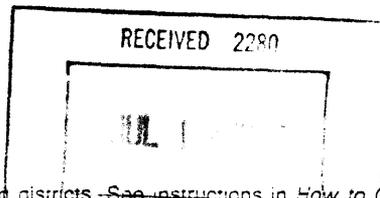


# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



896

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir

other names/site number 22-Jo-631

### 2. Location



### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kimberly H. P. Deak July 10, 1997  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

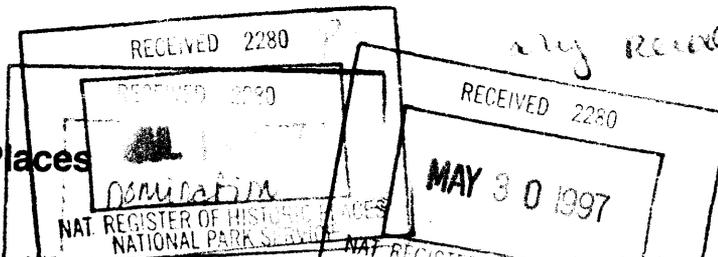
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Edson W. Beall 8/15/97

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



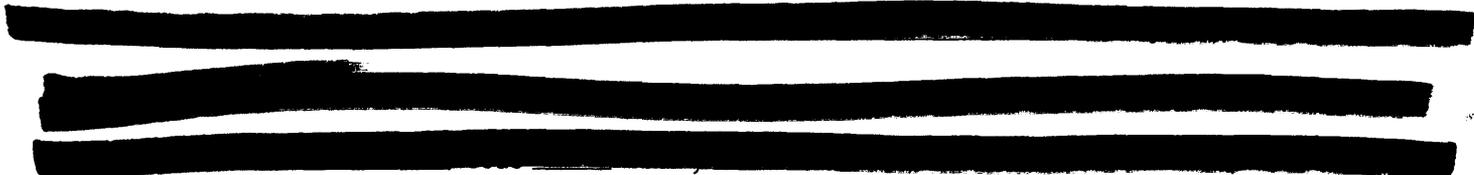
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Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
 State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: <input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet. <input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet. <input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____ _____ _____	Signature of the Keeper _____ _____ _____ _____	Date of Action _____ _____ _____ _____
---	---	--

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
1	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	_____	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Subsistence/ fishing facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other/ fishweir

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_

walls \_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_

other Stone/ catahoula sandstone

Wood/ posts

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering  
Maritime History  
Archaeology: Historic-Non-Aboriginal

**Period of Significance**

1870s - 1930s

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Henry C. Smith

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Miss. Dept. of Archives & History

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property [REDACTED]

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

3	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Connaway/ archaeologist

organization Miss.Dept. of Archives & History date Jan.21, 1997

street & number 100 South State St. telephone 601-359-6940

city or town Jackson state MS zip code 39201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Bud Smith

street & number 592 River Road telephone 601-752-2684

city or town Ellisville state MS zip code 39437

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7Page 1Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir  
Jones County, Mississippi

## Narrative Description:

The Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir is a rock dam structure built in a V-shape. There was an opening at the apex of the dam, with a short rock dam chute extending downstream in which was placed a wooden box type fishtrap.

along with fish swimming in it, was diverted by the two wings of the rock dam through the chute and trap. It functioned as a device for the procurement of fish en masse for people in the local area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The setting (see sketch map) consists of the Leaf River, situated in a deep valley between hills ranging from thirty feet higher than the river on the west side to one hundred feet higher than the river on the east side. The blufftop just to the east of the weir is shown on the Moselle quadrangle map as two hundred seventy feet above sea level. At the base of the bluff is an outcrop of Catahoula sandstone.

The shorter east wing of the dam terminates at the base of this rubble pile. The weir chute and trap were situated near [redacted]. The longer west wing of the dam extends at an angle upstream toward [redacted].

At some point in time, the current cut into the west bank near the west end of the weir and the channel diverted around it, where it is presently about eleven to twelve meters (36-39.4 ft.) wide. Both sides of the river at this point are covered by forests of pine, oaks, and other hardwoods. It is not clear where an access road may have been, but it presumably came down to the east bank in the lower valley area south of the weir. The owners have a small, recently built cabin on top of the bluff above the weir, but it is not visible from the riverbank below.

