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MAY 2025



Letter from the Director

After three and a half years of hard work, dedication and collaboration, I'm excited and proud to announce that Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders officially signed into law HB1607 – an act to create the Office of Outdoor Recreation (OOR) within the Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism. The OOR previously existed as an Executive Order.

This solidifies the Office in state law, ensuring that outdoor recreation remains a cornerstone of Arkansas' economy, communities, and way of life. This milestone wouldn't have been possible without the incredible support of our OOR Advisory Board, industry partners, outdoor enthusiasts, and so many others who have championed this effort from the start. Your passion and commitment have helped make Arkansas a leader in outdoor recreation, and we couldn't be more grateful. The future of outdoor recreation in Arkansas is bright, and we're just getting started!

Here's to continuing our work to enhance access, grow the outdoor economy, and ensure that our natural spaces thrive for generations to come.

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INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT

Morii Outdoor

Arkansas' Outdoor Economy Ignites Success Stories Like Morri Outdoor
 Entrepreneurs and startup brands like Collin Whittington of Morri Outdoor are thriving as Arkansas invests in its outdoor recreation sector. In less than a year, Whittington has taken his Coffee Campfire Starter product from a prototype to retail stores with support from initiatives like the Greenhouse Outdoor Recreation Program (GORP), the Outdoor Economy Summit, and Arkansas State Parks.

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GRANT UPDATES

Big Check Day!
 On March 6 the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism awarded \$3.85 million in Outdoor Recreation Grants to Projects within 20 counties across Arkansas. The grants fall into two categories: Facilities for Underdeveloped Neighborhood (FUN) Park grants and matching grants.

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Grant Applications Open

- The Great Strides Program Trails for Life grant application opened on March 10 and will close on June 30. [Apply here.](#)
- The Outdoor Recreation Grants Program FUN Park and Matching Grants opened on May 1 and will close on August 29. [Apply here](#) on the Office of Outdoor Recreation website.



Helena Miles Club

Whether you’ve called the Helena region home for years or you’re new to town, the Helena Miles Club is your invitation to get outside and move. This community-driven group encourages people of all fitness levels to walk, run, or bike their way through the beauty of the Delta — no pressure, just good company and great scenery. It’s not about speed or distance; it’s about showing up. Group meetups are flexible and collaborative, giving members a chance to explore local trails, connect with community members, and build healthy habits along the way. This could be a good model to think about starting in your own community!

[LEARN MORE HERE >](#)

Arkansas Outdoor Economy Summit

State leaders, industry experts, and local stakeholders gathered at the second Arkansas Outdoor Economy Summit in Bentonville on Feb. 23-24 to discuss the future of the state’s outdoor recreation industries and unveil key initiatives to drive continued growth. Summit discussions centered on the significant economic impact of outdoor recreation in the state, emphasizing its role in job creation, business growth, and infrastructure development. Sessions highlighted the importance of strategic investments in trail systems, private and public land project partnerships, and workforce training to sustain and enhance current momentum. Additionally, the summit addressed the need for improved accessibility to outdoor spaces, ensuring inclusivity for all residents and visitors. Environmental stewardship was also a key theme, focusing on conservation and sustainable practices to preserve Arkansas’ natural beauty for future generations.

[CHECK OUT THE HIGHLIGHTS>](#)

GENERAL UPDATES

Economic Impact Study Insights

Outdoor recreation is more than a lifestyle in Arkansas — it's a powerful economic driver. According to a newly released [study](#), the sector contributes \$7.3 billion in annual economic impact, supports over 68,000 jobs, and generates more than \$2.2 billion in wages across the state. OOR is working to publish a full suite of interactive tools, charts and lists on its website in the coming weeks. Stay tuned.

SCORP Roadmap

A key moment during the second Outdoor Economy Summit held Feb. 23-24 in Bentonville was the unveiling of the 2025-2030 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), a five-year strategic roadmap aimed at expanding and improving outdoor recreation opportunities in The Natural State. The plan prioritizes infrastructure investments, environmental stewardship, and improved accessibility and workforce development to ensure long-term success for Arkansas' outdoor economy. A guiding document for policymakers and industry leaders, the SCORP is also a required component for securing federal grant funding. See the full SCORP document [HERE](#).

Bella Vista and Mena Bike Parks Announced

In February, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed new legislation paving the way for lift-access downhill mountain bike parks in Arkansas. The legislation, sponsored by Senate President Bart Hester and Representative John Maddox, will help cement Arkansas' reputation as a premier destination for mountain biking enthusiasts. Read more [HERE](#).



GENERAL UPDATES

Arkansas Global Cycling Accelerator Launches

The Arkansas Global Cycling Accelerator (GCA) officially launched its inaugural 10-week program in Bentonville on Feb. 24, welcoming a dynamic first cohort of 10 startups from North America, Europe and Asia.

Focused on advancing innovation in cycling-related technology, the GCA connects participants with top-tier mentors, investors and industry leaders to fast-track growth and strategic partnerships.

Led by seasoned cycling entrepreneurs, this first-of-its-kind program in Arkansas is positioning the state as a hub for cycling innovation. Meet the 2025 GCA Cohort [HERE](#).

Newest GORP Cohort

The [Greenhouse Outdoor Recreation Program](#) launched the seventh cohort of its business incubation program with eight participating companies.

GORP is the University of Arkansas' flagship business incubation program that supports outdoor startups with workshop training, team mentoring, and dedicated product/service development to help them scale globally.

The 12-week program began in January and ran through April 8. The cohort celebrated completion of the program with Demo Night on April 15 at the Meteor Guitar Gallery in Bentonville. Learn more about the cohort businesses [HERE](#).



GENERAL UPDATES

Natural State Initiative Opportunity Zones

The Natural State Initiative Economic Opportunity Zones encourage investment and enhance the visitor experience in four Arkansas State Parks: Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Petit Jean State Park, Pinnacle Mountain State Park and Queen Wilhelmina State Park. The NSI Opportunity Zones establish sales and income tax credits to businesses opening or expanding in these areas.

For outdoor recreation businesses, this is a chance to grow while benefiting from financial advantages designed to stimulate development in these communities. By investing in these Opportunity Zones, you're not only supporting your business' success but also helping to create jobs, attract tourism, and strengthen Arkansas' outdoor economy. Contact the Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation to learn how your business can take advantage of these zones. Learn more [HERE](#).

GORP Around The State

The GORP Around the State program expands outreach and resources to outdoor-focused entrepreneurs across Arkansas. The program offers workshops, mentorship, and resources tailored to the needs of local startups in outdoor recreation. By visiting various communities, GORP helps startups statewide gain insights and support in the outdoor recreation sector, fostering connections and growth for Arkansas' outdoor economy. Learn more [HERE](#).

Join GORP Around the State at an upcoming session:

[Mena](#) - June 26

[Morrilton](#) - June 26

[North Little Rock](#) - June 27

[Helena](#) - June 28



ARKANSAS
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1 Capitol Mall | Little Rock, AR 72201

501-682-6829

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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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