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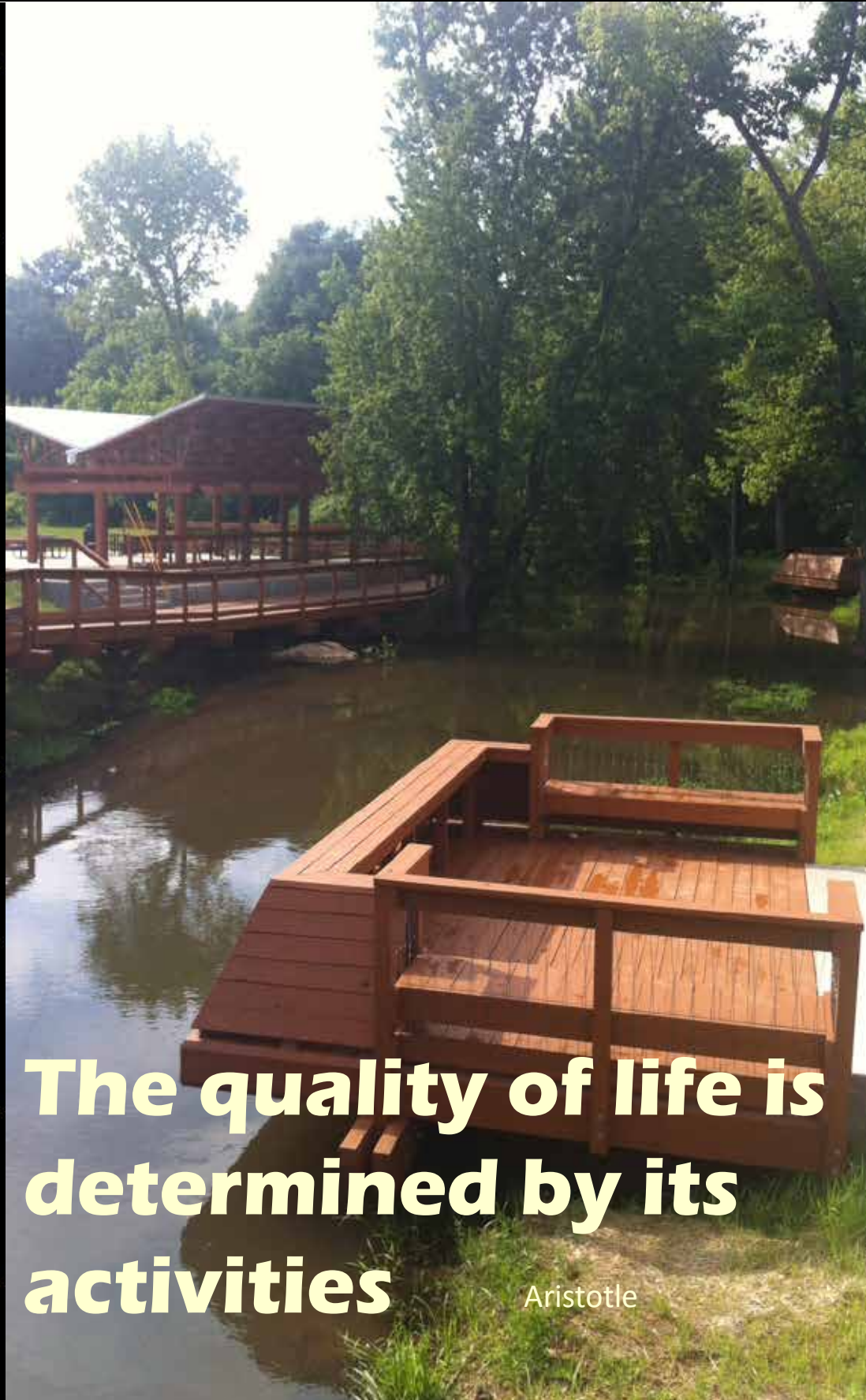
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**The quality of life is determined by its activities** Aristotle

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# Outdoor recreation continues to spur economic development



*Jason Daves*  
*Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce*

**D**uring the recession, unemployment reached its highest level, consumer spending habits declined and there were massive spending cuts on the local, state and national levels. But one industry actually saw a significant increase due to the economy — outdoor recreation.

The outdoor recreational industry is a massive, non-traditional sector of the Alabama economy which is often overlooked. Many Americans view outdoor recreation as a priority and a necessity in their lives for the purposes of staying active and achieving a healthy lifestyle.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, in 2012 Americans spent a whopping \$646 billion on outdoor recreation, nearly twice as much as

they spent on pharmaceuticals. Of that staggering figure, \$7.5 billion was spent in the state of Alabama, which created \$2 billion in wages and salaries, 86,000 jobs and \$494 million in state and local tax revenue.

Impressively, the Alabama Department of Tourism has continued to see those figures increase since their release in 2012. In particular, Talladega County continues to play a significant role in tourism growth.

The Greater Talladega and Lincoln Area Chamber of Commerce is happy to announce that it saw a tremendous climb in travel-related revenue and growth in tourism from 2012 to 2013. In fact, tourism-related employment in Talladega County increased 4 percent in 2013, which is much greater than the State of Alabama average of 2

percent. Travel-related earnings in the state averaged a 3-percent increase, while Talladega County exceeded that with a 6-percent increase. Lodging taxes were up 6 percent in Talladega County, while the state averaged a 3-percent increase. This shows not only that the outdoor recreation industry is growing throughout the state of Alabama, but specifically Talladega County is growing two times more rapidly than the state average.

Access to quality outdoor recreation is critical to individual residents of our area and our businesses. It is fundamental to recruiting employers and is at the heart of a healthy and prosperous community.

Most importantly, Talladega County's outdoor recreation economy can continue to be a growing generator of jobs and an economic engine for years to come. Our continued growth and success of this vital industry hinges on outdoor recreational opportunities for everyone like the ones highlighted in this magazine and on bringing in dollars from residents and out-of-state visitors alike.

So it is with great pleasure that we've put the spotlight on a few of the outdoor recreational opportunities available in our area. Now we just hope you'll tell your family, friends and acquaintances about these and the many more we have so that we'll continue to see those great numbers improve in the future as they have in the recent past.

# Plenty to see, do in our backyard

“**T**here is nothing to see or do in this town.” I have heard this said a countless number of times. Prior to returning to work in my hometown, I spent the better part of a decade traveling the country working in small towns just like Talladega. I would often ask the employees where I was working for unique places to visit while I was there or for their favorite restaurant recommendations. All too often, this was their response, sadly enough.

People would also ask me about my hometown or what Alabama was like. Long before my tenure on the Chamber board, I developed a short speech extolling the virtues of our great state. People were often surprised to hear that within a half-day drive we had beaches, mountains, dozens of lakes and just about any outdoor activity you could imagine. Almost 10 years later, I can shorten that drive to half an hour and still WOW everyone I meet.

