

NATURAL RESOURCES



OUR NATURE-RICH HOME

MISSISSIPPI'S DIVERSITY EXTENDS AS MUCH TO HER NATURAL RESOURCES AS TO THE CULTURALLY RICH DIVERSITY OF HER PEOPLE.



*Alex Littlejohn, State Director, Mississippi
The Nature Conservancy*

“It’s like an outdoor paradise,” said Alex Littlejohn, State Director of The Nature Conservancy. “You can leave the foothills of Pickwick Lake ... travel through the rolling hills of North Mississippi that were William Faulkner’s back porch ... roll into the flatlands of the Delta, through cypress lakes and oxbow lakes ... then backtrack through the Black Prairie region down through the pine hills of central Mississippi and on down to the Coast, and you’ve just seen six or seven different landscapes inside one state. It’s just incredible!”



Natural beauty abounds. And the opportunities to enjoy it are almost limitless.

“You can catch a small mouth bass off Yellow Creek Waterfall up in Iuka, and within a matter of hours be on the opposite end of state catching redfish and trout – all inside the state boundaries,” said Littlejohn.

By and large, Mississippians feel tied to the land – and waters – of our nature-rich home. It’s evident in everything from our agricultural-based economy to our vast contributions to the arts. The fertile soils of the Mississippi Delta yield crops, yet they are also “The Birthplace of America’s Music.” Writers, artists, singers, songwriters ... all manner of talent has sprung forth from Mississippi’s influential natural resources.

“People don’t realize that timber is our number-one export, not cotton,” said Littlejohn. “As an agricultural state, the health of our economy is tied directly to the health of natural resources. Our state can only benefit by efforts made and pride taken in our natural resources.”

Our river systems are unmatched. The Mississippi River is the third-largest river in the world, and the Pascagoula River is the largest undammed, unaltered, free-flowing river in the continental U.S.

“People need to realize the incredible opportunities we have here and take advantage of them,” said Littlejohn. “All our coastal streams ... the Wolf River, Little Biloxi, Big Biloxi ... the barrier islands off the Coast – from Ship Island all the way to Cat Island – it’s just gorgeous. People need to visit these places, right here in our own backyard.”



“Mississippians have always held a strong sense of place, because no matter where we each end up in life, most of us will always call Mississippi our home.”

Alex Littlejohn | Mississippi State Director | The Nature Conservancy



NATURAL RESOURCES

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MISSISSIPPI'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Mississippi can be divided into five broad geographical regions: the Delta region in northwest Mississippi, the Hills region in north Mississippi, the Pines region in east-central Mississippi, the Capital/River region from Jackson to Vicksburg to Natchez, and the Coastal region in south Mississippi along the Gulf Coast. The state's physiographic divisions include 10 distinct landform regions: the Tombigbee Hills, the Black Prairie, the Pontotoc Ridge, the Flatwoods, the North Central Hills, the Loess Hills, the Yazoo Basin, the Jackson Prairie, the Pine Hills, and the Coastal Meadows.

The state has 119 public lakes, 123,000 stream miles, and 255,000 freshwater acres. Additionally, the state has 16 major aquifers supplying over 90 percent of Mississippi's drinking water. Mississippi has six major reservoirs: Pickwick Lake on the Tennessee River, Arkabutla Lake near Coldwater, Sardis Lake near Oxford, Enid Lake in Yalobusha County, Grenada Lake near Grenada, and the Ross Barnett Reservoir to the northeast of Jackson.

More than 19 million acres of forestland cover almost 65 percent of the state, of which almost 80 percent is privately owned. The remainder is public land including a network of state parks, state wildlife management areas, and six national forests – Bienville, DeSoto, Homochitto, Delta, Holly Springs, and Tombigbee. This public land represents 1.2 million acres dedicated to recreation and wilderness protection.

The forestry industry is a national model of sustainable forest management. Mississippi was the first state in the nation to establish a reforestation tax credit to encourage landowners to replant after harvest, and was also the first to create a statewide forest inventory using remote-sensing satellite imagery to calculate the size and diversity of forestlands.

The state's namesake, the Mississippi River, runs along the western boundaries of Mississippi. The river and its tributaries continually deposit rich alluvial soil throughout the Mississippi Delta, resulting in agricultural industry that contributes to Mississippi's economy.

Mississippi's white-sand beaches along the Gulf Coast draw millions of visitors annually, in addition to the state-conserved Coastal tidelands and barrier islands.

There are more than one million acres of public hunting lands in Mississippi, including 15 National Wildlife Refuges and 53 state wildlife management areas representing a wide variety of habitats.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

1505 Eastover Dr., Jackson 39211

(601) 432-2400

www.mdwfp.com

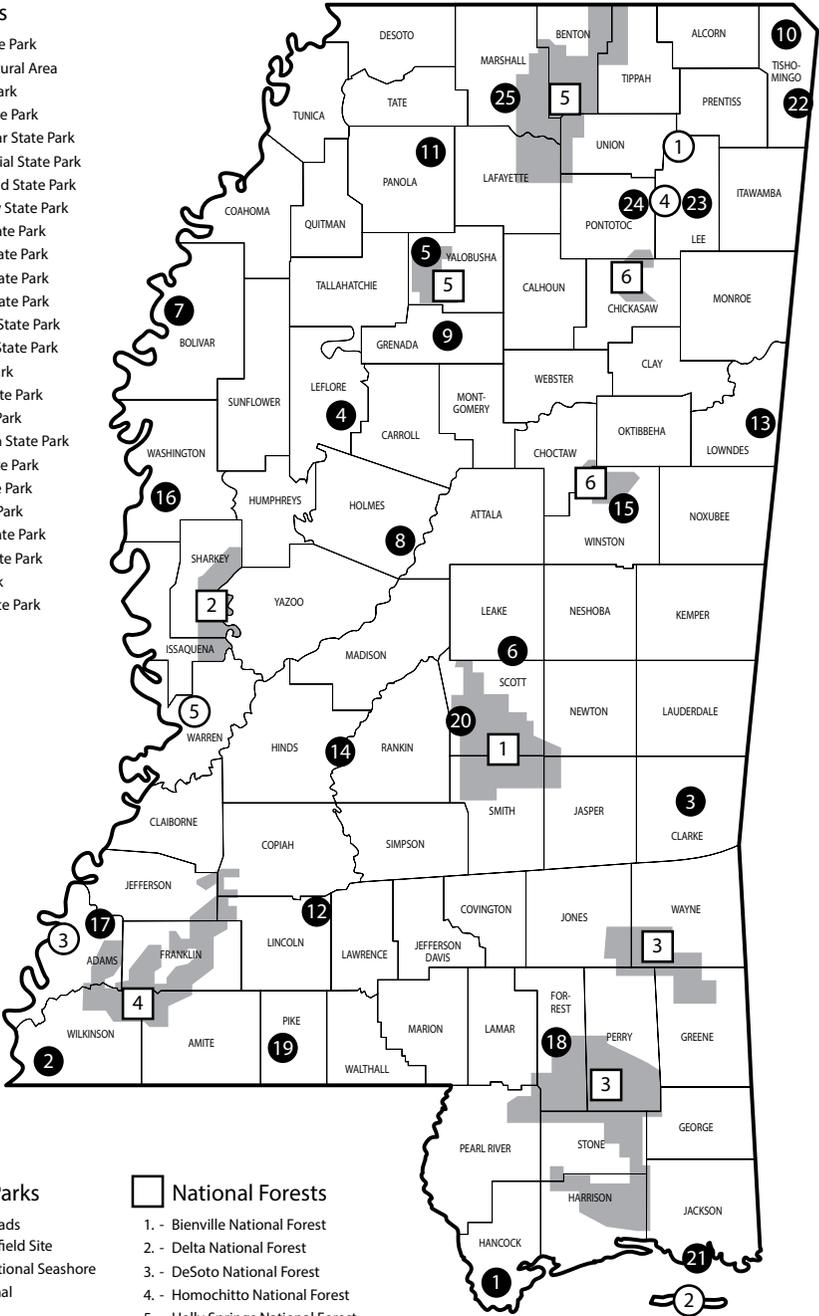
The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks oversees all Mississippi state parks, which offer amenities including fishing, camping, hiking, recreational facilities, and fully furnished cabin rentals. The 25 state parks stretch from the Tennessee border to the Gulf of Mexico. The MDWFP also is responsible for programs that protect Mississippi fish and wildlife resources and their habitats.

