

Alabama

Trails Commission

Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690

Act No. 2010-585

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

April 1, 2015

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INTRODUCTION

The Alabama Trails Commission (ATC) was established by Act. 2010-585 (HB 376) of the 2010 Regular Legislative Session for the purpose of creating the ATC with 12 commissioners and 17 Advisory Board members representing all user groups and citizens within the state of Alabama. The purpose of this Act is to promote, develop and facilitate a statewide trail system utilizing intergovernmental coordination, advocacy, education, and alternative funding sources. The ATC is receiving the necessary staff assistance from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

COMMISSION

The ATC was comprised of the following members as of the date of this report. The number in parentheses indicates the number of appointments for each appointing authority.

Appointed by the Governor (2)	Josh Jones, Homewood Amy Rauworth, Birmingham
Appointed by the Governor Governor's Office Staff Member (1)	Wesley Helton, Montgomery
Appointed by the Governor Representative of Alabama Association Of Regional Councils (1)	Jeff Pruitt, Decatur
Appointed by the Lt. Governor (1)	Debbie Quinn, Fairhope
Appointed by the Speaker of the House (1)	Dr. Wayde Morse, Auburn
Appointed by the Director of ADECA (1)	Dr. Richard Guthrie, Auburn
Appointed by the Director of ALDOT (1)	Rebecca Fulks, Montgomery
Appointed by the Director of Tourism (1)	Grey Brennan, Montgomery

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Appointed by the Commissioner of DCNR (1)	Greg Lein, Montgomery
Appointed by the Alabama League of Municipalities and alternating with the Association of County Commissions (1)	Walt Maddox, Tuscaloosa
Appointed by the Business Council of Alabama (1)	Phillip West, Orange Beach

ADVISORY BOARD

The Alabama Trails Commission Advisory Board was comprised of the following members as of the date of this report. The number in parentheses indicates the number of appointments for each appointing authority.

Appointed by the Governor (1) Representing a University in Alabama	Nisa Miranda, Tuscaloosa
Appointed by the Lt. Governor (2) State Senator State Senator	Senator Trip Pittman, Montrose Senator Cam Ward, Alabaster
Appointed by the Speaker of the House (2) State House of Representatives State House of Representatives	Rep. Terri Collins, Decatur Rep. Donnie Chesteen, Geneva
Alabama Recreational Trails Advisory Board (3)	Francesca Gross, Birmingham Richard Martin, Elkmont Jim Felder, Madison
Alabama Forestry Commission (1)	Jason Dockery, Gardendale
Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries (1)	Dr. John Jensen, Auburn
Alabama State Health Officer (1)	

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Executive Director of the Retirement Systems of Alabama (1)	Steve Timms, Birmingham
U. S. Forest Service (1)	Cindy Ragland, Brent
Alabama Power Company	Steve Newton, Adamsville
Tennessee Valley Authority	Rebecca Tolene,
Alabama Farmers Federation (1)	Frank Chirico, Jack
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1)	Ike Lyon, Demopolis
Natural Resources Conservation Services (1)	Dr. Bill Puckett, Auburn

The elected officers for the following year of a two year cycle:

Chair – Debbie Quinn	Fairhope, Alabama
Vice Chair – Phillip West	Orange Beach, Alabama
Secretary – Amy Rauworth	Birmingham, Alabama

December, 3rd, 2014 four Standing Committees were created:

Executive Committee

Policy and Advocacy Committee

Research and Education Committee

Communications and Outreach Committee

And two Ad Hoc Committes continued:

Alabama Trails Foundation

Members: Mim Gaines – Birmingham

Merrill Stewart – Birmingham

Rep. Jack Williams – Hoover

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Bruce Reid – Montgomery

R.B. Walker - Montgomery

Technical Assistance Committee –

Members: Cheryl Morgan - Birmingham

Phillip West – Orange Beach

Rob Grant – Montgomery

Jim Felder - Madison

Recognizing the need for a comprehensive plan for trails and outdoor recreation, that includes a cross section of representation from the state of Alabama, the Trails Commission created a two day Design Charrette. With the Alabama Innovation Engine, UA and AU a group of trail advocates/businesses were broken into two groups with moderators who helped facilitate discussion on how the Trails Commission would communicate, grow and connect with the state, our user groups and with our elected officials. Findings from that Charrette held November 2013 emphasized:

- Need to have a clear message on the value of Trails to the state
- Need to think beyond Advocacy-build Partnerships, stronger interface with and between user groups
- Need metrics for success

The Alabama Trails Foundation, A Not for Profit, has been actively talking with potential members of the state, had the Commission approve and vote on their bylaws, and are in the process of submitting their 501c3 paperwork to the IRS.

An Economic Impact Study is being formulated with the help of member, Dr. Wayde Morse, with Auburn University, the University of Alabama and Jacksonville State. They are beginning with a mapping project to project all the public lands/wetlands in the state, first.

We are also wrapping up a website for Trails that will host ALL trails in Alabama....eventually. The University of Alabama has been working on this project and with its launch date of March 2015 we will have the first 20 trails displayed....along with GIS coordinates/user groups/amenities at the site/businesses in the area that deal with recreational activities.

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We have also helped facilitate discussions in five areas of the state that have proposed rail corridor abandonments which could be developed into rails-to-trails projects: the 43.2 mile Alabama & Florida Railway in Southeast Alabama (Andalusia, Opp, Kinston, Samson and Geneva); the 7.2 mile Hybart Rail corridor in northern Monroe County; the 1.3 mile Wiregrass Central Railroad in Enterprise; two corridors in Gadsden; and a downtown rail corridor in Montgomery.

We have been in the most active discussions with the Alabama & Florida Rail abandonment in the Andalusia area. CSX owns the line. Their appraisal came in at 1.6 million dollars. We invited CSX to Alabama in June, 2015 to discuss with Forever Wild the possibility of the purchase of the corridor. We have also been in discussions with State Parks on the management of the corridor after purchase and all the communities and counties along the route in their possibility of maintenance and amenities along the trail. The Trails Commission is working with the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission/Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood/Civil Southeast Engineering on a grant application to ALDOT for a Transportation Alternatives Grant. This Rail Trail would be the longest in the Southeastern area.

We've also submitted a grant to the Munson Foundation for Universal Design on trail accessibility. It would be a two day workshop on how to access a trail, the GIS equipment to do the work with and the signage types that could be displayed. Working with ALDOT and ADECA it would be a new addition to grant applications to use this formula for all new trails.

Thank you for your continued support,

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie W. Quinn, Chairman