



Investing in Trails
is investing in Alabama's Future



Why Trails? Why Now?

- **Significant Economic Engine:** Outdoor recreation is a powerhouse for the state, contributing \$7.31 billion in value added to Alabama's economy and supporting over 71,000 jobs. Trails facilitate access to public lands, fueling secondary spending on lodging, equipment, and food, which generates nearly \$3.5 billion in compensation for Alabamians.
- **Community Connectivity and Property Value:** Trails act as "threads" that connect rural and urban areas, fostering social interaction, a sense of belonging, and a place to meet others.
- **Magnet for Talent and Innovation:** Access to outdoor recreation is a top priority for the modern workforce. Alabama can use our trail systems as a competitive advantage to attract and retain STEM professionals and young entrepreneurs who prioritize a high quality of life when choosing where to build their lives and businesses.



Why the Pinhoti?

**The Pinhoti Trail is Alabama's longest footpath,
and it is within 1.5 hours drive of 9 million people**

- By bringing the Pinhoti to a sustainable standard, we can keep Alabama's outdoor recreation dollars within our state. Proximity to Atlanta, Chattanooga, and Birmingham means potential visitors to east Alabama who are searching for an outdoor experience.
- The Pinhoti improves opportunities for east Alabama's rural communities by expanding access to outdoor recreation. It also helps communities attract top talent and entrepreneurial investments, all while improving quality of life and connecting people to Alabama's natural environment.



Rendering of the proposed U.S. 78 Bridge

What's the Current Need?

Funding for the US 78 Bridge Project. This project will improve access and recognition of the Pinhoti Trail.

Located just outside Heflin, near the I-20 corridor, the US 78 Bridge Project will transform a missing portion of the trail into a destination that invites everyone to enjoy the beauty of Alabama's southern Appalachians. It will help elevate the connection between the Pinhoti and the City of Heflin as a gateway community, while strengthening connections regionwide.

Project Budget

\$1.26 million

**\$1.09 million raised to date
from a combination
of public funds,
corporate foundations, and
private donors.**

Remaining Project Need:

\$170,000



CASE STUDY

\$3.5 million invested by public-private partners over six years at Flagg Mountain in Coosa County, the southern start to the Pinhoti Trail, has created an increase of 400% in visitation, leading to an annual economic impact of \$1 million.

Innovate Alabama, a secured funder of this project, explicitly positions outdoor recreation as a pillar of Alabama's talent strategy. Their SEEK AL campaign is built around outdoor life as a reason to choose Alabama, with trails in the state's 668,000 acres of national forest land as a central draw. **That pitch only works if the infrastructure is real.**

Cheaha State Park, looking off
Alabama's highest peak.



Investments on the Pinhoti Trail Open East Alabama to New Visitors

- The U.S. 78 Bridge project is located along the approach to gateway town Heflin, Alabama. This gateway also leads to the newly restored Cheaha State Park lodge.
- The State Park's \$25 million investment is another transformational commitment to this area's outdoor recreation economy. The Pinhoti Trail transects Cheaha State Park, allowing better connections. The proposed pedestrian bridge will position Heflin to capture a share of the growth by offering a safe, welcoming day hiking experience.
- The new trail corridor opens the Pinhoti to families, older adults, and people with limited mobility who would never have attempted the current road walk.



How this project helps small towns

A critical gap in trail infrastructure currently prevents the Pinhoti Trail from being a greater asset for Heflin's economy. Hikers cannot safely cross the highway, cannot easily reach downtown, and most bypass the community entirely. This project closes that gap, transforming an unpleasant and unsafe road walk into a welcoming gateway that can connect hikers directly to downtown Heflin.

This Legacy Project is one of ten Pinhoti sites designated as touchstones for viable outdoor recreation. It provides a more sustainable environmental footprint, improves safety, and increases use by families, students, and long-distance hikers. Through improved outdoor experiences, quality design, and accessible amenities, the project supports both environmental outcomes and economic vitality.

This project establishes a safe and permanent connection, taking the trail off the roadway and into the woods. The construction of the pedestrian bridge eliminates an unsafe and uninviting portion of the trail. Between these resources is the USDA Forest Service Shoal Creek Office that provides safe access points, a welcoming environment, and the opportunity for more users to access the Pinhoti Trail.

The design of the pedestrian bridge crossing Highway 78 will serve as a gateway for the Pinhoti Trail and east Alabama to market the trail and elevate Heflin and Oxford as examples of outdoor recreation and access.

Making an investment in a new path for Alabama

Alabama Trails Foundation Board of Directors
Bruce & Emilie Reid Family Foundation
Coca Cola United
Daniel Foundation
EBSCO
Eyes on the World Mapping
Innovate Alabama
Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation
Nielson Family Fund

Norfolk Southern
Protective Foundation
Regions Bank
Robert. H. Sprain, Jr.
The Caring Foundation
(Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama)
The Power of Good Foundation
(Alabama Power Company)
The State of Alabama





Alabama Trails
FOUNDATION

Who is the Alabama Trails Foundation?

The Alabama Trails Foundation works to enrich investments made along trails by building a long-term base of support with local leaders and the larger community. Building this base is critical to the success of the trail and of the communities it connects with.

Our volunteer board powers our organization with strong financial constraints, targeted project execution, and a focus on sustainable projects with realistic deliverables. We partner with other non-profits, state and federal agencies and local governments to turn significant destination trails into premier recreation resources and economic engines for our state.

From Alabama's longest footpath to the rails-to-trails corridors and our waterways, our goal is to weave the fabric of trails into the future of Alabama, from the most rural landscape to the most urban.



2026 Alabama Trails Foundation Board and Officers

Officers

Paul DeMarco, President
Rob Fowler, First Vice President
Wendy Jackson, Second Vice President
Maggie Cunningham, Secretary
Ann Haas, Treasurer
David Perry, Past President
 (2023-2024 president)

Board Members

Caroline McDonald Aderholt
Katherine Avants
Tom Carruthers
Maye Head
Taylor Pursell
Dr. William A. Sims
Terry Smiley
Graham Smith



Recently completed bridge at
Jogloma-Scott Lake along the Pinhoti Trail

Suggested Leadership Giving Levels

Contributor	\$ 5,000
Supporter	\$10,000
Enthusiast	\$20,000
Partner	\$50,000

How to Give?

Make your check payable to Alabama Trails Foundation or use the form below.

Submit Check to: Alabama Trails Foundation
c/o Ann Damon Haas
968 Linwood Road
Birmingham, AL 35222

Or visit alabamatrailsfoundation.org/give

