



National Park Service
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National Park Service News Release

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National Park Service Considers Mississippi Civil Rights Sites for Park Designation, Seeks Public Input

*Study highlights sites pertinent to the stories of Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, and
Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner*

ATLANTA – The National Park Service (NPS) this week announced it has begun to examine key civil rights sites in Mississippi for possible designation as a national park area and invites the public to weigh-in at the start of the project that could run two years.

“Rigorous research and public opinion help our nation’s leaders determine whether a resource of national significance should be added to the National Park System,” said Ben West, southeast regional chief for planning and compliance with the National Park Service. “The public’s voice is critical to this process. We welcome widespread participation as the National Park Service considers Mississippi-based civil rights sites and stories that helped shape our nation’s history.”

ABOUT THE STUDY

In 2017, the U.S. Congress [passed a law](#) directing NPS to conduct a special resource study of Mississippi’s nationally significant civil rights sites, such as:

- The home in Jackson where civil rights activist Medgar Evers resided with his wife and was killed in 1963.
- Sites in the Mississippi Delta related to the lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till on August 28, 1955, including Bryant’s store and Tallahatchie County Courthouse.
- The Old Neshoba County jail in Philadelphia, Miss., where civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were held for a speeding violation prior to being released and murdered by a mob for registering black voters in 1964. The Reverends Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph David Abernathy Sr. included the jail in a heralded voter registration march two years later.
- The Biloxi office of Dr. Gilbert Mason Sr. who was a principal organizer of “wade-ins” beginning in 1959 to desegregate Biloxi’s public beaches. He also helped organize voter registration drives and led other civil rights initiatives for 33 years.

Other related sites in the state not specifically listed in the legislation may be identified and added to the list of potential study locations.

The purpose of this special resource study is to gather information about the sites through historical research and public input and evaluate the sites' potential for inclusion into the NPS system. The findings – which are reported to Congress through the U.S. Secretary of the Interior – will center on the sites' national significance, suitability, feasibility and need for direct NPS management. Special resource studies can take place over a two-year period, depending on the findings.

PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

The NPS is providing multiple opportunities for public comment and participation during the initial phase of the special resource study to better assess public interest and support.

NPS will hold six Open House forums across Mississippi from May 7 to 10. The NPS study team will explain the special resource study process at the forums, answer questions and gather important information and ideas from the public concerning the study. All Open House forums are free and open to the public.

Open Houses are scheduled for:

Monday, May 7, 2018, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning / Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area
Delta State University
Jacob Conference Center, Ewing Hall
Highway 8 West
Cleveland, Mississippi 38733

Monday, May 7, 2018, 5 – 7 p.m.

Tallahatchie County Courthouse and Emmett Till Interpretive Center
[120 North Court Street](#)
[Sumner, Mississippi 38957](#)

Tuesday, May 8, 2018, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Two Mississippi Museums Auditorium
[222 North Street](#)
[Jackson, Mississippi 39201](#)

Tuesday, May 8, 2018, 5 – 7 p.m.

Medgar Evers Library
[4215 Medgar Evers Blvd](#)
[Jackson, Mississippi 39213](#)

Wednesday, May 9, 2018, 5 – 7 p.m.

The Depot
[256 West Beacon Street](#)
[Philadelphia, Mississippi 39350](#)

Thursday, May 10, 2018, 5 – 7 p.m.

Biloxi Visitor Center
[1050 Beach Boulevard](#)
[Biloxi, Mississippi 39201](#)

Written comments are requested by June 1, 2018 and may be submitted during the Open House forums, online at parkplanning.nps.gov/MSCR_SRS or through postal mail to:

Mississippi Civil Rights Sites Special Resource Study
Attn: Justin Henderson
National Park Service- Denver Service Center
[12795 W. Alameda Parkway](http://12795.W.Alameda.Parkway)
[Lakewood, CO 80228](http://Lakewood.CO.80228)

For further information, contact NPS project manager Justin Henderson at 303-969-2540 or Ben West at 404-507-5700.

BACKGROUND

Many historians identify the 1955 murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till and the exoneration of his killers as one of the defining moments of the modern civil rights movement in America. This period culminated in Mississippi with the 1964 Freedom Summer project to register African American voters and seat Freedom Party delegates at the Democratic National Convention. That year was also marked by the murders of Mississippi Freedom Summer volunteers Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner. During the decade in between, the struggle for civil rights and equality in deeply segregated Mississippi was shaped by people who risked their lives and faced adversity in their quest for freedom.

The Mississippi Civil Rights Sites Special Resource Study explores the most significant people and places representing civil rights history in Mississippi. Information about these sites, the special resource study process, project status updates and more are available at parkplanning.nps.gov/MSCR_SRS.

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