

WEOGUFKA STATE FOREST
FLAGG
MOUNTAIN
STRATEGIC PLAN



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EAST ALABAMA REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

General Information

Flagg Mountain Fire Tower and Grounds

Flagg Mountain is located in Weogufka State Forest, in north-central Coosa County, Alabama and is owned by the State of Alabama and managed by the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC). Most of the property was obtained from the Kaul Lumber Company. The Mountain borders the southern range of the Appalachian Mountain Region and, at 1,200 feet in height, holds the distinction as the Region's southernmost peak over 1,000 feet tall. The main attraction of Flagg Mountain is the Flagg Mountain Fire Tower, which is no longer used as such, but rather as a historical and cultural draw to the area. Originally, the Flagg Mountain Fire Tower was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, (CCC) in 1935, as an observation tower, at 52 feet in height. Hand built by stone, with 3 feet thick walls at the base and 2 feet thick walls further up the structure, the Tower's structural integrity was meant to stand the test of time. The Tower is further strengthened by a crisscross pattern of wood beams extending the entire height of the stone walls. When lightning struck the Tower the wood beams burned and were later extracted and replaced with inlaid stone. At the very top of the Flagg Mountain Fire Tower rests a 12-by-12 foot cab with windows for observing the surrounding scenic mountain area of the State Forest, however, on clear nights viewers can see city lights as far away as Birmingham, approximately 45 miles to the north, and Montgomery, around 40 miles to the south. The site



Figure SP-1. Flagg Mountain Fire Tower, 2018.

The enclosed side building was originally meant to house a Fire Tower Museum, but was never realized, while the opposite open air side structure could be used for special outdoor events. In addition to the Fire Tower, the CCC built seven cabins, on a nearby site, from the same stone and wood materials, to provide lodging

was chosen for an observation tower because it was the perfect place for such scenic views and also because of its status as one of the last mountains in the Appalachian chain. Furthermore, officials, at the time it was built, claimed Flagg Mountain would have views that were the “*most scenic in the state*”. Finally, the Forest holds unique significance as having a few old long-leaf pine forests.

Since 1989, Weogufka State Forest has been listed in the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage by the Alabama Historical Commission. As of March 1998, Flagg Mountain Fire Tower was listed on the National Historic Lookout Register #250, which keeps records of historic lookout towers throughout the country. Figure SP-1 shows a birds-eye view of the Flagg Mountain Fire Tower atop Flagg Mountain. The

for the Tower’s care-takers and guests to the site. The Flagg Mountain property also provides a number of outdoor campsites with fire pits and grills for camping use. The primary goal of the CCC in building Flagg Mountain was to establish a new state park called Weogufka State Park, which was advertised in a 1937, Alabama Highlands US National Park Service promotional video as “A Play Place in the Clouds”. At the time, hundreds of workers were employed, from President Roosevelt’s New Deal programs, to form the Civilian Conservation Corps and build the most prominent Alabama State Parks, such as DeSoto Caverns State Park, Cheaha State Park, and Oak Mountain State Park, which can still be visited today. These parks were finished and dedicated as State Parks. Unfortunately, Weogufka State Forest was never finished, and remained a State Forest, due to the advent of World War II. Historian Bob Pasquill, in his book, *The CCC in Alabama 1933-1942: A Great and Lasting Good*, described Weogufka State Park as “the greatest state park that never was”. Original plans for Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain showed construction of picnic areas, a beach beside Weogufka Creek, swimming pools, eleven cabins for housing, a caretaker’s home, and the observation tower. However, only the tower, seven cabins, and the picnic areas were built. Figure SP-2 shows the Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain site grounds. Cabins 1 and 2 are no longer standing, while cabins 3, 4, and 7 are in various stages of repair. Cabin 6 is the Ranger’s Cabin and has been restored. One of the major projects in the strategic plan is to repair and rehabilitate the remaining cabins for visitor overnight stays. Additionally, the AFC plans to drill a well, install water lines and a septic system, and build a bath house on the property in order to provide an even more attractive place for visitors and staff members using the facility.

