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## TALLADEGA COUNTY

### Pros and cons of 4-wheeler trails

By Brandon Fincher  
02-28-2009

TALLADEGA COUNTY — There has been much discussion about the proposed all-terrain vehicle or off-highway vehicle trail the city of Lincoln plans to develop on the Coosa River Annex property should the city receive the deed to the property.

Danny Hubbard, public relations director for the Cheaha Trail Riders, an organization for OHV enthusiasts, said the trail riders assisted Lincoln in plans to develop a park for the annex property.

He said he believes a regional park would be a large tourist attraction and the park “could be the savior of the economic situation in Talladega County.

“The estimated revenue impact after the first year will probably be about \$4 million a year. When the park matures in 10 years, we could be looking at \$15 million plus,” Hubbard said.

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He said the Trail Riders approached several government entities in the past few years with a plan to develop the park, but Lincoln was the only one to take them up on a plan that includes OHVs.

“(Mayor Lew Watson) and the council were all willing to do the plan and include OHVs in the plan,” Hubbard said. “But this is not an in-the-box plan. We’re planning on having a multitude of activities, and they accepted that. The plan we’re working on is probably about 12 to 14 months in design, possibly 18.”

This plan includes trails for hiking, OHVs, mountain biking and horse riding. “We’re probably looking at close to 150 miles of trails,” Hubbard said.

He said he has been in contact with the National Rifle Association about developing pistol and rifle ranges, and there are plans for three or four public lakes, 300 or more campsites from primitive to luxury and a zip line ride that could run up to four-fifths of a mile.

Locally, there is another OHV trail in northeastern Talladega County, the Kentuck OHV Trail. This trail is in the Talladega National Forest and is operated by the National Forest Service.

Kent Evans, district ranger for the Talladega Ranger District of the forest, said the Kentuck trail was started in the early ‘80s and has been in operation since. It currently has approximately 23 miles of trail and is open to vehicles 50 inches or less.

“A lot of people from Birmingham and Georgia attend the trail, based on the car tags we see,” Evans said. “The cost to ride is \$5 per (OHV) vehicle. Based on the receipts, we’ve usually collected anywhere between \$12,000 to \$20,000 per year.”

But with the money collected comes expenses to maintain the trail. The Forest Service closes the trail between the months of January and March to do maintenance.

Much of the maintenance costs come from riders going off the trail and causing damage to the surrounding forest. Evans said riding an OHV anywhere but on the approved trail, even if it is on the county roadways going through the area, is illegal.

“People in the neighborhood of the trail tell us it’s a problem,” Evans said. “Riders go to and from Kentuck, and don’t respect property lines. I don’t have a number, but it’s an annoying percentage that go away from the trail.”

There are numerous trails made by the OHV riders themselves that cut through the forest in between the approved trails, as well. Numerous mud holes created by OHVs can be found off the approved trails.

“We have to monitor the erosion,” Evans said. “We’re trying to improve and redesign to move trails away from streams to limit the erosion into those streams.”

The other costs of ownership and the liabilities the Forest Service is open

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to for operating the trail leave the Forest Service in the red when it comes to operation of the trail. “We also had a real drop-off in usage last year because of the fuel prices and people not wanting to pull their trailers over to here,” Evans said.

Evans said the Trail Riders had assisted in maintenance of the trail in the past, which has helped keep the park in decent physical shape.

Hubbard said the Trail Riders and Lincoln plan to offer security by having people do constant voluntary patrols around the trails of the proposed park. “If they see people off the trail, they can take them out of the park,” Hubbard said.

He also said maintenance is important to the Trail Riders. Hubbard said the Trail Riders helped with Kentuck maintenance until federal regulations would not allow them to help out.

“We’ll design trails that either don’t have erosion or minimize it as much as possible,” Hubbard said.

He said the Trail Riders have hundreds of members waiting to go to work on the proposed park when they are allowed to do so. For the first 10 years, profits from the park will go back into the park to develop it.

