



Trail Closure Notice – Temporary

Posted on December 20, 2016

As of tomorrow morning (12/20/2016), we will be once again temporarily closing the section of trail through the timber thinning area. This closure is expected to last about 2 weeks. I've been told that the current cleanup activities will not affect the trail, however, I have chosen to close it as a precautionary measure. The reason for this short closure is to clean up the logs that were left behind by the previous contractor. This will NOT complete the activity. We will reopen the trail once this area is cleaned and cleared and expect to re-close it again in late Spring for approximately 4 weeks.

(Editors Note: The impacted area is mile marker 209 to Highway 300 (MM209-211.5) or from near Lundsford corner and west of there for 2 miles.)

Thanks,

Raven L. Lawson

Watershed Protection Manager

Central Arkansas Water

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Friends of the Ouachita Trail Completes Shelter Project

Posted on November 16, 2016

Ten years ago FoOT proposed completing a shelter system on the Ouachita Trail. The project called for adding 12 new shelters to the existing 9 on the OT. The new shelters would extend from Talihina, Oklahoma to highway 27 north of Mt. Ida.

After several years of clearing the necessary reviews by the U.S. Forest Service, in March of 2013 the first new shelter was completed just east of Foran Gap. It was dedicated to Mr. Art Cowley. Mr. Cowley was known as the father of the Ouachita Trail.

What seemed to be an overwhelming effort for FoOT, had begun. With the support of an amazing group of FoOT volunteers, the 12th shelter was completed on Suck Mountain, Friday, November 11th, 2016. In just over 3 ½ years, what had seemed difficult at best was now a reality.

Financial support from the Cowley family, FoOT members, and grants from Arkansas & Oklahoma provided the necessary funds to purchase supplies. Volunteers added to this support by providing all the necessary planning and labor. Hundreds of hours of work and travel time were given to the project. Many dollars were spent with gas and lodging in support.



An amazing group of people worked through heat & cold, rocks, heavy lifting, and overall tough conditions to construct these 12 new shelters. A special thanks to each person who contributed to this effort. The Ouachita National Recreational Trail shelter system is now complete.

Bo Lea
FoOT President
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Ouachita Challenge 2017 Dates Announced

Posted on September 12, 2016

The Ouachita Challenge is the premier mountain bike race in Arkansas. On the weekend of March 25th and 26th, 2017, the Ouachita Challenge will be held for the 16th year. This 60 mile race covers portions of two IMBA Epic Trails, the Ouachita Trail and the Womble Trail. A Tour is held on Saturday and the Race is held on Sunday. Both events are limited to 250 riders and all spots are filled shortly after registration opens in December. This event is sponsored by the Ouachita Mountain Challenge Association. The proceeds from the event go to help the non-profit groups (Oden School, volunteer fire departments, ham radio club, FoOT, Traildogs, and others) who help to put on the tour and race. There is a Facebook site and a website for the Ouachita Challenge that can be accessed for additional information.

Friends of the Ouachita Trail Fall Report from President Bo Lea

Posted on September 12, 2016

Cooler weather is almost upon us and it is time to look toward FoOT's busy time of the year. Since spring, all of Fourche Mountain from Eagle Gap at Mile Marker 58.5 to Turner Gap at Mile Marker 79.9 has been worked. In March, FoOT

volunteers along with the Texas Outdoors Group worked from Tan-E-Hill Gap to Turner Gap, almost 6 miles. In July FoOT VP of Maintenance, Ron Mayfield led a Texas Conservation Crew to work from Eagle Gap to Foran Gap, 10 miles. Fourche Mountain is a very rough section of trail to maintain due to the difficult access and terrain plus vegetation growth.

FoOT trail grant request from the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department was approved late in 2015. Funds were released recently and FoOT has ordered and received the last 3 log kits to complete the new 12 shelter project. The

schedule for construction of the last 3 shelters is: Turner Creek – Sept. 27th, Suck Mountain – Oct. 18th, Story Creek – Nov. 8th. Dedication of the completed shelter system which includes the existing 9 on the east end will be in the spring. Contact us for details on the shelter project if you wish to participate.



Mark your calendars for the weekend of March 25th & 26th, 2017 for the next Ouachita Challenge Mountain Bike Race. For the past 2 years the Ouachita Mountain Challenge Association (OMCA) has managed the event. OMCA is composed of several organizations and FoOT has been a major player for many years. Each year we need numerous volunteers to conduct this first class event. It is a major source of funds for FoOT and many other worthy groups. Mark your calendars now. It is a fun event to be involved with.

