



Arkansas HIGHWAYS

MAY 2015

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

Alec Farmer, Jr. Joins Commission

NEW COMMISSIONER DISCUSSES
CHALLENGE OF HIGHWAY FUNDING

**Calico Rock:
FISHING WITH
A VIEW**

**AHTD RADIO
COMMUNICATIONS
to Go Digital**

**TREES and the
ROADWAY
ENVIRONMENT**



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This is always an exciting time of year for those in the transportation industry. Once the cold winter weather and the April showers have run their course, the warmer weather allows our construction crews to make good progress on improvement projects out on our highways across the State. The Interstate Rehabilitation Program, the Connecting Arkansas Program and numerous other projects underway this spring will result in a better transportation system for all of us in the years ahead.

In addition to construction crews working on projects, the warmer weather means more motorists on our highways. This issue of *Arkansas Highways* includes an article on Work Zone Safety. It's something we all must keep in mind as we are driving and approach warning signs and orange barrels indicating construction ahead. To our motorists and to members of our construction crews, I encourage everyone to make an effort to stay safe in our work zones across Arkansas this summer.

You may have read in the headlines recently about the fact that our Department has had to postpone numerous construction projects due to the uncertainty of Federal aid re-imbursments from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. It isn't something that we like doing, considering the ever present maintenance and improvement needs we face on Arkansas' roadways, but we believe it was in our best interest financially to put these projects on hold until Federal funding is on more stable ground.

In addition to individual projects being withdrawn, the AHTD has had to cancel its 2015 Overlay Program for the year. Considering this program alone, there are few areas of the State that won't be affected by the construction cancellations. Without the new driving surfaces our overlay program provides, our maintenance crews will have to put twice the time and effort into making repairs to our existing road surfaces. In addition, if you stop and think about the economic impact these cancellations have — not only on construction jobs, but the lost commerce in each local area because construction isn't taking place — then you begin to understand the trickle-down effect and the urgency of solving our Highway Trust Fund status in Washington D.C.

There are hopes that a solution will be found soon. In the meantime, there is one thing that I know is certain, our Department crews will do whatever it takes and give their best effort to make sure our highways in Arkansas are the best that they can be as motorists travel this summer.



AHTD workers repair a section of Highway 222 near Donaldson, Arkansas.



Scott E. Bennett, P.E.
Director of Highways and Transportation

FRONT AND BACK COVER:

Fishing Boats on the White River
Highway 5 Bridge
Calico Rock • Izard County

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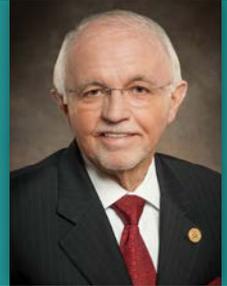
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**ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY
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ROBERT S. MOORE, JR.
Member



FRANK D. SCOTT, JR.
Member



DALTON A. FARMER, JR.
Member



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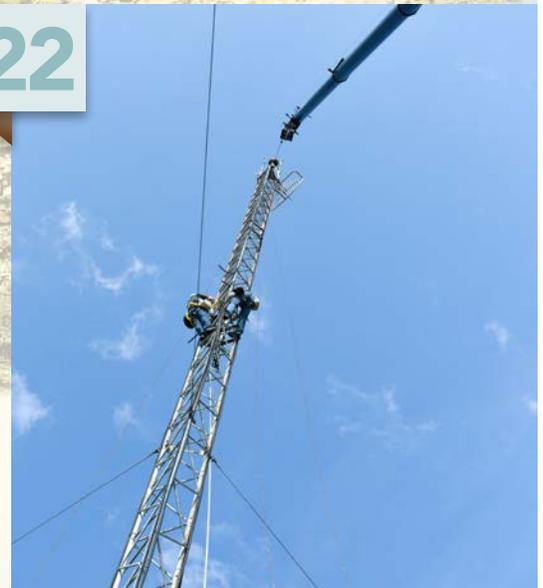
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- Staff Profile: Competitive Swimming with Rita Looney



DALTON A. FARMER, JR.

**NEW MEMBER
JOINS COMMISSION**

Alec Farmer, Jr. of Jonesboro has become the newest member of the Arkansas State Highway Commission. He was appointed by Governor Asa Hutchinson and was sworn in on January 27th of this year.

Farmer is president of Farmer Enterprises, Inc., a family-owned farm and property investment and management company. He also serves on the board of the Childress Gin and Elevator Company, and as manager for Alec Farmer Farms, LLC.

A native of northeast Arkansas, Farmer graduated with honors from Arkansas State University in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He received his Juris Doctorate degree in 1990 from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock School of Law.

Farmer is a former chairman of the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission and a former Special Commissioner of the Arkansas State Police Commission. He was also an original member of the Arkansas Agricultural Board.

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IN SERVING ON A BOARD OR COMMISSION SUCH AS THIS IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE AND BE CONSIDERATE OF THE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES THAT EACH PERSON BRINGS TO THE TABLE WHILE TRYING TO REACH THE DESIRED OUTCOME WITH THE BEST RESULTS.

His public service also includes serving over 10 years on the Craighead Conservation District board and providing free legal services as attorney for the Buffalo Island Drainage District of Craighead County since 1999. He served four years on the Jonesboro City Council and chaired the city council's Finance and Public Works Committees. He also served on the Jonesboro Metropolitan Area Planning Commission.

Farmer follows in the footsteps of his father, who served on the Highway Commission from 1985 to 1987. He sat down recently with Internal Communications Coordinator David Nilles to discuss his role on the Highway Commission and the work that lies ahead.

NILLES: *What was your personal reaction to being asked to serve on the Highway Commission?*

COMMISSIONER FARMER: Looking back, I'm not sure the Governor ever asked or that I ever accepted, it just seemed to happen. During the campaign, Governor Hutchinson made a campaign promise to appoint the next highway commissioner from Jonesboro. During and after the campaign, there were a lot of good people from Jonesboro and northeast Arkansas that kept mentioning my name to him as a potential Highway Commission appointee. And of course, it was no secret that I had a great deal of interest in the appointment for our area, not only due to its importance to the State and our region, but also because my father served as a Highway Commissioner in the mid-1980s. I learned from my father over 30 years ago the impact that highways can have on people's lives, not only from a safety

standpoint, but also from improving economic opportunities as well.

After the campaign, during the transition, we discussed the Highway Department, but nothing specific about the appointment. I guess it was a few days after Thanksgiving that I received a call from the then Governor-Elect. We spoke for a minute or two about the transition, he then says that he wants to announce me as one of his first appointees to the Highway Commission. I told him that I would be honored to serve and that was that.

As far as my personal reaction, once you get past the initial excitement and consider the responsibility to the State and the 3,500 plus employees of the Department, the 10-year commitment you are making, the enormous highway needs compared to the limited funding resources of the State, it can be somewhat overwhelming. But now that I've had several weeks to get more familiar with the various issues and projects, I view this as a great opportunity and am excited and ready to serve.

NILLES: *You have gained a great deal of experience working with others as a member of the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission as well as serving on numerous other boards. Do you think this will be valuable to you as you come to work on the Highway Commission?*

COMMISSIONER FARMER: Absolutely. I was fortunate to serve with a fantastic group of people both on the Commission and the staff at the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission for over 10 years. I've also served with many hard-working, dedicated people on my local chamber, my city council, my regional



(Left) Commissioner Farmer studies the issues up for discussion at the March 2015 Commission meeting.

(Below) The current Arkansas State Highway Commission: (Standing L. to R.) Alec Farmer, Jr., Frank D. Scott, Jr. (Seated L. to R.) Robert S. Moore, Jr., Commission Chairman Dick Trammel, and Commission Vice Chairman Tom Schueck.



planning commission and my county conservation district board.

One thing that I learned from serving with so many different individuals is that everyone approaches an issue from their own personal perspective; be it their region of the State, their business or occupational background, their personal or professional interests or some other viewpoint. In serving on a board or commission such as this, it is important to recognize and be considerate of the different perspectives that each person brings to the table while trying to reach the desired outcome with the best results.

NILLES: *How would you evaluate Arkansas' highway system as someone who is just coming onto the Commission?*

COMMISSIONER FARMER: Having grown up with highways literally being discussed around the kitchen table, I have always paid particular attention to highway issues and projects. By the time I was 20, I had already walked the halls of the Highway Department with my father. I think the Department has done

a remarkable job maintaining as many highways as it has under its authority considering the limited resources it has available. When you compare Arkansas which has over 16,400 miles of highway and a population of just over 2.9 million with other States such as California, New York and Illinois with less highway miles and four times to ten times the population, it is a pretty impressive accomplishment that Arkansas' highways are as good as they are. Everyone associated with the Department should be proud of this.

NILLES: *What was your impression as you sat in on your first Commission meeting?*

COMMISSIONER FARMER: I remember thinking, "Boy, there is a lot that I have to learn," but I imagine I'll still be learning new things until the last day of my term in January 2025. I was sworn in on January 27th and my first meeting was the next day, so things moved pretty fast the day of my first meeting. I had received congratulatory calls from the other Commissioners, but I still had not met the other Commissioners face-to-face until just before the meeting.

NILLES: *There is a great deal of discussion on the Commission about the gap that exists between the amount of funding the Department needs to meet our highway needs and the amount of funding that is actually available for those needs. What do you think may be the answer as we look at the next ten years?*

COMMISSIONER FARMER: The Blue Ribbon Committee on Highway Finance laid out the "roadmap" for the various financing options to be considered. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers, especially in the anti-tax environment that we are in today. The basic options are simple: either existing funds will have to be transferred or new funds will have to be created or we will have to get by with less or poorly maintained roads. While the Commission is the primary advocate for State highways, ultimately, the legislature and citizens will have to decide what option is taken.

NILLES: *Have you had time to think about what some priorities for our highway system should be as you begin your term on the Commission?*

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“THE PRIMARY ISSUE OF DECLINING REVENUES AND INCREASING COSTS WILL HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED AT BOTH THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL BEFORE WE HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE AS TO WHAT PROJECTS ARE VIABLE OVER MY NEXT 10 YEARS ON THE COMMISSION.”



(L. to R.) AHTD Director Scott Bennett speaks with Commissioner Farmer at the April 2015 Commission Meeting.

COMMISSIONER FARMER: We can talk about various projects that are important to the State or to a region of the State, but the primary issue of declining revenues and increasing costs will have to be addressed at both the federal and State level before we have a clearer picture as to what projects are viable over my next 10 years on the Commission. It is important that we continue to connect Arkansas with larger communities within the State as well as connecting Arkansas with other areas of the State and the country that will promote economic growth. In addition, we have to keep maintenance of our highways in mind. With the past two harsh winters,

maintaining our roads will be even more important.

NILLES: *Have you begun hearing from people in your area of the State about what they feel are important highway issues?*

COMMISSIONER FARMER: Yes, I've tried to make myself available to learn as much as possible from as many different perspectives as possible. I've heard from several communities about projects important to their area and from various business people sharing their thoughts on Highway Department procedures and processes. Not much has changed in the

10 years since the 2006 Highway Needs Study was published, there are still many more "wants and needs" than there are dollars to fund them.

