

Alabama

Trails Commission

Post Office Box 5690 | Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690

Act No. 2010-585 / 2016-149

REPORT TO THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE

April 6, 2020

INTRODUCTION

The Alabama Trails Commission (ATC) was established by Legislative Act Number 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. This legislation was updated by Legislative Act Number 2016-149 of the 2016 Regular Legislative Session to expand the ATC to 13 commissioners and 27 Advisory Board members. Collectively, Legislative Act Numbers 2010-585 and 2016-149 will be referred to as the “Act.”

The purpose of the Act is to create the ATC and Advisory Board to advance development, interconnection, and use of trails in Alabama and to promote, develop, and facilitate a statewide system of interconnected land and water-based trails utilizing intergovernmental coordination, technical assistance, education and outreach, research, and alternative funding sources. The membership of the ATC and its Advisory Board shall be inclusive and reflect the racial, gender, geographic, urban/rural, and economic diversity of the state. The ATC is required to submit an annual report to the Legislature detailing progress, plans, and milestones in its conduct of duties authorized by the Act and to what extent the commission is in compliance with the diversity provisions provided for in the Act.

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 (Birmingham) Phillip West (Orange Beach)
Appointed by the Governor Governor’s Office Staff Member (1)	William Filmore (Montgomery)
Appointed by the Governor Representative of Alabama Association Of Regional Councils (1)	Jeffery Pruitt (Huntsville)
Appointed by the Lt. Governor (1)	Debbie Quinn (Fairhope)
Appointed by the Speaker of the House (1)	Dr. Graham Sisson (Birmingham)
Appointed by the Director of ADECA (1)	Vacant
Appointed by the Director of ALDOT (1)	Sonya Baker* (Montgomery)
Appointed by the Director of Tourism (1)	Grey Brennan (Montgomery)

Appointed by the Commissioner of DCNR (1)	Greg Lein (Montgomery)
Appointed by the Alabama League of Municipalities (1)	Mayor Johnny Smith (Jacksonville)
Appointed by the Business Council of Alabama (1)	Vacant
Appointed by the Association of County Commissions (1)	Allen Armstrong (Oneonta)

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	Dr. Vini Nathan (Auburn)
An Alabama Land Trust	Marie Bostick (Huntsville)
Appointed by the Lt. Governor (2)	
State Senator	Vacant
State Senator	Senator Cam Ward (Alabaster)
Appointed by the Speaker of the House (2)	
State House of Representatives	Vacant
State House of Representatives	Vacant
Appointed by the Alabama Recreational Trails Advisory Board (3)	
	Jim Felder (Madison)
	Francesca Gross (Birmingham)
	Steve Newton (Adamsville)
Appointed by the Alabama Forestry Commission (1)	
	Jason Dockery (Gardendale)
Appointed by the Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries (1)	
	John Jenson, Ph.D. (Auburn)
Appointed by the Alabama State Health Officer (1)	
	Mark Wilson, M.D. (Birmingham)

Appointed by the Executive Director of the Retirement Systems of Alabama (1)	Steve Timms (Montgomery)
Appointed by the USDA National Forest Service (1)	Odell Sanders* (Montgomery)
Appointed by Alabama Power Company (1)	Brandon Glover (Birmingham)
Appointed by the Tennessee Valley Authority (1)	Frank “Bucky” Edmondson (Knoxville, TN)
Appointed by Power South (1)	Nisa Miranda (Tuscaloosa)
Appointed by Alabama Farmers Federation (1)	Francis Chirico (Troy)
Appointed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (1)	Larry “Chip” Dixon (Demopolis)
Appointed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (1)	Ronnie Davis (Ozark)
Appointed by the Commissioner of DNCR (1)	Ken Thomas (Fort Payne)
Appointed by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama	Tim King (Birmingham)
Appointed by the Alabama Trails Commission (3)	
Alabama Hiking Trail Society	Emily Campbell (Kellyton)
Alabama Bicycle Association	Jeff DeQuattro (Mobile)
Underrepresented Federal Agency	Vacant
Appointed by the Alabama Association of Of RC & D Councils	Otis French* (Bay Minette)
Appointed by the Alabama Railroad Association	Maecie Martin Walker (Montgomery)

