

SEPTEMBER 2013

Arkansas HIGHWAYS

A PUBLICATION OF THE ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY & TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT | **MAGAZINE**

Yesterday's Highways

EARLY AUTOMOBILE
TRAVEL AND THE
CULTURE THAT FOLLOWED

TRAVELING
Crowley's Ridge
Parkway

Assessing the
Environment
with AHTD's
DR. LANGSTON

Opening the New
DISTRICT FOUR
Headquarters



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

With the September issue of *Arkansas Highways* magazine in hand, it's hard to believe that the summer months have slipped away. Motorists have returned from summer vacations or visiting relatives and are now getting back to the fall routine and school schedules.

It was this time last year that the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department celebrated "Spirit Day" with our employees supporting their favorite school or sports teams. The day was great fun as we celebrated our favorite teams with our peers at work. It was a big success and we look forward to this year's event. Just as we welcome the fall season and celebrate our school spirit, let's take a few minutes to remember another team that is part of our lives each day, the AHTD team.

Not only is the work our employees do appreciated, keep in mind the importance of the job duties we carry out and how many motorists in Arkansas depend on us to do our job well.

At any given moment, there are thousands of vehicles traveling on Arkansas' highways. And with school now underway, add school buses to the mix taking our children to and from classes. Providing all of these travelers with well maintained, safe highways is our responsibility and job number one.

Safety is always a priority at the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department. It's reflected in our mission statement to provide a "safe, efficient, aesthetically pleasing and environmentally sound transportation system for our users." Our efforts to put safety first are a challenge, yet our goal of meeting that challenge can be seen all around us. It's the reason we are involved with the national strategic highway safety plan called "Toward Zero Deaths." On our roadways, motorists are noticing our new cable median barriers as they spring up along our divided highways across the State. Nationally, we participate in the annual Work Zone Safety Week with many of our fellow Departments of Transportation to remind motorists of the importance of driving safely through work areas. These and many other programs underscore how important a safe, well maintained highway system is to the motoring public.

Our highways are safer today because of our commitment to our job responsibilities. They are safer because of the good job each of us does individually and as a team every day at the AHTD. Let's continue to work hard to support each other and to work together in the true spirit of teamwork. And as we did last year at this time, let's enjoy another successful Spirit Day to recognize our successes and the service we provide to all of the motorists on Arkansas' highways.



A group from District Two celebrating Spirit Day on October 26, 2012.



Scott E. Bennett

Scott E. Bennett
Director of Highways and Transportation

FRONT COVER:
Vintage Esso Gas Station
U.S. Highway 88
Mena, Arkansas

BACK COVER:
Vintage Lake Atkins Sign
U.S. Highway 64
Atkins, Arkansas

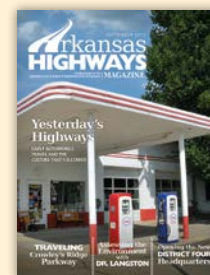
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BY DAVID NILLES

EARLY
Automobile Travel
AND THE CULTURE THAT
FOLLOWED

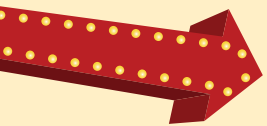


Without a doubt, the arrival of the automobile forever changed the way people travel across our country. A growing system of highways began to be built at the turn of the century making it possible for people to travel where they wanted, when they wanted.

(continued on page 6)

(Right) The Climber Motor Corporation of Little Rock produced cars and trucks in the 1920s that could perform on paved highways as well as unpaved roads, making Climbers similar to today's SUV.

(Below) The 1948 Studebaker Showroom in Mena is an outstanding example of Art Moderne architecture. Today the building serves as a "showroom" for antique cars.



A LOOK AT HIGHWAY CULTURE IN ARKANSAS

The State Highway Department in Arkansas built 93 miles of permanent roads in 1913 and 1914. Today, our highway system totals over 16,000 miles. Over the years in between, commercial development has grown right along with the highway system. With the automobile boom, there came a need for travelers to have a place to stop for gas, to eat a meal or to spend the night as they traveled. As a result gas stations, restaurants and motels sprang up along new highways. Today, Interstate highways and bypasses around larger cities have taken many travelers off of some of those early two-lane highways. Even so, still standing are some of the more interesting roadside attractions and buildings constructed between the 1930s and the 1960s. What follows is a look at some of the more interesting landmarks of that era that have survived along our Arkansas highways.

There were 3,596 registered passenger vehicles in Arkansas in 1913, a number that was growing rapidly. Arkansas had a hand in putting some of those automobiles on the road with its own automobile manufacturing company, the **Climber Motor Corporation**. Located in Little Rock, the goal of the Climber Corporation was to produce cars and trucks that could perform on well-paved highways in eastern Arkansas but also handle unimproved roads found in the Ozark Mountains. Climbers were similar to today's SUV. To prove their durability, a Climber was

TODAY'S INTERSTATES

HAVE TAKEN MANY TRAVELERS OFF OF THE EARLY TWO-LANE HIGHWAYS. EVEN SO, SOME OF THE MORE INTERESTING ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS OF *Yesterday's Highways* ARE STILL STANDING TODAY.

once driven up the front steps of the State Capitol Building in Little Rock. The company began production in 1919 and could build, on average, five cars a day. Unfortunately, a lack of parts and adequate capital slowed production and forced the company to close in 1924. Even so, the company produced 200 cars and about 75 trucks in its heyday. Two Climbers are known to still exist today. Both are a part of the collection of classic cars at the Museum of Automobiles located on Petit Jean Mountain. The factory where the vehicles were produced still stands at 1823 East 17th Street.

New automobiles moved from the factory to the showroom in a hurry. Judging from the architecture of some of those early showrooms, many car dealerships were as impressive as the cars for sale inside. A perfect example can be found in Mena. With its curved corners and glass-block windows, the **1948 Studebaker Showroom** was an outstanding example of Art Moderne architecture. The showroom still stands today at



519 Port Arthur. The Studebaker Showroom served as a car dealership until 1962. Since that time it has been used as an auto garage, dry cleaners, machine shop, and restaurant. The present owners have taken great care to restore the building to its original 1948 appearance. Today the Studebaker Showroom serves as a "showroom" for antique cars. One of those is a Studebaker truck, which was sold from the dealership in 1950 and now serves as a reminder of days gone by.

More automobiles on the road meant the Highway Department had to meet the growing needs of motorists. Completion of highways was vital to local towns across the State. In Blytheville, one can still find a tribute to the early days of road construction. **Blytheville's**

Highway 61 Arch was erected in 1924 to mark completion of the paving of the first highway through Mississippi County. Many Arkansans utilized Highway 61 to travel to St. Louis before Interstate 55 was built so it was a heavily traveled, well-known highway. The concrete and limestone arch still stands today on Highway 61 at the Missouri State line.

Automobiles weren't the only means of traveling the nation's growing system of highways. Commercial bus lines flourished. Greyhound Bus Line stations dotted highways all across the country. A few miles down Highway 61 from the arch is a restored **Greyhound Bus Station** built in 1937. The Moderne styling of Blytheville's station is distinctive. It was designed by Noland

(Left) The Moderne styling of the Greyhound Bus Station in Blytheville is distinctive. There were a dozen of this style station built but this is one of only three of this kind left in existence.

(Below) Blytheville's Highway 61 Arch was erected in 1924 and still stands today at the Missouri State line.



Van Powell. There were a dozen of this style station built but this is one of only three of this kind left in existence. It now houses a local Visitors Center. In April of this year, an exhibit featuring 60 rare, antique coach buses and motor home conversions was held at the station. Event organizer Tom McNally said he chose the location because of its historical significance. The station is located at 109 N. 5th Street.

Roadside restaurants, motels and gas stations became some of the most common businesses to spring up along roadsides in Arkansas.

Diners and drive-ins became popular for motorists who wanted fast, inexpensive food as opposed to a sit-down meal as they traveled. With 23 million cars on the road, these quick meal stops became popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Many featured chrome and neon signs to attract motorists off the road.

(continued on page 8)



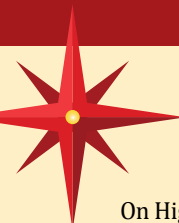
Butchie's Drive-In still operates today under the name Bailey's Dairy Treat.



The Fountain Motel in Hot Springs was built in the 1920s.



The Cotter Bridge on Highway 62B was built in 1930 to span the White River.



EAT, SLEEP AND REFUEL

On Highway 70 (534 Park Avenue) in Hot Springs, **Butchie's Drive-In** is still in operation serving up fast food for travelers just as it did in the 1950s. Butchie's was built around 1952 in an Art Moderne-style. The styling of the building was highlighted by the stucco exterior, streamlined façade, and neon lighting. Highway 70 was the main road between Little Rock and Hot Springs in those days and Butchie's stood to attract motorists entering the Spa City. Today it is known as **Bailey's Dairy Treat** and is still serving up delicious burgers to passing motorists.

Perhaps one of the most recognizable restaurants from days gone by is the **Mammoth Orange** at the intersection of Highways 46 and 365 in Redfield. This roadside café was built in 1965 by Earnestine Bradshaw. It was inspired by an Orange Julius stand in California where she worked in her youth. The Mammoth Orange was originally just the orange shaped building. Patrons ate in their cars or at the stools around the orange. Later, a cinder block building was added so that customers could eat inside.

Needless to say, gas stations were a necessity along the highways. A motorist could fill up the tank for 21 cents a gallon. In those days an attendant would fill up the tank and check under the hood as well. The city of Mena is home to an **Esso station** (see photo on front cover) that looks the same today as it did eighty years ago, right down to the big Esso sign. The station is located at the corner of Highway 88 (Mena Street) and Port Arthur and was constructed in 1928. It was restored by local businessman J.V. Brotherton.

THE NEED AROSE FOR MOTORISTS TO HAVE A PLACE TO STOP FOR GAS, TO EAT A MEAL OR TO SPEND THE NIGHT AS THEY TRAVELED.



The Mammoth Orange is a roadside café like no other.



Today the station houses a museum featuring a collection of classic cars and automotive memorabilia of the time.

Motorists on extended journeys needed somewhere to stay overnight. Many would pass up the larger hotels located in the heart of a city and choose a roadside motel along the highway instead. They were usually less expensive, had parking at the door and were located right on the chosen route. Tourist courts featured individual cabins often lined up in a semi-circle — while motels were built as a series of attached rooms usually in a one- or two-story configuration.

A perfect example of a roadside motel from that era is the **Fountain Motel** in Hot Springs. Still in operation today, the motel stands along Highway 7 near Oaklawn Park. The Fountain was built in the 1920s. Its architecture features unique free-standing guest rooms surrounding the motel's swimming pool. The walls of each building are made of stucco, both outside and in, with a thickness of 12 inches. Each room's casement windows swing out for ventilation. The motel includes a roadside café featuring booths and a counter with revolving stools. Though the café isn't currently in operation, all furniture, kitchen equipment and even the dishes are still there, waiting to be brought back to life by someone with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Though you don't see them along the roadsides often these days, drive-in movie theaters were popular in the 1950s and 1960s. Only three remain in Arkansas and the oldest is the **Kenda Drive-In** in Marshall. It was built in 1966 and has a 72-foot screen. The Razorback Drive-In, once located on Highway 10 in Little Rock, featured two screens — one on each end of the property.

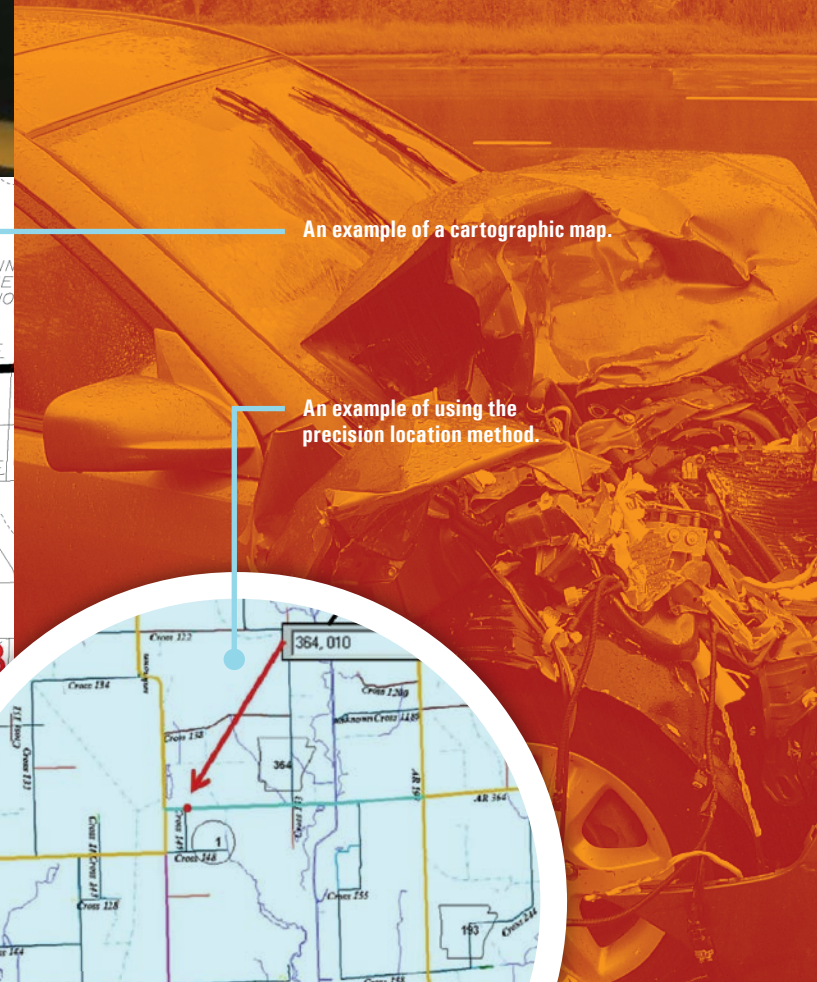


You can still watch a drive-in movie at The Kenda Theater in Marshall.

In addition to roadside attractions, Arkansas' highway system itself features a number of interesting structures... its bridges. Our highways are dotted with bridges that stand as architectural achievements from a past era as well.

