

The Alabamian

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION



ACHIEVING OUR GOALS IN 2023

Natalie Norman, CPRP
Executive Director
Alabama Recreation and
Parks Association

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Nominating – Willie Moore, III
Professional Development – Robin Brothers, CPRP
Recreational Sports – Tommie Agee
Therapeutic Recreation – Staci Wells

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Hello ARPA Friends!

The theme of this issue of the Alabamian is centered around the goals you have for the upcoming year, and I look forward to reading about all of the ways you are striving to enhance the quality of life for your citizens. From rural communities to large thriving cities, each and every member of ARPA makes a lasting impact in the lives of those that they serve, and I am honored to work alongside each and every one of you within our profession.

It is my goal in the coming year to connect with as many of you as possible. I look forward to visiting your district meetings, cheering on your teams at tournaments and learning and fellowshipping with you at all of our upcoming education opportunities.

I am looking forward to the upcoming year and all that it will bring. We have an amazing Board of Directors this year and an incredible slate of Committee Chairs that I know will work tirelessly to propel our organization forward. I am incredibly grateful for all of those who volunteer to serve ARPA and our members.

I want to thank all of those who worked to make our State Conference such a huge success. Particularly Robin Brothers, the Conference Education Committee and our State Office staff – Executive Director Natalie Norman, Tiffany Wade, Kay McCreery and Suzan Faulkner. The work that all of you do behind the scenes to make conference great do not go unnoticed and we are grateful for all of you.

I want to thank Tommie Agee and the entire Recreational Sports Committee for running a great State Basketball Tournament. It's a tough tournament to start a new year with, and I am always in awe of how the Rec Sports Chair, the Rec Sports Committee and the host site work together to ensure basketball athletes from across the state are able to compete in a well-run tournament. This year was no exception. Thank you for all of your hard work!

In closing, I want to thank every member of ARPA for their involvement in and support of our organization. You are what make our organization great.

Laura Leigh Chesser,
2023 ARPA President



from the
President
Laura Leigh Chesser
2023 ARPA President

Hello ARPA Members,

Spring has sprung, maybe?! Thank you for the goals you set and achieve each day, strengthening communities and the role of parks and recreation season to season!

A few things to share and gratitude to give from your State Office...

We had an awesome state conference in Orange Beach. Thanks to all of you that attended and helped make it a great success. We would like to extend a special thank you to the Conference Education Committee for providing us with a tremendous slate of educational sessions and speakers; to the exhibitors for making the Trade Show a wonderful event; and to the Awards Committee for helping put together the awards portion of the closing banquet. Congratulations to the recipients and thank you for your dedication to parks and recreation throughout the state. Also, a huge thank you to the City of Orange Beach and Orange Beach Parks and Recreation Department for being an exceptional host and on-target in all areas!

We installed an outstanding Board of Directors for 2023. I so look forward to working with the board and President Laura Leigh Chesser, as we set and achieve goals that will sustain and grow the Alabama Recreation and Parks Association.

Many thanks for their service, as well as the dedicated State Committee Chairs.

from the
Executive Director
Natalie Norman
Executive Director

We also had a great State Basketball Championship. Thank you to the City of Birmingham, Birmingham Parks and Recreation Department and the Recreational Sports Committee for giving our youth basketball participants and fans a great environment in which to play and cheer. What a great kick-off to the 2023 Rec Sports year!

The bulk of the 2023 membership drive has wrapped up. Thanks to all our members for joining and supporting ARPA. We survive only with you present and engaged.

My goal as your Executive Director is to assist in growing the ARPA through membership, professional development, advocacy, visibility, and voice.

We move forward with great excitement and anticipation as we promote the profession of parks and recreation. It is truly a privilege to serve the ARPA. Thank you for continuing to be difference makers, goal setters, and goal achievers!

