



Failed National Park Proposals in “Sweet Home Alabama”

Lary M. Dilsaver and Joe Weber

Among the U.S. federal land agencies, the National Park Service (NPS) has the sternest legal duty to preserve the natural and historical resources of the country while providing education and inspiration to the people. This mandate, now firmly part of the agency’s culture, is only exceeded by designated wilderness areas some of which are within national parks (Dilsaver 2016, 34, 245–54). The units in the national park system must preserve and exhibit compelling resources of interest to the entire country’s people. Many proposed areas fail to pass inspection due to a lack of this “national significance” or for other problematic qualities. The following essay analyzes that procedure in one state—Alabama—to

L. M. Dilsaver (✉)

Department of Earth Sciences, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL,
36688, USA

e-mail: ldilsaver@southalabama.edu

J. Weber

Department of Geography, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401, USA

e-mail: jweber2@ua.edu

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature
Switzerland AG 2024

111

J. Weber and S. Sultana (eds.), *The Changing Geography of National
Parks and Protected Areas*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-74653-6_6

explain the review process, the decisions made by the NPS, and what they reveal about the culture of preservation and the agency's political and procedural agendas.

After summarizing the growth of the national park system and explaining how the NPS evaluates a proposal, we introduce the status of federal and state parks in Alabama and list 72 places that failed to be added to the list of national units. We break down the proposed sites by type and then answer four questions: Who proposed them? Why did they fail? What subsequently happened to them? And what does this mean for the preservation of culture in the state and nation? We append a list of the documents and files from which we drew the names and data on the 72 failed proposals.

The first national park in the United States, and in the world, was Yellowstone established on March 1, 1872. Thirty-four more parks and monuments followed before Congress passed the National Park Service Act on August 25, 1916. This "Organic Act" organized the extant parks and monuments into a system and brought order to the process of identifying potential additions. Congress and most presidents have added hundreds of new units while facing a continuous stream of proposals for new units from political officials and private citizens. In March 2024 the American national park system consisted of 429 units spread across all 50 states and most territories.

In Alabama, the national park system roster includes six historic sites, two recreation corridors, and one natural preserve (Fig. 6.1). Five of them were established after 1982. Alabama's total of nine is roughly the average number of units for each state in the country. At the next level of preservation, Alabama has 25 state parks and the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) manages another 14 structures (Encyclopedia of Alabama 2022). This might lead to a comfortable assumption that the state's heritage is well preserved. Does this reflect a commitment to preservation among Alabamians in environmental and historic preservation? What other Alabama sites might have been included in the national park system to educate and inspire the populace? The answer to this question can be found by looking more deeply into the NPS experience in the state. Gaining inclusion in the elite national park system is difficult and each state has fielded more proposals that failed than ones that succeeded. Our research in Park Service archives has turned up records for 72 sites in Alabama that somebody thought worthwhile for the national system, but which failed to make the grade (Fig. 6.2). Analysis of these proposals

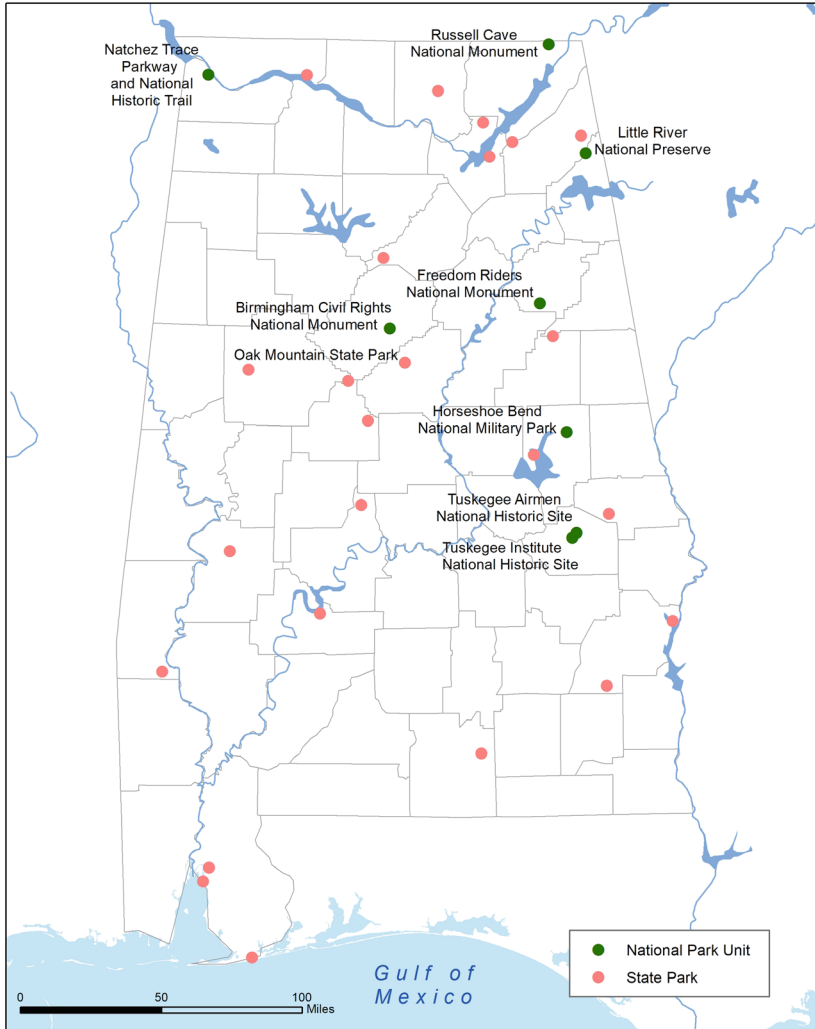


Fig. 6.1 State and national parks in Alabama. *Source* Authors

illuminates much about the natural and historical resources in the state, why so many proposals failed, and what became of them.