The Cotter Bridge on Highway 62B near Cotter was built in 1930. Spanning the White River, the bridge is an excellent example of the Marsh Rainbow Arch construction technique in which steel arches were assembled on the ground and then lifted into place. The bridge was rehabilitated beginning in 2002 and was presented an "Excellence in Highway Design Award" from the Federal Highway Administration. The bridge has appeared in numerous publications over the years.

It is no surprise that many of the structures in this story appear on the National Register of Historic Places. Information on these buildings and many others in Arkansas can be found at www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com. Each is a monument to an era gone by and continues to stand as an important part of the highway culture found along Arkansas' highways. ■



An example of a cartographic map.

An example of using the precision location method.



IMPROVING CRASH DATA IMPROVES TRAFFIC SAFETY

BY ANDY BREWER

The 2013 Strategic Highway Safety Plan, which was approved by the Arkansas Highway Commission earlier this year, focuses on striving **"TOWARD ZERO DEATHS"** on our highways. To accomplish this, a data-driven approach is required to most effectively allocate resources to our most critical safety needs. Paramount to this effort is having accurate and timely crash data in order to identify safety improvements.

One of the most important pieces of crash data that is used by the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) to conduct safety evaluations is the location of crashes. Although the Arkansas State Police (ASP) is responsible for tracking all motor vehicle crashes on public roads reported by law enforcement agencies in the State*, the accuracy of those crash locations is the responsibility of the AHTD.

The State Highway System only accounts for approximately 16 percent of all miles of public roadways in Arkansas. Yet up to 80 percent of all fatal or serious injury crashes occur on that system. The AHTD currently verifies the locations of crashes on our system only. This responsibility is delegated to the Traffic Safety Section within the Planning and Research Division. As a result, in 2011,

which is the latest year crash data is available, the AHTD verified the locations of almost 37,000 reported crashes, or about 60 percent of all crashes reported statewide.

Fortunately, the number of crashes has generally declined in Arkansas in recent years. But there are still a large number of reports to be checked by the AHTD.

It is not uncommon for law enforcement to not completely enter the exact location of a crash, or to not locate the crash correctly at all. This is not always the fault of the officer, since the route/section/log mile of any given highway can change over time. This change can be due to instances the officer may not be aware, for example a new bypass in a local area. Although the AHTD has made improvements to the way our staff and law enforcement agencies locate crashes through better tools and training, there are still more improvements to be made. The following is a summary of how locating crashes has evolved over the years at the AHTD.

LOOKING BACK

In the 1970s, the AHTD was tasked by the State with the duties of verifying and analyzing crashes to identify locations on the State Highway System that required safety improvements. In Arkansas, crashes were located by county, route, section, and log mile. At the time, the AHTD used the Road Inventory Log and cartographic maps.

* Resulting in one or more fatality or injury, or resulting in total property damage in excess of \$1,000.

The Road Inventory Log consists of tabular information regarding the State Highway System. Each route (highway, county, or city route) that intersects the highway system has an assigned point (log mile) along the highway route. In addition to the route log mile information, there is also a log mile identified for all bridges along the highway. Other attributes such as functional classification, surface type, number of lanes, shoulder width, lane width, median width, and average daily traffic are also included in the Road Inventory information. Any person responsible for locating crashes was required to use this tabular Road Inventory Log.

ROAD INVENTORY LOG TABLES

To locate crashes, Route and Section (RAS) maps and City maps were used. RAS maps were developed for each of the 75 Arkansas counties and only showed

the State Highway System. The RAS maps have a beginning log mile and an ending log mile for each highway as well as a log mile for each bridge on the map. City Maps consist of individual city areas with named streets indicated. Some city maps have handwritten log mile information. In 1999, to replace the manual labeling of log miles on city maps, a Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) program was used to digitally place the log miles on the city maps. The maps continued to be used in conjunction with the Road Inventory Log to locate crashes.

These methods for crash location identification were used by the AHTD and other local and State law enforcement agencies from the 1970s to 2004. However, there were multiple problems with these methods.

- The tabular Road Inventory Data was difficult to read and often confused the user.
- Law enforcement officers were unfamiliar with the route, section and log mile terminology or unable to accurately interpolate log miles based on the maps provided.
- The maps and physical mile markers were subject to change at all times. Updated maps were not available to law enforcement agencies in a timely manner.
- All of the crash reports required verification by the AHTD crash locators to ensure each crash was accurately located on the State Highway System. This verification could take a significant amount of time which contributed to major delays when finalizing the annual statewide traffic records database.
- Inconsistencies existed among crash locators within and outside the AHTD.

(continued on page 12)

The locations of crashes for those years were not as accurate as they are today. However, given the knowledge and technology that was available at the time, faster and more reliable methods were simply not available.

In 2004, the AHTD started utilizing the highway Linear Referencing System (LRS) to aid in crash location. The AHTD crash locators were able to use a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) platform (GeoMedia) by overlaying the LRS on digital cartographic base maps and linking roadway centerline data with the "Precision Location" tool to retrieve a log mile. In conjunction with the LRS and base maps, the crash locators were also able to take advantage of Arkansas' 911 (emergency response service) address centerline GIS data layer. With this additional data layer, crash locators had the most up-to-date public road information. This improved the crash location accuracy. Although this method was extremely beneficial to the AHTD locators, the tool was not available to law enforcement officers. Therefore, implementation issues remained.

- All crash reports required verification by the AHTD crash locators to ensure each crash was accurately located on the State Highway System. This verification could take a significant amount of time which continued to cause major delays when finalizing the annual statewide traffic records database.
- Inconsistencies existed among crash locators within the AHTD.
- Outdated base maps were a problem.
- Each county had its own GIS project workspace. Each workspace took some time to reload. It became very time consuming when locating crashes in several counties.

With the LRS and GIS, the AHTD was getting better at verifying crash locations. However, law enforcement agencies were still struggling. In 2004, the AHTD purchased Global Positioning Systems (GPS) units for some law enforcement



Corporal Jeremy Watkins
Arkansas Highway Police

agencies to improve the crash location accuracy. After a period of testing, it was recognized that using GPS equipment was not going to be the solution to improve the accuracy of the crash location. There were several reasons why:

- Providing all law enforcement with the GPS equipment was cost prohibitive.
- There was a lack of training and understanding of the GPS field data collection requirements.
- There was a lack of understanding of why and how the crashes should be properly located with the GPS.

TODAY

In an effort to better equip law enforcement and the AHTD staff with a method to locate crashes accurately, the AHTD developed a tool in 2011 using Google Earth that incorporates GIS technology and the LRS. Called the Virtual Integrated Safety User Assisted Location Tool or (VISUAL-T), it displays a point every 100 feet along each highway that shows data such as county, route, section, log mile, and other roadway characteristics.

The VISUAL-T is now being used by the AHTD and at least 18 law enforcement agencies. The largest agency, Arkansas State Police, accounts for nearly 25 percent of all motor vehicle crash reports in Arkansas, or about 40 percent of crashes on the State Highway System. In 2011 and 2012, the AHTD staff in the Traffic Safety Section began an outreach effort to educate and train law enforcement agencies on the use of the VISUAL-T. Training and technical support for these agencies continues today.

There are many benefits to using the VISUAL-T compared to the previous method for locating crashes.

- Law enforcement officers can visually locate a crash in Google Earth and click on the point nearest to the crash site to obtain the most accurate route, section and log mile information. This eliminates the occurrence of an officer using a route name other than the officially signed highway route number and the need for the officer to interpolate log miles.
- In addition to the point data, city limits or jurisdiction boundaries are provided to assist law enforcement agencies and crash locators to accurately identify crash locations.
- All .kml files are updated every few months to account for route or roadway characteristic changes. They are downloadable from a secured the

AHTD File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site. Notifications of updated files are emailed to all the law enforcement agencies that are using the tool. This process significantly reduces the time to get the updated roadway information to the officers.

- Since all the crash locators are using the same files, inconsistencies among staff are reduced.
- Because the visual nature of the tool, there is very minimal training required.
- Because of ease of use, productivity by the AHTD crash locators has increased by approximately 10 to 20 percent.

Recent evaluations of crash reports completed by ASP in 2012 showed a

significant increase in location accuracy. As a result, it was decided that ASP crashes would not be actively verified by the AHTD staff, resulting in a reduced workload of about 40 percent. Crashes located by ASP troopers are now verified through periodic quality control checks.

FUTURE

Although the accuracy of crash locations on highways has increased in recent years, other data elements reported by Arkansas law enforcement have not. Items such as collision type or supplemental information due to blood tests are sometimes incomplete, missing, or inaccurate. Much of this can be attributed to the out-dated nature of motor vehicle data processing, which is a mix of paper and electronic formats involving many organizations. Further, crash data typically isn't finalized and available for use for about one year. Because of this, the ASP, in coordination with the AHTD, has started the eCrash project.

The eCrash system, which is being developed by the Center for Advanced Public Safety at the University of Alabama, has been completed for several other states in the country. The system will convert the entire crash reporting process into an all-electronic format. It will also allow the AHTD to incorporate the VISUAL-T into eCrash to allow officers to automatically enter crash location data without manual entry with just a click of the mouse.

The first phase of eCrash will be pilot testing of the system with ASP troopers later this year. It is expected that full implementation by ASP troopers will occur in 2014, with other agencies to phase in implementation over the next few years. This effort, along with future updates to the LRS including the addition of all public roads, will create a system that will provide accurate and timely information to allow the AHTD and others to make better decisions in order to improve roadway safety and get us a step closer Toward Zero Deaths. ■

DISTRICT 10

CONSTRUCTION



CORNER

Crews in Lawrence County are at work replacing the Highway 63 Bridge over the Black River. The \$39.2 million project is located at Black Rock and was awarded to Jensen Construction Company of Des Moines, Iowa, in November of 2012.

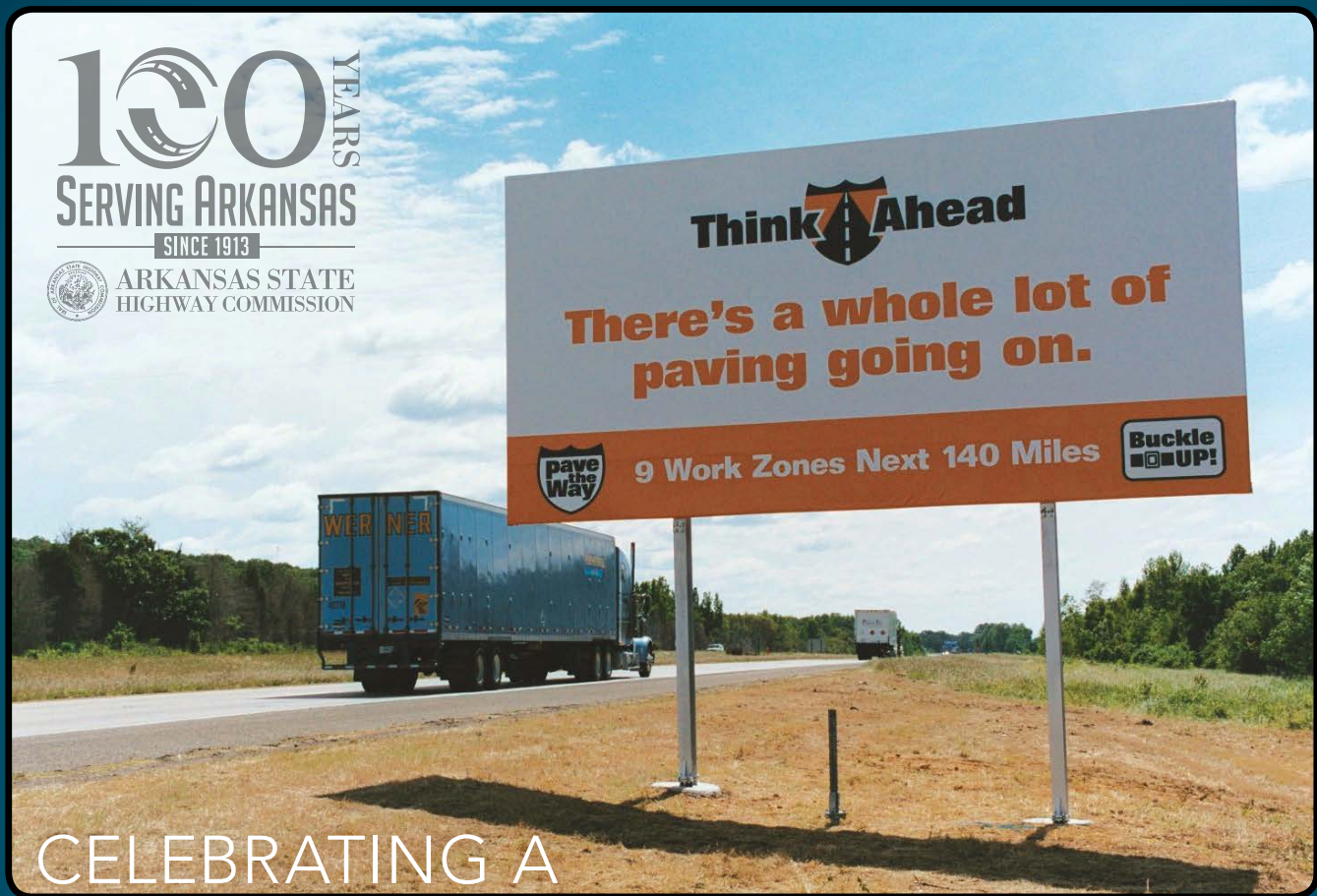
Construction began in February of this year. The new bridge is being built adjacent to the existing one. Crews are currently installing casings, drilling the shafts, setting rebar cages and pouring columns. When completed, the new plate girder bridge will be 2,592 feet in length.

The current bridge was constructed in 1949. It is the only one of its kind in Lawrence County and one of seven steel deck truss bridges left in Arkansas. The weight limit on the bridge was lowered in February of 2011 to 33 tons for five-axle trucks.

Work on the new bridge has been slowed by a rainy spring and summer. The river itself has flooded most of the lower project site twice during construction. Plans are to complete the new bridge and move traffic onto the new structure before proceeding with the demolition of the old structure.

Approximately 9,000 vehicles cross the structure each day.

Construction is approximately 11 percent complete. Crews hope to have the new bridge completed in the summer of 2015. ■



CELEBRATING A CENTURY of the

ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION

BY DANNY STRAESSLE

BLUE RIBBON SOLUTIONS
(1988 - 2013)

April 2013 marked the 100th anniversary of the Arkansas State Highway Commission. In this issue of Arkansas Highways we continue with part four of a series on the history of the Commission as we look back over the last century of road building.