NILLES: *You've had a great deal of experience working on commissions and boards, do you look forward to working with your fellow Commissioners and working toward a common goal of making our highway system the best it can be?*

COMMISSIONER FARMER: The current make-up of the Commission is very impressive. Our chairman, Dick Trammel, is one of the nicest, most civic-minded persons you'll ever meet. He fosters a very inclusive, cooperative environment on the Commission. Tom Schueck is an incredibly successful businessman and with his engineering background brings some very useful knowledge to the table when you consider an agency the size and the complexity of the Highway Department. Frank Scott's background in finance, public policy and State government adds so much to this group, plus he is one of the most impressive young gentlemen I have ever met. And Robert Moore's institutional knowledge and political acumen as both a former Speaker of the Arkansas House of Representatives and a former State agency department head for 20 years adds a very unique and important skillset to the Commission.

I cannot imagine a group of gentlemen better prepared and able to deal with the challenges and issues facing the Department in the immediate future. ■



IDriveArkansas

RECOGNIZED WITH BRONZE QUILL AWARDS

BY GLENN BOLICK

THE ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY & TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT WAS RECOGNIZED IN MARCH WITH TWO BRONZE QUILL AWARDS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATORS/ARKANSAS CHAPTER.

The IABC/Arkansas Bronze Quill awards program is the chapter's annual program recognizing excellence in writing, design, photography and interactive communications.

The 2015 awards were presented in recognition of the AHTD's IDriveArkansas campaign and were received in the categories of "Marketing Communications" and "Customer Relations." The AHTD received two of only ten top awards presented.

The IDriveArkansas website was created to provide the latest travel information for drivers in the State. Using the tagline "Travel Smart. Travel Safe," the site features real-time traffic conditions, construction zone information and other travel-related information. It went online at the end of 2013 and the marketing campaign began in earnest in 2014. Over 700,000 individuals have visited the site.

The goal of the marketing campaign is to brand the IDriveArkansas site as the primary source for travel information in Arkansas by utilizing two main components — AHTD resources and co-branded partnerships.

Thirty-seven IDriveArkansas signs are strategically located across the State (on 15 Interstate and 22 major highways). Nearly 3,000 AHTD vehicles are also being used as rolling billboards with signage.

The campaign has three partners that co-brand the site within their organizations: the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT), the Arkansas Oil Marketers Association (AOMA) and the Arkansas Hospitality Association (AHA).

The ADPT distributes IDriveArkansas materials at 13 Arkansas Welcome Centers, more than 50 State Parks and through tourism information packets mailed to over one million households a year. They also have an IDriveArkansas link on their tourism website.

The AOMA is a trade organization representing gas distributors, convenience store operators and other oil-related industries. IDriveArkansas decals are displayed on nearly 3,000 gas pumps across the State, posters are displayed at over 100 convenience stores and on nearly 50 oil tankers. Murphy USA has four oil tankers that feature full rear vinyl IDriveArkansas wraps.

The AHA represents hotel, restaurant and tourist industries. While this partnership is fairly new, nearly 30 hotels are distributing IDriveArkansas materials at customer check in.

"We are pleased with the success of this campaign," stated Scott Bennett, AHTD Director. "An ever increasing number of motorists are relying on our website to get up-to-date road information and that makes traveling our highways easier for everyone." ■



The Springfield Bridge is known as the oldest standing bridge in Arkansas. It was in continuous use for 117 years until a replacement bridge was built downstream in 1991.

UNIQUE BRIDGES

*This is the third in a series of articles featuring unique bridges found across Arkansas. Some of them are historic, some feature unique construction and some still stand though they haven't seen traffic in ages. Over the next year, we will take a look at many of those bridges in the pages of **Arkansas Highways.***

IMAGINE A BRIDGE IN ARKANSAS THAT WAS BUILT JUST FIVE YEARS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR ENDED. THEN, IMAGINE THAT IT IS STILL STANDING TODAY IN 2015. THAT WOULD BE **THE SPRINGFIELD BRIDGE**. THIS FORGOTTEN BRIDGE IS LOCATED EAST OF SPRINGFIELD, ARKANSAS, ON FAULKNER COUNTY ROAD 222 (SPRINGFIELD ROAD) WHERE IT CROSSES CADRON CREEK.

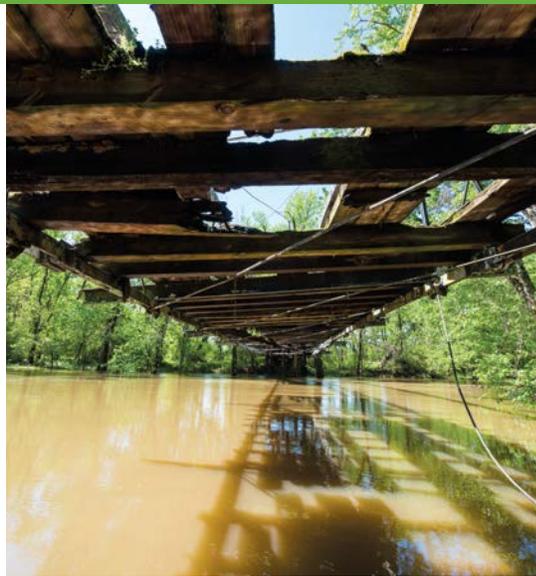
The bridge and the old roadway leading to it are abandoned now but it still remains the oldest highway bridge in Arkansas, as well as the only remaining iron bowstring arch bridge in the State.

According to data on file at the Faulkner County Courthouse, work began on the bridge in 1871. It was built by the King Bridge Manufactory & Iron Works of Iola, Kansas. Zenas King, the owner of the company, was known as one of the most successful bridge builders in the country. King was the



ACROSS ARKANSAS

BY DAVID NILLES



first to develop an effective system for mass producing bowstring bridges using wrought iron boiler plate. As a result, his company became the largest highway bridgeworks in the country in 1884.

The Springfield Bridge was one of a limited number of bridges manufactured at the Iola plant. Upon completion, it was shipped to Lewisburg, Arkansas, for future delivery to the construction site 20 miles to the north. Stones to support the bridge were obtained from a quarry two miles north of the bridge site. They were cut by Alfred Cook, a Springfield stone mason, and hauled by a team of oxen to the bridge location. On July 21st,

1874, the bridge was officially completed at a cost of \$12,857. It measures 188 feet in length and has a roadbed width of 11.5 feet.

It was in continuous use for 117 years until a replacement bridge was built downstream in 1991.

Today the Springfield Bridge is known as the oldest standing bridge in Arkansas. A path through the woods leads visitors to the bridge site from the roadway. Some accounts say the location is haunted. There are tales that one can hear a lady screaming or a baby crying. Not so on our visit, just the sound of birds singing and frogs croaking.

The Springfield Bridge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in July of 1988.

It has been threatened by numerous hazards over the years including three major floods in 1882, 1927 and 1982. The deck of the bridge partially burned in 2013. Despite all of that, the bridge still stands today, approximately 100 yards upstream from the current bridge and representing over 100 years of history. ■



AHTD vs. DOT WHAT'S IN OUR

D

EPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION...

THOSE THREE WORDS ARE USED AS THE TITLE OF THE AHTD'S COUNTERPARTS IN THE NEIGHBORING STATES OF TENNESSEE, MISSISSIPPI, MISSOURI AND OKLAHOMA. IN FACT, OVER FORTY

STATES IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE NAMED THEIR HIGHWAY AGENCIES DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION. SO YOU MAY WONDER...

HOW DID OUR AGENCY HERE IN ARKANSAS BECOME THE ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY & TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT AS OPPOSED TO A DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION?





NAME?

BY DAVID NILLES

A LOOK BACK

It hasn't always been that way. Looking back at the history of the agency, the Arkansas General Assembly created the first highway administrative agency in 1913. Act 302 of 1913 established the State Highway Commission and, under the same Act, the State Highway Department was created as an affiliate of the Department of State Lands. The new agency was renamed the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements. The Department was divided into three divisions: the State Land Division, Automobile License Division and the Highway Division.

Specifically defined responsibilities of the Department included the general supervision over road construction and maintenance; furnishing counties and improvement districts with advice and assistance; preparing and distributing information relative to roads, bridges, drainage levees and other public improvements; distributing available funds for the construction of public

roads; overseeing the efficient utilization of county and State convicts; and promoting greater interest in the improvement of Arkansas' highways.

BECOMING AN INDEPENDENT AGENCY

In 1929, the General Assembly separated Highways from the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements, making it a State agency of its own right. Its name... The Arkansas Highway Department.

Fast forward to 1977 and the Highway Department took on new responsibilities. As a result, it was renamed the Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department (AHTD).

Act 192 gave the AHTD the authority and duty to coordinate planning for all modes of transportation. Arkansas' highway system remained the primary responsibility of the Department, but preserving rail service and administering public transportation programs were placed under the AHTD's authority as well.

(continued on page 14)

New responsibilities included:

Public Transportation: The Department was to administer federal and State funds for planning, implementing, improving and operating public transportation programs in Arkansas.

Rail: The AHTD was authorized to plan, coordinate and administer a State Rail Plan to ensure the preservation of local rail services.

Air and Water: State and local airport commissions and the Arkansas Waterways Commission were directed to inform the Highway Commission regarding planned improvements to best achieve a comprehensive growth plan for Arkansas.

As is obvious, the Department now dealt with more than just highways. The addition of these new responsibilities made the name change necessary and appropriate.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The role of the AHTD, and a possible renaming of the agency, came up again in 2015 with release of the Report of the Legislative Task Force on Intermodal Transportation and Commerce. The 89th General Assembly created the Task Force in 2013 to study issues relating to intermodal transportation and commerce, and to develop recommendations relating to the subject.

The findings of the task force requested that the Task Force be re-established by act of the 90th General Assembly in 2015 in order to more fully explore the establishment of an Arkansas Department of Transportation with combined responsibility for highways, waterways and ports, rail and aeronautics.

Among other things, the Task Force would recommend that the following be considered:

- *The structure of any newly formed Department of Transportation, taking into account the constitutional nature of the Arkansas State Highway Commission, the existing legislatively created Arkansas Waterways Commission and Arkansas Department of Aeronautics, and the possibility of modal divisions.*



- *Identifying funding sources for the new Department of Transportation to promote and develop a coordinated multimodal transportation system.*
- *Development of a plan for a seamless and cost-effective transition into the newly formed Department of Transportation.*

“I appreciate the Legislature’s recognition that there could be benefits of an Arkansas Department of Transportation,” states AHTD Director Scott Bennett. “The main concern, as always, is to ensure that all modes of transportation have adequate funding for maintaining and improving their specific system. However, all these modes rely on each other and feed off each other, so it seems to make good business sense to have them all housed under one agency. This will allow us to bring Arkansas’ transportation system into the 21st Century and continue moving us successfully into the future.” ■

OUT & ABOUT

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AROUND THE STATE

As you travel Arkansas over the next two months, consider checking out some of the listed events. Our State is full of interesting things to do, no matter which highway you find yourself driving. For additional event listings, check Arkansas.com/events.