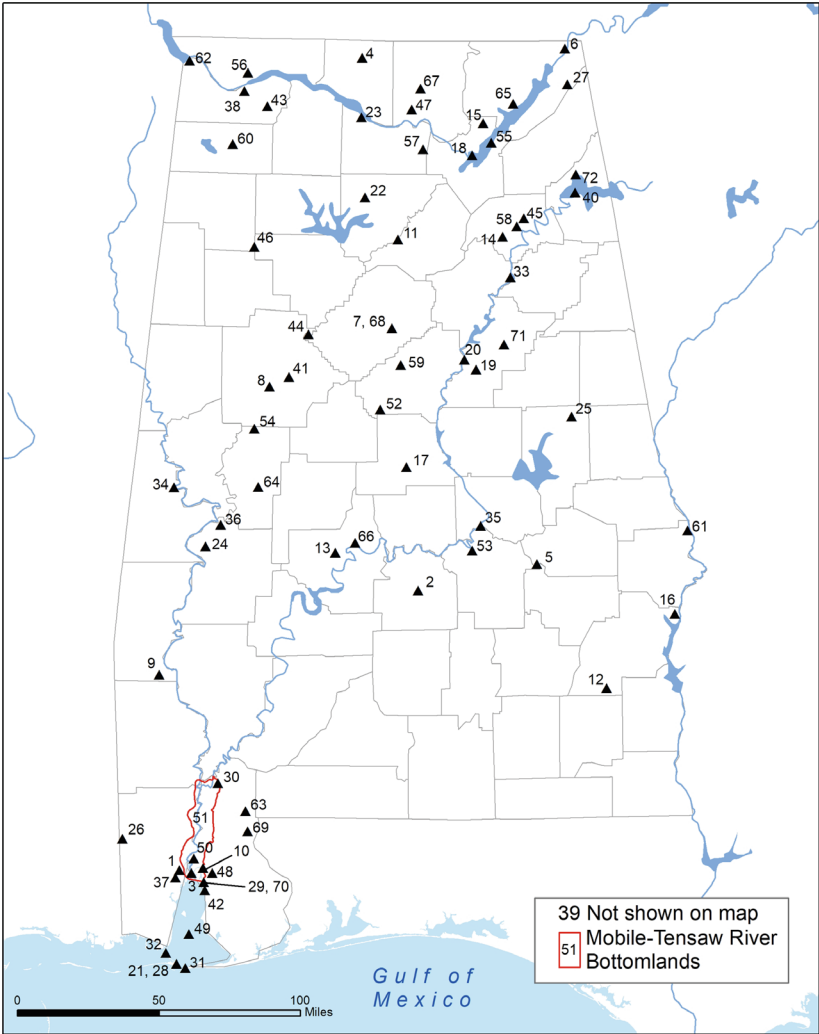


Fig. 6.2 Proposed national parks that failed in Alabama. *Source* Authors

THE HISTORY OF PARK-MAKING

The history of post-1916 park-making in the United States is divided into four periods. The earliest spanned the years from 1916 to the end of World War II. NPS Director Stephen Mather's vigorous campaign to popularize the parks led government officials and ordinary citizens to propose many new sites across the nation. Park Service officials deemed many of these proposals either lacking in importance to the entire country or excessively focused on outdoor games and recreation. Mather co-hosted the country's first conference on state parks in 1921, hoping to foster secondary systems to meet the recreation needs of the country (Conard 1997, 28–43). During the 1930s, when Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps funds and labor were available, Park Service planners helped state and local officials develop hundreds of parks that did not qualify for the national park system. Ironically, the National Park Service's leadership in state and local recreation planning ultimately led Congress to order the agency to identify outdoor recreation sites for the national system (Unrau and Williss 1983, 106–28).

The Park Service also developed a system of natural and historic themes to guide the search for places that best represented each scientific or historical category. Proposing a unit that filled a niche in the thematic framework let the NPS justify it to Congress. Director Horace Albright, lead field investigator Roger Toll, and anthropologist Clark Wissler helped design the first set of historic themes, while geographer Nevin Fenneman's map of physiographic regions in the United States became an analytical tool for measuring the worth of natural resource sites. Although these evaluative categories were in use by the late 1920s, the Park Service issued its first full thematic framework in 1936 (Fenneman 1916, 261–353; Wirth 1980, 163–66). With Depression-era funds and its thematic framework in hand, the National Park Service undertook large-scale studies with the expressed purpose of identifying the best of each category. Nearly a third of Alabama's park proposals came during the 1930s.

The end of World War II initiated a second period during which meager funding slowed the addition of new parks to the system. Nevertheless, the Park Service continued to study both new and repeat proposals, often with private financial backing. The importance of filling out a representative system of resources grew as funds remained limited. Although Mission 66 temporarily boosted appropriations, the bulk of the

money went to new administrative and visitor infrastructure. Criticism of Director Conrad Wirth's focus on development coincided with a surge of environmentalism and with the release of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission's reports. The latter spurred more interest in recreation areas, rivers, trails, and parkways (Wirth 1980, 237–84; Carr 2007, 289–338).

The combination of these upheavals in the National Park Service's focus and management led to the third period of park-making from the early 1960s through 1980. The agency issued new appraisals of the national park system thematic framework and its quotient of representation in 1972. In the natural history plan the Park Service divided the country into 41 natural regions based on Fenneman's physiographic map and devised 31 geological and ecological themes that meshed to create a large matrix of almost 450 distinct resource categories. Only half of these were represented by the existing units within the park system (USDI 1972b).

The complexity of the history plan meant that the Park Service and Congress had much more work to do to represent the nation's cultural heritage. The plan highlighted nine major themes that were subdivided into 43 subthemes. These subthemes in turn were further divided into 281 historical "facets" that needed to be represented if the park system were to be "truly representative of the country's national heritage." NPS officials determined that the historic parks then in the system represented only 32% of the identified facets (USDI 1972a). Congress then passed P.L. 94–458 in 1976 which mandated that the Park Service use Land and Water Conservation Fund money to propose at least twelve new parks per year. Overall, the years of President Jimmy Carter's administration rivaled the 1930s for the number and variety of new parks proposed.

The arrival of the Reagan administration in 1981 curtailed this bonanza of park proposals and ushered in the fourth period of park-making. Budget-conscious legislators ordered Park Service planners to carry out only proposed park studies authorized by Congress in 1998 (Public Law 105–391). In response, the Park Service produced a new set of thematic plans that reflected a more realistic appraisal of the existing units of the national park system plus two decades of new parks added specifically to address gaps in the system. The 1990 natural plan shows that nearly all the natural resource themes are now included in the system. The agency's 1996 history framework focuses on thematic gaps in the system and stresses their representation within existing parks wherever

possible. The historical parks authorized since the early 1980s include the history of women, minorities, and themes like labor history, arts and literature, and architecture (NPS 1990).

To determine a site's worthiness the NPS developed three basic criteria for judging proposed units. The first and foremost is “national significance.” Though qualitative and subjective, the question that a new area must satisfy is, “How important is the resource to the entire nation?” This includes both its level of interest to the American people and whether it is the best representation of a historic or natural resource theme. Field investigation teams are staffed with senior Park Service specialists to reduce subjectivity as much as possible. Agency experience has always counted heavily in proposed area surveys. When ordered to evaluate a potential national seashore, one field team member asked for further explanation of the concept. His supervisor responded that he would know it when he saw it (Everhart 1998). Sites that are “not of national significance” are rejected as unqualified.

The second criterion is feasibility. Regardless of its significance, a proposed park that will cost too much for land acquisition or meet intense local opposition is not considered feasible. The third criterion is suitability. A proposed park should not duplicate resources already in the park system. In addition, a proposed park is not deemed suitable if there is a question about the historical or ecological integrity of the site or if the site is not accessible to the public. In recent years, a de facto fourth criterion has been added by Congress: Can the resource be protected and available to the public by another government agency or private organization? Budget-conscious legislators worry about the costs of an expanding park system (Smith 2003).

Alabama's National Park Units

The nine NPS units in Alabama include one natural preserve (Little River Canyon National Preserve), six historic sites (Birmingham Civil Rights NM, Freedom Riders NM, Horseshoe Bend NMP, Russell Cave NM, Tuskegee Airman NHS, Tuskegee Institute NHS), and two recreation corridors (Natchez Trace National Trail and Natchez Trace National Parkway). Five were established after 1982. The 72 failed sites cover a wide variety of places and purposes. Analysis of the fates of these proposals illuminates what cultural, political, or economic elements led to their disapproval. Five questions can be asked to better understand the history

of Alabama's proposed parks: (1) What kinds of areas have been proposed within the state? (2) Who proposed these areas for national park status? (3) Why did the NPS reject or ignore these areas? (4) What has happened to these sites? (5) What do these failed parks and their ultimate fates tell us about how preservation works in Alabama and the United States?

WHAT KINDS OF AREAS HAVE BEEN PROPOSED IN ALABAMA?

NPS units preserve three types of resources—natural, historical, and recreational. Many parks contain all three types of resources, but nearly all have a dominant purpose that led to their establishment. Like most eastern states, Alabama's 44 proposed historical sites account for the majority (61%) of all submissions. This is close to the ratio of six historical NPS units among the state's total of nine. Eighteen areas nominated for recreational use make up another 25%. Ten natural resource areas or 14% are in the smallest category, although they include what many argue is the single most important resource in the state. Most proposals were made during the early years from 1916 through the end of World War II in 1945. The NPS fielded 53% of all the failed proposals in Alabama, while only the multistate Natchez Trace National Parkway joined the system during this period. Many of the failures were repeatedly nominated without success.

Historical Sites

Five types of historical sites explain the influential events of the state—Native American vs. Euro-American battlefields, Civil War forts and battlefields, areas important to minority peoples, places with economic development stories, and sites associated with extraordinary individuals. Two wars that took place in Alabama dominate the state's historical memory—the United States v. Creek War and the Civil War. Early in the nineteenth century, a Red Stick Creek contingent, led by William Weatherford, fought to maintain their land and way of life under pressure from white settlers. On August 30, 1813, a force of 700 Red Sticks, attacked 400 Americans, Indian allies including other Creeks, and slaves at a fortified plantation called Fort Mims. Over several hours they massacred some 250 men, women, and children. The outrage felt by white frontier settlers led Andrew Jackson and volunteers from Tennessee and elsewhere to engage in a string of battles at Emuckfaw, Fort Strother, Fort Tombebee,

Talladega, and finally Horseshoe Bend. The last of these destroyed the Red Sticks and forced the Creeks to cede over 21 million acres (8,498,398 hectares) of land. The treaty was signed at Fort Toulouse which was located on the ruins of an earlier French fort. All these locations were nominated as potential park units, but only Horseshoe Bend, a part of the national park system since 1956, was successful. The Park Service judged the other proposals not feasible because they lacked the remaining infrastructure to interpret, not suitable because Horseshoe Bend was so much more important, or in the case of Fort Toulouse, not of national significance (Encyclopedia of Alabama [2022](#)).

