



## **Friends of the Ouachita Trail (FoOT)**

### **Fall Report – September 10, 2019**

Summer has started to fade, FoOT is looking to the upcoming hiking / biking season and the start of our OT trail maintenance efforts. This report is to update you on some recent activities and alert you on upcoming events and issues.

First, as most of you are aware, last spring the U.S. Forest Service denied the requested permit for a quartz mining operation next to the Ouachita Trail near the Highway 27 trailhead. We thank everyone who gave feedback to the Forest Service regarding this application. FoOT appreciates the Forest Service's review and careful consideration of the mining permit request. Any future issues of this nature, the Forest Service and FoOT will have in place communications early in the process timeline.

Last year FoOT started a trail adoption program that allowed for the adoption of a mile of the OT with a donation of \$300. The program was very successful allowing individuals who could not work on the trail due to time or circumstances a chance to adopt. Please consider keeping your adoption or looking at joining this effort if it is an avenue that works for you. This resource has allowed FoOT to contract OT trail maintenance, usually in very difficult parts of the OT.

This October during the last weekend (Oct. 25, 26, 27), FoOT will hold its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual maintenance event. We will be returning to Queen Wilhelmina State Park for our base of operation. We encourage everyone to consider joining a great group of volunteers for good food, good fellowship, and some excellent trail work. FoOT will furnish food Friday and Saturday evenings as well as breakfast those days plus Sunday. The necessary tools will also be furnished but feel free to bring your favorite trail tool if you wish. Please let me know if you plan to attend and if you need a place to tent camp or an RV space. QWSP is providing several camping spaces for FoOT use. We need a fairly close headcount for planning the food requirements and camping spots. The first two years have been very, very successful; did I mention the loads of fun.

A Texas Conservation Crew will be joining us again this year during the maintenance event. I am pleased to report that FoOT has TCC crews booked through 2020. We are talking about 5 to 6 crews. At 8 work days per crew, the OT, Womble, & maybe some on the LOVIT could have 48 work days for our trails. Most of the time will be on the OT. You can see what a great help they are to our mission to maintain and improve the Ouachita Trail. Special thanks to Tom Ledbetter with the Forest Service, who has done yeoman's work coordinating our getting these crews. We are always needing help, directing these crews once they arrive. If



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you would like to help or need more information, please let me or Ron Mayfield know.

Speaking of Ron our VP of maintenance, he has received from the Forest Service new maintenance equipment, including weed eaters and some quality trail saws. Between FoOT's budget and our friends at the Forest Service, we have been able to provide good dependable equipment to our volunteers. Thanks again to Tom Ledbetter for his help.

As we approach the end of the year, the FoOT Board is looking at the election of new Board Members and officers. If you or if you know of anyone that would like to be considered for a leadership role in FoOT, please let us know. Ballots will go out in late September. The election for new Board Members will be held Saturday evening at the maintenance event during our annual meeting. Good leadership is a must for the future of FoOT and the Ouachita Trail.

It is not too early to mark your calendars for next year's Ouachita Challenge Mountain Bike race in Oden, Arkansas. It is FoOT's main fund raiser for the year. Money received goes toward the upkeep and improvement of the OT & Womble. The dates will be the weekend of March 28 & 29, 2020. Another great time for our volunteers, be a part of the fun next year.

As the weather cools and the Ouachita's light up with color it will be time to get out and enjoy our great trails. I would ask you to give back to these trails in any manner that works for you. Pay it forward!! Hope you are able to enjoy the beauty of the Ouachita Mountains in some manner soon.

Respectfully submitted:

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