

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Sucarnoochee River Fishweir

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number _____

not for publication

city or town Porterville

vicinity

state Mississippi code MS county Kemper code 069 zip code 39352


3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local


Signature of certifying official/Title

Jan. 27, 2010
Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Sucarnoochee River Fishweir
Name of Property

Kemper, Mississippi
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		district
		site
1		structure
		object
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/fishing facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER; fishweir

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: _____

walls: _____

roof: _____

Large sandstone rocks, two iron anchor

other: rods, twenty-eight wooden stakes

Sucarnoochee River Fishweir
Name of Property

Kemper, Mississippi
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

See Continuation Page

Narrative Description

See Continuation Page

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Engineering; Maritime History

Period of Significance

Late 19th century to early 1930s

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

See Continuation Sheets

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

See Continuation sheets

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See Continuation Sheets

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Sucarnoochee River Fishweir
Name of Property

Kemper, Mississippi
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See Continuation Sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property <1 acre

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

ZONE Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See Continuation Sheets

Sucarnoochee River Fishweir
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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See Continuation Sheets

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Connaway, Archaeologist
organization Mississippi Department of Archives and History date November 16, 2009
street & number P.O. Box 571 telephone
city or town Jackson state MS zip code 39205
e-mail

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Sucarnoochee River Fishweir

City or Vicinity: Porterville

County: Kemper **State:** MS

Photographer: John Connaway

Date Photographed: September 5, 1997

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 1 Of 1. View of stone weir and iron rods, facing east.

Sucarnoochee River Fishweir
Name of Property

Kemper, Mississippi
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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Sucarnoochee River Fishweir
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NA
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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DESCRIPTION

The weir, situated at the present _____ of the river, consists of the exposed apex portion of a V-shaped structure (see attached diagram). It is built of large sandstone rocks with interspersed remains of posts protruding from it and two iron rods in the apex opening. The iron rods were anchors for what is presumed to have been a typical fall trap, a box-like structure with slats in the bottom and tilted up at the back or downstream end so that water and small unusable fish might flow through it. There is no apparent chute at the apex. The two wing remnants form a shorter V-shape, with the suggestion that the original structure had a short wing on the north side and a longer, now mostly buried wing in the south.

The exposed portion of the _____ into the river from beneath a large sandbar, which rises about 1.8 meters above the top of the wing rocks. Presumably, the remainder of the _____ extends under the sandbar to the former river bank nearer the _____, as suggested in the diagram. This being the case, the projected total length would have been about 33 meters. The exposed part is about 8 meters in length, ranges from 2.4 to 2.6 meters at water level, and at its highest point, it is about 30 cm high above the water level at the time of recording. Rocks in this wing ranged in width up to 85 cm. The rocks appear more scattered near the bank, suggesting a strong current there at some point in time.

The portion of the _____ is also about 8 meters in length, ranges from 1.9 to 2.15 meters wide, and its height slightly less than the highest point (80 cm) in the south wing. It has a slight curve to it and extends beneath an island-like projection of the _____ of the sandbar (see diagram). No rocks were visible on the _____ of the island, but there is a mass of 9 vertical stakes there, suggesting that this might have been the terminus of the _____ wing against the former north bank in this river. The projected alignment is shown in the diagram and the suggested total length of wing, in this case, would have been about 17.5 meters. There is the possibility that this wing extends further under the sandbar in a straighter line, but this scenario does not account for the mass of stakes or the slight curvature showing in that exposed part. About a third of the wing was underwater, nearest the sandbar, at the time of recording.

The stakes in the weir were cut or split poles, probably pine, and most were leaning slightly. They protruded to varying heights since the upper ends were eroded or broken off by the current and debris. The range from 2 to 12 cm in width and 2 to 10 cm in thickness. No discernable pattern was noted regarding the stake, appearing to be randomly dispersed through the wings on the end of the _____ wing. Their presence suggests the possibility of a crib structure, but such could not be delineated, such a structure presupposing some kind of alignment along the sides of the dams.

The iron rods, each with threads and a large nut at the top end, were placed one on each side the apex opening. There is no doubt the anchor rods are for a trap. Both were 4 CM in diameter, the south one extending vertically 80 cm, while the north one extended vertically 148 cm. The square nut on each measured 5 x 5 cm and was 2 cm thick. There was reportedly a slatted box there at one time, possibly 10 feet long. The distance between the two rods was about 80 cm, suggesting the width of the trap, presuming that the rods were attached at the sides of the trap.

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT of SIGNIFICANCE

The Sucarnoochee River Fishweir is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for statewide significance under Criteria A for its association with Maritime History as a method of harvesting fish. It is also eligible for listing under Criteria C for its association with Engineering.