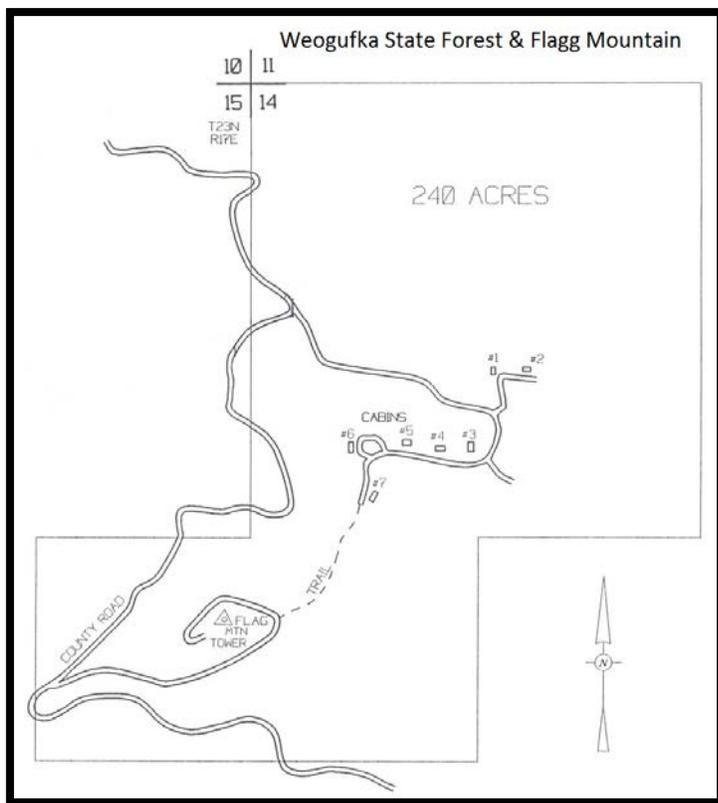


Figure SP-2 Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain, 2018. Cabins 1 and 2 are no longer standing, while cabins 3, 4, and 7 are in various stages of repair. Cabin 6 is the Ranger’s Cabin and has been restored. One of the major projects in the strategic plan is to repair and rehabilitate the remaining cabins for visitor overnight stays. Additionally, the AFC plans to drill a well, install water lines and a septic system, and build a bath house on the property in order to provide an even more attractive place for visitors and staff members using the facility.



Figure SP-3. Flagg Mountain Cabins, 2018.

After the CCC completed their building project, Flagg Mountain continued to be managed by the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) and used as a fire tower for wildfire detection and an office. The site was also used for recreation for a number of years. For the next six decades the AFC and alternately the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources managed the property. Then in 1997 AFC leased the grounds to the Coosa County Cooperators to improve the property and its buildings. The purpose of such a lease was to engage local citizens interested in protecting Flagg Mountain and

making improvements to the site. Without the involvement of these locals the buildings on Flagg Mountain would have been further deteriorated, possibly beyond repair. In 2017, the AFC took back management of Flagg Mountain. Figure SP-3 shows cabins 3, 4, and 5 from the Ranger’s Cabin.

A historical timeline for Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain is shown below in Figure SP-4.

Historical Timeline of Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain

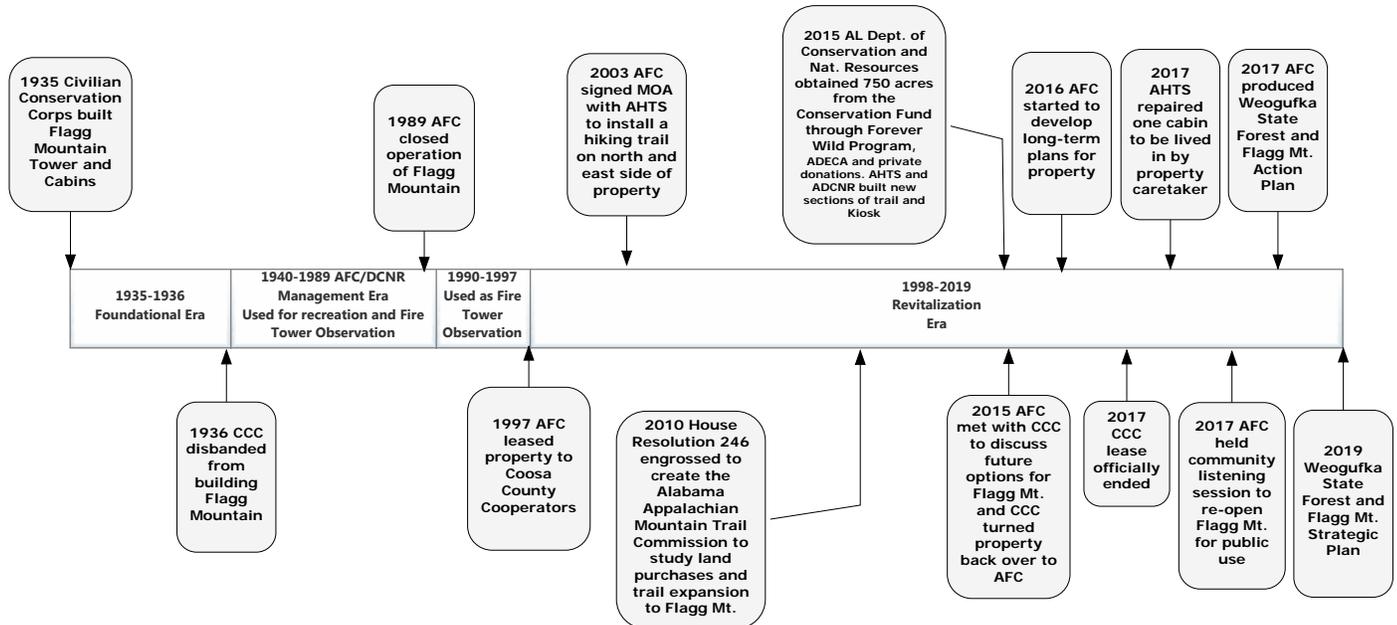


Figure SP-4. Historical Timeline, 2019.

Planning for Flagg Mountain

When the Coosa County Cooperator’s lease expired the AFC took back management and began consideration of long-term plans for Flagg Mountain. To begin these plans, the AFC held a community listening session, where 100 plus people attended, in order to gather community input and direction in re-opening Flagg Mountain for recreational use. A goal of AFC is continue conducting these listening sessions on a regular basis in order to keep the Flagg Mountain community of supporters informed and involved in the planning process.