The Agency issues hunting and fishing licenses, advises on habitat protection and sponsors public education programs. The Department is also responsible for the enforcement of Mississippi's fish and game laws.

STATE PARKS, NATIONAL PARKS, AND NATIONAL FORESTS

● State Parks

1. - Buccaneer State Park
2. - Clark Creek Natural Area
3. - Clarkco State Park
4. - Florewood State Park
5. - George P. Coszar State Park
6. - Golden Memorial State Park
7. - Great River Road State Park
8. - Holmes County State Park
9. - Hugh White State Park
10. - J.P. Coleman State Park
11. - John W. Kyle State Park
12. - Lake Lincoln State Park
13. - Lake Lowndes State Park
14. - LeFleur's Bluff State Park
15. - Legion State Park
16. - Leroy Percy State Park
17. - Natchez State Park
18. - Paul B. Johnson State Park
19. - Percy Quin State Park
20. - Roosevelt State Park
21. - Shepard State Park
22. - Tishomingo State Park
23. - Tombigbee State Park
24. - Trace State Park
25. - Wall Doxey State Park



○ National Parks

1. - Brices Cross Roads National Battlefield Site
2. - Gulf Islands National Seashore
3. - Natchez National Historical Park
4. - Tupelo National Battlefield Monument
5. - Vicksburg National Military Park

□ National Forests

1. - Bienville National Forest
2. - Delta National Forest
3. - DeSoto National Forest
4. - Homochitto National Forest
5. - Holly Springs National Forest
6. - Tombigbee National Forest

MISSISSIPPI STATE PARKS

Buccaneer State Park

1150 S. Beach Blvd., Waveland 39576
(228) 467-3822

E-mail: buccaneerstatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: Do not follow GPS; Call office for directions

Buccaneer was beautifully restored in November 2013, after being completely destroyed from Hurricane Katrina. There are 206 RV campsites and 70 additional campsites overlooking the Gulf of Mexico, as well as a waterpark, nature trail, playground, disc golf course, activity building, and picnic area.

Clark Creek Natural Area

366 Ft. Adams Rd., Woodville 39669
(601) 888-6040

Location: 13 miles west of Woodville off Hwy. 24 at the Pond Community

Area: Park 700 acres

Clark Creek Natural Area is one of Mississippi's most beautiful outdoor areas. A nature trail with about 50 waterfalls is available for hiking, bird-watching, etc. Since the terrain is physically demanding, no camping, facilities or other amenities are available.

Clarkco State Park

386 Clarkco Rd., Quitman 39355
(601) 776-6651

E-mail: clarkcostatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 5 miles north of Quitman on U.S. Hwy. 145

Area: Park 815 acres/Lake 65 acres

Clarkco is situated on 65-acre Clarkco Lake. Marked nature trails, lighted tennis courts, large picnic pavilions, a visitor's center with meeting rooms, and much more are available. Clarkco has 43 RV campsites, seven primitive camping pads, one vacation cottage and 20 cabins with individual piers.

Floewood State Park

1999 CR 145, Greenwood 38930
(662) 455-3904

Operated by Leflore County Board of Supervisors.

George P. Cossar State Park

165 CR 170, Oakland 38948
(662) 623-7356

E-mail: cossarstatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 8 miles east of Oakland off Mississippi Hwy. 32

Area: Park 836 acres

Cossar is situated on the shores of Enid Lake. Cossar has 16 cabins and 76 RV campsites, as well as a disc golf and miniature golf course, nature trail, playground, picnic area, and non-denominational Sunday worship services in the summer.

Golden Memorial State Park

2104 Damascus Rd., Walnut Grove 39180
(601) 253-2237

Location: On Mississippi Hwy. 492, five miles east of Walnut Grove off Mississippi Hwy. 35

Area: Park 120 acres/Lake 15 acres

Golden Memorial is managed as a day use only park. It has picnic tables, grills, two picnic pavilions, nature trails and a spring-fed lake stocked with bass and bream. The Loblolly Trail houses the second largest loblolly pine tree in Mississippi.

DAY USE ONLY

Great River Road State Park

101 State Park Rd., Rosedale 38769
(662) 827-5436

Location: In Rosedale off Mississippi Hwy. 1, 35 miles north of Greenville

Area: Park 756 acres/Lake 25 acres

Located on the Mississippi River, Great River Road State Park is managed as a day use only park and operated by the

City of Rosedale. A new playground area is available, as well as a boat launch for fishing.

DAY USE ONLY

Holmes County State Park

5369 State Park Rd., Durant 39063

(662) 653-3351

E-mail: holmescounty@mdwfp.state.ms.us

Location: 4 miles south of Durant off I-55, Exit 150

Area: Park 537 acres/Lake 59 acres

The most centrally located of the state parks, Holmes County has two fishing lakes, cabins and 28 campsites, as well as a picnic area and boat launch.

TEMPORARILY CLOSED DUE TO RENOVATIONS

Hugh White State Park

3170 State Park Rd., Grenada 38901

(662) 226-4934

E-mail: hughwhitestatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 10 miles east of Grenada off Mississippi Hwy. 8

Area: Park 1,320 acres/Lake 64,000 acres

Located on Grenada Lake, Hugh White State Park has 128 RV campsites and 12 duplex cabins. Available amenities include a golf course, playground, picnic area and activity building. There is boating, skiing, and fishing on Grenada Lake.

J.P. Coleman State Park

613 CR 321, Iuka 38852

(662) 423-6515

E-mail: jpcolemanstatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 4 miles north of Iuka, turn off Hwy. 25 onto CR 989

Area: Park 637 acres

J.P. Coleman offers many water sports, since it is located on a rocky bluff that overlooks the Tennessee River. The park offers 69 RV campsites, nine primitive campsites, 20 cabins, three cottages, 16 motel rooms and three townhouses. Amenities include a conference center, picnic area, playground, miniature golf course and swimming pool.

