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NATURAL LANDMARK SITE EVALUATIONS - GEORGIA

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1975

EBENEZER CREEK SWAMP

Effingham County

CX 500050186

John R. Bozeman, Ph.D.  
Evaluator  
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DIST: PER D. HOOD

## EBENEZER CREEK SWAMP

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

Evaluator: John R. Bozeman, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biology,  
Department of Biology, Georgia Southern College, Statesboro,  
Georgia 30458. (912) 681-5494.

Theme Source: Survey of Natural Areas of the Atlantic Coastal Plain -  
Ecological Themes. Center for Natural Areas, Office of International  
and Environmental Programs, Smithsonian Institution. Vols I-II, p.  
194-280 (p. 227-229).

Information Sources: Dr. Charles H. Wharton  
Department of Biology  
Georgia State University  
33 Gilmer Street, S.E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303  
(404) 658-3100 or (2260)

Mr. Herschel L. Paulk, Soil Scientist  
USDA-Soil Conservation Service  
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Statesboro, Georgia 30458  
(912) 764-5449

Mr. David Bozeman, Soil Conservationist  
USDA-Soil Conservation Service  
Trentlen Building  
Springfield, Georgia 31329

Mr. A. E. (Ed) Norton, Tax Assessor  
Ms. Sheila Saxon, Clerk  
Tax Assessors Office  
P. O. Box 307  
Springfield, Georgia 31329  
(912) 754-3027

Collaborator: Dr. Bill P. Lovejoy, Associate Professor of Biology,  
Department of Biology, Georgia Southern College, Statesboro,  
Georgia 30458. (912) 681-5497.

Visits: July 9-10, 1975. Float trip July 9; aerial reconnaissance July 10.

Other Names for Site: None for creek swamp. Ebenezer (Creek) Church and  
settlement are historical sites of early Salzburger Colony. Historical  
Salzburger Museum located at church site, now known as Evangelical Luth-  
eran Congregation, c/o Rev. F. R. Helme, Route 1, Clio, Georgia 31303.

## LOCATION

Political: Georgia, East-central section of Effingham County; East-Southeast  
of Springfield.

Directions: East-Southeast from Springfield on State Road # S1131 ca. four  
(4) miles to Stillwell Community, South from Stillwell on S953 road ca.

1.5 miles to Ebenezer Creek. Also accessible via Georgia Highway 275 Southeast of Springfield to Ebenezer Landing on the Savannah River. Mouth of Creek just north of landing. Creek accessible by several private roads.

Lat. & Long. Coordinates: 32° 21'-23' North; 31° 11'-14' West.

USGS Quadrangle Reference: Rincon, Georgia and Hardeville NW, S.C., 7.5 minute topographic. Savannah, Georgia, 1:250,000.

#### SIZE

Acreage: Approximately 2,500 acres, or four (4) square miles. Area approximately 0.4 mile wide and five (5) miles long.

#### BOUNDARIES

Site recommended extends from State Road S953 on the west boundary to the Savannah River on the east boundary. The 15' elevation line delimits the deep-water swamp boundary of Ebenezer Creek (Map #1).

Maps: Map #1 is a copy of 7.5 minute series (topographic). Map #2 locates area on Effingham County General Highway Map. Map #3 represents a replication of the soil field worksheets for Effingham County, based upon USDA-SCS flight 3-3-1949, sheet nos. BQG-1F-36, 38, and 68. Map #4 represents the land ownership boundaries along Ebenezer Creek, prepared from Tax Office, aerial photographic sheet numbers 6, 18, 19, and 26-28, dated 1968. New property maps, which were unavailable at time of evaluation, are numbers 107, 118, 119, and 128.

#### OWNERSHIP

Private: (Principal owners with land adjacent to Ebenezer Creek, see Map #4).

<u>Tract</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>
1	Mrs. Pauline G. Seckinger, et al.	818
2	Laura Fail	35
2A	Charles Exley	22
8	T. O. Long	1,432
12	J. W. Tebeau Estate	103
13	Lee H. & Wm. Morgan Lancaster	80
14	M. H. Rahn	80
15	Mrs. Mary Hutto	176
16	H. C. Gnann	87
17	Effie C. Williams	98
18	Ola M. Kessler, et al.	80
19	Emma Lancaster	86
20	Carolyn & Allen Kieffer	153
21	Alvin O. Gnann	60
22	Shearouse & Marchman	25
23	James J. & Jose Heagarty	97
24	Olive G. Griffin, et al.	159
25	E. A. Gnann	193
26	Miriam Gnann	86
27	W. S. Gnann	57
28	Cecil Gnann	65
29	A. O. Gnann (Alvin)	217
33	Jack E. Ramsey	260

Maps/Plats-Ownership Boundaries: See Map #4.

