

# OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION

## SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

– Overseeing the Trail –

### Board of Director's Meeting Announcement

The next OHTA Board of Director's meeting is scheduled for Sunday, August 25, 2022, at 2 p.m. If you have any questions about anything to do with the meeting, please feel free to ask them by sending an email to [OHTA@ozarkhighlandstrail.com](mailto:OHTA@ozarkhighlandstrail.com). We'll do our best to answer your questions promptly.

### OHTA Board for 2022 – 2023

Phil Brown (President/Eastern Chapter Rep)	Wade Colwell (Interim Boston Mountain Chapter Rep)
Adam Higinbothom (Vice-president)	Elizabeth Granderson (OHTA brochure manager)
Brent Umphlett (Secretary)	Kerry Coe (OHTA membership building)
Todd Wells (Treasurer)	Miles Jandrsevich (Maintenance Director-West Section)
Chris Adams (Maintenance Coordinator)	

### Lee Creek Cleanup

The annual Lee Creek Cleanup hosted by Devil's Den State Park will be held from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 10, 2022. Volunteers are asked to meet at the horse camp pavilion located at the west end of the park along Arkansas 220.

The cleanup area will run from the park to the Arkansas 220 bridge. Lunch will be provided from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the horse camp pavilion. Prize drawings will be from noon to 1 p.m.

For more information, please feel free to phone Terry Anderson, Park Interpreter, at (479) 761-3823 or to contact him via email at [terry.anderson@arkansas.gov](mailto:terry.anderson@arkansas.gov). Hope you can make it!

– OHT Origins –

It's not uncommon to hear someone ask about how the Ozark Highlands Trail (OHT) originated. About the best that is known is that the United States Forest Service started the trail in 1977. What the long-term plan for the trail was at the time is unclear, but it is known that the project did not get very far along before the funding dried up and so, too, did the efforts to design and construct the trail.

Not long, thereafter, a young man, Tim Ernst, took up the torch and began organizing efforts to make the design and construction of the OHT an all-volunteer project. The point in time at which work on the trail actually commenced once again is unknown, but it is known that the Ozark Highlands Trail Association (OHTA) was created in 1981 and became incorporated in 1984. In 1989, as the result of a great number of hours donated by countless dedicated individuals, the original section of trail known as the Boston Mountain segment—Lake Fort Smith to Woolum—was completed and received designation as a National Recreation Trail.

### **– The OHT's Future –**

Work continues on the OHT, and as it stands, only about 58 miles, give or take a few, of trail remain to be constructed. It is estimated that of that 58, roughly 23 miles lie in the Lower Buffalo Wilderness. Close to 27 of the trail miles left to be completed are within the section of trail known as the Ozark Keystone Trail (OKT). The timeline for completion of all sections of the (OKT) is 2025. As for the OHT being able to run through the Lower Buffalo Wilderness (LBW), that's another issue and one that does not lend itself to an easy solution.

On Thursday, August 18, 2022, one member from each of four organizational 'partners of Buffalo National River' met at Buffalo National River (BNR) headquarters in Harrison, Arkansas, to discuss numerous issues. The topic of extending the OHT through the LBW was among the issues discussed. What was learned from the discussion was that there are some major obstacles facing the OHTA in its quest to construct an "authorized" trail through the Lower Buffalo Wilderness. The obstacles include BNR being faced with not having the resources necessary for conducting a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of the area through which the OHT would travel.

As it stands, in or around 2005, a NEPA review was performed, and the conclusion of the study was that constructing an authorized trail through LBW would create damage to the wilderness area more than had been and would be created by all of the existing "unauthorized" trails that existed at that time in the LBW. As time has passed, Buffalo National River authorities said they have come to realize that just the opposite would almost certainly be true at this point in time. However, as was noted previously, conducting another required review would take personnel and other resources BNR is lacking. Possible solutions to the resource deficit problems facing BNR were proposed, but it will take time for decisions to be made regarding the practicality of those proposals. OHTA members will be notified of any and all progress on this issue as it develops.

