

December 15, 2023

[REDACTED]
National Natural Landmarks Program [REDACTED]
U.S. National Park Service
[REDACTED]

Re: Black River Nomination to be a National Natural Landmark

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We are writing to express our wholehearted support for the nomination of the Black River as a National Natural Landmark. The Black River holds a unique and invaluable place in North Carolina's natural heritage, and its recognition as a National Natural Landmark is not only well-deserved but also important for the preservation of its ecological and historical significance.

Just a few of the reasons for our support include:

- The Black River is the largest expanse of old-growth swamp forest in North America.
 - This area is home to the eastern bald cypress, the oldest known species of wetland trees and the oldest trees in North America east of the Rockies. These ancient trees date from 1000 to 3000 years in age and can only be found alongside the Black River's meandering waters.
 - Such ancient trees are not only important for their ecological significance; they are also scientifically valuable for investigating climate history and predicting climate changes.
- The Black River supports numerous rare plant and animal species.
 - More than two dozen plant and animal species found in this area are recognized as endangered, threatened or of state special concern, such as the federally endangered northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), proposed endangered tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), broadtail madtom (*Noturus* sp.), Cape Fear spike (*Elliptio marsupiobesa*), pod lance (*Elliptio lanceolata*), eastern lampmussel (*Lampsis radiata*), and federally threatened wood stork (*Mycteria americana*).
 - Many other charismatic wildlife species inhabit the river's floodplain, including bobcat, river otter, black bear, water snakes, alligators, and songbirds like the prothonotary warbler and yellow-throated vireo.

We believe that the Black River, with its stunning landscapes, unique ecosystems, and historical significance is an ideal candidate for inclusion in the National Park system. We urge you to consider Southern Conservation Partners' nomination thoughtfully and support the efforts to ensure the protection and preservation of the Black River for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Maclean D. Asbill".

Mary Maclean Asbill
Director, North Carolina Offices

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ramona H. McGee".

Ramona H. McGee
Senior Attorney and Leader of the Wildlife Program

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa Edmonds".

Melissa Edmonds
Science and Policy Analyst

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Derb Carter".

Derb Carter
Senior Advisor and Attorney