As the Department prepared to exit the 20th Century, it had every intention of bringing a funding solution with it. Decades of mixed results, combined with stability finally achieved through Mack-Blackwell, provided a blueprint for the new millennium.

Once again the Commission would break ground at the national level and cause other State Departments of Transportation to take note of the Department's successful funding mechanisms — from a unique bond approach to a temporary sales tax passed in a time of economic uncertainty.

(continued on page 16)



1990 WAS A BUSY YEAR

The last decade of the 20th Century began with the Department ranking 48th in administrative expenses as a percentage of total expenditures. AHTD was spending only 2.2 percent on administration versus a national average of 5.5 percent.

Although 275 miles of unpaved gravel roads remained on highways in 1990, some 2,279 miles of highways had been let to contract since 1985 as a result of the Rural Road Program. The program was funded by a four-cent per gallon increase in the gasoline tax and a two-cent per gallon increase in the diesel tax. The primary goal of the Rural Road Program was to pave all the unpaved highways in Arkansas.

In July of 1990, the largest federal motor fuels tax increase since the beginning of the Interstate era was implemented. The tax increased five cents per gallon on gasoline (to 14.1 cents) and diesel (to 20.1 cents). Unfortunately transportation needs were not the driving force. Congress raised the tax to help hold down the growing federal deficit. Only half of the revenues from this increase went into the Highway Trust Fund; the other half went into the U.S. Treasury for deficit reduction.

Add to this a lower court ruling that decided the weight/distance tax implemented in 1983 was unconstitutional. Although the tax continued to be collected during the appeal, revenue from the tax was deposited into an escrow account and could not be used for its intended purpose, to help off-set

THE PURPOSE OF THE WEIGHT/DISTANCE TAX WAS TO HELP OFF-SET DAMAGE TO THE ROADS CAUSED BY AN INCREASE IN HEAVY TRUCK LOADS. THE TAX WAS DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL IN 1990, WHICH FORCED A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE AMERICAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATION.

damage to the roads caused by an increase in heavy truck loads to 80,000 pounds.

The combined effects of the weight/distance tax being held in escrow and unreliable bidding prices caused the Commission to cancel its final two lettings of 1990. This slowed the progress of the Rural Road Program and other major

projects around the State. The first year of the last decade in the 20th Century ended with the Supreme Court setting a deadline of February 25, 1991, for the State and the American Trucking Association to reach an agreement settling the weight/distance tax dispute.

The New Year began with an agreement that required the Commission to request repeal of the weight/distance tax and replace it with other revenue producing measures aimed at trucks. In turn, the Trucking Association agreed to drop its lawsuits. Act 219 of 1991 became the enabling legislation for this compromise:

- The diesel tax was increased four cents per gallon to 16.5 cents;
- Registration fees were increased for trucks weighing more than 73,280 pounds, from \$1,044 to \$1,350 annually;
- Overweight permit fees were increased; and
- Nearly \$60 million in escrow accounts from the legal challenges were released by a one-time refund distribution of \$24.2 million to the Department, \$5.2 million each to the cities and counties, and \$24.2 million to the Trucking Association.

The provisions of Act 219 took effect March 1, 1991, ending the escrow accounts. Collection of the replacement taxes and fees began April 1. During the 1991 legislative session, the Commission again proposed a comprehensive, long-term road improvement program to address the State's highway and bridge needs. This time the legislators were more receptive.

THE HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

In February 1991, the legislature approved two identical proposals that would provide the needed additional revenues for a \$2.5 billion, 15-year Highway Improvement Program (HIP). Acts 364 and 382 raised the gasoline tax five cents per gallon and the diesel tax an additional two cents per gallon. This brought both tax rates to 18.5 cents per gallon.

This action was expected to produce an additional \$47.4 million annually for the Department and about \$10.1 million annually for cities and counties. The rest of the funding would come from the four cents per gallon increase in the diesel tax that was included in the weight/distance tax settlement bill passed earlier in the session. It was expected to produce approximately \$17.7 million annually for the Department and \$3.7 million for the cities and counties.

Key to success of the program was an assumption that the Department would continue to receive federal funds at the same level and that the funding ratios would not be altered. No one expected Congress to allow the Federal Aid Highway Act to expire without passing a new Act to replace it. The Commission had been on the fast track awarding contracts in 1991 prior to the Act's expiration. Lack of quick action by Congress caused the Commission to drastically curtail one bid letting and cancel another late in the year.

Fortunately, in December Congress came through with a new bill titled the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 that heralded a six-year, \$151 billion package containing major reforms to

America's highway program. In Arkansas, the program would provide nearly \$1.7 billion in federal aid over the six-year life of the bill. ISTEA enabled the Commission to begin 1992 by resuming the record-setting pace on which it had been prior to expiration of the old federal aid bill. By July, the Commission had awarded 261 projects totaling more than \$209 million.

EXITING THE 20TH CENTURY

In 1993, President Clinton nominated Arkansas Highway Commission Chairman Rodney Slater to be the new Federal Highway Administrator. He was easily confirmed by the Senate. Governor Jim Guy Tucker appointed former Little Rock Mayor J.W. "Buddy" Benafield to fill the remaining 18 months of Slater's unexpired term.

ISTEA had quite an impact on the State and in 1993 Arkansas was selected as the lead State for the Corridor 18 (proposed Interstate 69) Steering Committee — an eight-state group of highway agencies formed to coordinate development of the proposed high priority corridor linking Detroit with Houston. In the same year, Highway 7 from Arkadelphia to Harrison was named the State's first Scenic Byway.

1993 came to a close with Director Maurice Smith retiring from the Department. The Commission immediately appointed 25-year veteran Assistant Director Dan Flowers to replace Smith. *(continued on page 18)*



In 1993, Highway 7 from Arkadelphia to Harrison was named the State's first Scenic Byway.



Governor Mike Huckabee congratulates Commissioner Jonathan Barnett, other members of the Commission, and Director Dan Flowers on a successful bond sale.



THE BOBBY HOPPER TUNNEL, LOCATED ON INTERSTATE 540, OPENED TO TRAFFIC ON JANUARY 8, 1999. IT IS A TWIN BORE TUNNEL APPROXIMATELY 1,600 FEET IN LENGTH. IT IS THE ONLY TUNNEL LOCATED ON ARKANSAS' HIGHWAY SYSTEM.



As Commissioner J.W. "Buddy" Benafield completed the remaining term of former Commissioner Rodney Slater, Governor Tucker re-appointed Benafield to a full 10-year term in January 1995. Benafield became only the second Commissioner to be re-appointed to a successive term. The other was Bobby Hopper, who served a total of 16 years on the Commission.

During the 1995 regular session, Governor Tucker proposed the Highway Bond and Local Road Improvement Program, which would enable the Commission to issue up to \$3.5 billion in bonds and allow the State to undertake \$4.8 million in construction at an accelerated pace. It was the first time in 30 years a sitting Governor had pushed a bond issue proposal through the legislature to improve the State's roadways. The proposal was defeated by an overwhelming margin at the polls.

In August of 1995, bids were opened for construction of the first highway tunnel in Arkansas. The bids were opened in a special letting held in the Mountainburg High School cafeteria, near the tunnel site.

Less than four weeks after the tunnel bids were opened, the first segment

of Highway 540 (now Interstate 540) was opened. Approximately 9.5 miles of new alignment from Interstate 40 to Mountainburg was designated Highway 540 and gave motorists a preview of things to come for the entire route from Interstate 40 near Alma to Fayetteville, which opened in 1999.

In 1997, Governor Mike Huckabee appointed Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson of Texarkana to replace outgoing Highway Commissioner Bill Clark. Hickerson became only the third female in history to be appointed to the Commission.

ISTEA funding came to a close in September of that year and Congress failed to pass a new authorization bill. Throughout the next several months and into 1998, continuing resolutions and stopgap funding measures kept State highway agencies in business until the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) was passed.

Among other things, TEA-21 encouraged states to seek innovative ways to finance highway improvement projects. The Highway Commission constantly monitored new financing methods to determine their relevance to Arkansas, and while most offered little advantage, one emerged as a significant possibility. Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle

(GARVEE) bonds offered a different form of financing in that future federal funds (along with the required State match) could be pledged toward bond retirement.

A special election was held on June 15, 1999, and Arkansans spoke in favor of allowing the Commission to issue bonds. Known as the 1999 Interstate Rehabilitation Program, the Department began a successful method of addressing deteriorating Interstates. Unique to this program was the promise to have all work underway in three years and completed in five.

APPROACHING A CENTURY OF ROADBUILDING

The year 2000 was off to a great start due to a successful Interstate Rehabilitation Program. A new, state-of-the-art Materials Laboratory for the Department was dedicated in 2001. Constructed at \$8.4 million, the lab allowed the Department to expand its efforts in providing the best construction techniques and materials available.

A few months later in February 2002, the Commission awarded what at the time was the single largest contract in Department history. At \$57.1 million, the

project rehabilitated and widened 6.6 miles of Interstate 40 in North Little Rock between Interstate 30 and Interstate 430 to six lanes.

In August, the Department presented its 2003 Arkansas State Highway Needs Study in which several aspects of the highway system were examined, including the need to establish a statewide network of routes for intrastate and interstate travel and the role of the Arkansas Primary Highway Network.

The first dozen years of the new millennium were a time when natural disasters tested the resourcefulness of the Department. On several occasions AHTD personnel rose to challenge.

The first of these was an ice storm that occurred in December of 2000. Fifty-two counties were declared major disaster areas. Icy highways were covered with downed trees and utilities.

Highway Department expenditures for labor, equipment and materials totaled approximately \$7.3 million for the effort. Almost two months later, the Department was still busy cleaning up. An additional \$3 million was spent for removal of storm debris.

In August 2004, Hurricanes Rita and

Katrina caused significant damage along the Gulf Coast in Louisiana and Mississippi. The Department was called on for assistance by the State of Mississippi to help inspect damaged bridges. The Department also sent 16 Arkansas Highway Police officers to provide public safety in Jackson County, Mississippi.

In 2011, Mother Nature would strike in Arkansas. Unusually high rainfall totals in the spring left 57 counties declared disaster areas because of flooding. Some 80 sections of highways in 17 counties had to be closed due to high water.

The most significant closure was 22 miles of Interstate 40 between Hazen and Brinkley. The closure lasted for eight days in one direction or another. The Department worked with Departments of Transportation in surrounding states to warn truckers and other motorists of detours in Arkansas.

Telephone inquiries about closures flooded the Department resulting in a phone bank with 12 stations set up to provide information. AHTD staff volunteered to answer phones. In a 62-hour period, the phone bank received just under 15,000 inquiries regarding flooded highways.

(continued on page 20)

2000 Ice Storm



High water stands on Interstate 40 after flooding in the spring of 2011.



Natural disasters notwithstanding, there was much to celebrate a decade into the 21st Century. Act 374 of 2009 created the Blue Ribbon Committee on Highway Finance to define an equitable and adequate system that would properly finance improvements to the State's network of highways. The Committee was charged with producing a report and recommending legislation to the General Assembly for consideration in the 2011 regular session.

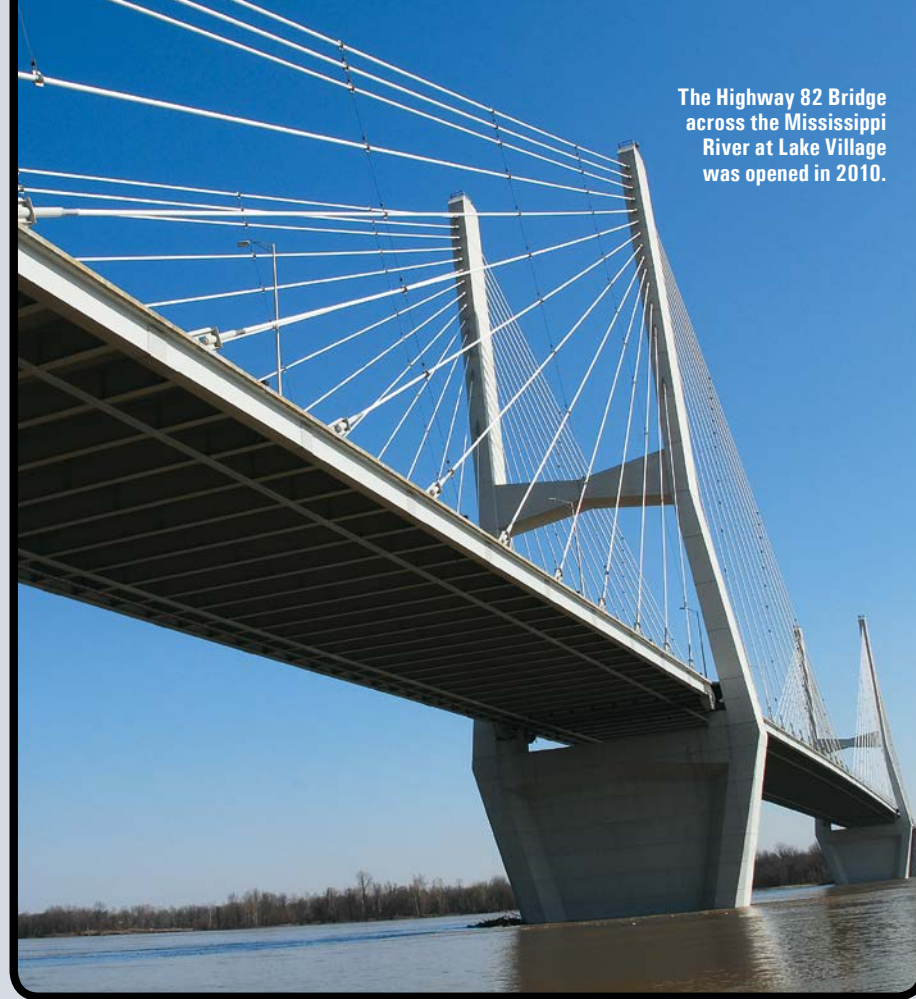
In its report, the Committee made the following revenue proposals:

- Re-issue GARVEE Bonds for the Interstate Rehabilitation Program.
- Establish the State Aid Program for cities.
- Pass a temporary half-cent sales tax to fund a 10-year construction program.
- A sales tax revenue transfer that would dedicate existing revenue from road user items to highways, roads and streets.

