

Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails-to-Trails Recreational District *"Longleaf Trace"*



A joint venture of the counties of Forrest, Jefferson Davis, and Lamar and the municipalities of Bassfield, Hattiesburg, Prentiss, and Sumrall for the purpose of creating economic benefits while providing multiple recreational opportunities and an improved quality of life for its citizens.

**9th Annual
Progress Report 2016
December 8, 2016
By
Herlon Pierce
Executive Director/Trail Manager**

Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails-to-Trails Recreational District

Longleaf Trace

Preface

This report was prepared by Herlon Pierce, Executive Director/Trail Manager for the District and Trace with the assistance of Mary Scruggs, Office Manager. Mr. Pierce's employment with the District did not begin until late in the year 2000, therefore, the activities prior to the year 2000 have been taken from available documents from that period and from conversations and discussions with those who were involved or had knowledge of those activities. It is not my intent to leave anyone or any event of importance out of this document, nor is it my intent to incorrectly report the order of events or to incorrectly give or take away credit from anyone. For that reason, should you as the reader of this document find inaccuracies, please notify Mr. Pierce so that the record and history of this important venture be made accurate.

Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails-to-Trails Recreational District

Longleaf Trace *A National Recreation Trail*

Dear Members and Friends,

Thank you for taking your time today to join the Board of Directors and staff of the Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails-to-Trails Recreational District as we recall the many individual and cooperative efforts that have led to a story of success, the “Longleaf Trace”, a place of great pride for our state, area, and individual communities.

We now enjoy the local, state, and national attention, recognition, and success these efforts have brought. However, it is important that we look to the future with a common, clear vision, and with a united goal of further integrating the nationally recognized Longleaf Trace into our individual lives, communities, and economy. For these reasons, we must maintain a unified framework for future planning and development that is carefully prioritized to accomplish that common goal. Therefore, your continuing suggestions, ideas, and support for further improving the Longleaf Trace and maintaining its presence as one of our nation’s best trails is necessary as we continue to advance our common dream into the future.

Thank you again for your continuing support.



Board of Directors

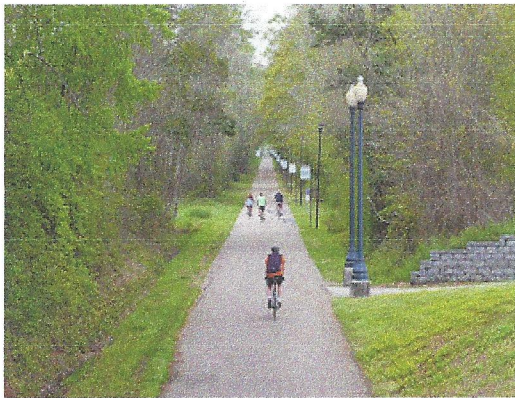
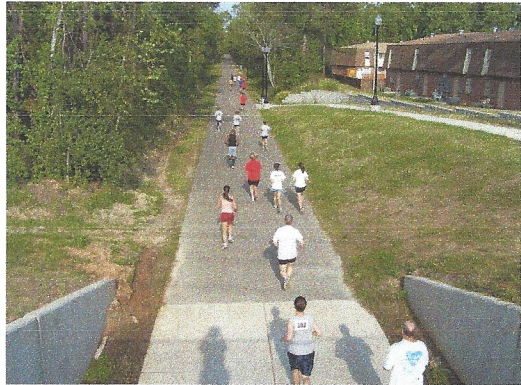
Johnny Kerley, Vice President
Dumas
Town of Bassfield
Dale Lucas, Secretary
Lamar County
County
Gerolene Rayborn, Treasurer
Town of Sumrall

Lynn Cartlidge, President
Forrest County

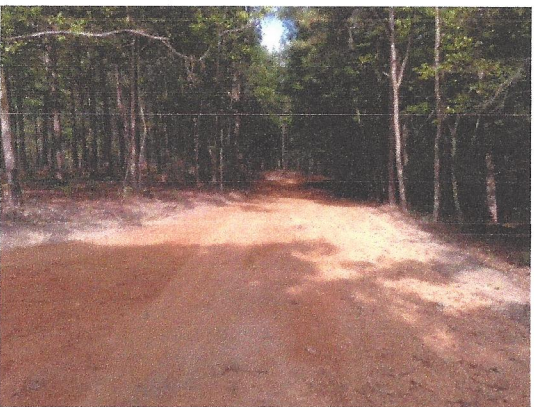
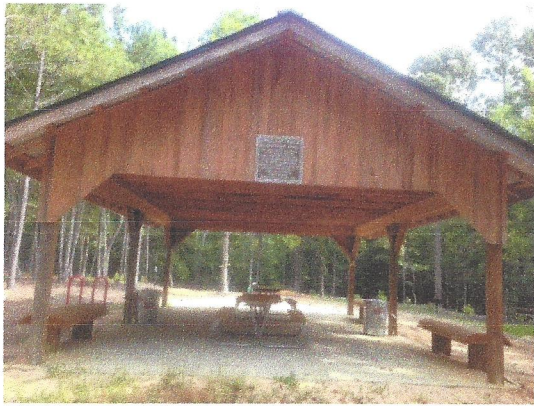
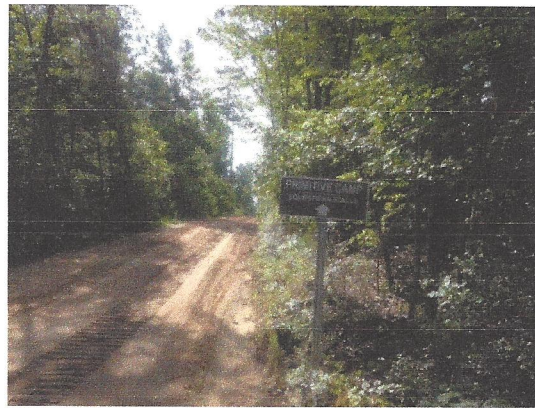
Charles
Town of Prentiss
Charles Reid
Jefferson Davis
Ginger Maddox
City of Hattiesburg

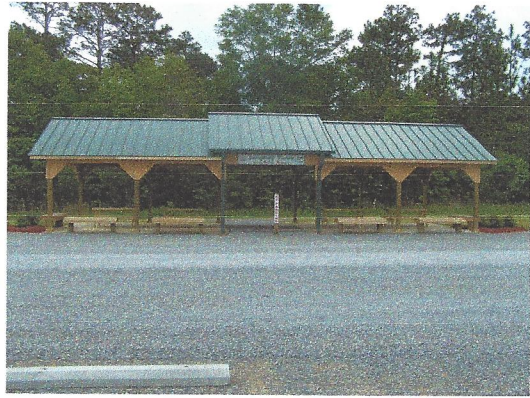
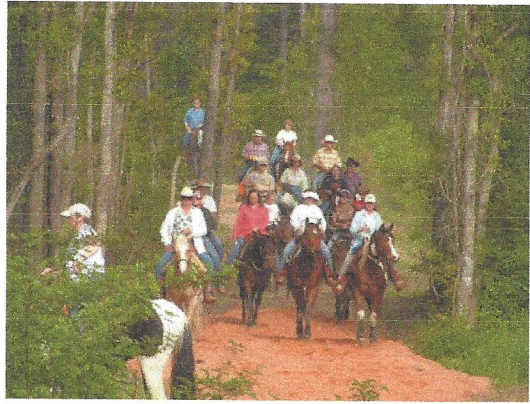
"The Longleaf Trace, a joint economic development project providing multiple recreational opportunities while improving our quality of life."













Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails-to-Trails Recreational District

“Longleaf Trace”

I. 1993 (circa) ABANDONMENT NOTICE/COMMUNITY ACTION

- Lynn Cartlidge, President, Forrest County Board of Supervisors, receives notice of Canadian National Railroad’s intentions to abandon the Illinois Central Railroad previously known as the Mississippi Central Railroad from Varnado Switch (west Hattiesburg) to Bassfield, a distance of approximately 28 miles;
- Mr. Cartlidge calls on his friend and recently retired board of supervisor’s attorney, Stone D. Barefield Sr., to assist with stopping the abandonment and finding an alternative use for the soon to be abandoned rail line;
- A joint effort led by Attorneys Stone D. Barefield, Sr. and Bobby J. Garraway along with local county and municipal leaders to cancel the abandonment fails;
- The possibility of converting the right-of-way into a multi-purpose recreational trail known as a rails-to-trails conversion is discovered with possible assistance through “Interstate Transportation Enhancement Act” grant funds set aside for innovative transportation project construction;
- The assistance of the Department of Interior and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is gained for advice and technical assistance with public awareness, education, hearings, and organization;
- Bassfield Mayor Buford Blount along with Attorney Bobby J. Garraway, working with Canadian National, successfully extend the abandonment intent from Bassfield, west to Prentiss (an additional distance of approximately 11 miles);
- A team of local biking/hiking enthusiasts, led by James Moore, along with Elmer Beardshall, Ed Crockett and the late Jerry Ryan, assist with public support, awareness, and education, and solicit corporate pledges of more than \$100,000 including the Georgia Pacific Corporation as founding adopter with a pledge of \$50,000 and W.R. Fairchild Construction, Mississippi Power, Warren Paving, and Tatum Development Corporation with pledges of \$10,000 to \$20,000;
- Legislation is drafted by Attorney Stone D. Barefield, Sr. and submitted to the Mississippi State Legislature for the purpose of authorizing the creation, powers, and funding for recreational districts in the State of Mississippi;

II. 1994 (circa) AUTHORITY AND CREATION

- With a demonstration of overwhelming public support, the Mississippi State Legislature passes the legislation drafted by former legislator Stone D. Barefield, Sr. creating the authority for the creation of recreational districts, including a state appropriation of \$150,000 to the District for the purchase of the soon to be abandoned rights-of-way;
- Governor Kirk Fordice signs into law 55-25-1 et seq., but vetoes the \$150,000 for the rights-of-way purchase;
- By joint resolution, the counties of Forrest, Jefferson Davis, and Lamar and the municipalities of Bassfield, Hattiesburg, Prentiss, and Sumrall create a recreational district known as the Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails-to-Trails Recreational District;
- The District’s first Board of Directors (BOD) is appointed by member counties and municipalities, that included: Lynn Cartlidge, Forrest County; Doug Allen, Jefferson Davis County; Jesse Douglas, Lamar County; Bobby J. Garraway, Town of Bassfield; Kenneth Smith, City of Hattiesburg, Lewis M. “Tut”

Williams, Town of Prentiss; and Darwin Graham, Town of Sumrall. Stone D. Barefield, Sr. is hired as the attorney for the District and the Board;

- With no funds available, and the veto of funds by Governor Fordice, the newly created district is notified that the deadline for the right-of-way purchase is expiring;

III. 1995 (circa) CRISIS/UNEXPECTED SAVIOR

- The long-term efforts and dreams of a multi-purpose recreational trail seem to be lost as the source of funds for the rights-of-way purchase are no longer available;
- Attorney Bobby Garraway has an unexpected and chance encounter with longtime friend of South Mississippi, former State Legislator, then Southern Highway Commissioner, and avid outdoorsman and biking enthusiast Ronnie Shows, who offers as a last resort to attempt the right-of-way purchase through the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT);
- The District is notified that Commissioner Ronnie Shows has successfully convinced his fellow highway commissioners to purchase the rights-of-way and lease it to the District for the development of the planned multi-purpose recreational trail;