Growing Together,
Natalie

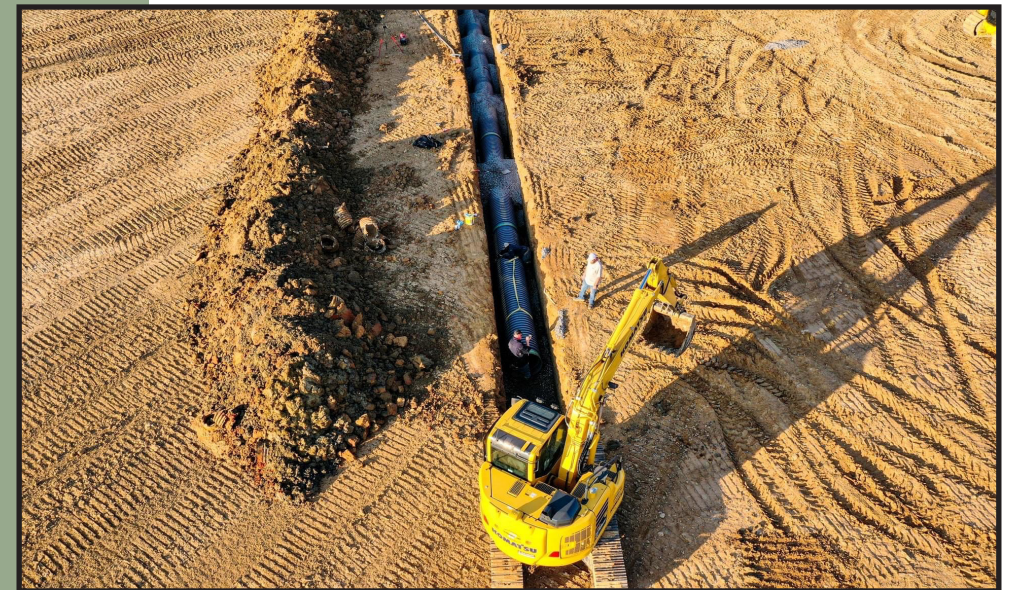


Arab Rec on the Go

One of our goals at Arab Parks and Recreation for 2023 is to create more opportunities for children to engage in physical activity. We have created a new program that will begin this summer called Rec on the Go. This will be a mobile unit that will travel to various locations around town and give children access to engaging activities with positive community role models.



Another goal we have for this year is to improve our ball field facilities so that they can be utilized more often. We are improving drainage issues to decrease the amount of field closures we have due to wet fields. This will positively impact our program for years to come.



Tuscaloosa Welcomes a New Director

A Familiar Face to ARPA

The Board of Directors of Tuscaloosa County's Park & Recreation Authority (PARA) approved the hiring of Brian C. Davis as Executive Director and CEO, during their regularly scheduled meeting on March 7. Davis, who currently serves as Director of Engineering and Public Works and is a former long-time Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Vestavia Hills, will assume the lead role on April 17.

"Our community is fortunate to have been represented by the exceptional search committee of area stakeholders who identified Brian Davis as a top candidate for the executive director position," said Board Chairman Dr. Tony Johnson.

"Brian brings more than two decades of parks and recreation, sport, and municipal experience to this role, and his leadership will be pivotal in redefining PARA's mission and vision for Tuscaloosa County and its partnering cities."

Davis, who is a member of several local, state, and national recreation and civic organizations, will serve as PARA's fourth Executive Director since the Authority was established in 1969.

"I am honored to be chosen as the next executive Director for PARA," said Davis. "I am excited to work with the Board of Directors and staff to create a vision for service to all the community. PARA has a great reputation, and I look forward to carrying the torch that has been handed to me."



In addition to his public service work for the City of Vestavia Hills, Davis has also worked in key recreation and sports leadership and management roles at Samford University, Loyola University New Orleans, and the University of West Florida, among others. Additionally, he has served as an assistant basketball coach and a long-time sports official in several athletic conferences and leagues, including the Southeastern Conference (SEC), the American Athletic Conference, the Ohio Valley Conference, the Gulf South Conference, and the Professional Indoor Football League.

Davis served in the U.S. Army Reserves as an Administrative Specialist from 1992-2004 and received the Joint Commendation Award for service in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (Bagram, Afghanistan) in 2003 as part of the 10th Mountain Infantry Division. He earned a bachelor's degree in Communication from the University of Alabama in 1994 and a master's degree in Health, Leisure and Sports, with an emphasis in Recreation Administration, from the University of West Florida in 1996. A member of Grace Life Baptist Church in McCalla, Davis and his wife, Tracy, have two sons, Micah and J.T.

