

History of Frozen Head State Park

In the early 1800's, settlers from the mountainous regions of Scotland and Wales moved into the area and built homesteads in the high mountains. The German settlers established the nearby town of Wartburg. The mountains were rich in natural resources and after the Civil War, land speculators and northern industrialist began buying land for its valuable timber and coal reserves.

In 1894, the state acquired a large area in Morgan County as a location for the Brushy Mountain State Prison. The coal was deep mined using convict labor and the forest area supplied the timber for the mine props.

Between 1911 and 1915, the forest was heavily cut over in a steam skidder operation. The timber was sold and the Emory River Lumber Company built a railroad from the mill site at Gobey over which the logs were hauled. In later years, portable sawmills re-worked the area, cutting practically all of the merchantable timber. Logging was completed by about 1925.

In May of 1933, Governor McAllister proclaimed a large part of the prison lands as Morgan State Forest to be managed by the Forestry Division. Shortly afterwards, a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was established on the Forest. Inasmuch as forest fires and trespass protection was of primary importance, a lookout tower was erected on Frozen Head Mountain. Fire control roads and trails were constructed, the boundaries surveyed and marked and a ranger's headquarters was built along Flat Fork Creek. The CCC camp disbanded in 1941 at the onset of W.W.II.

In the fall of 1952 the entire state forest was burned by the worst forest fire season in state history. The forestland was transferred to the Parks Division in 1970 and the area was designated as Frozen Head State Park.

In 1973, an additional 2,650 acres were transferred from the remaining acres at Brushy Mountain Prison. In recent years, two other small land acquisitions have brought the total to 11, 876 acres. In 1988, all of the Frozen Head State Park acreage except approximately 330 acres was classified as Natural Area. The 330 acres lie in the Flat Fork and Judge Branch watersheds below the 1600-foot elevation contour line, and all present and future park developments will be limited to this recreation area.