***African American**

Current ATC Officers:

Chair – Dr. Graham Sisson	Birmingham, Alabama
Vice Chair – Jeff Pruitt	Huntsville, Alabama
Secretary – Mayor Johnny Smith	Piedmont, Alabama

Current Advisory Board Officers:

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

2019 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The ATC and Advisory Board held joint meetings on April 10, August 20, and November 20 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 providing technical assistance to local government partners to advance the development and enhancement of multiple long-distance recreational trail projects in the cities of Fayette, Gadsden, Anniston, and Andalusia and in Baldwin and Mobile Counties. Included among these is the 16-mile Wiregrass Rail-Trail between Andalusia and Opp in Covington County. The City of Andalusia is leading the effort to acquire this corridor from CSX and has a \$400,000 funding commitment through the Recreation Trails Program, which is administered by ADECA. Andalusia has secured a preliminary appraisal and is in discussions with CSX at this time. The City of Gadsden has closed with Norfolk Southern on its purchase of a 2-mile rail corridor that will enable a bicycle-pedestrian connection between Downtown Gadsden and the Black Creek Trail system at Nocalula Falls Park. Fayette is also close to reaching an agreement with Norfolk Southern on the acquisition of a 2-mile corridor adjacent to their downtown.
 - In 2016-2017, the ATC initiated the Pinhoti Trail Enhancement Project, bringing together a steering committee consisting of 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 to begin conceptualizing a new master plan for the Pinhoti. At 171 miles in length, the Alabama Pinhoti is our state's premier backcountry hiking trail. This planning process is intended to improve the public infrastructure and align resource management along the trail in order to enhance the trail's appeal as a national hiking destination, to augment the trail's economic impact on nearby communities, and to position the trail to secure National Scenic Trail status. In 2017, ATC transferred management of the project to the Alabama Trails Foundation (ATF), which initiated the formal planning process. This planning process took place throughout 2018, and in 2019 the ATF released the Pinhoti Trail Built Environment Master Plan, which is available at <https://alabamatrailsfoundation.org/project-update/the-alabama-pinhoti-trail-built-environment-master-plan/>. 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 as the primary online trail information source in Alabama. This site enables the public to search for Alabama trails based upon activity type and amenities, to find locally owned outfitters, equipment suppliers, and lodging, and to connect to existing recreational user 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. The site currently 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 has 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, where participants log their miles and earn electronic badges for places visited and milestones reached. The 2020 season officially kicked off on March 14, 2020, and as of the drafting of this report, over 4,200 participants have logged over 113,000 miles since the program's inception.
 - ATC spent several months during 2019 planning the 2020 Alabama Recreational Trails Conference, which was held at Gulf State Park on February 6 & 7. One hundred and sixty people from across Alabama, representing local and state governmental agencies, trail planning, construction, and operations professionals, and user groups, attended the conference. Twenty-five speakers gave presentations during the day-and-a-half conference on best practices for trail planning, design, construction, operation, and programming, with a focus on trail accessibility, connectivity, and equity.
- Research
 - ATC, in cooperation with The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development (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 will provide valuable information to trail

operators about their users' demographics, home locations, 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. An early test of the program has been completed at Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve (Birmingham) and studies are currently underway at Shades Creek Greenway Trail (Homewood), Stoney Lonesome OHV Park (Cullman), Blackwater Creek Canoe Trail (Jasper), and Gulf State Park (Orange Beach). The ATC and UACED are assisting Jacksonville State University on updated studies of the Chief Ladiga Trail (Piedmont-Jacksonville), the mountain bike trail system at Coldwater Mountain (Anniston/Oxford), and the NICA Mountain Bike Course on the Ft. McClellan campus (Anniston).

Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Graham L. Sisson, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Graham L. Sisson, Jr., Chair