

Chapter 10: Recreational Travel and Tourism

Introduction

The Jonesboro Metropolitan Area and its vicinity are prime attractions for tourists throughout the year. Its parks and mild climate allure short and long-term tourists who find solitude in this sunny, temperate climate to enjoy natural and man-made attractions.

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Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives adopted by the MPO to promote recreational travel and tourism are listed below:

1. Promote access to MPO's historic, scenic, and recreational areas.
2. Collaborate with public and private sector decision-makers to improve and establish intermodal connections for recreational travel needs.
3. Promote cooperation among regional, state, and local interest groups to integrate land use and transportation for providing an attractive tourism environment.
4. Adopt and promote environmental friendly design standards for roadways, bikeways, and walkways.

Specific policies to achieve the above goals and objectives are listed below.

Policy 1

Preserve and enhance historic, scenic, and natural attractions.

Encourage the public and the private sector to conserve and enhance the treasures of the area for the enjoyment of the local people and the tourists.

Policy 2

Provide traffic signs to guide and inform travelers.

Traffic signs help in regulating speed and the movement of traffic. The signs help drivers arrive to their destination by identifying the route and avoiding hazards that would be difficult to see.

Policy 3

Provide off-street stopovers and observation points along roads and highways.

The metropolitan area is home for hundreds of resident and migratory birds of every description. Bird watching is a popular recreational activity in the area. Recreational travelers and visitors usually make frequent stops for bird watching and enjoy the beauties of nature. Parking and picnic areas should be provided along roads for people to stop safely.

Policy 4

Provide and improve access to tourist attractions by intermodal facilities.

Identify suitable bicycle routes along roads. Improve and connect hike and bike trails for visitors to use bikes and walk safely between various tourist attractions.

Policy 5

Encourage the private sector to provide land and air transportation to tourist attractions.

Motivate the private sector to provide buses, trolleys, and helicopter rides for individuals and groups for site-seeing, bird watching, and fishing. Public and private transit services will help reduce private car trips and improve air quality.

Policy 6

Improve street environment by landscaping and street furniture.

Picnic spots and parks may be developed along roads and highways for visitors to stop at selected places for picnics, bird watching, or resting.

The city of Jonesboro is in the process of building the Greenways (hike and bike trails) to enhance recreational travel and tourism. Other projects are in the planning stage.

Policy 7

Control and reduce air, water, and noise pollution.

Encourage public and private entities to promote alternative modes of transportation to reduce pollution.

Possible federal funds for these programs include: Transportation Enhancements (STP and Transit), Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways (NHS), Recreational Trails Program, National Scenic Byways Program, Parkways and Park Roads Program, and Transportation and Community and System Preservation Program funds.

Attractions

Arts and Entertainment

Arkansas State University Museum

The Arkansas State University Museum, which interprets the rich history of the Crowley's Ridge Region and the Lower Mississippi River Valley, is accredited by the American Association of Museums. It is one of four accredited museums in the state. The ASU Museum is located in the west wing of the library and museum complex in the heart of the ASU campus.



The permanent exhibits include fossils, minerals, antiques, toys, military collections, glass

collections and remnants from the pre-historic era. The Museum also features a variety of temporary and special exhibits during the year. One of the most popular permanent exhibits is "Old Town Arkansas", illustrating a variety of "Main Street" shops from the early 20th century.

The Forum

The Forum, Jonesboro's beautifully restored civic auditorium, hosts concerts, plays, seminars, pageants, town meetings, business meetings, religious services, film showings and weddings.



The Foundation of Arts for Northeast Arkansas, Inc., serves as an umbrella group to coordinate funding and provide business management for affiliated cultural and entertainment activities in Jonesboro. Divisions within the Foundation include art, dance, theater, The Showtime Series and the International Film Series.

Convocation Center

The Convocation Center, completed in 1987, has the versatility to host events ranging from small lectures to conventions, concerts, sporting events, trade shows, rodeos and other activities. The center seats up to 11,500 people for concerts and 10,529 for basketball games.



In addition to Arkansas State University athletics, special events have included the Ice Capades, the Harlem Globetrotters, the Lippizaner stallions and many others.

Features include one of the largest telescopic seating configurations in the world; meeting rooms and banquet facilities for groups up to 600 people (more than 1,000 on the arena floor); a lecture hall with seating for 281 and audiovisual facilities, a portable stage and sound facilities in the arena; and parking for 1,300 vehicles.

The Fowler Performing Arts Center

The 78,000 square-foot Fowler Center is the newest addition to the ASU campus. It features a concert hall, drama stage, experimental theatre, teaching gallery and a grand lobby.



