



WILDERNESS WATCH

Keeping Wilderness Wild

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October 26, 2021

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge
32 Refuge Headquarters
Indiahoma, OK 73552

Sent via email: wmr_publiccomment@fws.gov

Dear Fish and Wildlife Service Staff,

On behalf of Wilderness Watch, I am submitting the following comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for “Infrastructure Improvements at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge” dated September 2021.

Wilderness Watch is a national wilderness conservation organization focused on the protection and proper stewardship of all units of the National Wilderness Preservation System, including the Wichita Mountains Wilderness. Our headquarters office is located in Missoula, Montana.

We support the proposals in the draft EA to protect and improve the wilderness character of the Charons Garden unit of the Wichita Mountains Wilderness. In particular, we support:

- Converting the Treasure Lake “cherry-stemmed” road to hiking trail on southern edge of the Wilderness, and creating a new wilderness access point there near the old Job Corps site.
- Removing the abandoned Treasure Lake Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center and all of its accompanying infrastructure at the southern edge of the Wilderness and restoring the area to natural conditions.
- Removing the Sunset Recreation Area facilities that sit just outside the wilderness boundary on the north side of the Wilderness and restoring it to natural conditions, and closing that current access road and wilderness access point.
- Creating a new wilderness access point from the current ware yard and

Headquarters area to replace the Sunset Picnic Area access, re-routing a short segment of hiking trail, and allowing for the removal of bridges within the Wilderness by not having to cross Sunset Pool.

- Removing the sight of buildings and improvements from within the Charons Garden Wilderness unit at the Job Corps site and the current administrative Headquarters site.

Please keep us informed of the next steps in this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Proescholdt".

Kevin Proescholdt
Conservation Director