

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF ALABAMA

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State Geologist



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April 6, 2020

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of renovating the Red Mountain roadcut. As you may know, this site is designated as a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior, and is unique in many ways.

The Red Mountain roadcut exposes an incredible assemblage of geologic ages and structures impossible to see anywhere else in one place. The road cuts through 160 million years of geologic history, exposing a number of important geologic units, including the Red Mountain Formation. This unit is the richest iron-bearing unit in the State, and was the driver of Birmingham's (and much of Alabama's) economic growth and prosperity during the industrial age. Additionally, the roadcut exposes the mountain's complex interior structure and faults - a testament to the great tectonic forces that built the Appalachian Mountains and valleys underlying the city.

Universities from several states have visited this roadcut over the years to learn about Birmingham's economic geology and Appalachian Mountains, but it is becoming increasingly difficult for these learning opportunities to continue because of the growing inaccessibility. I encourage you to consider renovating the walkway of this cut as well as clearing away some of the vegetation to better expose the geology if possible. Your help and consideration is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Berry H. Tew, Jr.
State Geologist and
Oil and Gas Supervisor



Brian S. Cook
Geological Survey of Alabama
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03 April, 2020

Mr. Bryson Stephens
Chairman
EBSCO Industries
3800 Old Leeds Rd.
Birmingham, AL 35213

RE: Restoration of the Red Mountain Expressway Cut and Scientific Walkway

Dear Mr. Stephens—

I am writing to you in support of the proposed restoration of the geologic exposure and scientific walkway along the Red Mountain Expressway. I wish to briefly express the points of specific importance to my work here at the Geological Survey of Alabama.

First of all, I am employed as a field mapper, and thus I am familiar with the sandstones of the Red Mountain Formation, which extend throughout the Appalachians of Alabama (and into northwestern Georgia, where I conducted some of my graduate field research). In fact, I have been mapping the Red Mountain Formation over the last two years in the area between Gadsden and Fort Payne. The Red Mountain Expressway cut provides a complete view of the formation, which has been used as an example and point of reference for decades. Consequently, a restored and readily accessible expressway cut and walkway that gives geologists a refreshed view of the formation would be of great significance. As a field mapper, I would not only appreciate the access to the complete rock record for correlation elsewhere, but also the access to fossils, sedimentary features of varying scales, etc., all of which are used by a wide range of geoscientists in the southern Appalachians and beyond.

Secondly, I have been involved in outreach in my nearly four years here at the Geological Survey of Alabama and have visited some schools across central Alabama. Invariably, I will get questions from the students about the local rocks. A restored scientific walkway would provide students an invaluable field trip opportunity, and any of the outreach scientists at the Geological Survey of Alabama could meet students there to give an overview, guide tours, and answer questions. A refurbished walkway would be a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate to the young students about the importance of the Red Mountain Formation--not just geologically, but even more paramount to the history and economy of both Alabama and Birmingham.

Please contact me if I can be of any further assistance in this matter. You may reach me via my mailing address, email at bcook@gsa.state.al.us or call my personal mobile phone at (832) 296-6155.

Kind regards,



Brian Cook, Ph.D.
Geologist II