In December of 2017, Bruce Springer, with AFC, created an action plan for Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain which described a timeline of past improvement projects and a brief action plan for future projects. The goal of this strategic plan is to expand upon the first action plan. This would be done by gathering additional information and direction from the community and local organizational groups who use Flagg Mountain and who would serve to plan, support, and implement the projects and strategies necessary to further improve the property and make it more attractive and user-friendly to the general public. For more information on the strategic planning aspect and projects planned for, see the chapter on Strategic Planning and the Strategic Planning Table, on pages 12-14, for a list of projects and strategies along with

their respective priority, implementing agencies, potential partnerships and funding sources, and timeframes for completion. Additionally, The Flagg Mountain Strategic Plan establishes the Vision and Mission for Flagg Mountain in order to prioritize, guide, and direct projects and strategies toward the facility’s best interests. In order to track progress on strategies and projects, an evaluation table has been provided on pages 18-19 at the end of this document.

Hiking to Flagg Mountain

Another significant aspect of Flagg Mountain is that it is the southern terminus of the Pinhoti Trail, which runs 337 miles from Flagg Mountain, through Talladega National Forest, and connects with the Benton MacKaye Trail in the Blue Ridge Mountains of northwest Georgia, approximately 2.2 miles north of Dyer Gap. From there the Benton MacKaye extends northeast approximately 71 miles to the southern terminus



of the Appalachian Trail at Springer Mountain, GA. Then the Appalachian Trail runs approximately 2,180 miles northeast, ending at Mount Katahdin, Maine. The Pinhoti, Benton MacKaye, and Appalachian trails are part of a much larger trail system—the Eastern Continental Trail (ECT), which extends 5,400 miles from Key West, FL. to Cape Gaspe, Canada, located an additional 700 miles north from where the Appalachian Trail ends, following the International Appalachian Trail. Flagg Mountain is approximately the quarter-way point (from Key West) of this massive trail system and should be considered an important visiting and resting point for hikers traveling the ECT. The ECT is not an “official” trail, but rather a collection of trails, forming a hiking route along the entire eastern US and into the southeastern part of Canada. Figure SP-5 shows the entire ECT through the US and Canada, along with the Appalachian Trail portion. Plans to improve and upgrade Flagg Mountain facilities and services should take into consideration the needs of hikers, not only walking the Pinhoti, but also these much longer trails.

Figure SP-5. Map of the Eastern Continental Trail.

Pinhoti Trail Master Plan and Management

In 2019, the Alabama Trails Foundation (ATF) sponsored the development of a master plan which would be used to identify necessary incremental improvements to the Alabama portion of the Pinhoti Trail, as well as establish standards for trail management. The goal of the plan was determined as follows: *a trail that is user-friendly, safer, that celebrates, protects, and makes accessible this special part of Alabama’s Appalachia and that can spur economic development.* In light of this plan, the ATF understands that

bringing the Pinhoti to a standard equal to the importance of its representative landscape and to the expectation of today's trail users is an important step in developing this Alabama resource. Furthermore, the master plan strives to embrace the important cultural, historic, scenic and natural aspects of the trail, provide design criteria to improve visitor experiences, and explore linkages to local communities. Once the plan is completed, in early 2019, the ATF will offer its partnership to those already working on the trail so that funds can be leveraged to begin installing improvements along the trail.

As part of master plan development, a steering committee was formed which comprised of state, federal, and private landowners together with trail volunteers and advocacy groups to work with the ATF. The ATF also hosted stakeholder meetings and conducted an on-line survey to capture input from users and those interested in the trail. For its continuation, the master plan is meant to be a living document that will include an inventory of existing conditions and an evaluation of their sustainability. The plan will also contain recommendations for long-term management and improvements, intended to help managers and volunteers, however, these recommendations will ultimately be decided on for implementation by land managers and landowners on the trail.

The ATF provides support to drafting a nomination in order have additional portions of the Pinhoti designated as a National Recreation Trail. Currently, 28 miles of the trail have been designated. The ATF is also managing a comprehensive GIS database of the trail path in order to inventory features and connector trails.

Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain serve as the start of the Pinhoti Trail, which joins to the Benton MaKaye Trail and the Appalachian Trail at Springer Mountain, Georgia and ending in the State of Maine. Figure SP-6 shows Triple Crown (Appalachian Trail, Continental Divide Trail, and Pacific Crest Trail) hiker Sunny Eberhart, aka "Nimblewill Nomad" caretaker of Flagg Mountain, and Jodi McDade of the Coosa County Chamber of Commerce at the southern terminus of the Pinhoti Trail located at Flagg Mountain.



Figure SP-6. Pinhoti Trail, 2018.

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CHAPTER II: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

General Strategy and Stakeholder Involvement

The Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain strategic planning process began on August 30, 2018, with a planning meeting at the Ranger’s Cabin on Flagg Mountain, involving local stakeholders for the property. These people represented a variety of local interests and organizations such as the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC), Alabama Hiking Trails Society (AHTS), Alabama Trails Foundation (ATF)/Pinhoti Trail Enhancement Group, Pinhoti Trail Maintenance, University of Alabama Center for Economic Development, Coosa County Chamber of Commerce, and the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (EARPDC), as well as two architecture firms—*Macknally Land Design* and *Architecture Works*, both located in Birmingham. Figure SP-7 shows a few members of the Flagg Mountain Strategic Planning Team in front of the Ranger’s cabin, which was recently renovated in 2017. Overall, the group consisted of 20 members.