The stage was set with blue ribbon solutions in place for highway funding into the future.

In 2010, a new Mississippi River crossing was opened for Highway 82 near Lake Village. This new, cable-stayed bridge is 1,378 feet long, which at the time was the largest of its type crossing the Mississippi River. The entire project length is 3.8 miles and took nine years to build at a cost of approximately \$341 million. The project was a joint effort between the Department and the Mississippi Department of Transportation.

In 2011, the first of the blue ribbon solutions was achieved. In a special election, voters overwhelmingly gave their approval to begin a new Interstate Rehabilitation Program. Some 400 miles of Arkansas' Interstates would be rehabilitated without raising taxes.



The Highway 82 Bridge across the Mississippi River at Lake Village was opened in 2010.

The following year good roads were again at the forefront of discussion, this time as Issue #1 on the 2012 general election ballot. The question gave voters a chance to voice their opinion on moving Arkansas forward by completing more than \$1.8 billion of road construction projects through a temporary half-cent sales tax.

Once again, Arkansans expressed confidence in the Department by overwhelmingly voting in favor of the half-cent sales tax. That a majority of voters would elect to offer a half-penny from their pockets in a time of great economic uncertainty is confirmation that good roads have been, and will continue to be, a priority for the residents of Arkansas.

EPILOGUE

Through the years a partnership developed among the Highway Commission, the Department, and the people of Arkansas that has positioned the State as a national leader in transportation. More than 50 years after the Mack-Blackwell Amendment, Arkansas has become the envy of Departments of Transportation across the country thanks to the stability, reliability and integrity provided by Amendment 42.

There is much ground to cover as we embark upon a new Century. As the State's population thrives, more vehicles will take to the roads with drivers expecting a safe and efficient network of highways.

The challenge for the Commission and the Department remains the same... maintaining existing infrastructure while meeting anticipated demands of the future. If 1913 is any indication, the embarkation of the next 100 years will be another one for the history books. ■

HISTORY OF STATE HIGHWAY NEEDS VS. REVENUE

(BILLIONS OF DOLLARS)

Year	Total Needs	Funds Available	Total Shortfall
1998	\$14.2	\$3.9	\$10.3
2003	\$16.1	\$4.3	\$11.8
2006	\$19.1	\$4.1	\$15.0
2009	\$23.6	\$4.1	\$19.5

ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSIONS

1989 – 2013



THIRTY-NINTH COMMISSION (1989 AND 1990)

Raymond Pritchett.....Maumelle.....Chairman
 Ron Harrod.....Prescott.....Vice Chairman
 Rodney E. Slater.....Jonesboro.....Commissioner
 L.W. "Bill" Clark.....Hot Springs.....Commissioner
 Bobby Hopper¹.....Springdale.....Commissioner
 1. Reappointed to a 10-year term.

FORTIETH COMMISSION (1991 AND 1992)

Ron Harrod.....Prescott.....Chairman
 Rodney E. Slater.....Jonesboro.....Vice Chairman/Chairman
 L.W. "Bill" Clark.....Hot Springs.....Commissioner/Vice Chairman
 Bobby Hopper.....Springdale.....Commissioner
 Herby Branscum, Jr.....Perryville.....Commissioner

FORTY-FIRST COMMISSION (1993 AND 1994)

Rodney E. Slater².....Jonesboro.....Chairman
 L.W. "Bill" Clark.....Hot Springs.....Vice Chairman/Chairman
 Bobby Hopper.....Springdale.....Commissioner/Vice Chairman
 Herby Branscum, Jr.....Perryville.....Commissioner
 John "M" Lipton.....Warren.....Commissioner
 J.W. "Buddy" Benafield³.....Newport.....Commissioner
 2. Resigned June 3, 1993 to accept Federal Highway Administrator position under President Bill Clinton.
 3. Appointed June 29, 1993 to fill the unexpired term of Rodney E. Slater.

FORTY-SECOND COMMISSION (1995 AND 1996)

L.W. "Bill" Clark.....Hot Springs.....Chairman
 Bobby Hopper.....Springdale.....Vice Chairman
 Herby Branscum, Jr.....Perryville.....Commissioner
 John "M" Lipton.....Warren.....Commissioner
 J.W. "Buddy" Benafield⁴.....Newport.....Commissioner
 Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson.....Texarkana.....Commissioner
 4. Reappointed January 16, 1995 to a 10-year term.

FORTY-THIRD COMMISSION (1997 AND 1998)

Bobby Hopper.....Springdale.....Chairman
 Herby Branscum, Jr.....Perryville.....Vice Chairman/Chairman
 John "M" Lipton.....Warren.....Commissioner
 J.W. "Buddy" Benafield.....Newport.....Commissioner
 Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson.....Texarkana.....Commissioner

FORTY-FOURTH COMMISSION (1999 AND 2000)

Herby Branscum, Jr.....Perryville.....Chairman
 John "M" Lipton.....Warren.....Vice Chairman
 J.W. "Buddy" Benafield⁵.....Hickory Plains.....Commissioner
 Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson.....Texarkana.....Commissioner
 Jonathan Barnett.....Siloam Springs.....Commissioner
 5. Officially changed residency to Hickory Plains in 1998.

FORTY-FIFTH COMMISSION (2001 AND 2002)

John "M" Lipton.....Warren.....Chairman
 J.W. "Buddy" Benafield.....Hickory Plains.....Vice Chairman
 Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson.....Texarkana.....Commissioner
 Jonathan Barnett.....Siloam Springs.....Commissioner
 Carl Rosenbaum.....Little Rock.....Commissioner



Hickerson (right) being sworn in with the help of her husband, Randy (center).

IN 1997, MARY P. "PRISSY" HICKERSON OF TEXARKANA BECAME ONLY THE THIRD FEMALE IN HISTORY TO BE APPOINTED TO THE COMMISSION.

FORTY-SIXTH COMMISSION (2003 AND 2004)

J.W. "Buddy" Benafield.....Hickory Plains.....Chairman
 Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson.....Texarkana.....Vice Chairman
 Jonathan Barnett.....Siloam Springs.....Commissioner
 Carl Rosenbaum.....Little Rock.....Commissioner
 R. Madison Murphy.....El Dorado.....Commissioner

FORTY-SEVENTH COMMISSION (2005 AND 2006)

Mary P. "Prissy" Hickerson.....Texarkana.....Chairman
 Jonathan Barnett.....Siloam Springs.....Vice Chairman
 Carl Rosenbaum.....Little Rock.....Commissioner
 R. Madison Murphy.....El Dorado.....Commissioner
 John Ed Regenold.....Armored.....Commissioner

FORTY-EIGHTH COMMISSION (2007 AND 2008)

Jonathan Barnett.....Siloam Springs.....Chairman
 Carl Rosenbaum.....Little Rock.....Vice Chairman
 R. Madison Murphy.....El Dorado.....Commissioner
 John Ed Regenold.....Armored.....Commissioner
 Cliff Hoofman.....North Little Rock.....Commissioner

FORTY-NINTH COMMISSION (2009 AND 2010)

Carl Rosenbaum.....Little Rock.....Chairman
 R. Madison Murphy.....El Dorado.....Vice Chairman
 John Ed Regenold.....Armored.....Commissioner
 Cliff Hoofman.....North Little Rock.....Commissioner
 Dick Trammel.....Rogers.....Commissioner

FIFTIETH COMMISSION (2011 AND 2012)

R. Madison Murphy.....El Dorado.....Chairman
 John Ed Regenold.....Armored.....Vice Chairman
 Cliff Hoofman⁶.....North Little Rock.....Commissioner
 Dick Trammel.....Rogers.....Commissioner
 Tom Schueck.....Little Rock.....Commissioner
 John Burkhalter⁷.....Little Rock.....Commissioner
 6. Resigned to accept appointment to State Court of Appeals by Governor Mike Beebe.
 7. Appointed by Governor Mike Beebe to serve the remaining term of Cliff Hoofman.

FIFTY-FIRST COMMISSION (2013 AND 2014)

John Ed Regenold.....Armored.....Chairman
 John Burkhalter.....Little Rock.....Vice Chairman
 Dick Trammel.....Rogers.....Commissioner
 Tom Schueck.....Little Rock.....Commissioner
 Robert S. Moore, Jr.....Arkansas City.....Commissioner

Dr. Henry Langston
Environmental Scientist II

ON THE JOB *with*

HENRY

LANGSTON, Ph.D.

BY DAVID NILLES

ASSESSING THE ENVIRONMENT SURROUNDING OUR HIGHWAYS

WALK INTO HENRY LANGSTON'S OFFICE in the Environmental Division of Central Office and you will find a large collection of books dealing with plants and soils. But the office isn't where Henry spends most of his days. You're more likely to find him outdoors waist deep in water or mud, or using a machete to cut through the woods and briar thickets or climbing out of a cave. It's all part of being an Environmental Scientist in the Environmental Division of AHTD.

A great deal of Langston's day in the outdoors is taken up by performing wetland assessments. Before the Highway and Transportation Department can consider constructing a new roadway or bridge or reconstructing an existing structure, it's vital to know what impacts the construction will have on the environment in the project area. A variety of issues must be addressed such as archeology, environmental justice, noise, hazardous waste, wetlands and streams, and endangered species.

These are questions that must be addressed by all Departments of Transportation under NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act of 1972).

That's where Langston and others in the Environmental Division come into play. It's the job of the staff in the Environmental Division to keep the Department in compliance with the various State and Federal laws regarding the environment when it comes to highway construction.

"The Environmental Division's role in the highway review process starts very early," Langston states. "When a new highway project is proposed, a request is made to the Environmental Division to go out and find any potential environmental problems or constraints such as wetlands or streams, endangered species, hazardous waste, or archeological sites. Then we work with the roadway and bridge divisions, and the hydrologic section to determine if there is any way to avoid or minimize potential impacts to those sites."

The wetland team operates under Section 404 of the 1972 Clean Water Act. Specifically, this act was established to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States. The program is administered jointly by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (COE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The AHTD follows their guidelines focusing on avoidance, minimization and mitigation when it comes to wetlands and streams.

"Before a roadway can go in, we look for three things to assess a project area and to determine whether wetlands are present or not," Langston says. "Those are hydrophytic vegetation, hydrology and hydric soils."

Those particular areas are dominated by vegetation that can survive and grow

in wet conditions that are inundated or saturated to the surface for 14 consecutive days in the growing season and has a soil that supports hydrophytic vegetation. These criteria have been established in the COE Wetland Delineation Manual.

Before Langston goes to the field to assess a site, he tries to familiarize himself with the location. One of the first things he likes to do is look at aerial imagery of the site on the computer.

"The computer is an excellent source," Langston states. "The Department's own Photogrammetry Section is also an excellent source of historical aerial imagery. Through past experiences and familiarity with topography around the State, I can often tell from the aerial imagery if a wetland is present through changes in vegetation and soil patterns."

Aerial imagery may or may not help with hydrology determination. No matter how good the aerial imagery or databases are, Langston still maintains, "Eventually you have to put feet on the ground. You have to go to the field, put a shovel in the ground, dig a hole and look around you to see exactly what you have."

And that's where his job gets interesting. Armed with a GPS, soil probe or sharp shooter (similar to a shovel for digging up soil samples), a magnifying hand lens, and a Munsell Soil Color Chart, among other things, Langston heads to the field almost every day to do his job.

Reaching the job site is an adventure in itself. In many cases, there is no road to drive down or trail to follow through the woods to get there. An off road 4x4 vehicle (Kawasaki mule), a canoe, and a john boat are available when it makes getting there easier.

"Spring time and fall are the best times to do this work, mainly because you can wear tennis shoes to wade in water without worrying about stepping in a hole and filling your boots, also the weather is nicer," Langston states.

(continued on page 24)

(L. to R.)
Eric Sanders,
Environmental
Technician;
Max Farrell,
former AHTD
Environmental
Analyst; Henry
Langston; and
Mitch Wine of
the U.S. Fish &
Wildlife Service.





Langston exploring a cave for signs of bats or blind cave fish.



Snakes, like this cottonmouth, are a common site in field work.

IF YOU ARE SCARED OF SNAKES, THEN THIS IS NOT THE BEST JOB TO BE IN.

BECAUSE OF THE WORKING CONDITIONS and distance to many of these sites, Langston often works alone. When working in such conditions, Langston leaves instructions that “if you have not heard from me by nightfall, contact the local Sheriff’s Department.”

Because of these conditions most others in his office avoid going to the field with him. However when help is needed, two technicians, Eric Sanders and Ray Heaggans, often get drafted into helping.

“Experiencing the outdoors is the most unique thing about this job,” Langston adds. “I’ve seen many areas of the State that most people will not have the opportunity to see. I’ve gotten to do many unique things. One of the most interesting was being with the U.S. Geological Survey over in the White River bottoms at Clarendon. I spent a month with them doing cross sections of the floodplain. The data was needed so that they could run a model to look at the potential effects of the bridge replacement job at Clarendon and what effect it would have on flow velocity and direction across the floodplain.”

“Currently I am working in a stand of old growth pine trees south of Hamburg to determine what impacts a proposed highway project will have on it.”

“Regardless of where I am, field work is

enjoyable,” he states. “Where else can you be in mud up to your elbows one day in Chicot County and then the next day in a cold, crystal clear stream in Carroll County. What a job, and I get paid for it.”

Work in the outdoors has its good and bad points however.

“Staffers in other AHTD Divisions such as Surveys, Materials, and our Department road crews share one thing in common with me: it’s hot in the summer, cold in the winter, and we deal with insects like ticks and mosquitoes,” Langston comments.

The one question that Langston gets asked most often is about snakes.

“Yes, they are there,” Langston adds. “If you are scared of snakes, then this is not the best job to be in. You have to remember you are in their territory and you must respect them. Basically I operate under the theory that I don’t worry about what I don’t

see. At times I will wear snake leggings, but usually they are worn to protect the legs from the briars. If not, your legs will look like you have been standing naked in the middle of a cat fight. It’s not the snakes that concern me, although a moccasin can get rather mean. It’s things like getting into a yellow jacket nest with nowhere to run or getting between a wild momma hog and her little ones.”

“One of the most eye opening experiences is coming face to face with a wasp nest. You would not believe the number of wasp nests we have encountered going through the brush,” Langston recalls.