Fortunately, in just about every town I visited, the “There is nothing here” comment was completely inaccurate. The vast majority of places I visited had something unique to offer. The problem was, many people didn’t think that the things in their backyard were worth sharing. We hope this issue of the Chamber magazine will remind you of the great things waiting in your backyard — and make you want to share the many hidden gems in our area.

From the new BirdieBall golf course and Fishing Trail in Lincoln, to the back roads in Munford that lead to miles of trails, streams and waterfalls in the Talladega National Forest, to TOP Trails and Talladega Marksmanship Park under construction by CMP — outdoor activities abound in our backyard. Miles of scenic shoreline along the Coosa River and Logan Martin Lake, also fed by creeks and streams offer the opportunity for fishing, canoeing and kayaking. We truly have an amazing array of recreational activities with opportunities for someone of any age or with a variety of interests.

The question for each of you is, what kind of person



*Chip Moore  
Chamber of Commerce  
Board of Directors, President*

are you? Do you say “There is nothing to do here” or can you impress family and friends with a list of great places to see and do right here at home? After reading this issue, we hope that you will not only discover something new that you may not have known about, but also take it one step further. Plan a weekend or plan a week. Create your own “staycation” without even leaving the county. Invite friends and family to join you.

From the time we were in kindergarten, we have been taught to share. What better thing to share than your own hometown? Since moving back home, I have enjoyed having friends from around the country come to visit us. From the lake to the track or a morning jog down South Street, everyone who visited was impressed. The biggest problem we often face when visitors are in town is not “What can we do here?” it is “How can we fit it all in?” Give it a try sometime and what you will probably hear from friends and family alike is “When can we come back?” You will surely find that sharing our hometown is even more fun than enjoying it on your own.



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A photograph of three kayakers on a river. The kayakers are wearing helmets and life jackets. They are in a blue, red, and yellow kayak. The river is surrounded by dense green trees and reeds. The scene is captured in the late afternoon or early morning, with warm lighting. The text is positioned in the upper right corner of the image.

**Joan Steed, Judy  
Ranelli and Lynn  
Rasmussen practice  
their kayaking skills  
at Jackson Shoals.**



# Alabama Scenic River Trail



hey didn't build it, but the founders of the Alabama Scenic River Trail packaged it for use, creating the nation's longest one-state river trail that has it all.

"We started out in 2008 with about 650 miles of explored maps," said Jim Felder, executive director of the Alabama Scenic River Trail. "We now have nearly 5,000 miles of accessible waterways."

During a trip along the Alabama Scenic River Trail, you can travel from mountain streams to river delta to the salty waves of the Gulf of Mexico.

The trail offers paddling and powerboat experiences and exploration with amenities and campsites to support everything from long-distance touring to organized paddles to races, overnight trips, day trips, guided trips and much more.

"Alabama is said to have 20,000 miles of waterways, and about one-fourth of that is paddlable at least two to three months out of the year," he said. "Some areas such as the larger rivers and some smaller creeks are paddlable year round, but most of the riverways are seasonal due to floods, droughts, wind and debris after storms. Weather factors are the main reason for closures."

The main waterways of the trail are the Alabama River, Coosa River, Tensaw River, Tennessee River, Cahaba River, and other Alabama rivers, the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, and Terrapin, Hatchett and Weogufka creeks.

The trail passes through Cherokee, Etowah, Calhoun, St. Clair, Talladega, Shelby, Coosa, Chilton, Elmore, Autauga, Montgomery, Lowndes, Dallas, Wilcox, Monroe, Conecuh, Clarke, Baldwin and Mobile counties.

"Even though I have paddled only a small portion of the Alabama Scenic River Trail, the concept of the recreation trail is a wonderful idea," said David Atchison, who has extensively kayaked the trail and written about it for The

Daily Home's Lakeside Living magazine. "It offers plenty of adventure for canoeists and kayakers."

Atchison said Logan Martin Lake, the small portion of the Coosa River and the Alabama Scenic River Trail that borders Talladega and St. Clair counties, offers a diverse landscape filled with an abundance of wildlife.

"The great part about the trail is that you don't necessarily have to paddle the entire 650-mile trail," he said. "You can paddle small sections of it. You can plan overnight trips and stop at designated trail campsites or find your own spots to camp overnight."

The Alabama Scenic River Trail offers access to large cities, small towns, and a way of life many have not experienced.

"There is no fee for using any part of the trail itself, but there may be third-party fees such as a city boat launch fee," Felder said.

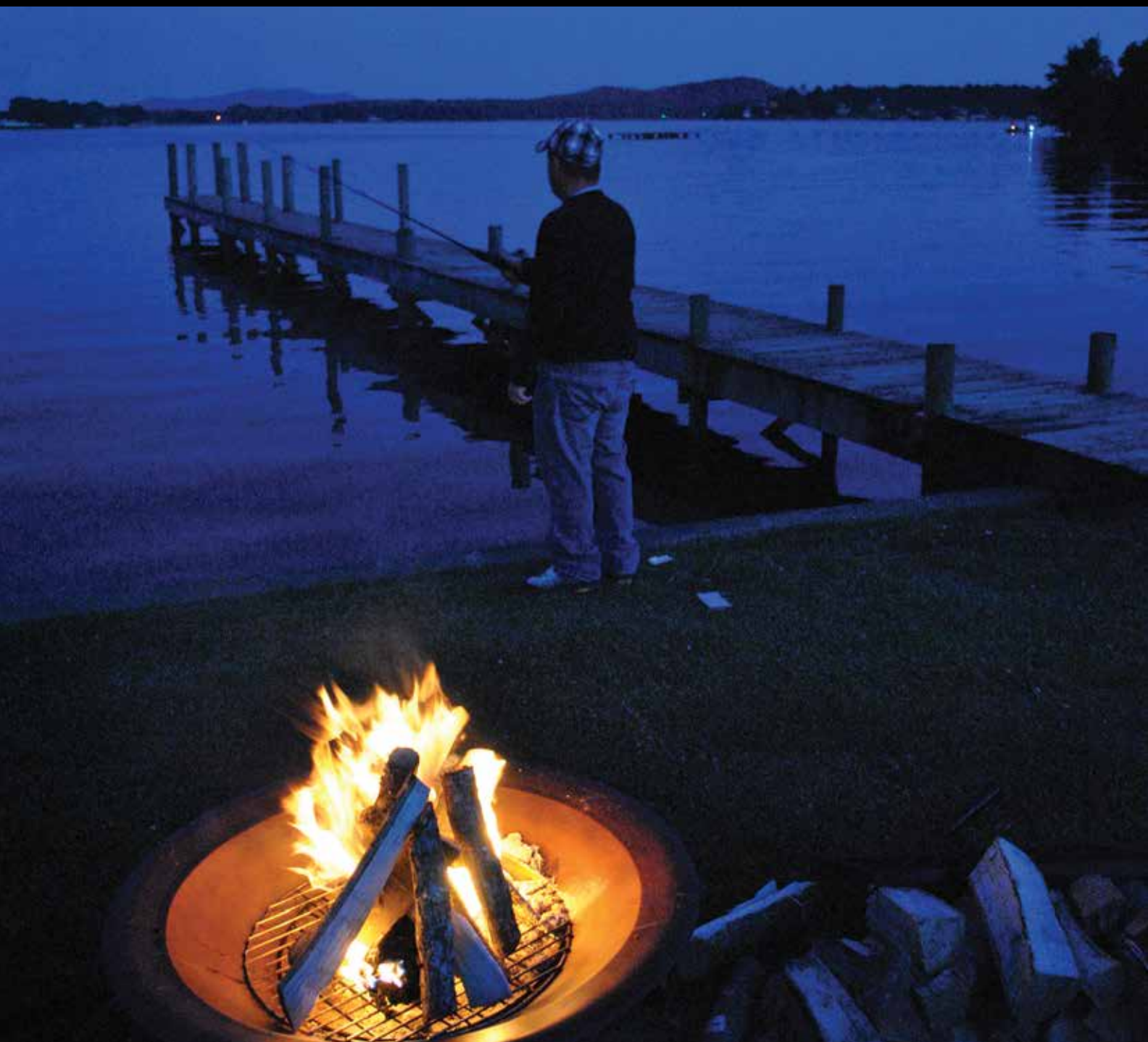
Felder said about 25 people have completed the entire trail, including a person who not only traveled down the trail but back up it on the return trip.