### **– Volunteering to Promote the Trail –**

So you've been finding yourself thinking about what you could do to be more involved in helping the OHTA? Well, as it turns out, there is something you can do that will benefit the organization. What you can do is volunteer to help staff a booth at the Ozark Outdoor Expo to be held from October 21<sup>st</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Rogers Convention Center (Embassy Suites Northwest Arkansas, 3303 S. Pinnacle Hills Parkway, Rogers, Arkansas 72758). This year, Pack Rat Outdoor Center is the "official retail partner" of the event and has graciously offered to share space in its booth with the OHTA for the purpose of expanding awareness of the OHTA and the Ozark Highlands Trail in northwest Arkansas.

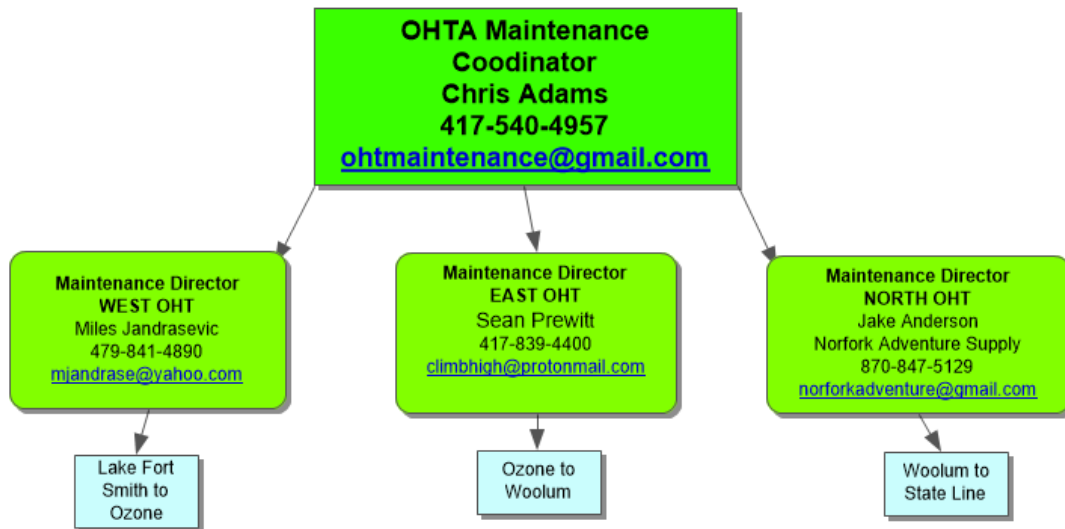
This year's Expo is sponsored by Channel 5 and the Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation. The best of what makes Arkansas a nature-lover's paradise, from trails to tailgates, will be showcased under one roof. More than 100 local and national businesses that maximize the outdoor quality of life in our backyard and beyond will participate in this event.

If this sounds like something you'd enjoy doing for a day or even a few hours, just email OHTA's vice-president, Adam Higinbotham, at [adam@packratoc.com](mailto:adam@packratoc.com). He'll be glad to answer whatever questions you may have and will work to find a time that works best for fulfilling your volunteering desires.

### **– Maintaining the Trail –**

As we all know by now, the Ozark Highlands Trail is a-changin'. For years, a thru-hike was considered completed at Woolum near the 164 mile marker. Nowadays, Woolum could be considered merely a restocking location for a hiker determined to make it to mile marker 206 near Dillard's Ferry—the new, official thru-hike destination for EaBo'ers. For true adventure hikers, there are roughly 140 additional miles, including bushwhacks, to be traversed before one reaches OHT's terminus at the Arkansas-

Missouri border. What this means is that, in the not-too-distant future, the Ozark Highlands Trail will traverse the beauty of the Ozarks for a total of close to 340 miles. Maintaining all those miles of trail poses some significant logistical challenges, and to address those, our Maintenance Coordinator, Chris Adams, has designed a new structure for OHTA's maintenance program. Here it is:



As shown above, the OHTA still has a Maintenance Coordinator, but oversight of trail maintenance is now split among three Maintenance Directors. Each Director is responsible for addressing the maintenance issues of a sector of the trail spanning roughly 100 miles, and maintainers will report to the Director of the sector where the section they've adopted lies. We are very optimistic that this arrangement will lead to significant improvements in all aspects of trail maintenance, and we'd like to give a big round of applause to Chris Adams for coming up with this brilliant plan!