IV. 1996 -1998(circa) MASTER PLAN/GRANT

- Architects/Engineers are hired to developed a master plan for multi-purpose development, to prepare preliminary construction plans, and a grant request for development of Phase I, west Hattiesburg to Prentiss;
- The master plan and an Interstate Transportation Enhancement Act grant is approved;
- In June 1996, the Town of Prentiss appoints Carolyn McRaney, its town clerk, to replace Lewis "Tut" Williams on the Board of Directors;
- Design is complete to include a 10-foot asphalt surfaced trail, a distance of 39+/- miles to include repair and conversion of 5 trestles, trailhead parking at Jackson Road, Epley, Sumrall, Lott Circle, Bassfield, Carson, and Prentiss, and restroom stations at Jackson Road and Epley. A minimum equestrian trail (horseback riding only) is included from Epley to Carson, a distance of 22 ½ miles;
- The City of Hattiesburg appoints its Director of Community Development, Kathy Garner, to replace Kenneth Smith on the Board of Directors;

V. 1999 CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT AWARDED/TRAIL NAMED

- A construction contract is awarded for Phase I (West Hattiesburg to Prentiss-39 miles) and construction begins;
- Pledges including mile markers and bridge adoptions totaling approximately \$160,000 are collected;
- The District's Board of Directors names the newly constructed trail the "Longleaf Trace" and adopts an official logo;

VI. 2000 DEDICATION/BEGINNING OF OPERATION

- The District's Board of Directors develops and approves rules and regulations for the operation of the Longleaf Trace including the use of electric golf carts;
- Herlon Pierce is hired as the District's first Trail Manager in charge of daily operations, maintenance, and security;
- Elmer Beardshall volunteers to develop a web-site for the Longleaf Trace;

and Carson;

- Through sponsors, James Moore, his father, and District employees construct 8 overlook nature/rest stops along the Trace;
- The second annual Birthday Challenge sponsored by the Prentiss Lion's Club is held with success;

IX. 2003-2004 PHASE II DEDICATION/OPERATION

- Phase II construction is complete at a total cost of \$2,408,183;
- September 12, 2003 a dedication ceremony is held at the newly constructed Gateway-Hattiesburg with Board President Lynn Cartledge presiding. Guest speaker was University of Southern Mississippi's Vice President of Student Affairs, Joe Paul, with approximately 100 people in attendance;
- Trail Manager Herlon Pierce's duties are increased to include that of Executive Director;
- Director Jeff Smith resigns, and Director of Public Services Bennie Sellers is appointed to represent the City of Hattiesburg on the board of directors;
- Kellie Sigrest is hired as the District's first administrative employee as Administrative Assistant (part-time permanent) to the Board of Directors for the purpose of preparing and maintaining board minutes, financial records, and other administrative duties;
- The Gateway-Hattiesburg is equipped to house the administrative and board activities of the District, as well as logo item sales and bike rental. The University of Southern Mississippi is contracted to oversee the operations of the Gateway-Hattiesburg to include public relations and marketing for the District, Bill Powe is hired as the University's Gateway Manager;
- Moore's Bike Shop, by contract, opens the Gateway Bike Shop to include bike accessories/rental/sales and logo sales;
- On October 22, 2003, Mr. Jerry Ryan, a member of the early and successful public support group and avid biker, loses his life in a biking accident on a Hattiesburg city street. The Longleaf Trace is chosen by the family for memorial donations and approximately \$12,000 is donated;
- Jefferson Davis County Director Doug Allen resigns and Supervisor Charles Reid is appointed as his replacement on the board;
- Lamar County appoints newly elected District 5 Supervisor Dale Lucus to replace Jerry Hanberry as its representative on the board;
- "Leaders of a New Century" Class of 2004 chooses as their project to light the Trace from Gateway-Hattiesburg to 7th Street Tunnel through donations and sponsorships;
- The District procures its first major maintenance equipment, a New Holland TS 100 tractor with boom mower, side hog, ditch machine and bushhog, through a lease purchase agreement;
- 2004 Moore's Bike Shop withdraws from its operation of the bike shop and the University agrees to modify its operation to include bike rental and logo sales;
- The third annual Birthday Challenge continues its success with increased participation;

X. 2005 OPERATION CHALLENGES/NEW FINDINGS

- It became obvious during the beginning years of operation that the beaver pond located at mile post 13, being a natural ecological site with exceptional natural

outdoor beauty, was a principle focal point along the Trace;

- The District purchases the old beaver pond and surrounding land (23.27 acres) from Plum Creek Timber Company, Inc. for \$11,500.00 for future impoundment and shoreline recreational development;
- Use has increased from the beginning of operation to approximately 25,000 uses annually, with approximately 3,000 uses from outside the area, and approximately 500 uses from out of state;
- August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina visits Mississippi and the Longleaf Trace leaving unparalleled destruction and damage to the state and closing the Trace with more than 10,000 trees across its path;
- The highly successful Birthday Challenge, sponsored by the Prentiss Lions Club is cancelled for the year 2005 due to hurricane Katrina;
- November 2005, the Trace is reopened at a cost of approximately \$813,000 for debris clean-up which was paid for with federal and state emergency funds;
- A campaign to reenergize users of the Trace is launched as use is reduced to early beginnings;
- A 20'X30' pavilion is constructed by District forces at Gateway Prentiss, with the Prentiss Lions Club (Run for the Roses) providing a \$10,000 sponsorship, for the purpose of staging events, group uses, and family activities;
- A U.S. Appropriation request for \$400,000 is made to our U.S. congressional delegation to improve the minimally constructed equestrian trail as a result of continuing concern by equestrian users;

XI. 2006 ADDITIONAL ROW/EQUESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS REQUESTED /BEAVER POND CHALLENGE

- The Canadian National Railroad offers additional right-of-way from Gateway Hattiesburg to Bouie Street in Downtown Hattiesburg, a distance of approximately 2 miles;
- Hattiesburg Mayor Johnny Dupree secures a \$640,000 federal appropriation through the U.S. Congress for the design and construction of Phase III of the Trace from Gateway Hattiesburg to Downtown Hattiesburg.
- "MDOT" purchases the additional right-of-way for approximately \$300,000 with inter-local agreement that the District will share the cost on a 50/50 basis;
- Equestrian users express their continuing concern that the original minimal equestrian trail is inadequate for wagon traffic and proper maintenance due to poor alignment and width;
- A group of equestrian enthusiasts, led by Greg Lowery, Director John Kerley, and Director Dale Lucus, create a "Trail Riders Friends" organization to encourage and assist the District with needed improvements to the equestrian trail. Charter members total approximately 50;
- Founding contributor and board attorney for the District, Stone D. Barefield. Sr. retires;
- Lamar County Board of Supervisor's Attorney Anthony Mozingo is hired as the District's attorney;
- With the leadership of Mayor Buford Blount of Bassfield, the Jefferson Davis County Board of Supervisors requests grant assistance from "MDOT" for construction of 2+ mile trail inter-connection from the Trace to Jeff Davis Lake;
- Former U.S. Congressman Ronnie Shows solicits the assistance of Denbury Resources, Inc. for assistance with the impoundment of the Beaver Pond;

- Denbury offers a \$10,000 challenge donation which was earned by matching local donations. Total donations equaled \$30,000;
- A dedication ceremony is held honoring donors and to officially name the beaver pond the “Denbury Beaver Pond”;
- At the request of “Longleaf Trace Trail Riders”, funds are budgeted to improve the first 4 miles of the equestrian trail, Epley to Sumrall, to accommodate wagon traffic and to create a maintainable trail;
- A second and updated request for U.S. appropriation assistance for improvement to the equestrian trail through U.S. Congressional delegation is made;
- Lighting is installed from Gateway-Hattiesburg to 200’ west of the 7th St. Tunnel through the efforts of “Leaders of a New Century”, Class of 2004, with donations and sponsorships of approximately \$27,000 and grant funds of approximately \$9,000. The City of Hattiesburg agrees to pay the monthly operating fees;
- The annual Birthday Challenge on the Longleaf Trace is resumed after Hurricane Katrina caused cancellation in 2005;

XII. 2007 (circa) PHASE III PLANNING AND DESIGN/EQUESTRIAN TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

- The 4-mile improvement to the equestrian trail is completed by District employees, with the assistance of the newly created “Longleaf Trace Trail Riders”, along with both donated and rented dozers and backhoes and donated and purchased materials at a cost of approximately \$40,000, including employee salaries;
- Architects/Engineers are employed to design the 2+/- mile addition from Gateway Hattiesburg to Downtown Hattiesburg;
- Architects/Engineers are employed to design the Jerry Ryan Memorial Outdoor Center at Gateway Hattiesburg in honor of the late Jerry Ryan;
- An additional 7+/- mile improvement to the equestrian trail, Sumrall to Lott Circle is budgeted;
- A Caterpillar D5G Dozer and Caterpillar Backhoe Loader are purchased through lease purchase with buy-back option for constructing the equestrian trail improvements and future improvements at the Denbury Beaver Pond, and etc;
- The seventh annual Birthday Challenge is held;

XIII. THE YEAR 2008

- The Jerry Ryan Memorial Outdoor Center was completed at an approximate cost of \$225,700.00, with memorial donations of approximately \$12,000, family donations of approximately \$34,000, Frank McWhorter donation of approximately \$6,000, Regions Bank donations of \$6,000, “Friends of the Trace donations of approximately \$5,500, a Mississippi Wildlife and Fisheries grant of \$95,206, other donations of \$5,000 and district funds of approximately \$62,000. The Center consists of a 30’X40’ open pavilion, 250’ of seat walls, an exercise warm-up area, and a children’s play area. The center is a central meeting point for user groups and is often reserved for group meetings and /or events on the Trace;
- Roland Byrd agrees to serve as the District’s full-time maintenance manager;
- The Jefferson Davis County Economic Development Authority applies for grant assistance to construct a farmer’s market to include a Gateway-Prentiss Sales/Welcome Center;

- An updated request for federal assistance in the amount of \$400,000 to continue improvements to the equestrian trail to include a 1 ½ mile extension from Epley east to the Denbury Beaver Pond to include a horse corral, overnight camping, and a riding trail around the pond is made through Senator Roger Wicker's office;
- The additional 7+/- mile addition to the equestrian trail, Sumrall to Lott Circle, is completed by District employees at a cost \$84,661.00, and is opened to public use with an inaugural ride on November 8, 2008;
- An additional 4 to 6-mile improvement to the equestrian trail is budgeted from Lott Circle west toward Bassfield;
- Preliminary design of the Phase III trail extension to Downtown Hattiesburg is near complete and design comments are requested;
- Through sponsors, the District forces have from 2003 constructed an additional 8 overlook/nature/rest stops along the Trace, with a total of 16 now available;
- Trail use has now reached an estimated 50,000 uses annually with estimated out-of-area uses of 5,000 and out of state uses of 1,000;
- "Friends of the Longleaf Trace" continue to make user friendly contributions through recommendations to the BOD, membership is now approximately 200;
- "Longleaf Trace Trail Riders" continue to provide valuable assistance as the equestrian improvements continue, membership is now approximately 75;
- The eighth annual Birthday Challenge continues to be sponsored by the Prentiss Lion's Club;
- The first annual progress update and appreciation meeting/luncheon for county/municipal officials and community leaders is hosted by the District's Board of Directors;

