



JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION

OHTA's Mission is to Build, Maintain, Promote, and ENJOY the Ozark Highlands Trail.

- OVERSEEING THE TRAIL -

OHTA Board of Directors for 2024-2025

Phil Brown, *President* (Board term ends: June 30, 2026)
Adam Higinbothom, *Vice-President* (Board term ends: June 30, 2025)
Todd Wells, *Treasurer* (Board term ends: June 30, 2025)
Brent Umphlett, *Secretary* (Board term ends: June 30, 2027)
Chris Adams, *Maintenance Coordinator* (Board term ends: June 30, 2026)
Tiffany Mallard (Board term ends: June 30, 2026)
Wade Colwell (Board term ends: June 30, 2027)
Peter Cooper (Interim—when approved as board member, Board term will end: on June 30, 2025)
Randy Soeung (Board term ends: June 30, 2027)

- RESTORING TRAIL ALLIANCES -

As many of us are aware, the Ozark Highlands Trail Association (OHTA) has repeatedly requested of the National Park Service/Buffalo National River that the OHTA be allowed to run the Ozark Highlands Trail (OHT) through the Lower Buffalo Wilderness (LBW). Doing so would connect the Buffalo River Trail/Ozark Highlands Trail (BRT/OHT) at Dillard's Ferry with the Sylamore section of the Ozark Highlands Trail that starts at the boundary line between the BNR and USFS just to the north of Tater Hill. All requests have been denied.

Through the years, there has been a persistent rumor circulating that the Ozark Society played a role in the NPS/BNR decision to not allow construction of the OHT through the LBW. That rumor, as has come to light, has always been false, and it has, to an unacceptable degree, damaged OHTA's alliance with the Ozark Society. Many OHTA members are members of the Ozark Society, or, if you prefer, many Ozark Society members are members of the OHTA. So, if for no other reason, it is imperative that the truth about the Ozark Society's stance on the OHT running through the LBW be heard by all.

Recently, Brian Thompson, Ozark Society President and OHTA member, sent a message to Phil Brown, Ozark Highlands Trail Association President and Ozark Society member. It reads exactly as follows:

The accomplishments of the OHTA in regard to establishing one of the finest hiking trails in North America, is nothing short of phenomenal. As members of the Ozark Society, we use and enjoy the trail regularly. We maintain a small section of it. We should do more.

I want to respond to a reference of "Ozark Society sabotage in 2003." Under Bob Cross's leadership, our organization voted 35 to 7 in favor of extending the trail through the Lower Buffalo Wilderness (see attachment). That was pretty significant support. Bob communicated that to the Park Service. In the end, it made not a lick of difference. It was, and is, a Park Service decision to make.

We are not exploiting the media to suggest the "interpretation that new trails are not permitted by the Wilderness Act." Bob's mis-statement in his article was immediately recognized and corrected, but the paper went to print with the original text. There was no hidden intent here.

The one public relations "skill" that we do employ, is cultivating alliances with other organizations. There is power in this and it has helped us tremendously in our conservation efforts. We greatly admire and support the work that OHTA does. Our memberships have a lot in common. Our organizations should be working together.

On the following page is the aforementioned attachment to which Mr. Thompson referred:

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Debate over trail slogs on between park, Ozark group

By Tom Bailey Jr.
baileytom@gomemphis.com
September 23, 2003

The Buffalo River National Park in Arkansas has proposed keeping the Ozark Highlands Trail out of a wilderness area.

Public comment started last week and continues through Oct. 15 on the park's tentative environmental assessment for the trail.

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But the years-long controversy over whether to route the trail through the Lower Buffalo Wilderness Area is far from over.

The venerable Ozark Society - which saved the Buffalo River from being dammed and which helped get the national park founded - has voted overwhelmingly to support alternative routes that cut through the wilderness area.

"It was about 35 to 7 in favor of the trail" going through the wilderness, said Kirk Wasson, conservation chairman of the organization's Pulaski Chapter.

The vote came during the society's semiannual meeting in Blanchard Springs over the weekend.

At issue is how to fill one of the remaining gaps in the Trans-Ozark Trail, combining Arkansas's Ozark Highlands Trail and Missouri's Ozark Trail.

The entire route will link Fort Smith, Ark., to St. Louis.

The 22,000-acre Lower Buffalo Wilderness Area is in Marion County (Ark.) about five hours northwest of Memphis.

The protected wilderness area envelops the last 25 miles of the Buffalo River.

Two years ago, Ozark Society officers expressed opposition to taking the trail through the wilderness section, saying it was a form of development that can diminish wilderness.

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Yes, there appears to have been some opposition expressed in or around 2001 by some “Ozark Society officers to the trail [OHT] through the wilderness section [LBW], saying it was a form of development that can diminish wilderness.” Nonetheless, in 2003, by a vote of “35 to 7 in favor of the trail,” the Ozark Society “voted overwhelmingly to support alternative routes that cut through the wilderness area,” and that decision has never been reversed.

So, there it is. With this truth, we are confident the ties between the Ozark Highlands Trail Association and the Ozark Society can be restored and that our organizations will work together from this point forward. Indeed, our memberships have much in common, and building on those commonalities in creating a stronger alliance will lead to a better future for both organizations.

Thank you Brian Thompson for sharing this information with us all! The truth will help 2025 be a brighter year for both organizations!

- LOOKING AHEAD ON THE TRAIL -

WILDERNESS FIRST AID COURSE . . . AND MORE

If you're thinking about what you could do to start off 2025 with skills that could save your life and the lives of others, it may not be too late to look into the Wilderness First Aid (WFA) course being offered on January 4 and 5. There may still be an opening available for you.

Just so you know, this is not an OHTA-sponsored course, but we're letting you know about it in this newsletter because there's no course taught anywhere near this neck of the woods that will prepare you as well as will this one to address an emergency out in nature. And if you're a trail maintainer or sawyer, completion of a course such as this is a virtual necessity! One other HUGE plus is that this course will be taught by Tom Burroughs. Anyone who has ever taken part in a course taught by Mr. Burroughs will attest to there being no one who provides a higher quality, more thorough WFA learning experience than he.

So here is the basic information:

Days and Dates:

- 16-hour WFA course: Saturday and Sunday, January 4th and 5th, 2025
 - 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day
- 3-hour CPR/AED course: Sunday, January 5, 2025
 - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Prices

- WFA course: \$215
- CPR/AED course: \$65

Location

- Byrd's Adventure Center, 7037 Cass Oak Road; Ozark, Arkansas 72949.

NOTE: Tom Burroughs is offering a Wilderness First Responder Recertification course, Saturday through Monday, January 4-6, 2025, with this Wilderness First Aid course being a part of that. If anyone is interested in this recertification, they can reach out to Tom at Swiftwaterrescue@gmail.com for details.

Camping and Lodging Options

- Go to: <https://byrdsadventurecenter.com/>

WFA Course Description and Details

This two-day course immerses participants in essential wilderness medicine procedures, preparing individuals to take immediate action when an outdoor activity doesn't go as planned and 911 responders are hours away. Time is split between interactive classroom sessions and hands-on field scenarios to prepare participants and help them quickly develop basic backcountry medical care skills. The course focus is on patient assessment, stabilization and emergency treatment of issues such as hypothermia and snakebites, as well as understanding

when and how to attempt evacuation. Participants will emerge capable of calmly responding to a wide variety of emergency situations.

This course will be taught by Tom Burroughs, who is the head of the Washington County AR Search and Rescue team. Tom has been an emergency responder since 1990 and is a NREMT/WEMT and WildMed Instructor Trainer. Tom brings a background of many years of backcountry rescue experience and has been teaching these courses since 2006.

All participants will need to be dressed in clothing that can be stained and/or damaged, as the program is heavily hands on, and moulage will be used to promote training authenticity.

Participants will need to be prepared to be outside for many of the training hours, regardless of weather conditions, unless hazardous storms or extreme heat or cold occur. Participants should bring whatever items they commonly carry on their persons in the performance of their duties, as improvisational concepts are an important aspect of this course.

All program supplies and a waterproof field guide, which becomes property of the participant, are provided by Ozark Safety and Rescue Educators (OSRE) as part of the program cost.

Successful completion of the entire program will result in a three-year nationally recognized Wilderness First Aid Certification through Sierra Rescue International that meets the requirements of BSA, NICA, and the American Camp Association for Wilderness First Aid Training.

Here is the link for registration:

<https://www.cognitoforms.com/OSREIntrepid/PROCWFAJan452025WildernessFirstAidCourseAtByrdsAdventureCenterOzarkARCPRCourseWillBeOfferedSeper>

FROST FEST 2025

Frost Fest 2025 is just one month away. Yes, it is scheduled for Saturday, February 1, 2025, at the Washington County Fairgrounds in Fayetteville, Arkansas. This year's event plans to host over 3000 attendees, close to 60 breweries from across the region, food trucks, bands and vendors for what will be a true celebration of craft beer, art, and community. What's more, Frost Fest will take place regardless of the weather! In other words, it will not be canceled due to rain, snow, ice, cold, or shine, and everyone is encouraged to dress for the weather because this is an outdoor event. Tickets are already on sale, so get yours while the gettin' is good by clicking here: <https://stubs.net/event/6576/frost-fest-outdoor-beer-festival-2025>. Note: Early Entry tickets are in danger of selling out, so get 'em while you can!

