



INFORMATION RELEASE

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State Highway Funds Not Used in Construction of Delta Heritage Trail

CHICOT, DREW AND DESHA COUNTIES (2-22) – The Delta Heritage Trail (DHT) State Park, in extreme southeast Arkansas, is one of the newest additions to Arkansas' State Park System. It is not a traditional State Park – the southern portion is actually a multi-use trail that follows part of the Mississippi River levee and extends from near Arkansas City to near Rohwer. When complete, the DHT will extend over 90 miles to a point northwest of Helena-West Helena.

The unique nature and shared use of the facility by motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists has created some confusion among citizens and even some candidates running for political office. "Some people think the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) built the road," said Scott Bennett, Director of the AHTD. "But no state highway funds have been or will be used in the construction of the Delta Heritage Trail."

Many entities have been involved in creating the DHT State Park, Bennett noted. The Game & Fish Commission, Department of State Parks, Corps of Engineers, and the local levee commission have all played significant roles, both in the planning and funding of the trail and park. The AHTD was asked and has performed construction oversight during the construction. The AHTD was compensated for that activity.

Once a State Park is established, like the DHT State Park, it is the AHTD's responsibility to maintain the access roads to and through the park. "Act 387 of 1957 states that roads leading to and within State Parks are to be maintained by the AHTD," Bennett stated. "So by law, the AHTD will perform routine maintenance and make routine repairs to those roads when needed."

According to Bennett, the AHTD and Parks & Tourism have had a good working relationship over the years. "We partner with them on many programs, including directional signs to tourist attractions, the joint operation of our Welcome Centers, and publication of our State Tourist Map. Helping maintain the roads in the Delta Heritage Trail State Park is simply the next chapter in what has been a pretty good book so far."