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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chickasaws, National Park Service affirm partnership

SULPHUR, Okla. – A long-term partnership between the Chickasaw Nation and the National Park Service (NPS) was reaffirmed July 9 when the tribe and park service announced it will share office space in the Chickasaw Visitor Center.

The agreement culminated five years of negotiation between the two entities. It was celebrated with a formal ceremony between tribal officials and NPS officers who manage the Chickasaw National Recreation Area (CNRA), directly south of center. The Chickasaw Visitor Center was constructed in 2014.

Keys to the center were formally exchanged “as a symbol of the relationship we have with the National Park Service,” said Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby. “We officially welcome you to your new office. It really is a privilege to have this working relationship and we thank you for the work you have done and the work you will do.”

Chickasaw National Recreation Area Superintendent Bill Wright, who is Chickasaw and began his park service career in Sulphur 30 years ago, called the partnership “a great opportunity for the National Park Service. We are extremely excited about this partnership and the future.

“I have a lot of ties to the community,” Wright said. He took over as superintendent of the CNRA in January.

“From day one when I arrived we’ve been working toward this. Seeing it come to

fruition is very exciting.”

FROM 1902 AND BEYOND

The property once belonged to the Chickasaw and Choctaw nations following removal to Indian Territory in the 1830s.

The tribes recognized the area’s unique blend of natural springs, fresh water resources, mountains, wildlife and natural water falls should be protected. Recognizing that Oklahoma statehood was looming, tribal leaders turned over ownership of the land to the federal government in 1902 with the understanding it would be protected for future generations. It was called Sulphur Springs Reservation.

In 1906, Congress designated it as Platt National Park to honor a Connecticut lawmaker, Orville Platt, who sponsored legislation to protect the area. At the time, it was the nation’s seventh national park. It is the only national park to be established at the request of a Native American tribe.

Lake of the Arbuckles, considered one of the most pristine bodies of water in Oklahoma, was later added to the park.

In 1976, Congress renamed it the Chickasaw National Recreation Area. In 2011, the United States Mint issued a coin featuring Lincoln Bridge, a limestone structure built in 1909 that is still in use.

Bison, white-tailed deer, bobcats and other wildlife may be observed, photographed and enjoyed by thousands of tourists who visit the park annually.



Cutline:

Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, center, and Chickasaw National Recreation Superintendent Bill Wright seal the deal to share office space at the Chickasaw Visitor Center in Sulphur. Watching the historic agreement are, from left, Chickasaw Nation Under Secretary of Community Services Tom John; Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Culture and Humanities Lisa John; National Park Service officials Jack Attig and Ron Parker, and Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Commerce Bill Lance.