- ✱ **25TH ANNUAL CRAWDAD DAYS FESTIVAL:** Come join the fun in Harrison at the Crawdad Days Festival. Events may include a 5K run, canoe rides, bungee jumping, a carnival, vendors, vintage cars, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament and, of course, a crawdad-eating contest. Come hungry! • MAY 15 – 16
- ✱ **GREEK FOOD FESTIVAL:** This festival features a medley of Greek and Mediterranean menu favorites including Baklava, gyros, calamari, pastitso, sourota, Greek pizza, Armenian pizza, soutzoukakia (Greek meatballs) and much more. The Festival will also feature an Old World Market offering specialty foods such as falafel, Greek olive oil, hummus, dolmathes (stuffed grape leaves), cheeses, Russian collectibles, fine jewelry and an array of imported gift items from around the world. • MAY 15 – 17
- ✱ **COSSATOT RIVER OVERNIGHT ADVENTURE CAMP:** A great adventure for kids ages 9-13. Join the fun at Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area on an overnight campout! We will be hiking, fishing, fire building, swimming and more. Participants will be staying two nights at River Ridge Campsite. Meals and tents are provided. Come get outside with us! Contact the Visitors Center at 870-385-2201. • JUNE 9 – 11
- ✱ **EUREKA SPRINGS BLUES WEEK:** A week of great blues music in northern Arkansas. Performances and workshops are the highlight of this music extravaganza. Performing will be blues artists The Bel-Airs, Earl & Them, Shawn Holt and the Teardrops, Kelley Hunt, Chris Thomas King, Jimmy D. Lane, The Nace Brothers and The Noah Wotherspoon Band. Many more artists will be appearing as well. • JUNE 13 – 21

MAY 15 - 16 ✱

25TH ANNUAL CRAWDAD DAYS FESTIVAL
Lake Harrison
Harrison, AR

MAY 15 - 17 ✱

GREEK FOOD FESTIVAL
Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church
Little Rock, AR

MAY 22 - 24

RIVERFEST 2015
Downtown on the Arkansas River
Little Rock, AR

JUNE 3 - 6

MISS ARKANSAS PAGEANT
Hot Springs Convention Center
Hot Springs, AR

JUNE 9 - 11 ✱

COSSATOT RIVER OVERNIGHT
ADVENTURE CAMP
Cossatot River State Park Visitor Center
Wickes, AR

JUNE 12 - 13

BRADLEY COUNTY PINK TOMATO FESTIVAL
Bradley County Courthouse Square
Warren, AR

JUNE 13 - 21 ✱

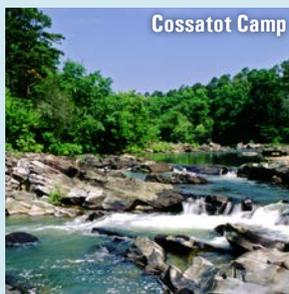
EUREKA SPRINGS BLUES WEEK
Performances around town
Eureka Springs, AR

JUNE 16 - 20

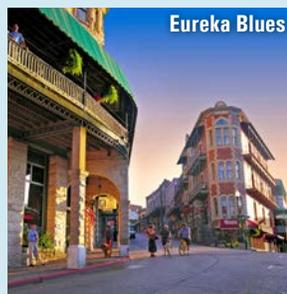
ANNUAL AUTO SHOW & SWAP MEET
Museum of Automobiles
Petit Jean Mountain, AR



Greek Fest



Cossatot Camp



Eureka Blues



THE "CHRISTMAS BARGE" CHRISTENED IN PEEL

BY GLENN BOLICK

I**F** you are around Commission Chairman Dick Trammel long enough, you will hear him utter one of his favorite sayings, "Everyday is like Christmas." It was in his honor that the new barge at the Peel Ferry was aptly named "The Christmas Barge" on the morning of April 16th.

Far from a chilly December morning, the 16th was actually one of those beautiful and sunny springtime days. Commissioner Trammel still reminded the crowd that he believes everyday is like Christmas as he ceremoniously broke a replica champagne bottle for the official christening of the barge.

Located 30 miles north of Yellville on Highway 125, the last operating ferry in Arkansas crosses Bull Shoals Lake and reconnects to the highway as it leads into Missouri.

The new \$653,000 barge was built by Sisco Marine of Panama City, Florida. Measuring 80 feet long and 30 feet wide, the barge can hold up to 100 passengers



(R.) Ferryboat Supervisor Mark Grozis secures the new barge to the dock.



(L.) Commission Chairman Dick Trammel breaks a replica champagne bottle to christen the new "Christmas Barge" at Peel.

and 12 vehicles — double the six vehicle capacity of the old "Toad Suck" barge that the Christmas Barge will eventually replace.

The barge arrived in Peel in four sections. It took five semi-trucks to haul it onto location next to the shore of the lake. It was assembled on site, and all the hardware was then installed. Work began on the barge in July of 2014, and it was launched into the water in Peel on January 10th.

The total weight of the barge is 92.7 tons. Its maximum load is 78,500 pounds.

The Toad Suck barge was put into service near Conway in 1956 and moved to Peel in 1971. It was originally a paddle



wheel barge and was converted to a flat barge around 1982. There are no current plans for its future.

Operation of the Peel Ferry began in 1968 when a private group bought and operated the Little Joe tug and Lady

Marion barge. They charged a dollar per car to cross the lake.

The State took over operations in 1969 and made it free to use. Two new tugs were put into service in the summer of 2011 at a cost of \$338,114. ■

Anglers fishing on the White River below the bluffs at Calico Rock



WEEKEND ROAD TRIP:

BY DAVID NILLES

SUMMER IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND FLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM ACROSS THE NATURAL STATE. THERE IS NO BETTER TIME TO MAKE PLANS FOR A WEEKEND ROAD TRIP.

To celebrate springtime and being outdoors, our adventurous magazine team studied the map, found an appealing outdoor area and hit the highway. This month's destination is the Ozark National Forest of north central Arkansas, the **White River** and the towns of **Allison** and **Calico Rock**.

Our route from Little Rock took us up Highway 9 and through Stone County. At the intersection of Highways 9, 5 and 14, we entered the Ozark National Forest and came to our first stop.

Located right on the **White River**¹ is the town of **Allison**². For anyone who enjoys

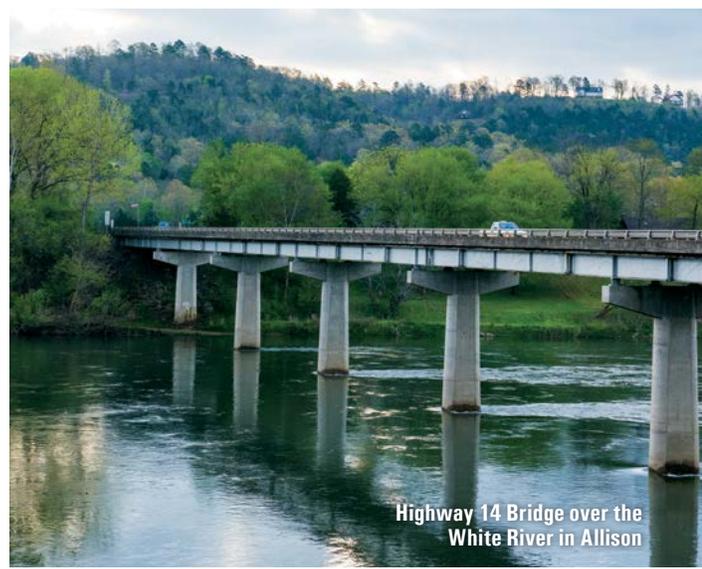
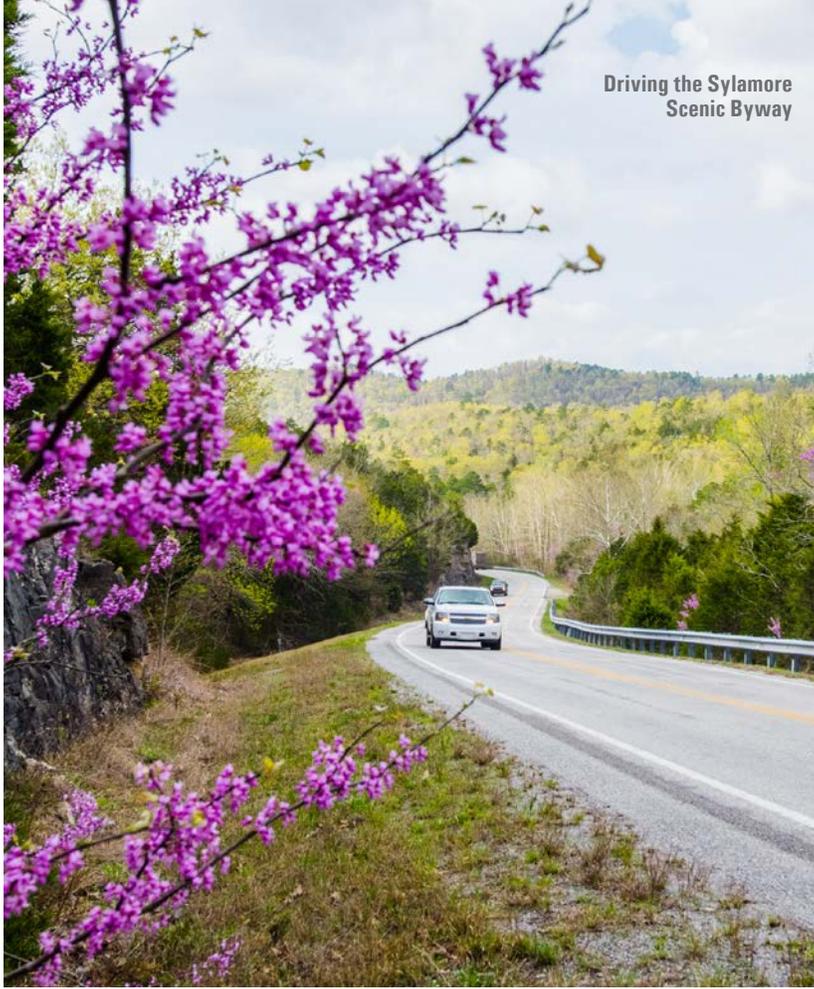
fishing, this is the perfect destination. Trout fishing is the name of the game here but smallmouth and largemouth bass can also be caught along the river. Spend your day wade fishing from the bank, renting a fishing boat or even fishing with a professional guide. There are numerous fishing services in town including Angler's White River Resort and Jack's Fishing Resort. Feel like floating the White River? Canoes, kayaks and even inflatable rafts are available to rent for a leisurely day on the water. For overnight stays, Angler's and Jack's offer motel rooms and cabins. Angler's also has a campground with a

swimming pool waiting for those who are traveling in recreational vehicles or plan on tent camping. Both resorts are located right on Highway 5 in Allison.