XIV. THE YEAR 2009

- Sumrall Director Jerry Herrington resigns and is replaced by Sumrall Mayor Geroline Rayborn on the District's Board of Directors;
- A "Recreational Trails" grant in the amount of \$120,000 is secured through the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (District share, \$20,000 in kind) for the completion of improvements to the original inadequate equestrian trail (12 miles) from Lott Circle to Carson;
- An additional rest stop is constructed approximately ½ mile west of Sumrall at the request of local users, a total of 17 now available along the trace;
- Construction of the final 12 miles of improvements to the equestrian trail begins with District equipment and labor clearing the right-of-way;
- A contract for debris removal from the equestrian trail improvements is awarded and completed by T.H.E. Construction and Recreation Company, LLC, at a cost of approximately \$110,000.00;
- At the request of the District, the grant for the equestrian trail improvements is increased from \$120,000 to \$150,000, with the District share of \$25,000 to be in-kind services through labor and equipment; completion of these improvements are expected to be final by spring 2010;
- A request for federal funds, \$ 1.6 million, through a U.S. Appropriation for extension of the equestrian trail 1 ½ miles east from the Epley Station to the Denbury Beaver Pond and for the impoundment and development of the shoreline facilities of the Denbury Beaver Pond is made through Senator Roger Wicker;
- Improvements to the Carson primitive camping and equestrian staging areas are completed with donated labor by the "Equestrian Friends of the Trace", with the

assistance of local donations and sponsorships, and materials and equipment from Director/Supervisor Charles Reid, Jefferson Davis County. The area will be equipped with an equestrian staging/parking area, 10 horse stalls, equestrian watering station, group pavilion, primitive camping, grills, water access, and fire rings;

- A contract for fill materials for the 12^{-mile} equestrian extension is awarded to Continental Rails & Excavating Co., fill will be installed as weather conditions allow;
- Plans are nearing completion by Shows, Dearman and Waits, Engineers, for an extension of the Longleaf Trace to near Main Street in downtown Hattiesburg, construction is expected to begin mid-year 2010;
- The Mississippi Department of Transportation agrees to raise and cage the US Hwy 49 overpass bridge on the Longleaf Trace, therefore reducing the District's cost of the extension to downtown Hattiesburg by approximately \$600,000;
- The Mississippi Youth Challenge continues to provide valuable community service to the Longleaf Trace by providing an average of 12 cadets 6-8 hours two days per week, during their session, picking up trash and debris along the trace. They provide this service approximately 40 weeks per year donating more than 7500 hours per year. Their contributions assure the Trace is almost always clean of trash and debris;
- The annual "Birthday Challenge" held the first Saturday in November hosted and sponsored by the Prentiss Lions Club continues to be successful;
- Trail use continues to increase;
- "Friends of the Longleaf Trace" and "Longleaf Trace Trail Riders" continue to make valuable contributions to the district and the Longleaf Trace through their suggestions, actions, and labor;
- On November 10th, the District Board of Directors honored the memory and founding contributions of Attorney Stone D. Barefield, Sr. by naming the 38th Avenue Tunnel the "Stone D. Barefield Tunnel". Stone also served the District as its attorney during its inaugural years (1994-2006);
- The ninth annual Birthday Challenge is held;
- The second annual progress update and appreciation meeting/luncheon for county/municipal officials and community leaders is hosted by the District's Board of Directors.

XV. THE YEAR 2010

- On March 9, the District Board of Directors, by proclamation, honored founding Director Darwin Graham for his 11 years of leadership and service to the District, while serving as Sumrall's representative on the Board of Directors. The proclamation further officially named the Sumrall Trailhead the "Darwin Graham Trailhead". A sign was installed and unveiled on site;
- On March 9, the District Board of Directors, by proclamation, honored founding Director, the late Jessie Douglas, his 6 years of leadership and service to the District, while serving as Lamar County's representative on the Board of Directors. The proclamation further officially named the Epley Trailhead the "Jessie V.E. Douglas Trailhead". A sign was installed and unveiled on site;
- On May 11, the District Board of Directors, by proclamation, honored founding Director Doug Allen for his 8 years of leadership and service to the District while serving as Jefferson Davis County's representative on the Board of Directors.

The proclamation further officially named the Carson Trailhead the “Douglas M. Allen Trailhead” A sign was installed and unveiled on site;

- On May 11, the District Board of Directors, by proclamation, honored founding Director Bobby J. Garraway for his 7 years of leadership and service as President of the Board of Directors during its formative years, while serving as Bassfield’s representative on the Board. The proclamation further officially named the Bassfield Trailhead the “Bobby J. Garraway Trailhead”. A sign was installed and unveiled on site;
- On July 13, the District Board of Directors, by proclamation, honored founding Director Carolyn McRaney for her 14+ years and continuing leadership and service as treasurer of the Board of Directors during its formative years while serving as Prentiss’s representative on the Board. The proclamation further officially named the Prentiss Gateway and Trailhead the “Carolyn McRaney Gateway-Trailhead”. A sign was installed and unveiled on site;
- A \$500,000 appropriation by the U.S. Congress through Senator Wicker is received to permanently impound the Denbury Beaver Pond to extend the equestrian trail 1 ½ miles from Epley to the pond, to construct hoarse stalls, and to provide biking access around the pond. The appropriation will be administered by MDOT with no local match required;
- The equestrian trail improvements from Lott Circle to Carson (12+/-) miles was continued and completed. The “Recreational Trails” grant was increased from \$120,000 to \$190,000 (District share \$40,000 in kind and donations) to complete the improvements and to construct an event/staging pavilion at the Sumrall Station;
- The Mississippi Youth Challenge continues (10 years) to provide valuable community service to the Trace by providing an average of 12 cadets 6-8 hours one of two times per week, picking up trash and debris along the Trace. They provide this service approximately 40 weeks per year, picking up approximately 2000 yards of debris and 2500 gallons of trash. Their contribution assures the Trace is almost always clean of trash and debris, and has contributed greatly to the Trace receiving national recognition as one of our nation’s finest trails;
- Use of the Longleaf Trace continues to grow; uses are now estimated to be 75,000 annually, with 15,000 from out of area, and approximately 2500 from out of state.
- Plans for a much-needed parking lot (46 spaces) at the James “Lynn” Cartledge Gateway are near completion. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2011;
- MDOT has completed raising (required for new clearance standards) the old railroad trestle over US 49 in Hattiesburg. The trestle has been sandblasted for painting. A cyclone fence-type cage has been installed. This improvement is required for the downtown extension of the Trace and the approximate \$500,000 cost is being paid by MDOT;
- Plans and rights of way purchases for the downtown extension are nearing completion. Construction is scheduled to begin in early summer 2011;
- Pine Belt Pathways, a division of Bike/Walk Mississippi, completes a master plan of sidewalks/blueways/greenways/bike paths for the City of Hattiesburg.
- The City of Hattiesburg has received funds to construct an access trail from the Trace near Hutchinson Avenue to the Hattiesburg Zoo, and to access the Hattiesburg Depot/Inter-model facility from the Trace end at Main Street;
- Hattiesburg Director Bennie Sellers resigns; a replacement has not been officially named;

- In August, the Trace was featured as Rail-Trail of the month by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and announced that the Longleaf Trace has been selected as a top 25 rail-trail and to the “Rail-Trail Hall of Fame” as one of the top rail-trails in the U.S;
- On September 4th, the District hosted a 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Longleaf Trace. With a theme of “Trace Turns 10”, the celebration included the Jerry Ryan Memorial Ride, a Fun Run/Walk/Roll/Stroll and free hamburgers/hot dogs. A program marking the tenth anniversary highlighted the trail’s founding, its success, and a look at the future. Founders and founding contributors were recognized with a permanent plaque and placement at the Gateway (see Trace Turns 10, following page);
- Director James “Lynn” Cartlidge was honored and recognized at the 10th Anniversary Celebration as the founder of the Longleaf Trace in honor of his founding actions and exceptional leadership. The Hattiesburg Gateway was, by resolution of the Board of Directors, named the James “Lynn” Cartlidge Gateway;
- The 9th Annual Birthday Challenge, sponsored by the Prentiss Lion’s Club, is held on November 6th with continuing success;
- The third annual progress update and appreciation meeting/luncheon for county/municipal officials and community leaders is hosted by the District’s Board of Directors;

XVI. THE YEAR 2011

- The Year 2011 began with an obvious increase in usage largely due to increased local, area, state and national awareness from recognition as one of our nations top rail-trail conversions (Hall-of-Fame) in August, 2010.
- Former Mayor of Sumrall, Darwin Graham, and founding board of Directors member (1994-2005) dies.
- Attorney Anthony “Tony” Mozingo (2006-2011) resigns after being elected to the position of 15th Judicial Circuit Judge and honored for his service to the district and leadership with the Pine Belt Pacers by naming of the planned outdoor amphitheatre at the Denbury beaver Pond the Anthony “Tony” Mozingo Outdoor Learning Center.
- Local attorney Carey Varnado is hired as the attorney of the district and Board Directors.
- Kellie Sigrest, Office Manager (2003-2011) resigns and is honored for her service, which included developing the districts administrative process.
- Mary Scruggs is hired as district’s Office Manager after an extended search for replacement of Kellie Sigrest.
- Forrest County, through the founding achievements of James “Lynn” Cartlidge received the 2011 National Association of Counties (NACO) Achievement Award for leadership in developing the Longleaf Trace, in a awards ceremony at the 2011 NACO Annual Conference in Multnomah County, Oregon. Mr. Cartlidge stated that he “accepted the award on behalf of the entire membership of the Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails to trails District”, which recognizes creative county programs that promote quality, efficient, and responsive management and administration.
- The district applies for a grant through the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks to extend the equestrian trail 1 ½ miles from the Epley Station to the Denbury Beaver Pond, and to construct a staging/activity pavilion at the Bobby J. Garraway Trailhead in Bassfield.

