

NEWS RELEASE



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Southern Region

Contact: **Stephanie Neal Johnson**
snjohnson@fs.fed.us
w: (404) 347-7226
c: (404) 895-1709

USDA FOREST SERVICE ANNOUNCES DECISION ON TRAVEL MANAGEMENT ON OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RELEASE NO. 05-10

ATLANTA (April 9, 2010) – USDA Forest Service officials announced today that the travel management decision on the Ouachita National Forest will be upheld, except for the portion involving the Wolf Pen Gap trail complex.

The Southern Regional Office of the Forest Service in Atlanta received and reviewed 25 appeals about the forest's route designation decision before issuing today's announcement. Seven additional appeals about the forest's decision to prohibit cross country travel will be reviewed by August 2.

"I am asking the Ouachita National Forest to emphasize public participation as they work to define a new management scheme for Wolf Pen Gap," said Liz Agpaoa, Regional Forester for the Southern Region. "It is important that the public have an adequate opportunity to review, understand and provide feedback on changes we are proposing for that area."

Currently, off-road travel is allowed in most areas of the Ouachita National Forest. An Environmental Assessment (EA) revealed that heavy use of OHVs (Off-Highway Vehicles) on the forest cause erosion and sedimentation that impact water quality and wildlife, including

Contact: *Region 8 Director of Public Affairs, Stephanie Neal Johnson, 404-347-7226 or snjohnson@fs.fed.us*

threatened and endangered species. The travel management decision will limit all motorized travel to designated routes.

While the majority of the original decision was upheld, a separate decision for the Wolf Pen Gap trail complex will be issued in the next 18-24 months after additional analysis and public involvement. No changes are anticipated at Wolf Pen Gap in the next few months. However, forest officials will continue to monitor effects and address any resource damage.

“Working with our partners and our communities, the forest will determine the best long-term management solution for the trail system in Wolf Pen Gap,” Agpaoa said.

During the appeal process, Ouachita National Forest officials worked with appellants and local communities in Oklahoma and Arkansas to address concerns about the decision. These discussions with partners and communities will continue.

For more information on the Ouachita Travel Management Decision visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/oonf/ouachita.htm>.

###