CORRESPONDENTS

Principal Owners: The seven (7) largest creek swamp tracts are numbers 1, 8, 12, 20, 24, 29, and 35. Correspondence concerning the registration of tracts should be directed to the following persons:

Tract 1                Mrs. Pauline G. Seckinger  
Springfield, Ga. 31329

Charles F. Gnann  
Route 2  
Springfield, Ga. 31329

Tract 8                Mr. T. O. Long  
Long Acres  
Route 1  
Rincon, Ga. 31326

Tract 12               J. W. Tebeau Estate  
c/o Mr. Troy P. Tebeau  
Springfield, Ga. 31329

Tract 20               Carolyn & Allen Kieffer  
Route 1, Box 258  
Springfield, Ga. 31329

Tract 24               Mr. Olive G. Griffin  
1290 LaVista Rd., N.E.  
Atlanta, Ga.

Tract 29               Mr. A. O. (Alvin) Gnann  
8 Varnedo Ave.  
Garden City, Ga. 31408

Tract 33               Mr. Jack E. Ramsey  
Route 1, Box 127  
Guyton, Ga.

Other Tracts as follows:

Tract 2                Ms. Laura Fail  
c/o Gordon F. Fail  
P. O. Box 132  
Rincon, Ga. 31326

Tract 2A               Mr. Charles M. Exley  
90 Varnedoe Ave.  
Garden City, Ga. 31408

Tract 13               Lee H. & William Morgan Lancaster  
c/o W. K. Lancaster  
Route 1  
Rincon, Ga. 31326

Tract 14            Mr. M. H. Rahn  
                     P. O. Box 51  
                     Springfield, Ga. 31329

Tract 15            Mrs. Mary Hutto  
                     P. O. Box 89  
                     Stillwell, Ga. 31330

Tract 16            Mr. H. (Herbert) C. Gnann  
                     P. O. Box 34  
                     Springfield, Ga. 31329

Tract 17            Mrs. Effie C. Williams  
                     73 S. Wren N  
                     New Orleans, La.

Tract 18            Ms. Ola M. (G.) Kessler  
                     8 Varnedo Ave.  
                     Garden City, Ga. 31408

Tract 19            Ms. Emma V. Lancaster  
                     c/o W. R. Lancaster  
                     Route 1  
                     Rincon, Ga. 31326

Tract 21            Mr. Alvin O. Gnann  
                     8 Varnedo Ave.  
                     Garden City, Ga. 31408

Tract 23            James J. & Jose (Josephine) Heagarty  
                     Route 1, Box 151  
                     Clyo, Ga. 31303

Tract 25            Mr. E. A. Gnann  
                     P. O. Box 85  
                     Stillwell, Ga. 31330

Tract 26            Ms. Miriam Gnann  
                     931 Princeton St.  
                     Columbia, S. C.

Tract 27            Mr. W. S. (Sidney) Gnann  
                     P. O. Box 3193  
                     Columbia, S. C.

Tract 28            Mr. Cecil B. Gnann, Sr.  
                     P. O. Box 78  
                     Stillwell, Ga. 31330

## LAND USE AND INTEGRITY

Past & Present Use: The upland soils surrounding Ebenezer Creek are used for row-crop cultivation, pasture and timber production. Very little selective logging has occurred in the deepwater Cypress-Gum forest. Occasional stumps of Bald Cypress were observed on the lower five-mile reach of creek swamp.

Ebenezer Creek Swamp is utilized primarily for recreational fishing and boating. Limited areas have built up week-end cottages. Three such subdivisions occur on the south bank, these are the Half Moon, High Bluff and Fail subdivisions. These subdivisions occur on bluffs overlooking the creek. The majority of the creek swamp is natural and undisturbed.

Future Use: The construction of additional cottages can be anticipated on the north bank. There are three to four high areas with access by private roads on the north side.

## THREATS TO THE AREA

Existing: Existing threats to the area are improper solid waste (garbage and trash) disposal and probable seepage of sewage from cottages along the creek bank. Many of the cottages (shacks) are aesthetically displeasing.

Potential: Additional construction as outlined above will distract from the natural beauty of the area. Logging would destroy the aesthetic values of the swamp.

## DESCRIPTION OF NATURAL VALUES

General Character: Ebenezer Creek is a black-water coastal stream that drains the northeastern quarter of Effingham County. The upper watershed includes Devils Branch, Runs Branch and Turkey Branch as the principal tributaries. The vegetational cover of the central and upper sections are typical for this type of coastal stream. The lower section of Ebenezer Creek is unique in its physical and biological features. Since the last Pleistocene inundation, Ebenezer Creek has eroded the south or right bank of the Savannah river to form a broad-flattened basin overlying residual clays. This basin is topographically uniform in elevation (15 feet above mean sea level) with the Savannah River floodplain for the last 4-5 miles above its junction with the Savannah River. The Savannah River acts as a "water-dam" or "slack-water-dam" on Ebenezer Creek. Any fluctuations, such as normal winter flooding or tidal backwater, in the water level of the Savannah River directly influences the water level in Ebenezer Creek. The winter flood waters from the Savannah River inundate Ebenezer Creek and raise the water level by 4-5 feet, as indicated by the water-marks on the bases of tree-trunks throughout. Additional sediments of a less acidic nature are transported into Ebenezer Creek from the Savannah River. It is for this reason, and because of an abundant source of seed, that Bald Cypress (Taxodium distichum) and Tupelo Gum dominate the forest cover of the lower Ebenezer Creek Swamp.

