

# Alabama

## Trails Commission

Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690

Act No. 2010-585

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

February 15, 2017

## 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)	William Edwards
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

Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690  
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 in Alabama An Alabama Land Trust	Nisa Miranda Vacant
Appointed by the Lt. Governor (2) State Senator State Senator	Senator Trip Pittman Senator Cam Ward
Appointed by the Speaker of the House (2) State House of Representatives State House of Representatives	Representative Donnie Chesteen 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

**Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690**

Appointed by the Tennessee Valley Authority (1)	Frank Edmondson
Appointed by Power South (1)	Vacant
Appointed by Alabama Farmers Federation (1)	Francis Chirico
Appointed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1)	Ike Lyon
Appointed by the 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)	
Underrepresented User Groups	Vacant
Underrepresented User Groups	Vacant
Underrepresented Federal Agency	Vacant
Appointed by the Alabama Association of Of RC & D Councils	Otis French
Appointed by the Alabama Railroad Association	Maecie Martin Walker

**Current ATC Officers:**

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

**Current Advisory Board Officers:**

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

## 2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The ATC and Advisory Board held joint meetings on March 2, August 3, and November 9 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.
  - 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 began facilitating the planning of improvements to be made along the Pihoti 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 Pihoti is a designated approach to the Appalachian Trail, and with these improvements, will become marketable as a nationally preeminent hiking destination
  
- 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 2016, 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, and the Alabama Obesity Task Force, ATC is leading the development of a new public

**Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690**

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 27,000 participants that have logged over 5,600,000 miles. As with the Missouri program, the 100 Alabama Mile Challenge will encourage people to run, walk, hike, bike, ride, roll, paddle, or swim 100 miles each year. Participants will register on the website and log their activity, mileage, and places that they visit, and by doing so, they can track their progress, earn electronic badges along the way, and even have friendly competition with others. For more information, see [www.100missourimiles.com](http://www.100missourimiles.com). Missouri is making their website source code available to any state that wishes to create a similar program, and Alabama is the fourth state to pursue the effort. Through a vigorous public outreach campaign each spring that will involve events in hundreds of communities throughout the state, 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.

- ATC conducted two one-day Alabama Recreational Trails Leadership Workshops in 2016. The first was held on May 14 in Tuscaloosa and the second on December 15 in Spanish Fort. 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 68 people attended these workshops.
- Research
  - The ATC is continuing to develop a website to be housed at Auburn University that will provide current, accessible and high quality research information about human values, beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behavior associated with outdoor recreation. This site will be intended for use by natural resources managers and planners at federal, state, and local levels, and will link to the Alabama Recreation Trails website.
  - In an effort to facilitate widespread gathering of recreational trail usage and social and economic impact data, ATC is currently testing a rapid trail user count and survey assessment protocol that will become available statewide to trail operators in July 2017. Data gathered from the process will provide valuable information to

**Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690**

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.

- Policy & Advocacy
  - During the 2016 legislative session, HB54 was passed, which provides for more efficient and sustainable operation of the ATC and Advisory Board. The most significant change contained in this bill was the addition of ten new seats to the Advisory Board.
  - On September 28-30 the ATC, in partnership with the Lakeshore Foundation (Lakeshore), ADECA's Recreation Trails Program, the Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation, and The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development, conducted three training sessions at Oak Mountain State Park in the use of the High Efficiency Trail Assessment Process (HETAP). HETAP provides accurate and detailed information about trail sustainability for resource managers and increases safety and enjoyment for trail users. A total of 53 trail managers attended the trainings to initiate certification in the use of the HETAP system. In addition, the team conducted a HETAP pilot project at Oak Mountain State Park to establish standards for assessment and production of signage that communicates accurate trail information for all trail users. Lakeshore also acquired HETAP hardware and software that will be made available to all training attendees that completed the certification process.
  - The ATC has established a separate 501(c)3 known as the Alabama Trails Foundation to create a conduit of private funding to support transformational recreational trail projects in Alabama. The Alabama Trails Foundation committee has defined the organization's goals and objectives and is in the process of establishing a formal board.

Thank you for your continued support,

Respectfully Submitted

Debbie W. Quinn, Chairman