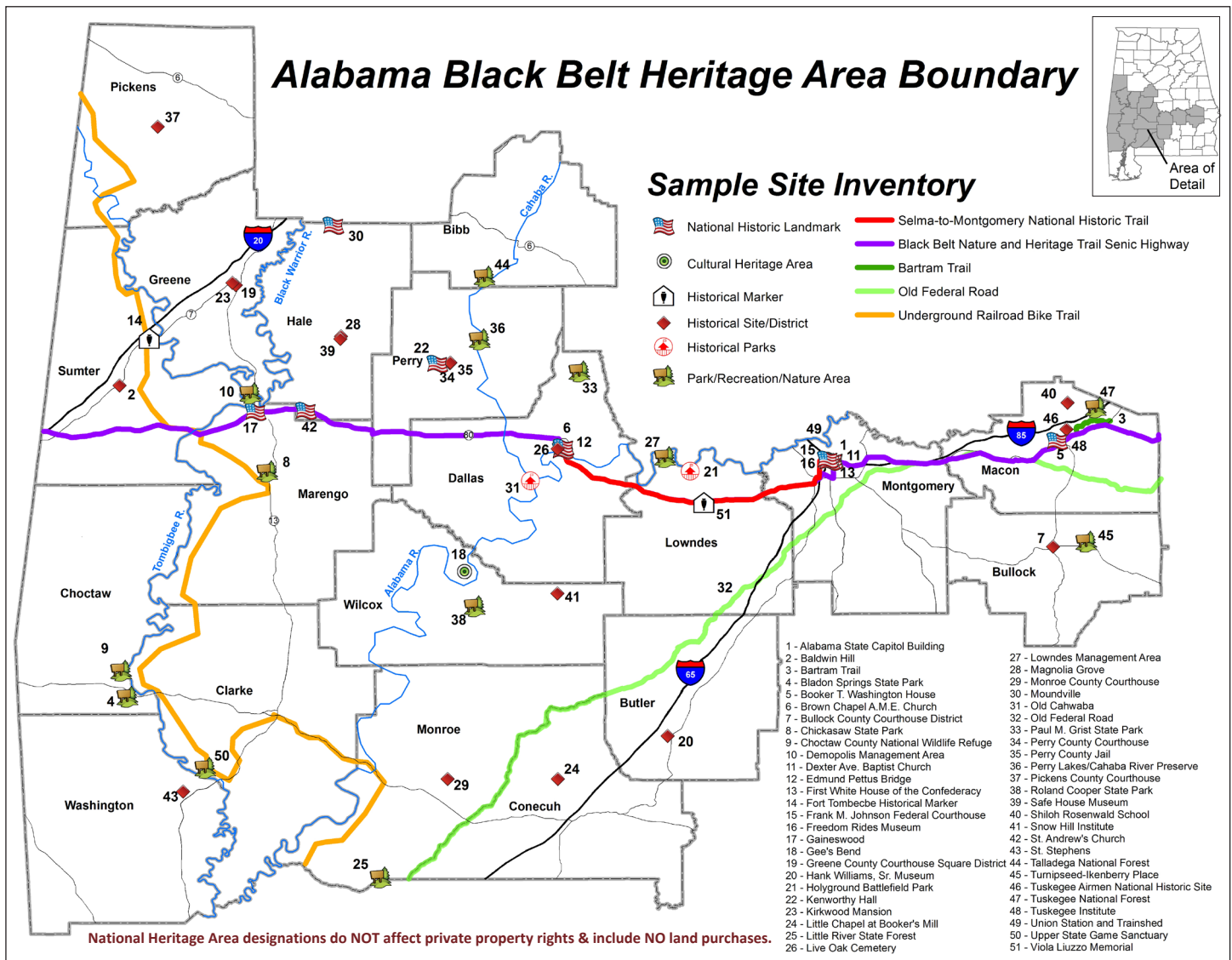


# Please support Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area *Where the stories are as rich as the land*

The Black Belt region of Alabama and the rivers that flow through it represent one of North America's great centers of biological and cultural diversity. The region embraces the centers of forest and aquatic biodiversity in the United States, and its famously rich soils and landscapes had a profound impact on the culture, history and politics of this country. It supported grand cities built by Native Americans long before Europeans discovered these shores, and served as the site of one of the largest battles between Europeans and Natives fought east of the Mississippi River when DeSoto encountered the powerful Mabila people. The enslavement and expulsion of Native Americans from Eastern North America was sealed in this basin, as Andrew Jackson led the effort to open up these notoriously rich lands for modern agriculture. It is no coincidence, therefore, that:

