

# Archery Unites Town After Tornado

By Shannon Rikard, ATA contributing writer

April 27, 2013 will mark the two-year anniversary of one of the nation's most notable days for tornadoes. 208 tornadoes touched down in multiple states, the most on record in a single day.

Alabama was the hardest hit on April 27, 2011 with nine violent tornadoes touching down there and 11 total crossings within its boundaries.

Vicious storms, including an EF-4 tornado, ripped through Cullman, Alabama that day, damaging homes, businesses, personal property and the Cullman Community Archery Park that served as a gathering place for local archers. The park opened in 2009 and was developed through a partnership between the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, the City of Cullman and the Archery Trade Association (ATA).

The townspeople vowed to pull together and rebuild. They were down, but not done.

"The community was in disbelief about the damage," said Shane Cupp, president of the Heritage Archery Club,

which often meets at the archery park and helps with its upkeep year round. "Many community members were already experiencing personal losses. Finding out the range was damaged was like taking two steps back."

Damage to structures at the archery park was minimal, but plenty of work was needed to restore the park to working order. Eight large trees that were 2 feet in diameter blocked the park's entrance completely; the wall at the range leaned precariously forward; and branches hung from trees around the range and walking archery course, threatening to fall at any moment without warning.

"Everyone suffered a tragedy that day," said Stuart Goldsby, regional hunter education coordinator for the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. "Helping with the cleanup was part of the healing process and seeing the archery park restored helped members of the community feel a sense of normalcy again. The progress lifted our spirits."

The archery park was built adjacent to the Cullman Golf Course in 2009. With nearly 200 trees down on the golf

course after the storms, the Cullman City Parks and Recreation Department was working hard to remove debris and restore the course. Members of the Heritage Archery Club brought in tractors, front-end loaders, chainsaws and other equipment to reopen lanes and remove trees from the archery park.

Cupp credits the Cullman City Parks and Recreation Department, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the ATA and Cullman's citizens for helping bring the new archery park to the city. He explained that the archery club saw cleaning up the park as a way to thank their partners for infusing archery in the community.

Michelle Doerr, director of archery and bowhunting programs for the ATA, said during the early stages of planning the Cullman archery park, the willingness of city representatives, club members and the community to work together was impressive.

"The community believes that when they help one another, everyone grows," said Doerr. "Seeing how they pulled together after the storms is a true testament to how archery can



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unify people and strengthen communities.”

In August of 2011, the Bowhunters of Alabama (BHA) State Championship tournament was coming to the park for the first time. About 40 volunteers, including Heritage Archery Club members and BHA members from throughout the state, turned out for each of the 20 workdays between when the storms struck and late July. Their work, Cupp explained, not only restored normalcy for the community but also paved the way for one of the most successful

tournaments in BHA history.

“The sense of community archery provides is like a family and we restored our home base, the archery park, as a family,” Cupp said. “Entire families showed up on work days at the park. Our method of cleaning up was an extension of the fundamentals archery teaches: working together, building values and getting outdoors as a family. We couldn’t have done this any other way.”

The Cullman park features adult and youth distance targets from 15 to

50 yards and 5 to 20 yards, respectively. A 12 foot high, elevated platform provides bowhunters with an opportunity to simulate hunting conditions at targets from 10 to 40 yards. There is also a 16 target walk-through course for archers to shoot at targets of unknown distances.

Archery parks are currently operating in cities throughout Alabama, including Athens, Cullman, Decatur, Demopolis, Dothan, Heflin, Lincoln, Ozark and Tuscaloosa.

## Features to Consider for Your Community Archery Park

The ATA has been involved in helping build more than 25 archery parks nationwide since 2004. Not all archery parks are cast from the same mold, but there are a few features that always should be considered when planning a community archery park.

“Two must-haves in an archery park are a basic range and a general range,” said Michelle Doer, director of archery and bowhunting programs for the ATA. After providing these two basic features, other additions can be made based on space, interest and the geographic location of the archery park.”

### The Basics

Beginners usually shoot low draw weight bows and need to shoot into targets where low-velocity arrows won’t bounce back from the target. These targets are often slightly different than those used by more advanced archers shooting higher velocity arrows. Moveable targets in a beginner area can be placed at shorter distances from the shooting line to ensure shooting success and make it easier to conduct classes.

A general range, or target practice area, also is a must in any archery park. Placing just five targets at distances ranging from 10 to 40 yards will meet the needs of most archers. The more shooting scenarios offered, the more space required.

### Additional Features

Once basic needs are met, many features can be added to tailor an archery park to the needs of the community it serves. When considering an archery park, consider the most common hunting scenarios for that area and offer them to the archers who will use the archery park.

If space allows, longer distances should be considered for the target practice range to draw in local target archers, shooting programs such as Junior Olympic Archery Development and bowhunters.

Bowhunters in western states typically use the spot-and-stalk method while hunting and because of the more open terrain most shot opportunities are presented at longer distances. In eastern states, most bowhunters use treestands or ground blinds and most shot opportunities are presented at 40 yards or less. In states where treestands are used, a platform can simulate these hunting scenarios.

Walking courses also are popular among hunters because this type of course simulates natural hunting conditions. These courses require 1 to 1.5 acres per target and are popular among 3-D and field archery competitors and those archers living in northern states.

Indoor archery ranges are also popular in northern states because of



This illustration of an archery park highlights shooting range safety measures.

cold weather and should be considered in any location where low temperatures would prevent the use of an outdoor range for more than three months.

Any indoor activity that requires open space could be compatible with archery. Gyms and community centers also can be converted into a temporary, indoor archery park by simply hanging special netting that not only protects walls and other property, but also could hide archery targets when not in use so the facility could be used for weddings, parties and other income-generating rentals.

Check out more tips on planning a community archery park by downloading the ATA’s Archery Park Guide at [archerytrade.org](http://archerytrade.org). Go to the “Resources” menu tab.

*Courtesy of the ATA’s Archery Park Guide  
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