Langston mentioned another potential threat, walking a trail that has been cut out and is left full of sharp, angled stems. Those stems can do serious damage if someone trips and falls on one.

There are unseen dangers as well when wading in the back waters. Things like Leptosporosis or parasitic meningitis. Langston caught Leptosporosis in 2008 from wading back waters of the Ouachita River. In addition to that disease, Langston damaged two discs in his back removing fish from a borrow ditch at Clarendon. And, he nearly cut his thumb off with a machete working on the Monticello bypass.

“The field is the best. You never know what you might encounter each time. Maybe you will come across a baby deer or get to watch a mother eagle feed her babies, perhaps a beautiful plant blooming or unique rock feature,” says Langston.

Langston’s job has also provided some other unique opportunities as well. Because of potential impacts to endangered

species from highway projects, Langston has had the opportunity to participate in several endangered species surveys. Targets of such surveys have included mussels, darters, bats and woodpeckers.

Most notable was the survey in 2006 for the supposedly extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Langston and others from the Environmental Division joined State and Federal agencies spending two months in the White River bottoms at Clarendon searching for the bird. The work had to be done before the replacement bridge and approaches could be built at Clarendon.

Another unique aspect of Langston’s job is caving. The existence of caves can cause a problem for highway projects in northern Arkansas. Anytime a highway project can possibly impact a known cave, it must be surveyed to look for potentially endangered species such as bats or blind cave fish. This also holds true for unknown caves discovered during the construction process. If such a cave is discovered, construction in that area must stop until the cave can be checked out.

Birds are another issue that must be

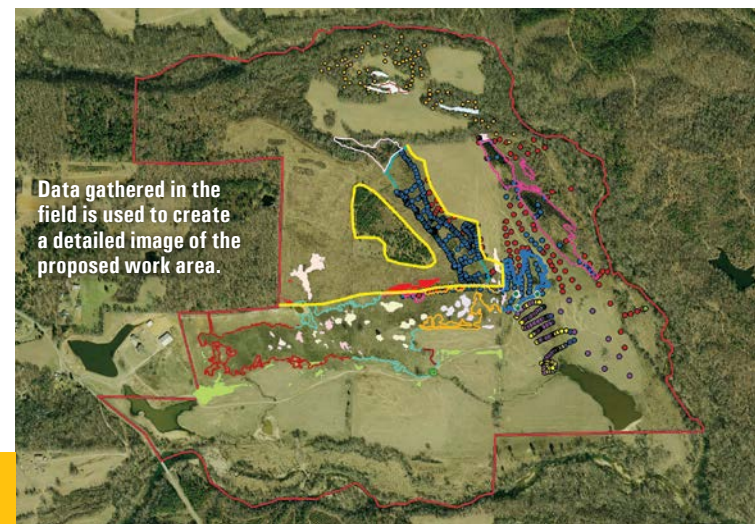
considered in Langston’s field of work. Structures such as bridges must be inspected for the possibility of birds nesting under them. Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Department and contractors have to take certain steps to avoid impacting the birds during certain times of the year.

“You do whatever it takes to get the job done. The environment that we work in is different from the one that most people play in,” Langston adds. “In the winter you can find yourself breaking through ice to get to a site. In the summer you are sweating heavily, trying to keep something dry to wipe your face with. If you are in a briar thicket, you constantly have vines grabbing your legs. If you try and use a machete, you just get hotter and waste energy. The best way to proceed is just put your head down and bust through it.”

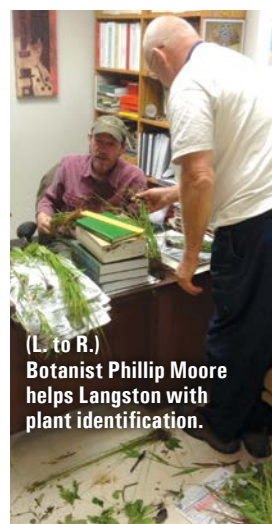
Langston adds that cramps are probably the biggest enemy during the summer months. “If it weren’t for pickles and pickle juice, I would be in a world of hurt. Pickle juice will knock a cramp out almost instantly,” he stated.



Henry collecting data in the Pulaski County river bottoms.



Data gathered in the field is used to create a detailed image of the proposed work area.



(L. to R.) Botanist Phillip Moore helps Langston with plant identification.

Langston says that more that once he has had people go down in the field and almost not make it out due to the conditions.

“When I take people out to the field with me who are not used to the conditions, I have to keep an eye on them. If you are not used to it, it can catch up with you fast and you can be in trouble.”

ONCE LANGSTON REACHES A JOB LOCATION, he begins work to determine whether the three criteria are present for a wetland. Langston samples the site using guidelines outlined in the COE’s 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual and two of the COE’s recently added Wetland Regionalization Manuals.

Langston was fortunate to have been invited by the COE to participate in the development of the regional manual for the Gulf Coast and Atlantic Coastal region of the country, so he is very familiar with it.

“When looking at the soils you look for certain tell tale indicators of a hydric soil, such as low chroma or grey color, and redoxomorphic features,” he states.

(continued on page 26)



Discussing hydric soils with Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel.



Pulling his way out of a tight cave.



Getting to the job site is easier with an all-terrain vehicle.



Pushing through the brush while knee-high in water.



Conducting geomorphology field work.

As for hydrology, Langston states that either you are standing in it or you are using indicators to determine whether the site has the needed hydrology. As for the vegetation, Langston is very knowledgeable about the plants and trees. For those that he is not sure of, they are collected and brought back to the office where he works with botanist Phillip Moore to correctly identify them.

“Once the data is collected from the field, we come back and analyze our findings,” Langston says. “If it is determined that a wetland or stream will be impacted, we proceed with the necessary documentation and apply for the appropriate permit from the COE.”

LANGSTON, AT TIMES WITH HELP FROM ERIC AND RAY, has covered a great number of miles across Arkansas. Many of them most individuals would not want to experience.

“We walked about 80 miles of the Ouachita River bottom working on a project looking at the potential wetland impacts among the four different alternatives proposed for Interstate 69. The Interstate 69 connector from Wilmar to Pine Bluff, 40 miles in length, was walked three times,” Langston added. Many times the junkets, as he calls them, are through pine sapling thickets and briar patches.

Wetland mitigation is something that takes up a considerable portion of his time. Once a Section 404 permit is applied for from the COE, the Department is required to mitigate for the impacts to the wetlands or streams under Section 404(b)(1) guidelines. Simply put, the Department is

required to replace the wetlands or stream channels that are impacted. In order to expedite this process, the Department has established numerous wetland bank sites of its own around the State. These range from 15 to 20 acres to over 800 acres. There are areas that the COE as well as the Inter-agency Review Team have approved as potential wetland bank sites. The sites were formerly wetlands that have been altered or destroyed over time. The intent is to restore them as close as possible to their natural condition.

The restoration of these sites is quite time consuming. The areas usually have to be prepped.

“I have four sites that need to be burned this fall,” Langston states.

The sites are then planted. Eric and Ray oversee the operation to ensure that it is done properly. The sites are monitored for five years to ensure that they are functioning properly as wetlands.

On occasion, Langston has the opportunity to do environmental work with other government agencies.

“I have done some field work and trained with the soil scientists from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) over the past years. “My work with them has allowed me to get a great deal of free training in soils and descriptive work. Last year the NRCS invited me to their three week Geomorphic Institute class as well as a week long Soil Correlation class,” Langston stated.”

Langston has even gone so far as to take vacation to go to Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee to help do soil description work

with the NRCS. He adds that the training that he has received from the agency has been very beneficial in doing his job.

Langston has done considerable work with Arkansas’ Multi-Agency Wetland Planning Team. One of the most notable projects was the collection of the data for the development of the Hydrogeomorphic Guide Books for the five different eco-regions of the State. This effort took around ten years to complete.

The Arkansas Natural Resources Commission has been fortunate enough to have had Langston’s help in establishing a State sponsored wetland mitigation bank at Days Creek in Miller County.

AS FOR HIS WORK WITH AHTD, Langston has been with the Department for 21 years. He is one of eight individuals with the Department who deal with wetland and stream issues along with Section Head John Fleming. They all have a running joke about sending new staff or summer help out with Langston and seeing how long they last.

The road to becoming an Environmental Scientist is a bit safer than being out in

the field because it begins in the classroom. Langston has a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry/Wildlife Management, a Masters in Botany from Louisiana Tech University and a Ph.D. in Forestry/Soil Science from Louisiana State University. He served as an Assistant Professor for three years at Oklahoma State University where he taught silviculture and forest ecology. He also taught a class at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Langston is also registered as a Professional Soil Classifier by the States of Arkansas and Mississippi. Langston was fortunate to have contributed to several publications published by the COE, the EPA, Society of Wetland Scientists, and Archeology Associates.

“As an Environmental Scientist, it’s really a combination of education, training, and experience,” Langston states. “While not critical, it helps to have a biological background. You can have all the book learning in the world but it doesn’t mean a thing if you can’t apply it in the field. Langston feels his real education did not really begin until he was out of school.

Langston’s own love of the outdoors started early in life.

“I enjoyed the outdoors back as early as elementary school,” Langston states. “My father was a possum cop (game warden) in north Louisiana and growing up, my spare time was spent out in the field on patrol with him, even up through my first few years of college.”

“It’s been an interesting career because I’ve gotten to work in so many different parts of the State and seen everything from the flatland of the Delta to the mountains in the Ozarks. There are so many interesting things to see. For example, on Highway 7 near Jasper, there is a hill top depression dominated by Overcup Oak trees. Overcup Oaks are found over in the Delta and Coastal Plains in forested wetlands. You have to wonder how those trees got up on that mountain top. At Pine Bluff, we were doing some soil work and got into a Native American midden. As I was pulling soil cores, I was pulling up old broken pottery hundreds of years old.”

“We have a bridge project over in Lee County coming up this fall. There is a Cypress tree that must be around 500 years old located upstream of the existing bridge,”

“IT’S BEEN AN INTERESTING CAREER BECAUSE I’VE GOTTEN TO WORK IN SO MANY DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE STATE AND SEEN EVERYTHING FROM THE FLATLAND OF THE DELTA TO THE MOUNTAINS IN THE OZARKS.”

Langston shares. “It is located inside the right-of-way. Ronnie Smith, in State Aid, was instrumental in working with me to save that old tree. It is marked on the plans so the contractor will know to minimize any disturbance to it when the time comes.”

Langston explained this was a case of doing what had to be done to get a highway job completed but, at the same time, trying to do a little bit of good as well.

As for Langston, he says the clock is ticking. He only has around four years left before he can consider hitting the retirement trail. Even with his education and field experience, he generally tries to get some type of training or class in each year. He believes in the theory that you are never too old to learn.

As an Environmental Scientist, Langston and the other scientists on the staff are doing their part to preserve the natural areas of Arkansas for future generations to enjoy as well as fulfilling the mission of the AHTD.

In closing, Langston added “If anyone in the Department ever wants a break from their day to day tasks and wants to tag along, just give me a call. There is usually an empty seat in the truck.” ■



DISTRICT FOUR



Old District Four Headquarters

Supply and Storage Facilities

Conference Room

OPENS NEW HEADQUARTERS

BY DAVID NILLES

They had utilized their old headquarters in Fort Smith for over 50 years, so June 17th was a big day for District Four AHTD employees. That's the day the ribbon was cut on a brand new headquarters located in Barling.

The new complex sits on almost 40 acres and consists of 14 structures, and each one was in brand new, mint condition for an Open House held on that day.

The \$13 million facility contains 55,000 square feet and includes a District Administration Building, Resident Engineer Office, an Area Maintenance Crew Building, Highway Police Commander's Office, District Materials Lab, Body and Paint Shop, Multi-Crew Building, service station, storage building, vehicle wash building, bulk salt storage, a spreader rack and a liquid calcium chloride tank.

"This is a facility that we are very proud of," stated AHTD Director Scott Bennett at the grand opening. "We look forward to enjoying it for many, many years."

In 1997, the Department of Defense closed Fort Chaffee and released over 6,000 acres of the fort to the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA). In 2002, the Authority transferred acreage along Frontier Road to the AHTD for the new Headquarters complex.

"We really appreciate the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority," Bennett added. "This is a state-of-the-art facility and will be good for this area."

"We are extremely happy with our partnership with the AHTD," stated Ivy Owen with the Redevelopment Authority.

The new facility marks the first time that district-wide crews have all been located at the District 4 Headquarters. Approximately 100 AHTD employees will be located at the complex.

In addition to the Open House, it was a farewell to District Engineer Joe Shipman. Joe retired a few weeks after the grand opening.

"Thank you to Joe for his years of service with the Department," Bennett added. "His professionalism and work ethic are exemplary."

Shipman had over 35 years of service with the Department upon retirement. He was District Engineer for District Four for nine years. Chad Adams was appointed as Shipman's replacement.

"Joe is the kind of person you want to work with," commented Commissioner Dick Trammel at the event. "I'm so lucky to have worked with him for almost five years."

Contractors on the new District Four complex included Heckathorne Construction, Crawford Construction and Crossland Construction. The construction projects were administered by Resident Engineer Office 42. John Sharum is Resident Engineer. ■

(L. to R.) Assistant to the Director Ralph Hall; Deputy Director and Chief Engineer Frank Vozel; Assistant Chief Engineer for Operations Emanuel Banks; AHTD Director Scott E. Bennett; Former District Four Engineer Harold Beaver; Former District Four Engineer Joe Shipman; Commissioner Dick Trammel; and Ivy Owen of the FCRA.



Fueling Station

Resident Engineer Office 42



Enjoy a round of golf at the scenic Ridges at Village Creek.



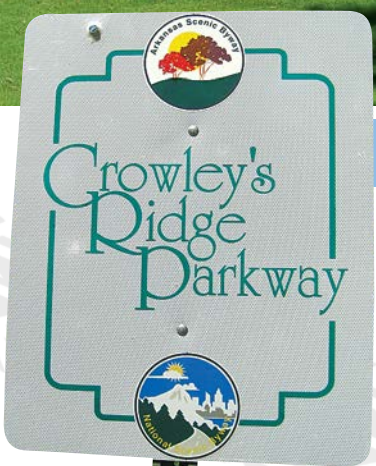
St. Francis County Museum



Horseback riding at Village Creek State Park

WEEKEND ROAD TRIP:

BY DAVID NILLES



Rising 200 to 300 feet above the flat terrain of the Delta in eastern Arkansas is Crowley's Ridge, our destination on this month's road trip.