Once the strategic planning team was formed, planning for Flagg Mountain commenced by establishing projects and strategies to work on for the plan and prioritizing each according to need. Projects were defined as anything to be constructed, placed, and/or repaired while strategies were anything non-construction related such as hiring, purchasing, or creating planning documents, as in the case of this document. These projects/strategies were organized into a strategic planning table, which listed each project or strategy as high, medium, or low. The table also identified implementing agencies for each (defined as the primary agency or organization overseeing the work. The Alabama Forestry Commission and The Alabama Hiking Trails Society were the primary implementing agencies), potential partnerships and funding sources (any

type of public or private investment in project work and/or funding), timeframes for completion, and general notes and attachments for additional information (See Strategic Planning Table on pages 12-14. Together, stakeholders at the meeting identified individual projects and strategies and worked through table categories for each.



Photo SP-7 A few members of the Strategic Planning Team.

For prioritizing projects, the overall goal of the planning process and the strategic plan was to identify improvements to Flagg Mountain and Weogufka State Forest which would make the property more attractive to visitors as a place to visit and stay overnight. This is why the most important and immediate projects to implement was installing new stairs in the Flagg Mountain Fire Tower, drilling a well for water, and building a bathhouse for visitor overnight stays. Currently, Flagg Mountain offers no convenient bathroom facilities, except a simple outhouse, for public use.

The facility also needs water lines installed, running from the well to the bathhouse and a septic system placed on the property. Other high priority projects and strategies identified were building a shop (which would provide a storage area for equipment and a bunk room for staff quarters) and purchasing needed equipment to maintain the facilities. The strategic planning process is summarized in the below diagram, Figure SP-8, and should be revised and updated on a regular basis, based on funding and work conducted on each project. After each project and strategy is revised and updated, the process should be restarted each year in order to bring in potentially new stakeholders and identify new projects for the year.

Strategic Planning Process Summary

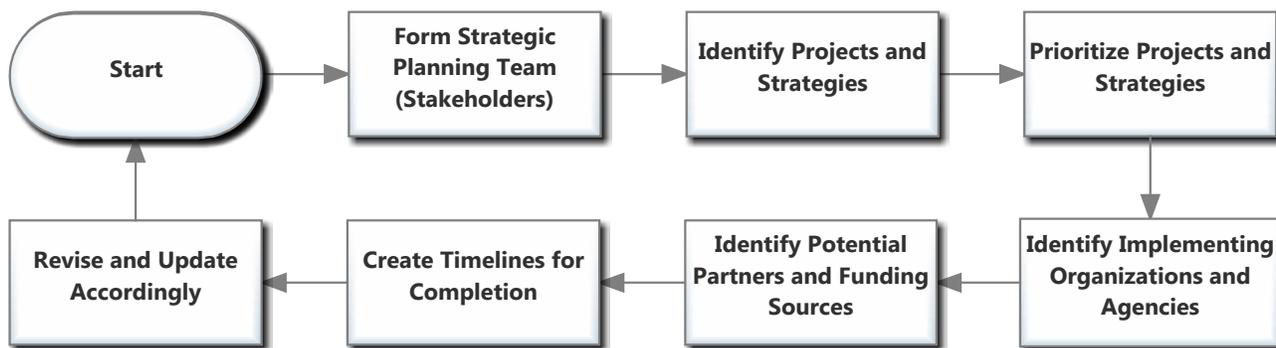


Figure SP-8 Strategic Planning Process for Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain.

Vision and Mission

Vision and mission are vital components of the strategic plan. Projects and strategies identified for the plan need to be prioritized based on a stakeholder-approved vision and mission for the property. The stakeholders on the strategic planning team established the following vision for Flagg Mountain and Weogufka State Forest, outlined as follows:

Vision:

“Through the collaboration with the Alabama Hiking Trail Society and the Friends of Flagg Mountain, the Alabama Forestry Commission intends to build upon the work performed by the Coosa County Cooperators to restore Flagg Mountain cabins and the lookout tower to near-original condition, with a few necessary adjustments to open the facilities to the public for primitive camping and sightseeing, with minimal maintenance.”

The mission of Flagg Mountain and Weogufka State Forest maintains four objectives, listed as follows:

Mission:

1. To preserve and promote Flagg Mountain Fire Tower along with the cabins and campgrounds.
2. To allow the public to experience the look and feel of 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps building projects in the tower and cabins.

3. To allow the public to experience the natural beauty of Weogufka State Forest and the surrounding area.
4. To serve as a major component of the southern terminus of the Pinhoti Trail which connects Alabama to the Benton MacKaye and Appalachian Trails that lead 2,500 miles north to Mount Katahdin in Maine.

Project/Strategy Timelines

Task	Priority	Assigned To	Start	End	Dur	%	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Projects and Strategies			1/1/19	12/31/23	1304							
1 Renovate Fire Tower Stairs	High	AFC	1/1/19	12/31/20	523							
2 Build Bath House	High	AFC	1/1/19	12/31/20	523							
3 Drill well	High	AFC	1/1/19	12/31/20	523							
4 Install water lines	High	AFC and AHTS	1/1/19	12/31/20	523							
5 Build Maintenance Shop	High	AFC	1/1/19	12/31/20	523							
6 Purchase needed equipment	High	AFC	1/1/19	12/31/20	523							
7 Establish Fire Tower Museum	Medium	AFC and AHTS	1/1/21	12/31/23	781							
8 Add security cameras	Medium	AFC and AHTS	1/1/20	12/28/22	781							
9 Repair remaining cabins	Medium	AFC	1/1/21	12/31/23	781							
10 Add picnic tables and fire pits to campsites	Low	AFC and AHTS	1/1/19	12/31/20	523							
11 Install electricity in cabins	Low	AHTS	1/1/20	12/28/22	781							
12 Secure volunteer host	Low	AHTS	1/1/19	12/31/21	784							
13 Put in second gate at tower entrance	Low	AFC	1/1/19	12/30/21	783							
14 Establish fee schedule	Low	AFC	1/1/19	12/30/21	783							
15 Install directional signage	Low	AFC	1/1/19	12/30/21	783							

Figure SP-9 Project and Strategy Timeline Table.

