

# Alabama

## Trails Commission

Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690

### REPORT TO THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE

March, 2019

# 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, technical assistance, education and outreach, research, 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 Filmore
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)	Vacant
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 An Alabama Land Trust	Dr. Vini Nathan Marie Bostick
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
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	Emily Campbell
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	Maecie Martin Walker

Current ATC Officers:

Chair – Amy Rauworth	Birmingham, Alabama
Vice Chair – Dr. Graham Sisson	Montgomery, Alabama
Secretary –Jeff Pruitt	Decatur, Alabama

Current Advisory Board Officers:

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

## 2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The ATC and Advisory Board held joint meetings on March 2, August 15, 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. ALDOT has become a partner in this project, and plans to acquire the corridor between Opp and Geneva for highway development but is amenable to locating a trail along the periphery of the corridor. ADECA has made a fresh funding commitment of \$400,000 starting in FY 2019 to support Andalusia's acquisition of the 16 miles of corridor between Andalusia and Opp, and Andalusia is proceeding with an appraisal. ATC maintains the NITU status for this corridor as well as for the Gadsden corridor on behalf of the City of Gadsden, which has reached an agreement on their corridor with Norfolk Southern, and is currently finalizing a purchase agreement.
  - In 2016-2017, the ATC initiated the the Pinhoti Trail Enhancement Project, bringing the National Forest Service, Alabama State Parks, Alabama State Lands, Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama Hiking Trail Society, The Conservation Fund, and the Alabama Trails Association together to begin conceptualizing a new master plan for the Pinhoti. In late 2017, ATC transferred management of the project to the Alabama Trails Foundation (ATF), at which time, that organization initiated the development of a master plan for trail facility improvements, which has progressed through 2018 and will be released in spring 2019. The ATC has been actively engaged throughout the process as a technical advisor to the Pinhoti Trail Enhancement steering committee.
- 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 2018, we enhanced the

database of trail records significantly. The site now features over 800 published trail records.

- 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 led the development of the 100 Alabama Miles Challenge, which officially debuted in May 2018. This program is working to inspire all Alabamians to run, walk, hike, bike, swim, paddle, ride, or roll 100 miles each year and to do so by visiting our beautiful parks, nature preserves, and rivers throughout the state. 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. The program's website is at [www.100alabamamiles.org](http://www.100alabamamiles.org), where participants log their miles and earn electronic badges for places visited and milestones reached. The 2019 season officially kicked off on March 2, 2019, and as of the drafting of this report, a total of approximately 2,000 participants have logged over 54,000 miles since the program's inception.
- ATC conducted an Alabama Recreational Trails Leadership Workshops on June 7 in Orange Beach with 58 people in attendance, and in Auburn on November 8 with 69 people in attendance. Targeted to local, state, and federal government agencies, planning organizations, and nonprofit user groups, these workshops provided important information about planning and implementing recreational trail projects and operating trails to create valuable assets for Alabama communities. The workshops also provided an opportunity for trail leaders to collaborate and 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.
- Research
  - ATC, in cooperation with UACED, has developed a trail user survey and economic impact assessment tool in order to facilitate widespread gathering of recreational trail usage and economic impact data throughout the state. 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 and UACED conducted a training at the November 8 Alabama Recreational Trails Leadership Workshop for 15 trail operators interested in participating in the program. The program will make available the survey and trail counter equipment to participants who will deploy the counters and administer the survey

over a six-month period. Studies are currently underway and will be completed in 2019 at several trail systems throughout the state.

Thank you for your continued support,

Respectfully Submitted

Amy Rauworth, Chair