media archivists Christian Lopez and Callie Holmes from the UGA Russell Special Collections Library traveled to Hawkinsville in Pulaski County to record stories about the Ocmulgee River. The opportunity was part of the First Person Project that documents the experiences of everyday Georgians. Interviews were recorded with 12 community members, including a county commissioner and a local author. There were stories about Native American artifacts, the steamboat days, the motorboat club in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Ocmulgee Water Trails Partnership.

“It was a lot of fun reminiscing … about our times on the Ocmulgee River,” said Emmett Head, a Pulaski County resident who participated in the storytelling event. “But, it’s even more important that we save those stories for future generations to hear.”

In addition to conducting citizen interviews, Lopez and Holmes also traveled down the River to document points of interest for the purpose of preserving history, and providing valuable research for an interpretive map.

Following The First Person Project’s completion, the Ocmulgee River Water Trail Partnership reached out to the Pulaski County Archway Partnership for assistance in maximizing the economic impact potential of the trail in the local communities.

Engineering Professor Dr. Bill Tollner and doctoral student Natalia Shim began work on the project in the summer of 2014. With Dr. Tollner’s guidance, Shim focused her work initially on the proposed National Park Site from Macon to Hawkinsville. Her work included identifying parcel owners, overlaying assets of cultural and historic value, and accessing soil sample and fishery data. She also proposed potential landing sites that would increase the economic impact of the trail, taking into consideration the conditions and amenities nearby and being respectful of both environmental and cultural concerns. Shim’s work culminated with a report and presentation to community members. She was also asked to present her research at the Georgia Trails Summit in June 2015.

To further tourism efforts, UGA Photography student Erin Mazzei visited sites along the Ocmulgee River and the Ocmulgee National Monument during the summer of 2015 to capture the many offerings for visitors. Her images included Native American Burial Mounds, trails, the visitor center, as well as creeks and swamps extending from the River. These images can be used to promote the attraction in brochures and other marketing materials as well as assist with documentation of the river and all of its many assets.

Advancing Community Priorities
Economic Development is a priority identified by the Pulaski County Archway Partnership. By assessing the potential economic impact of the Ocmulgee River and National Monument, communities can leverage it as a tool to spur tourism and increase tourism spending in communities along the River.