

# AGREEMENT FOR RECREATION SHARED STEWARDSHIP

Between

THE STATE OF ALABAMA

And

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE

**TITLE: Alabama Pinhoti Trail System Governance**

**This Agreement furthers the intent of the Memorandum of Understanding for Shared Stewardship by and between the State of Alabama and the United States Department of Agriculture signed in January 2021.**

**This Memorandum of Understanding (Agreement) for Shared Stewardship adds to the above-referenced Memorandum of Understanding and is hereby made and entered into by and between the State of Alabama and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service) to provide a framework for shared stewardship, coordination with stakeholders, volunteers and partners, and conveying the shared leaders' intent among and between the parties for the sustainability of the Alabama Pinhoti Trail System.**

**Whereas:**

- Outdoor recreation is a fourteen-billion-dollar industry in Alabama (*Outdoor Recreation in Alabama, 2021 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*) and much of that economic activity is dependent on healthy, resilient public lands. Additionally, access to outdoor recreation is linked to improved public health outcomes. Public land managers and their partners can help address social determinants of health by increasing access for people of all backgrounds and abilities.
- Sustainable outdoor recreation infrastructure within healthy resilient public lands and waters, with safe and inclusive access, is essential to creating an environment to attract and retain Alabamians; and is a component of Alabama's strategy to invest in outdoor recreation as a talent attraction and retention tool.
- The Alabama Pinhoti Trail System consists of an approximate 170-mile hiking route along the Talladega Mountain range with an unofficial beginning at Flagg Mountain in Coosa County, Alabama extending across six counties to the Georgia – Alabama border. Additional routes and trails connect to the “core” Pinhoti providing access to towns and points of interest – these are all considered part of the Pinhoti Trail System. (Reference Exhibit A: Alabama Pinhoti Trail System Map)
- The public land management agencies supporting 132 miles of Alabama Pinhoti are the US Forest Service, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Alabama Forestry Commission. Today, approximately 20 miles are located on private lands owned and managed by non-profit partners. There are approximately 18 miles of “road routes” along public roads and highways used by hikers to connect to the various trail segments.

- Construction of the Pinhoti Trail began in the early 1970s on the Talladega National Forest and in 1977 twenty-eight miles were designated as a National Recreation Trail, with the Alabama State Parks as a co-manager for 2 miles of the trail that transected Cheaha State Park.
- The Alabama Trails Commission, its Advisory Board, and the Alabama Trails Foundation were created by Alabama Code Title 41-23-140 & 141 to advance, develop, interconnect, and support the use of trails in Alabama; The Alabama Trails Foundation was further charged to serve Alabama trails in enterprises normally beyond the reach of government.
- In 2016 The Alabama Trails Commission began evaluating the potential for improving the Pinhoti and determining the stakeholder's support. In 2017 they asked the Alabama Trails Foundation to develop a planning document to outline strategic steps to improve the Alabama Pinhoti Trail. That document, *The Alabama Pinhoti Trail Built Environment Master Plan, Guidelines for Design, Construction, and Maintenance* was released in 2019, providing an inventory of existing conditions and recommendations for future study and improvements. The document also acknowledges that the Alabama Pinhoti Trail is not sustainable and lacks clear leadership regarding its management objectives.
- The Alabama Pinhoti Trail System is part of more extensive trail network, both in east Alabama and regionally, as the Pinhoti connects to the Chief Ladiga Rail Trail and once in Georgia the Pinhoti makes its way north where it eventually ties into other Appalachian trails.
- Rural and gateway communities along Alabama Pinhoti Trail System seek to enhance sustainable outdoor recreation-based tourism to diversify their economies.
- The Talladega Mountain range that supports the Alabama Pinhoti Trail System is a vital component of the montane longleaf ecosystem requiring active management including fire and vegetation treatments to build resilience and restore the native forest composition, structure, and function. The importance of restoration and maintenance of this ecosystem requires coordination and information sharing with the hiking community, as well as the inclusion of trail management objectives with the active management goals of the surrounding forest.
- Recreation participants need easy access to high-quality, accurate information to set expectations, enhance their safety, and enable them to behave responsibly within the landscape and among other recreation participants.
- **Shared Stewardship is a collaborative approach to federal land management that emphasizes partnership with states, and other groups to identify joint priorities and develop cross-boundary strategies that make an impact at the correct scale. The parties to this Agreement seek to apply the shared stewardship approach to achieve ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable outdoor recreation for the Alabama Pinhoti Trail System.**