John W. Kyle State Park

4235 State Park Rd., Sardis 38666

(662) 487-1345

E-mail: johnkylestatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 8 miles east of Sardis on Mississippi Hwy. 315, I-55 Exit 252 at Sardis

Area: Park 649 acres

Located on scenic Sardis Reservoir, John W. Kyle State Park offers 200 RV campsites, 20 cabins and two golf villas. John Kyle offers Mallard Pointe Golf Course, and fishing and boating on Sardis Lake. The lodge offers a large ballroom and a dining room that will accommodate 96 people, making it perfect for family reunions or banquets.

Lake Lincoln State Park

2573 Sunset Rd., Wesson 39191

(601) 643-9044

E-mail: lakelincolnstatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 4.5 miles east of Hwy. 51 near Wesson

Area: Park 900 acres/Lake 550 acres

Lake Lincoln is nestled in the shade of hardwood trees and offers 71 RV campsites, one cabin and three cottages. The park has a disc golf course, nature trail, picnic area, playground, volleyball court and non-denominational Sunday worship services during the summer. The lake offers fishing, jet or water skiing and a 1.5 acre sand beach.

Lake Lowndes State Park

3319 Lake Lowndes Rd., Columbus 39702

(662) 328-2110

E-mail: lakelowndestatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 8 miles southeast of Columbus off Mississippi Hwy. 69

Area: Park 709 acres/Lake 150 acres

Lake Lowndes State Park provides a complete recreational facility for many people to enjoy. A scenic, wooded tent camping area, 50 RV campsites, six vacation cabins and two vacation cottages are available for use. Amenities include a disc golf course, gym, picnic area, playground, playing fields, tennis complex and activity building. Water activities include fishing and water sports.

LeFleur's Bluff State Park

3315 Lakeland Terrace, Jackson 39216
(Campground)

1205 Lakeland Dr., Jackson 39216 (Golf Course)
(601) 987-3923

E-mail: lefleursbluffstatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: Exit 98B off I-55

Area: Park 305 acres/Lake 50 acres

LeFleur's Bluff is located in the heart of urban Jackson. Mayes Lake Campground has 28 RV campsites, ten primitive tent sites, a bathhouse and sewage dumping station. Amenities include a playground, nature trail, golf course, picnic area and disc golf course, as well as fishing.

Legion State Park

635 Legion State Park Rd., Louisville 39339
(662) 773-8323

E-mail: legionstatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 2 miles north of Louisville on N. Columbus Ave.

Area: Park 440 acres/Lake 20 acres

Legion State Park features Legion Lodge, a hand-hewn log structure that has remained unaltered since its construction in the 1930s. There are 15 RV campsites, six cabins and a tent camping area. Two fishing lakes are available, as well as a picnic area, activity building and playground.

Leroy Percy State Park

Leroy Percy State Park

1400 Hwy. 12 W., Hollandale 38748
(662) 827-5436

E-mail: leroypercystatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 5 miles west of Hollandale off Mississippi Hwy. 12

Area: Park 1,791 acres/Lake 60 acres

Leroy Percy encompasses a wildlife management area for deer, squirrel, turkey, duck and dove hunting. The park has 16 RV campsites, a scenic wooded tent camping area, eight vacation cabin units and a group camp that can accommodate 48 people. Amenities include picnic area, playground, playing fields, fishing, boat launch and water skiing.

Natchez State Park

230-B Wickliff Rd., Natchez 39120
(601) 442-2658

E-mail: natchezstatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 10 miles north of Natchez off U.S. 61 at Stanton

Area: Park 3,438 acres/Lake 230 acres

Natchez Lake offers excellent fishing, boasting the state's record largemouth bass (18.15 pounds). It also offers 50 RV campsites, eight tent camping sites, 10 lakeside vacation cabin units and a laundry facility. Amenities include a disc golf course, nature trail, picnic area, playground and hunting area.

Paul B. Johnson State Park

319 Geiger Lake Rd., Hattiesburg 39401
(601) 582-7721

E-mail: paulbjohnson@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 12 miles south of Hattiesburg off U.S. Hwy. 49

Area: Park 969 acres/Lake 225 acres

The park has many overnight options, such as 125 RV campsites, 25 primitive campsites, 16 cabins, three cottages and a group camp facility. There are a variety of activities and amenities available, including a visitor center, gameroom, picnic area, playground, splash pad, disc golf course, swimming and nature trails. Fishing, boating and water skiing are available on the lake.

Percy Quin State Park

2036 Percy Quin Dr., McComb 39648
(601) 684-3938

E-mail: percyquin@mdwfp.state.ms.us

Location: 6 miles south of McComb, exit 13 off I-55

Area: Park 1700 acres/Lake 490 acres

Percy Quin is an enjoyable blend of old and new. There are many overnight options, including 100 RV campsites, 27 cabins, four cottages, two golf villas, nine motel rooms, and a group camp facility. Amenities include: picnic tables and grills, picnic pavilions, playgrounds, swimming pool, tennis courts, game room, conference center, chapel, marina, and an 18-hole golf course. Boating is available on Lake Tangipahoa, but the lake is closed to fishing.

Roosevelt State Park

2149 Hwy. 13 S., Morton 39117

(601) 732-6316

E-mail: rooseveltstatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: Exit 77 off I-20

Area: Park 690 acres/Lake 150 acres

The park offers 109 RV campsites, primitive tent sites, 15 vacation cabins, 20 motel rooms and a group camp facility. Amenities at Alfreda-Harris Lodge include: visitor center, banquet hall, meeting rooms, and game room. The Livingston Performing Arts & Media Center has 600 seats and is perfect for church events, plays, pageants, ballet performances, musical programs and recording sessions. Roosevelt State Park also has activities to enjoy, such as a picnic area, pavilion, playground, nature trail, disc golf course, softball field and tennis court. Water facilities include fishing, boating, swimming, splash pad, as well as a water slide.

Shepard State Park

1034 Graveline Rd., Gautier 39553

(228) 497-2244

Location: 3 miles west of Pascagoula, south of U.S. Hwy. 90 at Gautier

Area: Park 395 acres

Shepard State Park has 28 RV campsites, primitive campsites and a group camping site. There are also a nature trail, picnic area, playground, soccer field and disc golf course. A boat ramp for small watercraft is available and provides access to the mouth of the Singing River by way of St. Pierre Bayou. Operated by the City of Gautier.

Tishomingo State Park

105 CR 90, Tishomingo 38873

(662) 438-6914

E-mail: tishomingostatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 2 miles south of Tishomingo off Mississippi Hwy. 25; milepost 304 off Natchez Trace Parkway

Area: Park 1,385 acres/Lake 45 acres

Tishomingo offers 62 RV campsites, a primitive campsite area, six cabins, one cottage and a group camp facility. The activities and recreational facilities include: a picnic area

with tables and grills, picnic pavilions, lodge facility, disc golf courses, hiking trails, swinging bridge, playgrounds, multi-use field, volleyball court and swimming pool. Rock climbing, canoes and fishing are also available.

