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Comments: Arkansas is known as The Natural State for a reason - our pristine streams, unspoiled wilderness, and diverse outdoor recreation opportunities, including hiking, biking, floating and climbing. Our state boasts the Mountain Bike Capital of the World, the duck hunting capital of the world, and the trout capital of the USA, and we are rapidly becoming the climbing capital of the South. We have the world's longest bayou, the highest waterfall between the Rockies and the Appalachians, and the nation's first national river, the Buffalo National River. Additionally, Arkansas is the only state where you can hunt both elk and alligator.

There are numerous benefits associated with areas rich in outdoor recreation, such as business attraction, workforce retention, public health and wellness, getting kids outside and off screens and the conservation and preservation of our natural assets. In addition, a robust outdoor recreation industry is not just a luxury; it is essential and highly impactful. In 2022, 4.3 million visitors spent an estimated \$278 million in local gateway regions while visiting National Park Service lands in Arkansas. These expenditures supported 3,900 jobs, \$107 million in labor income, \$191 million in value added, and \$362 million in economic output for the Arkansas economy. Visitors and citizens alike flock to places where they can spend time outside.

Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders has prioritized improving outdoor experiences, and we are working tirelessly to create outdoor recreation opportunities from our incredible State Parks to communities across the state. Through Executive Order, The Natural State Initiative has adopted a bold approach, involving multiagency and private partners working together to break down silos and invite innovation into our work and public lands. Access to outdoor recreation inspires generations of Arkansans to care for and champion the future of our natural places, ensuring that we remain The Natural State.

As the population of Arkansas grows, the need to expand outdoor access becomes crucial. Increased access to outdoor spaces fuels the outdoor economy by encouraging activities like buying hunting and fishing licenses, hiring guide services and purchasing outdoor gear. Additionally, fostering a larger community dedicated to conservation ensures that these places and many others will remain protected.

The Trails at Mena project encapsulates all of these great values and benefits of outdoor recreation. I am so excited and happy to support this project. Seeing this project come to fruition would add to the already incredible offerings our state boasts and elevate outdoor recreation opportunities for Arkansans.