



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I hereby transmit the enclosed *Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail Special Resource Study*. The study was prepared pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (PL 117-103), which authorized the “Study for Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail” (the Trail) and directed the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate:

1. resources associated with the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery not currently part of the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail that would be appropriate for addition to the Trail;
2. the potential designation of the Trail as a unit of the National Park System instead of, or in addition to, remaining a designated part of the National Trails System.

This study evaluated sites that are part of the designated Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail associated with the events of the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965; it also evaluates sites associated with an expanded period of significance from 1957 through 1970, including many sites that are not a part of the designated Trail. The Trail was established as a National Historic Trail via an amendment to the National Trails System Act by Congress in November 1996 (PL 104-333). This amendment outlined the extent of the Trail as “consisting of 54 miles of city streets and US Highway 80 (US 80) from Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in Selma to the State Capitol Building in Montgomery traveled by voting rights advocates during March 1965 to dramatize the need for voting rights legislation.” The legislation recommended that the Trail be administered by the National Park Service (NPS). In 2015, a 28-mile stretch of roadway between Marion and Selma, Alabama, was designated by the Secretary of the Interior as an official connecting trail. The connecting trail follows the route used by voting rights movement participants in 1965 and starts at Zion Chapel Methodist Church in Marion and ends at Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church in Selma.

Currently, the Trail is administered and managed by the NPS via several partnerships with private landowners, the Federal Highway Administration, and Alabama State University, which supports operations at the Montgomery Interpretive Center. As part of the Trail, the NPS operates the interpretive center in Montgomery and owns and operates two interpretive centers in Selma and White Hall (Lowndes County). The Trail works in partnership with the four campsites in private ownership along the Trail. The Trail includes or is associated with important sites and segments defined in a 2005 comprehensive management plan. In addition to sites that are part of the designated Trail, this study evaluated sites related to the voting rights movement beyond the date of the 1965 march itself and within a broader period of significance from 1957 through 1970. The majority of these sites are

in private ownership, although some are owned by foundations, nonprofit organizations, or local or state governments.

Section 100507 of Title 54 of the United States Code establishes criteria to be considered in the study of an area for potential inclusion in the National Park System. To be recommended as a new unit, a study area must meet the following criteria: (1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources and represent one of the most important examples of a particular resource type in the country, (2) be suitable for addition to the system, (3) be feasible for addition to the system, and (4) be appropriate for direct NPS management. If these are met, a special resource study includes management alternatives that describe what the NPS considers to be the most effective and efficient approach to protecting significant sites and providing for public enjoyment.

This study found that twenty-six sites associated with the voting rights movement in and around Selma from 1957 to 1970—including the Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches—collectively possess national significance under criterion 1. The routes, people, places, and events linked to the Selma voting rights movement and the three voting rights marches that took place in 1965 document the wider context of the people who supported, struggled, and sustained the decades-long voting rights efforts in central Alabama that culminated in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Without the communities and their stories, and without these other places and events, the situations leading to the Selma to Montgomery marches would not have occurred. The sites in this study represent an expansion of recognition and scholarship acknowledging the systemic and strategic efforts by everyday Americans that led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

The twenty-six sites that meet the special resource study national significance criterion also meet criterion 2, suitability, for inclusion in the National Park System. The sites collectively enhance and expand the narratives presented by comparable resources across the nation related to racial voting rights, including the designated Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. Even though many sites in the study area are already associated with the Trail, the study area represents an expanded period of significance that encompasses critical events before and after the famous march, during which a grassroots struggle for voting rights grew to have national implications.

Twenty-seven sites were evaluated for feasibility: the twenty-six sites that meet the special resource study national significance and suitability criteria 1 and 2 plus the Montgomery Interpretive Center as a supporting facility. The sites are categorized in three ways: feasible, conditionally feasible, and not feasible. Eleven sites meet all the factors considered in the analysis of criterion 3, feasibility. These sites are of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor access. Property owners and the public have demonstrated strong support for a potential designation of a National Park System unit and support an NPS presence at each site. Current land ownership patterns, economic and socioeconomic impacts, and potential threats to the sites do not appear to preclude the study area from becoming a new unit of the National Park System. In addition, ten sites are conditionally feasible, defined in this study as a site where possibility exists that the reason for its current infeasibility could change in the future. Reasons for conditional feasibility include no response from property owners or that property owners want to retain management at this time. Conditionally feasible sites can be reevaluated at a future time if their circumstances change. In addition, six sites are infeasible for inclusion as part of a National Park System unit.