#### **The Parties Agree to:**

- Establish a Governance Board consisting of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Alabama Forestry Commission, and the U.S. Forest Service to provide collaborative leadership in developing, restoring, and maintaining the Alabama Pinhoti Trail System as a sustainable outdoor recreation resource. **(Reference Exhibit B: Pinhoti Governance Board Members)**

- To communicate regularly to develop shared management objectives for the Alabama Pinhoti Trail System. Coordinate and use all available tools and authorities, recognizing there may be limitations in authorities to develop cohesive management objectives fully.
- Provide public venues to engage stakeholders so that their opinions, experiences, and technical assistance may be included in the developing management objectives.
- To use the guidelines and designation process of the National Trail System to develop touchstones for defining sustainability. Pursue national designations as appropriate to elevate the Alabama Pinhoti Trails System's status and to provide greater access to resources.
- Develop private-public ventures and partnerships to strengthen local trail management and operations capacity. Support the growth of local trail leadership to allow more significant investment and economic sustainability.
- Coordinate media, marketing, and other communications about the Alabama Pinhoti Trail System and other outdoor recreation opportunities especially where, when, and how recreation occurs. Include meaningful education and engagement to cultivate a stewardship ethic among recreation participants.
- Support equitable, safe, and inclusive access for all Alabama citizens and visitors to the Alabama Pinhoti Trail System. Acquisitions, easements, and other means may be necessary to establish or protect access to opportunities or key conservation and recreation lands.
- Build on the experience of the Alabama Trails Foundation and engage them as a liaison and repository for planning and developing innovative partnerships to fulfill shared visions for the Alabama Pinhoti Trail System.

**By signature below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this Agreement for Shared Stewardship for Alabama Pinhoti Trial System Governance.**

**In witness whereof, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the last date written below.**

**USDA Forest Service**

**KENDERICK**  
 By: **ARNEY**  
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**Ken Arney**  
**R8 Regional Forester, Forest Service**  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