The Bradbury Gallery

The gallery is located at 201 Olympic Drive in the Fowler Center on the ASU campus. The Bradbury Gallery features changing exhibitions of contemporary art in all mediums. Nationally and internationally recognized artists are represented to inform our viewers of cultural developments across the US and around the world. Twice yearly, the gallery also features the work by graduating seniors from the ASU Department of Art.

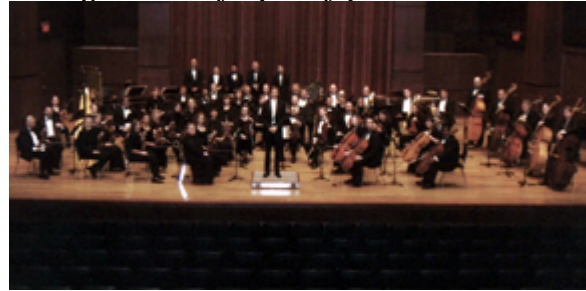
The Bradbury Gallery is also the site of the Delta National Small Prints Exhibition, a nationally recognized juried print show. Printmakers from across the country, who submit

their work, and patrons who enjoy viewing their work, anticipate this competition.

Delta Symphony Orchestra

The only professional performing symphony in this region, the Symphony performs three concerts annually in the Fowler Center.

The Delta Symphony has been entertaining, educating, and enriching the Northeast Arkansas region of the Delta for 30 years. Special projects include the Adopt a School program where orchestral musicians visit selected schools and our Concerto Competition in which talented young musicians audition for an opportunity to perform solos with the Symphony.



ASU Fine Arts Center Gallery

The Fine Arts Center Art Gallery, operated by the Department of Art, presents a regularly changing schedule of art exhibitions. These exhibitions include the work of artists from around the nation, the work of faculty and students of Arkansas State University, and selections from a distinguished and growing permanent collection.

The above information is copied from <http://www.jonesborochamber.org/view.php/id/40>

Craighead Forest Park

An outdoor enthusiast's dream, Craighead Forest Park is a city-owned park located in the scenic beauty of Crowley's Ridge. The park offers many recreational opportunities for the public to enjoy. The park opened in 1937 when the local Young Men's Civic Club began work on the lake.

Camping

Craighead Forest Park has become known as a camper's haven. The campground offers visitors a home-away-from-home atmosphere, combined with rustic surroundings. The Park has 26 tree shaded asphalt pads equipped with water and electrical outlets as well as picnic tables and grills. A central bathhouse and a waste evacuation station are located near the campgrounds.

Fishing

Fishing at the 55-acre lake in Craighead Forest Park is a favorite pastime for the local residents and for campers who visit the park. The lake is stocked by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and includes Bream, Bass, Crappie, and Catfish for the angler. Boats are allowed on the lake year round during daylight hours only. A 5 mph speed limit and a "no wake" rule are enforced at all times.



Special Events

Park visitors may also find a variety of events, celebrations, and concerts in the park. Some of the more popular events in the park include:

1. 4th in the Forest.
2. Labor Day Blues Fest (located at the band shell on Access # 6).
3. Iron Will Triathlon.
4. Off-Road Weekend including a Mountain Bike Race, Xterra, and 5K trail run.

Sporting Opportunities

The park offers several recreational areas for basketball, baseball, disc golf, football, soccer, horseshoes, softball, sand volleyball, and many other outdoor sports and games. The park is also home to several miles of trails for various uses.

Trails

Mountain Bikers will find trails for all skill levels within the confines of the park. Beginner trails are inside the loop road and have trailheads located at Access # 5 and Access # 6. The beginner trail is approximately 3 miles in length. The more advanced trail begins just behind the bathroom at Pavilion # 1 and winds its way around to the South side of the park before connecting to the beginner section of the trail. The entire trail is 9 miles in length and a test for even the most seasoned rider. ATV Enthusiasts are welcome to ride all the trails in the Northeast section of the park. The ATV riding area extends from the parking lot on Craighead Forest Road west to South Culberhouse Road.



Horse riding is also permitted in the park. There are no marked trails for horses, but horse enthusiasts may take a nice trail ride on several trails located on the Southern end of the park. All trails are open for hiking. In addition to the trails, mountain bike, trails and ATV trails, walkers and runners are invited to spend a little time on the 2.4 mile chat trail that circles the lake.

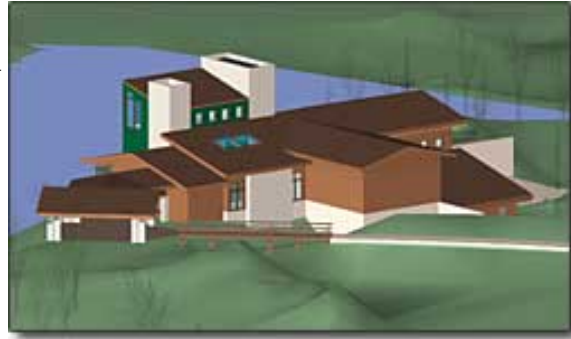
The Craighead Forest Park information is copies from <http://www.jonesborosports.org/view.php/id/194>.

