FOR THE TEACHER
The goal of Whole Places is to bring awareness and understanding to places along the Mississippi Gulf Coast that contribute to the culture, heritage, and ecology of the state. The sites have been carefully selected to show diversity in flora, fauna, culture, and place.

OPENING THE LESSON
Read a brief history of the Phoenix Naval Stores and the surrounding Turkey Creek Watersheds communities, making sure to highlight/repeat the key points. This can be done either on the site, if a field trip is part of the lesson, or in the classroom. The students may also listen to the oral histories provided (available online) and look through the attached photos.

HISTORY
- Address: Rippy & Creosote Road - Gulfport, MS
- National Register of Historic Places, 2009

History of the area:
In 1866, a group of emancipated African Americans settled on 320 acres alongside Turkey Creek. The land was formerly owned by the Arkansas Lumber Company, and freed slaves, Thomas and Melinda Benton sought to acquire fifty percent of the land in the community. The settlers that acquired land in the coming years purchased from the Bentons.

The creosote industry was crucial to the survival of the Turkey Creek community, located in the heart of Gulfport. “The factory was built in the community at the turn of the century, when the community matriarch, Melinda Benton, sold land to the Gulfport Creosoting Company on the condition that local men were employed there. It is part of the community’s proud history of self-determination, but also a story tainted by poverty wages, physical harm to workers and environmental degradation.”

Phoenix Naval Stores was responsible for employing many African Americans from the surrounding community of Turkey Creek and was once part of this area’s bustling timber industry. The store was used to support the nearby creosote plant, which was the scene of a massive explosion in the 1940s which killed eleven men, and ultimately resulted in the closing of Phoenix Naval Stores. After the business closed, the office was converted to a residence, and today the building stands as one of the few remaining structures from the booming timber industry.

Phoenix Naval Stores sat vacant for twenty years and suffered significant damage during Hurricane Katrina. The building was purchased by Turkey Creek Community activist, Derrick Evans, to prevent its demolition. A partnership between the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, Gulf Coast Community Design Studio, the University of Southern Mississippi, the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area and Turkey Creek Community initiatives is seeking funding to restore the building for its use as a community center.
Ecology:
Turkey Creek is considered a freshwater marsh and coastal hardwood forest. Live oaks flourish in this area, and surround the meandering creek as is flows 12.9 miles southeast to Bayou Bernard. This waterway is popular for swimming, fishing, canoeing, and contributes mightily to the culture and quality of life of the residents. “Native vegetation in the watershed includes those species found in coastal wet pine savannas, mixed southern forests, bayhead swamps, and bottomland hardwood forests. The topography of the watershed is relatively flat creating a slow-moving coastal stream and tidal creek.”

WHAT MAKES PHOENIX NAVAL STORES IMPORTANT?
Phoenix Naval Stores and the Turkey Creek Community is an integral part of the history of the Gulf Coast. This area is a testament to the timber industry in Mississippi and the important role that the African American community played in defining the area. Phoenix Naval Stores is one of the last buildings standing in the neighborhood, and it is an excellent example of

DEVELOPING THE LESSON
Materials needed:
Pencils
Paper
Colored Pencils

If a field trip will be conducted:
• Before arriving at the site, either in the classroom, or on the school bus, explain to the students the history of the building, the significance of the community, and the damage done by Katrina.
• Once on the site, the students should have the area and a guide will direct them around the site and into the surrounding community.

If an in-class lesson will be conducted:
• Explain to the students the history of the building, the significance of the community, and the damage being done.
• Allow the students to explore the community via photos, oral histories, and videos (all resources found at: wholeplaces.net)
• Either allow the students to select an activity they would like to complete or select one for the entire class.
EXTENDING THE LESSON
Another option for extending the lesson would be to visit, either in the classroom or via field trip, one of the other sites:
Charnley-Norwood House - East Beach, Ocean Springs
12 Oaks- Hanley Road, Ocean Springs
Shaw Homestead- Poplarville
Cedar Lake Island- Cedar Lake Rd, Biloxi

CURRICULUM DEVELOPED BY
• Mississippi Heritage Trust
  P.O. Box 577
  Jackson, MS
  39205

• TALLstudio, LLC
  1508 Government St.
  Ocean Springs, MS
  39564

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:
Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area
Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain
Mississippi Heritage Trust

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Whole Places Educational Outreach Program

Image above: Turkey Creek Watershed aerial view

Image at left: Phoenix Naval Stores as it sits in 2016
Whole Places Educational Outreach Program

Image at left and below: Phoenix Naval Stores as it sits in 2016
Image at left: the Benton House on Rippy Road
Whole Places Educational Outreach Program

Image at left and below: damage in the Turkey Creek neighborhood after Hurricane Katrina
Image above: Architect David Perkes studying the existing Phoenix Naval Stores
Image above: Architect John Anderson studying the existing Phoenix Naval Stores

Image at right: community activist Derrick Evans, David Perkes, and Eugene Johnson discuss the future of Phoenix Naval Stores
Image above: The proposed renovation of Phoenix Naval Stores into a community center. The renovation is being designed by Unabridged Architecture in conjunction with the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio.