



# Proposed Andrew Jackson & Choctaw Area Councils Merger Background and Frequently Asked Questions

## Scouting America's Current Realities

Scouting America continues to provide the nation's most effective youth leadership development programs. However, competition for young people's time and attention has grown increasingly strong. While ongoing efforts at every level of the organization (national, territorial, and local) have made Scouting more accessible and engaging, overall youth participation has gradually declined over the past several decades.

As a result, some of the infrastructure originally built to support Scouting is now larger or unevenly distributed compared to current needs. To ensure long-term strength and sustainability, the National organization has encouraged councils to collaborate more closely, share resources, and identify opportunities for improvement.

In that spirit, leaders from the Andrew Jackson Council (AJC) and the Choctaw Area Council (CAC) began discussions in early 2025 to explore ways to work together. Those conversations revealed that a true merger, rather than a simple resource-sharing arrangement, would provide significant benefits to Scouts, volunteers, and families across both Councils.

Following consultation with National representatives, both Councils agreed to begin a formal merger process. This process, which involves review and approval by each Council's leadership and key stakeholders, is designed to ensure a thoughtful, transparent approach. The FAQs and timeline that follow outline the major steps and considerations in that process.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Overview

Andrew Jackson Council, headquartered in Flowood (Jackson), MS, and the Choctaw Area Council, headquartered in Meridian, MS, are moving forward with a proposed merger. A combined Council would enable us to increase membership, consolidate resources, share resources, add field staff, and better position ourselves for long-term stability.

### Why are these Councils considering merging?

This merger, if approved, reflects a shared commitment to strengthening Scouting and expanding service to youth and families across our combined territories.

National Scouting America has encouraged Councils nationwide to explore consolidation opportunities that improve service delivery and sustainability. By combining two strong, financially stable Councils, we are proactively positioning ourselves to offer greater resources, stronger programs, and improved support for Scouts, leaders, and families.

Together, our Councils can more effectively reach communities where Scouting is not yet present, while ensuring long-term stability for those already participating in our programs.

## What are the benefits for Scouts and units?

Merging the two Councils would bring several meaningful benefits to Scouts, leaders, and units:

- **Aligned Service Areas:** The borders of both Councils naturally align, enabling more efficient delivery of programs and support through coordinated staff and volunteer leadership.
- **Enhanced Camp Access:** Hood Scout Reservation and Camp Binachi would continue to serve Scouting for the entire Council, with long-term summer camp programs centered at Hood Scout Reservation and weekend unit and district opportunities, as well as training at both properties.
- **Council Program Committee support.** Sharing of leadership will improve support for unit-level programming, expanding training and advancement committees, and delivering more training opportunities.

## What would the program fees be for the new Council?

At the effective date of the merger, both Councils would adopt the following program fee structure:

- \$25 Annual Program Fee (Youth & Adult Volunteers) collected with annual membership renewal
- New members do not pay an annual council fee until they "re-enroll."

## Would District boundaries or names change?

Most likely yes. With the combined territory and more funds directed to unit service, District boundaries will realign to membership and population needs to grow Scouting and serve existing unit leaders better. Will have Service Areas East and West, plus districts.

## Would the merged Council have a new name?

Yes. A new Council name would be adopted as of the merger's effective date. Representatives from both councils have selected the name Scouting America, **Mississippi Riverlands Council** and has been approved by the national council of Scouting America. The new name and new Council Shoulder patch will be effective on March 1, 2026.

The name **Mississippi Riverlands Council** captures the essence of unity, heritage, and geography that defines Scouting in our state. It honors the mighty **Mississippi River**—a symbol of strength, continuity, and life—while embracing the network of rivers that flow through the counties now served by the new council. These counties, in alphabetical order, include:

**Adams, Amite, Attala, Clarke, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Hinds, Holmes, Issaquena, Jefferson, Kemper, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Lincoln, Madison, Neshoba, Newton, Pike, Rankin, Scott, Sharkey, Simpson,**

## **Walthall, Warren, Wilkinson, and Yazoo.**

Within this expanded area, the council encompasses rivers such as the **Mississippi, Pearl, Big Black, Yazoo, Homochitto, Amite, Bogue Chitto, Tangipahoa, Bayou Pierre, Sunflower, Strong, Yockanookany, Chunky,** and **Chickasawhay**. These waterways are not only geographic landmarks but also symbols of resilience, connection, and exploration—values that mirror the spirit of Scouting.

- **Reflects shared geography and identity**

"Riverlands" authentically unites the Delta, Hill Country, Pine Belt, and the Capital Region—even to our Gulf-ward watersheds—under a single banner that mirrors where our Scouts live, camp, serve, and explore.

- **Symbolizes unity and growth**

Just as tributaries join to form greater currents, this merger brings two strong councils together to expand program reach, deepen volunteer support, and broaden opportunities for youth.

- **Honors tradition while looking forward**

Mississippi's rivers carry centuries of culture, service, and enterprise—paralleling Scouting's legacy. The new name respects that heritage while signaling a modern, mission-driven focus.

- **Inclusive and inspiring**

"Riverlands" is welcoming and aspirational. It evokes adventure, leadership, and service—inviting every community in our 28-county area to join a council that is unified, purpose-filled, and outward-looking.

## **Would unit numbers be affected?**

No. Unit numbers would not change.

## **Who would be the new Scout Executive?**

When the proposed merger becomes effective, Mr. Ken Kercheval, current Scout Executive of the Andrew Jackson Council, will become the Scout Executive of the newly merged Council. This transition coincides with the Vacancy of Scout Executive in Meridian, MS. Future Scout Executive selections will follow the prescribed Scouting America HR process.

## **Who would serve as the Executive Board Chair for the merged Council?**

Over the next couple months, both Council's will collaborate to submit a single nominating Committee report. Both Boards will be nominated to the new single Board and officers will be selected from the existing membership of the newly combined Board. Selection of the new officers is ongoing. Suggestions should be sent to Ken Kercheval to share with both Council presidents and Nominating Committee chairs.

## **Who would serve as the Council Commissioner?**

The new Executive Board will select the New Council Commissioner; at this point in time, that decision has not been made.

## What would happen with the Order of the Arrow lodges?

Both Order of the Arrow lodges will maintain their current status immediately following the merger. Within approximately three months after the merger becomes effective, lodge leadership will present a unified plan for consolidation to the new Executive Board. Both Lodges are already in conversation. Scouting America policy allows only one lodge per council.

## What would happen to the Council facilities, offices, and Scout Shops?

At the time of the merger, the combined Council would continue to operate the following facilities:

- Council Administrative offices: Flowood MS
- Council service center: Meridian MS
- Camp Bianchi – Meridian MS
- Hood Scout Reservation- Hazelhurst MS

## How will this Merger change the support I get as a volunteer?

The combined council will have the ability to redirect critical funding resources to more closely align volunteer and youth membership support. Examples include.

- Consolidating Audit requirements
- Consolidating Accounting and donor data management services.
- Consolidating back-office 3<sup>rd</sup> party service contracts (BlackPug, website, IT management)
- Adding a full-time Program staff person
- Adding an Assistant Scout Executive to be located in the Meridian Service Center.
- Adding additional Field staff

## What happens to each Council's assets, debts & endowments?

Each Council's finances would be combined into a single corporation. The newly elected Board of Directors would have the same fiduciary responsibility as the two independent boards. The Choctaw Area Council's investment fund will be closed to future gifts (with the exception of known planned gifts), and the income generated by the fund will be administered by local trustees appointed by the new board and used to support Scouting and Camp Bianchi as designated by the donors. The Andrew Jackson fund would remain open to new gifts and again be administered by trustees appointed by the board to ensure income generated would be used in accordance with the donors' wishes.

## What would happen next?

The proposed merger process has been approved by the Executive Boards of both Councils. Both Councils will continue due diligence and collaborative planning. Throughout this process, we remain focused on supporting every Scout, volunteer, and family we serve.

Further updates, including the new Council name, branding, and detailed transition plans, will be shared as soon as they are finalized.

## What is the anticipated timeline for this proposed merger?

<b>Date</b>	<b>Milestone</b>
<b><i>Initial Talks started in 2022</i></b>	Past Council Presidents and Current Leadership met in 2022 to discuss potential benefits of a future merger.
<b><i>Early 2025</i></b>	Discussions resumed with a focus on ways to increase Scouting program opportunities and field services for volunteers across the combined area.
<b><i>Completed on November 20, 2025</i></b>	Both Council Boards approve Merger discussion and establish merger committee
<b><i>Completed on December 1, 2025</i></b>	Draft plan of merger approved by Scouting America with proposed effective date of March 1, 2026
<b><i>Dec 2025-Jan 2026</i></b>	Due diligence evaluation and drafting of Plan of Merger
<b><i>Completed Dec 15 2025</i></b>	Each Council calls a Special Meeting of Voting Members for late January
<b><i>Early Jan 2026</i></b>	Town Hall meetings, which include Roundtables, Feedback from National and Town Halls incorporated into Plan of Merger, as appropriate/required
<b><i>January 07, 2026</i></b>	Joint Public announcement and release of FAQs
<b><i>Late Jan 2026</i></b>	Voting Member meetings held
<b><i>February 2026</i></b>	Completion of National system integration planning
<b><i>March 1 2026</i></b>	Merger effective date. Filing completed with the MS Secretary of State.