"There is no way to count the number of people who have used portions of the trail," he said. "People come from all over the country and the world to paddle the Alabama Scenic River Trail. I think there is more awareness of the world-class destinations in Alabama."

Felder said the Alabama Scenic River Trail offers plenty of options, whether you enjoy kayaking, canoeing or powerboating.

"There is something for everybody — flat water, saltwater, backwater, quick water and whitewater," he said. "We are by far the longest single river trail in the U.S."

For more information visit [www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com](http://www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com).



**Fishing by firelight is one of the many activities you can enjoy on the Alabama Scenic River Trail.**

The Alabama Scenic River Trail website offers tips to aid in planning your trip along Alabama's beautiful waterways.

A complete list of everything you might need on a trip depends on you, your experience, your common sense and your ability to think through a situation. It also depends on the weather conditions, how far you are going at one time and how you intend to travel. As a general rule you should:

- Bring food and water. At a minimum, plan on bringing

food and water for everyone in the group. Since you are boating, not backpacking, let the boat do the work. If you're an outdoors person, you already know how much you need to bring. If you're not, call an outfitter and learn as you go.

- Bring a way to communicate. Cell phones are great near cities and in certain rural situations, but service may not be available in all areas. Have a map and know



**You can find all sorts of waterfowl and other creatures along the Alabama Scenic River Trail.**

where your next (and most recent) access to civilization is. Marine VHF radios are another option. Marine police, lock operators, commercial boaters, marinas and some recreational boaters monitor channel 16 of these devices, which can be used to call for help.

- Bring first aid. A first-aid kit should accompany you on every trip you take. Be sure to include sunscreen and a hat for sunny days, and in cold or chilly weather consider warm clothing an essential first-aid item.

- Bring the requisite and good-sense safety items. Bring extra clothing in case someone in the group overturns, and keep it dry in a dry bag that you can get from sporting goods and outfitter stores. Don't depend on plastic bags – you can't trust them. If your kayak has a dry cargo compartment, don't trust dry-bag critical items in it unless you have tested it.

- Bring a way to keep cameras and cell phones dry. Small dry bags and hard-shell cases for cameras and cell phones are a must.

- Bring an extra paddle for every group. A lost paddle can turn an otherwise great trip into a disaster.

- Bring a way to navigate. Anyone embarking on a river for any distance without at least a map or knowledge of the area shouldn't be going. If you have a GPS, take a waypoint at the put-in and, if possible, the takeout or else know for sure where they are on the map and GPS. You only have seconds to get information off a GPS or map when you need it most if you're paddling, as your hands are always needed for something else.

- Bring a light source. Everyone on your trip needs a readily available flashlight handy at all times, even for day trips.

- Powerboaters should not go on any part of the trail without a depth finder and a good map. This is especially true on the Coosa River.

For more information visit [www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com](http://www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com).

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At the grand opening and first kids fishing derby, 3-year-old Dayne Yoder touches a fish he just caught.

# Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail

**A**n idea 40 years in the making came to fruition in May 2014 with the creation of the handicapped-accessible Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail in Lincoln.

“I wanted a place where kids in wheelchairs would have the ability to fish the same way other kids can,” former

Lincoln Mayor Lew Watson said.

Watson proposed the idea and applied for a state grant in the 1970s, and although it was turned down, he continued to pursue the goal. Current Mayor Bud Kitchin and the City Council continued with the project and saw



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**Above: The fishing trail features a pavilion and boardwalk in old downtown Lincoln. At Right: Anthony Jacks helps his 4-year-old son, Jasper, wet a line at the Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail in Lincoln.**

it through to its opening.

The Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail is in old downtown Lincoln along both sides of Blue Eye Creek. The creek is 3 to 6 feet deep in some places and 8 to 10 in others.

“I used to fish off this creek – you can see bass and bream,” Watson said.

The Blue Eye Creek Fishing Trail has five fishing stations – two concrete and three wooden – on both sides of the creek. The stations are set up to go straight down into the water, without overhangs that could cause tangled fishing line.

“We wanted people in wheelchairs to be able to go up to the edge to fish easily,” Watson said.

A pedestrian bridge crosses Blue Eye Creek. There is a concrete sidewalk approximately 10 feet wide and 3,500 feet long that winds between the creek and an old seed warehouse providing access to the fishing stations.

A pavilion with amphitheater seating provides a venue for performances. There is an open trellis-covered walk from Crawford Street to the new pavilion. A wooden boardwalk runs from the pedestrian bridge to the new deck built adjacent to the pavilion.



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**Lincoln opened Alabama's first BirdieBall golf course April 2014. BirdieBalls are napkin ring-shaped golf balls made of a super polymer that is highly durable.**

# Lincoln BirdieBall Golf Course

**B**Whether you want to work on your golf swing or chipping or you simply want to see if golf is the game for you, Lincoln's BirdieBall golf course is the place to go.

The first of its kind in Alabama, the nine-hole BirdieBall golf course opened in April at Lincoln Park. The course is on the left immediately after entering Lincoln Park.

"I first learned about BirdieBall at the National Recreation and Parks Association conference in October 2013," Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department Director Roben Duncan said. "It looked feasible for Lincoln Park, so we repurposed wood and other material from other parks and created the course."

BirdieBalls are napkin ring-shaped golf balls made of a super polymer that is highly durable. BirdieBalls travel about 40 yards with a 5-iron, and players can add or take away one or two yards per club.