- Bert Kuyrkendall is appointed by the City of Hattiesburg as its board member replacing Bennie Sellers.
- Jefferson Davis County Board of Supervisors substantially completes a 1.8 mile connecting link trail from the Longleaf Trace at near mile 41.25 to the Jeff Davis County State Lake, and the district agrees to perform ordinary maintenance on the link.
- Board of Directors endorses Lamar Counties planned pedestrian trails and associated facilities, located near US HWY 98, designed to eventually extend to the Trace along the proposed Western Beltway to the Jackson Road Station.
- Resolutions requesting assistance was forwarded to the Forrest and Lamar County Sheriff's Departments and the Hattiesburg Police Department for presence, patrol and enforcement assistance from the James Lynn Carlidge Gateway to the Jackson road Station.
- A grant requested to extend the equestrian trail 1 ½ (+/-) mile to the Denbury Beaver Pond and the construction of a staging/activity pavilion at the Bobby J. Garraway trailhead in Bassfield is approved for \$52,380 in grant funds with the local 20% share being from in-kind services (labor & equipment).
- The Longleaf Trace/Jeff Davis County State Lake connecting link is named (Mayor Blount's Contrail) in honor of the late and long term Mayor of Bassfield, Buford C. Blount, for his founding actions. A dedication ceremony and a memorial was unveiled at near the north end of the link.
- Sponsorship/adoption and renewals along the Longleaf Trace are solicited for the next five years. Sponsorship/adoption pledges total \$16,500.
- Regularly scheduled monthly meetings of the board of Directors were held in Bassfield on July 12, Prentiss on September 13, and Sumrall on October 18, as a means of demonstrating unity and to increase public awareness and participation in the activities of the district.
- In October district employees Roland and Larry Byrd begin the construction (clearing & grubbing) on the equestrian trail extension from Epley to the Denbury Beaver Pond.
- District employees Roland and Larry Byrd constructed information kiosks at the Carolyn McRaney Gateway /Trailhead which was sponsored by the Kendall Berry Trust in memory of Prentiss Webb and Effie Magee Berry founders of the Town of Prentiss and at the Jackson Road trailhead sponsored by the Pine Belt Pacers.
- On September 24th the first advertised invitational equestrian ride was sponsored by the Equestrian Friends of the Longleaf Trace. The event hosted 40(+) horseback riders and 7 wagons that traveled from Carson to Sumrall on September 24th, spent the night and returned to Carson on September 25th. Riders were very complimentary of the newly improved equestrian trail. Funds from the event were used for purchase cost of the t-shirts and the balance restricted to develop equestrian facilities at the Denbury Beaver Pond.
- Mississippi Youth Challenge continued providing weekly trash and debris pick-up along the Trace, on a weekly basis, and assisted with small debris removal along the equestrian trail extension, Lott Circle to Carson.
- On October 29, biking enthusiast and friends of the Trace, Joey Jarrell and Jerry McBeth, from Mississippi Power Company sponsored the first annual Century Ride on the Trace and selected county roads long the Trace, for the benefit of the Trace which was very successful, with 125 (+) participants. Through sponsorships, donations, and registration fees less expenses \$3,549 was donated

to the Trace for restricted use to develop a much-needed parking lot at the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway.

- The 10th Annual Birthday Challenge, sponsored by the Prentiss Lions Club was held on November 5th with continued success.
- Final confirmation of a \$500,000 (no share) appropriation for impoundment and development of the Denbury Beaver Pond is received, and preliminary planning is begun.
- The district continues its pursuit of additional property on the west side of the Denbury Beaver Pond for shoreline recreational development from the Weyerhaeuser Corporation.
- The fourth annual progress update and appreciation meeting/luncheon was held at Lamar Counties District 5 Breland Voting Precinct on December 13, 2011, for state/county/municipal officials and community leaders hosted by the District's Board of Directors and Staff.

XVII. THE YEAR 2012

- Director James Lynn Cartlidge is re-appointed to representing Forest County for term 2012-2015, Director Dale Lucus is re-appointed to represent Lamar County (2012-2015), and Director Charles Reid is reappointed to represent Jefferson Davis County (2012-2015).
- The year 2012 continued to show increase in usage from local, area, state, and national awareness for recognition as one of our nation's top rail-trail conversions, and from continued growth in local and quality of life usage. An estimate of 2012 usage is approximately 80,000.
- President Lynn Cartlidge makes a request to Mississippi Department of Transportation, District 6 Highway Commissioner Tom King for Transportation Enhancement Funds to construct a much needed 45+/- car parking lot at the James "Lynn" Cartlidge Gateway.
- District crews continue construction on the 1 ½ mile extension to the equestrian trail from Epley east to the Denbury Beaver Pond and the construction of a activity pavilion at Bassfield, funded through a \$54,482 Land and conservation Grant by the US Department of Interior, and administered by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Fisheries and Parks.
- District crew construct information kiosk at the Sumrall Station sponsored by Shows Dearman & Waits, Inc.
- Preliminary designs started on the Denbury Beaver Pond Impoundment structure, design and construction to be funded 100% through a \$500,000 congressional appropriation (thanks to Senator Roger Wicker). The impoundment should be complete in 2013.
- The district begins the pursuit of ownership of 15+/- acres of land adjacent to property the district owns west of the Denbury Beaver Pond and currently owned by Weyerhaeuser Company.
- The district continues its pursuit of ownership of 10+/- acres of land adjacent to its current property surrounding the Denbury Beaver Pond and currently owned by Plum Creek Timber Company.
- The City of Hattiesburg has completed a loop of interest from the planned extension to downtown from Hutchinson Avenue to the Hattiesburg Zoo.
- Design work in nearing completion on the 2+/- mile extension of the longleaf Trace to North Main Street in downtown Hattiesburg. Construction will begin in

2013.

- The City of Hattiesburg has completed a biking/pedestrian trail extension from North Main Street to the Hattiesburg Depot.
- Sponsorships/adoptions and renewals along the trace for a five-year period continues, sponsorship pledges during the year total \$3,125.00. Thanks to a supporting business/corporate community.
- The Mississippi Youth Challenge Corp of cadets completed its twelfth (12th) year of providing weekly trash and debris clean-up on the trace. It is estimated the value of their community service now exceeds \$200,000 over the twelve (12) years they have provided their service.
- District crews complete the extension of the equestrian staging/trail from Epley west to the Denbury Beaver Pond and the construction of a activity pavilion in Bassfield. The reimbursement of eligible expenses totaling \$54,482 has been made from the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.
- The Mississippi Department of Transportation has notified the District that \$379,496 in Transportation Enhancement Funds (TE) has been earmarked for construction of the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway parking lot. Construction will begin and should be completed in 2013.
- The district completed its lease purchase payments with balloon payments totally \$50,000, and now own both the backhoe Cat 416E, and dozer Cat D5G.
- Hurricane Issac visited the Longleaf Trace in August 27, 2012, leaving approximately fifty (50) trees across the trail and considerable small debris. District crew and Mississippi Youth Challenge completed the clean-up.
- The District's Board of Directors held its regularly scheduled March 13, 2012, meeting in Sumrall, and its regularly scheduled June 12, 2012 meeting in Bassfield, as a means of demonstrating unity and to increase public awareness and participation in the activities of the district.
- The District's Board of Directors agreed to award two (2) \$500 scholarships to two (2) deserving cadets of the Mississippi Youth Challenge program, one for each of two (2) classes annually. These scholarships can be used for advanced education or trade training, and are in recognition of the Corps of Cadets who make contributions to the Longleaf Trace through their required community service by picking up trash and debris on the Trace.
- The Annual Birthday Challenge historically held on the first (1st) Saturday in November is cancelled by the Prentiss Lions Club, due to unexpected circumstances.
- On October 27, 2012, biking enthusiast and Friends of the Longleaf Trace from the Mississippi power Company sponsored the Second Annual Century Ride on the Trace and selected county roads along the Trace, for the benefit of the construction of a parking lot at the James Lynn Cartlidge. The event was again successful with 100 participants. Through sponsorships, donations, and registration fees less expenses \$2,985 was donated to the Trace. The first two events have raised a total of \$6,474 for the parking lot construction.
- The fifth (5th) annual progress and appreciation meeting/luncheon was held at the Lamar Counties District 5 Voting Precinct and Community Center on December 11, 2012, for State, County, municipal officials, community leaders, and friends hosted by the District's Board of Directors and staff.

XVIII. THE YEAR 2013

- Carolyn McRaney retired as Prentiss representative on the Board of Directors due to health reasons after serving as treasurer for seventeen (17) years (1996-2013).
- Mayor Charles Dumas is appointed as Prentiss's representative on the Board of Directors.
- Director Johnny Kerley is re-appointed to represent the Town of Bassfield (2013-2016), and Director Gerolene Rayborn is re-appointed to represent the Town of Sumrall (2013-2016).
- Director James Lynn Cartlidge was re-elected as President of the Board, Director Johnny Kerley was re-elected as Vice President, Director Dale Lucus was re-elected as Secretary, and Director Gerolene Rayborn was elected as Treasurer.
- The district purchased fifteen (15) acres from the Weyerhaeuser Corporation for \$15,000 adjoining existing Denbury Beaver Pond property. The property will be used to develop a primitive camp area, equestrian stalls, and an activity/staging pavilion. The true value of the property and timber is \$50,000+.
- The district requested property for a critically needed parking (60+ spaces) at the Jackson Road Station from the Hub City Humane Society. With final approval, the parking area will be constructed in early 2014.
- In February 2013, Jake Lynch from the Rails to Trails Conservancy in Washington, D.C. visited and biked the Longleaf Trace for the purpose of featuring the Longleaf Trace in the Winter 2013 Edition of "Rails to Trails" magazine. A copy of the article is in the back of the Progress Report 2013.
- Consultant Shows, Dearman, & Waits was hired and design is nearing completion on a critically needed 45+ space parking lot at the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2014, assuming no unforeseen circumstances. The parking lot is being built with a \$379,406 transportation grant through MDOT, and \$94,652 in district funds..
- Design has been completed for the extension of the Trace from the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway to North Main Street in downtown Hattiesburg. Construction is expected to begin in early year 2014.
- A contract was awarded to the Walker and Associates to design an impoundment structure for the Denbury Beaver Pond funded by a \$500,000 no match congressional earmark provided through efforts of Senator Roger Wicker. As a result of unforeseen preliminary engineering findings (\$300,000+) in additional funds are being sought for the project through MDOT 's transportation alternative funding.
- District is notified that Plum Creek Timber Company has agreed to sell an additional 11+/- acres adjacent to properties already owned at the Denbury Beaver Pond for \$2,500 per acre. The estimated value of the property and timber is \$45,000+. The district will then own approximately fifty (50) acres in the area of the beaver pond for recreational development.
- The State of Mississippi and Longleaf Trace were awarded the 2013 Rail Trail Program (RTP) achievement award for the improvement and extension of the Longleaf Trace Equestrian Trail. The award is given through the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- Director Kuyrkendall resigned his position with the City of Hattiesburg, and

as a result no longer represents the City of Hattiesburg on the Board of Directors.

- The district and Ms. Jeanne Williams, Director of the Lamar County Library Systems installed a “Little Free Library” at the Darwin Graham Trailhead in Sumrall. The little free library is a box approximately 2’x2’ with a door. It is filled with books for people to enjoy reading and then returning. People are encouraged to use the library and to donate books. If successful, an additional “Little Free Library” will be installed at the Jackson Road Station.
- A ceremony was held on November 12, 2013, to honor former Director Carolyn McRaney, who represented the Town of Prentiss for seventeen (17) years (1996-2013) on the District’s Board of Directors. Ms. Carolyn served as treasures for her entire tenure. She was honored for her exceptional service during the early years when she managed the financial activities of the district during the design and construction of the forty (40+) miles phase I & II of the Trace. Her duties included accounting for over \$5 million in grant funds to include architectural, engineering, and construction contracts. Ms. Carolyn performed these duties which took considerable time away from her personal time, in the spirit of assisting the district during a period when district funds were needed to construct and get the Longleaf Trace into operation. The district shall always be thankful and indebted to Ms. Carolyn.
- The Parkway Pipeline, LLC made a \$2,500 donation to the district for the purpose of constructing an exercise/warm-up station at the Carolyn McRaney Trailhead in Prentiss.
- With the assistance of the Lamar County Road Department the Clyde Depot parking lot has been expanded and improved, hopefully no more need.
- The Longleaf Trace continued to enjoy user growth as the estimated 80,000 users for 2012 was exceeded in 2013.
- The Mississippi Youth Challenge Corp of Cadets perform pick-up trash and debris along the Longleaf Trace for the thirteenth (13th) year saving the district an estimated \$15,000 annually.
- The Prentiss Lions Club again successfully hosted the Annual Birthday Challenge on October 26, 2013, after cancelling in 2012.
- The sixth (6th) annual progress and appreciation meeting/luncheon was held at the Lamar Counties District 5 Voting Precinct and Community Center on December 10, 2013, for State, County, municipal officials, community leaders, and friends hosted by the District’s Board of Directors and staff.

XIX. THE YEAR 2014

- The Hub City Humane Society agreed to allow the district to use 1.35+/- acres of property immediately west of the Jackson Road Station and adjacent to the Trace through a “License Agreement” for the construction of a much-needed additional parking for users of the Trace, subject to the district installing a four (4) foot cyclone fence around the parking lot and access drive. With the continuing assistance of the Lamar County Board of Supervisors through their labor, equipment, and materials the parking lot will be completed in early 2015.
- In February, the Board of Directors authorized the construction of an exercise/warm-up station at the Carolyn McRaney Trailhead in Prentiss through the proceeds of a \$2,500 donation/sponsorship for that purpose. The

exercise/warm-up area was completed in March 2014.

- In March, the City of Hattiesburg appointed Ginger Maddox to represent the city on the District's Board of Directors to replace Bert Kuyrkendall who resigned and moved from Hattiesburg.
- In March, President Cartlidge made a request to the Forrest County Sheriff's Department for enforcement, presence, and security of the Trace from the Gateway to the county line, immediately west of Interstate agreed that Mr. Walker will prepare a feasibility report for excavating five (5) to ten (10) acres of the old pond for fish propagation and to enhance the remaining area for biological/ecological purposes. Design will continue into the year 2015. This work is being performed through a \$500,000 100% stimulus grant.
- On May 10, the 3rd Annual Century Ride on the Trace, sponsored by friends from the Mississippi Power Company, Joey Jarrell, Jerry McBeth, and Matt Roland from AT&T, was held with 101 participants. Net proceeds of \$3,883.10 was donated to the district for the purpose of 59, due to an increased vandalism in the area. The patrols have continued throughout the year with excellent success.
- In April, the Board of Directors approved a grant request, prepared by district staff, to the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks for a \$99,950 grant for the purpose of making a short extension to the equestrian trail, onto property recently purchased from Weyerhaeuser, along with construction of a primitive camp area, equestrian stalls, and an activity/staging pavilion. An activity/staging pavilion near the Jackson Road Station was also requested. In September 2014, the district was notified that the grant was approved. Construction will be on-going and completed in mid-year 2015.
- In May, consulting Engineer, Don Walker, Walker Associates notified the district that the design of the Denbury Beaver Pond Impoundment Project will need to be severely modified as the result of planned residential development downstream of the planned project. It was assisting with the construction of a much-needed parking lot at the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway. The three Century Rides has raised a total of \$10,357.10, to date, to benefit the district. The annual ride will continue annually into the future.
- In July, the district purchased an additional 11.44 acres, from the Plum Creek Land Company in the total amount of \$28,886 adjacent to the Denbury Beaver Pond for future recreational development.
- In August, the Board of Directors authorized the production of a video of the Trace and the municipalities along its route for purposes of promoting the Trace and our communities. The video will be made in early summer 2015, and will be shown at the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway, the Hattiesburg Visitor Center, the City of Hattiesburg web-site and possibly the State of Mississippi's Visitor Centers, and possibly web-sites for Bassfield, Prentiss, and Sumrall.
- Bids for the construction of the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway Parking Lot was received on September 25, and low bid of \$489,305 exceeded the engineers estimate by \$112,085. As a result, a request was made to Commissioner Tom King for approximately \$90,000 in additional federal funds. On October 27, the district was notified by Commissioner King that an additional \$90,000 in grant funds were approved.
- The City of Hattiesburg is expected to award a contract within the next thirty (30) days for the construction of Phase III, James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway to

downtown Hattiesburg. After construction is complete, the district will maintain Phase III along with Phases I and II.

- The Trace continues to enjoy an exceptional relationship and service from the Lamar County Sheriff's Department, and Sheriff Danny Rigel, who provides daily patrols and security on the Trace throughout Lamar County.
- The Mississippi Youth Challenge Corps of Cadets continues to assist the district by picking up trash and debris along the Trace weekly throughout the year. This year is the fifteenth-year youth challenge has provided this service at an estimated value/savings to the district of approximately \$20,000 per year.
- Annual use of the Trace continues to grow at an unexpected rate. Current usage is estimated at greater than 150,000 uses annually.
- The seventh (7th) annual progress and appreciation meeting/luncheon was held at the Lamar County, District 5, Voting Precinct and Community Center on December 9, 2014, for state, county, and municipal officials, community leaders, and friends of the trace hosted by the District Board of Directors and staff.

XX. THE YEAR 2015

- In January construction was begun on the critically needed Tom King gateway parking lot funded through a \$496,496.00 Transportation Alternative Project (TAP) grant. The 48-space parking lot was completed in August.
- A critically needed 80 car, crushed limestone parking lot was completed located immediately west of the Jackson Road Station at an cost of approximately \$17,000.
- The Plum Creek Foundation approved and provided a \$10,000 foundation grant to assist with the development of Jackson Road (west) Parking Lot completed in April.
- A 22' x 54' Pavilion was completed in April adjacent to the new Jackson Road (west) parking lot and constructed through the districts 2015, \$99,950 Recreational Trail grant administered through the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks at a cost of approximately \$30,000.
- A ½ mile loop equestrian trail has been constructed extending the existing equestrian trail into the Ronnie Shows Recreational Center and the equestrian trails eastern terminus. The loop trail was constructed as a part of the district's 2015 Recreational Trail Grant at a cost of approximately \$15,000.
- Nicholson & Company, PLLC performed the districts 2013-2014 audit and found no deficiencies.
- 15,680 feet of cracks through the trails asphalt surface into the base was sealed from Hattiesburg to Prentiss by A-1 Sealing, in a continuing effort to extend the life of the trails surface.
- The district was presented a Recreational Trails award for the quality development, improvement, and extension of the Longleaf Trace Equestrian Trail.
- The district's Board of Directors and staff paused to recognize and express their sympathy to James Moore and Family with the loss of their son, Jeffrey. The board authorized and approved the erection of memorial bench at mile marker 10 (sponsor Moore's Bike Shop) remembering Jeffrey and honoring of his father, James Moore's exceptional and long-term service to the creation, development, and operation of the Longleaf Trace.

- The district received notice in May 2015 that our Southern Highway Commissioner, Tom King approved a \$250,535 Transportation Alternative Project grant for an estimated \$313,169.00 tails street/road/highway intersection safety improvements project.
- The Pinebelt Pacers made a \$2,500 donation to the district to assist with the proposed intersection safety improvement project.
- On July 9, the district's New Holland TS-100 Tractor equipped with side boom, boom hog, and bush hog burned. The 12-year-old tractor and equipment was covered with insurance and replaced with a Kubota GX110 and new equipment.
- In late July, the district's New Holland 3010 mowing tractor developed a serious steering problem. Due to tractors age and the projected cost of repair a request was made and approved through the districts existing 2015 Recreational Trail Grant for a new 65 horsepower Kubota tractor at an estimated cost of \$34,000, increasing the grant total to \$135,950.
- A 20' x 30' activity pavilion, 10 equestrian stalls and 10 primitive campsites are nearing completion in the Ronnie Shows Recreational Center (old Weyerhaeuser property) at an estimated cost of \$30,000 funded through the districts 2015 Recreational Trail Grant.
- The Denbury Beaver Pond project - deepening pond - is nearing construction bids, funded 100% through a \$500,000 Federal stimulus grant.
- New mile marker signs to replace the original 15-year-old signs are being installed.
- The district's Board of Directors ordered that the under construction/future recreational facilities to be constructed adjacent to the Denbury Beaver Pond be named in honor of Ronnie Shows, an early supporter and invaluable contributor to the creation and development of Longleaf Trace.
- The district's Board of Directors ordered that the recently constructed and critically needed 48 vehicle parking lot located adjacent to the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway be named for Tom King, a continuing invaluable supporter of the continuing development of the Longleaf Trace.
- The Longleaf Trace has been notified that a special publication will be issued featuring only the 25 Rails to Trails Conservancy Hall of Fame projects, of which the Longleaf Trace is honored as being.
- The eighth (8th) annual progress and appreciation luncheon was held at the Lamar County District 5 voting precinct of December 2, 2015, approximately 90 state, county, municipal, and community leaders, and friends was hosted by the District's Board of Directors. Executive Director, Herlon Pierce presented the annual progress report followed by a seafood/traditional luncheon.

XXI. THE YEAR 2016

- **In January member county Board of Supervisors of the district made appointments to serve on the Board of Directors of the District for the term 2016-2019 as follows:**

Forrest County	James Lynn Cartlidge (reappointment – 7th)
Jefferson Davis County	Charles Reid (reappointment – 4th)
Lamar County	Dale Lucas (reappointment – 4th)
- **In January, the board of Directors of the board for the term January 2016 to January 2020 James Lynn Cartlidge was elected president for the**

5th consecutive 4-year term, Johnny Kerley was elected as vice-president for the 5th consecutive 4-year term, Dale Lucus was elected as secretary of the board for the 4th consecutive 4-year term, and Gerolene Rayborn was elected treasure.

- In January, Herlon Pierce was re-appointed as Executive Director/Trail Manager for the year 2016 (16 yrs.), Mary Scruggs was reappointed administrative assistant and records clerk for the year 2016 (5 yrs), and Carey Varnado was reappointed as attorney for the district for the year 2016 (5 yrs). All other existing employees were also continued for the year 2016.
- In February, the district received notice that the district's request for Mississippi power Company's annual Environmental Stewardship Council Project of \$5,000 for each of the next 4 years was approved on an annual review basis. The grant funds will be used to enhance the development of the Ronnie Shows Recreational Center (biological/ecological area).
- In February sisters, Marilyn H. Williams and Carolyn H. Clemons, donated a 100' x 150' lot adjacent to the extension of the trace to downtown Hattiesburg (Main Street) at near North Street. The property will be used for a future maintenance or trailside recreation area.
- In April, the districts audit was completed for the fiscal year 2014 - 2015 by top McWhorter Harvey, PLLC, with no discovery of deficiencies.
- In April, all work was complete on the critically needed 48 vehicle Tom King (Gateway) Parking Lot at the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway and the parking lot was opened for use.
- In April, a contract was awarded and completed for the construction of 5800 feet of 2 ½" waterline to include fittings and valves from the Epley subdivision to the newly constructed equestrian stalls and primitive camp area.
- In April, the district received a \$10,000 donation from Forrest General hospital for local share assistance on the under design and critically needed \$300,000+, 40+ public intersection/streets/roads/highways safety improvement project with the Trace.
- In May, a Pine Belt Leadership group of the Area Development partnership was authorized by the Board of Directors to proceed with raising funds for lighting the Phase III addition James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway to Main Street, Hattiesburg.
- In May, a memorandum of understanding was executed between the City of Hattiesburg and the district authorizing the operation and shared maintenance of the under-construction Phase III, James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway to Main Street, Hattiesburg.
- In May, Phase III, constructed under contract by the City of Hattiesburg, was opened for public use.
- In June, a 5' chain link fence was completed around and in connection with the recently constructed 80 vehicle parking lot immediately west of the Jackson Road Station.
- On June 18, a dedication ceremony was held in the newly constructed parking lot at the James Lynn Cartlidge Gateway honoring Mississippi's southern district highway commissioner by naming the parking lot the "Tom King (Gateway) Parking Lot" for his support of the Longleaf

Trace through alternative transportation funding. Keynote speaker was Mr. Ray Ballantine, a former MDOT employee who developed the administrative process for development of rails to trails in the State of Mississippi. Hattiesburg mayor Johnny DuPree and Mr. Rick Taylor, Executive Director, Hattiesburg Tourism Commission made remarks. The program was concluded with the official unveiling of a sign and permanent monument was unveiled at its location in the parking lot approximately 125-150 people were present.