After spending time here, head north on Highway 5 out of Allison and you are on the **Sylamore Scenic Byway**³. The byway is made up of a 26-mile portion of Highways 5, 14 and Forest Service Road 1110. Along the way are limestone bluffs, numerous creeks and river views, and panoramic views of the national forest and Ozark Mountains. Travel the road in the spring time and you will enjoy an amazing number of redbud and dogwood trees in bloom.

Keep an eye open for bicyclists while you travel the byway because approximately three miles north of Allison is the **Syllamo Mountain Bike Trail**⁴. The

Driving the Sylamore Scenic Byway



Highway 14 Bridge over the White River in Allison

CALICO ROCK

trail is a series of interconnecting loops offering the mountain bike enthusiast 50 miles of trail, much of it single-track. The trail features a variety of difficulty—stretches that are pleasant for a beginner, then stretches where some experience is helpful. This is the main trail head; there are three secondary trail heads on Green Mountain Road. Hikers are welcome to walk on the trail.

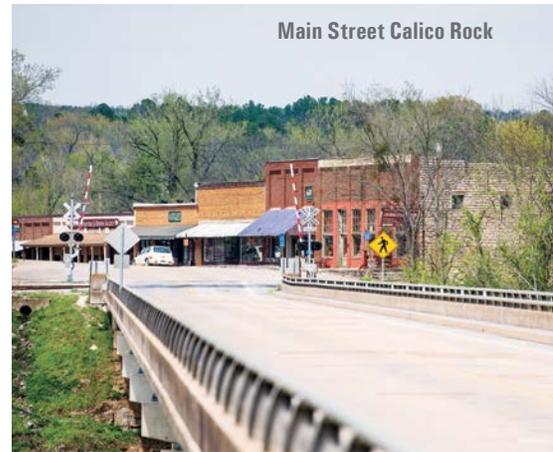
Take in the scenery on the byway for 17 miles, cross the White River and you arrive in the town of **Calico Rock**⁵. Calico Rock was an important river port for steam boats on the upper White River as early as the first half of the 1880s. Legend says the town was named when an early explorer of the White River Valley saw the beautiful limestone bluff and called it “The Calico Rocks” because it

resembled the calico fabric used to make women’s dresses. The community became a boomtown in 1902 when railroad tracks were laid.

Calico Rock’s Main Street (Highway 5) features brick and stone buildings built in the 1920s. Visitors will find shops, antique stores and a museum just after crossing the river. The **Calico Rock Historic District** was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985 for its collection of buildings featuring early 20th century commercial-style architecture. The historic district consists of one block of buildings on both sides of Main Street between the railroad tracks and Walnut Street. It also includes the coal house and the River View Hotel. All 17 buildings are contributing to the historic significance of the district.

(continued on page 20)

Main Street Calico Rock



Be sure to visit the **Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center**⁶ housed in the historic E.M. Rand Building and Bluff City Bank building. On view are collections and exhibits telling the history of this area beginning with American Indian culture, the history of Frank and Jesse James in the area, the building of the railroad and progressing right up to the 1960s.

Also in the museum is the Gwen Murphy Art Gallery, an area devoted to handmade works of art made by local artists. Among the items for sale are pottery, furniture, leather works, quilts, woodworking and jewelry. The museum is located at 104 Main Street and is open Tuesday through Saturday.

Not far from the activity on Main Street is a much slower paced area known as the **"East Calico Historic District."**⁷ This area was home to the industrial district in years past and features old deserted buildings from days gone by. In fact, the area is known as a ghost town. A walking tour of the area focuses on approximately fifteen deserted buildings. Strategically located signs share the history of each structure and display historical photos. Among the buildings are an old funeral home, a barber shop, a theater, a cafe and a jail.

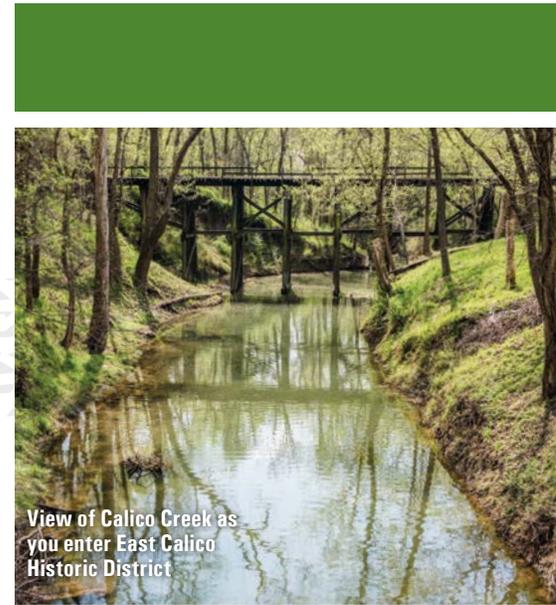
On the creek side of the East Calico District is **Peppersauce Alley**⁸. This former disreputable part of town was originally an old wagon yard. When farmers came to town on their buying trips, they would park their wagons in the yard and stay overnight. They would often visit the old taverns in the area dating back to the 1890s. The drink of choice along the alley was known as "Peppersauce", the local name for area moonshine brewed there.

Just like Allison, trout fishing is the name of the game in Calico Rock. Guide services include Jenkins Fishing Service and Calico Rock Trout Dock. Rent a boat for a few hours or all day while you enjoy the river, the bluffs and great fishing.

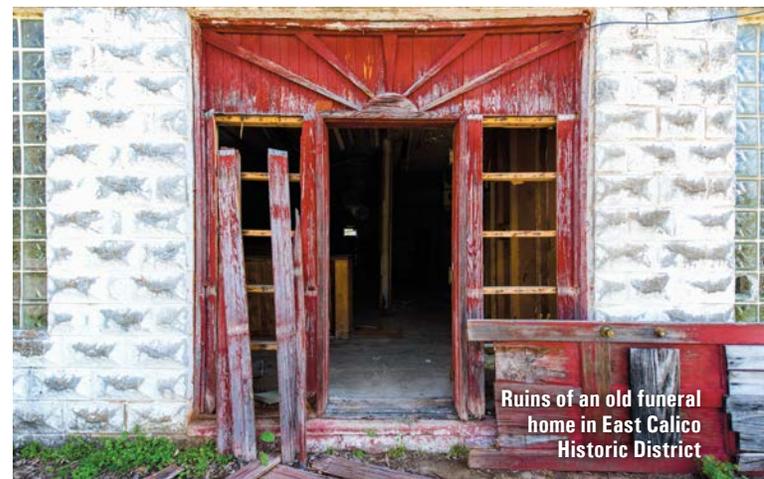
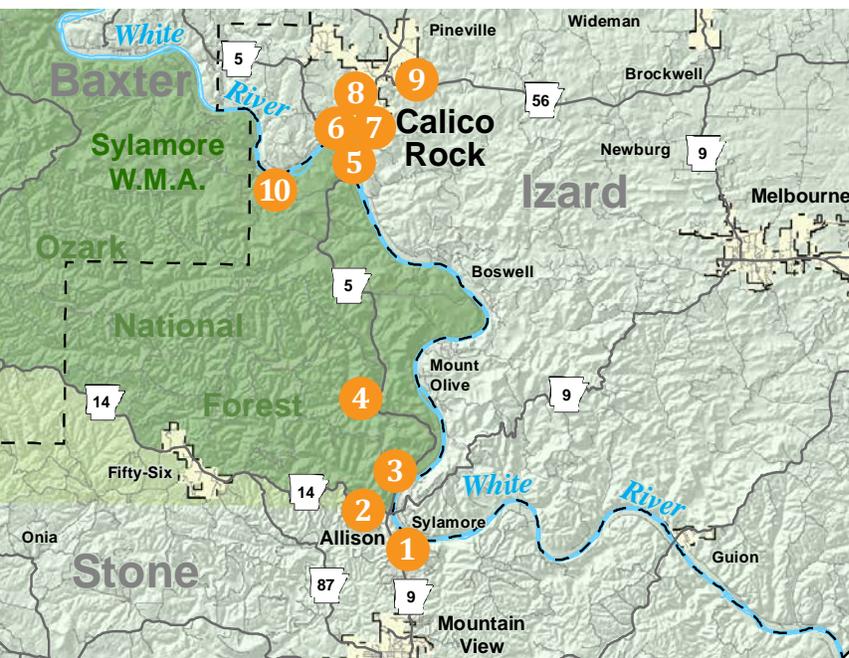
Leaving Main Street, a few miles up Highway 56 but still in town is the **1815 Trimble Cabin**⁹, one of the few log cabins in existence predating the Civil War. James and Phebe Trimble built their log cabin in 1815. It was there that they raised ten children. James was an elder in the Mount Olive Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Whenever the circuit-riding minister arrived, the Trimbles would open their house and land for a camp meeting or worship services. In 1858, James and Phebe donated 107 acres to the Union

C.P. Church, now Trimble Campground Church. The land had a cemetery, meeting house, large spring and campground. The cabin has been relocated from Dolph to a location right on Highway 56 across from Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

For an impressive view of the Calico Rock area, travel out Highway 5. It's just a few miles to **City Rock Bluff**¹⁰, one of the most spectacular views of the White River to be found anywhere. Standing on the bluff, you can enjoy a panoramic view of the river down below and the city in the distance. It's a great place to spend some leisurely time taking in the view. To reach the bluff, turn right onto Culp Road (County Road 53) at New Hope Church and go approximately 2.5 miles. This gravel road has some scenic views as well as farmlands and cedar



