

# Alabama

## Trails Commission

Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690

Act No. 2010-585

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

January 10, 2018

## 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)	Amy Rauworth Phillip West
Appointed by the Governor Governor's Office Staff Member (1)	Vacant
Appointed by the Governor Representative of Alabama Association Of Regional Councils (1)	Jeffery Pruitt
Appointed by the Lt. Governor (1)	Debbie Quinn
Appointed by the Speaker of the House (1)	Graham Sisson
Appointed by the Director of ADECA (1)	Richard Guthrie, Ph.D.
Appointed by the Director of ALDOT (1)	Rebecca Fulks
Appointed by the Director of Tourism (1)	Grey Brennan
Appointed by the Commissioner of DCNR (1)	Greg Lein
Appointed by the Alabama League of Municipalities (1)	Mayor Johnny Smith
Appointed by the Business Council of Alabama (1)	Vacant

Appointed by the Association of County  
Commissions (1)

Allen Armstrong

## 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 (2)

A University

Vacant

An Alabama Land Trust

Vacant

Appointed by the Lt. Governor (2)

State Senator

Senator Trip Pittman

State Senator

Senator Cam Ward

Appointed by the Speaker of the House (2)

State House of Representatives

Representative Donnie Chesteen

State House of Representatives

Representative Jack Williams

Appointed by the Alabama Recreational  
Trails Advisory Board (3)

Jim Felder

Francesca Gross

Steve Newton

Appointed by the Alabama Forestry  
Commission (1)

Jason Dockery

Appointed by the Alabama Commissioner  
of Agriculture and Industries (1)

John Jenson, Ph.D.

Appointed by the Alabama State Health  
Officer (1)

Mark Wilson, M.D.

Appointed by the Executive Director of the  
Retirement Systems of Alabama (1)

Steve Timms

Appointed by the USDA National Forest  
Service (1)

Odell Sanders

Appointed by Alabama Power Company (1)

Brandon Glover

Appointed by the Tennessee Valley Authority (1)	Frank “Bucky” Edmondson
Appointed by Power South (1)	Nisa Miranda
Appointed by Alabama Farmers Federation (1)	Francis Chirico
Appointed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1)	Larry “Chip” Dixon
Appointed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (1)	Vacant
Appointed by the Commissioner of DNCR (1)	Ken Thomas
Appointed by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama	Tim King
Appointed by the Alabama Trials Commission (3)	
Alabama Hiking Trail Society	Hayward Warren
Alabama Bicycle Association	Jeff DeQuattro
Underrepresented Federal Agency	Vacant
Appointed by the Alabama Association of Of RC & D Councils	Otis French
Appointed by the Alabama Railroad Association	Maeie Martin Walker

Current ATC Officers:

Chair – Amy Rauworth	Birmingham, Alabama
Vice Chair – Phillip West	Orange Beach, Alabama
Secretary – Vacant	

Current Advisory Board Officers:

Chair – Nisa Miranda	Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Vice Chair – Steve Newton	Gardendale, Alabama
Secretary – Jim Felder	Madison, Alabama

## 2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The ATC and Advisory Board held joint meetings on March 8, August 16, and November 28 to direct the organization's activities in each of its priority areas to advance the organization's mission. The following is an account of accomplishments within each of these priority areas.

