

**EXHIBIT A**

Minutes of the Alabama Trails Commission  
and Advisory Board Joint Meeting

Wednesday, August 25, 2021  
10:00 AM

(via web conference)

Alabama Trails Commission Attendees

Dr. Graham Sisson, Chair  
Amy Rauworth  
Dr. John Kvach  
Sonya Baker  
Grey Brennan  
Greg Lein  
Jonathan Hester  
Phillip West

Advisory Board Attendees

Francesca Gross  
Steve Newton, Vice-Chair  
Jason Dockery  
Odell Sanders  
Josh Yerby  
Jimmy Lemmond (Bucky Edmondson's proxy)  
Nisa Miranda, Chair  
Tim King  
Larry "Chip" Dixon  
Maeci Martin Walker  
Marie Bostick  
Dr. Vini Nathan  
Nathan Wright  
Will O'Connor (Jeff DeQuattro's Proxy)  
Elizabeth Lawlor (Maeci Martin Walker's Proxy)  
Dr. Jon Jensen

Associates & Visitors

Brian Rushing – UACED  
Cindy Ragland – Alabama Trails Foundation  
Tom Carruthers – Alabama Trails Foundation  
Debbie Quinn – Former ATC member  
Lisa Booher – Birmingham Ultra Trail Society  
Rachel Gargus – City of Oneonta  
Phillip Darden – SORBA

Casey Rogers – Alabama Farmers Federation  
Louise Couture – Citizen

### Welcome and Introductions

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted via web conference. Dr. Graham Sisson (Chair) called the meeting to order at 10:00AM and a role was called. A quorum was present for both the Alabama Trails Commission (ATC) and Advisory Board (AB).

### Approval of Minutes

Dr. Sisson asked for the ATC to make a motion for the approval of the March 31, 2021 meeting minutes (EXHIBIT A). Greg Lien made a motion for approval and Sonya Baker seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

### ATC Chair's Report

- **Federal Funding Opportunity.** Dr. Sisson briefly reviewed new funding through the EDA American Rescue Plan for Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation. Through the Travel, Tourism & Outdoor Recreation program, the Economic Development Administration is focused on accelerating the recovery of communities that rely on the travel, tourism and outdoor recreation sectors. \$240 million of EDA's American Rescue Plan funds are allocated to support communities that have been hardest hit by challenges facing the travel, tourism and outdoor recreation sectors to invest in infrastructure, workforce or other projects to support the recovery of the industry and economic resilience of the community in the future. Eligible projects include new outdoor recreation and trail infrastructure and access enhancements, nature-based infrastructure to improve access to recreation, and country-wide or multi-state outdoor recreation promotion. State and local governments as well as nonprofit organizations working in cooperation with governments may apply. The federal share is 80% or could be up to 100% if there is demonstrated compelling need. Local match can be cash or in-kind. Applications with more than 20% local match will be more competitive. Applications are made directly to the EDA. The application period opened on July 23 and EDA is reviewing applications on a rolling basis. All funds must be obligated by Sept. 30, 2022. More information is available at [www.eda.gov](http://www.eda.gov).
- **Hoover Institution's Outdoor Recreation Policy Lab.** The Alabama Innovation Commission (Chaired by Sen. Reed and Rep. Poole) was created by the Governor to provide policy recommendations to the state legislature that will support Alabama's development of a more robust and inclusive economy, particularly focused on entrepreneurship, technology, and innovation. The Commission has partnered with Stanford University's Hoover Institution (Dr. Condoleezza Rice became Executive Director in January 2021) to help it identify priority opportunities and policies that should be adopted in order to take advantage of those opportunities. Among four priority focus areas the Hoover Institution identified this year is outdoor recreation. They believe Alabama's outdoor recreation assets and resources are a

major strength in recruiting, growing, and retaining tech talent. The Hoover Institution's Outdoor Recreation Policy Lab held a series of meetings with agencies and organizations this summer to determine what is needed in order for Alabama to develop its outdoor recreation economy to its full potential. They will be issuing a report to the AIC this fall. We anticipate the AIC releasing that report shortly thereafter.

- **State Trails Plan.** Last December, the Trails Commission affirmed its intent to take the lead role over the next 3-5 years in creating a conceptual plan for a statewide connected trail network and is has created a working committee to oversee that process. This committee met on June 11 to review and discuss a preliminary plan scope. This preliminary scope is an initial effort to help the ATC to begin defining the elements the plan should contain, and to aid in soliciting preliminary cost estimates to get an idea of the scale of fundraising that will be required. Sonya Baker has agreed to join the working committee. Others who wish to join should contact Brian Rushing.
- **Upcoming ATC Online Trails Leadership Workshops.** The ATC is looking to hold a trails leadership webinar and a web conference this fall. The web conference will be in collaboration with legal experts at the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and will pertain to legal considerations communities need to make with rail-trail projects in light of the recent Alabama Supreme Court decision challenging federal rail-banking authority. The webinar will be in collaboration with Alta Planning's Matt Hayes and will focus on the planning process involved in planning and developing trail projects. Both events are being scheduled for October, and Brian Rushing will send the announcement when the dates are confirmed.
- **Alabama News Center Piece on the Alabama Trails Commission and Importance of Trails in Alabama.** Earlier this month, the Alabama News Center published an online story and video about the importance of trails to quality of life and economic development, recognizing the role that the Alabama Trails Commission plays in advancing trails in our state. The story and video are available at <https://alabamaneewscenter.com/2021/08/10/alabamas-trail-systems-good-for-economy-and-quality-of-life/>.
- Graham thanked Josh Yerby for lining up the opportunity and Dennis Washington and Alabama Power for the coverage.
- **Initiatives Status.** An updated status report on ATC initiatives is presented in Exhibit B. Brian Rushing thanked Piedmont's mayor, Johnny Smith, for hosting the Wiregrass Trail Partnership delegation visit to Jacksonville in June and Rep. Mike Jones for helping to coordinate the visit for the Wiregrass communities. Since the trip, the City of Geneva has joined the partnership. Brian also thanked Tim King and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama for their continuing support of the 100 Alabama Miles Challenge, which is making it possible to integrate wearable devices with the program's website through the Strava application.

