



Explore the River

Just downstream from Wilson Dam lies a series of trails maintained by the Tennessee Valley Authority. Starting at the Visitor Center, explore the trails as they meander along the riverbank and through the forest.

1 Wilson Dam Visitor Center

The Visitor Center at Wilson Dam is the perfect place to begin exploring the area. The center provides an overview of the history of Muscle Shoals and how it has been central to the development of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

2 Rockpile Trail

This 2.7-mile trail takes visitors along the river from Wilson Dam to the Old First Quarters Small Wild Area. The trail traverses everything from bluffs to woodlands.

3 Old First Quarters Trail

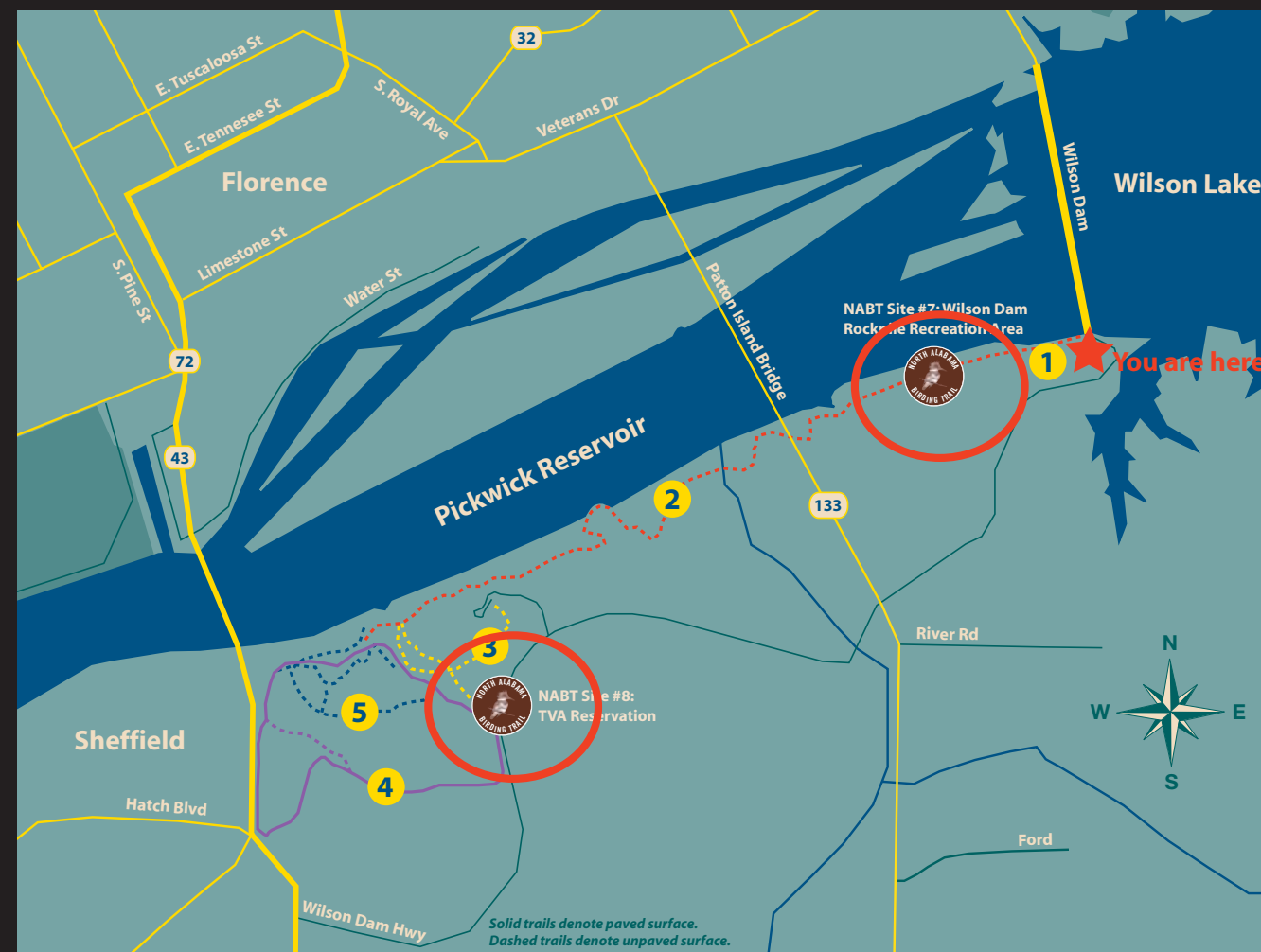
This trail is named for the World War I era building complex that housed the officers of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who constructed Wilson Dam.

4 Muscle Shoals Trail

The paved Muscle Shoals Trail is perfect for bicycling or a walk through the woods. The trail offers great views of Pickwick Lake and provides excellent exercise with frequent climbs and descents.

5 Southport Historical Trail

A comprehensive interpretive guide will lead you back through a cross section of Tennessee Valley history from the Civil War to the Civilian Conservation Corps.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo/Cornell Lab of Ornithology, L. Page Brown

Land Birds

Many of the trails near Wilson Dam wind through a variety of forested habitats. These trails are at their best during spring and early summer when the Yellow-billed Cuckoo can be heard croaking from overhead and Swainson's Warbler can be found with a little patience and some luck.



Great Blue Heron/USFWS, Lee Karney

Water Birds

Wilson Dam and the upper end of Pickwick Reservoir are both known to harbor good numbers of gulls and waterfowl during the winter and nesting wading birds during the summer. A number of very rare Alabama birds have been found here on a fairly regular basis.



Sharp-lobed Hepatica/Mary Jeanne Packer, FERMATA, Inc.

Wild Flowers and Ferns

Walk the Old First Quarters Trail to see a profusion of wildflowers each spring. Search the forest floor for such species as Trillium, Jacob's Ladder, and Chickweed. The lush undergrowth along the trail abounds with ferns. Maiden Hair, Christmas, and Resurrection ferns can all be found.



Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee River prior to impoundment by Wilson Dam

History

On top of its impressive natural beauty, this area is rich in history. The taming of Muscle Shoals, the important research that put a stop to malaria in the valley, and the production of immeasurable amounts of electricity are just a few of the documented accomplishments of this area.