Why is OHTA making such a big deal out of Frost Fest? The answer is that it is an event which, since 2016, has been presented by Fossil Cove Brewing Company of Fayetteville. Fossil Cove views Frost Fest not just as a one-day outdoor beer festival but as a way of supporting local nonprofits they believe make our region a better place to live. And we're beyond pleased that for the third year straight, OHTA has been chosen as one of those organizations! Yes, that means each of you who has made this organization a part of your life is playing a key role in the OHTA becoming an organization deserving recognition!

So, once again, a big THANKS goes out to all of our members! And, if you will, please step out of your door and with all of your might loudly express added appreciation by shouting:

THANK YOU FOSSIL COVE!!!

We hope to see you all there!

RENDEZVOUS 2025

Mark your calendars for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, May 9, 10, & 11, 2025, because that's when OHTA is going to get really high—as in altitude—atop White Rock Mountain for the annual Rendezvous! At this point, the details are scanty. What we do know is that we have reserved for each of the three days the following:

- White Rock Lodge
- Campsites 3 and 4
- Group campsite 9
- Cabins A and C

At this very early stage of the planning process, we're anticipating that preference for the cabins will go to our older members, especially those who require special accommodations for sleep or safe haven from the elements. Also, the annual meeting will be held on Saturday evening. Apart from this, more will be coming your way in the days and weeks to come. For now, what we ask is that when you decide to attend, please let us know as soon as possible so preparations can begin for the food and activities that will be a part of the affair.

This is going to be a great Rendezvous, and the view is one of the best you'll find in Arkansas!

Hope you can make it!!

– LOOKING BACK ON THE TRAIL –

BOARD MEETING COOKIE

If you missed the board meeting on Sunday, December 22, you missed out on the special logo cookies there for all to enjoy! There were two flavors, vanilla bean and mint chocolate, but since tasting them is no longer an option, here is a picture showing how they looked and the contact info for the baker/creator.

The meeting itself was productive, and as usual, the folks at Fossil Cove Brewing were very accommodating. Oh, and there was an abundance of beverage delights for all to enjoy! Of course, that's stating the obvious given the meeting was held at Fossil Cove!



2024 has been a year filled with incredible challenges, and throughout the year our volunteers have stepped up time again to face and conquer the unexpected. Together, this organization's volunteers rallied together and demonstrated what a real team is all about. Several received recognition for all they did for the OHTA, and there is no doubt,



The man laying out the day's plan as only he can.

Photo courtesy of Dale White

each of them deserved considerably more than that. Most were not recognized, but their contributions were no less appreciated and notable for what they added to the spirit of this amazing organization.

Given the nature of the challenges that confronted the OHTA in the year just ended, it seems only fitting to give special recognition to the person who led the charge and went countless extra miles over and over and over again in addressing

each of those challenges. It's pretty certain there is no one among us who would disagree that this individual's leadership abilities, drive, generosity, and determination have outpaced all others. Yes, we're talking about the role model of the year, the one and only, our Maintenance Coordinator:

Chris Adams

Chris, you are a leader of leaders, and on behalf of the Ozark Highlands Trail Association, we want to say a very special thanks to you not only for what you do for this organization but for the person you are! Saying you are outstanding is an understatement!

Chris, you are appreciated more than you could ever imagine!!

- TRAILSIDE READS -

Entangled Life: How Fungi Make our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures – Merlin Sheldrake

Vanishing Treasures: A Bestiary of Extraordinary Endangered Creatures – Katherine Rundell

QUOTES FOR THE MONTH

“The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing which stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity, and by these I shall not regulate my propositions. And some see no nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself.”

William Blake

“In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.”

Margaret Atwood



Photos courtesy of Nancy Raven

May we return from our trail's journey with peace in our hearts, joy in our souls, and wonder in our minds, yet leave for others that which nature gave us.

Till the trails we travel alone become the trail that brings us together . . .

HIKE ONWARD!!

**YOUR ASSOCIATION WITH THE OHT MAKES THIS THE ASSOCIATION IT IS!
THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING A PART OF THE OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION!!**