Ebenezer Creek meanders through the creek basin forming a series of elongated lakes. Monospecific stands (forests) dominated by Bald Cypress or Tupelo Gum, and mixed stands of both species occur along these

lake perimeters. During the summer months the water color is very darkly stained, reminding the observer of lakes and sloughs in Okefenokee Swamp.

Specific Natural Values: Near climax forests of Bald Cypress-Tupelo Gum with extreme buttressing of stem bases. Extended hydroperiods probably account for the stunted nature of these trees. The creek swamp is believed to be an important spawning area for Striped Bass. Two large specimens (greater than 10') of the American Alligator were observed in the lakes.

Ecological/Geological Type Category:

Vegetative Subthemes & Phases

<u>Subtheme</u>	<u>Phase</u>
E. Cypress-Gum Swamp Forest	a. deepwater (Bald Cypress-Water Tupelo)
P. Aquatic Fauna	a. rare, endangered or unique species of wildlife (American Alligator)
	c. seasonal concentrations (Striped Bass)

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

Location: Savannah River basin in Southeast Georgia. East-central section of Effingham County. Access by state roads at two points.

Vegetation Types/Unique Floral Components: Generally undisturbed section of creek swamp approximately five (5) miles in length. Mature deep-water phase of Cypress-Gum Swamp Forest in unique physical setting. Creek, natural lakes, and swamp forests have very high visual, photographic, and aesthetic values.

Fauna: Lakes and swamp provide habitat for American Alligator, River Otter, and Striped Bass. Birds include Wood Duck, Pileated Woodpecker, Green Heron, Little Blue Heron, White Ibis, and Warblers - Parula, and Prothonotary.

Education/Research: High educational/research potential. Creek suitable for year-around canoeing.

Comparison: This site is the best remaining Cypress-Gum Forest in the Savannah River Basin. The physical relationship and interactions between the river and the creek are unique to this system. The evaluator knows of no other area with these exact qualities.

SIGNIFICANCE SOURCES

Persons Consulted: Dr. Charles H. Wharton  
Department of Biology  
Georgia State University  
33 Gilmer St., SE  
Atlanta, Ga. 30303  
(404) 658-3100 (-2260)

Publications:

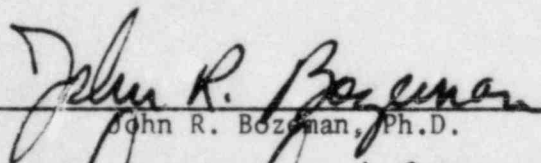
Wharton, C. H. 1975. The Natural Environments of Georgia. A Special Report to the Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia (unpublished manuscript).

## PUBLICITY SENSITIVITY

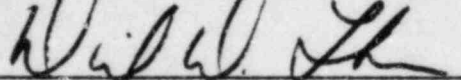
None

## RECOMMENDATION

In my opinion, the site appears to be nationally significant and I recommend that it be designated a natural landmark.

  
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John R. Bozeman, Ph.D.

8/29/75

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
David D. Thompson, Jr., Regional Director, Southeast Region

10-5-75



## ENCLOSURES

Maps:

1. USGS, Rincon, Georgia & Hardeville NW, S.C., 7.5 minute topographic.
2. General Highway Map, Effingham County, 1970.
3. USDA-SCS, Soil Survey, field worksheets, 3/3/1949 aerial flight.
4. Property Boundaries, compiled from aerial photographic sheet numbers 6, 18, 19, and 26-28 (Tax Office).

Literature Cited:

1. Wharton, C. H. 1975. The Natural Environments of Georgia. A Special Report to the Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia (unpublished manuscript).

Photographic Illustrations:

1. Eight (8) original color transparencies with original copy.
2. Eight (8) color prints (3½ x 5) with each copy of report.

## NATURAL LANDMARK BRIEF

Site: Ebenezer Creek Swamp, Effingham County, Georgia.

Description: Area consisting of approximately 2,500 acres, or four (4) square miles. Lower five-mile reach of coastal creek swamp that is frequently flooded by the Savannah River. Year-around flooding of creek swamp has resulted in extreme buttressing and possibly dwarfing of Bald Cypress-Tupelo forests.

Principal Ownership: Multiple private ownership consisting of approximately 30 tracts of land.

Proposed by: Survey of Natural Areas of the Atlantic Coastal Plain - Ecological Themes. Center for Natural Areas, Office of International & Environmental Programs, Smithsonian Institution. Vols. I-II, p. 194-280 (p.227-229).

Significance: Possibly the best remaining Bald Cypress-Tupelo Gum Forest in the Savannah River Basin. Climax deep-water phase of Cypress-Tupelo. Creek forms a series of lakes which provide year-around habitat for American Alligator and breeding area for Striped Bass. Numerous bird species utilize habitat. All aquatic systems have high visual, photographic, and aesthetic values.

Land Use: Limited areas used for week-end cottages. Primary use is for sport fishing and recreational boating (not high-speed boats).

Dangers to the Integrity of the Area: Pollution from human sewage and solid waste as additional cottages are located along creek. Possibly the logging of forest.

Special Conditions: None.

Studied by:

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