The plan got support from sources such as several OHV companies, as well as state government officials Gov. Bob Riley and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Commissioner Barnett Lawley.

Lawley and Riley met with Lincoln officials and the Trail Riders in the summer of 2008 to listen to the plan for the annex land. Lawley said he came away impressed with much of what was presented in the meeting.

He said he did not mean for his support for the Lincoln plan to be a slight toward plans for the park made by the city of Talladega and the International Motorsports Hall of Fame. He said when gave his support to the Lincoln plan, he did not know any other government entities were developing plans for the annex.

“The only part we played in it was to clear an avenue for a local entity to be able to take the land,” Lawley said. He added that neither he nor Riley wanted to see control of the annex land leave local hands.

Lawley said the DCNR had considered applying for the land but it was decided the land did not fit into the department’s plans or budget.

Hubbard said he hoped a resolution on who gets the Brecon Annex land is finally reached sometime soon.

“I don’t care about the politics, I just wish the county would transfer the land, so we can build a park to benefit this area,” Hubbard said.

#### **About Brandon Fincher**

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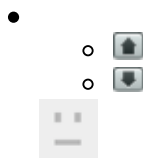


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### 6 Comments



*djrice* [1 day ago](#)

As an Owner of an ATV & RV, the Talladega National Forest Service and the Talladega County Commissioners are way behind other states in this country inwhich we live. Kentuck will only allow primitive camping(no utilities), power lines are 1.5 miles away and Oxford city water is 2.0 miles away. There is grant money available for these projects. Talladega County Commissioners have sat on this land for 5 years and NOTHING has been done to develop this land as proposed. The world inwhich we live is changing constantly. If you can't keep up with the changes, you get left behind. Hello Talladega County, why haven't you done something? My hat is off to the City of Lincoln, rather they do what I think is the best or not, they are willing to make an effort. I think it is sad, that the County Commissioners have now turned to their lawyers to go to court to delay this project. That is another waste of the taxpayers money!!! You should have spent that money on land projects over the past 5 years. You had your chance, give up!!! If you don't have Trails & Campgrounds in Alabama, I'll load up go to

other states for my vacations and their businesses will receive the revenue. Take a look at other states such as West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, & Mississippi. HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU!!!

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*bhveach* [1 day ago](#)

Talladega County had their opportunity to develop this area. They were complacent and now they are defiant over the revenue of this property. Get over it. These grown men are acting like fussing 10 year old kids. Learn to work together. Keep your noise pollution and blight on the community.

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*Mike McDuff* [1 day ago](#)

There is really no comparison between Kentuck and the park proposed by Lincoln.I have riden at Kentuck and it is a primitive trail system on National Park land.There are no amenities on the property and I have never seen a park ranger out there policing the property.It draws people from as far away as Birmingham because of the lack of public riding areas in the state.The park on the annex land will be fully developed for multiple uses,will have restrooms,campgrounds, and other amenities .It will draw people from all over the southeast if developed to it's full potential which will benefit the entire area.Trails such as this in other states hold large rallies several times a year which draw in many thousands of riders and provide much needed revenue to their local economies.People plan family vacations around facilities such as this.It is time to put away the political bickering and get this park built.

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*MARKPERKINS* [1 day ago](#)

4 wheelers and motor cycles leave a small foot print while 4x4 trucks leave a large foot print and this is why small puddles are now 3 to 4 feet deep and have caused so much damage to the park

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*david malone* [1 day ago](#)

ok come on (just do it) i like shooting my guns and rideing my off road bikes ,i also like shooting my paintball guns and if it think you are trying to stop me from doing it lii shoot ya in the face with pink paint so let us do what were gona do on this land and if you dont like it stay in your house you dont need to see or take part in it ,danny hubbard has good plans for the property so let them do it and keep your mouth shut about it if you dont want to take part in it! lets get it on man stop stalling and do it!

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*MARKPERKINS* [1 day ago](#)

yes we have been denied access to our public park to long by the city of talladega and the city water board

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