Tombigbee State Park

264 Cabin Dr., Tupelo 38804

(662) 842-7669

E-mail: tombigbeestatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 6 miles southeast of Tupelo off Mississippi Hwy. 6

Area: Park 522 acres/Lake 120 acres

Options for staying overnight include 20 RV campsites, a primitive camping area, seven cabins, one cottage and a group camp facility. Many activities are available, such as a picnic area with tables and grills, picnic pavilions, meeting room and banquet facilities, playground, multi-use field, volleyball court, disc golf course, nature trail and fishing.

Trace State Park

2139 Faulkner Rd., Belden 38826

(662) 489-2958

E-mail: tracestatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 10 miles east of Pontotoc off Mississippi Hwy. 6

Area: Park 2,545 acres/Lake 565 acres

Trace State Park has 76 RV campsites, eight cabins and cottages, and primitive camping sites. A variety of facilities for use include two playground areas, picnic sites, pavilion, laundry facility, disc golf course, golf course, nature trails and water activities.

Wall Doxey State Park

3946 Hwy. 7 S., Holly Springs 38635

(662) 252-4231

E-mail: walldoxeystatepark@wfp.ms.gov

Location: 7 miles south of Holly Springs off Mississippi Hwy. 7

Area: Park 806 acres/Lake 60 acres

Wall Doxey has 64 RV campsites, primitive campsites, nine cabins, one cottage and a group camp facility. Activities at the park include: visitor/activity building, picnic sites/pavilions, playing field, playground, nature trail, disc golf and fishing.

PAT HARRISON WATERWAY DISTRICT WATER PARKS

Archusa Creek Water Park

540 CR 110, Quitman 39355
(601) 776-6956

Big Creek Water Park

2 Big Creek Water Park, Soso 39480
(601) 763-8555

Dry Creek Water Park

13 Dry Creek Park Dr., Mt. Olive 39119
(601) 797-4619

Dunn's Falls Water Park

6890 Dunn's Falls Rd., Enterprise 39330
(601) 655-8550

Flint Creek Water Park

1216 Parkway Dr., Wiggins 39577
(601) 928-3051

Maynor Creek Water Park

1351 Reservoir Rd., Waynesboro 39367
(601) 735-4365

Okatibbee Creek Water Park

9283 Pine Springs Rd., Meridian 39305
(601) 737-2370

Turkey Creek Water Park

142 Parkway Dr., Decatur 39327
(601) 635-3314

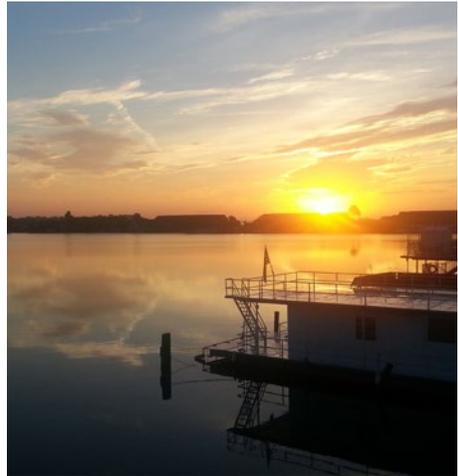
ROSS BARNETT RESERVOIR

The Ross Barnett Reservoir was created in 1965 by impounding the Pearl River between Madison and Rankin Counties and is named after the 52nd governor of Mississippi. It is bounded by the Natchez Trace Parkway and has 105 miles of shoreline. The lake is about 45 miles long and 3.5 miles wide in some places. The average depth is 12 feet and there is approximately 33,000 acres of surface area.

The Pearl River Valley Water Supply District is the state agency that was created to manage the lake and its surrounding

area. The district provides a water supply for the city of Jackson. It also maintains the reservoir's dam and monitors water quality in cooperation with the Mississippi Department of Health and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

An estimated 2.5 million people visit the 48 recreational facilities annually. Available facilities include: five campgrounds, 16 parks, 22 boat launches, three handicapped-accessible trails, two multi-purpose trails and a mountain bike trail. Each campground has a police manager. The District also developed five marinas, four baseball/soccer complexes and two golf courses. Almost 20 miles of paved trails for walking, jogging, bicycling and sightseeing connect the reservoir to surrounding neighborhoods and shopping areas.



NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY

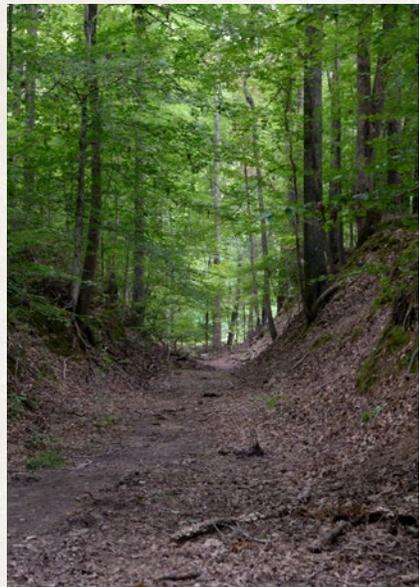
The historic Natchez Trace Parkway is a 444 mile long path that connects Natchez to Nashville. The Parkway was created and used for centuries by Native Americans, and was later used by early European and American explorers, traders and emigrants in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The Trace is open year-round to motorists, hikers and bikers. It gives visitors the chance to take a leisurely trip through time. The Parkway is headquartered in Tupelo and is maintained and administered by the National Park Service.

Visitors can discover scenic areas, numerous hiking trails, picnic sites, campgrounds and water recreation areas. Almost 30 hiking and self-guiding trails cover 60 miles of the Natchez Trace. Besides cars, motorcycles, bicycles and RVs are popular ways visitors travel the Trace.

