



ARKANSAS
OFFICE OF
OUTDOOR RECREATION

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MAY 2024



With a passion for outdoors, [Eddyline Kayaks](#) manufactures the highest quality lightweight touring kayaks for sea kayaking, open water, recreational kayaking and fishing. Years of design innovation - from superior hull design to the use of aerospace technology to high-performance thermoplastic - go into every Eddyline touring kayak. Founded by legendary designer Tom Derrer in 1971, today Eddyline Kayaks is majority management-owned and operated.

While it has a world-class production facility in Queretaro, Mexico, in 2023 Eddyline relocated to Siloam Springs, AR near several world-class kayak parks. This central location helps Eddyline improve its distribution throughout North America.

Alex and Jonathan de la Fuente of [Hightag](#) based in Arkansas, joined 15 other outdoor recreation startups graduating this week from [Embark](#), a national accelerator program hosted by Founded Outdoors and REI Path Ahead Ventures that provides entrepreneurs of color the resources to launch their businesses.

Hightag gives mountain bikers, skiers and other athletes the power to automatically capture photos and videos of themselves in-action. The company—along with [all the founders from this year's Embark program](#)—were hosted by REI for a graduation ceremony on April 19, 2024 in Beaverton, Oregon.

The Hightag founders were first introduced to the Embark program at [Plug and Play's](#) Innovation in Outdoor Recreation Showcase, hosted in Bentonville in 2022. The event included a panel discussion that featured entrepreneurs and investors in the outdoor recreation industry. Among them were Alex de la Fuente, Chief Executive Officer of Hightag, and Dan Kihanya, Director of REI Path Ahead Ventures.

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State Grants

At the annual Office of Outdoor Recreation grant presentation on March 27, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism and Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders awarded \$4.34 million in Outdoor Recreation Grants to projects within 29 counties across the state. The grants fall into two categories: Facilities for Underdeveloped Neighborhoods (FUN) Park grants and matching grants.

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We are in the midst of crafting a new Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which is our guiding light for the work we do and the areas of focus we look to achieve. This include advancements to the outdoor grant program. We will take steps in the coming months to revamp our grant program's procedures to better serve our constituents and ensure a more streamlined and efficient process for our staff. This involves assessing the entire grant cycle process, including the requirement for site visits.

We have implemented a new grant management software that was long overdue and enables applicants to apply online. The online application process was launched on May 1, along with a video with instructions on how to apply. As always, applications will be due by the last Friday in August.

The application site is live now at our [grants page at ArkansasGoOutdoors.com](#). We are committed to ensuring a smooth transition and facilitating a seamless experience for all applicants and stakeholders involved. You can also find more detailed information regarding the revised grant program on the grants page. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at 501-682-6829.

Federal Grants

The 2024 Recreational Trails Grant applications are now open. This program, administered by the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), provides funding to local project sponsors (public and private/nonprofit agencies) to construct and maintain motorized and non-motorized recreational trails and trail support facilities. The ARDOT works closely with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to administer this Program. Project sponsors apply for program funds through a competitive process with the applications being reviewed by the Arkansas Recreational Trails Advisory Committee. The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a reimbursement-type grant program. The program provides for an 80% federal share and 20% non-federal share for each project. The main priority in allocating funding is for the construction of new trails and for major maintenance of existing trails. Application deadline is 4 p.m., Friday, May 31, 2024.

[APPLY HERE >](#)

The 2024 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is now open. TAP is a reimbursement-type grant program providing for an 80% federal share with a 20% match required from the eligible sponsor. Types of projects eligible under TAP pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity.

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NWACC Launches New Trail Technician Program

Northwest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville recently received approval from the Arkansas Legislative Council and Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board to offer a new Trail Technician program in fall of 2024 and further renovate the college's previous physical plant into a trail construction lab. Earlier this year, the NWACC Foundation received an \$8 million grant from the Walton Family Charitable Support Foundation to support the creation of the trails program and facility renovation.

