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## Employment Trends and Recovery in Muscogee County, Georgia, 2003-2011\*

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### Introduction

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included over \$800 billion of government spending targeted to stimulate the US economy out of the so-called “Great Recession”. The third anniversary of the “Stimulus Bill” recently passed which provides us with a timely opportunity to look back and examine how Muscogee County was affected by the recession and how its recovery is progressing. In this report, we focus on a single measure, employment, which was the number one priority of the Stimulus.

### Employment Statistics

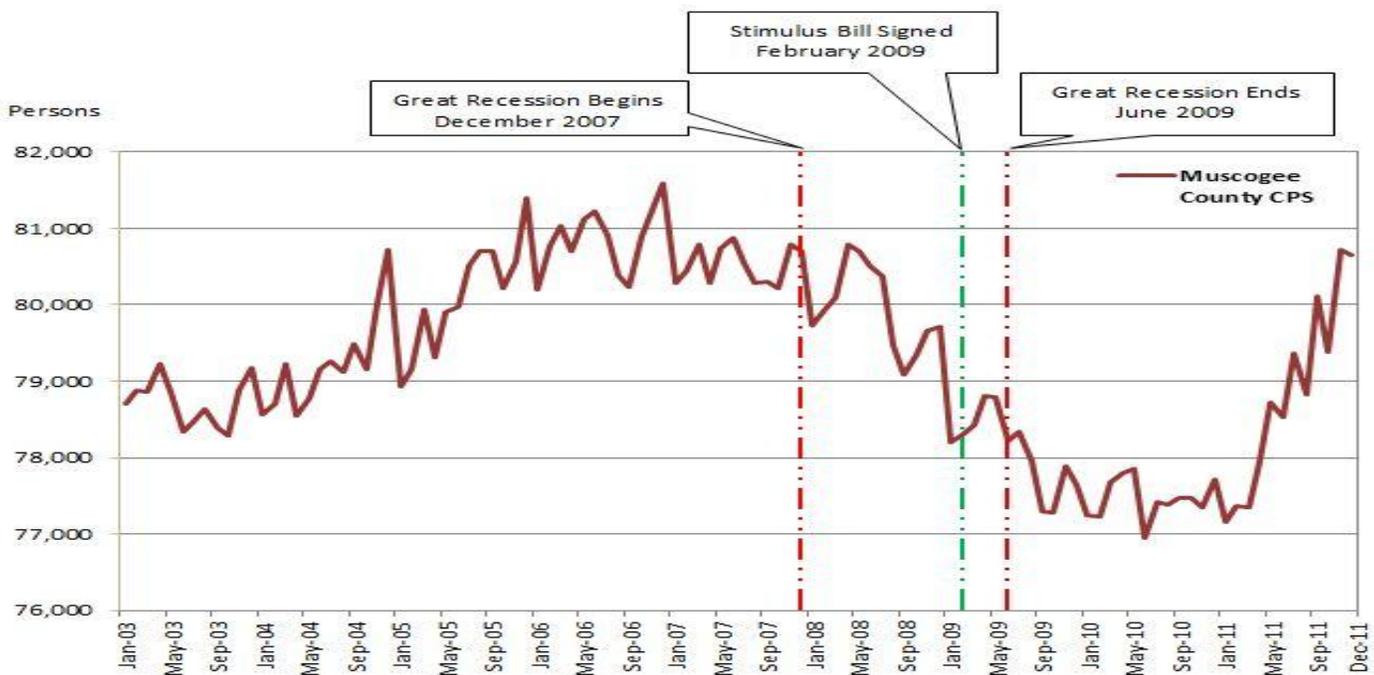
At the individual county level, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) measures employment using a survey, the Current Population Survey (CPS), of over 60,000

households nationwide. The survey provides estimates of the number of persons who live in each county that have jobs no matter where the job is located. The survey has a broad definition of employment which counts anyone who did any work as a paid employee, worked in their own business, worked on their farm, worked 15 hours or more as an unpaid worker in a family business, or were temporarily on paid or unpaid leave.

### Employment in Muscogee County

The figure below shows the level of employment for the residents of Muscogee County, GA, from January 2003 through December 2011.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of the recession, the number of Muscogee County

CPS Employment Statistics for Muscogee County Residents, 2003 – 2011.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

\*This fact sheet and the full report can be accessed at <http://butlercenter.columbusstate.edu>

<sup>1</sup>In order to examine the actual employment levels the employment data are not seasonally adjusted.

residents who were employed fell from 80,709 to 78,212 a decline of 2,497 jobs. The number of jobs continued to fall after the end of the recession by an additional 1,258 to a low of 76,954 in June 2010.

As part of the recovery effort, Muscogee County has received an influx of over \$122 million in Federal funding<sup>2</sup> since February 2009. This includes grants, contracts, and loans. At the time the Stimulus legislation was passed, employment in Muscogee County had fallen nearly 3%.

Since January 2011 employment in Muscogee County has been trending upward. The number of county residents that are employed has increased from 78,212 at the end of the recession to 80,652 by December 2011, an increase of 2,440 jobs.

By the end of 2011, the number of employed residents in Muscogee County had returned to what it was just prior to the recession.

The figure also illustrates the large degree of seasonality in the employment numbers. In general, the following cycle repeats itself year after year; following a reduction in employment in January due to layoffs after Christmas employment rebounds from February through May, there is a dip during June and July and a slight increase in August, after decreasing in September and October employment rises at the end of the year in November and December.

## Concluding Comments

Compared to the State of Georgia, whose employment level is still 6% below its pre-recession level, Muscogee County has recovered much more quickly.

While we cannot directly tie the region's job recovery to the Stimulus, it surely played some role, although the exact size is debatable. Also during this time the county was the beneficiary of several large economic development projects including the movement of the armor division from Fort Knox to Fort Benning, the opening of the NCR production facility in Columbus and the location of the KIA manufacturing facility just to the north of Muscogee County.

- *Muscogee County lost 3,755 jobs from December 2007 through June 2010.*
- *During the course of the recession the number of jobs in Georgia fell by 7.2%. The number of jobs in Muscogee County fell by only 3.1%*
- *Since February 2009, Muscogee County has received over \$122 million in Stimulus funding.*

**“By the end of 2011, the number of employed residents in Muscogee County had returned to what it was just prior to the recession.”**

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<sup>2</sup> The locations of the projects that were funded by the Stimulus are based on how the recipient reported the location and may not be entirely accurate. If a location was denoted by a zip code then the location was taken to be the center of the zip code not necessarily where the project was located. This causes a problem when zip codes extend across county lines. As a result, some of the projects that are designated in Muscogee County may actually be located in another county.