- Martin Luther King marched from Selma to Montgomery on the same paths where the Red Stick Creeks made their last stand;
- The first great explosion of modern agriculture here fed the industrial expansion of Europe and New England;
- The wealth of the 19th Century Cotton Kingdom here created the political center of the southern Confederacy;
- And Stokely Carmichael and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee tested black power and voting rights here alongside thousands of unsung heroes of the Civil Rights movement.

Understanding the Black Belt, and recognizing how the footsteps of diverse human experience have tracked the natural diversity of this basin for millennia, is essential to understanding the American experience. Important cultural and heritage sites, such as the Lowndesboro School, Tent City, Freedom House, and Holy Ground will receive further attention and recognition through a Black Belt National Heritage Area.



## Feedback from Community Partners



"Having the Alabama Black Belt declared a heritage area and having national designation means there will be new opportunities and new life for one of the nation's poorest areas. It means that 19 counties have been given a chance to grow economically, - bring more people, more homes, more income, bring new infrastructure and development, new and more small businesses, better educational systems, more pride and so much more. The possibilities are endless."

-Katanga Mants, Lowndes County Friends of the Civil Rights Movement

"Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center educates residents and visitors about the arts and rich cultural heritage of Alabama's Black Belt region. On behalf of our Board of Directors, more than 500 Black Belt artists, Guild members, staff and volunteers, we express strong support for the Alabama Black Belt Heritage Area Act. As a member of a diverse group of organizations from the local, regional, state and national level, it is our hope this designation will increase tourism for our region, an area that sorely needs economic development."

-Sulynn Creswell, Director, Black Belt Treasures

"I applaud the efforts of the Alabama Black Belt Heritage Area for their leadership in bringing communities together for the common good of the region and the tremendous contributions of the ABBHA toward the preservation and conservation of its valuable assets as well as stimulating community pride and economic benefits which are all positive results of this worthwhile program."

-Pam Swanner, Project Director, Alabama Black Belt Adventures



### Why does National Designation Matter?

- Creates a sense of regionalism that helps small rural counties leverage their marketing dollars.
- Allows the ABBHA the opportunity to compete for funding for which it is not currently eligible.
- Tourism, the arts, and nature-based recreational activities represent major revenue sources for Alabama.
- NHA management entities collaborate to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interest and encourages economic development.
- Our hope is that with the establishment of a Black Belt National Heritage Area Act, we will bring even wider attention to the rich history and culture of the area in a way that complements the recent establishment of civil rights sites championed by the state, increasing tourism to those sites and the Selma to Montgomery Trail, an area that sorely needs economic development.
- A formal federal designation for the area will allow for a greater investment in the quality of life for citizens of the Black Belt, while providing needed funding to preserve the historical and cultural sites in a region that has experienced generational poverty and population migration.

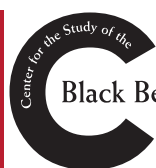


**For more information, contact Emily Jones, NPCA Southeast Regional Director, 865.335.4666 / [ejones@npca.org](mailto:ejones@npca.org).**

**To co-sponsor the Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area Act, contact Rep. Terri Sewell's Legislative Director, Rob Nuttall, 202.225.2665 / [robert.nuttall@mail.house.gov](mailto:robert.nuttall@mail.house.gov) or Senator Richard Shelby's Legislative Correspondent, Will Brewster, 202.224.5744 / [Will\\_Brewster@shelby.senate.gov](mailto:Will_Brewster@shelby.senate.gov).**



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