An earlier fight involving Europeans and Native Americans occurred on October 9, 1540, when Spanish troops exploring what are now the southern U.S. states encountered Chief Tuscaloosa at his fortified village called Mabila (or Maubila). Hernando de Soto landed near Tampa, Florida in 1539 with approximately 600 men, plus weapons, horses, and supplies. Searching for gold, pearls, and other treasure while demanding food, porters, and “comfort women” for his soldiers, the conquistador traveled a long path through Georgia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee, before crossing Alabama (Fig. [6.3](#)). Tuscaloosa and his warriors knew what to expect and attacked some of the visiting Spanish inside the stockade. A massive battle ensued which killed 20 Spanish troops and injured more than 150. They also lost most of their equipment including religious materials. Nevertheless, the armored and horse-riding Spaniards killed approximately 2500 Indians. It stands as the worst defeat for Native Americans in U.S. history. It also broke the Spanish expedition and led to De Soto’s death near the Mississippi River (Knight [2009](#)).

The episode has led other explorers, historians, geographers, and archaeologists to embark on a centuries-long search for the exact site of Mabila. No trace was found by two later sixteenth-century Spanish expeditions, and the location remains unknown. Vernon Knight ([2009](#)) called it the Holy Grail of archaeological mysteries in the Southeast. Recent research by archaeologist Ashley Dumas along the border between Marengo and Sumter Counties has uncovered multiple pottery sherds and bits of Spanish metal from that period, but no definite trace of a burned stockade (Tutor [2024](#)). The hunt will continue.

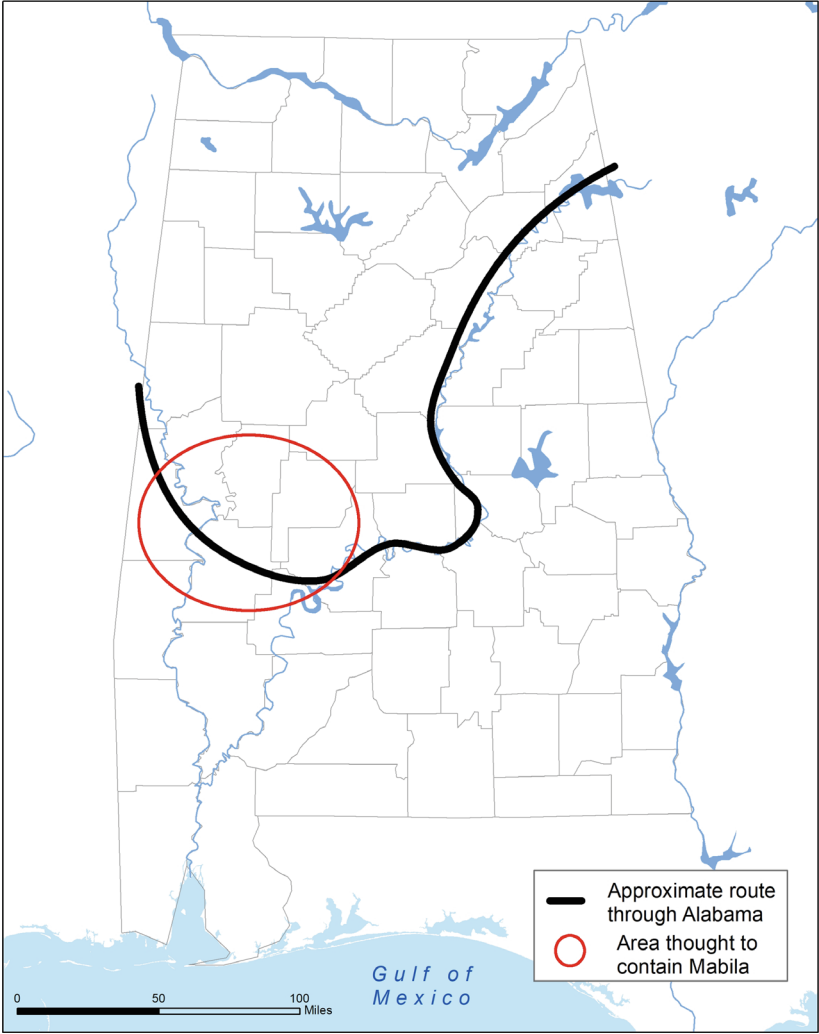


Fig. 6.3 De Soto's route and the area where chief Tuscaloosa resided at Mabila.
Source Authors

Civil War Sites

If there is one event that still lives in the minds of many people in Alabama it is the Civil War. Fifteen battle sites and forts make up 21% of the total proposals in the state. The majority were proposed before World War II showing a decline as the people who remembered it passed away. Some occurred in the northeastern part of the state, but the most important Civil War battles in Alabama took place in and around Mobile Bay. The city of Mobile was one of the last open ports of the Confederacy. Union forces hoped to shut down trade and further cripple the Southern economy. In addition, President Abraham Lincoln was running for reelection and faced challenges due to war-weariness. A critical victory was necessary to improve morale. On August 5, 1864, Admiral David Farragut led four ironclads and more than a dozen wooden ships into the bay uttering the famous command, “Damn the torpedoes [mines], full speed ahead!” At the same time Union troops attacked Fort Gaines on Dauphin Island, a ramshackle earthen Fort Powell on the mainland north of the island (Fig. 6.4), and Fort Morgan on the eastern peninsula across the mouth of the bay. Once in the bay and having lost the ironclad USS *Tecumseh* to a “torpedo,” Farragut’s fleet met a Confederate ironclad and a few other ships. Three hours of pounding finally forced the armored CSS *Tennessee* to surrender. A few days later the forts at the mouth of the bay also surrendered (Fig. 6.5). Farragut’s victory in Mobile Bay was one of the badly needed Union victories that ensured President Abraham Lincoln’s reelection in November (American Battlefield Trust 2024).

The land campaign to take Mobile occurred from April 2–9, 1865 as Union commanders looked to wipe out remaining Confederate forces in the deep south and stop their production of Confederate arms. Union troops moved north from the coastal forts along the eastern shore of Mobile Bay toward Confederate defenders at Spanish Fort, arriving there on March 27. CSA forces only numbered about 3000 men but had artillery firing on Union gunboats from a hill called Fort McDermott (Fig. 6.6). They held out against the much larger Union army until the Spanish Fort fell on April 8. Union General Edward Canby concentrated 16,000 men for the attack on nearby Fort Blakeley the following day. After a brief fight, Union troops breached the Confederate breastworks and trenches compelling the defenders to surrender. As the victorious troops approached Mobile from the east, city fathers surrendered to avoid



Fig. 6.4 Fort gains in 1935 when the NPS investigated it. *Source* NPS—HABS/HAER files

destruction. Around 5000 African Americans played a major role in the successful Union assault. The capture of Fort Blakeley was the last important battle of the war, fought the same day Robert E. Lee surrendered his army at Appomattox (American Battlefield Trust 2024).

All the sites named here were proposed as units of the national park system, including the individual-named forts as well as the naval battle in the Bay. Had these sites been added they would have been a unique collection in the park system, focusing on the Bay rather than a single battlefield.

Many other small skirmishes were fought in northern and eastern Alabama, but the NPS rated all the Civil War battle sites including those at Athens, Battery Hill, Days Gap, Decatur, Lookout Mountain, Montgomery, Phoenix City, and Selma as either not of national significance or not suitable because of better examples in the system. One last proposed war-related site was 37,000-acre (14,973 hectares) Camp Sibert, a World War II chemical warfare training base in Etowah and St. Clair Counties.



Fig. 6.5 An 1865 map of the mobile bay civil war battles. Drawn by Robert Sneden. Source Library of congress

Mayor J. H. Meighan of Gadsden proposed it with support from Senator Lister Hill. The NPS inspected it in 1945 and found it not suitable, presumably because of the traces of its former activity.