Crowley's Ridge was formed when the Mississippi and Ohio rivers eroded away the land on each side and wind-blown soils added height to the remaining ridge. The ridge begins in Missouri, near Cape Girardeau, and forms a crescent shape into Arkansas, ending at Helena-West Helena, some 210 miles to the south. The width of the ridge varies from ten miles near Jonesboro to only one mile near Harrisburg.

There's no better way to experience Crowley's Ridge than to drive the **Crowley's Ridge Parkway**. The highway was designated one of Arkansas' scenic

highways in 1997 and became one of America's national scenic byways in 1998. The Parkway takes motorists through the St. Francis National Forest and offers plenty to do with outdoor opportunities at five State Parks and recreational destinations in towns like Forrest City, Jonesboro and Piggott.

Though the Parkway begins at Helena-West Helena, our weekend road trip begins in Forrest City and heads northward after exiting Interstate 40. (The city of Helena-West Helena was featured in the March 2013 issue of *Arkansas Highways*.)

In Forrest City, make your first stop the **St. Francis County Museum**¹. It serves as a visitor center for the parkway. The museum is housed in the historic Rush-Gates home which was built in 1906 by Doctor J.O. Rush. The museum is dedicated to sharing the history of the county through temporary and seasonal exhibits, artifacts and photographs. Features of the museum include a 1920s parlor, the "Rush Room" with Indian artifacts, Rush's reconstructed clinic office, the military room where seven wars are represented, the agriculture room and the business room. The



museum is located at 603 Front Street and is open on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

To begin the drive northward on the parkway, leave Forrest City on Highway 284. Thirteen miles ahead is **Village Creek State Park**².

Village Creek is Arkansas' largest State Park at 6,911 acres. Here you can explore the unique geology, topography and unusual plants along Crowley's Ridge. There are five park trails for hikers to enjoy totaling seven miles. Anglers will find two lakes within the park that are perfect for fishing. In fact, a record-breaking largemouth bass weighing in at 16 pounds and 5 ounces was caught on the park's **Lake Dunn** in 2012. Horseback riding is popular at the park as well. A campground and cabins are available for overnight stays.

Village Creek State Park offers a surprise for golfers. There are three different nine-hole courses at **The Ridges at Village Creek**. The courses are relatively new having only been open



Parkin Archeological State Park

just over a year. They were designed by Andy Dye, one of the world's foremost golf architects, and the scenery is spectacular.

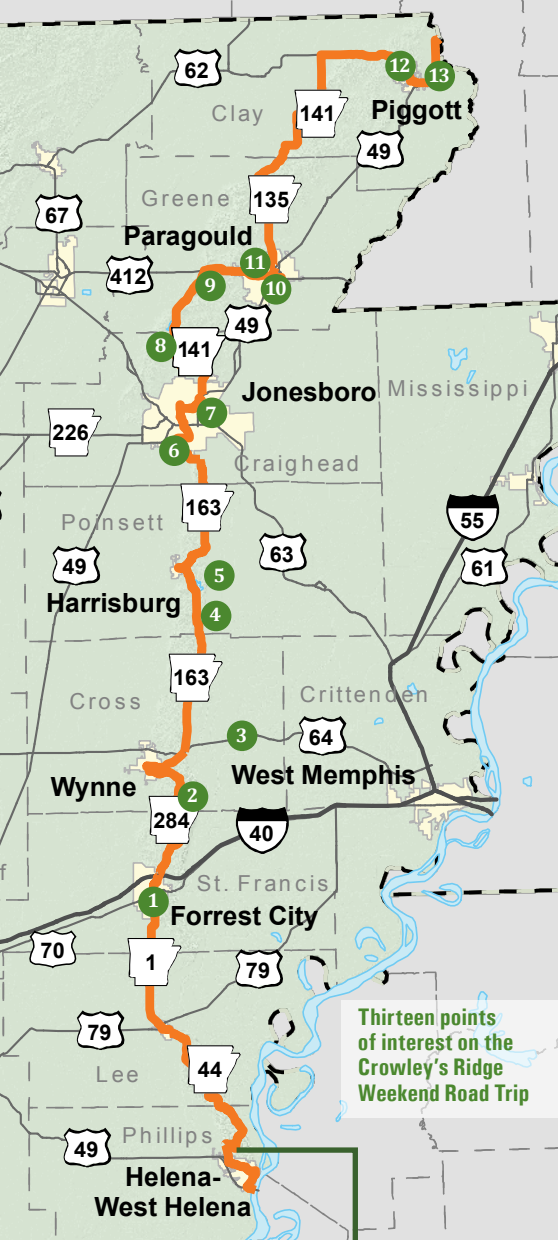
For travelers interested in Native American history, the next stop on the trip will prove interesting. It's the **Parkin Archeological State Park**³. Travel up Highway 284 from Village Creek and turn right on Highway 64. Eight miles east is the park at the intersection of Highway 64 and Highway 184 North.

Parkin Archeological State Park preserves and interprets a site on the St. Francis River where a 17-acre American Indian village was located from 1000 to 1550 A.D. A large platform mound on the river bank remains. The site is important for understanding the history

(continued on page 32)



Lake Dunn at Village Creek State Park



Thirteen points of interest on the Crowley's Ridge Weekend Road Trip

of northeast Arkansas. There were once many archeological sites similar to Parkin throughout this region, but they did not survive as eastern Arkansas was settled.

Many scholars believe the Parkin site is the American Indian village of Casqui visited by the expedition of Hernando de Soto in 1541, and included in his chronicles. The museum features an introductory video, a trail leading through the park, Spanish and Native American artifacts and exhibits. A research station has been established in the park by the Arkansas Archeological Survey. Station archeologists conduct research at the site on occasion providing visitors with a unique opportunity to see how we learn about prehistory. Visitors can watch research in progress, and see firsthand the results of careful excavations and laboratory analysis. Guided tours are offered. Guests can also tour the 1910 Northern Ohio Schoolhouse, one of many one-room schools that stood in the area of Parkin over 100 years ago. The large field of sunflower plants adjacent to the museum makes for a nice photo opportunity.

To continue the road trip, travel back to the intersection with Highway 284 and turn right onto Highway 163. Approximately 20 miles north up the parkway is **Lake Poinsett State Park⁵**.

The 640-acre lake is a paradise for crappie, catfish, bream and bass fishing. There are 29 campsites, picnic areas and boat rentals for those who want to get out on the water. For those who enjoy hiking, the one-mile Great Blue Heron Trail can be walked in about 45 minutes. To reach the park from Harrisburg, travel east one mile on Highway 14 and then take Highway 63 south for three miles into the park.

If your visit to Lake Poinsett takes place in the fall, check out the **Annual Homestead Festival⁴** which happens

in October just south of Harrisburg. Sorghum cooking, broom making, blacksmithing and butter churning are all part of the weekend. This year's festival is October 12th & 13th.

After visiting three State Parks, the weekend journey follows Highway 163 into Jonesboro. Jonesboro is the largest city in northeast Arkansas and home to **Arkansas State University**. The university's campus includes our next stop, the **ASU Museum⁷**.

The museum focuses on the natural history and cultural heritage of northeast Arkansas and the Delta region. It holds significant historic, archaeological and natural history collections originating primarily from Arkansas. One of the first museums in the Southeast to be accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM), it is the largest and most comprehensive museum in northeast Arkansas. The ASU campus is located on Highway 63 (East Johnson Avenue).

After taking in the ASU Museum, visit the **Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center⁶**. Inside the center, exhibits reveal the natural forces that formed the 200-mile-long Crowley's Ridge. Also on view are exhibits that take a look at

native wildlife, ranging from large game animals to small insects. Outside, visitors may stroll the quarter-mile, fully accessible Habitats Trail to watch for animals that live in uplands, wetlands, ponds and prairies. Other trails take hikers across ridge tops and into deep ravines. Wildlife gardens and native plants are featured in areas surrounding the Center. The Center is located at 600 E. Lawson Road.

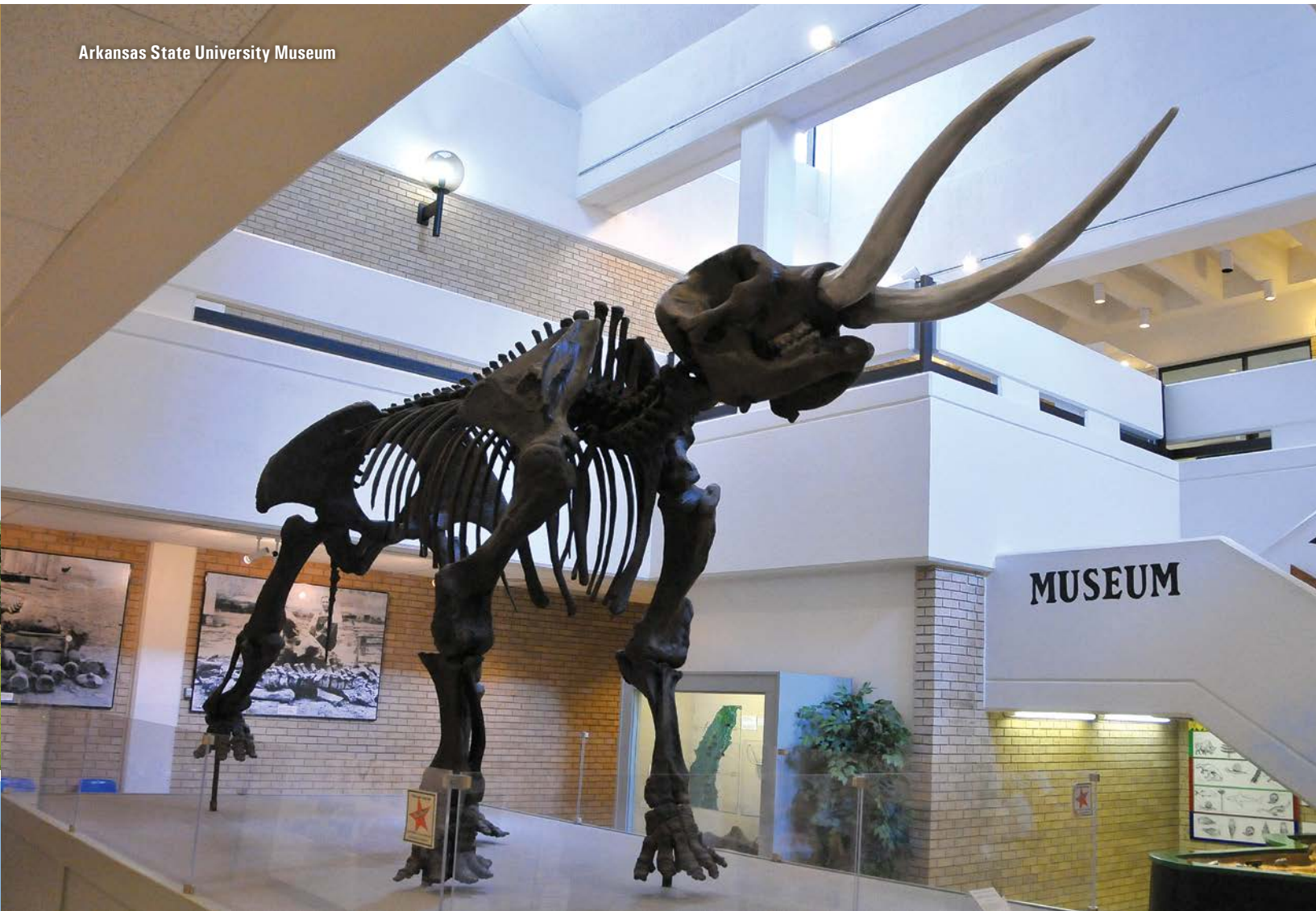
Leaving Jonesboro on Highway 141, it's just a ten minute drive northward to **Lake Frierson State Park⁸**. This State Park is known for its wild dogwood trees that bloom each spring. You may want to try fishing on the lake as Lake Frierson is known as one of the hottest fishing spots in northeast Arkansas. The park has kayaks and pedal boats available too. There are campsites for overnight stays and picnic sites for a day visit. A visitor's center with interpretive exhibits is the place to begin discovering this park. Dogwood Trail Lane awaits those interested in a leisurely hike.

(continued on page 34)

THE CROWLEY'S RIDGE PARKWAY WAS DESIGNATED ONE OF ARKANSAS' SCENIC HIGHWAYS IN 1997 AND BECAME ONE OF AMERICA'S NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS IN 1998.



Arkansas State University Museum



Crowley's Ridge State Park



Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center

The fifth State Park on Crowley's Ridge Parkway is just five miles up Highway 141 from Lake Frierson. **Crowley's Ridge State Park**⁹ occupies the former homestead of Benjamin Crowley, whose family first settled this area. Native log and stone structures, constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, set the mood for this park's rustic warmth. The park was one of the six original State Parks built in Arkansas. There are two lakes, one for fishing and the other for swimming. Lake Ponder is one of the most popular swimming areas in the State and features a swimming beach and bath house. Walcott Lake offers visitors 31 acres of fishing for bass, catfish and other stocked fish. Hiking is available on four different trails. Spend the day and then stay overnight in one of the park's cabins or pitch a tent in the campground. Park staff offer interpretive programs throughout the year. To reach the park,

turn right off of Highway 141 and travel two miles south on Highway 168.

Two miles up Highway 141, the parkway turns east on Highway 412 and leads travelers to the city of Paragould. Be sure to visit the **Historic Greene County Courthouse**¹⁰ located at the corner of North 3rd and West Court. The building was constructed in 1888 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Also in town is the **Greene County Museum**¹¹. The museum is housed in the home of former Governor Marion Futrell. The home was built in 1908 and each room offers different exhibits involving Greene County history. On display are the museum's collection of Native American artifacts, military items from numerous wars down through history, lost landmarks, a sports hall of fame and three rooms of Greene County History. The museum is on the Arkansas Register of Historic places and is located at 130 South 14th Street.

The Greene County Museum is the starting and ending point of the Paragould History Trail. This two-mile historic trail through the area features 18 historic homes and buildings that are an important part of Paragould's past. Detailed information on each stop along the way is available at the museum.