View of Calico Creek as you enter East Calico Historic District



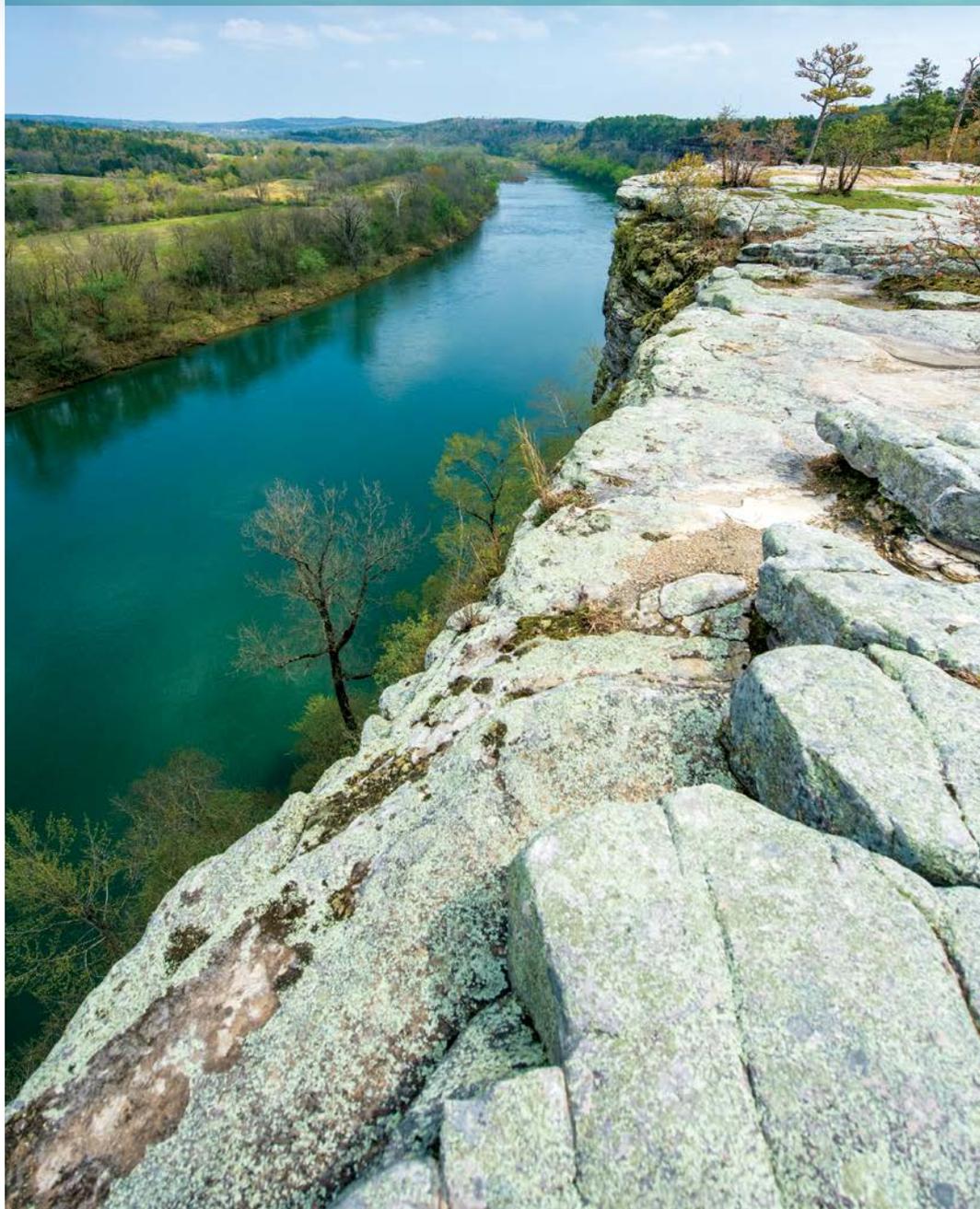
Ruins of an old funeral home in East Calico Historic District

rock glades. Watch for the turnoff to the parking area on the right because there are no signs leading to the area.

The cities of Calico Rock and Allison are ideal for outdoor lovers, both offering all there is to do on the White River. Our weekend travels end here but Stone County offers a week's worth of other adventures right in the area including the town of Mountain View, the Ozark Folk Center State Park and Blanchard Springs Caverns. Stone County is a great vacation destination in north central Arkansas with adventures to be had in every direction. ■

For more information on things to do in Stone County, see the January 2015 issue of Arkansas Highways magazine.

FOR AN IMPRESSIVE VIEW OF THE CALICO ROCK AREA, TRAVEL OUT HIGHWAY 5. IT'S JUST A FEW MILES TO **CITY ROCK BLUFF**, ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR VIEWS OF THE WHITE RIVER TO BE FOUND ANYWHERE.





Members of the Communications Maintenance team secure the top section to a new radio tower.

COMMUNICATIONS:

RAISING TOWERS TO GO DIGITAL

BY DAVID NILLES

OVER THE NEXT 18 MONTHS, AHTD CREWS IN THE COMMUNICATIONS MAINTENANCE SECTION WILL BE BUSY ERECTING RADIO TOWERS ACROSS THE STATE. IT'S ALL PART OF AN EFFORT TO UPGRADE AND EXPAND THE DEPARTMENT'S RADIO SYSTEM TO MAKE IT MORE IN LINE WITH MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOLS.

"The Department is improving its radio system from a VHF analog system to a VHF digital system," says Woody Adams, Communications Maintenance Coordinator in the Maintenance Division. "The towers we are erecting are the first stage of the plan."

The AHTD currently has the largest VHF radio system in the State. AHTD crews use two-way radios in their staff vehicles to communicate with District Headquarters, maintenance offices, area foremen and the Radio Dispatch Room at the Central Office. Hand-held units are used on construction sites. For example, flaggers use them to communicate when directing traffic flow.

"The new towers will help us improve what we are doing and allow us to build on top of what we already have," Adams states. "Some of the new towers are replacements, some are new and in new locations."

The condition of some of the older towers warranted their replacement. Some of the older towers were built in the 1960s. Other existing towers will have height added to them to make radio links a little more stable.

“It allows us to communicate better across a bigger footprint,” Adams adds.

The AHTD currently has 42 tower sites. There are also satellite sites at some Area Headquarters across the State.

Plans call for new towers at Gentry, Greene County, Almond, McGehee, Conway and Forrest City. Crews will be replacing towers at Shinall Mountain, Mt. Nebo, Brinkley and Fordyce.

BUILDING THE TOWERS

“The Heavy Bridge section builds the concrete footers for the towers, and then our six-man crew comes in and erects the tower,” Adams explains. “We hire out the cranes because the AHTD doesn’t have cranes large enough to do this kind of

work. Our guys do the hands-on work.”

Once a base is built, it takes two weeks to erect a tower. There is some assembly on the ground. Then crews stack them up with the crane and attach them when in position. The work isn’t for the weak-hearted. Crew members climb to dizzying heights and work while being tethered to the tower. In addition to Adams, the crew includes Bobby Allison, J.R. Bailey, John Clements, Larry Coatney, Dan Crews, Kelly Fields, David Fort and Pat O’Bannon.

“Most of these will be free-standing towers with no guy wires,” Adams states. “Free standing towers offer less maintenance and fewer issues than towers with guy wires. They take less real estate and you don’t have to maintain the guy paths.”

Locations for the new towers were based on the location of existing towers and identifying on a map where the gaps in coverage may be.

THE ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL

With towers in place, how will the digital system make for better radio communications?

“Right now, we have an ‘all-call’ system,” Adams explains. “That means when somebody keys up a radio to talk, it goes out everywhere and everybody hears what you’re saying. The new digital system will allow us to do select calls, as opposed to your message going to everyone out there. Now we can select and individualize our calls to select groups. Foreman to County yard, for example. It will give our groups more usability out of the radio system.”

The voice quality across the radio system will improve as well because it is digital. In addition, it will give us some range back. FCC mandates caused us to lose some range several years ago. With the new digital system we will get some of that lost coverage back.”

“Some crews have been using their cell phones to communicate,” Adams adds.

(continued on page 24)





Communications Maintenance Specialist Bobby Allison does ground work before a tower section is hoisted into place.

“The problem is that cell phone use is sketchy in certain terrains and crews can’t use it. They use cell phones so they are not broadcasting Statewide. It will be such an improvement for them when we can start narrowing it down to certain groups on the radio.”

COMMUNICATIONS AND MORE

Selective communication and better coverage using the new digital system are just the beginning.

“In addition to radio traffic, we want to look at the ability to transfer Department data across the new system as well,” Adams explains. “Data such as Kronos and Site Manager could be utilized over the new digital radio links. It would really bring them up to speed.”

There are also plans to upgrade the radio dispatch system in the Radio Room at Central Office. Equipment will be brought in that will allow them to handle radio traffic in a better, more effective way.

“Hopefully everyone will be able to use the new system,” Adams adds. “We hope to make it easy enough to use and stable enough to use that everyone will want to use it.”



Cost for the new digital radio system is in the neighborhood of \$2.0 to \$2.5 million. That is for an all-digital system featuring select call for all ten Districts across the State.

As far as a timeline for the improvements, “We hope to have the system done in one to two years,” Adams stated. We began six months ago on this program and had numerous discussions before that. Once we get all the towers up, we will transition from the towers to working on improving the links and our data speeds.”

Whether at dizzying heights constructing towers or at ground level working on updating equipment, the staff in Communications Maintenance is hard at it keeping the Department’s communications systems up to date and in optimal condition. ■

(L. to R.) Communications Maintenance Specialist Dan Crews and Communications Maintenance Coordinator Woody Adams work on a guy wire.



HIGHWAY HISTORIAN



Circa 1990

THE ARKANSAS WELCOME CENTER AT LAKE VILLAGE,

THEN AND NOW. THE ORIGINAL CENTER WAS OPENED IN 1978 AT A COST OF \$420,000. THE NEW WELCOME CENTER OPENED TO VISITORS IN 2010. THE MOST UNIQUE FEATURE IS THE 3,700 SQUARE-FOOT, MULTI-LEVEL FISHING AND OBSERVATION DECK OVER LAKE CHICOT. THE NEW CENTER WAS DEDICATED BY THEN GOVERNOR MIKE BEEBE AND WAS BUILT AT A COST OF \$2.8 MILLION.

2015

Front Entrance



Observation Deck

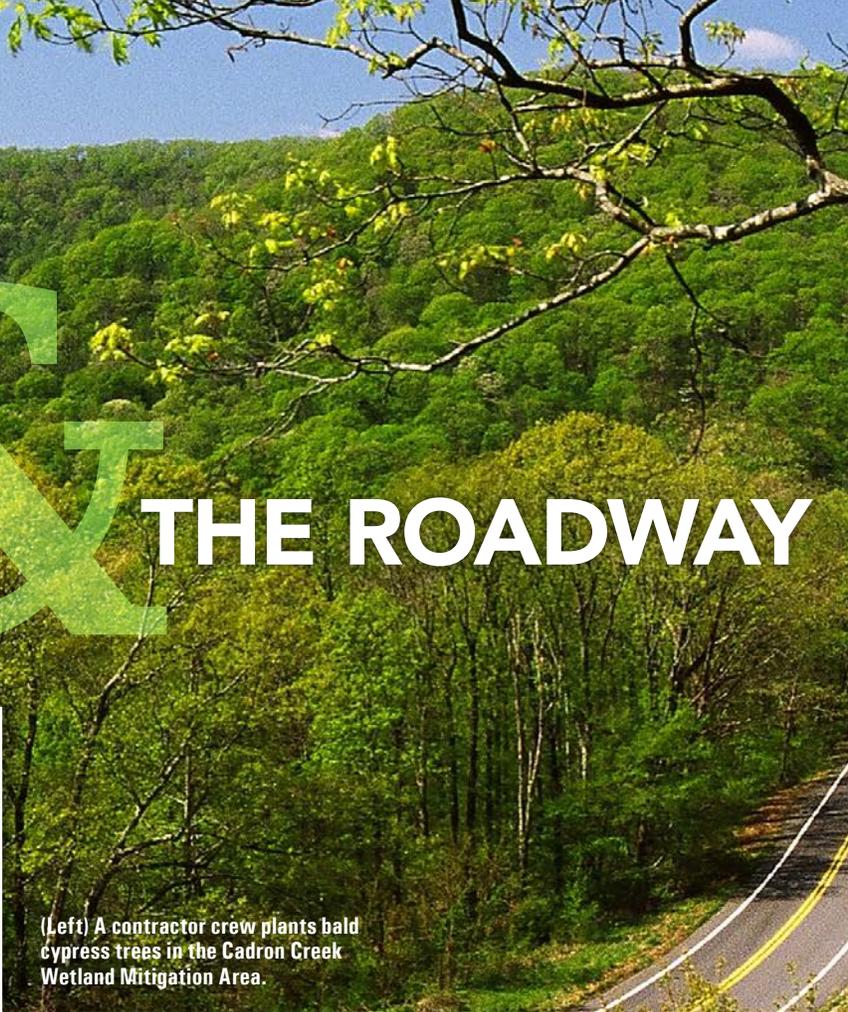
THEN

NOW

TREES & THE ROADWAY



(Left) A contractor crew plants bald cypress trees in the Cadron Creek Wetland Mitigation Area.