Fig. 6.6 Fort McDermott in Spanish Fort. Photo by Lary Dilsaver

Sites Commemorating Black and Native American History

In 2019 divers discovered the remains of the *Clotilda*, the last ship to carry African slaves to the United States. It was deliberately sunk in the Mobile River by its owners after they illegally smuggled the captives into the area in 1860. The Africans settled near the town of Prichard just north of Mobile on land that became an industrial zone. At a hearing in April 1983, Mayor John H. Smith of Prichard sought historic preservation for the community and memorialization of the plight of the Africans and their descendants. However, the Park Service responded that there were no “site, buildings, or objects of national significance” and that the area had no historical integrity. Hence, it lacked suitability. Subsequent discovery of the ship’s burned timbers has not renewed the proposal.

The NPS files list two other proposals for African American sites. A multistate proposal for Historical Black Colleges is a funding program that does not propose a specific place for the system. The Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area is an enormous swath across the middle of the

state where rich soils led to a plantation economy that relied upon Black workers. The region still has a substantial population of their descendants and many civil rights events have occurred there. National heritage areas are large regions filled with many private and other government components that are managed by committees of stakeholders including the NPS.

The agency considered three archaeological sites representing Native Americans other than existing system units Russell Cave and Horseshoe Bend. South of Tuscaloosa is Moundville managed by the University of Alabama (Fig. 6.7). Located on the Black Warrior River, the park preserves an 800-year-old, 326-acre (132-hectare) village site where Mississippian people constructed 29 massive flat-topped earthen mounds surrounding a large central plaza. They served as elevated platforms for civic and ceremonial structures and the homes of nobles. The state acquired the property in 1933 before the NPS could act. Eight years later, after remedial work by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the NPS Advisory Board, created by the Historic Sites Act of 1935, declared that it was nationally significant. The state did not release it. In the delta, at the head of Mobile Bay, is a smaller set of 18 mounds. Hazel Council, a member of the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs, partially owned the property and proposed it in 1939. The Park Service declared that it was not feasible due to a lack of funds for its purchase. The third historical native site lay on the Coosa River close to the purported De Soto Trail. Despite support from Senator Hugo Black, the NPS deemed it not to have national significance in 1935.

Sites of Economic Importance

In addition to the Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area, another heritage area at Muscle Shoals and one still under consideration along the Chattahoochee River were studied by the NPS. NHAs are not technically part of the park system although the agency proposes, studies, and co-manages them. The NPS investigated a third one based on 600 coal and steel sites in and around Birmingham in 1991 and found it to be not suitable. Seven other places of economic or transportation renown included two plantation houses, Gaineswood in Demopolis (Fig. 6.8) and the home of naval hero, congressman, and prohibitionist Richmond P. Hobson in Greensboro; industrial complexes Sloss Furnace in Birmingham (Fig. 6.9) and Old Cedar Creek, the first iron mill in the state;



Fig. 6.7 A portion of the Moundville site. *Source* The George F. Landegger collection of Alabama photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America, library of congress, prints and photographs division

the remains of the Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia Railway; NASA's Man in Space facilities at Huntsville; and finally LaGrange College, the first site of higher education in the state now controlled by its descendant the University of North Alabama. The National Park Service found Gainesville not suitable and all the rest not of national significance.

Historical Individuals

Four sites celebrate extraordinary individuals who lived or acted within Alabama. The earliest was naturalist and artist William Bartram who traversed much of the South collecting biological data and specimens in the mid-1770s. He began in Philadelphia and journeyed for 4 years to reach the Mississippi River. His work informed the world about the ecological diversity and richness of the region. He also contacted and gathered data about the Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw peoples. His pathway is well known and portions including a canoe trail in



Fig. 6.8 Gaineswood plantation home. *Source* NPS—HABS/HAER files

Alabama celebrate his accomplishments. Local Bartram Trail Groups worked through the Bartram Trail Conference to push the government to investigate the matter. Public Law 94-527 in 1976 ordered the NPS to study it along with seven other candidates for addition to the National Trails System. Although the agency admitted that a few segments were worthwhile, it found the entire proposal not feasible.

A second heroic person was General Andrew Jackson who not only fought Red Stick Creeks across the state but passed near Mobile Bay on his way to face the British in New Orleans. Allegedly he stopped in 1814 to address his troops under a massive oak tree on the eastern shore of the bay. Henceforth it has been known as the Jackson Oak. The NPS in the mid-1930s and others have wondered if the story is true and the agency declared that it did not have national significance.

Chronologically, the third was CSA General Braxton Bragg who led armies to one dubious and heavily criticized win at Chickamauga and



Fig. 6.9 Sloss furnaces near Birmingham. *Source* The George F. Landegger collection of Alabama photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America, library of congress, prints and photographs division

many defeats before and after that. Ultimately, Jefferson Davis relieved him of command. He was roundly hated by other officers and his men who suffered inordinate casualties in those battles. After the war, the North Carolina native moved to Mobile where his brother owned a house. He left after a few months and the home was later bought by the Mitchell family. The 1970 proposal suggested the architecture of the now-named Bragg-Mitchell House might be worth an addition to the system. The NPS understandably disagreed and noted its lack of significance.

The final notable figure was blind and deaf Helen Keller whose fame rests on her conquest of these disabilities and subsequent social and political action. Famous for her own writings and the film "*The Miracle Worker*," she championed efforts to improve the treatment of the deaf and the blind and co-founded the American Civil Liberties Union. Congressman Robert E. Jones proposed the house in 1949 after the town of Tuscumbia took over its upkeep (Fig. 6.10). The NPS Advisory Board turned it down because the policy is not to establish a site until the



Fig. 6.10 The home of Helen Keller in Tuscumbia. Photo by Jennifer Lee. *Source* Wikipedia. Rescaled to 300dpi. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>

person has been dead for 25 years. Keller died in 1968 but no action has followed.

Recreation Sites

The history of Alabama’s state parks began in 1927, when the Alabama legislature passed the State Land Act which ordered the development of state parks and the administration of other state lands. In 1939, a newly established Alabama Department of Conservation established Cheaha, the first state park, near the south end of the Appalachian Mountains. The goal in acquiring and establishing these parks was to “preserve wild areas and provide recreational opportunities.” Activities such as camping, boating, fishing, and hiking are encouraged and everything from hotels to golf courses can be found in some of them. Many are smaller than

two square miles (518 hectares) and were strategically placed near population centers. Alabamians and their legislators suggested 17 recreation spots for the national park system. Most were water-oriented occurring on rivers (Black Warrior, Cahaba, Connors Island, Coosa, Escatawpa, Hog Island, Lake Bankhead, Murphy Hill, Pickwick Lake, and Soldier Creek), beside springs (Blount and Blue), or along the coast (Dauphin Island). Two proposals sought full national park status for larger areas including Chilton County and Oak Mountain/Shelby County. Most of the rest were small places that the state wanted to fill out its recreation matrix for locals (Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 2014).

Natural Resource Sites

The Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands, established in 1984 as a National Natural Landmark, has had the fullest support of the NPS and can easily meet the criterion of national significance as a national park or preserve. In 1979 the agency conducted a study to determine what options for its management were available. A cost/benefit analysis rated it second highest as an NPS unit. The analysts admitted that it was for economic savings that it did not receive the highest overall score. Since that study, the proposal has appeared consistently on nearly every list submitted by the NPS with its highest recommendation. It is a large area stretching from the confluence of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers through the distributaries of the two named rivers to Mobile Bay. Harvard University entomologist and Pulitzer Prize winner Edward O. Wilson described the Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands while participating in a recent campaign to make it a national park:

The greater Mobile-Tensaw River area, containing the Delta and the Red Hills immediately to the north, is both uniquely beautiful and one of the least known natural areas in America. Although located on the flat Gulf of Mexico plain, its habitats match—or exceed—in diversity those in any of America’s established national parks...Because of the great variety of the habitats in which they live, and their still mostly undisturbed condition, the fauna and flora of the greater Mobile-Tensaw River area may well be the most diverse of comparable geographical areas in North America. The 28 + species of oaks in the Red Hills, for example, is evidently a national record. The number of turtle species is one of the highest in the world. The full roster of plants and animals includes many endangered

species. Others are certain to exist still unknown to science (Waselkov et al. 2016, xix).