It is not known exactly what year the weir was built, but according to the present owner, Bud Smith, his grandfather, Henry C. Smith and some other unidentified men built it. Henry was born in 1862 or 1863, so by 1880 he would have been about 18 years old and presumably mature enough to attempt such a construction. He wasn't married until 1897, when he was about 33 years old, so if the trap was built to help support a family, it may have been constructed around this time. It had been abandoned before Bud was born in 1936. Since Bud's father and grandfather are no longer living, he and his son were the only living sources of information available. Supplementary geneological information was derived from the U.S. Census For 1900 and from Strickland, et. al. 1994. The taking of game fish by means of fishweirs was outlawed in Mississippi in 1922 (Laws of Mississippi 1922), but some continued in operation with certain restrictions (essentially that they not completely obstruct the passage of fish or any body of running water) into the 1930s. Thus it is suggested that this one was built and in operation sometime between the late 1870s and the early 1930s.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2 Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir  
Jones County, Mississippi

## Narrative Description (continued):

The east and west wings of the dam were built of Catahoula sandstone rocks ranging in size from small gravel up to 140 cm (4.6 ft.) in length. Most were in the 20 to 80 cm range, the larger ones measured averaging 66.2 x 46.3 cm. The larger the rocks, the less apt they are to be moved by river current, so most were generally as big as one or two men could carry. Gaps were filled in with smaller ones. In other weir examples, a log or pole crib was built on both sides of a wing to hold the rocks in place, but only one possible pole was found protruding from the west wing. If there were such supports in this weir, they have long since rotted or washed away.

The longer west wing is 44 meters (144.32 ft.) long, measured from the northwest corner trap post to the last rock at the end of that wing. The width of the top part of the dam, visible above water level, ranges from 160 cm (5.2 ft.) to 298 cm (9.8 ft.). The part below surface gets wider as it approaches the river bottom. The shorter east wing is 15 meters (49.2 ft.) long, measured from the northeast corner trap post to the last rock where it joins the rubble pile on the east bank. The width of the top visible portion is around 450 cm (14.8 ft.). Most of the lower portion of this wing is buried in silt and gravel.

At the apex opening or head of the chute, rocks have either been placed there or washed in at one time, blocking the chute entrance. They appear to have been placed there, possibly to inhibit current flow and forming a calm pool between the weir wings. A fishing or swimming hole is suggested, but this is not known. The chute, which consisted of a row of rocks on either side of the trap, [REDACTED] from the weir apex about 12 meters (39.5 ft.) and was about 4 to 5 meters (13.1 to 16.4 ft.) in outside width.

The only remaining portion of the trap consists of the four pine support/anchor posts in the chute. These are rectangular in cross-section, being sawed beams somewhat like cross-ties. They range from 13 to 15 cm (5 to 6 inches) thick by 17 to 20 cm (ca. 7 to 8 inches) wide and are buried vertically to an unknown depth. An estimation of the size of the missing trap can be made from the placement of these posts. The two on the east side, including their greatest widths, are 5.58 meters (18.3 ft.) apart, while their counterparts' spacing on the west side is 4.78 meters (15.7 ft.). Assuming the two posts at the south end supported the elevated south end of the trap and the two at the north end supported and anchored the side beams of the trap somewhere along their length, then the trap had to have been over 18.3 feet long. Total length would have depended somewhat on how deep the front end would be to touch river bottom and the angle at which the trap was tilted. The north end posts, including their thicknesses, are 2.7 meters (8.9 ft.) apart, while the two at the south end are 2.6 meters (8.5 ft.) apart. These are very close measurements and suggest the greatest outside width of the trap to have been from 8.5 to 9 feet

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir  
Jones County, Mississippi

## Narrative Description (continued)

By comparison, a box trap with interior, stepped slats was recorded in Ponta Creek, Lauderdale County, Mississippi, by Mississippi Department of Archives & History archaeologist John Connaway in September, 1994. It consisted of two large side beams 19.5 to 20 feet long connected by cross-beams to which were attached three interior tiers or steps of wooden slats. These slats were separated by an inch or so to allow water to pass through the trap, but to seine out any larger fish, which got trapped behind each step. There were vertical boards at each side to prevent fish from escaping, and the whole trap was elevated at an angle on posts at the lower or back end, sloping down to the stream bed at the upper end or mouth. This trap was 5.64 feet in outside width. The Fishtrap Bluff trap was apparently about the same length, around 20 feet or so, but about 3 to 3½ feet wider. A similar, if not identical, construction style is suggested.

The only changes or deterioration due to neglect and natural elements over the past sixty years of non-use include the following:

- (a) The trap is gone, except for the four support/anchor posts still in place in the chute. The upper portions of the posts badly eroded, but the buried portions are intact in their original positions.
- (b) The opening at the mouth of the chute/trap is now closed with rock fill. It is not known if this was intentionally done or a result of natural rock displacement by the river current.
- (c) Some displacement of rocks in the sides of the chute has occurred, leaving a somewhat scattered alignment there.
- (d) Except for minor displacement of some rocks along the edges by river current, the two weir wings are essentially in place.
- (e) Any log or pole crib remnants that may have been part of the structure have disappeared, with the possible exception of one pole protruding from the west wing. It is leaning at an angle and is not presently interpretable.