Leaving Paragould on Highway 135 North, the Parkway makes its way towards Piggott on Highways 141, 90 and 62. A must stop in Piggott is the **Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum**¹². Piggott is perhaps best known for its association with American writer and Nobel laureate Ernest Hemingway, whose second wife Pauline Pfeiffer was the daughter of prominent local landowner and businessman Paul Pfeiffer. After meeting and marrying in the late 1920s, Ernest and Pauline made frequent and lengthy visits to her parent's home in Piggott, where Hemingway wrote portions of his novel *A Farewell to Arms*, and other works. The Pfeiffer House and Carriage House are now preserved as the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center. The home is listed on the National Historic Register. The museum is located on W. Cherry Street.

History buffs will want to drive just outside of Piggott to the **Chalk Bluff Civil War battlefield site**¹³. Chalk Bluff occupied a strategic position during the Civil War. Its cliffs commanded a vital river crossing on the only major road from Missouri into the Crowley's



Crowley's Ridge State Park

Ridge country. Provisions were collected here and shipped downstream to Confederate forces. At daybreak on May 15, 1862, Union troops seized the ferry, crossed the river under fire, captured the town and drove the Confederates into the woods. On April 20th, Confederate Cavalry answered by surprising and routing a Union encampment across the river from Chalk Bluff. Confederates crossed into Missouri to engage in battle with Union forces again in 1863.

The battle and the town's history are interpreted through markers placed along a walking trail. The park is located 10 miles north of Piggott on Highway 62, in the town of St. Francis.

Standing on the St. Francis River, with Missouri on the far shore, this brings us to the northern end of Crowley's Ridge Parkway and the end of this month's Weekend Road Trip. ■

Greene County Courthouse



THE WISHING WELL FLUME, WHICH SPILLS INTO LAKE PONDER, IS A MUST-SEE FEATURE OF CROWLEY'S RIDGE STATE PARK.



Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum



The 2013 class of engineering student interns who spent the summer at AHTD offices across the State included:
Front Row L to R: Landon Meeks, Michael Boxell, Thad LyBrand, Jon McEachern, Tanner Clement;
2nd Row L to R: Diego Robayo, Tyler Blevins, Leah Miramontes, Beth Allen, Gilberto Robayo, Bryce Acton;
3rd Row L to R: Ross Helliker, Jeremy Waits, Kyle Martin, Gibran Santana, Andy Hanna, Ethan Clark, Tyler Norton, Cody Baxter, Hunter Lake;
4th Row L to R: Ben Whatley, Tyler Moncrief, Sam Davies, Casey Cerrato, Adam Pankey, Robert Darrington, Alexander Smith, Eric Romero;
Back Row L to R: Tyler Feemster, Vance Liles, Davaughn Jackson, Kyle Covington.



Carla Edwards
 Personnel Staff Coordinator



(Left and Below)
 Engineering interns hit the outdoors for hands-on training with AHTD equipment.



ENGINEERING INTERNS

BY DAVID NILLES

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department held its annual Engineering Student Intern Orientation in July. The event is held each year for college students who are interning with the AHTD during their summer break and who are interested in careers in transportation upon graduation.

This reporter sat down with Personnel Staff Coordinator Carla Edwards for an inside look at how the AHTD goes about recruiting engineering graduates for a career at the Department.

NILLES: How big a challenge is it to recruit and hire engineers?

EDWARDS: It is quite challenging to recruit and hire engineers graduating from college, especially now as the economy is improving and because our competition is trying to hire the same candidates. However, the Department has a great reputation, especially at in-state schools, so this helps a great deal.

NILLES: Who are we competing with to hire engineers?

EDWARDS: Our competition for these candidates is private consulting firms and other Departments of Transportation around the country.

NILLES: How many different types of engineers do we hire?

EDWARDS: The Department mainly hires civil engineering majors because the focus is on public works and, of course, ours is transportation. We do have some areas where we will occasionally hire other disciplines, such as electrical engineering, but this doesn't happen very often.

NILLES: What recruiting tools do you use?

EDWARDS: We recruit at several different career fairs held at colleges and universities with ABET-accredited civil engineering

programs in Arkansas and surrounding states (ABET is the accrediting bureau for civil engineering programs). Our engineering vacancies are posted on websites at all of these schools, and we post vacancies at additional schools where we aren't able to attend career fairs. One of our best recruiting tools is our summer Engineering Student Intern program. The Department hires students majoring in civil engineering to work in our engineering offices during the summer. During this time, we also organize an orientation program in Little Rock like the one we just completed. Students learn more about how the Department works, salaries, benefits, and get to meet our engineering staff. Many of these students end up coming to work for the Department on a full-time basis upon graduation.

NILLES: What are the advantages for an engineering student coming to work at the AHTD?

EDWARDS: One of our big selling points is stability. To my knowledge, the Department has never laid off engineers, while private firms and even some other Departments of Transportation seem to do this often. In today's environment, this is certainly something to consider. When we have a temporary increase in work, rather than hiring additional engineers who will not be needed after the busy time ends, we contract some of the work out. When the busy time slows down, we simply stop hiring consultants and contractors. The Department also has excellent benefits and our pay is competitive. Also, for those students from in-state schools, we're the largest

employer of engineers in the State, so our job openings give them the opportunity to stay in their home state instead of having to seek work elsewhere.

NILLES: How many engineers do we hire in a year's time?

EDWARDS: The Department's recruiting schedule is based on college semesters, so we recruit during the spring and during the fall. The number of engineers recruited depends on the needs of the Department at the time. These needs are based on various factors ranging from work load to crew complement. This fall semester, for example, we are seeking 14 new engineers, which is actually quite a high number compared to some past semesters.

NILLES: Is it difficult to keep engineers once they are hired?

EDWARDS: As with any job in the Highway and Transportation Department, we hope our engineers will stay until they retire. Most of the engineers who leave us don't leave because of the work or the Department itself, but have family-related reasons or perhaps want to move back to their home if they are from out-of-state. And, we've seen some that have left us for what they thought were greener pastures, but have now returned to the AHTD. ■





Photo at Left (L. to R.) Steve Frisbee, District 3 Engineer; Glenn Bolick, Special Projects Coordinator; Emanuel Banks, Assistant Chief Engineer for Operations; Rex Vines, District 1 Maintenance Engineer; Ray Gruver, Facilities Management; Scott Bennett, Director; Frank Vozel, Deputy Director and Chief Engineer; Ray Woodruff, District 1 Engineer; John Ed Regenold, Commission Chairman; Jeff Adams, West Memphis Resident Engineer; and Tom Schueck, Commissioner.

NEW WELCOME CENTER

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department opened its seventh new Arkansas Welcome Center on July 28th. And because it is situated on Interstate 40/55 in West Memphis, it is guaranteed to stay busy with motorists dropping in from one of the most heavily traveled highways in the State.

Location of the new Center was crucial in order to serve the public in the high-traffic area.

“We really spent a great deal of time designing this new Center, even restructuring the local traffic flow to be able to put the building where it is, because we felt this would be the best location,” stated AHTD Director Scott Bennett.



AT WEST MEMPHIS

Like all of Arkansas’ new Welcome Centers, the new West Memphis facility features a natural rock and log exterior. Inside, the state-of-the-art building projects a welcome setting that includes a reception desk, video displays, exhibit cases, brochure racks and even a place to sit in comfortable rocking chairs to play checkers. There are also eight picnic pavilions on the grounds.

The ribbon cutting ceremony for the Center was attended by local and State dignitaries, and guests. The event was presided over by State Senator Keith Ingram.

“This is a truly wonderful facility, something that West Memphis and the State as a whole will benefit from for years to come,” Ingram stated.

The original West Memphis Welcome Center was built in 1971 for \$584,000. Construction of the new facility was awarded to Olympus Construction Company of Jonesboro for \$3.7 million.

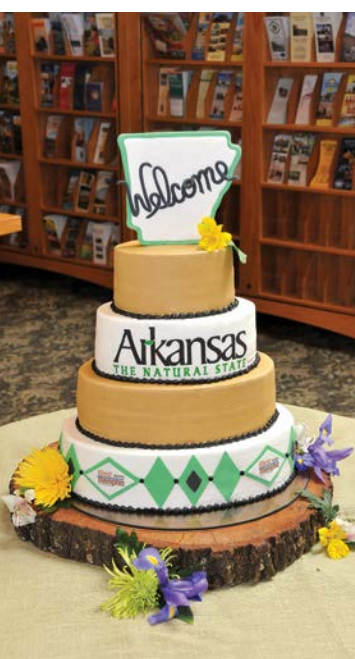
“The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department partners with the Department of Parks and Tourism to construct and operate

these Arkansas Welcome Centers,” Highway Commission Chairman John Ed Regenold told the crowd. “Our Department constructs and maintains the buildings and then staffing is handled by Parks and Tourism. Thanks to everyone involved for coming together and bringing us such a wonderful facility.”

Also on hand at the ribbon cutting was Cindy Smith, Arkansas Parks and Tourism Commission Chair.

“Our job when visitors come to Arkansas is to show them what we have to offer,” she commented. “This beautiful new Welcome Center will allow us to do that job even better.”

The Center is one of seven that have been built under a program that began in 2003. Other new Welcome Centers are located at El Dorado, Texarkana, Fort Smith-Van Buren, Corning, Blytheville and Lake Village. A new Center in Helena-West Helena will open later this year. Total cost of the seven new Centers is \$24 million. Construction of the Centers has been funded with Federal Transportation Enhancement funds and State funds. ■



(L. to R.) Commission Chairman John Ed Regenold visits with former State Representative Clark Hall at the Welcome Center opening.





CONSTRUCTION PLANS AROUND THE STATE

Throughout the year, public meetings are held around the State in communities where roadwork is being planned. These meetings are an opportunity for citizens to hear about and respond to future highway construction happening in their area.

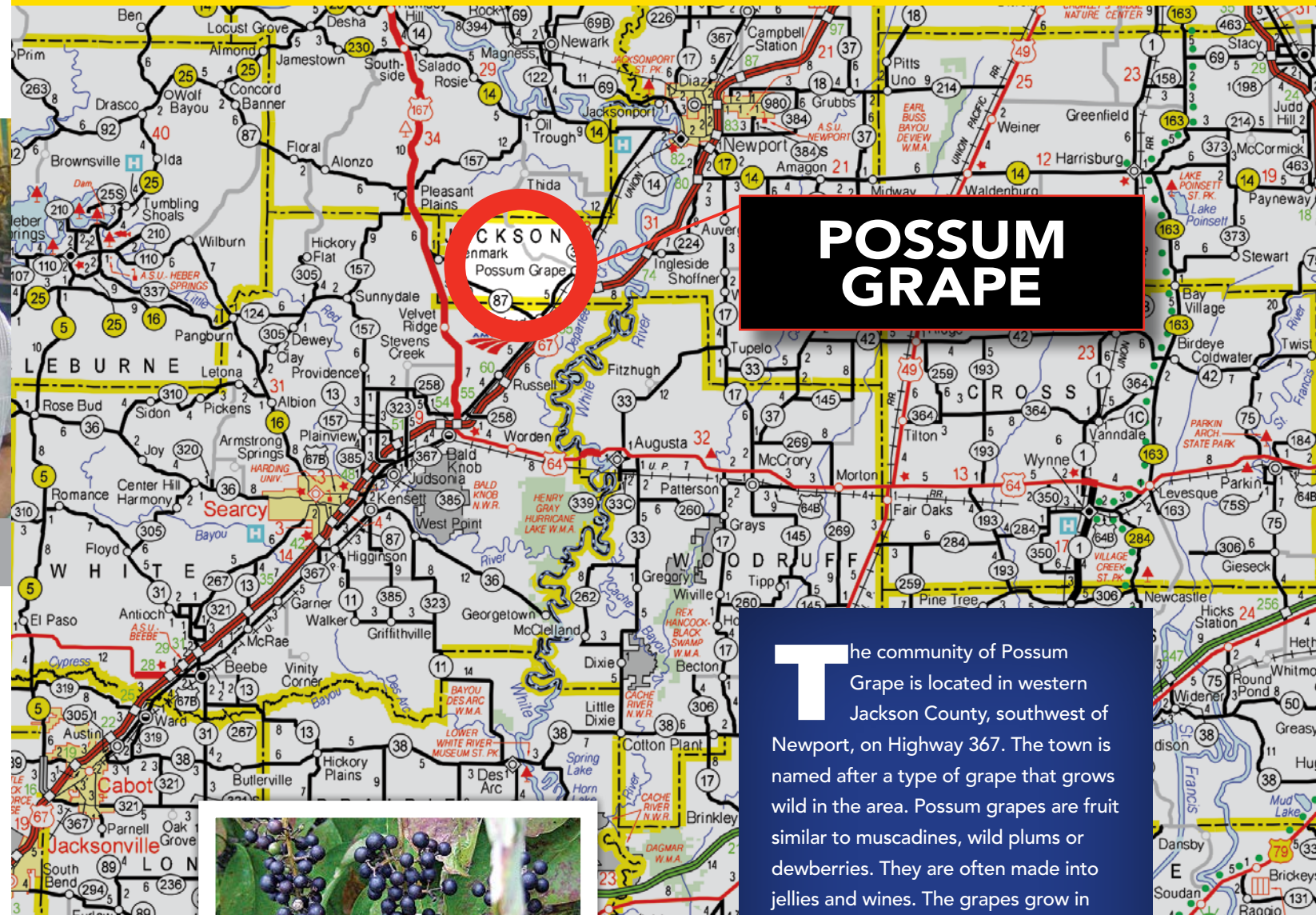


PUBLIC MEETINGS JUNE 25 - AUGUST 8, 2013

- 1** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 89
CONSTRUCTING RAILROAD OVERPASS
Mayflower, AR
Meeting Location/Date:
Mayflower Elementary School
June 25, 2013
- 2** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 64
WIDENING SEVEN MILES
El Paso, AR
Meeting Location/Date:
Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church
June 27, 2013
- 3** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 265
CONSTRUCTING NEW ROADWAY
Lowell, AR
Meeting Location/Date:
Lowell City Hall
July 11, 2013
- 4** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 51
REHABILITATION
Arkadelphia, AR
Meeting Location/Date:
Park Hill Baptist Church
July 16, 2013
- 5** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 82
WIDENING FOUR MILES
Magnolia, AR
Meeting Location/Date:
Magnolia Christian Center
July 18, 2013
- 6** *Construction Topic:*
INTERSTATE 40
WIDENING
Conway, AR
Meeting Location/Date:
Greater Pleasant Branch
Missionary Baptist Church
July 25, 2013
- 7** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 285
REHABILITATION OF FIVE MILES
Bono, AR
Meeting Location/Date:
Bono Baptist Church
July 30, 2013
- 8** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 23
REPLACING MULBERRY RIVER BRIDGE
Ozark, AR
Meeting Location/Date:
Cass Job Corp Center
August 8, 2013

ON THE MAP

SPENDING TIME WITH AN ARKANSAS HIGHWAY MAP CAN BE INTERESTING. THE FOLLOWING IS THE NAME OF AN ACTUAL TOWN IN ARKANSAS! HAVE YOU EVER VISITED HERE?