### Alabama Trails Foundation (ATF) Report

- Tom Carruthers gave a slide presentation on the status of the Flagg Mountain improvement project. He noted that the observation tower renovation is largely complete, with the exception of new windows at the top of the tower that are slow in arriving from the manufacturer. The project also involves the development of a new parking lot and ½-mile accessible trail that leads to the observation tower. The ATF hopes to be finished entirely in a month or so. Tom invited all ATC and AB members to join the ATF at a ribbon cutting at Flagg Mountain that will be scheduled in the near future.
- The ATF is spearheading an application to the National Park Service for establish Flagg Mountain as a National Historic Landmark and thanked The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development (UACED) and the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) for their support in this documentation process.
- The ATF is working on a Pinhoti Trail enhancement project at Jugloma (Scott) Lake within the Talladega National Forest. They have issued an RFP for the design and will be selecting a designer in the next few weeks. Design will take 6-8 weeks with construction following. The project will involve trail and bridge improvements.
- The ATF is seeking applications for a new “Pinhoti Director” to work with Cindy Ragland in administering ATF’s projects and strengthening relationships with communities. It will be taking applications until September 10.

### Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Summary

Brian Rushing gave a general summary of the process, analysis, and preliminary trail-related findings that of the 2021 SCORP that UACED and The University of Alabama Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) have been conducting. UACED and CBER will submit the draft SCORP to ADECA by the end of September. Brian reviewed the background and purpose of the SCORP. A major focus of this SCORP is to identify barriers to public participation, determine unmet demand for outdoor recreation facilities, and identify gaps in levels of service for facility types. A second focus is updating the statewide outdoor recreation strategy. Both focus areas inform an update of the Priority Rating System that will be used to score applications to the Stateside LWCF.

### Round Table Discussion about Current Events, Challenges, and Opportunities

- Steve Newton shared that NOVHHC recently held two motorized trail workshops with the U.S. Forest Service on how to build, maintain, and re-route ATV/OHV trails. NOVHHC is will soon be conducting chainsaw trainings in partnership with the Forest Service as well. Steve noted that the Recreational Trails Program funding bill that was recently before Congress did not pass due to a delay in a report that Congress had commissioned two years ago that analyzed the amount of ATV gas tax that has been collected to determine the level of funding the federal government should make available. The report found that RTP funding should be raised from \$81 million per year to \$282 million per year. Since the bill was not passed, funding will remain at \$81 million. The question was raised about how ATC could help

advocate at the federal level for RTP funding and if any of our congressional delegations was working on this item. The group agreed to do some research on what other national trails groups are doing and identify ways ATC can support their efforts.

- Debbie Quinn shared that she and Nisa Miranda (as well as Steve Newton) are on the U. S. Forest Service's Resource Advisory Committee and that in FY 2022, there will be \$127,000 that the committee will allot to certain counties for projects within National Forests. This program previously funded improvements on the Pinhoti Trail. She invited members who have national forests in eligible counties to make proposals for trail improvements.
- Odell Sanders shared that the Great American Outdoors Act has provided \$300,000 for the U. S. Forest Service in Alabama to do repair work and relocation on the northern end of the Bartram Trail in the Tuskegee Ranger District. The agency will be working on this project in cooperation with the Central Alabama Mountain Pedalers. The agency has also submitted proposals for work along the Pinhoti Trail.
- Jason Dockery shared that trails at Choccolocco State Forest have been closed due to unexploded munitions that from previous use of the forest by Fort McClellan for exercises. The AFC and the Department of Defense have put up warning signs to deter unapproved trail expansions in the area and Jason asked that members help get the word out about this danger.
- Greg Lien shared that Alabama State Parks is working to expand the Branyon Back Country Trail at Gulf State Park using BP Oil Spill Restoration Funds. Due to high materials costs this project may be phased. State Parks is also working on two OHV projects at Lake Point State Park. Steve Newton has provided valuable guidance on the placement of those trails, which should open in the fall or winter. Greg also shared that State Parks has hired Will Collins as the new state trails coordinator. Will has worked in several municipal park projects as well as Red Mountain Park and will be based out of Oak Mountain State Park.
- Dr. John Kvach shared a number of updates on the Singing River Trail. They have engineering firms conducting a number of trail route studies of potential connections in the Greater Huntsville Area and ranging east to Gurly and west to Athens. John reported great progress on partnering with Huntsville Airport to create new connections and amenities on their campus. John acknowledged the help of Marie Bostic and the Land Trust for North Alabama in this process.
- Brian Rushing also shared that the Rails-to-Trail Conservancy (RTC) is assembling a list of the top ten multi-use trails in each state and called for the membership to email their nominations to him to forward to RTC. He also asked members who have given round table reports to send him quick summaries of those reports via email to assist in creating the minutes for this meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 8, 2021 at 10:00AM.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.