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4 Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir  
Jones County, Mississippi

## Narrative Statement of Significance:

The significance of the Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir lies primarily in two areas, engineering and maritime history. These two areas are inter-related in this case in that the techniques used to construct the weir, the design principles by which it operated, and its function are all derived from an historical continuum dating back hundreds of years in pre-historic North America. Fishweir technology and utilization have been recorded over much of North America from, for example, as early as the Seabasticook Fishweir in Maine, dating between 1,760 and 5,080 B.P. (Petersen et.al.1994:197-223), until as late as the 1950s. Hubbert and Wright (1987:100) estimate the use of fishweirs at least as early as the Middle Archaic period, possibly earlier. In Alabama, many of the earlier rock fishweirs were repaired and used by Euro-Americans up until the early 1950s when they were outlawed there (Hubbert and Wright 1987:100). Such weirs were in use in Tennessee at least up until ca. 1939, although the State Department of Game and Fish tried to discourage their use by dynamiting them as early as 1915 (Cobb 1978:45). The use of weirs to catch game fish and the construction of weirs that completely blocked any running streams were outlawed in Mississippi in 1922 (Laws of Mississippi 1922), but with certain restrictions were still in use as late as 1938 (Connaway, in press).

The design and construction techniques remained essentially unchanged over the long period of time mentioned above. With the exception of tidal weirs and special types built as traps around flowing springs, the basic design is a V-shaped dam with an opening for a trap at the downstream apex of the V. Depending on availability of materials, the dams were constructed of either large rocks or wooden poles or posts driven into the stream bottom, or combinations thereof. The preferable rock dams were more stable against stream current force. If posts were used, some form of obstruction was attached or woven between them to prevent fish from escaping. This included brush, limbs, woven mats, boards, hogwire, and chicken wire. In both cases, there was usually a short chute constructed at the mouth of the weir where the trap was placed.

In prehistoric times, traps varied, including woven baskets, fenced enclosures, nets, and other similar devices. In historic times, traps were usually constructed like a rectangular box, sloping upward toward the lower end, with open slats in the bottom for passage of water and small unusable fish. The slats were arranged in tiers, stair-step fashion, so that fish passing over them would fall behind the end of each step and get caught there. Though only four anchor posts remain of the trap at the Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir, the dam and chute, along with the positioning of the posts, remain as a prime example of this type of fish procurement technology.

The function of the weir also remains unchanged through the ages, that of mass procurement of fish for food at times when local communities were dependent to some extent on natural resources for subsistence. At a certain

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5 Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir  
Jones County, Mississippi

## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued):

time of year when some species of fish are spawning, these weirs were operating at their peak and were of great economic importance to the people who used them. They provided an easily acquired meat source in areas and at times when meat was not plentiful. This was especially true during prehistoric times, during the early European settlement of this country, and even during the depression era of the 1930s.

The Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir represents one of the best preserved fishdams recorded to date in Mississippi, exemplary of the style and construction techniques used during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to the descendants of its builder, it served to feed numerous people in the surrounding area, where the community was scattered on farms and small towns. Wagon-loads of fish were reportedly hauled from the weir, and people came from as far away as Mobile, Alabama, to trade for goods in the area, including fish caught there. It is significant in that it illustrates the practical application of specific design and construction techniques to build a structure to serve certain human needs, the procurement of a necessary type of food.

It is also significant in that it was the result of a community effort and activity to serve community needs during difficult times. It thus fits into the context of local community history and significance, as well as representing the state-wide significance of similar endeavors in other parts of Mississippi during this particular time frame. It is an expression of late nineteenth through early twentieth century community life and community involvement and sharing in an economic endeavor that cannot be readily seen in other remaining structures from that period.

It might also be considered of national significance in that it reflects an historic function and technology that was in common use over most all of the eastern United States for hundreds of years, but which is no longer legal and thus relegated to a niche in the prehistoric and historic past. It is typical of such structures that were commonplace throughout much of North America during times past, serving a function that has since been replaced by other commercial enterprises and technologies. This structure is a good specimen of its type and thus an important example of a particular building practice during its limited time in history, related to its predecessors through a cultural tradition carried on for centuries by prehistoric peoples and inherited by Euro-American settlers. It is part of our heritage that is fast disappearing through such modern practices as stream channelization, along with natural erosion, silting, and channel displacement.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 6

Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir  
Jones County, Mississippi

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In Press. The fishweirs of Mississippi. Mississippi Department of Archives & History, Archaeological Reports.

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Laws of Mississippi, 1922.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir  
Jones County, Mississippi

Section number 10 Page 7

Verbal Boundary Description: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Boundary Justification: T [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

the four imbedded trap posts being the only permanent elements of the weir not likely to ever be displaced by the river current. Thus, the combination of part section and the arbitrarily drawn [REDACTED] enclosure on the diagram was used for the boundary description.