Only BirdieBalls may be used at the Lincoln BirdieBall

golf course. The course is free to play, but an honor box by the entrance allows players to donate to assist with the upkeep of the course. Score cards are available with the course layout on the back.

The BirdieBalls travel far enough to show ball flight, but short enough so they are easily retrievable. They are designed for more hang time, which helps new golfers learn the game or experienced golfers improve their skills.

BirdieBall golfers tee off like in regular golf. The swing and chip is the same stroke pattern, but there is no putting. Golfers chip into a 1-foot radius white circle around the flag.

Lincoln's BirdieBall golf course features sand traps, dog-leg right holes and water hazards, and yes, BirdieBalls float and are retrievable should you find one of those hazards.

Right now, the City of Lincoln is the only authorized dealer of BirdieBall equipment in Alabama. BirdieBalls are three for \$10. Strike pads, which simulate taking a divot,

**Lincoln Parks and Recreation Athletic Director Wesley Yoder practices chipping at the new nine-hole Birdie-Ball golf course at Lincoln Park.**

are \$25. The velocity tees, which set the BirdieBall in a perfect position for a driver or 3-wood so you can practice drives, are \$15.

All are available for purchase at the Lincoln Park House on Magnolia Street, the Lincoln City Center and the concession stand at Lincoln Park. Prices are subject to change.

Golfers may use their own clubs or clubs are available for rent at the same locations. A standard golfer could probably complete the course in an hour to an hour and a half.

“You can pretty much play the course with three clubs — a driver, pitching wedge and 5-iron,” Lincoln Parks and Recreation Athletic Director Wesley Yoder said. “It hooks and slices like a regular golf ball. It’s a lot of fun to play.”

For more information, call the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department at 205-763-1006.



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# CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park



The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) is constructing a \$20 million marksmanship range in Talladega County, but those in charge of the project expect it to be more than just a place where gun enthusiasts come to sharpen their skills.

“The CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park is much more than just a range,” said Mark Johnson, Deputy Chief Operating Officer for the CMP. “We want to make it where the whole family can come out and enjoy events whether they are shooting in them or watching.”





**The Civilian Marksmanship Program is constructing a \$20 million marksmanship range in Talladega County that sits on approximately 500 acres a few miles south of the Talladega Superspeedway.**

Chartered by Congress in 1903, the CMP has dedicated itself to training and educating U.S. citizens in the responsible use of firearms and air guns, with a focus on youth.

“We are truly excited about developing a new facility where the CMP will geographically expand its mission of teaching respect for firearms, promoting gun safety and marksmanship principles,” Johnson said.

CMP Business Development Officer Jim Townsend said

the idea of expanding the organization’s footprint was kicked around for 10 years or more.

“About three years ago, a more serious search for property began,” he said. “We went to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and they did a survey on the number of shooters within 300 miles of property CMP was considering.”

In 2012, the CMP acquired approximately 500 acres a few miles south of the Talladega Superspeedway.



The site had to be cut to a 30-foot-plus depth in some places.



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“There were several factors that led us to this property,” Townsend said. “The property is close to our Anniston location, and the number of NSSF shooters within 300 miles of our property is 4.5 million.”

Townsend said although there are many shooting ranges in this area, most only offer one discipline of shooting such as shotgun or only have a 25-yard range.

“The CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park will be a multi-discipline range encompassing shotgun, rifle and pistol,” he said. “We will have three different shotgun venues, two rifle venues and multiple pistol venues.”

Townsend said the park is a \$20-million investment, but when the cost of purchasing the land, engineering and other fees is included, the cost of the total project will be approximately \$23 million.

Johnson said the test range was constructed in June 2012, after the perimeter fencing was completed.

“The perimeter fence is more than 25,000 feet, or about

five miles of fencing,” he said. “There are no trespassing signs posted every 125 feet for safety reasons.”

Contractors began the earthmoving phase in December 2013. Johnson said approximately 600,000 cubic yards of dirt had to be moved around on site, not transported in or out.

“They had to cut to a 30-plus-foot depth in some places,” he said.

As of June 2014, the earthmoving is approximately 95 percent complete, with an estimated completion date of July 2014. This overlapped with the beginning of range building construction, which is the second phase of the project. The second phase includes construction of the CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park Clubhouse, which got underway in June 2014.

When completed, the clubhouse will be 13,000 square feet with two large multi-purpose classrooms, CMP personnel offices and a store with range supplies, CMP



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CMP Business Development Officer Jim Townsend stands where the 13,000-square-foot clubhouse will go.



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**Approximately 600,000 cubic yards of dirt had to be moved around on site, not transported in or out, to create the marksmanship park.**

memorabilia, clothing, safety equipment, ammunition and more.

A covered presentation area will separate the clubhouse east and west wings where awards ceremonies will be held overlooking the range. The east and west concourses will feature large sitting and viewing areas with monitors displaying the shooting events in real time. Glass windows will separate the open east and west porches from the concourses and will also feature viewing monitors.

“You can view the shooting matches from inside or outside in the clubhouse, which sits 30 feet above the 600-yard range floor,” Johnson said. “This lets viewers watch the matches in comfort in real time or relax between matches. It also makes it more feasible for competitors to compete in multiple matches with a place for some downtime in comfort. We will also have multiple large leaderboards to show scores as they change.”

The estimated footage of the porch is 12 by 150 feet, with seating for about 100. There is also a grassy embankment below the porch that will accommodate up to 200 people.

Townsend said all shooters on the 600-yard, 100-yard and 50-yard pistol ranges will have covered firing positions. There are spectator areas behind each firing shed.

“There is no pit duty,” he said. “No one goes forward of the firing line. This eliminates people movement and the time it takes, which means matches can run much more efficiently and in a much more time-efficient manner.”

CMP officials expect substantial completion of buildings and fixtures to be in place by the end of the year, with January and February 2015 open for installation of equipment and beginning testing. There is a projected soft opening in the April or May 2015 timeframe, with

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# CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park