Chief Wildlife Biologist Greg Plumb (Waselkov et al. 2016, 7, 9) from the NPS Biological Resources Division, who co-edited a second much larger NPS study of the area in 2016, added:

It has been over 40 years since the Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands was championed by Alabama citizens and scientists as an area of national significance leading to National Natural Landmark designation. Since this designation, Alabama conservation agencies, Alabama academic scientists and scholars, Alabama public and private conservationists, and popular media have continued to highlight the extraordinary values and characteristics of the Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands as a place of local, regional, national, and international significance... It is an important habitat for wildlife, and the vastness of the delta and its limited accessibility continues to support its basic integrity.

In the same 2016 document, environmental reporter Ben Raines (Waselkov et al. 2016, 151–54) pointed out that the state leads the nation in aquatic diversity, but “ranks as the king of extinctions for aquatic creatures, responsible for roughly half of all extinctions that have occurred in the continental US since the 1800s.” He explained further,

Obviously, a state cannot forever wear both the crown for most aquatic diversity and the crown for most extinctions. Unfortunately, the current political climate in the state suggests the scale may be tipping toward more extinctions. The Alabama Legislature has provided zero funding to the state’s environmental agency, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, for the last several years. And Alabama ranks dead last among the 50 states in terms of money spent on environmental protection.

So, what happened? By 2018 Alabama congressmen and senators had backed away from support for the initiative and it quietly disappeared from the legislative scene. Some portions of the area are protected by state agencies and The Nature Conservancy (Fig. 6.11).

Other natural resource sites include Nocalula Falls, four underground sites (Blount Springs Caverns, Cathedral Caverns, Shelta Cave, and Newsome Sinks Karst Area), Mallard Creek, the Splinter Hill Pitcher Plant Bog (Fig. 6.12), and two 1930s proposals for large national parks named Alabama Forest north of Mobile and Scottsboro or Crockett and Jackson, west of Huntsville. The last two vaguely bounded tracts fell to advancing settlement and economic development.



Fig. 6.11 A quiet stretch of the mobile-Tensaw rivers bottomlands. *Source* The George F. Landegger collection of Alabama photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America, library of congress, prints and photographs division (DLC/PP-2010:090)

WHO PROPOSED THESE SITES FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM?

NPS files often list the identities of those who proposed new units, but many of them are the last of a long trail of unnamed enthusiasts. In seven files where only the site's name is supplied, the proposers remain unknown. The people who proposed new national park system units did so as individuals or members of private organizations. Local citizens or interest groups suggested 20 of them. Another 11 came from Alabama members of Congress, no doubt responding to such unnamed citizens or interest groups. Among identified sources, chambers of commerce suggested 10 places, various levels of state or local government eight, scientists or historians three, the official Civil War Commission three, congressional votes four, and the NPS six. The 1930s saw a vigorous cluster of proposals including ten by Mobile's Chamber of Commerce or city commissioners. Chamber members John Glennon or Herbert Brown



Fig. 6.12 Splinter Hill Pitcher plant bog in Northern Baldwin county. Photo by Robin Dilsaver

signed eight of the initiatives and Congressman Frank Boykin (in office 1935–1963) added his approval to seven of them. Most were Civil War sites around the bay. Senator Hugo Black (serving from 1927 to 1937) and Congressman Tom Bevill (in office 1967–1997) particularly sought approval for recreation sites. Bevill sponsored a meeting between the NPS, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the AHC to investigate six places in northern Alabama including Cathedral Caverns, Connors Island, Coosa River, Hog Mountain, Murphy Hill, the Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia Railway, and Little River Canyon. The latter became an NPS unit in 1992 while all the others failed. The sequence of actions behind a proposal by the NPS to investigate a site can also remain unknown. Park units in the system usually identify the backers of its campaign for establishment in their administrative histories, but there is no reason for the details of those that fail to remain in the files.

WHY DID THE PARK SERVICE REJECT THESE AREAS?

The NPS cited all four criteria for judging national park proposals to reject the 72 failed sites. The agency ranked 43 of the 72 as not of national significance. Many were recreation sites. The Alabama Department of

Conservation and Natural Resources notes that more than 80% of the money to finance its state parks comes from visitor use fees, donations from chambers of commerce, civic organizations, city and county governments, cigarette taxes, and federal funds. The low amount provided by the state government is a point of pride. This explains the paucity of state parks and why other sites are sought by the national system to increase recreation opportunities without incurring more expense (Encyclopedia of Alabama 2022).

The NPS declared 23 places not feasible due to lack of funds for acquisition, intense opposition, or a dearth of public and congressional support. The Escatawpa River flows from southeast Mississippi to Mobile Bay and was proposed for the Wild and Scenic River category. People living along its course aggressively opposed this as did the governors of both states. Even when the Park Service first welcomes a proposal, an inspection can reveal problems. Mobile County's Dauphin Island faced this in the 1930s and again in the late 1960s. The NPS first rebuffed the barrier island as a recreation area while supporting one for Santa Rosa Island in nearby Florida. Later during the successful campaign to establish Gulf Islands National Seashore, it was part of the chain of barrier islands stretching from Florida to Cat Island in Mississippi. Settlement had covered the eastern half of Dauphin Island, but kilometers of low beaches lay westward. Nevertheless, the NPS abruptly dropped it from the plan not long before the seashore's authorization. Areas described as not suitable either duplicated existing resources in the system or were more appropriate as national heritage areas with their complex patterns of ownership and management.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE AREAS?

The overwhelming majority of Alabama's proposed places remain in private ownership or are a mix of private and local or state government holdings. Thirty-four are entirely private. Bladon Springs, Blakeley, Cathedral Caverns, Fort Morgan, and Oak Mountain are state parks while seven others are official AHC sites. Four are parts of local parks. Jackson Oak is in Daphne's Village Point Park Preserve while Sloss Furnace is in Birmingham, Montevallo in the town of the same name, and Noccolula Falls in Gadsden. A few other attractions such as the Helen Keller Home are privately managed but receive local or state government financial assistance. The protection level for all these places varies from excellent

in the larger state parks to good in the eight that are recognized as national natural or historical landmarks or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Thereafter the picture becomes unclear to the poor. The Mobile Bay Naval Battle and nearby Fort Powell are underwater and have no hope of in-place recognition.

CONCLUSION: WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS FROM ALABAMA'S 72 FAILED PARKS?

We have summarized the growth of the NPS and its means of adding new units to the system, we have reported what areas were proposed, who did so, why they failed and what happened to most of them. During the research for this article, some people have questioned the authors' motive for focusing on places that did not pass the test to be national park units. What can we learn from these stories of failure? In business, marriages, and most other human activities a lot can be learned from analyzing failure. The data in Alabama adds to a growing understanding of how preservation works in the United States. Two stories are evident from the analysis of Alabama's park proposals. First, most of the nominated sites judged by NPS standards were not of national significance. Is Alabama unusual in this pattern? Earlier work done on California and Montana indicates it is not. Both of those states had five to seven times as many failed proposals as the ones that joined the system (Dilsaver 2008; Dilsaver and Wyckoff 2009). When the natural resources of Alabama are compared to the rivers, waterfalls, caves, and forests of the national park system they are clearly inferior. Although a lot of history has happened in the state, the level of importance for most could not overcome the agency's suitability or feasibility criteria. Many of this country's 7000 Civil War battles and skirmishes took place in the state, but only the Naval Battle of Mobile Bay came close to the significance level of Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Antietam, and a half dozen others. Multiple battle sites where Euro-Americans and Native Americans fought were either peripheral to Horseshoe Bend National Military Park or, in the case of Fort Mims, do not have any structural remains to interpret. Many other historical sites were and are significant to the state but cannot compete with the compelling impact of places in other regions that draw visitors from across the nation. The problem for Alabama and for the thousands of proposals in every other state is that the national park system has the highest possible membership bar to cross.