The significance of the Sucarnoochee River Fishweir lies primarily in two areas, engineering and maritime history. These two areas are inter-related in this case in that the techniques used to construct the weir, the design principles by which it operated and its function are all derived from an historical continuum dating back thousands of years in prehistoric North America. Fishweir technology and utilization have been recorded over most of North America from, for example, as early as the Seabasticook Fishweir in Maine, dating between 1760 and 5080 B. P. (Petersen et al. 1994: 197-223) until as late as the 1950s. Hubbert and Wright (1987:100) estimate the use of fishweirs at least as early as the Middle Archaic period, possibly earlier. In Alabama, many of the earlier rock fishweirs were repaired and used by Euro-Americans up until the 1950s when they were outlawed there. (Hubbert and Wright 1987:100). Such weirs were in use in Tennessee at least up until ca. 1939, although the State Department of Game and Fish tried to discourage their use by dynamiting them as early as 1915. (Cobb 1978:45). The use of weirs to catch game fish and the construction of weirs that completely blocked any running streams were outlawed in Mississippi in 1922 (Laws of Mississippi 1922), but with certain restrictions were still in use as late as 1938 (Connaway 1999).

The design and construction techniques remained essentially unchanged over the long period of time mentioned above. With the exception of tidal weirs and special types built as traps around flowing springs and lake banks, the basic design is a V-shaped dam with an opening for a trap at the downstream apex of the V. Depending on the availability of materials, the dams were constructed of either large rocks or wooden poles or posts driven into the stream bottom, or combinations thereof, as is apparently the case here. The preferable rock dams were more stable against stream current force. If posts were used, some form of obstruction was attached or woven between them to prevent fish from escaping. This included brush, limbs, woven mats, boards, hogwire, and chicken wire. In both cases, there was usually a short chute constructed at the mouth of the weir where the trap was placed, though no chute was added here.

In prehistoric times, traps varied, including woven baskets, fenced enclosures, nets and other similar devices. In historic times, as in this case, traps were usually constructed like a rectangular box, sloping upward toward the lower or downstream end, with open slats in the bottom for the passage of water and unusable fish. The slats were arranged in tiers, stair-step fashion, so that fish passing over them would fall behind the end of each step and get caught there. The Sucarnoochee River Fishweir had only an opening at the apex, and the only visible evidence of the trap remaining were the two iron anchor rods. Anchoring devices are often the most likely part to survive.

The function of the weir also remains unchanged through the ages, that of mass procurement of food at times when local communities, both prehistoric and historic, were dependent to some extent on natural resources for subsistence. At a certain time of the year when some species of fish are spawning these weirs were operating at their peak and were of great economic importance to the people who used them. They provided an easily acquired meat source in areas and at times when meat may not have been plentiful. This was especially true during prehistoric times, during the early European settlement of this country, and even during the depression era of the 1930s.

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The Sucarnoochee River Fishweir represents one of the better preserved fishdams to date in Mississippi, exemplary of the style and construction techniques used both during the prehistoric and historic periods, up until the early twentieth century, one that has now all but disappeared. It served to feed numerous people scattered about the area, possibly on farms or small communities in the historic period. It is significant in that it illustrates the practical application of specific design and construction techniques to build a structure to serve certain human needs, the procurement of food, namely protein.

It is also significant in that it was the result of human effort, possibly a community effort, and activity to serve their needs in difficult times. Since this particular weir was known to have been used historically, it would thus fit into the context of local community and significance, as well as representing the state-wide significance of similar endeavors in other parts of Mississippi during this particular time frame. It would be an expression of late nineteenth through early twentieth century community life and community involvement and sharing in an economic endeavor that cannot be seen in other remaining structures of that period.

It might also be considered of national significance in that it reflects an historic function and technology that was in common use over most all of North America for thousands of years, but which is no longer legal and thus relegated to a niche in the prehistoric and historic past. It is typical of such structures that were commonplace throughout much of North America during past times, serving a function that has since been replaced by other commercial enterprises and technologies. This structure is a good specimen of its type and thus an important example of a particular building practice during its limited time in history, related to its predecessors through a cultural tradition carried on for millennia by prehistoric peoples and inherited by Euro-American settlers. It is part of our heritage that is fast disappearing through such modern practices as stream channelization, along with natural erosion, silting and channel displacement.

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NA
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Bibliography

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Connaway, John. "Fishweirs: A World Perspective with Emphasis on the Fishweirs of Mississippi." 2007
 Mississippi Department of Archives and History Archaeological report No. 33.

Hubbert, Charles M. and Richard A Wright. "Lalkala, the Fishing Place: Another Way of Seeing the Archaeology of the Rother L. Harris Reservoir." Journal of Alabama Archaeology 33 (1)

Laws of Mississippi 1922. Chapter 181, Sections 15(b) and 16(c).

Petersen, James B., Brian S. Robinson, Daniel F. Belknap, James Stark and Lawrence Kaplan. "An Archaic and Woodland Period Fish Weir in Central Maine." Archaeology of Eastern North America. 1994, 22:197-223.