In Figure SP-9 projects and strategies for the Strategic Plan are listed, prioritized, given generalized timelines for completion, and assigned to the respective entities which will implement and oversee the work. More detail on each project and strategy is given in the Strategic Planning Table at the end of this Chapter. Additionally, a Planning Evaluation Table is provided at the end of this document to track progress on each project and strategy.

Other Potential Projects and Strategies for Flagg Mountain/Weogufka State Forest

- Place a monument on Flagg Mountain, next to the Fire Tower, notifying the beginning of the Pinhoti Trail.
- Build a Welcome Gate to Flagg Mountain property.
- Put electrical lines underground.
- Replace bridge along access road.
- Enhance marketing of Flagg Mountain by offering maps, brochures, flyers, and other promotional material.
- Contact and work with the Creek Indians on land south of Weogufka for a potential American Indian Museum.

- Build a picnic pavilion, on Flagg Mountain, which could be used for special events such as weddings, banquets, etc.
- Contact a Master Gardener to help plant, protect, and exhibit native plants and wildlife on the Flagg Mountain property.

Projects and Strategies Conducted to Date

- 2015: New sections of the Pinhoti Trail built, extending the Trail’s southern terminus to Flagg Mountain. New Kiosk built, marking the southern terminus.
- 2015: AFC created new Flagg Mountain Facebook page to build local support and reach out to the hiking community to get feedback on ideas, plans, and announce events. Presently over 600 friends follow this page.
- 2018: Special event, “*First Friday on Flagg*” created, which draws in close to 100 locals at the beginning of each month.
- 2017: Complete renovation of Flagg Mountain Ranger’s Cabin, with new wood floors, walls, furniture, kitchen, and toilet facilities—although not working due to the need for water infrastructure and supply.
- 2017: New signage built and placed for Flagg Mountain and Pinhoti Trail.
- 2017: AFC listening session.
- 2017: AFC Action Plan created.
- 2018: Flagg Mountain added to the Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail of the Alabama Birding Trails.



Figure SP-10 Pinhoti Trail Terminus Kiosk.



Figure SP-11 Flagg Mountain Ranger’s Cabin.

Partnerships and Funding Sources

The second planning meeting for Flagg Mountain was held on November 13, 2018 in which updates on project status and funding were discussed and administered to the planning table. The third and final meeting was held on February 22, 2019 to finalize the Strategic Plan. As planning and project/strategy updates progress, funding for projects and strategies usually follow the funding cycles of their respective funding sources. Therefore, the Strategic Plan and the planning process flows from these funding cycles along with accompanying support from local organizations contributing to the work involved. The following is a list of potential funding sources and partnerships which could assist the Alabama Forestry Commission in project implementation and/or funding assistance for this Strategic Plan:

- **Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)**—Established in 1965 by an act of Congress, the Appalachian Regional Commission is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government and is composed of 13 Appalachian states, ranging from the State of Mississippi in the south to New York in the north. Northern and Central Alabama is one of the states included in the Appalachian Region and is therefore eligible to receive ARC funding for projects that invest in any one of 5 goals related to the following: 1) Economic Opportunities, 2) Ready Workforce, 3) Critical Infrastructure, 4) Natural and Cultural Assets, 5) Leadership and Community Capacity. The plan to promote and enhance Flagg Mountain and Weogufka State Forest invests efforts into the goal involving natural and cultural assets. One major part of this Strategic Plan is to identify high priority projects for Flagg Mountain and Weogufka State Forest which would be eligible for ARC funding—such as putting new stairs in the Flagg Mountain Fire Tower, installing water infrastructure on Flagg Mountain, and building a Bathhouse. ARC grants are administered each year and due in October. Funding applicants should receive notification of approval or denial at least 2-3 months after submission. The grant ceiling for ARC grants per year is \$200,000.
- **Alabama Hiking Trails Society (AHTS)**—Founded in 2001, the Alabama Hiking Trails Society was formed to promote, protect, maintain, and develop hiking trails in Alabama, in an effort to create a statewide hiking trail system. The AHTS is also working to complete the portion of the Eastern Continental Trail through Alabama that stretches from Key West, FL to the Pinhoti. As an important point in the Alabama Trails system, AHTS is committed to making Flagg Mountain and Weogufka State Forest an attractive place to visit and bring further recognition to the site.
- **Conservation Fund (CF)**—A major goal of the Conservation Fund is to protect and preserve public lands for future generations. The Conservation Fund offers a variety of means for land protection and preservation such as conservation lending, conservation easements, conservation grants, land trusts, and ecosystem services. Through conservation finance, the Fund holds to the belief that it is possible to succeed in conservation efforts by aligning social, environmental, and economic returns in what is called the “triple bottom line”. The Fund believes that environmental protection and economic vitality are mutually inclusive. In 2015, The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources obtained 750 acres from the Conservation Fund, through the Forever Wild Program, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and through private donations in order to extend the Pinhoti Trail from Talladega National Forest to Flagg Mountain. The property and the trail join the east side of Weogufka State Forest. Furthermore, there is an additional 1,000 acres adjacent the Forest, which is privately owned and used for forest preservation.
- **Hugh Kaul Foundation (HKF)**—The purpose of the Hugh Kaul Foundation, established in 1989 in Alabama, is to give funding and support for the advancement of arts, education, children and youth services, family services, and community development in the Birmingham metro area and in Clay and Coosa Counties. Grants from the Hugh Kaul Foundation vary greatly in size from \$5,000 to over 1M and may be used for a variety of funding types. Although education and healthcare is where most money from the Foundation is funneled into, economic development is also an important consideration. Funding from the Hugh Kaul Foundation could be used to install water lines and build

an Administrative Cabin on premises should projections show an increase in tourism and accompanying economic development on Flagg Mountain and in Weogufka State Forest.