The other story is determining whether something in the culture of Alabama's people and government affected the success rate. Was it a lack of motivation among the public and politicians to aggressively campaign for truly worthy places? Environmentalists might say yes. The Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands is an example of an overqualified natural resource being ignored due to an unwillingness to lose private usage opportunities and a lack of commitment by elected officials. The preservation statistics Ben Raines brandishes are factual. Some people hold a disdain for federal government influence. Alternatively, some of the Alabama places proposed to the NPS still draw interest, have public support, and would be outstanding parks or monuments. Three come immediately to mind. The Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands should not just slip into back files. It is a site of international importance, and the United States will fail in its environmental mission if it does not give it the highest protection. The Mabila site on the trail of De Soto should be included once it is located. The biggest-ever battle between Europeans and Native Americans is a critical historical resource. A third site surrounds Mobile Bay. Every proposed fort or battlefield in the area failed, but the naval battle was decisive militarily and politically. The NPS needs to select somewhere to interpret and teach that story, perhaps along with the state in one of its parks or as another component of Mobile-Tensaw River National Park.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors have no conflict of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this chapter.

APPENDIX 1: TABLE OF PROPOSED PARKS

See Table [6.1](#).

APPENDIX 2: CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF SOURCES FOR PROPOSED ALABAMA UNITS

The Office of Planning and Special Studies of the National Park Service in Washington D.C. offers the primary archival data for our study. Unfortunately, some records are poorly maintained, and others have been discarded with personnel changes. However, the planning office has

Table 6.1 List of 72 proposed national park units in Alabama

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
1	Africa town	H	1980, 1983	Mayor of Prichard John H. Smith through Senator Howell Heflin	S	Private
2	Alabama Black Belt	H	2009	NPS; Bill introduced by Senator Debbie Strabenow, D-Michigan	Sig	Private
3	Alabama Forest National Park	N	1935, 1941	Mobile city commissioners through Senator Hugo Black	Sig	Private
4	Athens Battlefield	H	1933	Civil War Sites Advisory Commission	S	Private
5	Bartram Trail	R	1982	Local Bartram Trail groups	F	Mixed private and government
6	Battery Hill Park	H	1939	Unknown	F	Private
7	Birmingham District Heritage Corridor	H	1993	Birmingham Historical Society	S	Mainly private, some local government
8	Black Warrior River	R	1963	John K. Bradley, Southern Timber Management Service, Inc	F	Army Corps of Engineers
9	Bladon Springs	N	1934	Proposed by local citizens through their Congressman John McDuffie	Sig	State park

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
10	Blakeley National Historic Site	H	1936, 1941, 1947	John Glennon of Mobile forwarded by Rep. Frank Boykin	Sig	State park
11	Blount Springs Caverns	N	1953	Proposed by W. T. Morgan through Congressman Carl Elliott	Sig	Private
12	Blue Springs	N	1935	Local resident P. F. Whigham	Sig	Private
13	Cahaba River	R	1979	Congress	Sig	Mixed private and government
14	Camp Sibert (or Silbert) including Noccalula Falls	H	1945	Mayor J. H. Meighan of Gadsden proposed through Senator Lister Hill	S	Private
15	Cathedral Caverns	N	1964, 1980	Unknown, but possibly former owner Jacob Gurley after his financial woes	S	State park
16	Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor	H	2009	Congress	F	Private
17	Chilton County	R	1940	Local farmer wanted to sell 8600 acres	Sig	Private
18	Connors Island	R	1982	Congressman Tom Beville	Sig	TVA and private

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
19	Coosa	A/ H	1933, 1941	Senator Hugo Black was interested in a Coosa Historical Sites National Monument of 10,000 acres and introduced legislation to no avail	Sig	Private
20	Coosa River	R	1989	Congressman Tom Bevill urged several studies in 1988	Sig	Private and state
21	Dauphin Island	R	1936, 1940, 1956, 1979	John Glennon of Mobile forwarded by Congressman Frank Boykin	Sig	Mixed state and private
22	Day's Gap Battlefield	H	1993	Civil War Advisory Commission	Sig	Private
23	Decatur Battlefield	H	1993	Civil War Sites Advisory Commission	Sig	Private
24	De Soto Trail and Mabila	H	1938, 1940	Walter Jones and many historians, archaeologists, and others	F	Private
25	Emuckfaw	H	1958	Unknown	S	Private

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
26	Escatawpa River	R	1984	NPS nominated for a wild and scenic river designation	F	Private
27	Flat Rock	H	1930s	Unknown	Sig	Private
28	Fort Gaines	H	1935, 1936, 1399	Herbert C. Brown, Mobile Chamber of Commerce; John F. Glennon of Mobile forwarded by Congressman Frank Boykin	Sig	State historic site
29	Fort McDermott	H	1935, 1941	Nominated with Old Spanish Fort (possibly by Herbert Brown, president of Mobile Chamber of Commerce)	Sig	Privately-owned reserve
30	Fort Mims	H	1936, 1970, 1992	John F. Glennon of Mobile Forwarded by Congressman Frank Boykin; Archaeologists in 1975; Congressman Sonny Callahan in 1992	F	State historic site

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
31	Fort Morgan	H	1935, 1939	John F. Glennon of Mobile Forwarded by Congressman Frank Boykin 1936; Mobile Chamber of Commerce	F	State historic site
32	Fort Powell	H	1937	Mobile Chamber of Commerce	F	Destroyed (underwater)
33	Fort Strother	H	1937, 2019	Original unknown; November 2019 Calhoun County Commissioner Eli Henderson sent U.S. Senator Richard Shelby asking for federal protection	S	County
34	Fort Tombecbee	H	1939, 1959	Congressman Peter Jarman	F	State University
35	Fort Toulouse (also called Fort Jackson)	H	1941, 1961	Congressman Kenneth Roberts	Sig	State park
36	Gaineswood	H	1940	Local resident Mrs. W. M. Steele	F	State historic site
37	General Bragg Home	H	1970	Unknown. Proposed for National Register	Sig	Private
38	Helen Keller Home	H	1949	Congressman Robert E. Jones, Jr	S	City historic site

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
39	Historic Black Colleges	H	1988	NPS	Sig	State and private colleges
40	Hog Island	R	1982	Congressman Tom Bevill	Sig	TVA, private
41	Holt Reservoir	R	1971	Alabama Historical Commission	Sig	Army Corps of Engineers
42	Jackson Oak	H	1936	John F. Glennon of Mobile forwarded by Congressman Frank Boykin	Sig	City park
43	LaGrange College	H	Before 1957	Local committee and university	Sig	University
44	Lake Bankhead	R	1939	Unknown	Sig	Army Corps of Engineers
45	Lookout Mountain	R	Late 1930s, 1991	NPS	Sig	Private, Alabama Power, state and local parks
46	Mallard Creek	N	1938	Eldridge Wildlife and Conservation Club	Sig	Private
47	Man in Space	H	1984	NASA, Congress, NPS Advisory Board	F	NASA
48	Mobile Bay Eastern Shore	H/ R	1934	Congressman John Lister Hill and R. B. Vail, editor of <i>Baldwin Times</i>	Sig	Private, state park
49	Mobile Bay Naval Battle	H	1943, 1947, 1993	NPS; Civil War Advisory Committee	F	Mobile Bay

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
50	Mobile Bay Shell Mounds (also called Bottle Creek Mounds)	H	1939	Hazel Council, Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs	F	State Historical Site, NHL
51	Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands (including Tensaw River and Swamp and Mobile Delta)	N	1960, 1972, 1974, 1979, 1981 until 2016 repeatedly	Scientists, NPS	F	State and private
52	Montevallo Area including Jarmin NP	R	1937	F. H. Hardy wrote a letter to the NPS	Sig	Private and city park
53	Montgomery National Historic Site including First Confederate White House and Liberty Hall	H	1935	Mrs. Minnie-Reese Elmore Richardson	F	Private
54	Moundville	A/ H	1941, 1965	Unknown	F	State University
55	Murphy Hill	R	Ca. 1982	Congressman Tom Bevill	Sig	TVA, other federal
56	Muscle Shoals	H	2001	Congressman Robert Cramer	F	Mixed private, state, federal, Natural Heritage Area
57	Newsome Sinks Karst Area	N	1973	Unknown	Sig	Private
58	Noccalula Falls	N	1947	NPS	Sig	City park
59	Oak Mountain Recreation Demonstration Area	R	1936, 1942	Congressman Pete Jarman	Sig	State park
60	Old Cedar Creek Furnace	H	Early 1930s	Unknown	Sig	Private