Direct NPS management is defined as the NPS owning and managing sites within an authorized boundary and having responsibility for park operations, resource protection, and visitor services at the time of this study. This does not include partnership sites where ownership and the lead management role are retained by the current property owner. Among the twenty-one sites found to be feasible or conditionally feasible, the study found one site that meets special resource study criterion 4, a need for direct NPS management: the Old Perry County Jail in Marion, Alabama. Direct NPS

management of the Old Perry County Jail would provide long-term protection of the site and a more cohesive management approach to interpretation and visitor opportunities. The landowner, the public, and local community organizations have expressed support for the NPS having a direct role in managing the Old Perry County Jail. Although the remaining feasible sites and conditionally feasible sites do not present a clear need for direct NPS management at this time, they can be evaluated at a later date if situations change.

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Sincerely,

Shannon A. Estenoz
Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Tommy Tuberville
The Honorable Katie Britt
The Honorable Terri Sewell (AL-7)



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Ranking Member
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for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Tommy Tuberville
The Honorable Katie Britt
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The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior,
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Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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The Honorable Chellie Pingree
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Subcommittee on Interior,
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Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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1. resources associated with the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery not currently part of the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail that would be appropriate for addition to the Trail;
2. the potential designation of the Trail as a unit of the National Park System instead of, or in addition to, remaining a designated part of the National Trails System.

This study evaluated sites that are part of the designated Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail associated with the events of the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965; it also evaluates sites associated with an expanded period of significance from 1957 through 1970, including many sites that are not a part of the designated Trail. The Trail was established as a National Historic Trail via an amendment to the National Trails System Act by Congress in November 1996 (PL 104-333). This amendment outlined the extent of the Trail as “consisting of 54 miles of city streets and US Highway 80 (US 80) from Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in Selma to the State Capitol Building in Montgomery traveled by voting rights advocates during March 1965 to dramatize the need for voting rights legislation.” The legislation recommended that the Trail be administered by the National Park Service (NPS). In 2015, a 28-mile stretch of roadway between Marion and Selma, Alabama, was designated by the Secretary of the Interior as an official connecting trail. The connecting trail follows the route used by voting rights movement participants in 1965 and starts at Zion Chapel Methodist Church in Marion and ends at Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church in Selma.

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in private ownership, although some are owned by foundations, nonprofit organizations, or local or state governments.

Section 100507 of Title 54 of the United States Code establishes criteria to be considered in the study of an area for potential inclusion in the National Park System. To be recommended as a new unit, a study area must meet the following criteria: (1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources and represent one of the most important examples of a particular resource type in the country, (2) be suitable for addition to the system, (3) be feasible for addition to the system, and (4) be appropriate for direct NPS management. If these are met, a special resource study includes management alternatives that describe what the NPS considers to be the most effective and efficient approach to protecting significant sites and providing for public enjoyment.

This study found that twenty-six sites associated with the voting rights movement in and around Selma from 1957 to 1970—including the Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches—collectively possess national significance under criterion 1. The routes, people, places, and events linked to the Selma voting rights movement and the three voting rights marches that took place in 1965 document the wider context of the people who supported, struggled, and sustained the decades-long voting rights efforts in central Alabama that culminated in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Without the communities and their stories, and without these other places and events, the situations leading to the Selma to Montgomery marches would not have occurred. The sites in this study represent an expansion of recognition and scholarship acknowledging the systemic and strategic efforts by everyday Americans that led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

The twenty-six sites that meet the special resource study national significance criterion also meet criterion 2, suitability, for inclusion in the National Park System. The sites collectively enhance and expand the narratives presented by comparable resources across the nation related to racial voting rights, including the designated Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. Even though many sites in the study area are already associated with the Trail, the study area represents an expanded period of significance that encompasses critical events before and after the famous march, during which a grassroots struggle for voting rights grew to have national implications.

Twenty-seven sites were evaluated for feasibility: the twenty-six sites that meet the special resource study national significance and suitability criteria 1 and 2 plus the Montgomery Interpretive Center as a supporting facility. The sites are categorized in three ways: feasible, conditionally feasible, and not feasible. Eleven sites meet all the factors considered in the analysis of criterion 3, feasibility. These sites are of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor access. Property owners and the public have demonstrated strong support for a potential designation of a National Park System unit and support an NPS presence at each site. Current land ownership patterns, economic and socioeconomic impacts, and potential threats to the sites do not appear to preclude the study area from becoming a new unit of the National Park System. In addition, ten sites are conditionally feasible, defined in this study as a site where possibility exists that the reason for its current infeasibility could change in the future. Reasons for conditional feasibility include no response from property owners or that property owners want to retain management at this time. Conditionally feasible sites can be reevaluated at a future time if their circumstances change. In addition, six sites are infeasible for inclusion as part of a National Park System unit.

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Sincerely,

Shannon A. Estenoz
Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Tommy Tuberville
The Honorable Katie Britt
The Honorable Terri Sewell (AL-7)



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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Sincerely,

Shannon A. Estenoz
Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Tommy Tuberville
The Honorable Katie Britt
The Honorable Terri Sewell (AL-7)



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Tommy Tuberville
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United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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