

7/22/2024

RE: Trails at Mena Proposed Action

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the "Proposed Action" alternative for approval of the Trails at Mena downhill biking trail system. As a resident of Mena, Arkansas, and outdoor enthusiast, I believe that this project will bring significant benefits to our community and the surrounding region:

1. **Outdoor Recreation and Health:** The Trails at Mena will provide unparalleled opportunities for outdoor recreation. With up to 100 miles of gravity-specific trails, including backcountry loops and family-friendly options, residents and visitors alike can enjoy hiking, mountain biking, and other outdoor activities. Regular physical activity in natural settings has been linked to improved mental health, reduced stress, and enhanced overall well-being.
2. **Increased Tourism and Economic Growth:** By creating a world-class mountain biking destination, we can attract tourists from across the country. These visitors will stay in local accommodations, dine at our restaurants, and shop in our stores, directly benefiting our economy. The economic impact will extend beyond the trail system itself, supporting local businesses and job creation.
3. **Preserving Our National Forest:** The Trails at Mena will encourage responsible use of the Ouachita National Forest. By providing designated trails, we can minimize environmental impact and protect sensitive ecosystems. Additionally, increased foot traffic will foster a sense of stewardship, encouraging people to appreciate and care for our natural resources.
4. **Community Engagement:** The proposed trail system will serve as a gathering place for our community. Families, friends, and neighbors can come together to explore the outdoors, fostering a sense of camaraderie and shared experiences. The "backyard" trail accessible from downtown Mena will encourage local residents to participate in healthy activities close to home.
5. **Gateway to Adventure:** Queen Wilhelmina State Park, perched atop Rich Mountain, offers breathtaking views and a unique setting for outdoor enthusiasts. The Trails at Mena will connect our town to this natural wonder, creating a gateway to adventure. Visitors can experience the thrill of descending 1,300 vertical feet while surrounded by the beauty of the Ouachita Mountains.

In summary, the Trails at Mena project represents an exciting opportunity for our community, our economy, and our environment. I urge the U.S. Forest Service to support this initiative, recognizing its potential to enhance our quality of life and promote sustainable outdoor recreation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "K" and "W".

Kevin Williams, President  
Union Bank