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
61	Phenix City (Ingersoll Hill Battlefield)	H	1935, 1979	State of Georgia passed a resolution calling for a national park in the area in 1935; Phenix City Historical Preservation Society in 1979	Sig	Private
62	Pickwick Lake	R	1935	Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage	Sig	TVA and private
63	Pitcher Plant Bogs	N	1980	State government	F	Private (TNC)
64	R. P. Hobson House	H	1970	Unknown	Sig	State historical site
65	Scottsboro, also called Crockett and Jackson NP	H	1966	O. P. Bouldin of Jackson County Forestry Service	F	Mixed local, state, and private lands also including Russell Cave National Monument
66	Selma Battlefield	H	1937, 1993	Congressman Sam Hobbs 1937; Civil War Sites Advisory Commission 1993	F	Private
67	Shelta Cave	N	1984	G, Michael Clark and Henry R. DeSelm letter to NPS	Sig	Private
68	Sloss Furnaces	H	1976	HABS/HAER (NPS)	Sig	City park

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
69	Soldier Creek	R	1984	Congressman Jack Edwards	Sig	Private
70	Spanish Fort	H	1934, 1947, 1989, 1990, 2000	Herbert Brown President of Mobile Chamber of Commerce 1934; John F. Glennon of Mobile 1936 through representative Frank Boykin; Mobile Chamber of Commerce 1940; David Denney 1989	Sig	Private and local government

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

#	Name	Res.	Proposal date(s)	Proposal source (s)	Reason	Current status
71	Talladega or Talladego	H	1931, 1935	G. T. McElderry wrote a letter to NPS 1934; in 1940 Women's Chamber of Commerce of Talladega urged consideration via Senator Bankhead of a Historical Park of 300,000 acres to commemorate several battles between 1812 and 1814	F	Primarily private
72	Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia (TAG) Abandoned Railway	R	Early 1980s	Jim Martin, Alabama Commissioner of Conservation and Natural Resources, aides of Congressman Tom Bevill and TVA officials	Sig	Private

Res. Indicates resource type: N = natural, R = recreational, H = historic, A = archaeological. Reason refers to why the park was not accepted: S = not suitable, Sig = not significant, F = not feasible

compiled lists of proposed areas periodically. The most comprehensive lists from 1934, 1957, 1980, and 1988 can be found in that office's general files, at the National Archives in Suitland, Maryland, or the National Park Service archives in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The latter has lists, specific site reports, and other related materials. Other sources include the Congressional Record, the *Federal Register*, archives at individual NPS units, as well as place-specific published articles and National Park Service reports. Some lists and files were able to supply answers to the questions posed above, while others offer only the name of a proposed park.

1. 1934. "Park Planning, Facilities and Lands, Subset F Proposed Areas," NPS Harpers Ferry Center, Proposed Areas Files, Box-Series III, Roger Toll Chart of Inspections, Loose files., *Coosa Historical*
2. 1934. "Proposed Areas," NPS Harpers Ferry Center. L58 Shelf 2, Box containing two reports to Director Horace Albright, ca. 1930 from Arno Cammerer and H.L. Brooks plus a long, detailed list of > 150 proposed areas nationwide. *Coosa Historical, Talladego*
3. 1935-41. NARA, RG 79, Appendix 2, Entry 10, Box 3020, "Proposed National Historic Sites, Alabama, 1935-41." *Fort Tombecbee, Mound Park, Old Spanish Fort, Jackson Oak, Blakeley, Fort Mims, Dauphin Island, DeSoto-Mabila, Fort Gaines, Fort Morgan, Mobile Bay Shell Mound, Coosa Archaeological Site, Battery Hill Park, Flat Rock, Fort Strother, Old Cedar Creek Furnace, Selma Battlefield.*
4. 1935-42. NARA, RG 79, Appendix 2, Entry 10, Box 2922, "Proposed National Parks Alabama, 1935-46." *Spanish Fort, Fort Morgan, Fort Gaines, Battle of Mobile Bay, Alabama Forest, Montevallo, Blue Springs, Lookout Mountain, Pickwick Lake, Mallard Creek, Crockett & Jackson NP (near Scottsboro), Shelby County*
5. 1937, October 23. NARA, Central Classified Files (601), Box 376, Part 5, "Land Acquisition Program Recommended for Historic Sites," *DeSoto-Mabila, Mound Plantation and Sites on the Natchez Trace, Oak Mountain*
6. 1938-47. NARA, RG 79, Appendix 2, Entry 10, Box 2979, Proposed National Monuments, "0-35 Alabama, 1935-47." *Camp Silbert, Chilton County, Dauphin Island, Fort Toulouse, Spanish Fort*

7. 1939. NARA, RG 79, Appendix 2, Entry 10, Box 2939, "Alabama Proposed National Parks, Lake Bankhead, 1939." *Lake Bankhead*
8. 1947, August 29. "Proposed Additions to the National Park System." NPS Harpers Ferry Center, L58, Box 1 and loose files. > 200 proposed areas nationwide. *Alabama Forest, Bladen Springs, Camp Sibert, Coosa hist, Fort Gaines, Fort Morgan, Fort Powell, Mobile Bay Eastern Shore, Mound State, Noccalula Falls, Old Spanish Fort, Phenix City, Talladega*
9. 1949, July 28. "Suggested Area Resumes Region One," Ibid. > 100 proposed units. *Blakeley, Fort McDermott, Fort Toulouse, Gaineswood, Helen Keller Home, Mallard Creek, Scottsboro, Shelby County, Talladega*
10. 1957, January. "Suggested Area Resumes," NPS Harpers Ferry Center, Proposed Area files, including a long and detailed list of > 200 proposed areas. See binder: *Alabama Forest, Bladen Springs, Blakeley, Blount Springs Caverns, Camp Sibert, Coosa Hist Mon, Dauphin Island, Fort Gaines, Fort Morgan, Fort Powell, Fort Toulouse, Gaineswood, Home of Helen Keller, LaGrange College, Mobile Bay, Moundsville, Phenix City, Scottsboro, Shelby County, Talladega*
11. 1958. Edmund Rogers, "Index to Proposals in Congress to Establish National Areas," USDI, NPS. *Fort Toulouse*; For commemorations only *Blakeley, Ft. Mims, Talladega Battle, Emuckfaw war w/ Creeks*
12. 1964. U.S. Department of the Interior, NPS, "Parks for America," (Washington D.C.: GPO). *Fort Toulouse*
13. 1964. "National Park System Plan Studies and Reports, Reject List," NPS Harpers Ferry Center, Proposed Area files, Loose reports 7F72. *Cathedral Caverns. Black Warrior River, Fort Toulouse*
14. 1965, January 18. "National Park System Plan," NPS Harpers Ferry Center, Proposed Area Files, Theodore Swem files. *Moundsville historic*
15. 1970. "The Colonial Period in American History, Suggested Sites and Site Types," NPS Harpers Ferry Center, L58, Box 1. *Fort Mims, General Bragg Home, Montgomery National Historic Site, R. P. Hobson House in Greensboro*

