

## NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY

May 2016; updated August 2016 to better describe "options" on pages 6-7

Camp Ouachita (Perry County, Arkansas)  
Ouachita National Forest



**The Great Hall at Camp Ouachita**

**The Main Point.** The U.S. Forest Service, Ouachita National Forest, is renewing efforts to engage local governments, individual citizens, State agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), businesses and other potential partners in efforts to find a new mission for Camp Ouachita, a partially restored former Girl Scout Camp in Perry County, Arkansas. The Forest Service seeks ideas and potential partners to find a more sustainable way to manage this beautiful historic complex. Please contact Bill Pell, Staff Officer for Planning, Recreation, and Heritage ([bpell@fs.fed.us](mailto:bpell@fs.fed.us), 501-321-5320), or Meg Moynihan, District Ranger ([mmoynihan@fs.fed.us](mailto:mmoynihan@fs.fed.us)), to discuss ideas and opportunities or to request a meeting to explore options.

**Background.** Located in the Ouachita National Forest about 30 miles west of Little Rock and 10 miles south of Perryville, Camp Ouachita is the last remaining Works Progress Administration (WPA)-built Girl Scout camp in the United States. Constructed between 1936 and 1940 for the

Little Rock Girl Scout Council, Camp Ouachita was a top-notch facility containing high-quality, rustic-style buildings and swimming/canoeing access to Lake Sylvia. Structures were built with battened (sloped/angled) fieldstone walls, broadly-pitched, gabled roofs with hand-split cypress shingles, and exposed hewn-log framework.

The camp was in operation from 1937 to 1979. In 1979, due to insufficient potable water, the Girl Scout Council did not renew its land-use permit with the Forest Service. In the 1980s and early 1990s, a community effort spurred then-Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and others to earmark funding for restoration/rehabilitation of some of the historic structures. These efforts were successful in rehabilitating Ogden Hall, six cabins, and one former bathhouse that was converted into an accessible cabin. Independent efforts made community water available to Camp Ouachita and the adjacent Lake Sylvia Recreation Area.

Ogden Hall (aka the Great Hall), a renovated historic structure, is available for rental through the Jessieville-Winona-Fourche Ranger District of the Ouachita National Forest and is used for a variety of special events (family reunions, weddings, meetings, staging center for run events, etc.) on an intermittent basis. The hall has a fire rating capacity of 120 people.



**Inside the Great Hall**



### Events in the Great Hall

All of the restored cabins have a small shower, toilet, sink, heating and air unit, glass-paned windows and space for a microwave and small refrigerator. Although currently unfurnished, there is room for a bed or bunkbed and a table and chairs (the converted former bathhouse has the most room of any of the cabins). The six former cabins would be best suited for couples, couples with a small child, or solitary visitors; the former bathhouse converted to an accessible cabin could accommodate a couple and 2-3 children. Community water is available in ample quantity, and the "camp" (including each rehabilitated structure) has electrical service and a septic system.

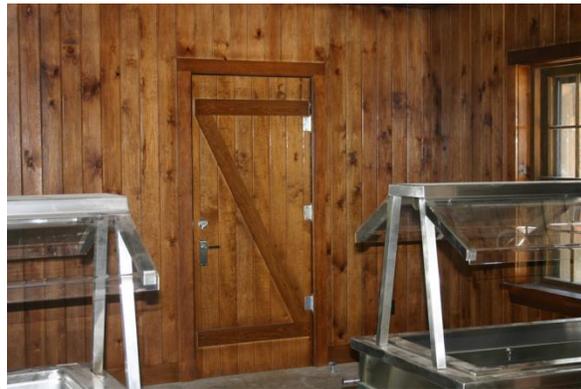


**One of six restored cabins**



**Inside one of the restored cabins**

The former Ogden Hall kitchen was replaced by modern and accessible restroom facilities, and a new commercial kitchen was added “next door” to the Hall. There is close access to the Great Hall via a covered boardwalk and rolling stainless steel food carts are available.



### **Commercial kitchen near the Great Hall**

In addition to the Great Hall and seven cabins, the Forest Service and partners (including Perry County) rehabilitated the “caretaker’s house” and have benefitted at times from having a volunteer caretaker who lived there. That house has now been vacant for several years. Even with a volunteer caretaker on site year-round, the Forest Service would not have the means to operate Camp Ouachita on anything close to a “full-time” basis.



## Caretaker's Cabin

The entire complex covering about 70 acres is on the National Register of Historic Places (<http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/National-Register-Listings/PDF/PE0086.nr.pdf>). Nearby Lake Sylvia Recreation Area continues to be operated seasonally for day use and camping.



