



Alabama Hiking Trail Society



Media Kit

About AHTS



Mission of AHTS

The mission of the Alabama Hiking Trail Society, Inc., a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization, is to develop, maintain, promote, and protect hiking trails throughout the state and to provide opportunities for the public to hike, camp, and learn to appreciate and conserve the natural beauty of Alabama.

AHTS Members

The Alabama Hiking Trail Society has over 200 members from Huntsville to Mobile with many more partners from different state, federal, and private organizations, and those numbers grow daily. Our members, whose ages range from 6 to 60+, share a common love of hiking, backpacking, and the outdoors and are committed to the mission of AHTS.



What We Do

Trail Work Days / Weekends / Weeks

AHTS members take on the task of maintaining current trails in our charge including clearing tree blow downs, brush, re-blazing, etc., so that the trails can be used safely by the general public. In addition, we create new trail under the guidance of our partnering government and environmental agencies to continue building the Alabama Trail System, Eastern Continental Trail, and Great Eastern Trail.



Trail Planning

The Alabama Hiking Trail Society, along with our state, federal, and environmental partners, continually review and develop plans for new trail development in the state to allow the public to visit the beautiful Alabama landscapes that can only be experienced by foot. In addition, the Alabama Trail System, Eastern Continental Trail, and Great Eastern Trail will be major long paths that travel through Alabama and as such require planning by dedicated individuals to identify property owners, plan routes, and obtain required permissions.



Hikes:

What kind of a hiking group would we be without hikes? Members around the state organize day hikes and backpacking trips throughout the year. There is always a hike in the works that will interest every hiker no matter what the age or hiking experience.

Education:

AHTS is committed to educating the public about the benefits of hiking, especially the health benefits, and about the beauty of Alabama and how to protect its fragile environment. AHTS provides speakers and holds workshops throughout the year and across the state on a variety of topics from hiking and backpacking gear and tips to destinations to Leave No Trace practices, and more.





- * First organizational meeting held July 20, 2001, in Dothan, AL.
- * Incorporated September 17, 2001 as a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation
- * At the first official meeting at Conecuh National Forest (Andalusia, AL), it was decided that AHTS would be a statewide organization. Its purpose was to build trails locally but also to complete what has since become known as the Eastern Continental Trail through Alabama which travels from Key West, FL, to Canada, link trails wherever possible to complete a statewide trail system (the

Alabama Trail System), and to promote a greenway wilderness corridor system.

- * First conference was held at Blue Lake Methodist Camp in Andalusia, AL, March 2002.



- * 2004: AHTS headquarters moved to the state's capital, Montgomery.

AHTS Accomplishments



- Maintains over 35 miles of the Pinhoti Trail
- New trail constructed at Flagg Mt (Weogufka State Forest) and Geneva State Forest
- On-going trail maintenance continues at Conecuh National Forest (Conecuh Trail)
- Partnered with Alabama Forest Service to reopen trails at Little River State Forest (Atmore) after devastating hurricane seasons.
- New projects in development stages: Partnering with US Forest Service at Talladega National Forest/Oakmulgee Unit to develop new trails in the forest.
- Partnering with Blakeley State Historic Park to reopen hurricane battered trails.
- One of the founding members of the Pinhoti Trail Alliance, an organization dedicated to promoting and mainting this 300+ mile long trail that stretches from Alabama to the Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia and on to the Appalachian Trail.
- Brought environmental awareness to the public at various events throughout the state including Earth Day, Year of Alabama Outdoors, plus many more specialized presentations to Scouts and other civic groups.
- Active participant in the yearly National Trails Day celebration to bring knowledge of trails and the health benefits of hiking to the public.
- The annual Conference has grown to be the third largest such event in the region.
- 3 AHTS members have been named American Hiking Society Volunteers of the Year: Leroy Zinkan, Mike Kennedy, Joe Cuhaj

Annual AHTS Conference



In only six short years, the annual AHTS Conference has become one of the top three events for hikers and backpackers in the Southeast! Each year, AHTS packs this 3-day weekend with guest speakers giving presentations on a wide variety of subjects



including hiking gear, destinations, geology, history, and everything in between. The weekend is also filled with great music, fantastic food and fellowship.