16. 1972, June 8. "Authorized and Proposed National Park System Areas," Harpers Ferry Center, Proposed Additions to NPS files, L58. > 150 proposed areas, NPS. *Oak Mtn, Cathedral Caves, Holt Reservoir, Tensaw River Swamp (part of Mobile-Tensaw Bottomlands)*
17. 1974, May 15. Memorandum Acting Chief Scientist, Science Center to Associate Director, Legislation, "Suggested new areas of the NPS-Advisory Board recommendations," Ibid. *Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands*
18. 1978, January. "Process for Addition of New Areas to the National Park System," NPS Planning Office, Washington D.C., File-New Area Studies Correspondence 1976-. *Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands*
19. 1978, September. "Briefing Statement New Area Study Program," Ibid. *Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands*
20. 1978, November 7. Memorandum Acting Chief, Special Programs Division to Manager and Assistant Managers, Denver Service Center, "New Area Study Program and Omnibus Bill Studies Responsibilities," Ibid. *Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands*
21. 1980. "Master List of Proposed National Parks," NPS Harpers Ferry Center, L58," Long list of > 200 proposed areas nationwide. *See binder, Africatown, Cathedral Caverns, Dauphin Island, Newsome Sinks Karst Area, Pitcher Plant Bogs*
22. 1980, July 16. Memorandum Director NPS to Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, "1980 Section 8 Studies," Ibid. *Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands w/data*
23. 1981. "Suggested New Natural Area Units for the National Park System.," NPS Planning Office, Washington D. C., File-New Unit Theme Studies. *Newsome Sinks Karst Area, Mobile River Delta*
24. Early 1980s. Letter Regional Director Baker to NPS Director, "Resource Assessment-Coosa River Area," NPS Planning Office, Washington D. C., File-New Unit Theme Studies, *Cathedral Caverns, Coosa River, Connors Island, Hog Island, Murphy Hill, Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia Railroad*
25. 1982. Richard H. Goodwin and William A. Niering. "Inland Wetlands that Might Warrant Further Study for Possible Inclusion in the National Park System," Ibid. *Mobile River Delta*

26. 1984, May 25. Letter G. Michael Clark and Henry R. DeSelm to Arthur Stewart, Acting Chief National Landmarks Branch, "Natural Landmark Sites." Ibid. *Cathedral Caverns, Shelta Cave*
27. 1984, June. NPS, "Final Wild and Scenic River Study, Escatawpa River," Harpers Ferry Center Library. *Escatawpa River file*
28. 1988, March 21. "New Areas Study Inventory," Long list of > 200 proposed areas nationwide. NPS Harpers Ferry Center, L58. *Dauphin Island, Fort Toulouse, Man in Space, Mobile Tensaw Bottomland*
29. 1989, August 9. Regional Director, SE Region to NPS Director, "Resource Assessment-Coosa River Area," NPS Planning Office, Washington D. C., Proposed Area Files. *Coosa River*
30. 1990. "New Area Studies and Authorizations 1970–1990," NPS Planning Office, Washington D.C., New Area Studies Misc.—Inventory files. *Dauphin Island, Man in Space, Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands*
31. 1991, January 16. Memorandum James Ridenour to Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, "Follow up with OMB on New Unit Study Criteria," Ibid. *Dauphin Island, Man in Space, Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands*
32. 1993, July 10. Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, "Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields," Submitted to Congress, July 10, 1993. Financed by the NPS. *Mobile Bay, Blakeley, Fort Morgan, Day's Gap, Athens, Selma, Spanish Fort, Decatur*
33. 1993, August 30. "New Area Study Inventory," NPS Planning Office, Washington D.C., New Area Studies Misc.—Inventory file. *Bartram Trail, Birmingham District Heritage Corridor, Dauphin Island, Fort Toulouse, Mobile-Tensaw River Bottomlands*
34. 1998, February 18. "NPS Special Resource Studies Fiscal Years 1989–1998," Ibid. *Birmingham District Heritage Corridor*
35. 2000. "Special Resource Study Inventory," Ibid. > 475 proposed areas nationwide. (Only names) *Africatown, Bartram trail, Birmingham District Heritage Corridor, Coosa River, Dauphin Island, DeSoto Trail, Fort Toulouse, Historic Black Colleges, Man in Space, Mobile Tensaw River Bottomlands, Old Spanish Fort, Sloss Furnaces*
36. 2007, December. Patrick Gregerson, "Special Resource Studies and Other Authorized Studies-Briefing to the Director NPS," NPS Planning Office, Washington D.C., New Area Studies Misc.—Inventory files. *Muscle Shoals (data on industry and music)*

37. 2016. Ibid., Box 8, “Mounds in Lower Baldwin County.” *Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor, Muscle Shoals*
38. 2016, July. “National Park Service Authorized Studies and Reconnaissance Surveys,” NPS Planning Office, Washington D. C., Digital Release, July 2016. *Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area*
39. 2023, May 5. NPS Agency (NPS) History, “Proposed Parks,” (Agency (NPS) History) *Alabama Black Belt, Bartram Trail, Black Warrior River, Blakeley, Cahaba, Cathedral Caverns, Chattahoochee River, Coosa Historical, Man in Space, Mobile-Tensaw Bottomlands, Montgomery Historical, Newsome Sinks Karst, Soldier Creek, Spanish Fort, Talladega*

NARA = National Archives and Records Administration

*NARA records are indexed in E. E. Hill and R. M. Jaussaud, “Inventory of the Records of the National Park Service Record Group 79,” NPS, 2007. Author Dilsaver collected most of the Alabama data at NARA in Suitland, Maryland in 2016 and 2019.

REFERENCES

- Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. 2014. *Alabama state parks: A reflection on 75 years of public service*. <https://www.alapark.com>
- American Battlefield Trust. 2024. *Mobile bay*. <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/civil-war/battles/mobile-bay> Accessed February 23, 2024.
- Carr, Ethan. 2007. *Mission 66: Modernism and the national park dilemma*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Conard, Rebecca. 1997. National conference on state parks: Reflections on organizational genealogy. *The George Wright Forum* 14 (4): 28–43.
- Dilsaver, Lary M. 2008. Not of national significance: Failed national park proposals in California. *California History* 85: 4–23.
- Dilsaver, Lary M. 2016. *America’s national park system: The critical documents*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Dilsaver, Lary M., and William Wyckoff. 2009. Failed national parks in the last best place. *Montana: the Magazine of Western History* 59: 3–24.
- Everhart, William. 1998. Telephone interview by Lary Dilsaver, July 23.
- Fenneman, Nevin M. 1916. Physiographic divisions of the United States. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 6 (1): 19–98.

- Knight Jr., Vernon James, ed., 2009. *The Search for Mabila: The Decisive Battle between Hernando De Soto and Chief Tascalusa*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- National Park Service. 1990. *Natural history in the national park system and on the national registry of natural landmark*. Natural Resource Report NPS NR NRTR-90 03.
- Plumb, Greg E., 2016. A brief history of the mobile-Tensaw river bottomlands national natural landmark. In: Gregory A. Waselkov, C. Fred Andrus, Glenn E. Plumb, *A state of knowledge of the natural, cultural, and economic resources of the greater Mobile-Tensaw River area*. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/BRD/NRR—2016/1243.
- Raines, Ben. 2016. Modern cultures of the mobile-Tensaw delta. In: Gregory A. Waselkov, C. Fred Andrus, Glenn E. Plumb, *A state of knowledge of the natural, cultural, and economic resources of the greater Mobile-Tensaw River area*. Resource Report NPS/NRSS/BRD/NRR—2016/1243.
- Smith, Brenda. 2003. *National park service U.S. department of the interior criteria for parklands*. National Park Service Web Template Accessed March 8, 2024.
- Tabor, Nick. 2023. The forgotten 1980s battle to preserve Africatown. *Smithsonian Magazine*, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-forgotten-1980s-battle-to-preserve-africatown-180981641>. Accessed March 1, 2024.
- The Encyclopedia of Alabama: Geography and Environment. 2022. Alabama humanities alliance and auburn university. Geography & Environment—Encyclopedia of Alabama Accessed February 20, 2024.
- Tutor, Phillip. 2024. UWA's Dr. Ashley Dumas and students help find Chief Tuskaloosa's territorial province. <https://www.uwa.edu/news/the-hunt-for-mabila/>. Accessed March 1, 2024.
- U. S. Department of the Interior, NPS. 1972a. *Part one of the national park system plan: History*. Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office.
- U. S. Department of the Interior, NPS. 1972b. *Part two of the national park system plan: Natural history*. Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office.
- University of Alabama, 2024. *Moundville archaeological park*. <http://moundville.museums.ua.edu/about/>. Accessed March 1, 2024.
- Unrau, Harlan D. and G. Frank Williss. 1983. *Administrative history: Expansion of the national park service in the 1930s*. NPS Denver Service Center.
- Waselkov, Gregory A., C. Fred Andrus, Glenn E. Plumb. 2016. *A state of knowledge of the natural, cultural, and economic resources of the greater Mobile-Tensaw River area*. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/BRD/NRR—2016/1243.
- Wirth, Conrad. 1980. *Parks, politics, and the people*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.