

Briefing Statement

Project Name:

Trail of Tears Study

Location:

The 1,000-mile study corridor extends from Echota in northern Georgia through Tennessee and Kentucky to Golconda, Illinois, at which point two routes to Oklahoma emerge. One route out of Illinois extends west through Springfield, Missouri, and the other extends westerly to the St. Francis River in Missouri and turns southerly through Batesville, Arkansas, with both terminating at Fort Gibson, Oklahoma (see attached map). The study corridor encompasses three National Park Service regions, the southeast, which includes the majority of affected States; the midwest; and the southwest.

Background:

This study was called for by an amendment to Public Law 90-543, the National Trails System Act.

"Trail of Tears, including the associated forts and specifically, Fort Mitchel, Alabama, and historic properties, extending from the vicinity of Murphy, North Carolina, through Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas, to the vicinity of Tahlequah, Oklahoma."

Trail Significance:

During the 1830's the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole) of the southeast were forcibly removed from the east to Indian Territory established west of the Mississippi. The removal of the Indians established a national reservation policy. Significant to the Indian removal over several routes during 1831 to 1839 is the route a small group of Eastern Cherokees were forced to march. The Cherokees primarily lived in Georgia but also in North Carolina, Alabama, and Tennessee. The removal of the Cherokees started by water in the spring of 1838 and over land in the fall of that same year. The Cherokees that took the fall land route in October 1838 marched over what has become known as the "Trail of Tears." After being driven to concentration camps by the government, 15,000 started westward on a tragic journey. The trail was significant in the history of native Americans.

Planning Problems:

Delineating the routes of migration may cause some confusion as they relate to this period. Although the trail is associated specifically with the Cherokee's removal, the study should not exclude the other tribes affected. Given the extent of development it is likely that little of the original trace exists during present time. Trail integrity may be an issue. A determination on potential suitability will be made during the study. However, given shrinking State budgets, development and maintenance of a national trail may not be a high priority. The Act specifies that historic trails are to be administered at no expense to the Federal Government.



# REMOVAL of the INDIANS

TRAIL OF TEARS  
1838 FALL MIGRATION