Many of us “of a certain age” have fond memories of climbing trees during the endless summers. It was an adventure which gave us a new perspective on the world and maybe allowed us to spy on unsuspecting adults or temporarily escape punishment for breaking Mom’s vase.

For the lucky few with access to scrap lumber and with understanding parents, the back yard tree could even support a treehouse. For most adults our tree climbing days are largely over except for energetic deer hunters and we now may view trees as shade for our backyard, as resources which provide lumber and paper, and as objects of beauty in the fall.

Besides their shade, beauty and economic utility, trees also play an important role in the environment. By absorbing carbon dioxide and returning oxygen to the atmosphere, they help provide the air we breathe and it is estimated that one large tree can provide enough oxygen for two people. Through a process called transpiration, their root system takes in water from the soil and the trunk and branches carry it to their leaves where it is released into the atmosphere. Studies have shown that about 10 percent of the water in the atmosphere comes from this source and according to the U.S. Geological Survey, a large oak tree can recycle up to 40,000 gallons of water in this manner every year.

Additionally, interception of rainfall by the tree canopy helps reduce the force of raindrops striking the soil, thereby reducing erosion while the root system holds the soil in place, contributing to this effect. The number of trees in a watershed is directly related to the overall health of waterbodies within that watershed because deforestation contributes to an increase in total stormwater runoff and peak runoff rates.

IF AN AHTD
CONSTRUCTION PROJECT
DISTURBS A WETLAND
AREA, THE DEPARTMENT
MUST MITIGATE FOR THESE
IMPACTS AND THIS IS DONE
THROUGH REFORESTATION
IN DESIGNATED AREAS.



ENVIRONMENT

BY: GARY WILLIAMSON,
NPDES Section Head
SARAH DEVRIES,
Environmental Analyst III

These benefits derived from the preservation of trees and the surrounding vegetation combined with wildlife habitat protection, air quality improvement, noise reduction, and energy savings, make trees a valuable resource worthy of protection.

Obviously, we can't build highways without removing trees but because of the environmental benefits and regulatory requirements, the Department tries to limit clearing as much as possible on construction projects. Preserving trees and other vegetation even though challenging, can help absorb and filter out metals, fine sediment, and nutrients from overland flow and decrease the amount of erosion once the highway is completed. For this reason, construction plans designate areas of preserved vegetation where clearing or damaging trees is not permitted. Because of safety factors such as driver visibility, these areas are normally restricted to medians, interchanges and wide rights of way. Other areas are designated for selective

clearing which requires the contractor to leave the area in a park-like condition with trees maintained but dispersed in a manner which will accommodate economical mowing.

Protection of vegetated areas adjacent to waterbodies is a requirement of the Construction Stormwater Permit which governs the Department's earth-disturbing activities on construction projects. The goal of this constraint is to provide a filtration area for sediment which might otherwise be carried by stormwater from the disturbed soil area of the project to a stream or lake. The specific requirement is "...to provide and maintain natural buffers around surface waters, direct stormwater to vegetated areas to increase sediment removal and maximize stormwater infiltration, unless infeasible". This regulation requires a 25-foot vegetation buffer adjacent to most water bodies and a 50-foot buffer along designated special category waters. Necessary clearing is allowed by the

Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality for roadways which cross water bodies on a case-by-case basis.

If an AHTD construction project disturbs a wetland area, the Department must mitigate for these impacts and this is done through reforestation in designated areas. The Environmental Division's Special Studies Section identifies how many wetland acres are disturbed on a project and works to mitigate the impacts to the watershed by replanting in other wetland and riparian areas. Some of the mitigation work is done on the Department's right-of-way or on easements obtained for the purpose. Several different tree species which are native to that area of the State are selected for each mitigation area with an average of over 300 seedlings planted per acre.

In 2014-2015, almost 150,000 trees were planted by contractors in seven different mitigation areas. If 50 percent of the seedlings reach maturity with an average of 100 gallons of water uptake per tree per day, well over seven million gallons of water would be removed from the amount of runoff in those watersheds after a rainfall event.

As we have seen, by preserving trees through selective clearing, integrating effective buffers into construction projects and through mitigation work, stormwater runoff can be significantly decreased. When stormwater travels through a forested buffer area it slows down, spreads out, and soaks into the ground providing groundwater recharge, water for surrounding vegetation and lowers discharges into water bodies. The benefit of trees is clearly more than aesthetics when flooding concerns are decreased, erosion rates are lower and ultimately less pollution is produced. ■



HIGHWAY 226 IMPROVEMENTS HIGHLIGHTED FOR WORK ZONE SAFETY EVENT

The widening of Highway 226 to four lanes between Highway 67 and Jonesboro was the focus of a Work Zone Safety event held April 7th in northeast Arkansas.

AHTD officials, Jonesboro city leaders and contractors gathered for a news conference at the eastern end of Highway 226 to remind motorists to take caution when traveling through work zones on our roadways.

“We don’t take safety lightly,” said Emanuel Banks, Deputy Director and Chief Engineer for the Department. “We want people to be able to drive through project sites such as this one and navigate safely.”

Sherri Fryar, a representative of the Arkansas Chapter of the American Traffic Safety Services Association urged motorists to slow down when entering work zones and to drive in the lane that’s farthest from workers.

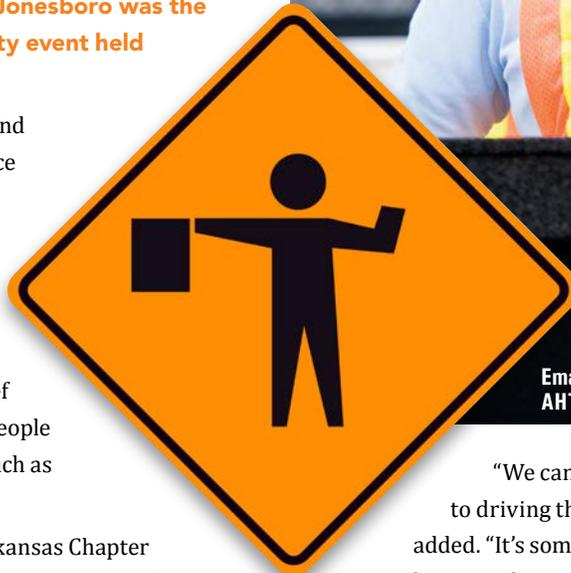
“Lives are impacted in work zones,” she reminded the audience. “We have seen senseless accidents. Most of these cases could be preventable.”

Richard Hedgecock, vice president of General Contractors of America/Arkansas Chapter pointed out that about 600 people die in the United States every year due to accidents in construction zones.

“Most of these deaths are caused by distractions such as cell phones,” he stated. “When you see the caution signs and orange barrels, pay attention.”

The good news is work zone deaths are down from as high as 1,000 ten years ago to 579 in 2013, Hedgecock shared.

With the warmer weather, construction crews are in full swing on Arkansas highways. The AHTD’s Interstate Rehabilitation Program and Connecting Arkansas Program mean a higher than usual number of work zones for motorists.



Emanuel Banks,
AHTD Deputy Director and Chief Engineer

“We can’t overemphasize safety when it comes to driving through or working in a work zone,” Banks added. “It’s something that we really try to raise the bar on with our workers, our contractors and the driving public. We want people to drive safely through work zones and arrive safely at their destination.”

As for improvements along Highway 226, Banks shared a timetable for the projects’ completion.

“We began these improvements in 2010. After years of work, only three sections remain,” he commented. “We’re anticipating finishing a couple of them towards the end of this year. We have one here that should be completed towards the end of the summer, one that should finish up by the end of the year and then one that we hope to have completed at the early part of next year.”

When finished, drivers will have an uninterrupted four-lane route extending from Little Rock to Jonesboro.

Jonesboro Mayor Harold Perrin is already looking forward to the benefits an improved Highway 226 will bring.

“I see this widening bringing us two things,” he commented. “Safety for our motorists traveling in this area and a way to bring economic development to our area. It’s going to be great for us.”



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 planned in their area. The list below serves as a record of past meetings. A list of upcoming meetings can be found at www.ArkansasHighways.com, under the "Upcoming Events" section.



PUBLIC MEETINGS OCT. 2014 - APRIL 2015

- 1** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 412
NEW LOCATION
Paragould, AR
Meeting Date:
October 30, 2014

- 2** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 67
NEW LOCATION
Pocahontas, AR and Corning, AR
Meeting Dates
November 12 - 13, 2014

- 3** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 82
CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT STUDY
Texarkana, AR and El Dorado, AR
Meeting Dates
November 18 - 19, 2014

- 4** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 286
ROUNDABOUTS
Conway, AR
Meeting Date
December 18, 2014

- 5** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 51
REHABILITATION
Arkadelphia, AR
Meeting Date
January 27, 2015

- 6** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 335
REHABILITATION
El Dorado, AR
Meeting Date
March 31, 2015

- 7** *Construction Topic:*
HIGHWAY 278 - HIGHWAY 425
MONTICELLO BYPASS
Monticello, AR
Meeting Date
April 9, 2015



SPECIAL EVENTS

BY DAVID NILLES

AROUND THE STATE

Ground Broken for Springdale's HIGHWAY 412 BYPASS

A HTD Commissioners past and present lined up with local dignitaries on April 15th to break ground for the first leg of the Highway 412 Bypass north of Springdale.

Clear skies and perfect temperatures prevailed for the symbolic beginning of construction on a project that will carry traffic from Interstate 49 westward to Highway 112.

The project was awarded to Eutaw Construction Company of Aberdeen, Mississippi, at a cost of \$100.6 million, the single largest road construction contract awarded by the Arkansas State Highway Commission.

"This will be our first east-west Interstate-type corridor and it's really going to help our east-west mobility," commented Mike Malone, CEO of the Northwest Arkansas Council.

The first leg of the bypass will be a four-lane, divided highway 4.5 miles in length. The project also includes

construction of 12 bridges.