Crowley Ridge Nature Center

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission have been awarded a \$900,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration for exhibits at Crowley's Ridge Nature Center. The Jonesboro nature center received the grant because of its proximity to Arkansas' first National Scenic Byway - Crowley's Ridge Parkway.

The nature center will serve as a visitor and information center for travelers on the byway, as well as a place for area residents to learn more about the natural world around them. The grant will be applied to the permanent exhibits for the nature center's main building, which

will include a high-definition film on the origins, history and characteristics of Crowley's Ridge, which is a unique geological formation; a 30-foot-long satellite photo of the ridge, which extends from St. Francis, Arkansas near the Missouri border to Helena; three topographical models of specific places along the ridge; a diorama reflecting the impact of water on shaping the ridge, and two wildlife exhibits featuring many of the species native to northeast Arkansas.



The nature center will have exhibits on duck hunting, the forces of nature such as tornadoes and ice storms, as well as a wildlife viewing area. There will be outdoor exhibits as well as an accessible trail that will loop around the nature center's pond and provide quite a view of the prairie being established in the basin of a former gravel quarry. Total cost of the Crowley's Ridge Nature Center is \$4.3 million. It is the second of four nature centers the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) is building with money from the Conservation Sales Tax.

Byway grants are provided to projects nationwide, with the Crowley's Ridge facility receiving the third-highest grant award. The U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said that 206 projects in 42 states received \$24 million in FHWA scenic byways grants. The funding is earmarked to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected scenic roads and highways throughout the United States.

The Crowley Ridge Nature Center information is adapted from http://www.agfc.com/education/agfc_ao_050703.html.

Crowley Ridge Park

The park is located 12 miles west of Paragould via U.S. 412 and AR 141, or 15 miles north of Jonesboro via AR 141. The park also serves as an information center for the Crowley's Ridge Parkway, a national scenic byway that links several roadways along the length of the ridge in Arkansas.

Facilities at the park today include 26 campsites, four modern, fully-equipped cabins with kitchen and fireplaces, a Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) group cabin area with five units and dining hall, and a 31-acre fishing lake with barrier-free pier and boat launch ramp.

The park also boasts a restored CCC-era amphitheater, a looping trail system, a primitive tent camping area, a barrier-free playground, pavilions, a wildlife observation platform, the CCC pavilion-bathhouse, a sandy beach area, paddleboat rentals, surf bikes, snack bar and a visitors center.

Other Parks

Joe Mack Campbell Park

Joe Mack Campbell Athletic Complex is home to youth soccer and baseball leagues. The park includes:

- 10 Baseball Fields, All Lighted
- 12 Batting Cages, 8 Lighted
- 18 Soccer Fields, 4 Lighted
- 1.2 Miles Walking Track
- 2 Tennis Courts
- 3 Concession Stands
- 5 Pavilions
- Ample Parking

Parker/Miles Park

Parker/Miles Park is 12.9 acre of recreational complex. It features:

- A community center
- A large playground
- 3 Pavilions
- An outdoor Basketball Court
- A walking track
- 8 acres of multi-purpose field
- Ample Parking

Parker Park Community Center features the Dickey Nutt Gymnasium, an air conditioned two-court gymnasium, a small and a large meeting room, bathrooms, and a kitchen and concession area.

Allen Park

Allen Park is 22.9 acre recreational complex. Allen Park features:

- A community center
- A large playground
- A water sprayground
- A skatepark
- A 12-court tennis complex
- A walking track
- Multi-purpose ball fields
- Ample Parking

Allen Park Community Center has two air conditioned basketball courts, meeting rooms, bathrooms, and a kitchen and concession area.

Trails

Greenway:

The City of Jonesboro is planning a "linear park" connecting neighborhoods, parks, schools, shopping districts, and athletic facilities. The Greenway will be implemented in three

phases.

Phase I: Connecting downtown with ASU, Nettleton Intermediate Center and Nettleton Central Elementary, and Allen Park Community Center.

Phase II: This will connect Joe Mack Campbell Park, Parker Park, Southern Hill Mall, Craighead Forest, and Southside Softball Complex.

Phase III. This phase will connect Jo Mack and Parker Parks through two different routes that will connect North Main Park and Northside Baseball Park.

The proposed Greenway Map (page 10-9) shows the proposed greenways, sidewalks connecting the greenways, and parks within the study area.