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Comments:

I understand the USFS is conducting an Environmental Assessment regarding the proposal 63649 to build infrastructures including a lodge, parking lot, chair lift, and 100+ miles of trails, including trails for motor bikes, in the Quachita National Forest north of Mena.

I want to voice my opposition to the project. The extent and types of changes being proposed will, no doubt, attract tourists and money to Mena and the surrounding area, but the negative impacts on the flora and fauna of the pristine forest will be irreversible.

The rare and endangered plants, and the animals that depend on them, are at risk of being pushed to further endangerment and extinction. Some plants that grow in that forest grow almost nowhere else in the world. Other creatures will be unnecessarily harmed and inconvenienced. For example, a non-poisonous snake sunning in an open hiking trail confined to hikers has the opportunity to escape when approached by slow moving humans, but when a mountain bicyclist comes charging down the trail, the snake is at a sharp disadvantage. The proposed changes would likely impact migration patterns of large mammals such as the black bear, but also movement of less visible animals, as well.

I know that there are more evidence-based sources to address issues such as endangered plants and animals at risk. I am speaking from the perspective of a citizen of Arkansas who values what few other state have to offer. Our state's motto, The Natural State, says it all. When we sacrifice what took tens of thousands of years to develop for the short term monetary gain of the few, we make a huge mistake.

Thank you for your attention.