Davis replaces Gary Minor, who retired as PARA's Executive Director on Dec 31, after nearly a dozen years in that role and a total of 18 years at PARA.

"Brian brings more than two decades of parks and recreation, sport, and municipal experience to this role, and his leadership will be pivotal in redefining PARA's mission and vision for Tuscaloosa County and its partnering cities."

Dr. Tony Johnson

City of Opelika Upcoming Renovations

The City of Opelika has numerous upcoming building and renovation projects slated for this year.



current projects

- Installing turf athletic fields at Floral Park
- Building two 18-hole disc golf courses at Spring Villa Park
- Installing a new Miracle Playground at West Ridge Park
- Renovating the Calhoun Tennis Center restrooms



upcoming projects

- Building pavilions, restrooms, a concession stand, inclusive playground and splash pad at Floral Park
- Constructing a new lodge at Spring Villa Park
- Renovating Denson Drive Recreation Center with new restrooms, a new parent sitting area and updating the current lobby aesthetic.
- Constructing a new 40-meter pool and new outdoor water playground at the Opelika SportsPlex
- Constructing a new water playground and a new teaching swimming pool at Covington Recreation Center.
- Installing new scoreboards at Covington Park and Floral Park.



Water World Planning & Goals

The last few years have been a flurry of goal setting, planning, designing, and expanding at Water World Water Park in Dothan. We would love to share a glimpse into our journey over the past few years as we began the exciting process of planning, setting goals, and seeing those goals to completion.

Background

WaterWorld opened in 1980 with just two attractions: a 450,000-gallon wave pool and a 400-foot-long triple flume water slide. The park also included a concession stand, front gate, bathhouses, and tube rental. In 1986 a kiddie pool was added for our smallest citizens as an alternative to swimming in the wave pool. To put that date into perspective, those one-year-olds that were playing in the kiddie pool in 1986 are now 37 years old! The Great White Sidewinder Slide was opened in 2000 to much fanfare, especially with the pre-teen and teenage crowds.

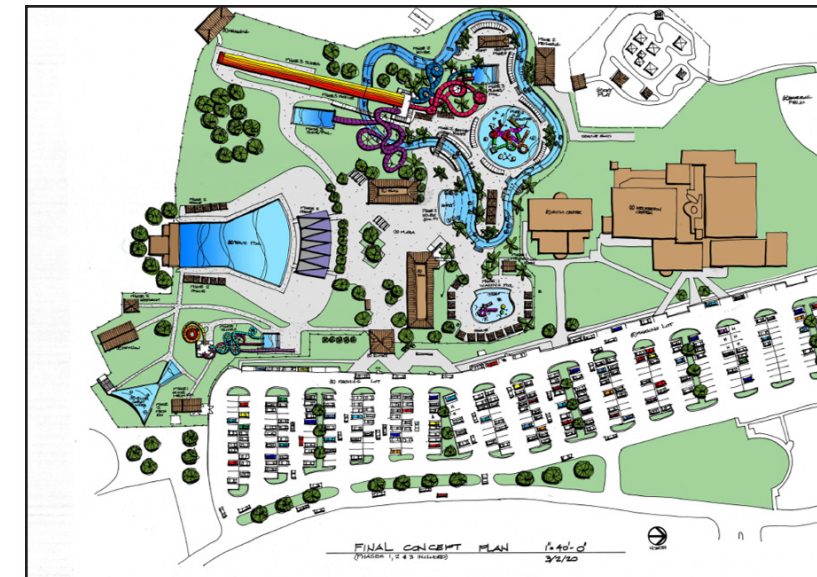
Park maintenance staff struggled with the upkeep of the triple flume slides for over a decade through the early 2000's. The concrete flumes were absorbing moisture from the ground, making it almost impossible to keep the smooth sliding surface intact. In 2019, the decision was made to close the slides because they were at the end of their useful life. Around that same time, we realized the size and function of the kiddie pool had become woefully inadequate for the number of guests that visited the park.