A conceptual illustration depicting range and facility locations\*



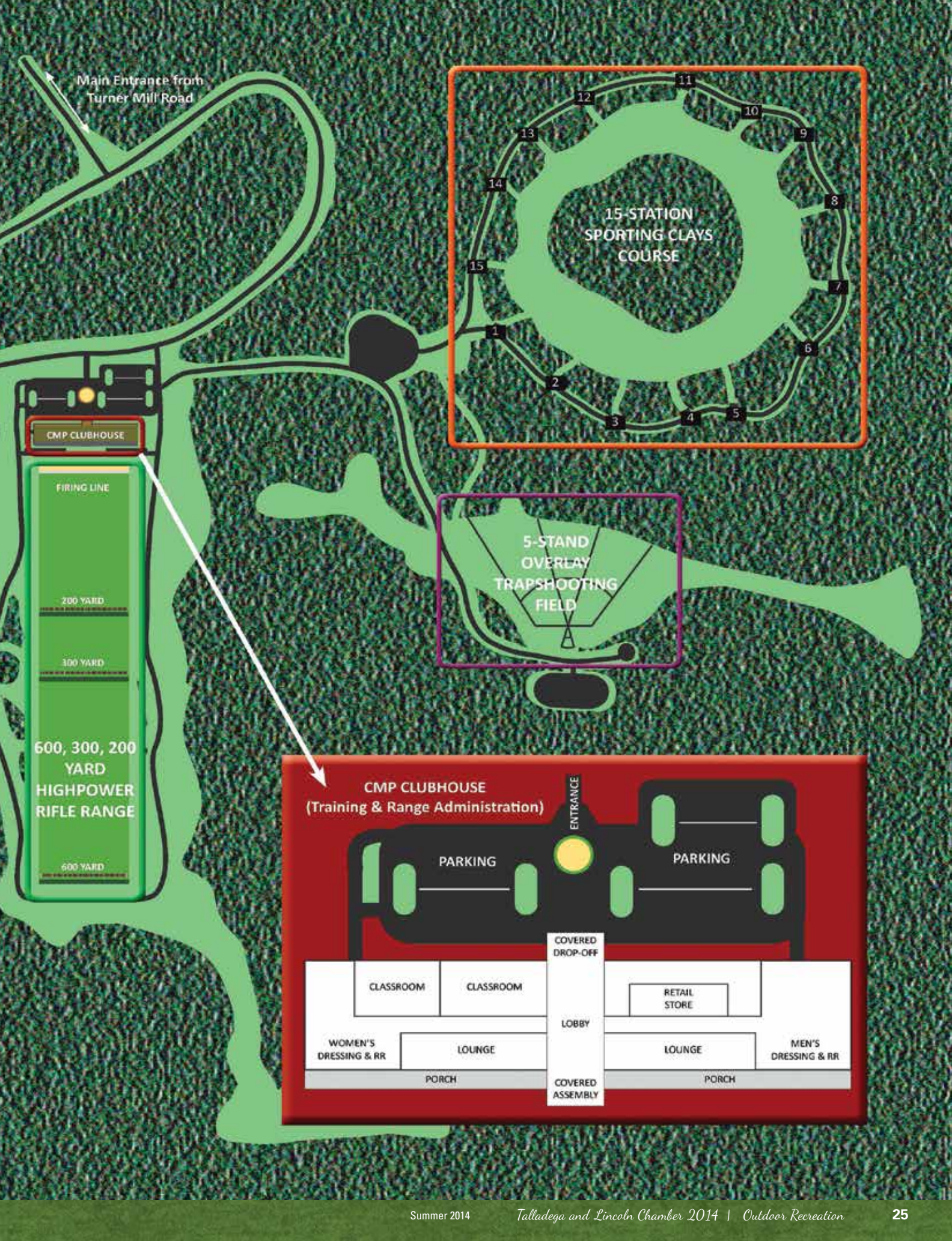
## LEGEND

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | <b>CMP Talladega Training &amp; Range Administration Building.</b> Classrooms, retail store, guest lounges, retail store, spectator and exhibitor areas, competitor awards and recognition area. |  | <b>Action Pistol Range.</b> 3 50 yard Action Pistol bays.                                     |
|  | <b>600 Yard Highpower Rifle Range.</b> Electronic targets at 200, 300 & 600 yards - 50 covered firing points.  |  | <b>Action Pistol Range.</b> 12 25 yard Action Pistol bays.                                    |
|  | <b>100 Yard Rifle Sight-In Range.</b> Rifle sight-in and smallbore rifle range with 50 covered firing points.  |  | <b>Sporting Clays Range.</b> Sporting Clays shotgun course featuring 15 challenging stations. |
|  | <b>50 &amp; 25 Yard Pistol Range.</b> Bullseye and Police Pistol Combat range with 25 covered firing points.   |  | <b>Trapshooting Field.</b> Shotgun trap field featuring a 5-Stand overlay.                    |
|  | <b>50 Foot Pistol Range.</b> Concealed Carry Weapon pistol range with 20 covered firing points.  |  | <b>Parking Areas &amp; Range Roads</b>  |
|   |  |  | <b>Cart Paths and Walking Trails</b>  |

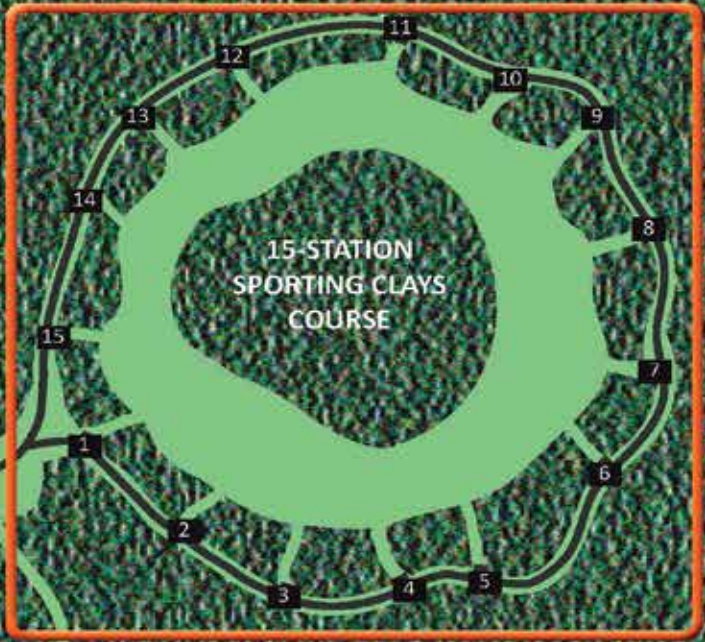
\*This site plan is conceptual in nature and subject to change without notice.