U.S. NATIONAL PARKS

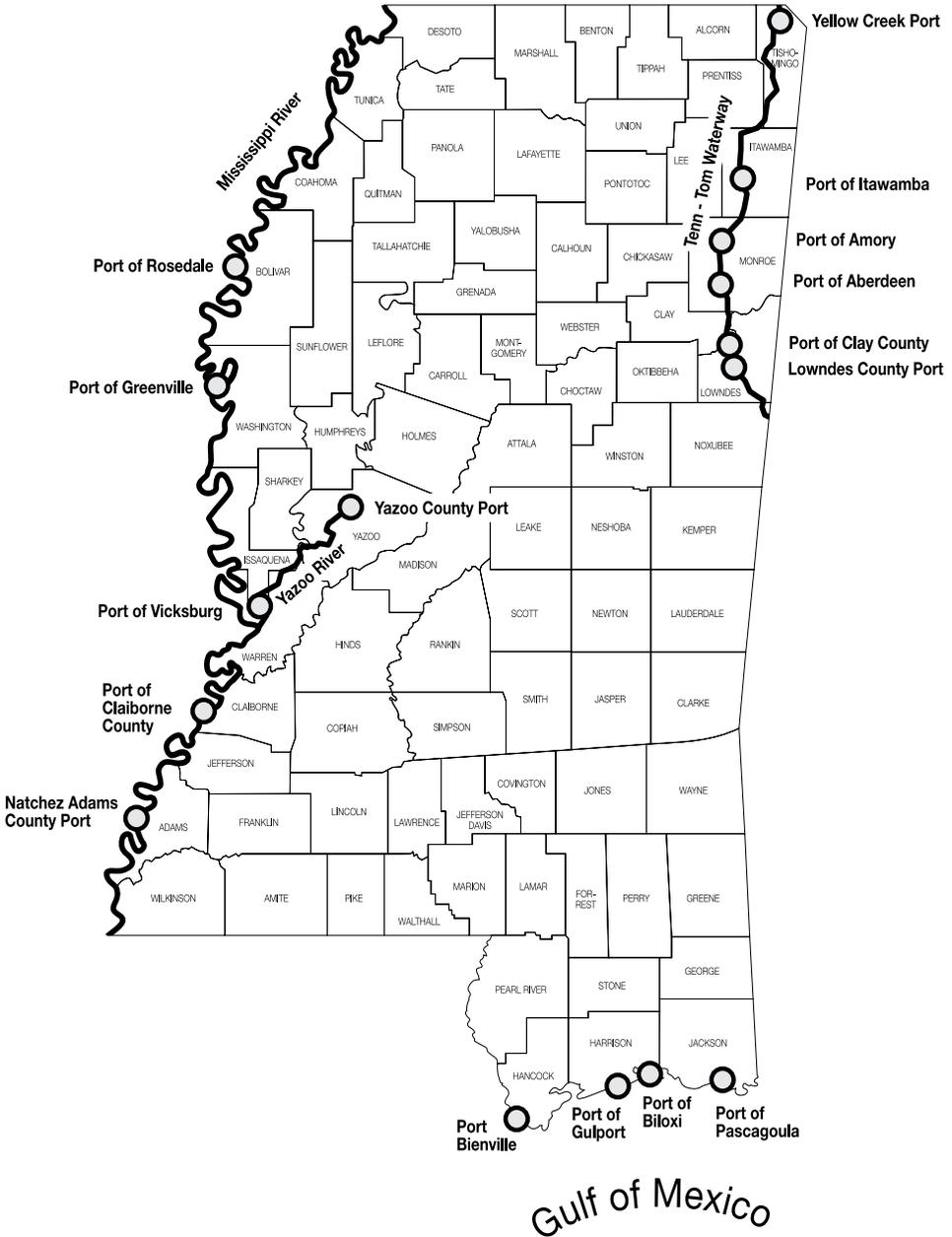
1. Brices Crossroads National Battlefield
2. Gulf Islands National Seashore
3. Natchez National Historical Park
4. Tupelo National Battlefield Monument
5. Vicksburg National Military Park



MAJOR LAKES AND RIVERS



PORTS IN MISSISSIPPI



PUBLIC TRUST LANDS

The Mississippi Secretary of State has the constitutional and statutory authority to protect Mississippi's public trust lands to preserve the state's resources for future generations. These responsibilities include enforcing the 16th Section Public School Trust Lands and Lieu Lands laws, developing and implementing the Public Trust Tidelands Management Programs, overseeing the sale of lands forfeited to the State for non-payment of ad valorem taxes, maintaining an inventory of State agency lands and providing services to the public and governmental subdivisions relating to sales, acquisitions, leasing, and title of the State's real property assets.

16TH SECTION PUBLIC SCHOOL TRUST LANDS

Mississippi is the only state east of the Mississippi River that substantially retains and utilizes its school trust lands for the benefit of local school districts. The designated lands, including 642,000 surface acres and 674,000 mineral acres, have generated millions of dollars in revenue used to fund public schools for nearly two centuries. Upon statehood in 1817, Mississippi received one section containing approximately 640 acres out of every six-square-mile-township. These designated lands were set aside to support the specific public school that fell within each district. All revenues generated by 16th Section Public Trust Land goes directly to the local school district. Approximately 99 school districts manage the trust lands within their boundaries.

The Mississippi Secretary of State is the statutorily mandated supervisory trustee of 16th Section Public Trust Lands. The Secretary of State reviews and signs all leases to guarantee that the school trust receives fair market value and utilizes the land in the best way possible.

In an effort to increase transparency, the Secretary of State's Office now posts all leases online at www.sos.ms.gov. This website also posts notices for bids to be accepted for hunting, agriculture, and mineral leases. In order to assist the schools in managing the lands in their districts, the agency provides fillable lease forms,

annual report forms and change forms. Y'all Business is another tool found online at www.yallbusiness.ms. There is a section for leased lands where the public can see the actual parcels of trust lands by county. The parcel information is from tax assessors' offices and is tied with the state lease number.

These are just a few of the tools that are currently offered by the Secretary of State's Office. The agency wants to provide excellent service to the public and give school districts the tools they need to make the management of trust lands easier and more efficient. This has led to a steady increase in revenues, more efficient management of lands and a greater involvement between schools and the public, as well as a partnership with the Mississippi Forestry Commission.

The partnership with the Mississippi Forestry Commission has resulted in the certification of 480,000 acres of 16th Section timber by the American Tree Farm System – all in an effort to produce better harvests and greater revenue over time. Roughly 70% of Mississippi's State Trust Lands are managed for timber.

Since the implementation of the lease review process, revenues have increased to exceed over \$100 million for several years. Even with market fluctuations that affect mineral, timber, and agriculture, the overall revenues have greatly improved.

In 2019, oil and gas revenues from 16th Section Lands were \$7.7 million. Timber

revenues were \$11.4 million and surface leasing increased modestly to \$23.5 million.

A HISTORY OF 16TH SECTION LANDS

The origin of 16th Section Public School Trust Lands in America can be traced to the British and Colonial tradition of reserving land for the support of public schools. After the formation of the Union, Thomas Jefferson incorporated the practice into the Land Ordinance of 1785.

Designed to encourage westward expansion, the Ordinance adopted a six-square-mile township as its basic unit of measure and "... reserved the lot no. 16, of every township, for the maintenance of public schools within said township ...". The reservation of land for public schools was further confirmed in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Later, in 1798, when Congress established the Mississippi Territory, it provided a government initially based on the Northwest Ordinance model.

With division of the Mississippi Territory in 1817 to form the State of Mississippi and the Territory of Alabama, Congress called for a survey of land in the new state. Again, 16th Section land was reserved in each township.

THE TREATIES

At the time of statehood, Native Americans inhabited Mississippi. The Choctaw Nation occupied the area south and west of a line extending southeasterly from the Coahoma and Tunica County boundary to a point on the old Natchez Trace in Webster County and then across Clay County in a generally southeasterly direction to a point on the Tombigbee River. The Chickasaw Nation inhabited the area north and east of that line.

In September 1830, the United States and the Choctaws signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. In accordance with the treaty, 16th Sections were reserved from government land sales. The territorial claims of the Chickasaws were resolved

with their removal under the Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832. Although these lands were to be sold by the government to private parties "... in the same manner ..." they were, in fact, sold with no 16th Section reservations.