Here is some information about each sector:

- West OHT – Lake Fort Smith to Ozone
  - Maintenance Director: Miles Jandrasevic
- East OHT – Ozone to Woolum
  - Maintenance Director: Sean Prewitt
- North OHT – Woolum to Arkansas-Missouri line
  - Maintenance Director: Jake Anderson

There are several ways to get involved in trail maintenance, and one of those is to participate in one or more of the work weekends that are currently scheduled. If you're interested in learning more about these, please give a look at the Base Camp attachment accompanying this Newsletter. If you cannot get that attachment to open, please contact the Maintenance Director of the OHT sector in your area (please refer to the information above), or you can email the OHTA Maintenance Coordinator at [Ohtmaintenance@gmail.com](mailto:Ohtmaintenance@gmail.com). Just in case, here is some of the Base Camp information:

Fall Base Camps: The OHTA will be sponsoring three work weekends during October. This will enable us to take care of some problem areas along the trail in preparation for hiking season and trail runs/events that the OHT will be hosting. All three Base Camps will be camping events, so bring your camping gear. The OHTA will have several campsites reserved at the campgrounds at no cost for you. Also, we will provide BREAKFAST, LUNCH, and DINNER for all participants. Hard hats and safety gear will be provided, if needed. Members and nonmembers are welcome. Participants can help perform a variety of tasks, as loppers, sawyers, trimmers, and “swampers” will be needed on the trail. If, instead, you’d prefer to assist with the camp duties, help will be needed with meal preparation and serving, cleaning, and taking care of the camp. Whatever role you choose to play, your help will be appreciated!

Here are the Base Camps currently on the schedule:

- RICHLAND CREEK CAMPGROUND: Oct. 7-9  
vault toilet -- no showers- bring solar showers – hot water will be available and an area will be set up for individual showers
- BLANCHARD SPRINGS CAMPGROUND: Oct 14-16  
Group Site #1 -- showers and facilities available
- REDDING CAMPGROUND: Oct 21-23  
showers and facilities available

**– Shout-Out to Those Who Are a Vital Part of the Trail –**

Too often we on the Board get so consumed the business of the organization and our personal lives that we kind of overlook the fact that the Ozark Highlands Trail is not the most important part of this organization. Well, if not the trail, then what is? Naturally, it is you and every other member like you. Without our members, the organization is nothing, and with that reality in mind, we want to express our sincere appreciation for each and everyone of you! Thanks for being a part of the OHTA and making it the organization it is and will become!

**YOU ALL ARE GREAT!!!**

**– Making Your Time on the Trail Safer –**

The OHTA is very pleased to announce that we now have the ability to arrange for all of our members to get involved in workshops that can make your time on the trail safer. What are those workshops? They are Wilderness First Aid and CPR AED workshops, and the instructor for these workshops is phenomenal! If you’re interested in this, just contact us at [OHTA@OzarkHighlandsTrail.com](mailto:OHTA@OzarkHighlandsTrail.com).

**– Preparing for the Trail Ahead –**

**NOTE:** If you have an event, a book title, any important trail information, or whatever and you'd like to share with everyone who receives the Newsletter, please send it to [ohata@ozarkhighlandstrail.com](mailto:ohata@ozarkhighlandstrail.com), and it will likely appear in the next edition of the OHTA Newsletter.

Again, here's wishing everyone a great big bunch of good health, a very enjoyable Labor Day and month of September, and until we meet again, HIKE ONWARD!