- **Recreational Trails Program (RTP)**—The Recreational Trails Program is a division of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) and is funded by the US Department of Transportation to provide funding assistance to federal agencies, state, and local governments for the development and improvement of recreational areas for such activities as walking, jogging, cycling, skating, backpacking, horseback riding, and off-highway vehicle trails. This type of grant funding could be used to make improvements or trail extensions to the Pinhoti Trail and other trails connected to Flagg Mountain and Weogufka State Forest. Grant funding can also be used to acquire equipment needed to build and maintain trails.
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**—The LWCF is a division of ADECA as is funded by the US Department of Interior to provide funding assistance to Alabama cities and counties for the development or establishment of outdoor recreational areas. Such projects include parks, playgrounds, forest and wildlife refuges, recreational lakes and ponds, outdoor playing fields, and picnic and camping areas. LWCF funds may also be used to acquire land and water interests for park purposes, develop new outdoor recreational facilities, and in certain instances renovate existing recreational facilities. However, in order to receive funding, the project sponsor must either own or have a perpetual interest in land that is developed with LWCF assistance. The LWCF program provides 50 percent matching assistance to project sponsors. Flagg Mountain could use LWCF funds to make improvements to campsites, such as adding picnic tables and fire pits.
- **Coosa County Commission (CCC)**—The Coosa County Commission is the governing body for the County of Coosa and establishes goals and objectives to direct the county’s growth and development. The Coosa County Commission will be a major partner in improving the Flagg Mountain access road, as the road is a county road under CCC jurisdiction.
- **Alabama Historical Commission (AHC)**—The mission of the Alabama Historical Commission is to preserve and promote state-owned historic sites as public attractions and to manage statewide programs which assist people, groups, towns, and cities with local preservation activities. AHC will work with the contracted architect to ensure the design and location of new structures on Flagg Mountain does not negatively impact the historical aspects of the site.
- **Federal Excess Property Surplus**—The Alabama Forestry Commission has an agreement with the US Forest Service to acquire federal access property as it becomes available for the use of emergency response. With the amount of public access to Flagg Mountain, AFC believes it is prudent to stage some excess property on Flagg Mountain to help protect structures from damaging wildfires. This equipment will be provided to the caretaker.

Flagg Mt. Strategic Planning Table

The following is the complete Strategic Planning Table which is used to provide guidance and direction for all projects and strategies for the Flagg Mountain and Weogufka State Forest. Attachments have been provided to provide more detailed information, which are identified in the notes. Furthermore, a Planning Evaluation Table has been provided at the end of this document to track progress on each project/strategy without having to update the Strategic Planning Table.

Project -Anything Constructed, Placed and/or Repaired. Strategy -Anything Non-Construction (Hiring and Purchasing, etc.)	Priority High, Medium, Low	Implementing Agency The primary agency or organization overseeing the work	Potential Funding Sources and Partnerships Public and/or private investment	Timeframe (years) Immediate 1-2 Short Term 3-4 Intermediate 5-9 Long Term 10+	Notes
Project: Renovate the Fire Tower stairs.	High	AFC	ARC / AHTS	Immediate	See Attachment FT for more details.
Project: Build Bathhouse for the cabin grounds.	High	AFC	ARC / AHTS	Immediate	See Attachment BH
Project: Drill well.	High	AFC	ARC / AHTS / RCD	Immediate	See Attachment DW
Project: Install water lines from water well to general community area/bath house.	High	AFC	HKF / ARC / AHTS	Immediate	See Attachment WL
Project: Build a Maintenance Shop & Storage with Bunk Room for staff.	High	AFC	ARC / AHTS /HKF	Immediate	See Attachment MS
Strategy: Purchase needed equipment to maintain facilities.	High	AFC	AFC / RTP / RCD Auburn Surplus	Immediate	See Attachment PE
Project: Establish a Fire Tower Museum.	Medium	AFC	AHTS / AHC / ARC	Short Term	See Attachment FTM
Project: Add security cameras to tower, cabin, and campsite.	Medium	AHTS	AHTS	Short Term	See Attachment SC
Project: Repair remaining cabins.	Medium	AHTS	AHTS	Short Term	See Attachment RC
Project: Add a picnic table and camping fire pit to every site.	Low	AFC / AHTS	AHTS / LWCF	Immediate	See Attachment PT
Project: Install electricity in cabins.	Low	AHTS	AHTS	Intermediate	See Attachment IE