Possum Grape is a wild grape (*Vitis baileyana*) of the southeastern United States.

The community of Possum Grape is located in western Jackson County, southwest of Newport, on Highway 367. The town is named after a type of grape that grows wild in the area. Possum grapes are fruit similar to muscadines, wild plums or dewberries. They are often made into jellies and wines. The grapes grow in an area ranging from Florida northward to Kansas. They are about the size of a pencil eraser and have an intense flavor. A number of farms and houses make up the community. The Possum Grape store was the backbone of this Arkansas community for many years but it closed in 1998. A local post office has closed as well. For booklovers, *The Disenchanted Princess* by author Julie Linker is a novel set in, of all places, Possum Grape, Arkansas. 🍇

Dear AHTD,

No one can accuse you of being slow to respond! Thank you for the quick fix to restore airport directional signage on Interstate 30, Highway 549, and the ramps. The "squawks" stopped as soon as the signs were in place!

I wanted you to know I very much appreciate the rapid and comprehensive response you provided. And with regards to the highway improvements themselves — well done. From a user's perspective, the phasing, safety, and temporary routing during construction was well-managed, and the finished work has that "oh wow" factor!

Stephen Luebbert

Director

Texarkana Regional Airport

NOTE: This letter references recently completed work on Interstate 30 and Loop 245 in Texarkana.

IMPROVED RIDE

I have received several compliments from the public and city officials of the vast improvement with the asphalt overlay on T.P. White Drive. The latest compliment came from a resident with back problems and spoke of the difficulties of riding down the road and now it was great!!! She praised your efforts. Please pass our thanks on to all of the AHTD staff and commission.

Regards,

Jim Oakley

Public Works Director
City of Jacksonville

PROMPTLY-FIXED PROBLEM

Thanks to Andy and his crew from the AHTD in Hot Springs for taking care of the overgrowth of limbs that were hanging over the Highway 7 bridge in Hot Springs. This is a very dangerous turn out of and into Long Island Drive. Andy came out the same day I called and within several days, the crew was there at the spot and took care of the problem.

Thank you again to your employee, Andy, and for such prompt attention to the dangerous problem that existed at Highway 7 and Long Island Drive in Hot Springs.

Mary Jean Cunningham
Hot Springs, Arkansas

IMPRESSIVE MAGAZINE

I'm very impressed with the new magazine. The *Celebrating a Century of the Arkansas State Highway Commission* article by Danny Straessle was one for the ages. It will be something folks refer back to over the next few years. Great job in the entirety!! Hope all is well.

Chris Villines

Executive Director
Association of Arkansas Counties

VERY NICE WORK

The I-40 resurfacing from Plumerville to Atkins that is in process is very, very nice. Night work is a real plus as well — no traffic issues to speak of and obviously a very good contractor. Making my commute much better! The work from Conway to Mayflower is coming along nicely as well. Thanks, for your hard work.

Randy Young, P.E.

Executive Director
Arkansas Natural Resources Commission

KIND ASSISTANCE

Thank you and your fellow employee for your kindness to my sister and me when our vehicle had been rear-ended by another car. May the Lord forever bless you.

Paula W. Simmons

Leesville, Louisiana

NOTE: The AHTD employees referenced above are Chris Potter of R.E. 34, and Kenneth Starr of R.E. 74. They assisted Ms. Simmons and her sister when their vehicle was rendered inoperable on a hot July day.

AHTD PEOPLE

The AHTD employs approximately 3,600 people. We welcome our new employees, congratulate others on promotions and service, and say goodbye to those retiring.

NEW EMPLOYEES

EQUIPMENT & PROCUREMENT • Laura Miller, Office Administrative Assistant I

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT • John Clements, Electrician's Aide
LEGAL • Evelyn Allison, Legal Aide; Chris Lenard, Legal Aide

DISTRICT ONE • Markita Green, Single Axle Truck Driver; Decoda Johnson, Single Axle Truck Driver; Steven Kelley, Single Axle Truck Driver; Tyrone Lewis, General Laborer; Andre Hawkins Jr., Single Axle Truck Driver; Kenneth Watlington

DISTRICT THREE • Charleston Grissom, General Laborer

DISTRICT FOUR • Shelly Howard, Storeroom Assistant I

DISTRICT FIVE • Bradlee Daniels, General Laborer; Cody McDoniel, General Laborer

DISTRICT SIX • Whitney Fair, General Laborer; Troy Gaines, Rest Area Attendant; Cory Lyman, Single Axle Truck Driver; Joseph Rigby, Single Axle Truck Driver; Richard Vail, Single Axle Truck Driver; Calvin Metcalf, Single Axle Truck Driver; Jeremy Kester, Single Axle Truck Driver

DISTRICT SEVEN • Cory Anderson, Single Axle Truck Driver

DISTRICT NINE • James Standridge, Single Axle Truck Driver

DISTRICT TEN • Nicholas Rosten, General Laborer; Jason McNatt, General Laborer; Josh Tarry, General Laborer; Lakesha Harris, General Laborer

PROMOTIONS

CHIEF ENGINEER'S OFFICE • Jared Wiley, Consultant Coordinator

FISCAL SERVICES • Elizabeth Fisher, Voucher Typist

LEGAL • Sharon Blakley, Legal Office Manager

PERMITS • Michael Weidman, Permit Technician

RIGHT OF WAY • William Kirk, Right of Way Plans Designer II; Regina Kuca-Sikora, Relocation Coordinator I; Roger McManus, Right of Way Plans Designer II

ROADWAY DESIGN • Tammy Jernigan, Staff Design Engineer

DISTRICT ONE • William Cheatham, District Construction Engineer; Corey Cross, Single Axle Truck Driver; Tyler Farrell, Multi-Axle Truck Driver; Derrick McGill, Multi-Axle Truck Driver; Dennis Petty, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator

DISTRICT TWO • Daniel Courtney, Advanced Construction Field Engineer; Charlie Gipson, Mechanic

DISTRICT THREE • Bryan Bass, Maintenance Aide II; Stephen Frisbee, District Engineer; Chad Putman, Crew Leader

DISTRICT FOUR • Jason Hughley, District Construction Engineer; Caleb Work, Construction Aide I

DISTRICT FIVE • Josh Higginbottom, Motor Patrol Operator; Dennis Walling, Asphalt Tank Truck Driver

DISTRICT SIX • Kevin Ashcraft, Multi-Axle Truck Driver; James Freeman, Multi-Axle Truck Driver; Richard Hines, Street Sweeper Operator; William Williams, Crew Leader

DISTRICT SEVEN • Curtis Bearden, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator

DISTRICT EIGHT • Luke Poe, Construction Field Engineer II; Aaron Ring, Area Maintenance Supervisor; Jacob Stane, Single Axle Truck Driver; Jacquelyn Yates, Single Axle Truck Driver

DISTRICT NINE • Ronald Collins, Crew Leader; Clyde Hensley, Station Attendant II; Anthony Huber, Maintenance Aide I; Randall Keef, Motor Patrol Operator-Finish

DISTRICT TEN • Christy Cambron, Maintenance Aide II; Franklin Hendrix, Maintenance Aide I; Paul Nedelman, Distributor/Roller Operator; Nicholas Rosten, General Laborer; Gregory Wineland, Maintenance Aide I

SERVICE

ARKANSAS HIGHWAY POLICE • Michelle Miller, Division Bookkeeper, 5 yrs.; Quincy Lyons, AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.; Ebony Lewis, AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.; Michael Meeks, AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.; Charles Tolliver Jr., AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.; Kyle Eveld, AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.; Darriel Ezell, AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.; Donald Hilliker, AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.; Juril Henson Jr., AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.; Leonard Turner, AHP Patrol Officer - First Class, 5 yrs.

COMPUTER SERVICES • Margarita Olive, System Support Technician I, 25 yrs.

CONSTRUCTION • Stanley Glover, Resident Engineer, 30 yrs.; Jason Efird, Resident Engineer, 25 yrs.; Douglas Dickens, Senior Inspector, 25 yrs.; Bennie McKim, Construction Aide I, 15 yrs.; Mark Simecek, Assistant Resident Engineer, 15 yrs.; Sondra Grider, Resident Office Technician, 10 yrs.; Brandy Stormes, Construction Aide I, 5 yrs.; Jay Tooke, Construction Field Engineer II, 5 yrs.; Jerry Lairson, Construction Helper, 5 yrs.; Kyle Battenfield, Construction Aide III, 5 yrs.

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE • Scott E. Bennett, Director of Highways & Transportation, 25 yrs.

ENVIRONMENTAL • Sherry Leblanc, Environmental Analyst III, 10 yrs.

EQUIPMENT & PROCUREMENT • David Fulmer, Senior Mechanic, 15 yrs.

MAIL & SUPPLY • John Sacrey, Mail Courier, 10 yrs.

MAINTENANCE • Mickey Satterwhite, Striping Crew Supervisor, 20 yrs.

RIGHT OF WAY • Allen Lewis, Realty Appraiser III, 5 yrs.

SURVEYS • Joshua Thompson, Surveys Technician II, 15 yrs.

DISTRICT ONE • Brook Hively, Storeroom Assistant II, 10 yrs.; Jimmy Cansler, Area Headquarters Attendant, 10 yrs.; Cedric Hall, Maintenance Aide I, 10 yrs.; Robert Johnson, Crew Leader, 5 yrs.; Steven Johnson, Sign Erector, 5 yrs.; Michael Smith, Multi-Axle Truck Driver, 5 yrs.

DISTRICT THREE • Melissa Downing, Distributor/Roller Operator, 5 yrs.

DISTRICT FOUR • Leroy Dewey, Storeroom Supervisor, 15 yrs.; Carla Ennis, Maintenance Aide I, 10 yrs.; Joseph Cloos, Maintenance Aide I, 10 yrs.; Marcus Standridge, Maintenance Aide II, 10 yrs.; Steven Cole, Distributor/Roller Operator, 5 yrs.

DISTRICT SIX • Anthony Nix, District Bridge Inspector, 15 yrs.; Tommy Bowling, Street Sweeper Operator, 10 yrs.

DISTRICT SEVEN • Lewis McCallister, Rest Area Attendant, 10 yrs.; Randall Hollis, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator, 5 yrs.; Darrick Erby, Multi-Axle Truck Driver, 5 yrs.

DISTRICT EIGHT • Richard Rackley, Dozer Operator-Finish, 10 yrs.

DISTRICT NINE • Arvel McConnell, Distributor/Roller Operator, 25 yrs.; Jeff Shimko, Maintenance Aide I, 10 yrs.; Joyce Dodson, Guard, 5 yrs.

DISTRICT TEN • Jason Stigall, Maintenance Aide II, 15 yrs.; Deborah Hart, Multi-Axle Truck Driver, 10 yrs.; Michael Cooper, Senior Mechanic, 10 yrs.; David Wicker, Crane Operator-Finish, 10 yrs.; Michael Borden, Motor Patrol Operator, 5 yrs.

RETIREMENT

MAINTENANCE • Johnny Carte, Pavement Profiler Operator, 17+ yrs.

PLANNING & RESEARCH • Marion Shepherd II, Electronics Technician, 20+ yrs.

RIGHT OF WAY • Neil Palmer, Appraisals Section Head, 36+ yrs.; Vickie Whitley, Utility Coordinator II, 21+ yrs.

DISTRICT ONE • Lanny Utley, Motor Patrol Operator-Finish, 28+ yrs.; Billy Martin, Distributor/Roller Operator, 14+ yrs.

DISTRICT TWO • John Cowen, Motor Patrol Operator-Finish, 34+ yrs.

DISTRICT THREE • Don Donaldson, District Engineer, 42+ yrs.; Jackie Horton, Station Attendant II, 20+ yrs.; Athena Bright, Inspector, 21+ yrs.

DISTRICT FIVE • James Morgan, Area Maintenance Supervisor, 34+ yrs.

DISTRICT SIX • Marilyn Walker, Street Sweeper Operator, 14+ yrs.

DISTRICT SEVEN • Tim Farrell, Maintenance Aide II, 11+ yrs.

DISTRICT NINE • Greg Criner, Lowboy or Float Truck Driver, 37+ yrs.

DISTRICT TEN • David Cooper, Area Maintenance Supervisor, 27+ yrs.; Mark Fender, Motor Patrol Operator, 6+ yrs.

MEMORIALS

ARKANSAS HIGHWAY POLICE • William Donald Branch, 8/8/2013, retired

FISCAL SERVICES • Irene A. Hawkins, 8/22/2013, retired

MAINTENANCE • Herbert D. Ensey, 8/9/2013, retired

SURVEYS • Albert E. Helmert, 8/10/2013, retired

DISTRICT THREE • Curtis Ray Hill, 8/21/2013, active

DISTRICT FOUR • Craig R. Duck, 8/25/2013, retired

DISTRICT FIVE • Charles W. McClusky, 8/17/2013, retired

DISTRICT SIX • Reuben Carter, 8/2/2013, retired

DISTRICT SEVEN • James R. Williams, 7/24/2013, retired

DISTRICT NINE • Lloyd Burgess, 7/28/2013, retired

ACTIVE DUTY

As of 8/27/13, the AHTD has four employees serving active duty in the United States military. Deployment date is noted.

ARKANSAS HIGHWAY POLICE • Ruddy Gene Short, Arkansas Highway Police Patrol Officer, 3/22/13

PLANNING & RESEARCH • E. Wright-Kehner, Staff Research Engineer, 5/30/13

DISTRICT FOUR • Christina Simmons, Roller Operator, 6/3/13

DISTRICT SIX • Jeremy Stokes, Construction Helper, 5/28/13



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