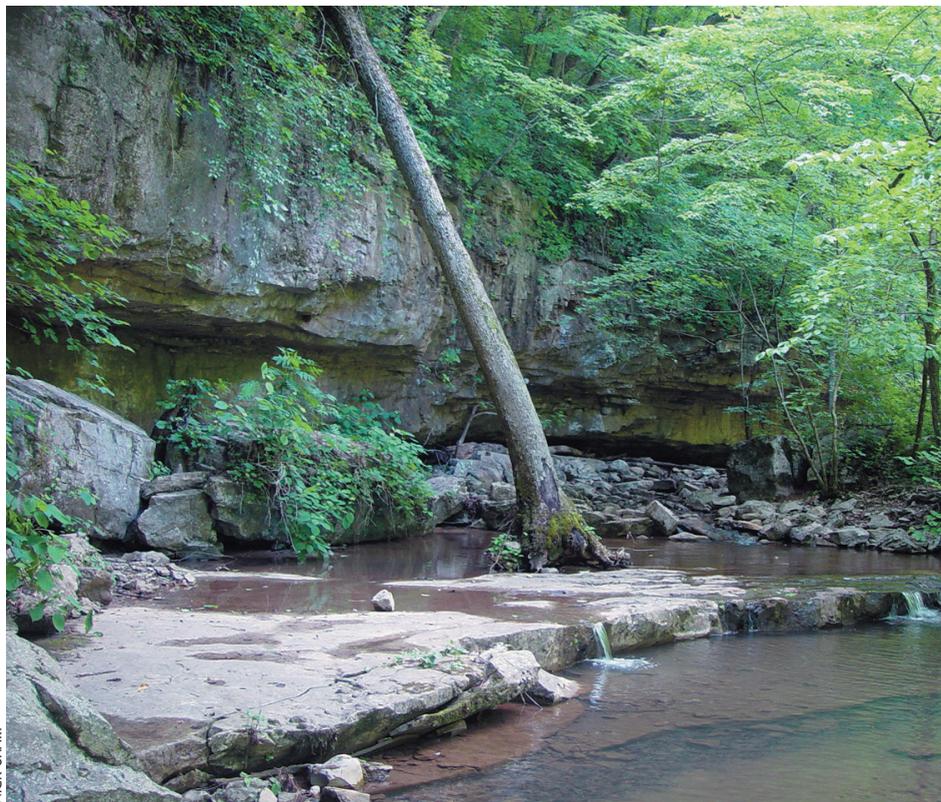




## Walls of Jericho, Post Oak Flat, and Henshaw Cove Tracts

**Location:** Jackson County, 15,827 acres

**Mgmt Objectives:** habitat conservation, outdoor recreation, scientific research and education



NICK SHARP

**T**HE WALLS OF JERICHO, POST OAK FLATS, AND HENSHAW Cove tracts are cooperatively managed by the State Lands Division and the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division as a Nature Preserve, Recreation Area, and Wildlife Management Area. The hunting and fishing programs on these tracts are managed by the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division as part of James D. Martin - Skyline Wildlife Management Area. Hunting regulations for these tracts follow the seasons and limits established for the WMA.

### Ecological Importance

What makes these tracts so ecologically important? Aside from its large size and the aesthetic beauty of the tract's limestone canyon, what makes these lands more unique than a comparable gem located at Little River Canyon? To answer this, we have to take

a look at the Paint Rock River.

The Paint Rock River watershed begins just north of the state line at the headwaters of Estill Fork, Larkin Fork, and Hurricane Creek. Hurricane Creek is almost entirely contained within the confines of the Walls of Jericho tract. It is remote and entirely forested, and its stream has the highest water-quality in Alabama. As testament to this fact, several species of federally endangered mussels and fish are found within Hurricane Creek, but no other locations in Alabama, and two species of mussels are found nowhere else in the world. The Paint Rock River also hosts more fish than any other similarly-sized river in the country. No other tributary watershed to the Tennessee River can rival the Paint Rock River's ecological significance. Protecting it provides tremendous gains in water quality and aquatic habitat protection.