Main Entrance from Turner Mill Road



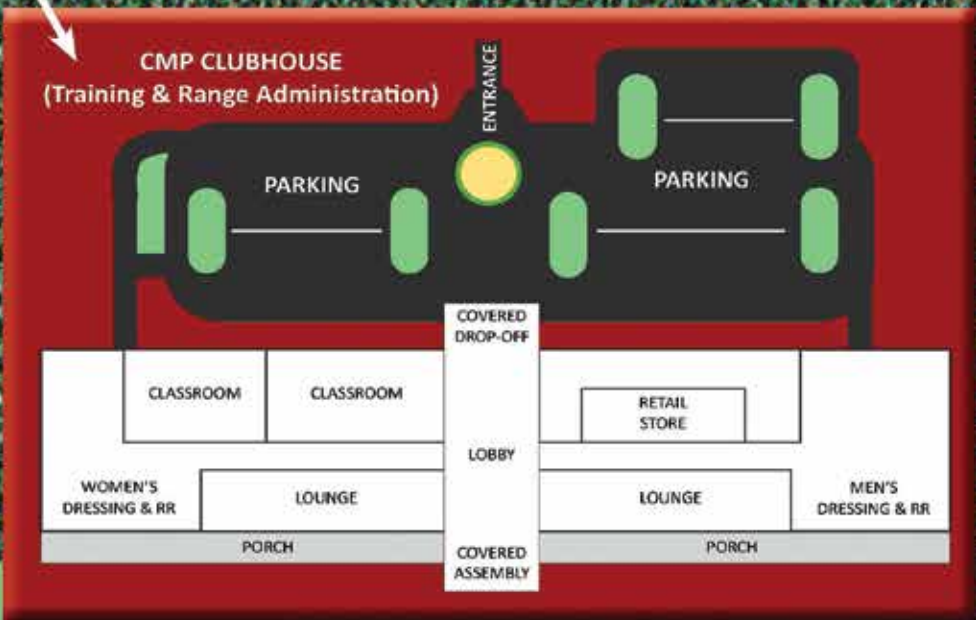
15-STATION SPORTING CLAYS COURSE



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600, 300, 200 YARD HIGHPOWER RIFLE RANGE



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COVERED ASSEMBLY

PORCH



**The Anniston CMP location holds open public shooting sessions and competitions such as the one above.**

the first event planned for June 2015.

The CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park will include a 200/300/600-yard range with 50 positions, 100-yard rifle range with 50 positions, 50-yard pistol range with 40 positions, 50-foot pistol range with 20 positions, three 50-yard pistol bays, 12 25-yard pistol bays, and a 15-station sporting clays range and trap field with 5-stand overlay.

The facility will be open for daily use and will provide firearms safety and marksmanship classes for a broad spectrum of participants, with an emphasis on youth. CMP will also host several major regional and national marksmanship competitions at the new facility annually.

### **Civilian Marksmanship Program has a long history**

For more than a century, the Civilian Marksmanship Program has dedicated itself to training and educating U.S. citizens in the responsible use of firearms and air guns through gun safety training.

The U.S. Congress created the Office of the Director of Civilian Marksmanship as part of the 1903 War Department Appropriations Act to provide civilians the opportunity to learn and practice marksmanship so they would be skilled marksmen if later called on to serve in the U.S. military. Through the years, the program's emphasis was shifted to focus on youth development



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The third largest employer in Talladega County, Alabama, the Talladega County School System has seventeen schools serving approximately 7,700 students and 1,000 employees. The school system and its schools have received various national and state awards including being selected as a US Department of Education Green Ribbon School System along with four schools selected as US Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools. Talladega County Schools is currently implementing a 1:1 digital device to student program utilizing desktop computers, Apple iPads, and MacBooks entitled **iLearn: 1:1 Student to World Initiative**. As the district moves forward with this program, it continues to be recognized on both a state and national level for work in personalized learning and project-based learning.

- Eight schools with 1:1 Digital Device to Student Ratios, upcoming plans for four additional schools, eventual expansion to all 17
- Graduation Rate above the state average
- Over the past 10 years, seven schools listed as CLAS (Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools) Banner Schools:
  - Munford Middle - 2013
  - Lincoln Elementary - 2013
  - Childersburg High - 2012
  - Munford High - 2012
  - Winterboro High - 2011 & 2005
  - Munford Elementary - 2008
  - Fayetteville High - 2007
- **The Leader in Me** program, Lighthouse School recognition for Lincoln Elementary, and more near the achievement mark for this status

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**The CMP maintains two permanent marksmanship centers. Pictured is the Anniston location. The other is located in Camp Perry, Ohio.**

through marksmanship.

The U.S. Army administered CMP from 1916 until 1996, when Congress chartered it as a nonprofit corporation. Other than a donation of surplus .22 and .30 caliber rifles in the Army's inventory, the CMP receives no federal funding.

The CMP operates through a network of affiliated shooting clubs and state associations that cover every state in the U.S. The clubs and associations offer firearms safety training and marksmanship courses as well as the opportunity for continued practice and competition, which promotes CMP's statutory mission:

- To instruct citizens of the United States in marksmanship.
- To promote practice and safety in the use of firearms.
- To conduct competitions in the use of firearms and to award trophies, prizes, badges and other insignia to competitors.

The law specifically states, "In carrying out the Civilian Marksmanship Program, the corporation shall give priority to activities that benefit firearms safety, training, and competition for youth and that reach as many youth participants as possible."

The CMP maintains two permanent marksmanship centers, one in Camp Perry, Ohio, and the other in Anniston. The marksmanship centers are world-class air rifle and air pistol training and competition facilities that

feature state-of-the-art electronic targets. These allow all shots to instantly be displayed on monitors beside each shooter and on display screens visible to spectators at the center of the range. The marksmanship centers host air rifle and air pistol events throughout the year, as well as evening open public shooting sessions.

The Anniston location holds open public shooting sessions Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 4 to 7 p.m.

The CMP also built a portable air rifle range to expand its outreach to shooters across the country. The CMP designed a portable lifter and had a third party build those lifters, bought an electronic target system and put it all together in-house. The mobile range has 60 electronic target firing points, very similar to the ones at Camp Perry and Anniston.

There is no direct membership to the CMP. Membership is through one of CMP's more than 1,800 affiliated clubs or organizations.

All of CMP's shooting events are accessible to anyone regardless of their affiliation or club membership, but to purchase anything from the CMP, an individual must show proof of belonging to an affiliated club or organization. Any U.S. citizen who is not legally prohibited from owning a firearm may purchase a military surplus rifle from the CMP, provided they are a member of a CMP-affiliated club.

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**Cheaha State Park offers a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities.**

# Cheaha State Park



Cheaha State Park, the foothill of the Appalachian Mountains, is the highest point in Alabama, offering a multitude of activities to enjoy. Standing 2,407 feet above sea level, it was named “Chaha,” meaning “high place,” by local Creek Indians.

Located in the Talladega National Forest, Cheaha Resort State Park provides access to the Kentucky ORV trail, an ATV trail built and maintained by the National Forest Service. The park is also home to the Cheaha

Trailhead of the Pinhoti Trail, a 107-mile trail eventually connecting into the Appalachian Trail, accessing trails such as the Odum Scout Trail or the Chinnabee Silent Trail, home to some of the most beautiful waterfalls in the area.

In addition to the Pinhoti Trail, the park features mountain biking trails, a lake for swimming and fishing, an observation tower at the highest point, campgrounds, cabins, chalets, motel rooms, a restaurant, an Indian



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**The park is also home to the Cheaha Trailhead of the Pinhoti Trail, a 107-mile trail eventually connecting to the Appalachian Trail.**

artifact museum and much more.

Here's a look at some of the many ways you can experience the "high place" this summer:

## **MOUNTAIN BIKING**

The many different trails on Cheaha are marked by colored blazes to aid in mapping out your route. The Cheaha Express trail has yellow blazes, the Deer Run trail has purple blazes, the Lower Spring Loop has blue blazes, the Upper Spring Loop has green blazes and the Mountain Express has yellow blazes. You can ride portions of the trail or the entire trail, or return on the paved roads in the park. The trails are rough and rocky in places and smooth in others, providing a good combination of challenging and fast single track trails.

