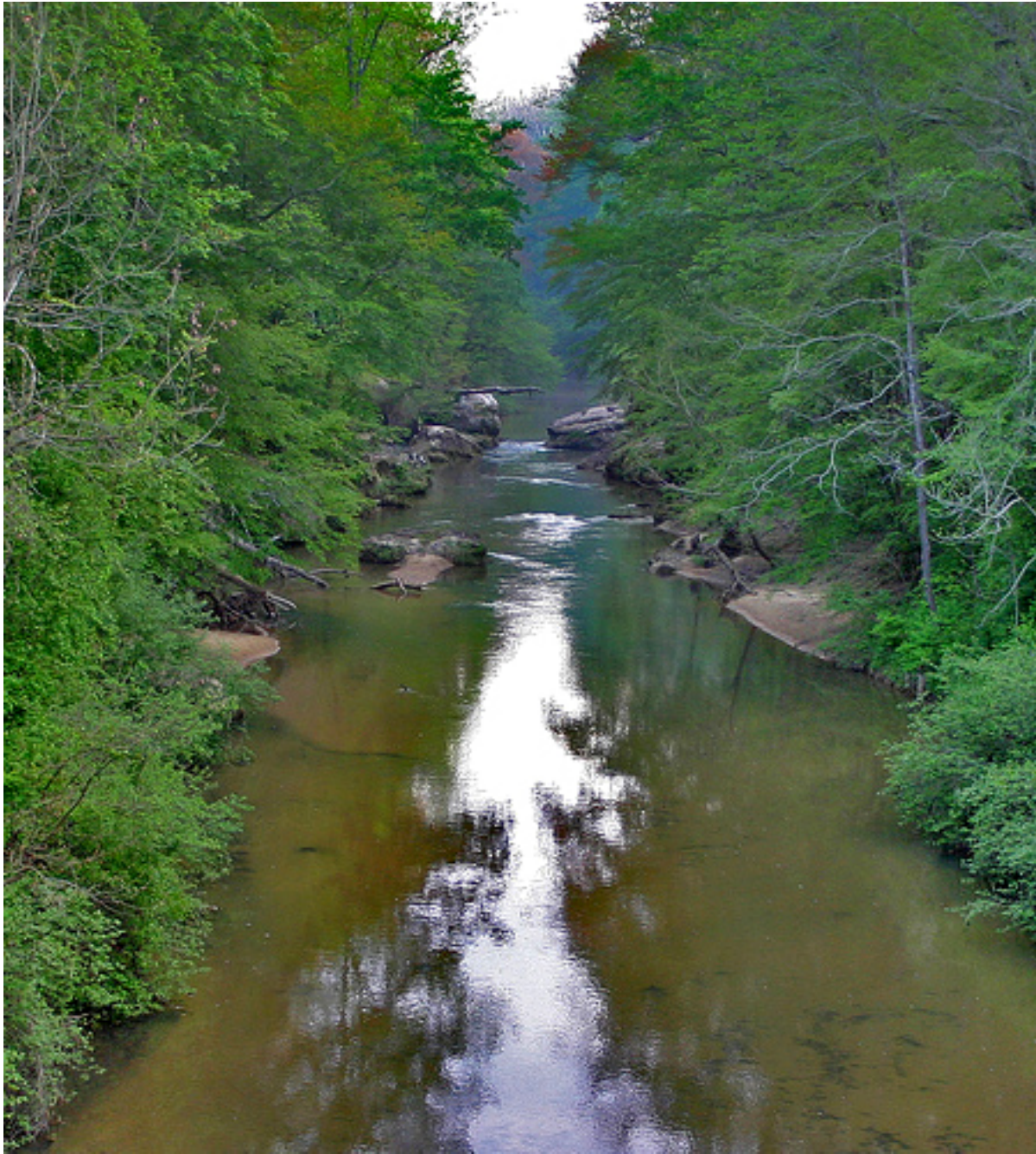


## Bankhead National Forest



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Originally set aside as an Alabama Purchase Unit in 1918 and named the Alabama National Forest, the Bankhead was renamed in 1942 in honor of [William B. Bankhead](#), a U.S. congressman from 1917 to 1940 and a member of [Walker](#)

[County](#)'s powerful Bankhead family. Its 198,385 acres are located in the northwestern part of the state in parts of [Lawrence](#), [Winston](#), and [Franklin](#) Counties. The forest lies in the Cumberland Plateau physiographic section, and the topography consists of high bluffs and sloping ridges that lead to steep gorges, waterfalls, and stream bottoms. Bankhead also contains stands of large old-growth hardwoods including oak, maple, beech, and black gum. The Bee Branch area is home to a 150-foot tulip poplar that is approximately 500 years old. Mixed hardwood stands, piney woods, and abundant streams and rivers provide excellent habitat for native animals and plants.

There are five recreation areas, 80 miles of hiking trails, and 40 miles of horseback trails. [Canoers and kayakers](#) may paddle a portion of the 61-mile Sipsey Wild and Scenic River, Alabama's only river so designated. The forest is also home to the 25,000-acre Sipsey Wilderness. Established in 1975, it is Alabama's first wilderness area and the result of a 10-year effort by [Mary Ivy Burks](#) and the Alabama Conservancy (now the Alabama Environmental Council) and other conservationists in the state. The area features undisturbed plant and animal species, sandstone cliffs, sloping canyon walls, and cascading waterfalls.

Archeologists have found hundreds of stone piles in Bankhead, believed to be the burial mounds of ancient peoples dating back some 8,000 years to the [Woodland Period](#) (10,000 BC to 1000 AD). Native American relics can be found around the cultural heritage grounds of the forest. These areas include old settler roads, American Indian trails and sites, and ancient rock carvings.