Master Plan

Planning and setting goals became our central focus. We didn't want to add anything without a detailed, phased plan and location for attractions across the 13-acre park for the foreseeable future. We commissioned a master plan from Aquatic Design Group, which included new slides to replace the closed triple flume slide, a new Kids Cove to replace the old kiddie pool, the addition of cabanas, and future additions including a lazy river, a Kid's

Island play structure, a head-first mat racer, and multiple family tube slides.

With the support of City Leadership, we began working on Phase I of the master plan, generating detailed construction plans for four new slides and a Kids Cove pool (with Barge Design Solutions, Seay, Seay, and Litchfield Architects, and Aquatic Design Group). In spring 2020, Lewis Construction completed the construction of four new Splashtacular slides off a 40-foot tower: a bowl slide, a speed slide, and two serpentine slides. Cox Pools built the splash pools and the new Kids Cove. We also added new carpet around the wave pool, cabanas, and tropical landscaping.



2020: The Covid Year

Covid-19 emerged in the summer of 2020, and the park was open intermittently throughout the summer. Just 7,727 guests visited the park in 2020. Despite Covid, we continued to move forward with our plans for improvement. In the fall of 2020, we added a Splashtacular play structure to our Kids Cove. The play structure included one slide and more than 20 hoses, buckets, and spray nozzles for children to play with.

2021

The public was excited to get out and play when summer rolled around in 2021. Larger than normal crowds descended on the park, and we finished the season with a total of 77,008 guests – an average of 963 customer each day! This was attributed in part to the well-received addition of the new slides and Kids Cove.

Planning for future expansion continued throughout this summer. In the winter of 2021 and spring of 2022, Wyatt Sasser Construction began renovating the restrooms, adding 15 new toilets, new sinks, two family restrooms, and new showers. They replaced the outdated key lockers with kiosk lockers, renovated and expanded the concession stand, added a new concession area, replaced the 40+ year-old wave generation equipment (with Aquatic Development Group), created a new employee lounge area from old office space, and added more cabanas. A "Quiet Room" was also established as a complimentary area for special needs children and nursing/pumping mothers.

2022

2022 was another successful summer with large crowds ready to have fun in the sun! 82,570 guests visited the park in 2022, which is more guests than the park has had in any one summer since opening in 1980 – and greater than the number of citizens in Dothan! We had an average daily attendance of 1,086 guests, and seven of our operating days had over 2,000 people in attendance. Our guests are visiting from across the Wiregrass area, including Northwest Florida, Southwest Georgia, and Central Alabama.

As staff worked hard to provide a safe, fun, customer-friendly park throughout the summer, future planning continued. Construction plans were drawn, and Lewis Construction expanded the ticket windows from two to eleven, added a new park office, added more guest kiosk lockers, constructed a new maintenance and chemical storage barn, and added premium cabanas. We are now on the cusp of a new season, and we can't wait to open and show our guests what we have been working on all winter!