- On June 18, and in conjunction with the “Tom King Parking Lot dedication” Phase III, constructed under contract by the City of Hattiesburg, was dedicated. Mayor Johnny DuPree, City of Hattiesburg Mayor and Mr. Rick Taylor Executive Director, Hattiesburg Tourism Commission made remarks. Mayor Johnny DuPree officially opened Phase III by cutting the ceremonial ribbon, a number of dignitaries were at his side.
- In July, the district completed a grant with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks and requested a final reimbursement on the \$135,950 grant project that extended the equestrian trail approximately ½ mile, constructed 10 horse stalls, constructed 10 primitive campsites, constructed 2 event/staging pavilions, extended water service to the primitive camp and equestrian area, purchased a 60-horsepower tractor, purchased a 3-point hitch landscape leveler, purchase of picnic tables, grills, and etc.
- In July, Mr. Ed Crockett purchased and leased, at no cost to the district, a 4-seat golf cart to rent to the handicapped, senior citizen, and the physically impaired.
- In October, the district’s Board of Directors by resolution named the recently constructed Phase III the “Johnny L. DuPree Downtown Link” in honor of his long-time support of the Longleaf Trace as a member of the Forrest County Board of Supervisors and as mayor of the City of Hattiesburg and his successful efforts in securing 100% of the funding for the project through grant sources. A onsite marking and ceremony will be held at a future date.
- In October, the district’s Board of Directors recognized Mr. Jerry McBeth, Miss Power Company, as the district’s volunteer user resource/liason official to and from trace users for the purpose of creating greater communication between the board and trace users for awareness of district activities and concerns of users.
- In October, the district received a \$1,000 donation annually for 5 years from local Hattiesburg’s Kohler Engine for the purchase of needed maintenance equipment.
- In November, the district received a \$7,000 donation from Weyerhaeuser through their Giving Fund for local share assistance on the under design and critically needed \$300,000, 40+ public intersection (streets, roads, highways) safety improvement project with the Trace.
- The district’s Board of Directors and staff are in deep appreciation of the exceptional labor/materials assistance and frequent directed donations from Ms. Becky Ryder and the Pine Belt Pacers.
- The District’s Board of Directors presented its seven (7) member membership: Forrest, Jefferson Davis, and Lamar Counties, and the

municipalities of Bassfield, Hattiesburg, Prentiss, and Sumrall a framed 8 x10 special portrait (Springtime on the Longleaf Trace) of the Trace for display in their respective court house or City Hall in recognition of their dedicated and local support of the district and its Longleaf Trace.

FRAME WORK FOR THE FUTURE

- Continue an aggressive maintenance program to assure the Longleaf Trace continues as one of our nation's finest trails;
- Continue pursuit of Federal and State assistance for the continued development enhancement and maintenance of the Trace and the vast resources along the Trace.
- Design and construct a small lake and enhanced biological site at the Denbury Beaver Pond.
- Continue to enhance equestrian facilities along the 25 +/- mile equestrian trail to better accommodate group riders and activities to include overnight camping.
- Continue to develop existing and add facilities as needed to accommodate increasing user demand.
- Seek federal and state grant assistance to develop the shoreline recreational facilities around the Denbury Beaver Pond to include an amphitheater (as an outdoor classroom for eco-nature teaching our youth), family day use/picnic areas, overnight camping (primitive and class A), and the possibility of future overnight cabins;
- Identify, prioritize, and construct loops of interest (overnight facilities, historical, ecological sites, and etc.);
- Continue to work with "Friends of the Longleaf Trace" and "Longleaf Trace Trail Riders" to provide quality, user friendly improvements to the Trace facilities;
- Continue to solicit user and public ideas for the further improvement of existing facilities and further developments;
- Aggressively pursue funding to resurface the asphalt hiking, biking, blading trail.
- **You**, as county and city leaders and as advocates of the Longleaf Trace, are requested to share your suggestions and ideas with the District's "BOD" to improve the present and to assure the future of the Longleaf Trace as it continues its status as one of our nation's finest trails.

AWARDS/RECOGNITIONS/USER COMMENTS

- 2004 longleafttrace.org was chosen as the winning website in the American Trail Website Contest, Elmer Beardshall, Webmaster;
- 2004 The Longleaf Trace was honored by the US Secretary of Interior, Gale Norton, by its selection as a member of a family of National Recreation Trails. The Longleaf Trace is one of only a few non-federal trails to have that designation;
- 2004 *Mississippi* magazine features the Longleaf Trace;
- 2005 *Southern Living* magazine features the Longleaf Trace and the late Mrs. Gladys Ward's garden on the Trace near the community of Melba;
- 2006 *Mississippi* magazine selects the Longleaf Trace as Mississippi's "Best Place to Exercise";
- The *American Trail* and *Rails-to-Trails* magazines have featured the Longleaf Trace on several occasions;
- A number of national, state, and local magazines have featured the Longleaf Trace;
- The Longleaf Trace, with its outdoor/health opportunities, has contributed to a number of retirees choosing the Hattiesburg-Forrest and Lamar County area as their retirement home;
- Avid users of the Trace from outside the state often take their time to tell us personally or by e-mail that the Longleaf Trace is one of our nation's finest trails
- There are a number of local newspaper and magazine articles on the Longleaf Trace written throughout each year. (see attached article).
- 2010 *Rails-to-Trails Conservancy* names the Longleaf Trace to its "Rail-Trail Hall of Fame" top twenty-five (25) conversion.
- 2011 Forest County, through the founding actions of James "Lynn" Cartlidge was awarded the 2011 National Association of Counties (NACO) Achievement Award for leadership in developing the Longleaf Trace. Mr. Cartlidge stated that he "accepted the award on behalf of the entire membership of the Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails to Trails Recreational District."
- 2013 the Longleaf Trace and the State of Mississippi were chosen as the recipient of the 2013 RTP Achievement Award for the exceptional improvements and extension of the Longleaf Trace Equestrian Trail, made through the Recreational Trail Program, Federal Highway Commission, administered by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.
- 2013 Jake Lynch of the Rails to Trails Conservancy, Washington, D.C., visited and rode the Longleaf Trace in March, for a feature article in the "Rails to Trails" Magazine (Winter 2013 issue). See article in back
- 2014 the Longleaf Trace continues to be recognized as one of our nation's finest rails to trails conversions by trade magazines and users from throughout the United States.
- 2014 again selected as Mississippi's best place for outdoor recreation.
- 2015 the Longleaf Trace continues to be recognized as one of our nation's finest rails to trails conversions.
- 2015 the Longleaf Trace was chosen to be one of the nation's top 25 rail trail conversion to be published in a publication to be issued by the Rails to Trails Conservancy.



HITTING THE TRACE

FADI SHAHIN/FOR THE HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

Pine Belt residents take advantage of the sunny skies Monday as they bike, walk and run along the Longleaf Trace. Temperatures in the Hattiesburg area are expected to be in the low 90s all week, with a threat of thunderstorms every day.





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Rail-Trail Hall of Fame



Photo by Kelly Pack/RTC

Trail Supporters Pick 2016 Rail-Trail Hall of Fame Inductee

Congratulations to [New York's Hudson Valley Trail Network \(/trailblog/2016/march/17/new-yorks-hudson-valley-trail-network/\)](#), voted into the [2016 Rail-Trail Hall of Fame \(/resource-library/resources/from-hudson-valley-to-hall-of-fame/\)](#) by trail supporters from across the country.

[Learn More \(/resource-library/resources/from-hudson-valley-to-hall-of-fame/\)](#)

In 2007, RTC began recognizing exemplary rail-trails around the country through its Rail-Trail Hall of Fame.

We select inductees on merits such as scenic value, high use, trail and trailside amenities, historical significance, excellence in management and maintenance of facility, community connections and geographic distribution.

Hall of fame rail-trails receive a variety of honors, including special signage to place along their trails, a [Trail of the Month \(/trailblog/?tag=Trail+of+the+Month\)](#) feature and a highlight in [Rails to Trails \(/magazine/\)](#) magazine.

Members of the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame

1. [Great Allegheny Passage \(/trailblog/2007/july/01/pennsylvania-and-marylands-great-allegheny-passage/\)](/trailblog/2007/july/01/pennsylvania-and-marylands-great-allegheny-passage/)
2. [Katy Trail State Park \(/trailblog/2007/september/01/missouri-katy-trail-state-park/\)](/trailblog/2007/september/01/missouri-katy-trail-state-park/)
3. [Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail \(/trailblog/2007/october/01/floridas-pinellas-trail/\)](/trailblog/2007/october/01/floridas-pinellas-trail/)
4. [Burke-Gilman Trail \(/trailblog/2008/february/01/washingtons-burke-gilman-trail/\)](/trailblog/2008/february/01/washingtons-burke-gilman-trail/)
5. [Minuteman Bikeway \(/trailblog/2008/june/01/massachusetts-minuteman-bikeway/\)](/trailblog/2008/june/01/massachusetts-minuteman-bikeway/)
6. [Illinois Prairie Path \(/trailblog/2008/august/01/the-illinois-prairie-path/\)](/trailblog/2008/august/01/the-illinois-prairie-path/)
7. [Elroy-Sparta State Trail \(/trailblog/2008/september/01/wisconsins-elroy-sparta-state-trail/\)](/trailblog/2008/september/01/wisconsins-elroy-sparta-state-trail/)
8. [Bizz Johnson Trail \(/trailblog/2008/november/01/californias-bizz-johnson-national-recreation-trail/\)](/trailblog/2008/november/01/californias-bizz-johnson-national-recreation-trail/)
9. [W&OD Trail \(/trailblog/2008/december/01/virainias-washington-old-dominion-railroad-regional-park/\)](/trailblog/2008/december/01/virainias-washington-old-dominion-railroad-regional-park/)
10. [Monon Trail \(/trailblog/2009/march/01/indianas-monon-trail/\)](/trailblog/2009/march/01/indianas-monon-trail/)
11. [Silver Comet and Chief Ladiga trails \(/trailblog/2009/june/01/georgias-silver-comet-trail-and-alabamas-chief-ladiga-trail/\)](/trailblog/2009/june/01/georgias-silver-comet-trail-and-alabamas-chief-ladiga-trail/)
12. [East Bay Bicycle Path \(/trailblog/2009/september/01/rhode-islands-east-bay-bicycle-path/\)](/trailblog/2009/september/01/rhode-islands-east-bay-bicycle-path/)
13. [Pere Marquette Rail-Trail of Michigan \(/trailblog/2009/october/01/the-pere-marquette-rail-trail-of-mid-michigan/\)](/trailblog/2009/october/01/the-pere-marquette-rail-trail-of-mid-michigan/)
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15. [Paul Bunyan State Trail \(/trailblog/2011/february/01/minnesotas-paul-bunyan-state-trail/\)](/trailblog/2011/february/01/minnesotas-paul-bunyan-state-trail/)
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27. [Virginia Creeper Trail \(/trailblog/2013/may/01/virginia-creeper-national-recreation-trail/\)](/trailblog/2013/may/01/virginia-creeper-national-recreation-trail/)
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30. [Hudson Valley Trail Network \(/trailblog/2016/march/17/new-yorks-hudson-valley-trail-network/\)](/trailblog/2016/march/17/new-yorks-hudson-valley-trail-network/)