Additionally, the land is host to numerous unique natural communities that support an abundance of rare Appalachian wildlife. White nodding trillium, Cumberland rosinweed, limerock arrowwood, bloodroot, yellow lady slipper, Dutchman's breeches, and yellow tree are just a few of the uncommon plants found in these tracts whose forests shelter a tremendous diversity of herbaceous plants, and an equally diverse animal population. Hooded warblers, Kentucky warblers, blue-winged warblers, chestnut-sided warbler, ruffled grouse, green salamanders, four-toed salamanders, mountain chorus frogs, and the Eastern milk snake can all be found here, as can the unique cerulean warbler, which was previously only

known to occur within Bankhead National Forest. There are also many cave-dwelling species that make their home in these tracts: grey bats, Indiana bats, Rafinesque's big-eared bat, the Tennessee Cave salamander, and the Alleghany woodrat.

### Recreational Opportunity

Bird watching, backpacking, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, stream fishing, and wildflower viewing are all accommodated on Alabama's Walls of Jericho Tract. There are several new trailhead parking areas north of the community of Hytop, off of Highway 79. There are also several new recreational trails, developed by State Lands Division personnel.

A 2.1 mile hiking trail that begins at the parking area at Alabama Highway 79 leads to a small primitive campsite near Clark Cemetery at the mouth of the small limestone canyon that forms the Walls of Jericho. From there, visitors can follow Turkey Creek upstream, or continue another half mile on a small trail leading up the side of the canyon above Turkey Creek. The marked trail ends at the Alabama/Tennessee state line, but many visitors continue upstream above a small waterfall and into an area known as the amphitheater, where the stream has eroded the limestone and formed a bowl-like formation.

Trail construction efforts also include an 8.3 mile horse trail that begins at a dedicated horse trailer parking area and ends at the mouth of the walls. A small hitching area

allows riders to rest their horses here and walk the remaining distance into the canyon.

Both of these trails have been well used over the past four years, and annual visitation continues to be about 15,000 visitors annually, supporting the possibility of a hundred-mile trail system being created on the tract over the next five years. Tennessee officials have also created new trails, and are coordinating their development so that these trails can be linked with Alabama's trail system

Visitors should remember that the entire 12,510 acre tract is just an addition to the already existing 28,167 acre Skyline Wildlife Management Area, creating a 45,690-acre tract that supports fantastic hunting opportunities. Deer, turkey, quail, and other small game are abundant, and with limited road access west of Alabama Highway 79, there is the opportunity for unique walk-in hunting adventures.

### Summary

The Walls of Jericho, Post Oak Flat and Henshaw Cove represent some of Alabama's crowning achievements in land conservation. They were made possible through the persistence, patience and dedication of many conservation-minded people. Years ago their conservation was our hope... Today, they are Forever Wild.

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**For more information** about the Forever Wild Program visit: [www.alabamaforeverwild.com](http://www.alabamaforeverwild.com)

### Walls of Jericho Tract

**Date Purchased: February 26, 2004**  
**Acreage: 21,453**

The Walls of Jericho tract lies on the Tennessee border, and it is made up of mountains, woods, caves, springs, rocky bluffs, and portions of the headwaters of the Paint Rock River. It was purchased in partnership with the Alabama chapter of The Nature Conservancy. The tract is adjacent to Skyline Wildlife Management area on its western boundary.

**Directions:** From Highway 72 just west of Scottsboro, turn north on Highway 79 and travel approximately 20 miles, through the town of Hytop. The hiker's parking lot is on the left after the horse trail parking lot.

### Post Oak Flat Tract

**Date Purchased: May 16, 2006**  
**Acreage: 2,433**

Post-Oak Flat tract adjoins the Walls of Jericho tract and is comprised of mountainous and wooded terrain, hosting caves, springs, rocky bluffs and portions of the headwaters of the Big Coon Creek and Mud Creek watersheds. An additional 1,223 acres of forest habitat were acquired by the State Lands Division in partnership with the Alabama Forestry Commission and the Forever Wild Program. Both parcels are adjacent to Skyline Wildlife Management Area on its southern boundary.

### Henshaw Cove Tract

**Date Purchased: February 28, 2008**  
**Acreage: 701**

Henshaw Cove tract adjoins the Skyline Wildlife Management Area and is comprised of mountainous and wooded terrain, hosting caves, springs, rocky bluffs as well as grassy coves and riparian forests bordering the junction of Estill Fork and Hurricane Creek, which are two of the three principal tributaries that form the Paint Rock River. An additional 873 acres of forest habitat were acquired by the State Lands Division in partnership with the Alabama Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, the Alabama Forestry Commission and the Forever Wild Program.

*left:* Along the south side of Turkey Creek, just before reaching the terminus, lies an exposed limestone cliff.

*below:* Years of water scour has shaped the large amphitheatre and created numerous fissures within the limestone, from which water flows during heavy rains.