While FoOT has been working hard over the past few years to add the shelters to the OT, trail maintenance remains our primary responsibility. FoOT can always use more trail adopters. There are some excellent adoptions available. Contact FoOT if you would like to look at adopting a section of the Ouachita Trail. Definitely a great way to give back to the trail. The effort to maintain 224 miles of mountainous trail is a big one, every adoption helps.

The Friends of the Ouachita Trail Foundation has been established for about a year. This Foundation is for the maintenance and improvement for all the trails in the Ouachita Region, with emphasis on the OT. Look at the FoOT website for more details or contact FoOT for information. This foundation will be a source of perpetual funding to ensure our trails will be there for future generations. Direct gifts or estate planning gifts are needed to make the foundation large enough to generate revenue for FoOT. Only interest is used, the base will never be drawn down. Please consider being a part of this effort.

We have had a wet summer with a few strong storms so even Fouché Mountain with all the recent work may not be pristine. If you are out hiking and run across some major problems, let us know. It is impossible to know what is happening on all 224 miles of trail.

The hiking season about to begin in earnest. Hope you get a chance to get out and enjoy the premier hiking trail in our region, the Ouachita National Recreational Trail. FoOT appreciates your support and input.

Bo Lea
FoOT President
501-622-8809 cell

Annual Elections and Annual Meeting

Posted on August 29, 2016

The time has come again to look at the election of directors to the Board of Friends of the Ouachita Trail. FoOT is governed by nine directors, who the membership elects each fall. This fall we have three board positions to fill, and are seeking candidates for these positions.



Board members serve a three year term. Those elected this fall will serve 2017 through 2019 (with two additional terms allowed). During that time, you would be expected to attend three to four meetings a year, to help provide overall guidance to the organization, to participate in the election of our operating officers, and to approve and monitor our financial position.

Candidates for the Board positions must be identified by September 30th.

The Board elects the operating officers, which serve for the calendar year. Operating officers include the President, three Vice-Presidents (Maintenance, Membership, and Community Relations), and a Secretary / Treasurer. Candidates for officer positions must be identified by the end of the year December 31.

If you would like to nominate someone for the Board or wish to serve yourself, please let me know at Bolea66@Gmail.com or our Secretary / Treasurer, Richard Lawrence at law28@aristotle.net. There are numerous positions of service within FoOT.

You will be receiving information in a few of weeks regarding our FoOT annual meeting. It will be held on Saturday, October 29 th , 2016 in Hot Springs. Further information as to location and agenda to follow. Your support of Friends of the Ouachita Trail is greatly appreciated. I know I am repeating myself but a lot of good things are happening on the OT, we appreciate those who have worked so hard this past year to make that possible.

Bo Lea
FoOT President
501-622-8809 cell

Trail Closure Notice – Temporary

Posted on July 4, 2016

Central Arkansas Water has announced that forest thinning activities will close the Ouachita Trail Tuesday afternoon, July 5th. The impacted area is mile marker 209 to Highway 300 (MM209-211.5) or from near Lundsford corner and west of there for 2 miles.

National Trail Day Event – June 4 Hike from Winding Stair Campground to Big Cedar

Posted on May 15, 2016



Greetings Friends of the Ouachita Trail!

My name is Andy. I handle social media for the Talimena Scenic Drive. This year we are really focusing in on the Ouachita Trail and I would love an opportunity to speak with you on how we can help support each other!

I would also like to let you know about an event on the trail for National Trail Day.

We are working with Ouachita Trail Guide to help promote a hike on Saturday, June 4th from Winding Stair Campground to Big Cedar.

Would love your support in helping spread the word. Here is the Facebook event page:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1663817233899110/>

Thank you so much!
Andy Choquette

Jonathan Waldrip Memorial

Posted on April 29, 2016

Friends of the Ouachita Trail would like to extend our thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of Jonathan Waldrip. Jonathan passed away unexpectedly at the too young age of 34. He is remembered for a kind generous spirit, a great sense of humor and a loving heart. He loved many pets that enriched his life. Jonathan found solace and renewal in nature and especially enjoyed camping, hiking, fishing and floating. Sunsets and sunrises were his absolute favorites. One of his favorite places was the Ouachita Trail in Flatside Wilderness. Music was another huge outlet in Jonathan's life and he enjoyed singing and playing multiple instruments.

FoOT has been honored by being the recipient of memorials in Jonathan's name. Hope we can all find the solace that Jonathan found in nature. Embrace those special moments we are given.

Bo Lea
FoOT President