## **CHEAHA LAKE**

The six-acre Cheaha Lake, which was dug by hand by the Civilian Conservation Corps, offers recreational bass and bluegill fishing. It is 3 miles from the Mountain Top Resort and across the street from the lower campgrounds.

The lake has its own play area, beach, diving platform and paddle boating. The swimming area generally opens for swimming and boating on Memorial Day weekend and remains open through Labor Day. The bath house is closed in September. No lifeguards are on duty at the lake and children must be accompanied by an adult.

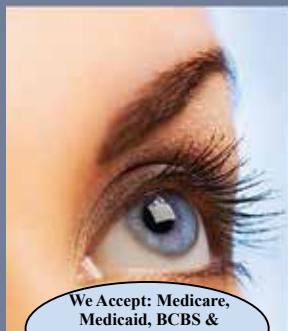
If you're going to fish, Alabama law requires all eligible anglers 16 years and older have in their possession a valid State of Alabama fishing license, which can be purchased at the park's Country Store on the mountaintop or online.





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**Cheaha State Park, in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, offers many different types of lodging.**

Due to the size of the lake, only hand-launched boats and electric motors are allowed.

Paddle boats are available for rent on weekends between Memorial Day and Labor Day, but fishing is not permitted from paddle boats. Life jackets must be worn by persons 12 years and younger, and an adult must accompany persons under age 12.

No boats are allowed in the swimming or beach areas. Visitors should bring their own beach towels.

The Cheaha Hotel Pool is available for overnight guests only. No lifeguards are on duty at the pool, and children must be accompanied by an adult.

## **GEOCACHING**

Alabama State Parks recognize geocaching as an opportunity for additional outdoor activities for individuals

and families at state parks.

To ensure the safety of guests and to maintain proper management of natural resources, a geocaching policy was established allowing geocaches hidden in state parks.

Before hiding geocaches in Alabama state parks, geocachers should review and submit a signed permit to the park manager. After the park manager or designee receives and reviews the permit, the geocacher will be contacted with info on its status.

## **MUSEUMS AND ACTIVITIES**

The Indian Artifacts Museum contains hundreds of pieces including arrowheads, stone tools and musical instruments. It is available for tours by park guests, home school groups, school field trips and other tour groups.

The Civilian Conservation Corps Museum in Bunker



The six-acre Cheaha Lake has its own play area, beach, diving platform and paddle boating.

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**Cheaha Lake offers great fishing opportunities.**

Tower, Alabama's highest point, held its grand opening in June 2014, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the CCC.

The Pinhoti Mineral and Gem Mining Co. attraction allows visitors to purchase bags of sand at the store and mine to see what gems they can find. A brochure is included in each bag to assist in identification.

Groups wishing to experience the gem mine should call ahead or email the event coordinator at Cheaha.

event@dcnr.alabama.gov. Other field trips are available for children 6 years and older.

**LODGING**

Each Cheaha Hotel room features television, telephone, private bathtub/shower, air conditioning and heating, iron, ironing board and coffee maker. There are three types of guest rooms with amenities including small

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There are four cabin choices. Bluff Side cabins are located along the western bluff of the mountain where guests can view spectacular sunsets.

Four-capacity cabins sleep more than the other cabin options, which sleep two people.

Deluxe cabins (honeymoon cabins) feature a screened porch, rustic wooden furniture and a bathroom with a whirlpool tub.

Chalets sleep up to four people, with two bedrooms each with a queen bed. The chalets feature fireplaces, central heating and air, linens, kitchenettes, irons, ironing boards and coffee makers. Each chalet offers a scenic view from the porch.

Bald Rock Conference/Group Lodge offers everything a group needs for a getaway in one place. There is private parking including handicap parking. Guests have access to the boardwalk (Doug Ghee Accessible Trail) for mountain biking or leisurely riding around the park.

The CCC Ball Room offers meeting or dining facilities, with tables and chairs for up to 130 people that can be setup for any style function. There is a small conference room and lobby, which can be used as a game room, dressing room for brides and more. The bedrooms each

have a private bathroom. A dining room terrace, furnished with teak tables and chairs, offers options for outdoor meals and parties. Private barbecue pits and an outdoor fire pit let guests grill on the fire pit and two grills or use the fire pit as an outside fire.

Camping offers four main options. Group primitive camping is “tents only.” Improved campgrounds have water, sewer and electrical hookups, picnic table, grill and fire ring. Primitive campgrounds have a fire ring, no electricity, community water faucet and bathroom in primitive campground or short drive to bath house in improved campground. Semi-primitive camping is at the top of the mountain close to the pool, restaurant, and bathroom. Water and electricity are close to the sites.

**DINING AND PICNICING**

Dining includes Cheaha Mountain Restaurant with a beautiful panoramic view while dining. There is also Pavilion Catering — Cheaha Restaurant, and other catering options.

The CCC observation tower, which at its base is Alabama’s highest point at 2,047 feet above sea level, features a few tables by the playground, and this area has two pavilions available to reserve. Near Cheaha Lake there are picnic tables and two more pavilions for rent.

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**TOP Trails has more than 70 miles of OHV trails with a wide variety of riding conditions for many different kinds of vehicles and riding styles.**

# TOP Trails



wooded site that once played a role in providing ammunition for America's effort in World War

II now provides miles of adventure for riders of four-wheelers and motorcycles.

TOP Trails offers a unique and wide variety of riding

conditions for many different kinds of vehicles and riding styles.

Just a 15-minute drive off I-20 between Birmingham and Atlanta, the site covers 2,800 acres of what was the Coosa River/Brecon Annex property. Bunkers there



“No Limit Trail Riders” gather for a group ride at TOP Trails.

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**Wes Pope is the TOP Trails Park Director. TOP Trails is located on 2,800 acres of what was the Coosa River/Brecon Annex property.**

are testament to the site's history as a storage site for ammunition components.

The Coosa River/Brecon Annex property was deeded to Talladega County in 2003. In 2011, the land was renamed TOP Trails, governed by the Public Park Authority of the cities of Talladega and Lincoln, which was formed for that purpose.

In 2011, the park had about 50 miles of off-highway vehicles (OHV) trails. TOP Trails currently has more than 70 miles of OHV trails for all kinds of riding styles, from beginner to expert. Archery ranges and primitive camping sites are also available.

The TOP Trails OHV trail systems are designed for ATVs, dirt bikes, dual sports, mountain bikes and ROHVs (side-by-sides and UTV).

Three-wheeled ATVs are not allowed on the property. Jeeps, 4x4s, rock crawlers and trucks are also not allowed

on the trail systems, but specific trails and other activities will be designed for those vehicles in the future.

