

Talladega National Forest



American Chestnut in Talladega National Forest

The federal government purchased the land now encompassed by Talladega National Forest in 1936 as part of an effort to restore clearcut timberlands and farmlands no longer capable of producing crops. The reserve's 375,000 acres are divided among three ranger districts: Oakmulgee, Shoal Creek, and Talladega. The Oakmulgee District, located in west-central Alabama, includes sections of [Hale](#), [Tuscaloosa](#), [Bibb](#), [Perry](#), [Chilton](#), and [Dallas](#) Counties. Located in the East Gulf Coastal Plain physiographic section, the land is level, with moderately sloping ridges and broad floodplains. The Oakmulgee had been a natural longleaf pine community with native grasses and low shrubs. Extensive timbering and replanting with loblolly pine during the settlement period of the nineteenth century attracted the pine beetle and greatly reduced the population of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, which nests in mature longleaf pine forests with grassy undergrowth. Reforestation and controlled burning of undergrowth have restored and protected nesting sites.

The contiguous Shoal Creek and Talladega Districts are located in northeastern Alabama in portions of [Cherokee](#), [Calhoun](#), [Cleburne](#), [Talladega](#), and [Clay](#) Counties. The districts straddle both the Alabama [Valley and Ridge](#) and [Piedmont Upland](#) physiographic sections, and the topography principally consists of upland hills and low mountains.

The Pinhoti National Trail System runs for 102 miles through the Talladega National Forest, and the 29-mile Talladega Scenic Mile Drive accesses Alabama's highest point, Cheaha Mountain (2,407 feet), located within [Cheaha State Park](#) in the northern Shoal Creek District.



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The Shoal Creek District includes Alabama's other federally recognized wilderness areas. The 7,245-acre Cheaha Wilderness was designated in 1983, and the 9,222-acre Dugger Mountain Wilderness, named for the 2,140-foot Dugger Mountain, was established in 1999. Dugger lies at the northernmost edge of the Talladega Mountain Range, with its peak of 2,140 feet being the second highest in Alabama. The land is unsuitable for logging because of its ridge lines, deep ravines, and rock outcroppings, but these features make it an excellent primitive area. During recent years, archeologists have found prehistoric rock shelters and artifacts indicating that the area was a habitation site during the early [Archaic period](#).