

August 2, 2016

Shalonda Guy, District Ranger
Womble Ranger District
1523 Highway 270 East
Mount Ida, AR 71957



Lake Ouachit's Permier Resort

ESTABLISHED IN 1955

Dear Shalonda:

Reference File Code 1950/2400 – your letter of July 29, 2016, regarding the proposed Gap Creek project for future Forest management.

You all do a lot of good things in the forest, and I am certainly not opposed to general forest management, but I would urge you in planning the harvesting that you leave a 200 ft. buffer on either side of all sections of the LOVIt Trail that are involved. Shalonda – when logging occurs literally up to the edge of the trail, it opens up the canopy that creates a weed and underbrush situation that becomes unmanageable and destroys the esthetics of the trail. Nobody wants to wade through chiggers, poison ivy, and that occasional snake. They will simply go to other trails.

As you are aware, the LOVIt Trail has been built over about twelve years primarily by volunteers but with significant Forest Service, Corps of Engineers, and private sector investment. Because of its recognition as an EPIC TRAIL, it has gained immense popularity – and continues to do so with America's hiking/biking public. This trail that cost about a million dollars, plus over 11,000 volunteer hours, is a huge economic engine for our area. Without these protective 200 ft. corridors, it will rapidly loose its attraction.

I recognize there is economic benefit to logging for the Forest Service, but as you look at the economic engine that the trail is, I suspect it's far more valuable than the logs in that 200 ft. corridor on either side of the trail.

Tourism is now the second largest industry in the state and the fastest growing. It provides well over 100,000 jobs. The way it will continue to grow is with its diversity of product. Trails and mountain biking are two of the most rapidly growing segments of the tourism market.

I urge you to incorporate the 200 ft. protective corridor on either side of all pieces of the LOVIt Trail.

Sincerely,

Bill Barnes

President

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