"This is one of the top priorities of the region and has been a goal to accomplish for decades," stated U.S. Senator John Boozman of Rogers. "I'm proud of the effort and countless hours that Arkansans have put in to make this a reality.

Commissioner Dick Trammel recognized one of those that was instrumental in initially planning for an improved highway system in northwest Arkansas including Interstate 49.

"I want to credit former Highway Commissioner Bobby Hopper," he stated. "It takes a long time to get from dream to reality. This is the visionary that made this possible."

"It means a lot to see that it's going to get done," Hopper commented. "Northwest Arkansas deserves this."

Trammel also gave credit to the voters of Arkansas.



(Top, L. to R.) Springdale Mayor Doug Sprouse and AHTD Director Scott Bennett listen as Commission Chairman Dick Trammel speaks to the crowd gathered for the event.



(Left) Former Highway Commissioner Bobby Hopper

"The voters of this State stepped up to the plate and approved Issue 1 for the half-cent sales tax back in 2012. Without this sales tax funding for the Connecting Arkansas Program, this project and the widening of Interstate 49 to six lanes wouldn't be happening."

"This is part of more than \$750 million in highway construction and improvements being made in Benton and Washington Counties now or in the coming months," stated AHTD Director Scott Bennett. He added that the first leg of the bypass will eventually link to a connector highway planned by the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Authority that will provide easier access to XNA Airport.

Bennett added that the first stage of construction on the new Springdale Bypass should be completed by mid-2019. ■



Highway Department officials and local dignitaries line up to break ground for Springdale's Highway 412 Bypass.

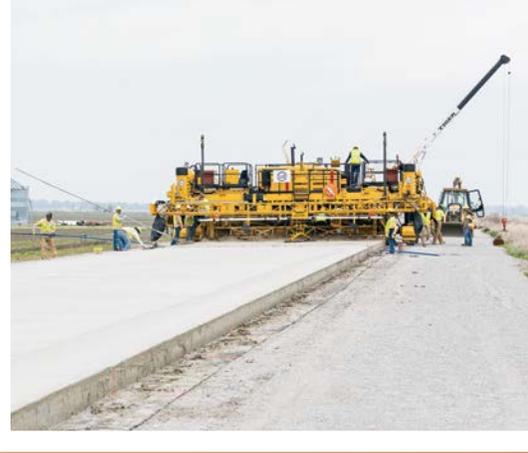


<https://vimeo.com/ahtd/n412>

CLICK HERE
FOR VIDEO CONTENT

DISTRICT 10

CONSTRUCTION



CORNER

Highway 67 is one of the major roadways carrying traffic between central Arkansas and northeast Arkansas. To meet traffic demands for the future, improvements are presently underway by the AHTD to widen the highway between Little Rock and Walnut Ridge.

Crews are on location in Lawrence County widening just over 15 miles of the highway to four lanes. The improvements begin at Highway 230 and extend northward to Highway 63 in Walnut Ridge. Grading and structures for this section of the roadway were completed last summer.

Crews with Weaver-Bailey Contractors, Inc. are now constructing the base and surfacing. It was awarded to the company for \$20 million in late 2012.

Construction is now approximately 40 percent complete. Work is expected to be finished during the summer of 2016.

A six-mile widening project connecting to the southern end of this project and extending down to Highway 226 was completed several months ago. The four-lane improvements from Walnut Ridge southward to Highway 226 will open simultaneously in 2016. ■

Dear AHTD,

My

wife and I are traveling in our motorhome through Arkansas for the first time on our way out West. Picked up issues of *Arkansas Highways* for January and March 2015 at the lovely new Welcome Center in Helena. I am very impressed with the Magazine.

I have seen a number of similar publications by government agencies and this is the best. Variety and quality are the two words that come to my mind. The articles actually are interesting to the layman, though I was an engineer and architect before retirement. The personnel articles, usually boring on similar publications, come to life with good copy and excellent photos, current and historical. The road and construction pieces are just long enough and hit the points of most interest to the layman. Throw in Weekend Road Trips, design articles like Roundabouts and on and on.

On top of the great variety there is some of the best photography and writing I have seen. Amazing work by the entire staff. I have an immediately good impression of Arkansas.

Sincerely,
Carl Gaines
 Plant City, Florida

HARD WORK APPRECIATED

I appreciate all the hard work y'all did getting ready for, and dealing with, the spate of late-season ice and snow storms we suffered this year.

Thank you,
Alex Kienlen
 Conway, Arkansas
via Email

TEXARKANA WELCOME CENTER

This rest area was beautiful, well maintained, and staff was friendly. A very positive experience, and made your State look good.

Free coffee was a bonus, and made for a more relaxed atmosphere. People actually stopped to rest a few minutes and talk.

Mark Fillion
via Email

TREMENDOUS SERVICE

I just want to take a few minutes of your busy schedule to thank you and all the crew workers for all the hard work, long hours, sustaining the cold weather, preparation and planning to ensure the highways are cleared and made safe for the citizens. I leave home at approximately 3:00 am to arrive at work by 5:00 am at Baptist Hospital. I can't express how relieved I felt to have the Interstates salted and cleared that early in the morning. I was not expecting it. I was so elated and grateful. I appreciate the service tremendously.

I am used as a vessel of God as a nurse to help save lives. I consider you as the same because clearing the roads, making them safe as possible, prevents many accidents, deaths and injuries. Thank you again for all your efforts. I am sure you all are not given the praise you deserve as much as you should. I am only one person, but I assure you, I am speaking for many grateful citizens, even for the ones who have not really given it much thought. Some may think it is your job, and that may be so, but I appreciate you all for doing an OUTSTANDING JOB.

Thank you so much,
Monica Hall
via Email

COMPLIMENT TO PASS ON

My husband and I were talking the other night, and the AHTD came up — he works at FutureFuel, and was talking with a truck driver that had come in from Rochester, NY. They started talking about roads, and the driver mentioned that he had just come in from Tennessee, and that the roads had been bad there... but when he crossed the bridge at Memphis to come up into Arkansas, everything was great! He was very complimentary of how y'all had taken care of the State highways, and was glad that he had gotten to come this way!

I wasn't sure who to pass this along to, but my husband said that someone needed to know, because you always hear the bad stuff from folks, and never the good. He wanted the words of this driver to get to whomever they needed to get to so that they would know that their extra work WAS important and that it was appreciated!

So if you would, please pass this along to whomever needs to see it, we'd be grateful! Y'all do a great job, and a lot of the time, it doesn't get noticed.

Have a great day,
Regina Weaver
Batesville, Arkansas
via Email

FROM THE GOVERNOR

I want to thank you and commend you and your staff for your quick response and excellent handling of the recent winter weather the State faced over the past few months.

As you well know, weather in Arkansas is never easy to predict, but because of your preparation, equipment and personnel, you were able to keep our roads in the safest possible condition and in a timely manner. Your Department's work is critical to our State, especially in situations like this.

Once again, thank you for your hard work and for ensuring all of Arkansas's roads stay clean and safe.

Sincerely,
Asa Hutchinson,
Governor of Arkansas

ROADS THIS WINTER

I just wanted to drop a line to say thank you! I live in Conway, but work in west Little Rock. My daily drive is mostly Interstate and, in my opinion, you guys are doing an exemplary job in keeping the roads as safe as possible even with all the frozen precipitation we've had in the last month.

I don't recall being so pleased with the AHTD during winter storms in the past. So, giving credit where it's due, thank you very much!

Elizabeth
via Email

JOB WELL DONE

This letter is written to commend you and your staff for the outstanding job you did in clearing Cleburne County/Heber Springs Highways during the recent inclement weather. I have received numerous positive comments from travelers regarding the excellent condition of the State Highways in Cleburne County/Heber Springs.

Thank you for the long hours you spent in working to make the highways safe and accessible during this period of bad weather. I am aware that your crew worked all night and long hours on several days and nights to clear the highways. Your efforts have been noticed by grateful citizens. Please accept my sincere appreciation for a job well done.

Sincerely,
Jerry Holmes,
Cleburne County Judge
Heber Springs, Arkansas

NOTE: The above letter was addressed to Raymond Ratton, AHTD Area Maintenance Supervisor.

ALL CLEAR!

The AHTD did a great job on our highways in Brinkley! They are clean! Thanks!

Lew E. Sorrells
Brinkley, Arkansas
via Email

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?

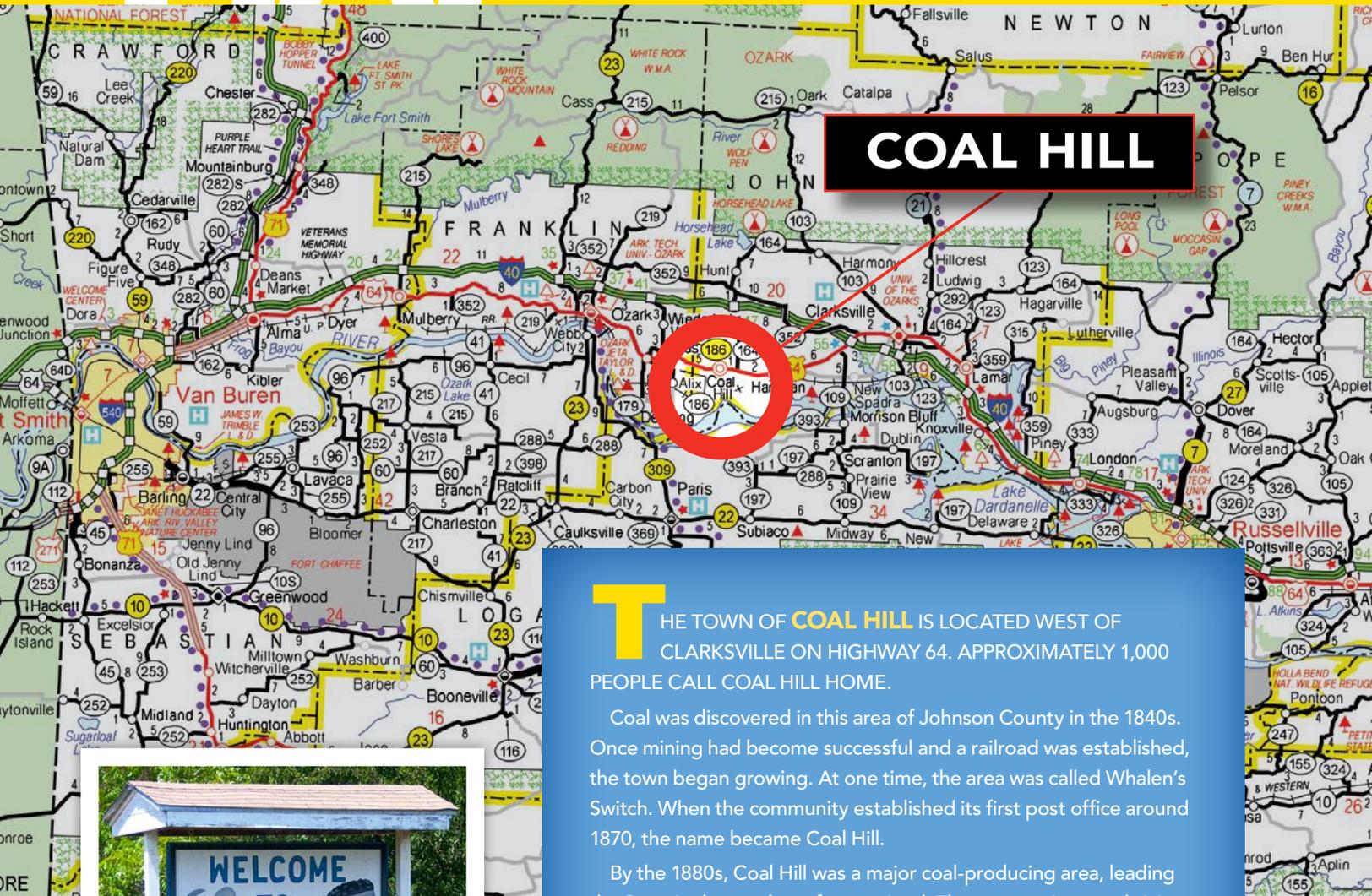


Photo Courtesy of Stephanie Vanderslice

THE TOWN OF **COAL HILL** IS LOCATED WEST OF CLARKSVILLE ON HIGHWAY 64. APPROXIMATELY 1,000 PEOPLE CALL COAL HILL HOME.