- Technical Assistance
  - ATC is provided technical assistance to local government partners to advance the development and enhancement of multiple recreational trail projects in Madison, Fayette, Gadsden, Anniston, Union Springs, Monroe County, Baldwin County, Mobile County, Covington County, Coffee County, and Geneva County. Included among these is the 43-mile Wiregrass Rail-Trail between Andalusia and Geneva, which is under consideration by Forever Wild for acquisition. When developed, the Wiregrass Trail will become the longest rail-trail in Alabama, and a bicycle tourism destination. Currently, the partnership is working to complete NEPA documentation associated with a Transportation Alternative Program funding commitment through ALDOT, which will enable the acquisition proceeding forward.
  - Through a convening of the USDA National Forest Service, Alabama State Parks, Alabama State Lands, the Alabama Forestry Commission, the Alabama Hiking Trail Society, and private fundraisers, ATC is facilitating the planning of improvements to be made along the Pinhoti National Recreation Trail, which is Alabama's premiere back country hiking trail, stretching 171 miles through Alabama from Coosa County to Cherokee County and into Georgia. Planned improvements will include designing and building new shelters, bridges, signage, and trailheads that meet or exceed National Park Service standards. The Pinhoti is a designated approach to the Appalachian Trail, and with these improvements, will become marketable as a nationally preeminent hiking destination. The steering committee has completed a work plan for moving the project forward, and has secured a \$39,000 grant through the National Forest Service and a \$5,000 grant through the Hugh Kaul Foundation to facilitate development of new design standards and a master plan for improvements and to fund a facilities improvement demonstration project in Clay County within the Talladega National Forest.
- Outreach & Education
  - ATC is actively managing the website at [www.alabamarecreationtrails.org](http://www.alabamarecreationtrails.org) as the primary online trail information source in Alabama. This site enables the public to search for Alabama trails based upon trail type and amenities, to find locally owned outfitters, equipment suppliers, and lodging, and to connect to existing

recreational organizations. The site also provides valuable technical information for use by local governments, planners, nonprofit organizations, and citizens interested in creating trails in their communities. In 2017, we added new trail records to the database and made significant improvements to the site's search functions.

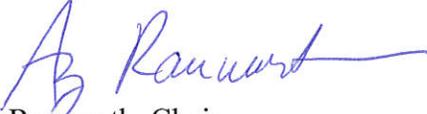
- Through convening a partnership that includes the Alabama Trails Foundation, the Lakeshore Foundation, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Alabama, the Governor's Commission on Physical Fitness and Sports, the Alabama Obesity Task Force, and AARP, ATC is leading the development of a new public engagement campaign that will be called the "100 Alabama Miles Challenge." This program will be adapted from one created by the State of Missouri in 2013 that to-date has over 28,000 participants that have logged over 6,00,000 miles. As with the Missouri program, the 100 Alabama Mile Challenge will encourage people to run, walk, hike, bike, swim. Paddle. Ride, or roll 100 miles each year. Through a vigorous public outreach campaign each spring, we hope to engage and excite the public to get outside and be active, just as Missouri has done. We believe that this important program will assist Alabama cities, towns and rural areas in realizing the multiple health, community, and economic benefits associated with outdoor trail recreation, and will increase public use and appreciation of our local, state, and federally managed recreational lands. In 2017, we raised \$44,000 in funds to develop the program's branding, messaging, public awareness and engagement strategy, and website. The program is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2018.
- ATC conducted two one-day Alabama Recreational Trails Leadership Workshops in 2016. The first was held on May 18 at Monte Sano State Park in Huntsville and the second on October 26 in Birmingham. Targeted to local, state, and federal government agencies, planning organizations, and nonprofit user groups, this workshop provided important information about planning and implementing trail projects to create valuable assets for Alabama communities. The workshop also provided a forum for these leaders to tell the Alabama Trails Commission what their needs are and how the Commission can best work to meet those needs. A total of 119 people attended these workshops.
- Research
  - ATC developed a rapid trail user count and survey assessment protocol during 2017 in order to facilitate widespread gathering of recreational trail usage and economic impact data. This development also included a web-based public survey available at [www.alabamarecreationtrails.org](http://www.alabamarecreationtrails.org). In addition to economic impact assessment, the data gathered from the process will provide valuable information to trail operators about their users' demographics, home locations, and spending related to trail use, as well as frequency and patterns of trail usage. These data will also be used to build a statewide database that will help to inform

public policy regarding recreational trail development. ATC will deploy the program at several “high priority” sites in 2018.

- Policy & Advocacy
  - The Alabama Trails Foundation is a separate 501(c)3 organization established to secure public and private funds to support transformational recreational trail projects in Alabama. The organization initiated formal operations in 2017 and is actively serving as the fundraiser and fiduciary agent for the Pinhoti Trail Enhancement Project and the 100 Alabama Miles Challenge.

Thank you for your continued support,

Respectfully Submitted



Amy Rauworth, Chair