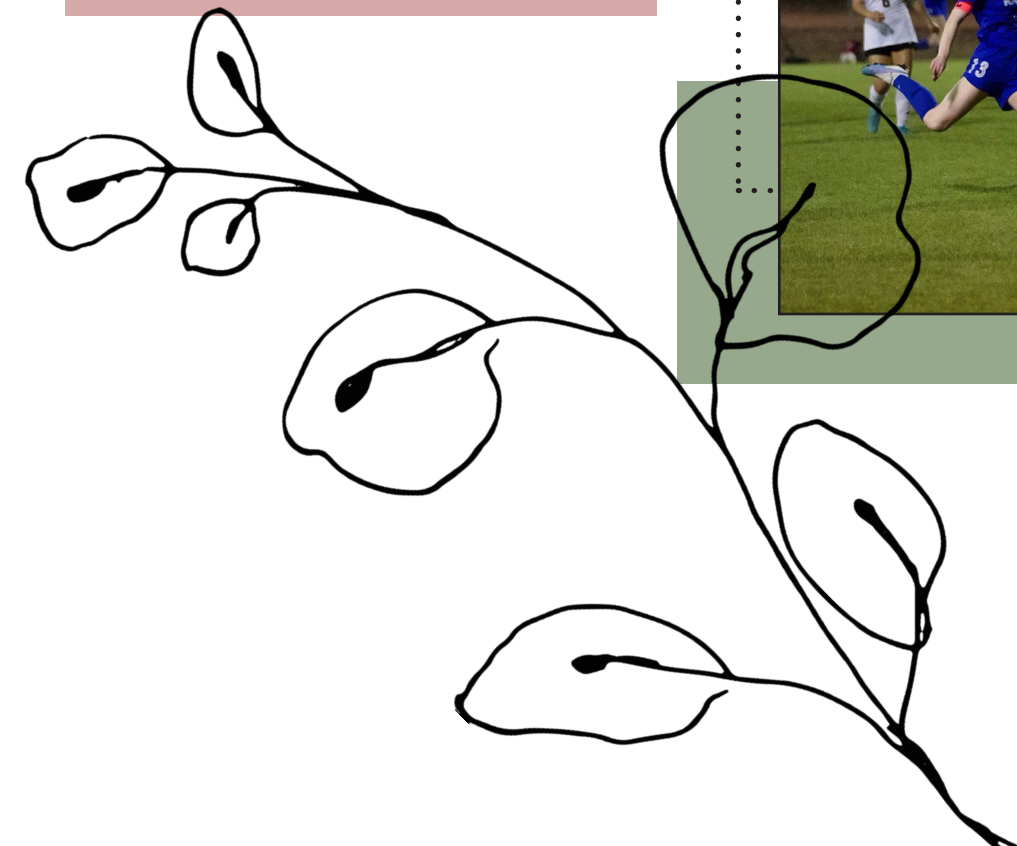
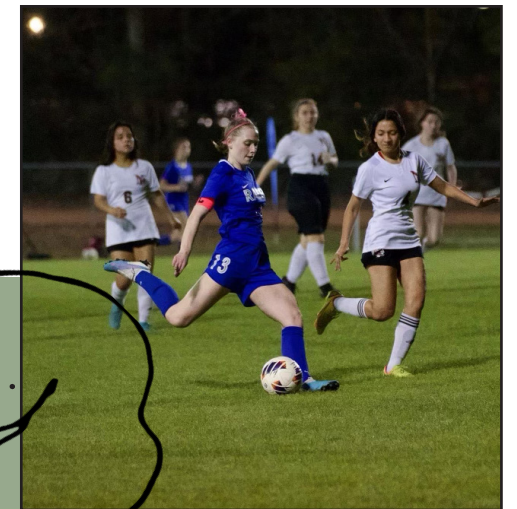


The Future

With all the needed infrastructure projects checked off the list, we are eagerly anticipating the next attractions. We hope to have another record-breaking season this summer at Water World. We are currently working with Aquatic Design Group to update the Master Plan that was established in 2019, and hope to have the continued support of City Leadership as we move towards our next challenge – The Lazy River and Kids Island! Our staff is hopeful that we can continue this yearly process of evaluating, re-evaluating, planning, studying, polling, designing, presenting, building, and pushing forward so that the Citizens of Dothan can be proud to call Water World "Dothan's Most Exciting Beach."