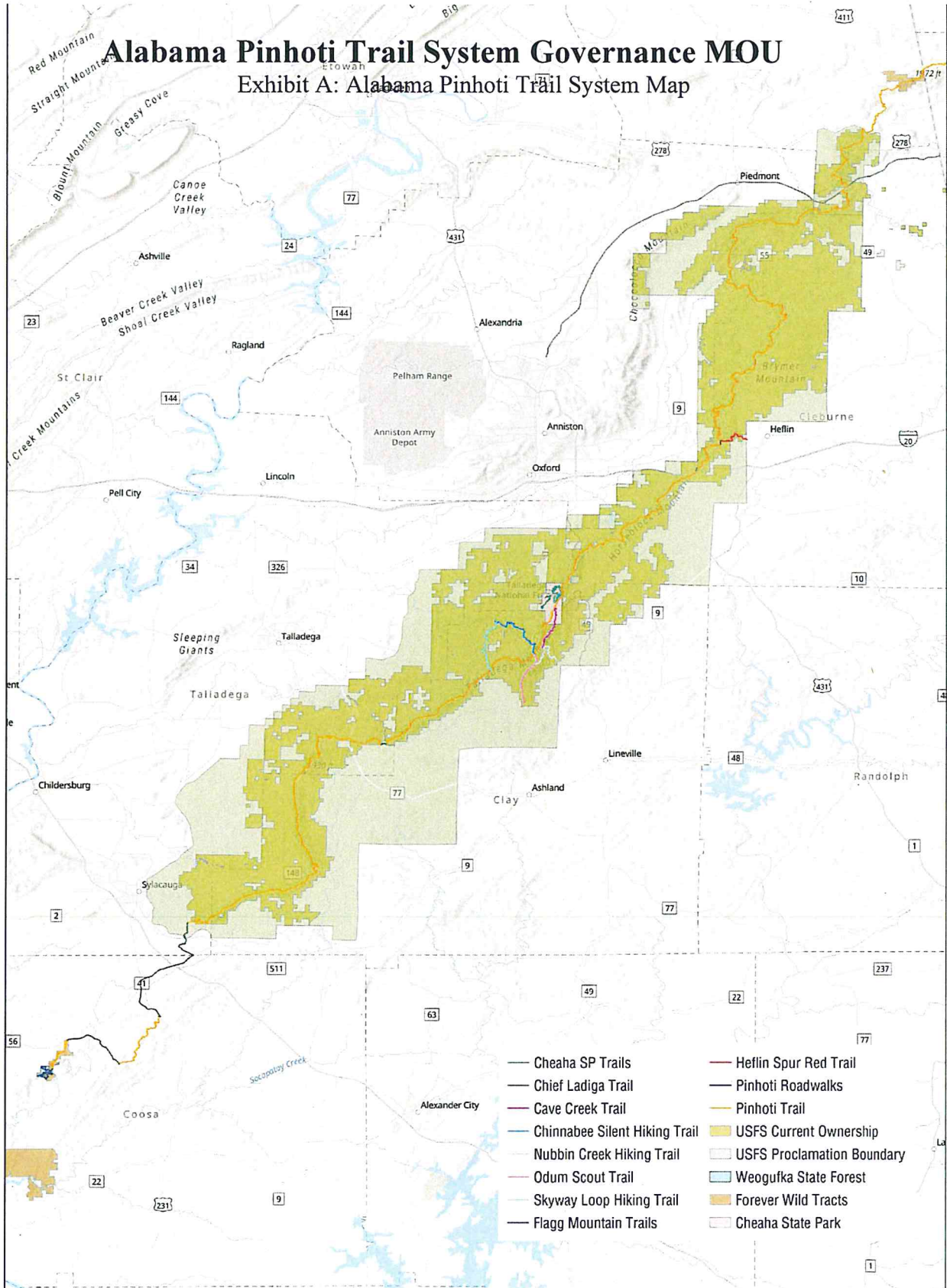
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**State of Alabama**

By: *Kay Ivey*  
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**Kay Ivey**  
**Governor of Alabama**  
 Date: *8-1-23*  
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# Alabama Pinhoti Trail System Governance MOU

## Exhibit A: Alabama Pinhoti Trail System Map



**Exhibit B: Alabama Pinhoti Trail Governance Board Members**

**Principal Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) Contacts:**

AFC Program Contact	AFC Technical Contact
<p><b>Name:</b> Rick Oates, State Forester  <b>Address:</b> 513 Madison Avenue  <b>City, State, Zip:</b> Montgomery, AL 36104  <b>Telephone:</b> 334-240-9300  <b>Email:</b> Rick.Oates@forestry.alabama.gov</p>	<p><b>Name:</b> John Goff, Protection Division Director  <b>Address:</b> 513 Madison Avenue  <b>City, State, Zip:</b> Montgomery, AL 36104  <b>Telephone:</b> 334-240-9300  <b>Email:</b> John.Goff@forestry.alabama.gov</p>

**Principal Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ACDNR) Contacts:**

ACDNR Program Contact	ACDNR Technical Contact
<p><b>Name:</b> Chris Blankenship, Commissioner  <b>Address:</b> 64 North Union Street  <b>City, State, Zip:</b> Montgomery, AL 36130  <b>Telephone:</b> 334-242-3486  <b>Email:</b> Chris.Blankenship@dcnr.alabama.gov</p>	<p><b>Name:</b>  <b>Address:</b>  <b>City, State, Zip:</b>  <b>Telephone:</b>  <b>Email:</b></p>

**U.S. Forest Service, National Forests in Alabama Contacts:**

National Forests in Alabama Program Contact	National Forests in Alabama Technical Contact
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