Strategy: Secure volunteer host for Flagg Mountain.	Low	AHTS	AHTS	Short Term	See Attachment VH
Project: Put in second gate for Fire Tower entrance.	Low	AFC	AFC	Short Term	See Attachment SG
Strategy: Establish fee schedule for campgrounds and cabins.	Low	AFC	AFC	Short Term	See Attachment FS
Project: Install directional signage along US Hwy. 231 and US Hwy. 280.	Low	ALDOT	ALDOT	Short Term	See Attachment DS

Strategic Planning Table

Acronym Glossary:

- AFC—Alabama Forestry Commission
- AHTS—Alabama Hiking Trails Society
- AHC—Alabama Historic Commission
- AFWP—Alabama Forever Wild Program
- CCC—Coosa County Commission
- ARC—Appalachian Regional Commission
- HKF—Hugh Kaul Foundation
- FOF—Friends of Flagg Mountain
- RTP—Recreational Trails Program
- RCD—Rural Conservation District
- ALDOT—Alabama Department of Transportation

Attachments

Attachment FT

Project: Renovate the Flagg Mountain Fire Tower stairs.

Priority: High

Need Addressed: The interior stairs to the top of Flagg Mountain Fire Tower are unsafe to use and in absolute need of complete replacement with a new staircase. The staircase renovation is Flagg Mountain’s top project since the fire tower is the main attraction and cultural and tourism enhancement is the facility’s primary goal.

Project Status: The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) is currently soliciting services for an architect to design and make plans for the building and installation of an interior all metal or combination metal and wood staircase for the fire tower. Once plans and cost estimates are finalized and obtained the Commission plans to apply for and seek federal funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to construct the staircase. The Commission seeks to obtain these plans and cost estimates by May of 2019 and apply for the ARC grant over the summer and beginning of fall of that year.

Attachment BH

Project: Build a bathhouse for the cabin grounds.

Priority: High

Need Addressed: The Flagg Mountain cabin grounds currently have no bathrooms for cabin users. In conjunction with bringing well water and water lines to the facility the Alabama Forestry Commission is seeking an architect to design and build a new bath house. For the goal of historic and cultural preservation, the plan is to (1) make the exterior of the building out of stone or logs, similar to the material used by the CCC-built cabins and to keep the general look and feel of the original site, and (2) site the building appropriately so that it does not interfere with or disrupt the historic landscape of the National Park Service designed, CCC constructed facilities. The AFC will consult with AHC during the design phase of this project.

Project Status: This project is currently being solicited for architecture services along with the fire tower project. However, the project is dependent upon well water being brought in and needs to be built in conjunction with water line installation from the well site. A septic system will also be needed on site to serve the bath house.

Attachment DW

Project: Drill a well.

Priority: High

Need Addressed: There is currently no water service at the top of Flagg Mountain and for the cabin sites. The AFC is planning to establish a working well at the cabin site and extend water lines to the general community area—serving the bath house and other facilities deemed necessary by the Forestry Commission.

Project Status: The well is ready to be drilled. Presently AFC will drill the well for private use in order to supply water to the Ranger Cabin and Cabin 1. As a future goal, the AFC would like to hire an architect to design a well for public use. The Conservation Fund has funds available and reserved for use in drilling the well.

Attachment WL

Project: Install pump house and water lines from water well to general community area/bath house.

Priority: High

Need Addressed: A pump house and water lines need to be installed to serve the bath house and other buildings deemed necessary by the Forestry Commission. A septic system will also need to be installed to serve the bath house.

Project Status: AFC will install the pump house, water lines, and septic system once the well is established in March or April and complete water and septic projects in conjunction with the bath house in 2019.

Attachment MS

Project: Build a Maintenance Shop.

Priority: High

Need Addressed: Flagg Mountain needs a single multi-use building which will be utilized as follows:

- A shop and storage—which will provide shop machinery (drills, saws, grinders, etc.) to maintain, improve, and repair cabin grounds and equipment while the storage would be used to store equipment and materials for such purposes.
- A bunk room—to house full-time facility staff.

Project Status: The project is scheduled as Immediate (1-2 years), but to be built after the bath house, as priority. The project to repair cabins and the strategy to purchase needed equipment are contingent on this project. The structure should be designed, built, and sited so as not to interfere with or disrupt the National Park Service's 1930's era design for the cabins, tower and surrounding landscape.

Attachment PE

Strategy: Purchase needed equipment to maintain facilities.

Priority: High

Need Addressed: Flagg Mountain needs to acquire some basic equipment to maintain its facilities. Equipment needs are listed as follows:

- Zero turn lawn mower,
- Tractor with bucket and backhoe,
- Bushhog with finish mower attachments,
- Wheelbarrow,
- Kubota side by side.

Project Status: AHTS has applied for a \$2,100 RCD grant to help with smaller purchases such as a push mower, 2 grills, a weed eater, wall heaters, and gutters for the Wardens Cabin. The AFC is acquiring equipment through the federal excess property program.

Attachment FTM

Project: Establish a Fire Tower Museum.

Priority: Medium

Need Addressed: Built in 1935, by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the original intent of the Flagg Mountain Fire Tower was to be an observation tower and museum, as part of the Alabama State Parks. The goal of the project was to promote Weogufka State Park, with its beautiful yellow pine forest, the largest one east of the Rocky Mountains, as the “most scenic in the state”. The view atop the tower would be truly magnificent and well worth the climb. In 1937, the US Park Service further advertised Flagg Mountain as “a play place in the clouds” in an Alabama Highlands video clip. However, the Park never became a reality since the CCC working on the mountain disbanded in 1936 due to the advent of WWII. Preserving the tower as an observation tower and museum for CCC related and fire lookout tower historical documents, photos, and artifacts would bring visitors to the site.