Coal was discovered in this area of Johnson County in the 1840s. Once mining had become successful and a railroad was established, the town began growing. At one time, the area was called Whalen's Switch. When the community established its first post office around 1870, the name became Coal Hill.

By the 1880s, Coal Hill was a major coal-producing area, leading the State in the number of tons mined. The community was thriving by then and included four saloons, a shoe shop, three general merchandise stores, the post office, a school and a railroad depot. Over the years, a number of newspapers were published in Coal Hill. Its population hovered at around 800 citizens by 1890.

Prosperity continued until the early 1920s, when the coal mining industry suffered a decline. People then began to move away in order to seek employment elsewhere.

Today, Coal Hill is enjoying growth once again. New residents have settled in to take advantage of good schools and a small-town way of life. The exploration of natural gas has also brought attention to the area. Today Coal Hill boasts approximately 24 businesses and a consolidated school district that has 600 students. ■

Information for this article was provided by "The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture" at www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net.

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

BRIDGE • Philip Tanner, Senior Bridge Design Engineer

CONSTRUCTION • Blake Harper, Construction Helper; Scott Sexton, Construction Materials Inspector; Jacob Sant, Construction Helper; Jamie Henson, Field Clerk I; Bailey Adams, Construction Helper; Chelsea Anderson, Field Clerk I; Elizabeth Young, Field Clerk I

HEAVY BRIDGE • Donny Tolbert, Bridge Repairer I

HUMAN RESOURCES • Linda Howard, General Laborer; Lakeyta Jones-Wilson, General Laborer; Latashia Settles, Office Administrative Assistant II; Melvin Sims, General Laborer; Wendy Sims, General Laborer

MAINTENANCE • James Steele, Striping Helper

RIGHT OF WAY • Catherine Mitchell, Abstractor

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & POLICY • Katherine Rasmussen, Office Administrative Assistant III

DISTRICT THREE • William Rateliff, Single Axle Truck Driver; David Austin, Jr., General Laborer; Willard Swope, Single Axle Truck Driver; Donald Williams, General Laborer

DISTRICT FOUR • Brandon Bass, General Laborer

DISTRICT FIVE • Lance Gross, Single Axle Truck Driver; Michael Calendar, Single Axle Truck Driver; James Stewart, Single Axle Truck Driver

DISTRICT EIGHT • Carey McGee, Storeroom Assistant I; Leslie Allen, Single Axle Truck Driver

DISTRICT NINE • Jose Lovaas, Single Axle Truck Driver; Steven Sattler, Single Axle Truck Driver

DISTRICT TEN • Brandon Hamm, General Laborer; Dalton Tate, General Laborer; Quinton Williams, General Laborer; Carlton Farrow, General Laborer

PROMOTIONS

COMPUTER SERVICES • Henry Frasher, Hardware Technician III

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE • Randy Ort, Assistant Chief of Administration

EQUIPMENT & PROCUREMENT • Christopher Lusk, Division Bookkeeper

FISCAL SERVICES • Mike Boyd, Chief Fiscal Officer

HEAVY BRIDGE • Donald Black, Bridge Repairer II; Andrew Clark, Bridge Repairer I; Jacob Turner, Bridge Repairer I; Anthony Wood, Bridge Repairer II

MAINTENANCE • Rickey Prince, Traffic Investigator

MATERIALS • Angela Bettis, Inspector; Matthew Green, Engineer III; Gregory Norton, District Materials Supervisor; Raymond Taylor, Geotechnical Aide II

DISTRICT TWO • Daniel Courtney, Assistant Resident Engineer; William Lum, Construction Materials Inspector; Katrina Wright, Distributor/Roller Operator

DISTRICT FOUR • Anthony Steele, Multi-Axle Truck Driver; Cody Wain, Multi-Axle Truck Driver; Michael Ward, Area Maintenance Supervisor

DISTRICT FIVE • Anthony Cossey, Construction Materials Inspector; Christopher Hill, Asphalt Tank Truck Driver; Brad Langston, Construction Project Coordinator; William Miller, Maintenance Aide II; Mark Sandridge, Roller Operator

DISTRICT SIX • Sandra Chapman, Senior Inspector; Mark Johnson, Area Headquarters Attendant; Jeremy Stokes, Construction Aide I

DISTRICT SEVEN • Robert Swartz, Body Repairer/Painter

DISTRICT EIGHT • Regina Colclough, Fuel Clerk; Samuel Gullede, Maintenance Aide II; Donald Pipkin, Construction Aide III

DISTRICT NINE • Cory Blankenship, Multi-Axle Truck Driver; Justin Sams, Field Clerk II

DISTRICT TEN • Zachary Gilbee, Multi-Axle Truck Driver; Michael Haggard, Rest Area Attendant; Read Phillips, Roller Operator; Kim Pugh, Crew Leader

SERVICE

CONSTRUCTION • Jodi Mahan, Construction Aide I, 20 years; Michael Foster, Construction Aide I, 15 years; Clint Morris, Construction Aide II, 10 years; Daniel Huett, Assistant Resident Engineer, 10 years

FISCAL SERVICES • Lanecia Weston, Administrative Assistant III, 15 years

MAINTENANCE • Bishop Terrell, Sign Layout Supervisor, 15 years; Gary Hester, Striping Crew Supervisor, 15 years

MATERIALS • Thomas Sturch, Materials Technician IV, 25 years

RIGHT OF WAY • Randall Cobb, Closing Agent, 25 years; Lyndsey High, Office Administrative Assistant III, 5 years

SURVEYS • Steven Wrigley, Surveys Crew Chief, 30 years

DISTRICT ONE • Charlie Fryer, Motor Patrol Operator, 20 years; Benford Adell, Single Axle Truck Driver, 20 years; William Ewing, Rest Area Attendant, 15 years; Alton Chapman, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator, 15 years; Bobby McGee, Station Attendant II, 10 years; Stanley Myers, Rest Area Attendant, 10 years

DISTRICT TWO • Sammie Green, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator, 5 years

DISTRICT THREE • Larry Burke, Area Headquarters Attendant, 20 years; Chad Hodges, Bridge Job Superintendent, 20 years; Charles Fritts, Senior Mechanic, 20 years

DISTRICT FIVE • Bryan Anderson, Area Maintenance Supervisor, 25 years; Steve Sutton, Motor Patrol Operator, 5 years

DISTRICT SIX • Stanley Rogers, Sealing Job Superintendent, 25 years; Lawrence Hobbs, Sr., Maintenance Aide II, 15 years; Wayne Story, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator, 10 years

DISTRICT SEVEN • Raymond Prescott, Maintenance Aide II, 30 years; Tommie Kitchens, Crew Leader, 25 years; Leonard Crain, Bridge Repairer II, 20 years; Carl Garlington, Motor Patrol Operator, 10 years; Sharod Ricks, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator; Ronnie Harcrow, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator; Zachary Lamkin, Bridge Repairer I, 5 years

DISTRICT EIGHT • Jessie Chronister, Jr., Senior Mechanic, 5 years

DISTRICT NINE • James Keeton, District Permit Officer, 20 years; Cameron Whitney, Bridge Repairer I, 10 years; Kylan McCutcheon, Distributor Operator, 5 years

DISTRICT TEN • William Putman, Backhoe/Front End Loader Operator, 15 years; Jeffery Armstrong, Maintenance Aide II, 15 years

RETIREMENT

ARKANSAS HIGHWAY POLICE • Anita Hollis, AHP Corporal, 10+ years; Ned Ward, AHP Sergeant, 30+ years

ENVIRONMENTAL • Phillip Moore, Environmental Scientist II, 23 years

DISTRICT ONE • Larry Hall, Maintenance Aide II, 35+ years; Richard Yocum, Senior Construction Materials Inspector, 14+ years

DISTRICT FOUR • Steven White, Crew Leader, 30+ years

DISTRICT FIVE • David Graham, Distributor/Roller Operator, 10+ years; Merle Campbell, Area Maintenance Supervisor, 33+ years; Howard McLaughlin, Multi-Axle Truck Driver, 10+ years

DISTRICT SIX • Orland Andrews, Maintenance Aide II, 12+ years; Gregory Oliver, Senior Inspector, 34+ years

DISTRICT SEVEN • Bobby Helms, Maintenance Aide II, 26+ years

DISTRICT EIGHT • Timmy Henry, Assistant Resident Engineer, 29+ years

DISTRICT NINE • Herbert Jordan, Assistant Bridge Inspector, 28+ years; James Fancher, District Bridge Inspector, 36+ years; Randall Keef, Motor Patrol Operator/Finish, 27+ years

MEMORIALS

FISCAL SERVICES • Mary Crow, 3/14/2015, retired

DISTRICT TWO • Bobby D. King, 4/15/2015, retired

DISTRICT THREE • Rick D. Billingsley, 3/26/2015, retired

DISTRICT FOUR • Olen Brooks, Jr., 3/30/2015, retired

DISTRICT FIVE • Weldon Walley, 4/9/2015, retired

DISTRICT SEVEN • Larry R. Launius, 4/5/2015, retired

DISTRICT NINE • Garry L. Godfrey, 4/6/2015, retired

ACTIVE DUTY

As of 4/24/15, the AHTD has three employees serving active duty in the United States military. Deployment dates are noted.

ARKANSAS HIGHWAY POLICE • James Friend, AHP Officer, 7/6/14

DISTRICT FOUR • Arrow Thornburg, Motor Patrol Operator, 5/1/14

DISTRICT SIX • Marco Newnum, Construction Helper, 6/5/14





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