**Lake Sylvia Day Use Area**

**Efforts to Find Partners to Manage and Maintain Camp Ouachita.** When restoration efforts began in the mid-1990s, there was a widely held expectation that local businesses and/or citizen groups would emerge that would maintain and operate the restored facilities as a community development venture, drawing upon projected uses of Camp Ouachita for business retreats, family reunions, weddings, and other meetings, training sessions, and the like. To date (May 2016, no viable proposals have emerged from the local community or other entities. A proposal from a state agency to operate Camp Ouachita primarily as a conservation education center was welcomed, but negotiations with the State eventually ceased and efforts to renew them have been unsuccessful. The Girl Scouts have moved on to other venues in Arkansas, although many of the women who went there in their youth retain fond memories of Camp Ouachita.

**Where do we go from here?** The U.S. Forest Service remains very interested in working with a partner, group of partners, leasee, concessionaire or special use permittee to maintain and operate Camp Ouachita in a way that is economically sustainable, supports local community aspirations for public use and economic development, and preserves the historic nature of the facilities and area. A primary use for the facilities has not been identified. The Forest Service would like to see conservation education and outdoor recreation experiences featured, but the agency is open to any ideas that are compatible with the camp's historic structures and setting and with applicable federal laws and regulations. We invite interested parties to consider the following options:

**(1) Lease.** One avenue the Forest Service is starting to explore nationally is the use of the historic property leasing authority granted to federal agencies under Section 306121 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. 306121; <http://tinyurl.com/grob4pq>). Camp Ouachita would be a good candidate for a Section 111 pilot project for the U.S. Forest Service.

**(2) Partnership Agreement.** From the agency perspective, a partner is an organization or another agency with which we have a mutually beneficial relationship. The U.S. Forest Service has the authority to enter into a variety of partnership agreements and considers such relationships a key to managing the National Forest System successfully (<http://tinyurl.com/77s57vr>). In 2014, the Forest Service was granted expanded authority to enter into partnership agreements by the Consolidated Appropriations Act; the following language from the Act covers this expanded authority:

The Secretary of Agriculture may enter into an agreement under section 1 of Public Law 94–148 (16 U.S.C. 565a–1) [see above] with a Federal, tribal, State, or local government or a nonprofit entity for the following additional purposes: (1) To develop, produce, publish, distribute, or sell educational and interpretive materials and products. (2) To develop, conduct, or sell educational and interpretive programs and services. (3) To construct, maintain, or improve facilities not under the jurisdiction, custody, or control of the Administrator of General Services on or in the vicinity of National Forest System lands for the sale or distribution of educational and interpretive materials, products, programs, and services. (4) To operate facilities (including providing the services of Forest Service employees to staff facilities) in any public or private building or on land not under the jurisdiction, custody, or control of the Administrator of General Services for the sale or distribution of educational and interpretive materials, products, programs, and services, pertaining to National Forest System lands, private lands, and lands administered by other public entities. (5) To sell health and safety products, visitor convenience items, or other similar items (as determined by the Secretary) in facilities not under the jurisdiction, custody, or control of the Administrator of General Services on or in the vicinity of National Forest System lands. (6) To collect funds on behalf of cooperators from the sale of materials, products, programs, and services, as authorized by a preceding paragraph, when the collection of such funds is incidental to other duties of Forest Service employees....(c) DURATION.—The authority provided by subsections (a) and (b) expires September 30, 2019.

**(3) Special use authorization.** The US Forest Service may issue a permit, term permit, lease, or easement that allows occupancy, use, rights, or privileges of National Forest System land. There are many formats for special use authorizations, depending on the particular kinds of activities and organizations involved. For more on special use authorizations see <http://www.fs.fed.us/specialuses/>.

**(4) Concession.** A concession is a specific type of special use permit. A concessionaire is a private business operating on a Forest Service site providing visitor services for profit. In order to select this route for Camp Ouachita, the Forest Service would need to conduct a feasibility study and prepare a prospectus for potential bidders. The successful bidder would be issued a particular type of special use permit. At this time, we know of no potential bidders. When the Ouachita National Forest solicited bids in 2007 for concessionaires to operate one or more of eight campgrounds on the Forest (but not including Camp Ouachita or nearby Lake Sylvia), no bids were received.

**(5) Decommission or “Mothball.”** As a last resort, the Forest Service may need to eliminate public use of the Great Hall and “mothball” it as well as the restored cabins. This would save taxpayer dollars currently going toward maintenance and utility costs for the facilities while possibly offering a way to extend their “life.” The downsides of this option include not only loss of public access but also some inevitable deterioration of restored facilities and very likely an unsightly, “boarded up” appearance.

Again, the “main point” is that we are renewing efforts to engage local governments, individual citizens, State agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, businesses and other potential partners in efforts to find a new mission for Camp Ouachita, the partially restored former Girl Scout Camp in Perry County, Arkansas. The Forest Service seeks ideas and potential partners to find a more sustainable way to manage this beautiful historic complex. Please contact Bill Pell, Staff Officer for Planning, Recreation, and Heritage ([bpell@fs.fed.us](mailto:bpell@fs.fed.us), 501-321-5320), or Meg Moynihan, District Ranger ([mmoynihan@fs.fed.us](mailto:mmoynihan@fs.fed.us)), to discuss ideas and opportunities or to request a meeting to explore options. Thank you.