..... Wiregrass Cup
Soccer Tournament

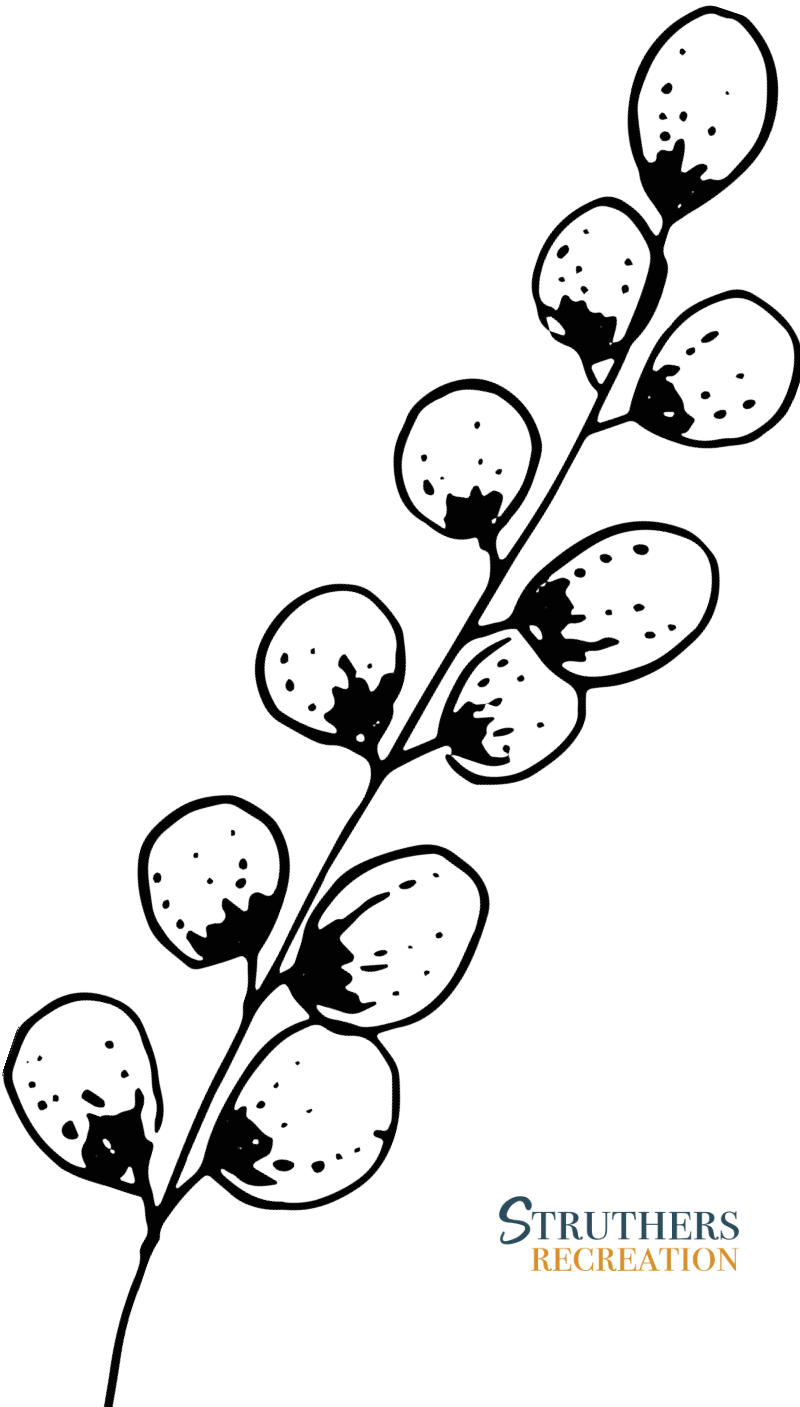
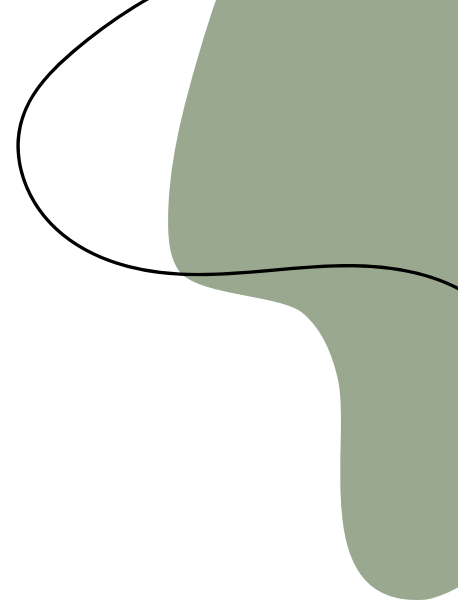
Dothan Leisure Services, in conjunction with Houston Academy, hosted the inaugural Wiregrass Cup soccer tournament March 3rd and 4th. The tournament took place at Westgate Park and consisted of 23 teams in 4 divisions: Varsity Boys, Varsity Girls, JV Boys, and JV Girls.



Alabama Recreation & Parks Association

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