Project Status: The Alabama Historical Commission currently holds a CCC exhibit in storage. Such an exhibit would provide a perfect display for the museum. The project is contingent with purchasing security cameras for the tower as well as installing a second gate to deter vandalism.

Attachment SC

Project: Add security cameras to the tower, cabin, and campsite.

Priority: Medium

Need Addressed: Trespassing and vandalism at the tower site is currently a problem. Security cameras are needed at the tower site, cabins, and campgrounds to deter these crimes and make visitors to Flagg Mountain feel safer.

Project Status: The Alabama Forestry Commission will provide AHTS with security cameras. Cameras purchased should be tied in with motion sensors and lighting, relay real-time video to nearby users, and be able to work adequately without an internet connection.

Attachment RC

Project: Repair remaining cabins.

Priority: Medium

Need Addressed: The cabins in the community area of Flagg Mountain are in various states of disrepair and in need of improvements.

Project Status: This project is contingent upon building the shop and storage as a part of the Maintenance Shop since various cabin repairs would require the use of machinery and materials in storage on site.

Attachment PT

Project: Add a picnic table and camping fire pit to every site.

Priority: Low

Need Addressed: Picnic tables and camping fire pits would considerably improve campsites and make them more useful and enjoyable.

Project Status: The AFC and AHTS could coordinate purchases of tables and fire pits as budget items.

Attachment IE

Project: Install electricity in cabins.

Priority: Low

Need Addressed: Electricity for cabins would provide a convenient service for campers and hikers staying overnight.

Project Status: The current assessment is to repair and/or replace conduits.

Attachment VH

Project: Secure a volunteer full-time host for Flagg Mountain.

Priority: Low

Need Addressed: A volunteer host would be useful in greeting visitors, giving tours, conducting administration, and assisting the care takers when needed.

Project Status: AHTS is currently providing this caretaker under agreement with the AFC.

Attachment SG

Project: Put in a second gate for the fire tower entrance.

Priority: Low

Need Addressed: A second gate for the fire tower entrance would deter vandalism on the current gate entrance.

Project Status: No status at this time.

Attachment FS

Project: Establish fee schedule for campgrounds and cabins.

Priority: Low

Need Addressed: There are currently no fees tied to using Flagg Mountain cabins and campgrounds for visitor overnight stays. AHTS is taking donations, however, charging fees for overnight stays would allow a revenue stream to be used for basic maintenance needs and improvement needs to the facility.

Project Status: No status at this time.

Attachment DS

Project: Install directional signage along US Hwy. 231 and US Hwy. 280.

Priority: Low

Need Addressed: Directional signage to Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain along these major highways in Coosa and Talladega Counties would promote the area to potential visitors and make finding the place considerably easier.

Project Status: No status at this time. The AFC would need to work with ALDOT to install signage on federal, state, and county roads.

Flagg Mt. Planning Evaluation Table

This table is designed as a resource which allows project managers to track progress on each project and strategy by marking where each project/strategy stands and to keep projects/strategies properly updated without having to make changes to the Strategic Planning Table and accompanying timelines. Furthermore, should additional projects and strategies arise, this table offers blank boxes to write in and track progress accordingly.

Project -Anything Constructed, Placed and/or Repaired. Strategy -Anything Non-Construction (Hiring and Purchasing, etc.)	<u>Planning</u> Preparation of grants, engineering/arch. drawings, procurement of materials and services, etc.	<u>Administration</u> Begin site prep and construction, grant administration, etc.	<u>Closeout</u> Construction finished, final inspection, grant closeout, etc.	<u>Finished</u> Final inspection approved and grant closeout complete.
Project: Renovate the Fire Tower stairs.				
Project: Build Bathhouse for the cabin grounds.				
Project: Drill well.				
Project: Install water lines from water well to general community area/bath house.				
Project: Build a Maintenance Shop & Storage with Bunk Room for staff.				
Strategy: Purchase needed equipment to maintain facilities.				
Project: Establish a Fire Tower Museum.				
Project: Add security cameras to tower, cabin, and campsite.				
Project: Repair remaining cabins.				

Project: Add a picnic table and camping fire pit to every site.				
Project: Install electricity in cabins.				
Strategy: Secure volunteer host for Flagg Mountain.				
Project: Put in second gate for Fire Tower entrance.				
Strategy: Establish fee schedule for campgrounds and cabins.				
Project: Install directional signage along US Hwy. 231 and US Hwy. 280.				

References

Figure SP-1. Flagg Mountain Fire Tower, 2018.

Facebook.com - Flagg Mountain Facebook page. (Pg. 1)

Figure SP-2. Map of Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain.

Weogufka State Forest Action Plan, 2017. (Pg. 2)

Figure SP-3. Flagg Mountain Cabins, 2018.

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. (Pg. 2)

Figure SP-4. Historical Timeline, 2019

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. (Pg. 3)

Figure SP-5. Map of Eastern Continental Trail.

M.J. Eberhart. Retrieved 2009-12-20. Wikipedia. (Pg. 4)

Figure SP-6. Pinhoti Trail, 2018.

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. (Pg. 5)

Figure SP-7. A few members of the Strategic Planning Team

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. (Pg. 7)

Figure SP-8 Strategic Planning Process for Weogufka State Forest and Flagg Mountain.

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. (Pg. 8)

Figure SP-9 Project and Strategy Timeline Table.

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. (Pg. 9)