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NEWS

Tires to trails: Tires turned into new biking and walking trails at T.O. Fuller State Park

Lucas Finton Memphis Commercial Appeal

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Officials unveiled on Friday afternoon a new hard-surfaced walking and biking trail at T.O. Fuller State Park, in Southwest Memphis.

The trail is made up of small pieces of rubber from tires that were illegally dumped in the surrounding area and spans 2.5 miles, making it one of the longest rubber-bearing trails in the United States.

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Local contractors and volunteers began collecting the tires in 2019 and ended up gathering more than 24,000 tires from cars, trucks and construction vehicles. The tires were then sent to Patriot Tire Recycling in Bristol, Tennessee, to be processed into the "rubber crumbs" used to make the paved trail.

Patriot Tire Recycling is the only facility in Tennessee with the ability to recycle tires that way.

"This is a quintessential example of recycling in a full circle, collecting dumped material then converting it into positive use," said the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's commissioner, David Salyers. "It's exactly the kind of responsible environmental activity Tennesseans can be proud of, where an area can be cleaned up then have people enjoy the benefits in a new way."

The trail came together through the combined efforts of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Tennessee Department of Transportation, the City of Memphis, Shelby County and Memphis City Beautiful and was funded by two grants, totaling \$530,000, from TDEC along with a \$200,000 grant from TDOT.

"We're pleased to see discarded tires recycled to improve T.O. Fuller State Park," said Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris. "The new trail is a great example of collaboration with our federal, state and city partners to invest in our shared environment and a treasured community asset."

The trail replaces some weathered cart paths from an old golf course but also features newly paved trails in order to create a complete loop for parkgoers.

Lucas Finton is a news reporter with The Commercial Appeal. He can be reached at Lucas.Finton@commercialappeal.com and followed on Twitter @LucasFinton.