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Mississippi's Longleaf Trace

Posted 08/01/10 by [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#) / [/trailblog/?author=Rails-to-Trails+Conservancy](#) in [America's Trails](#) / [/trailblog/?category=America%27s+Trails](#)



Trail of the Month: August 2010

 This trail is a recipient of the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame Award. Click to learn

<http://www.railstotrails.org/ourWork/promotingTrailUse/trailRecognition/hallOfFame/index.html>

Mississippi's Piney Woods country, vast forests of longleaf and slash pines once ruled the landscape. Much of that original growth disappeared in the timber

boom that lasted into the 1920s, but you can still find plenty of remnants and recovering woodlands that give the state its familiar matting of pine straw and pine cones. So if you're keen to needle your way across the Pine Belt, and to re-trace the path of industry and settlement in Mississippi, you won't find a more appropriate route than the 40.25-mile Longleaf Trace.

"The Trace is special in our communities," says Herlon Pierce, who has managed the rail-trail since it first opened on Labor Day in 2000. "The old railroad was really the reason that many of our towns and cities exist in this area. So the trail preserves a big piece of history—a big piece of what we were all about."

A retired civil engineer, Pierce had been asked to do the construction inspection on the Trace. He ended up staying on to manage the pathway, thinking it would only be for a short time because of his age.

"Now they'll have to run me off," he says. "I love it."

Owned by the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the trail begins in Hattiesburg, right at the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi. From there, following a Mississippi Central Railroad corridor, the asphalt pathway cuts northwest to the timber town of Prentiss (with a bit of a climb at the end).

Rolling with the hills around it—at times requiring a few more pedal strokes than usual for a rail-trail—the Trace visits wetlands, small lakes and a handful of community downtowns. And among the many pine forests, you'll get ample views of the trail's namesake, the longleaf pine.

Known formally as *pinus palustris* ("pine of the marsh"), longleaf pines once covered 30 to 60 million acres of the southeastern United States. They are highly resistant to fire and can grow to more than 100 feet. Some can live longer than 400 years, but they can take up to 150 years to reach full size.

Longleaf pines may be slow growers, but another local shrub has flourished and rather prickled trail managers. Privet hedges, popular for their blossoms and amenability to pruning, have taken root along much of the trailside. They can sprout a foot a week in the right weather, says Pierce, and folks compliment them all the time. But that heartiness proved troublesome along the dirt equestrian path that parallels the Trace for 22.5 miles from Epley Station west to Carson Station. Indeed privet hedges had choked out most of the route.

"Privet hedge," says Pierce. "I think that word kind of describes it. They will privatize and hide your yard in a hurry!"

Since there wasn't an easy way to manage the privet hedges on the woody equestrian path, Pierce had the trail widened and upgraded. It now has a minimum 15-foot width and can even accommodate wagon traffic. The equestrian path zigzags across the main asphalt Trace a few times because of terrain, but otherwise it is entirely separate and remains surfaced in dirt.

These careful management touches—and others, including covered rest areas and restrooms—have made the Trace a shipshape attraction. "We tried to put our money into maintenance," says Pierce. "I promise you, we've got a well-kept trail."

Not just well kept, but also well traveled. According to trail statistics, an estimated 65,000 users hit the Trace in 2009. And since the trail opened in 2000, visitors have come from all 50 states and a number of other countries.

Businesses have opened along the corridor, and new housing subdivisions advertise their proximity to the trail. Doctors are using it to prescribe physical activity for patients, and 20 percent of the estimated 40,000 residents who live within three miles of the Trace have reported an increase in regular exercise. "We have an awful lot of people who have incorporated the Trace into their daily routines," says Pierce.

The Trace is about to celebrate its 10th anniversary this September, and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has fittingly named the pathway to the [Rail-Trail Hall of Fame](http://www.railstotrails.org/ourWork/promotingTrailUse/trailRecognition/hallOfFame/index.html) (<http://www.railstotrails.org/ourWork/promotingTrailUse/trailRecognition/hallOfFame/index.html>). So let the swoosh of longleaf pines whisk you into southern Mississippi. It's a perfect time to enjoy and appreciate a decade's worth of trail excellence.

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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (</trailblog/?author=Rails+to+Trails+Conservancy>) is a national nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., working to create a nationwide network of trails and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people.

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Put Your Foot Down

Published on 27 September 2016



Category: October 2016 Issue



Dr. Seuss wrote, “You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose.” Why not, then, find your family’s footing by hiking and walking around Hattiesburg?

Longleaf Trace

The Longleaf Trace is a family-friendly trail. The Trace is named for the *Pinus palustris*, or “pine of the marsh,” the Longleaf Pine. This favorite tree of southern Mississippi grows lavishly along the Trace’s path.

The Rail-Trail Hall of Fame Trace is owned by the Mississippi Department of Transportation. The pathway is built on an abandoned railroad right-of-way of the former Mississippi Central Railroad line, traversing the 41-mile distance between the towns of Hattiesburg and Prentiss. It is one of the

longest rail-trails in America’s southeast.

The route passes through the small towns of Bassfield, Sumrall and Carson. Start your journey at the Trace Gateway on the University of Southern Mississippi campus.

Herlon Pierce, executive director and trail manager, expects 250,000 usages of the Longleaf Trace in 2016. A 2-mile addition to Main Street (downtown Hattiesburg) was officially opened in June, 2016.

Pierce reports families and users enjoy the east track towards Kamper Park, home of the Hattiesburg Zoo, and historic Hattiesburg.

Families trek together west for the 4-mile jaunt to the trailhead at Jackson Road to enter the Trace.

Mother of three, Katie Shepherd has been running for three years. She is the veteran of one marathon, 12 half-marathons, and numerous shorter-distance events.

Katie is a St. Jude Hero. She participated in the St. Jude Run For the Kids 5k race held on the Longleaf Trace. Katie won a medal in her age group; it was her second year to place.

Katie says the Trace is peaceful, quiet, safe and shaded. She sees families biking, running, and walking their dogs along the road.

If your family enjoys running or walking together, consider joining the Pine Belt Pacers, a club located in the Piney Woods for anyone who has an interest in recreational and competitive running and walking. The Pacers have weekly training runs on the Longleaf Trace.

Run for Literacy, a 5k Run/Walk and 1 Mile Fun Run/Walk, will be sponsored by H4H (Hope for Hattiesburg) on October 15, 2016. The starting line for the meet will begin at the Longleaf Trace USM Gateway. The literacy program at Grace Christian Elementary School will benefit from this occasion.

Nature lovers in your family will relish signs that name trees as they pass on the Trace. In addition to the trail’s namesake, you will see Black Gum, Chinese Tallow, Crabapple, Loblolly Pine, Mimosa, Sassafras, Southern Magnolia, Sparkleberry, Supplejack, and Yaupon. Birds, deer, rabbits, raccoons and squirrels frequent the roadway.

Paul B. Johnson State Park

Paul B. Johnson State Park is a 20-mile drive from the University of Southern Mississippi. Why not include the outdoors in your football weekend?

Break in your boots on the Nature Trail. The “Trail of the Southern Pines” is 0.8 miles long. Two lookout towers give visitors a glimpse of animal life, birds and plants. The pine straw-covered footpath is well-marked. Be prepared to sidestep roots.

For the young botanists in your family, signs label trees. Black Cherry, Dogwood, Loblolly and Longleaf Pine, and Water Oak.

A day-use entry fee is charged on a per vehicle basis. Entrance to the state park is \$4. Add 50 cents for each person over six people.

“You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who’ll decide where to go...” wrote Dr. Seuss.

Enjoy being outside with your family in Hattiesburg this fall!

Mary C. Fairley is a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi. She is a retired Medical Technologist. Mary is a devoted wife and mother. Her favorite role is grandmother. Mary is an avid baseball, performance dance, and soccer fan.

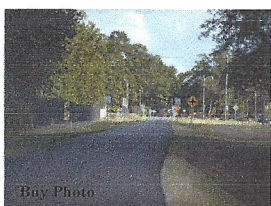


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Stretch of Longleaf Trace to get new lighting

Haskel Burns , American Staff Writer 5:06 p.m. CDT October 21, 2016



(Photo: Susan Broadbridge/Hattiesburg American)

The new 2-mile stretch of the Longleaf Trace running east of U.S. 49 to downtown Hattiesburg has seen its share of pedestrian traffic since opening this summer, but so far has been lacking one important amenity: lighting.

A Leadership Pinebelt-founded project to remedy that, known as Lighting Longleaf, recently got a financial boost thanks to contributions from officials with Forrest County and the City of Hattiesburg.

"We know that the Longleaf Trace is such a huge part of Hattiesburg, and with the new extension we knew that safety would be paramount," Leadership Pinebelt member Logan Grubbs said. "With Hutchinson right there and Hattiesburg High in the middle, a lot of kids use it after school. And the earlier it gets darker as we get into winter time, the more we really need it to be lit for safety purposes."

The first contribution to the project — for which Leadership Pinebelt members have already raised \$20,000 — came Monday, when the Forrest County Board of Supervisors agreed to pitch in \$15,000 to help install lighting along the length of the path.

"We feel like it's a worthwhile cause, and it'll make the Trace safer," board president David Hogan said. "Not that it's not safe already, but this will make it that much safer."



HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

[Group works to light Longleaf Trace extension](#)

(<http://www.hattiesburgamerican.com/story/news/2016/08/06/group-works-light-longleaf-trace-extension/87915036/>)

The second boost came during Tuesday's meeting of Hattiesburg City Council, when council members voted 4-0 to execute an LED lighting proposal with Mississippi Power for a one-time cost of \$48,453 and a monthly cost of \$2,484.

Mississippi Power Co. workers will use 50-watt Colonial LED fixtures and 20-foot black aluminum poles for the project. The proposal recommends installing 10,000 feet of underground secondary in 2-inch conduit to serve 100 of the LED fixtures and 100 of the aluminum poles. Lights will be spaced 100 feet apart along the walking trail.

The monthly cost to the city includes \$9.51 for each pole and \$15.33 for each fixture.

"Any time we have good lighting, it makes people feel safe," Ward 4 Councilwoman Mary Dryden said. "And that is a wonderful addition to Hattiesburg, to have the Trace extend all the way to downtown, and to join USM to downtown. It's being used often ... so it needs to be well-lit, so that people don't have to worry about what's happening in the dark at night."

