

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/26/2024 8:53:49 PM

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Title:

Comments: I am in favor of the mountain biking trails. I believe they will open the Ouachita National Forest to a much larger segment of the population in need of a healthy dose of the great outdoors. It is a beautiful area and should be properly shared. Furthermore, instead of just admiring the Ouachita Mountains online, it will get people off of the internet and into nature in a beautiful environment. There are mental health advantages to this. Too many people are stuck in urban areas or geographically deprived sections of the country that need of a place like this they can enjoy. The sublime beauty of Rich Mountain and the entire Ouachita range can serve this purpose. The bike trails on Rich Mountain will make enjoyment of this beauty an even more spectacular experience. Furthermore, the trails will provide more choices for locals to get outside to participate in outdoor activities. The planned sections of the trail closer to and in town will enable commuting for both bicyclist and pedestrians. This will also enhance the quality of life for locals and visitors alike.

The preceding are the main reasons I am in favor of the trails. However, the direct and indirect economic boost the trails will provide should at least be mentioned. I expect the impact will be positive and large. Most obviously, both Queen Wilhelmina State Park and the Talimena Scenic Drive will experience more usage. But the economic footprint of the trails will be much bigger than that. If nothing else, the trails will also be a great recruiting point for local businesses seeking employees from outside of the area.