The off-road trails for bikes and quads offer a challenging ride that winds through thousands of acres at the foot of the highest point on the old Coosa River/Brecon Annex property.

TOP Trails is closed Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and will run normal operating hours the rest of the week and on holidays. Gates are open each day from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Quiet time is from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Visitors are responsible to exit the park before the gates are closed.

Individual admission is \$10. There is a family membership plan to cover year-round admission. The membership is \$150 for the first family member, \$100 for the second and \$75 for each additional family member over age 11. Children under 11 are admitted for free. Prices are subject to change.





Dylan Fikes, 9, of Northport, practices archery at TOP Trails.

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**DeSoto Caverns offers a one-hour guided tour which begins in a room 12 stories high and larger than a football field.**

# DeSoto Caverns Family Fun Park

**D**eSoto Caverns Family Fun Park in Childersburg offers not only tours where you can see thousands of cave formations, but also a host of other fun family activities.

“Most people are drawn to DeSoto Caverns for the

one-hour guided tour,” said Caprece Clinton, director of marketing for DeSoto Caverns Family Fun Park. “It’s a walking tour with a laser light show during it.”

The cavern tour is a one-third mile walk that begins in a room 12 stories high and larger than a football field.



DeSoto Caverns Family Fun Park mixes history and fun for people of all ages.

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**Shelby Hicks enjoys the hand-crank paddle boat.**

The cave remains about 60 degrees year-round, although with 100 percent humidity inside the cave, the temperature feels closer to 70.

The tour is wheelchair- and stroller-accessible, but motorized wheelchairs are not recommended.

There are two areas during the tour which are not handicapped-accessible, but, tourists go into those areas and return to the main room after a few minutes. The pathways are covered with fine gravel, and handrails are provided where necessary for safety.

All cavern tours feature light shows. Special light shows are presented around Valentine's, Easter and Christmas, and the God and Country show is presented around Independence Day. During the rest of the year, the cave features the Creation Light Show, based on the Book of Genesis.

"We have several popular school packages," Clinton said. "There are campground and overnight cave

adventures too."

Clinton said there are several popular attractions, some of which are age-based.

"Many people come to see our Butterfly House," she said.

The Butterfly House is seasonal, and visitors can view hundreds of butterflies including Monarchs, Zebra Long Wings, Red Admirals and many more as they walk through the beautifully landscaped house.

"The maze and panning for gemstones are our other most popular attractions overall after the cavern tour," she said. "For the young kids, the beach ball blast is great. Children 5 years and younger really enjoy the Earth Mover, similar to a large backhoe."

Clinton said groups enjoy the Water Balloon Battle.

"For the Water Balloon Battle, there are two groups with two tall towers," she said. "The groups take the



DeSoto's Park Express Train offers a tour through shaded park grounds.

water balloons to the top of the towers and battle it out.”

Clinton said Mini Pedal Go Karts are new this year, offering the experience for smaller children.

“It has been very successful so far,” she said.

Prices vary. Visit [www.desotocavernspark.com](http://www.desotocavernspark.com) for more information.

DeSoto Caverns Family Fun Park features these attractions:

- Gemstone panning — Pan for gemstones like old prospectors did by dipping pans into the water trough and shaking away the sand. You can find onyx, rubies, pyrite and other semiprecious stones. Everyone is guaranteed to find something.



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**Phillip and Elena Moore enjoy a round of Wacky Water Golf.**

- DeSoto's Lost Trail Maze — A three-quarter-acre maze that's great for all ages. The goal is to navigate the maze, find three towers along the way and get a stamp at each one, then find your way out and compare your time with others in your group.
- Tubs of Fun — Spin around as fast as you want in your individual tub. (You must be at least 36 inches tall to participate.)
- Happy's Hoops — A 10-hoop course challenges you to bounce a ball off targets to get it into the basket. The trick is to find the right angle, and each hoop presents a different challenge.
- Bow and Arrow Shoot — Practice bowhunting skills or compete against friends in a multi-target bow-and-arrow course. (You must be at least 36 inches tall to participate.)
- Rock 'n' Roll — This ride is like a big hamster wheel. Four people buckle in and rock back and forth, flipping the wheel over and over in a circle. (You must be at least 36 inches tall to participate.)

- DeSoto's Cave Wall Climb — A 250-foot horizontal wall climb offers 10 challenging sections to master.
- Happy's Moonwalk — An inflatable moonwalk that's great for the little ones.
- DeSoto's Park Express Train — Take a tour through shaded park grounds on the Park Express Train.
- Crystal Find — Search the sand under a shaded hut for beautiful crystals to fill your bag.
- Wacky Water Golf — Two streams weave in and out of every hole, giving each a unique water hazard. Jump your ball over the water gap or dodge water holes for a challenging hole-in-one.
- Cannon Wars — Eight air cannons and Nerf balls create a fun and exciting game.
- DeSoto's Disc Golf Course — Features a 9-hole disc golf course.
- DeSoto's Cave Crawl Box — This adventure lets you try your skills as a cave explorer in a box that twists and turns over and under itself, taking you through 200 feet of simulated cave crawling. (You must be under 6-foot-1 and 210 pounds to participate. You must be at least 36 inches tall to participate.)
- Happy's Pedal Go-Carts — These go-carts go as fast as you can pedal them, allowing you to race friends around a winding track. (You must be at least 52 inches tall to participate.)
- Happy's Cruisin Track — Little drivers can pick their favorite ride and journey around Happy's Cruisin Track.
- Twin Spin — Four people strap in facing the center and pump handles in unison to spin around as the G-force pushes them back against their seats. You must be at least 36 inches tall to participate.
- Bumper Cars — A fun classic that lets you race around the track and bump your friends with electric bumper cars. You must be at least 48 inches tall to drive.
- Earth Mover — Uncover your child's dream as they dig into fun and excavate on the new Earth Mover.
- Beach Ball Blast — Perfect for the little ones.
- GyroXtreme — Experience weightlessness as you spin



**Bumper Cars provide a fun classic race around the track with friends.**

and turn on the new GyroXtreme. (You must be at least 36 inches tall to participate.)

- Mini Pedal Go Karts — These go-carts go as fast as you can pedal them around a winding track. (You must weigh less than 100 pounds to participate.)

**Seasonal Water Attractions**

- Squirt Gun Maze — Form teams or go solo in a soak-or-be-soaked battle. Try to take over the maze while blasting your opponents with high-power water guns.
- Water Balloon Battle — You can either stand in the


Spanish Fort or Native American teepee and battle in an all-out water balloon war. This is great for group fun.

- Paddle Boats — Enjoy floating around the lagoon in hand-crank bumper boats. You must be at least 36 inches tall to participate. (You must be under 6-foot-1 and 210 pounds to participate.)
- Foam Falls — Have a blast in a foam-filled pit that’s always full of bubbles.
- Happy’s Slip ’n’ Slide — A trip down memory lane in an inflatable slip ’n’ slide.

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