Mayor Johnny DuPree said Leadership Pinebelt's contribution will help pay for about 50 percent of the city's cost of the project, with the other half hopefully donated by another entity.

"We'll find out about that next week," he said. "But that would allow us to do some other things like put call boxes up. Oftentimes people go and exercise, and (if) they have some medical condition, and they'll have the call boxes so they can use that. And the lighting will just increase the opportunities for people who may be a little bit skittish about walking (at night)."

Once the project is complete, the Longleaf Trace will have lighting from Hattiesburg all the way to Prentiss.

Stretch of Longleaf Trace to get new lighting

"People can go any time of the day or any time of the night, and walk with the assurance that they can be safe," DuPree said. "There's some areas that are not lighted, but those that are lit in the city of Hattiesburg, going all the way to Chain Park, will have lights."

Dryden said citizens also can contribute to the trace by helping to keep litter off the road.

"When you see litter there on (West) Fourth Street, when you're going through this most recent section, it's a little discouraging after we've tried so hard to create something that's beautiful and usable," she said.

Leadership Pinebelt officials are striving to raise an additional \$5,000 for Lighting Longleaf, and will continue to hold fundraisers and accept donations for the project. Interested parties can purchase lightpole sponsorships for \$1,500 each, which guarantees an individual or business name on the pole for 10 years.

"We're hoping to have at least (\$25,000) raised by the start of the year, and hopefully more," Grubbs said.

To contribute

Leadership Pine Belt officials are still conducting fundraisers and accepting donations for the Lighting Longleaf project. To contribute to the project, purchase a lightpole sponsorship, or get more information, visit www.facebook.com/lightinglongleaf (<http://www.facebook.com/lightinglongleaf>).

Read or Share this story: <http://hatne.ws/2eWrvdE>



Longleaf Trace Reviews

A Great Trail



By [billcal](#) in October, 2016

We rode this trail from the University trailhead away from the city. It doesn't take long to realize why this is a Hall of Fame Trail. Wide, well-maintained, and excellent support facilities make this a pleasure to ride upon. One of the top 5 trails I've been on. A great positive for this area.

Great scenery, fun ride



By [your leaf man](#) in October, 2016

A nice day for a nice ride!



By [jlogan107](#) in October, 2016

Rode the trail from the Hattiesburg trailhead at USM to Prentiss and back on September 29, 2016. The weather was great! First cold front of the fall and the temps were in the low 70's to low 80's.

I agree with pretty much everything that has been said. This is an excellent trail and nicely maintained! There are restrooms and water stops with soft drink machines all along the way. There is also a Ward's Hamburgers right off the trail near Bassfield if you need some lunch.

Since it was a Thursday, there weren't a lot of people out using the trail, and from Sumrall to the end at Prentiss, I think I saw perhaps 4 or 5 people.

There are long stretches of straight runs, but very subtle changes in elevation. Between Bassfield and Prentiss, the trail showed signs of little use with leaves and limbs on the asphalt, but nothing that would hinder you at all.

I did see six deer at different spots around Carson. One person spoke of being harassed by dogs, but I never had any problems. There are several bridges between Carson and Prentiss which help break up the monotony at times. The asphalt between Hattiesburg and Sumrall is showing signs of wear and patches are visible in areas.

Overall, an outstanding trail! It is a tough ride to do all 82 miles round trip, but as long as you stay hydrated, carry snacks and pick a nice day, it can make for a nice day out. Just know your limits and know when to turn around if you need to.

great trail!



By [katuvball](#) in August, 2016

Lots of places to stop and use the restroom as well as fill up your water bottle. There are also vending machines and a lot of shaded spots to sit and rest. Great job with the trail. Nice to grind out some miles without the sun baking you.

The Mississippi Queen



By [koldtoess](#) in May, 2016

I started my ride at the northern terminus, Prentiss, where there is a very nice shaded trailhead/mini-park with restrooms (opened at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday). After a couple of miles under a nice overcast sky, I took the 1 ½ mile paved spur (grades up to 15%) that led to Jeff Davis Lake. This would be a great place to bikepack camp and fish or just to break. Upon returning to the Longleaf, I found the mostly shaded trail winding itself above the creeks, around horse trails, through small towns and among the sunken rail beds of southern MS. I took a break at the Sumrall station where there is a large covered pavilion and vending, typical at most town stations, so bring dollar bills. I continued (40 miles) until I met my wife parked at the Jackson Road Station & Dog Park (1 of 3 parking areas at Jackson Rd.) which was nice but not suitable for picnicking due to dog smells. We began the last 5 miles of the trail to the SMU Gateway by yo-yo'ing 10 miles. This section of the Longleaf became more populated and urban with a trail bridge over I-59 and two picturesque RR tunnels. Near the south trailhead, there is a snow cone stand up the large wooded stairs. Great treat on a hot day, but you will have to bring your own "sweetener". We rode our last 5 miles in a roaring thunderstorm that made the trek more memorable, lonelier and wetter. I thought the trail was slightly shy of scenic overlooks, unique local spots and creek crossings but always felt safe while riding and only encountered two small snakes. I love, love and love the "Grand Lady of the South" and MS cyclists! Over this weekend, we stayed in Hattiesburg at the Meador Homestead B&B (bike accessible, ~ 1 ½ miles, from the trail) with Mother Dean for an unbelievable, southern rustic experience.

Jealous from PA



By [carolalexander](#) in March, 2016

Spent six days in this area. Had the privilege of pedaling this trail from the university. It is fantastic, well marked, and lots of bathrooms and break areas. There was even a multi-level deck overlooking a swampy area loaded with turtles. The locals have really invested big bucks making this one of the best "Hall of Famer" we ever pedaled. You can be very proud of it! I especially like the no littering sign. "If you see litter - pick it up"

Best trail to ride



By [bdabing69](#) in January, 2016

I have ridden this trail several times. Rode the whole thing back in December. On Jan.16 Me and a buddy rode from Sumrall to Bassfield. Great ride, nice hills. The trail is kept very clean and smooth. Will be back with my road bike soon.

great ride



By [jcolema7](#) in November, 2015

Rode on a 65degree cloudy day, the ride was great! A little bumpy in some spots but relatively flat w/moderate incline, decline. Very scenic w/mile markers and plenty of rest areas.

Inline Review



By [britte.lowther](#) in November, 2015

4.5 star experience for inline skating (my favorite is Courtney Campbell in Clearwater so can't give 5). This trail pretty smooth, beautiful, well maintained, and long. The first mile eve seems like it is lit.

LLT Century Ride



By [tslaw](#) in November, 2015

I rode the Tanglefoot Trail recently and thought it was great. I still like the LLT better than any place I've ever ridden.

My only ride on the Tanglefoot was with my BIL who rides it several times a month. I invited him to do our century ride on the LLT on November 8, 2015 as his intro to LLT cycling. We completed the ride with several hours of light rain and leaves and twigs strewn everywhere due to the previous days' storms. In spite of the adverse conditions, we loved it.

It was a wonderful day, even with a flat that made me ride the last 5 miles in the rain and dark! (Leave a little safety factor for emergency stops - or learn how to ride faster :))

One of the Best Rails to Trails



By [OldTerry](#) in September, 2015

On September 16, my wife and I rode the trail out from Hattiesburg for about 16 miles and then rode back. Back in 2005 we rode the entire trail and have always wanted to return and ride again. This trail is one of the top trails in the country. It is clean, wide and scenic without a great danger from road traffic. Our ride began about 9:00AM and was picture perfect. The Tanglefoot trail in MS is also a good trail but the Longleaf Trace is much better.

LLT Round Trip



By [tslaw](#) in September, 2015

On Thursday, September 10, 2015, a friend and I met in Prentiss and rode the Trace to Hattiesburg and back to Prentiss. What a wonderful place to ride. Overall the condition of the Trace wasn't perfect due to the time of year and weather (lots of wind and a little rain)- lots of twigs, leaves, and pine cones littered the surface. This was a minor price to pay for the canopy provided by the trees. We picked our way through the debris easily without incident. The rest stations and the scenic overlooks made for an enjoyable ride. One complaint is that the three vending machines we tried either were empty, not working, or would only except exact change, but the water fountains we tried all worked.

I have enjoyed riding shorter rides on the Trace from Hattiesburg when I visit my daughter there and am thrilled that we have a such a great place to bike in Mississippi. One thing to look out for is pedestrian traffic between Jackson Station and USM. It can be a moving obstacle course. The bikers seem to know trail etiquette, but walkers are unpredictable. You should slow and be prepared to stop any time you see more than two walkers in a group.

I look forward to returning to the best place to ride in Mississippi. I plan to try the Tanglefoot Trail in the next few weeks - hope it is just as awesome.

Sweet Day



By [howlin](#) in May, 2015

Rode from Prentiss to Bassfield and back, nice trip!
Trail is in great shape, rest stops were clean and everything worked, couldn't ask for more.

A True Hall of Fame Trail



By [mathteacher45](#) in April, 2015

We drove over 500 miles from central FL, in early April, just to ride this trail and it was well worth it. The trail is well-maintained, mostly shady (in the morning), flat, tranquil, rural. We rode from University of Southern MS north to Prentiss. The farther north you go, the more rural it gets. The scenery is beautiful and there was not much traffic on the trail during the week. The trail is well-marked and there were a few towns along the way where you could get food and drink. It's one of the most beautiful trails I have ridden.

Great ride



By [gbigoness](#) in March, 2015

We started at the trail head in Hattiesburg rode out to mile marker 15 and back. Nice ride.

longleaf



By [gbigoness](#) in March, 2015

Very nice, we bike about 24 miles near Hattiesburg.

Great trail!



By [trail53link](#) in March, 2015

I can see why it's in the Hall of Fame. I can think of nothing bad to say about it. Rode the entire trail out and back and had two great days.

Financial Status Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2016 (Unaudited)

Revenues (FY 15-16)

Tax Revenue	\$ 379,690.00
Permits	\$ 415.00
Donations	\$ 12,759.00
Memorial/Sponsorships/Commission	\$ 23,346.00
Bike Shop Revenues	\$ 13,905.00
Friends Memberships/Advertisements	\$ 1,820.00
Grant Dept. Wildlife/Fish	\$ 49,227.00
Federal Grant	\$ 8,441.00
Insurance Claims	\$ 4,935.00

Directed Donations

Intersection Safety	\$ 10,000.00
Ronnie Shows Nature Center	\$ 5,000.00
Other	\$ 5,784.00
Total Revenue	\$ 515,323.00

Expenditures (FY 15-16)

Personal Services	\$ 238,110.00
Contractual Services	\$ 103,001.00
Consumable Supplies	\$ 55,846.00
Debt Services	\$ 14,332.00
Grants	\$ 0.00
Capital Outlay	\$ 94,326.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 505,615.00

Assets

Capital	\$ 3,816,656.00 (Sept. 30, 2015)
Checking	\$ 144,573.00
Due From Others	\$ 0.00
Less Restricted Funds	(\$ 13,713.00)
Cash Available (unrestricted)	\$ 130,860.00
Total Assets	\$ 144,573.00

Liabilities (Financial)

Accounts Payable	\$ 15,229.00
Long-term liability	\$ 54,568.00
Total Liabilities	\$ 82,628.00