Today, 15 counties lie entirely north of the Choctaw-Chickasaw Boundary and have no reserved 16th Section lands. The counties are Tishomingo, Alcorn, Tippah, Benton, Marshall, DeSoto, Tunica, Tate, Lafayette, Union, Prentiss, Itawamba, Lee, Pontotoc, and Chickasaw. Another seven, Quitman, Panola, Yalobusha, Calhoun, Webster, Clay, and Monroe, are bisected by the Choctaw-Chickasaw Boundary and have no 16th Section lands in the portions of those counties lying north of the boundary. Although the boundary passes through Tallahatchie County, there are no 16th Sections lying north of the boundary in that county.

CHICKASAW CESSION LANDS

To compensate for this failure, in 1836 Congress granted the State of Mississippi 174,555 acres of unsold public land in Bolivar, Coahoma, Tallahatchie, Quitman, Panola, and Leake counties. In the 1850s, Congress and the State of Mississippi allowed this lieu land to be sold. Mississippi invested the \$1,047,330 realized from the sale in eight percent interest loans to railroad companies in the state. The principal was lost with the destruction of the railroads during the Civil War.

Thereafter, the Mississippi Legislature began making annual appropriations to school districts in the Chickasaw Cession equal to the eight percent interest on the lost principal. The interest amount was reduced from eight to six percent by the Constitution of 1890. For decades, annual appropriations totaling approximately \$62,000 were made to the school districts in the Chickasaw Cession. But by the 1980s, the estimated annual appropriation amounted to only \$0.63 per pupil in the Chickasaw Cession

school districts, while the estimated average income per pupil from 16th Section land in the Choctaw Cession counties was \$75.34.

In 1981, Chickasaw Cession school districts successfully challenged the disparity as a violation of the United States Constitution's equal protection clause. As a result, the Chickasaw Cession school districts now receive a payment per teacher unit based on the average annual expendable 16th Section revenue per teacher unit received by the Choctaw Cession school districts, less the amount of the annual interest appropriation.

COURT RULINGS

In 1890, the United States Supreme Court declared the early laws reserving land in each township for the support of public education to be a "binding and perpetual obligation." In 1895, the Mississippi Supreme Court ruled that 16th Section lands are held by the State in trust for public schools. In 1906, Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice A.H. Whitfield opined: "Sixteenth sections are set apart as a sacred trust. No greater trust can be committed to any state than that of the education of the children within its borders ... And, if one such trust can be more sacred than another, it is that trust designed to bring home to the doors of the poor children of the commonwealth the means of acquiring a good education."

Despite Congressional and federal and state judicial endorsements, management of the 16th Section land, with few exceptions, ranged from indifferent to abusive. Disregarding the Mississippi Constitution's prohibition against donation of public lands, many 99-year leases of 16th Section lands were given for one-time payments. Through generations, leaseholders mistakenly came to view themselves as the actual owners of the 16th Sections.

This perception began to change in the early 1970s when Smith County Superintendent of Education Joe Tally

refused to sign inadequately compensated leases. Litigation resulted in a Mississippi Supreme Court decision holding that 16th Section lands must be leased for fair market value. The 1974 Legislature gave local school boards veto power in leasing 16th Section land.

16TH SECTION LAND REFORM ACT

In 1978, 16th Section and Lieu Land Act was passed by the Legislature, with Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Gandy casting the tie-breaking vote in the Senate. It provides that 16th Section school lands and lieu lands are held in trust for the benefit of the public schools; it transfers control of public school trust lands from the Boards of Supervisors to the Boards of Education, under the general supervision of the Secretary of State.

Since the passage of the 1978 16th Section and Lieu Land Act, 16th Section land leases are based on a classification system. The nine classifications include: Forest Land, Agricultural Land, Industrial Land, Commercial Land, Residential Land, Farm Residential Land, Recreational Land, Other Land, and Catfish Farming Land. Classification is determined by a finding of the highest and best use of the land for producing the maximum revenue.

All timber on 16th Section land is under the general supervision and management of the Mississippi Forestry Commission.

LEASING AND COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Based on statutory requirements, local Boards of Education offer three classifications of land for competitive bid. Those classifications include: Agriculture, Forestry (hunting and fishing), and Mineral lands. Agriculture leases are awarded to the highest bidder, while forestry leases allow the existing leaseholder the right to renew their lease by matching the highest acceptable bid received. Mineral leases are awarded to the highest bidder with the caveat that the bid includes royalty payments and a bonus. Agriculture leases do not exceed five-year terms, unless the land is used for cultivation of rice or for pasture land. In those cases, the term may not exceed 10 years. Forest leases for hunting usually have terms that do not exceed five years.

All 16th Section lands, regardless of classification, may be leased for the exploration, development, mining, and production of oil, gas, and minerals including: carbon dioxide and other gaseous substances; metals, compounds of metals, metal-bearing ores; coal, lignite, sulfur, salt, sand, gravel, fill dirt, and clay.

LEASING BY APPLICATION AND APPRAISAL

Lands not offered by competitive bid are leased based on an appraised value. The appraisal is fee simple and values the land without improvements. At the discretion of the local school board, a rate of return of the appraised value is used to determine the rent. For leases of industrial land and commercial land, the annual rental may not be set at less than five percent of the current market value, exclusive of buildings or improvements not owned by the school district.

The maximum lease term for all land classifications leased upon application is 40 years, and rent adjustment clauses are mandatory, except in leases of residential

and farm residential land. Rent adjustment clauses are optional, but recommended, in residential and farm residential leases.

Application to lease properties is submitted to the Superintendent of Education and the Board of Education for approval. Once the property has been appraised and the lease has been drafted, the terms and rent of each lease must be approved.

The holder of a lease granted upon application has a prior right to re-lease or extend an existing lease on terms as may be agreed upon the Board of Education, but subject to the classification of the land. Assignments of leases of 16th Section lands are allowed only if the lease contract so provides, or at the discretion of the Board of Education, provided that it may not arbitrarily withhold permission for assignment.

REVENUES – EXPENDABLE AND NON-EXPENDABLE FUNDS

Revenues collected from the following sources are deemed expendable funds: lease bonuses and annual delay rentals collected under oil, gas and mineral leases; annual rents collected under leases covering all 16th Section land classifications; interest received upon loans or investments of the principal fund; and proceeds from the sale of timber. Generally, expendable funds may be used for all the same purposes as other available school funds in operating and maintaining the schools of the district.

The principal fund is a permanent fund consisting of revenue received from the following sources: easements and rights-of-way; sales of lieu land; permanent damages to school trust land; sales of nonrenewable resources including, but not limited to, the sale of sand, gravel, dirt, clays, and royalties received from the sale of mineral ores, coal, oil, and gas; sales of buildings on 16th Section lands, and sales of timber. Except for income from timber sales, funds required to be deposited into the principal fund are not expendable. However, if

a district desires to spend income from timber sales, it must maintain a separate principal fund account for timber income.