The AHTS Board of Directors



Mike Kennedy - President

Mike resides in Prattville, AL, and has been AHTS President for over 2-years. During his tenure, Mike has strengthened AHTS partnerships, encouraged members to be more active participants, increased public awareness of AHTS, and sparked increased interest in trail maintenance. Mike spearheaded the effort to build trail atop Flagg Mountain with the goal to connect Flagg to the Pinhoti Trail. Mike was named American Hiking Society Volunteer of the Year in 2004.



Erik Douglas - Past Previous President

J. Erik Douglas has been involved in shaping the path of AHTS since its inception. A founding member, Erik was elected as the first Vice-President of Trails and served as President from 2003 through 2004. He lives in Brewton near both Conecuh National Forest and Little River State Forest, two keys to his vision of a trail system in South Alabama that will connect the Florida National Scenic Trail to the Conecuh Trail. "If the past is any indication of the future in Alabama, we must be advocates of land conservation and work to preserve Green Spaces not only for ourselves but for generations to come."



Skip Essman - VP Administration

Skip is the VP of Administration for AHTS. His military and law enforcement background brings solid organizational skills and dedication to the position. Skip is Alabama's Leave No Trace Advocate and travels the state to teach the public about LNT practices, ethics and how we can minimize our impact on the environment both on the trail and in our everyday lives. Skip is also an instructor and advisor to the Boys Scouts and is an advisor and hiker of the "Philmont 70-miles/10-Days" backpack trip.



Johnny Brewer - VP Trails

JB is from Andalusia, AL and has been with AHTS for over 4-years. He previously served as VP of Publicity on the Board of Directors. Johnny reorganized efforts to build trails at Geneva State Forest and a 4-mile loop around Geneva Lake is nearing completion.



Rick Guhse' - VP Membership

Rick started hiking and backpacking in 1989. He became Chair of Tropical Trekkers sub-chapter Loxahatchee Chapter, Florida Trail Association and led the group to become a full fledged chapter. In subsequent years he won the FTA Volunteer of Year Award, helped with the creation of the Companion Guide to Hiking the Florida Trail, and became Equipment Editor for Florida Hiking Magazine. Rick co-founded the Alabama Hiking Trail Society in July 2001 and ran the AHTS office in Andalusia from 2001 to 2003. He organized the painting of blazes on the first 28.1 miles of the Alabama Trail in Conecuh NF and wrote the trail guide. In addition, Rick was the first editor of the AHTS newsletter and website, the AL-NW Georgia Trails handbook, and became section leader of the 31.7-miles of Pinhoti Trail maintained by AHTS. He moved to New Hampshire in 2005 and founded the New England Hiking Trail Society.



Marie Arnott - Secretary

Marie has served on the Board as Secretary and Treasurer for over 5-years. Marie lives in Mobile, AL, and came to AHTS with solid experience having served as recording secretary on government and private boards and from her career as a bookkeeper. Marie has been strategically involved in all AHTS conferences and organizational projects since the organization's inception.



Joe Cuhaj - VP Publicity

Joe has been the VP of Publicity for AHTS for over 2-years, using his previous career in radio broadcasting as a springboard to handle the position which includes editing the quarterly newsletter, "Alabama Hiker", maintaining and designing AHTS' presence on the Internet, press releases, and media relations. Joe is also an author having penned two outdoor guides for Falcon Books, "Hiking Alabama" (now in its third edition) and "Paddling Alabama." Joe was named AHS Volunteer of the Year in 2006.

**Learn more about the
Alabama Hiking Trail Society**



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www.hikealabama.org**

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