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OFFICE NEWS

- Applications for the next Greenhouse Outdoor Recreation Program (GORP) Cohort will open in mid-June. GORP offers a 12-week program with comprehensive support, including workshops, mentorship, consulting, co-working space, network connections, up to \$15K per company of non-dilutive funding, product/service design and an intern from the Venture Intern Program. Admittance into the GORP Cohort is competitive and offered twice a year. Companies accepted into the Cohort will be expected to commit an average of 15 hours per week to the program and their businesses. Residents from both Northwest Arkansas and the broader Heartland region, as well as current University of Arkansas students, are eligible for the GORP program.
- The Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation has a new [LinkedIn page](#).
- The Arkansas OOR also has a new website address. Visit ArkansasGoOutdoors.com to stay up-to-date on the state's outdoor recreation economy.
- The Office of Outdoor Recreation will host several regional session throughout the rest of the year. These sessions serve two purposes – resource sharing through short presentations on resources available to communities and industry and information gathering with public input and comments on what resources are being utilized and/or what do they need more of. Examples of resource sharing include: OOR infrastructure grants, AGFC marine fuel tax program and water trails partnership, AGFC shooting sports development, AEDC industry incentives and community development info, University of Arkansas undergrad and masters programs. Public input is sought from community member such as advocacy groups like the Arkansas Canoe Club, local trail chapters, mayors, county judges and chambers of commerce as well as industry members like bike shop owners, boat manufacturers, river guides, duck lodges, outfitters and aspiring outdoor recreation entrepreneurs.

Information from the sessions will be evaluated and used to implement plans for 2025. Regional session dates are:

- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., June 5, UA Hembree Room at Walker Hall, Fayetteville
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., July 30, Searcy County Library, Marshall
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Oct. 2, AGFC Nature Center, Jonesboro
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Nov. 19, Community Center, Monticello

— The Office of Outdoor Recreation, Runway Group and the University of Arkansas are partnering to host an Arkansas brands booth at [Outdoor Retailer](#) in Salt Lake City, Utah on June 17-19. Outdoor Retailer is the leading business-to-business outdoor sports show where industry brands, retailers, reps, designers, suppliers and leaders gather. Held twice a year in June and November, Outdoor Retailer showcases the largest collection of innovative and unique gear, apparel, footwear, hardgoods and accessories. And with conferences, training sessions, leadership seminars and educational opportunities, the show is a must-attend event.

— The Office of Outdoor Recreation and Runway Group represented Arkansas at the Sea Otter Classic in Monterey, California in April. The event is a premier cycling festival where individuals can test ride the latest gear from 1,000-plus bike brands and converse with cycling legends at the Sea Otter Expo. It includes 300-plus races and untimed recreational rides.



Sea Otter Classic in Monterey, California

— The Office of Outdoor Recreation attended the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Executive Forum on Tuesday, May 7. The event was the outdoor recreation industry's first-ever, cross-segment CEO-level Forum in Washington, D.C. This is part of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's ongoing efforts to uniquely convene industry leaders and government officials to provide a space for thought-leadership. The goal is to raise awareness about the industry's greatest challenges and opportunities and drive collective strategies forward. The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable awarded **Governor Sanders the Outdoor Recreation Leadership Award** for her leadership to promote and sustain Arkansas' outdoor recreation economy. This award recognizes innovative leadership from elected officials who prioritize and integrate outdoor recreation for the benefit of communities, economies, and citizens alike.

— If you're an outdoor recreation company in Arkansas and interested in joining the World Trade Center of Arkansas' trade mission to Canada contact Mackenzie Mollner at mmmollne@uark.edu. The trade mission to Ontario is set for June 16-23 and is an excellent opportunity for businesses eager to explore and expand their reach in the Canadian market.

During this trade mission, attendees will have the chance to participate in the **Collision Toronto Tech Conferences**, an event celebrated for its focus on emerging technologies across a broad spectrum of industries. The conference promises insightful discussions on innovations that redefine our lifestyle, workplace, and leisure activities.

— Terrance Youngblood has been named the new Outdoor Recreation Grants Program Director. He comes to ORGP from the Arkansas Arts Council and brings expertise in grant administration, research and analysis, and high-level strategic thinking, which will undoubtedly contribute to our continued success and growth. He will begin his new position on May 13.



OPPORTUNITY ZONES

— Arkansas State Parks seeks to lease the old Pinnacle Mountain State Park visitor center, which lies within a Natural State Initiative Opportunity Zone.

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If you're interested in the opportunity, please reach out to Arkansas State Parks or the Office of Outdoor Recreation.





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The Office of Outdoor Recreation works to grow and support the outdoor recreation economy at the state level through collaboration with outdoor businesses, local communities and stakeholders.



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