Foundation Document Overview
Horseshoe Bend National Military Park
Alabama

Contact Information
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Significance statements express why Horseshoe Bend National Military Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Horseshoe Bend National Military Park is the only unit of the national park system east of the Mississippi River protecting the site of a battle between U.S. forces and an American Indian tribe. The battle resulted in the greatest loss of life for American Indians in any single battle in U.S. history.

- The decisive battle cost the Creek Nation approximately 23 million acres of their homeland, which eventually led to the creation of the state of Alabama and contributed to the expansion of the young United States.

- The events at Horseshoe Bend established the national prominence of Andrew Jackson as a military leader and ultimately, president of the United States.

- The village sites of Tohopeka and Newyaucau, together with the battlefield, present an exceptional venue for interpreting the history and stories of the Creek people in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

- The victory at Horseshoe Bend and other American victories gave leverage to the U.S. negotiators during the 1814 Treaty of Ghent, leading to a status quo ante bellum agreement. (return to pre-war conditions).
**Fundamental Resources and Values**

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- the battlefield (encompassing the barricade site, Tohopeka village site, Lemuel Montgomery gravesite, Bean’s Island, the Tallapoosa River, and areas on the other side of the river)
- battle-related artifacts in the museum collection
- battle-related archeological resources
- nonbattle-related archeological resources associated with Creek culture
- Tohopeka Village site
- Newyaucau Village site
- Congressional Monument and Jackson Trace marker

Horseshoe Bend National Military Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- Miller’s Bridge Piers
- archeological resources unrelated to the battle or to Creek culture
- artifacts in the collection unrelated to the battle or to Creek culture
- archival materials
- Mission 66 Visitor Center
- the historically prevalent natural and cultural landscape (during the period of significance/period of the battle)
- opportunities for recreation, wildlife viewing, and water-based recreation
- night sky

**Interpretive Themes**

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- On March 27, 1814, a mixed force of militia, army regulars, and allied Cherokee and Creek warriors under the command of Andrew Jackson attacked and defeated the fortified Red Stick (Upper Creek) encampment of Tohopeka located in the Horseshoe Bend of the Tallapoosa River. This battle marked the watershed moment for the Creek Nation. For American citizens, however, it was the beginning of a new era of opportunity and growth in the Old Southwest (the current Southeast).
- Key figures in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend such as Chief Menawa, Sam Houston, Andrew Jackson, William McIntosh, and John Ross voiced differing views of frontier life. Words and deeds reflect the spectrum of views—Indian separatists, racial hatred, betrayal, cultural cooperation, and Indian removal—and illustrate the unresolved differences that brought about human suffering, tragedy, and war culminating at Horseshoe Bend.
- The town site of Newyaucau and campsite at Tohopeka provide a unique opportunity to understand Creek culture (1790–1820). This includes social organization (clan), tribal government, food ways and subsistence, family life, the role of women in Creek culture, and the changes that occurred within Creek society following European American contact.
- The Battle of Horseshoe Bend is essential to understanding the complexity of the Creek tribal war that took place between 1812 and 1814. The camp of Creek (Red Stick) warriors at Tohopeka and their broken barricade symbolize the broken power of the Creek Nation in the Old Southwest.
- Local commemorative efforts to preserve Horseshoe Bend National Military Park saved the critical natural resources highly depended upon by the Creek Indians and sought after by early settlers.
Horseshoe Bend National Military Park was established in 1959 to preserve and protect the site of the last major battle of the Creek Indian War (1813–1814). Horseshoe Bend is the only unit of the national park system east of the Mississippi River that protects the site of a battle between the U.S. military and an American Indian tribe.

On March 27, 1814, a mixed force of militia, army regulars, and allied Cherokee and Creek warriors under the command of Andrew Jackson attacked and defeated the fortified Red Stick (Upper Creek) encampment of Tohopeka, located in the Horseshoe Bend of the Tallapoosa River. The battle was the culminating event in a civil war between the Red Sticks, who wished to maintain tribal independence and continue traditional trading ties to Great Britain, and the rest of the tribe, which favored allying with and assimilating into the growing United States of America. This internal conflict reflected the much larger conflict between the U.S. and Great Britain that had led to the War of 1812.

In addition to the battlefield, the park protects two Creek habitation sites, Newyaucau and Tohopeka. The Creeks named the town of Newyaucau in honor of New York City, New York, where in 1790 the newly established U.S. government resided temporarily. There Creek chiefs met with President George Washington and agreed to a treaty establishing territorial boundaries between the United States and the Creek Nation, with a promise that these boundaries would remain in perpetuity. Tohopeka was located on the peninsula of land created by the bend in the Tallapoosa River. This encampment is where Creek warriors and their families prepared for what would be the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.

The battle marked a watershed moment for the Creek Nation. More American Indian lives were lost at Horseshoe Bend than in any single battle with U.S. troops in the history of the United States. The battle contributed to the forced emigration of the Creek people from their southeastern U.S. homeland to Indian Territory (Oklahoma). Before the battle the Creek Nation had controlled much of present-day Alabama and part of Georgia. Afterward, they were forced to cede approximately 23 million acres, more than half of their territory, to the United States.

For American settlers, the battle was the beginning of a new era of opportunity and growth in the Old Southwest (the current Southeast). The battle also figured importantly in the outcome of the War of 1812. In preparing for battle at Horseshoe Bend, military forces built supply routes through the area, making key resources available to victorious U.S. forces at the Battle of New Orleans, the final engagement of the War of 1812. The victory at Horseshoe Bend made Andrew Jackson a national hero and contributed to his eventual election as president of the United States.

The park comprises 2,040 acres, mostly undeveloped. The visitor center includes an interpretive video, museum exhibits, a bookstore, and a visitor information desk. Experiences available to visitors include a three-mile paved loop road through the battlefield, two picnic facilities, a boat ramp for access into the Tallapoosa River, and the 2.8-mile Battlefield Nature Trail.