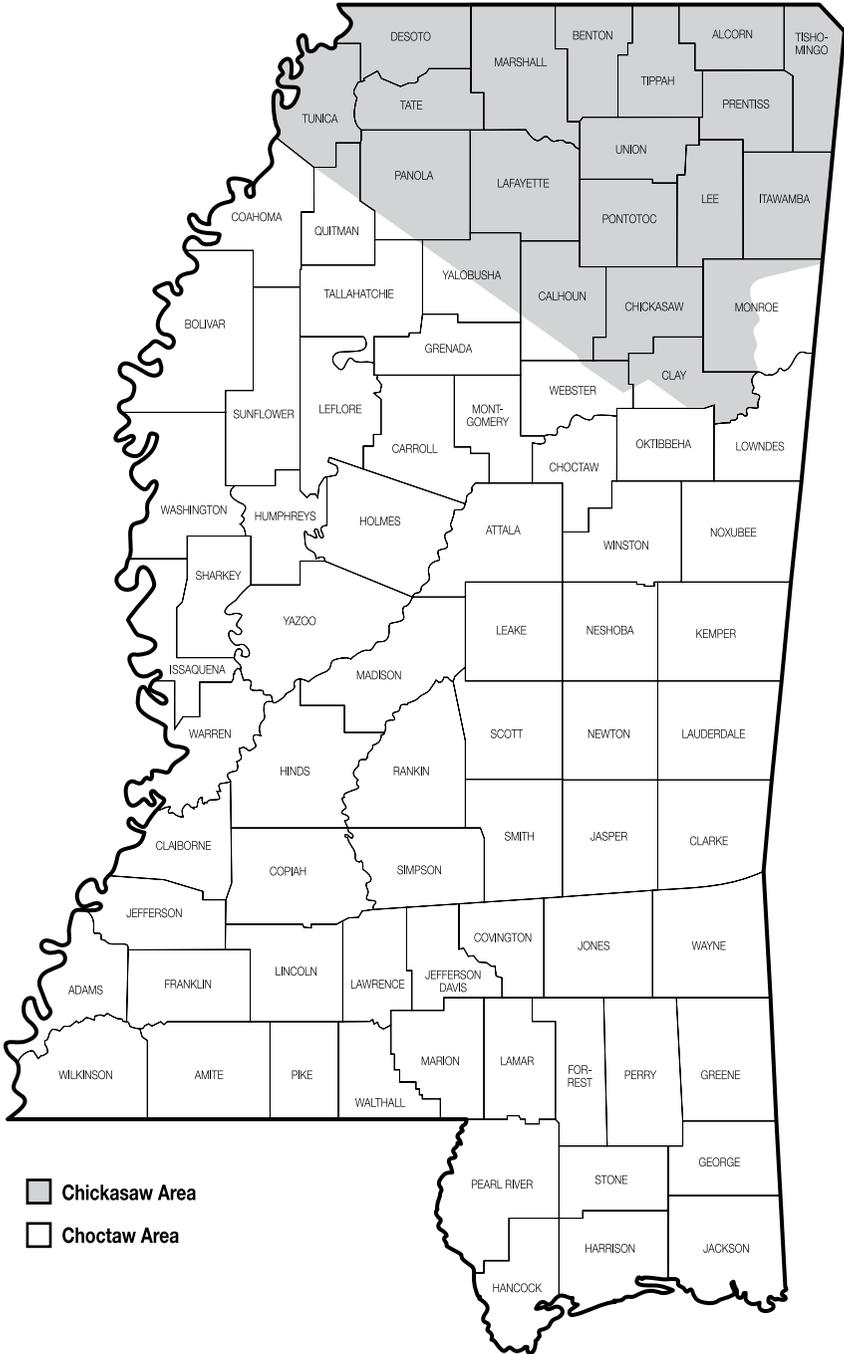
Districts are authorized to borrow principal funds at a rate of interest of not less than four percent per annum for a term of not more than 20 years for the erection, equipment, or repair of school buildings, improvement of timber stands, and to provide funds for any building project approved by the State Board of Education. Additionally, districts may borrow funds, at the same interest rate, for a term not exceeding 10 years for the purchase of school buses. It is the duty of the Board of Education to keep the principal fund invested.

BUILDING ON REFORM

The passage of the 1978 16th Section and Lieu Land Act made tremendous strides in instituting sound management practices of our School Trust Lands. Secretary of State Michael Watson strives to build upon the 16th Section Reform Act and the work of prior Secretaries of State by allowing for more open transparency in the way Mississippi regulates 16th Section land.



SCHOOL TRUSTS LANDS



TIDELANDS

OUR TIDELANDS POLICY

It is the policy of the State of Mississippi to favor the preservation of the natural state of the public trust tidelands and their ecosystems and to prevent the despoliation and destruction of them, except where a specific alteration would serve a higher public interest in compliance with the public purposes of the trust. Public Trust Tidelands are managed with a view towards preservation and conservation.

Mississippi's Public Tidelands Trust includes all lands beneath waters that are naturally subject to tidal influence. In general, the inland boundary of the trust is the line of mean high tide of the Gulf of Mexico and the bays, rivers and bayous that flow into it. The outer boundary is the state's seaward boundary, three miles south of the barrier islands. The mean high tide is an arithmetic average of ordinary high tides over a 19-year tidal epoch. As such, the boundary line between public trust tidelands and privately owned lands is not a fixed, stationary line. It ambulates with changes in the mean high tide over the years. Accretion and reliction may increase the upland private estate; while erosion, subsidence and rising sea levels may move the boundary inland and increase the area held as public tidelands and submerged lands. Artificial changes to a shoreline, such as filling or dredging, do not change the public trust tidelands boundary.

THE PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE – IN HISTORY AND AS APPLIED IN MISSISSIPPI

The Public Trust Doctrine, the historical legal authority upon which these lands are administered, is of ancient origin. The concept of common ownership of the sea and the seashore is based on the second century work of the Roman jurist Gaius. The doctrine was later codified by Justinian, the emperor who ruled the Roman Empire from Constantinople in the

Sixth Century: "... Let us proceed to the law of Things. Of these, some admit of private ownership, while others ... are by natural law common to all ... The following things are by natural law common to all – the air, running water, the sea, and consequently the seashore."

Roman civil law shaped not only the civil law of Continental Europe, but also the common law of England, where the tidelands were protected by the King for all his subjects, and subsequently the law of the United States.

The original colonies withheld their tidelands from the United States when they adopted the Constitution and entered the Union. Subsequently admitted states entered the union on an equal footing with the original thirteen, with the United States creating similar trusts for each new state.

Mississippi's Public Tidelands Trust was funded at the time of statehood in 1817. In 1857, the Mississippi Supreme Court recognized in *Martin v. O'Brien*, 34 Miss. 21, that "the shores of the sea below high-water mark belong to the state as trustee for the public ..." and there followed a long and unbroken line of cases recognizing the State's ownership of lands overflowed by the tide. The issue attracted new interest in the mid-1980s when a dispute arose between the State and private owners over the right to lease oil, gas, and mineral interests. In the 1986 Mississippi Supreme Court decision in *Cinque Bambini Partnership v. State*, 491 So.2d 508, Justice James Robertson, writing for a unanimous court, declared that "title to all lands naturally subject to tidal influence, inland to today's mean high-water mark, is held by the State of Mississippi in trust ..." Justice Robertson noted in the *Cinque Bambini* ruling that, "The public purposes to which these lands and waters placed in the public trust may be devoted are not static." They include navigation and transportation; commerce; fishing;

bathing, swimming, and other recreational activities; development of mineral resources; environmental protection and preservation; the enhancement of aquatic, avarian and marine life, sea agriculture “and no doubt others.”

In February 1988, the United States Supreme Court affirmed the *Cinque Bambini* decision in *Phillips Petroleum Company v. Mississippi*, 484 U.S. 108, 108 S.Ct. 791, 98 L.Ed. 277.

Following the state and federal Supreme Court decisions, the Mississippi Legislature in 1989 adopted the Public Trust Tidelands Act, which is codified primarily in Chapter 15 of Title 29 of the Mississippi Code. The Legislature, mindful of the many and sometimes conflicting public purposes of the trust, declared it “to be the public policy of this State to favor the preservation of the natural state of the public trust tidelands and their ecosystems and to prevent the despoliation and destruction of them, except where a specific alteration of specific public trust tidelands would serve a higher public interest in compliance with the public purposes of the public trust in which such tidelands are held.” MCA §29-15-3(1). And while the law provides that tidelands and submerged lands are held by the State in trust for use of all the people, it also recognizes the State’s responsibilities as trustee extend to littoral and riparian property owners as well as to other members of the public. MCA §29-15-5.

The constitutionality of the 1989 Public Trust Tidelands Act was upheld by the Mississippi Supreme Court in *Secretary of State v. Wiesenberg*, 633 So.2d 983 (Miss. 1994).

TIDELANDS MAPS

In the preamble to the Public Trust Tidelands Act, the Legislature found that certainty and stability of the land titles of riparian and littoral property owners along the shores of tidally affected waters of the state are essential to the economic welfare

of the state and to the peace, tranquility, and financial security of the citizens of the State of Mississippi. A crucial part of this act directed the Secretary of State to publish maps depicting the boundary of the public trust tidelands. MCA § 29-15-7. Pursuant to this directive, final maps were adopted and certified on December 5, 1994. These maps provide the basis for determining the boundary between private upland and Public Trust Tidelands by showing areas where the shoreline is natural and where the shoreline has been artificially altered by excavation and filling. Official copies of these maps are available in the Secretary of State offices in Jackson and Biloxi, as well as in the offices of the Chancery Clerks of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties.

TIDELANDS LEASING

Under MCA §29-1-107, the Secretary of State is authorized to “rent or lease surface lands, tidelands or submerged lands owned or controlled by the State of Mississippi lying in or adjacent to the Mississippi Sound or Gulf of Mexico or streams emptying therein ...” The Secretary of State may decide a particular proposed alteration of public trust tidelands does not serve a higher public interest in compliance with the purposes of the trust and decline to lease tidelands to a lease applicant. The discretionary nature of the tidelands leasing authority was upheld by the Mississippi Supreme Court in *Columbia Land Development LLC v. Secretary of State Eric Clark*, 868 So.2d 1006 (Miss. 2004).

Pursuant to this statutory and judicial authority, the Secretary of State publishes Rules, Regulations and Procedures for the Administration, Control and Leasing of Public Trust Tidelands and Submerged Lands. Because the Mississippi Constitution in Section 95 prohibits the donation of lands belonging to the State to individuals or private corporations,

these rules generally require that, when an activity on public trust tidelands requires a lease, the lease rental must be fair market value. In 2012, the Legislature exempted littoral and riparian owners' residential piers from the leasing requirements.

In all cases where a lease is required, the Secretary of State establishes the initial rent. In most cases the initial rent is based on an appraisal prepared by a qualified appraiser selected by the Secretary of State. The prospective lessee is free to provide the State's appraiser with any information he believes is relevant. The law requires rent review and adjustment at each fifth anniversary of the lease. The rent adjustment is tied either to the All-Urban Consumer Price Index – All Items (CPI) or to an appraisal that deducts the value of the lessee's improvements. Casino leases are generally adjusted annually by the CPI index.

The Secretary of State's administrative rules consider the special status of riparian and littoral owners. In the riparian or littoral area, the rules provide that only the riparian or littoral owner or someone who stands in his shoes can lease the adjoining tidelands for private use. Nevertheless, the State may impose additional public uses in a littoral or riparian area provided such uses serve a higher public purpose approved by the legislature.

THE PUBLIC TRUST TIDELANDS FUND / THE PUBLIC TRUST ASSESSMENT FUND

The rents which the State collects from tidelands leases are deposited in the Public Trust Tidelands Fund. Each year, after covering lost ad valorem taxes, if any, within the three Coastal counties, the Secretary of State disburses the Tidelands Funds to the Department of Marine Resources.

After Hurricane Katrina, the Legislature took action to allow casinos to operate on shore, generally within 800 feet of the water's edge. Casinos on shore pay

a statutory assessment in lieu of a tidelands lease rent. The amount of the statutory assessment is based on the capital investment in the part of the structure in which licensed gaming activities are conducted. The statutory assessments are deposited in the Public Trust Assessment Fund. Each year the Secretary of State disburses the Assessment Funds to the Department of Marine Resources.

Revenues deposited in the Tidelands Fund or the Assessment Fund and disbursed to the Department of Marine Resources are allocated by the State Legislature programs and projects relating to tidelands management, such as conservation, reclamation, preservation, acquisition, education, or the enhancement of public access to the public trust tidelands or public improvement projects as they relate to such lands." MCA §29-15-9 and MCA §29-15-10.

Between 1990 and 2020, the Secretary of State has turned back more than \$165.9 million from tidelands leases and assessments to the Department of Marine Resources for disbursement by the Mississippi legislature. That money is spent in the three coastal counties to build public piers and boat launches; to improve and build municipal and county marinas and harbors; to establish and monitor fishing reefs in the Mississippi Sound; to acquire environmentally important habitat for Mississippi's Coastal Preserve System; and to conduct important scientific research on subjects like fisheries stocks, red tide and submerged sea grasses, and other subjects essential to the protection and preservation of the public trust tidelands and their ecosystems.

PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS AND PROTECTING PUBLIC TRUST TIDELANDS THROUGH PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The Secretary of State, as Trustee of Mississippi’s Public Trust Tidelands, has also worked to acquire properties adjacent to the Tidelands to enhance the public’s access and protection of these areas. Most of the properties acquired over the past 26 years were planned for and are managed with the help of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources under the Mississippi Coastal Preserves System. Secretary of State Michael Watson participates as part of the property acquisition team using BP-Deepwater Horizon litigation settlement funds ensuring the State of Mississippi acquires good and clear title to purchased property and is in the position to serve as good stewards of lands acquired. Significant acquisitions recently accomplished through this funding source are in the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, approximately 1500 acres, and the northern portion of Round Island, approximately 17 acres, both in Jackson County. Other acquisitions of note are the Baldwin Family property in Hancock County marshes, approximately 2,500 acres acquired in 2013 and two areas of Cat Island in Harrison County, including approximately 217 acres acquired from private owners in 2013 and approximately 492 acres acquired in 2016 through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program. An additional 40 acres of Cat Island’s east beach were renourished under the program and added to the State’s holdings. These properties will be managed by the State for the benefit and use of its citizens.



Photo Credit: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.