

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- 1.8 Million Acres in two states (AR & OK)
- Two separate and distinct state OHV laws
- One of three National Forests in Arkansas

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- Three National Forests, two different policies.
- Ouachita - open unless posted closed.
- Ozark - St. Francis - closed unless posted open.





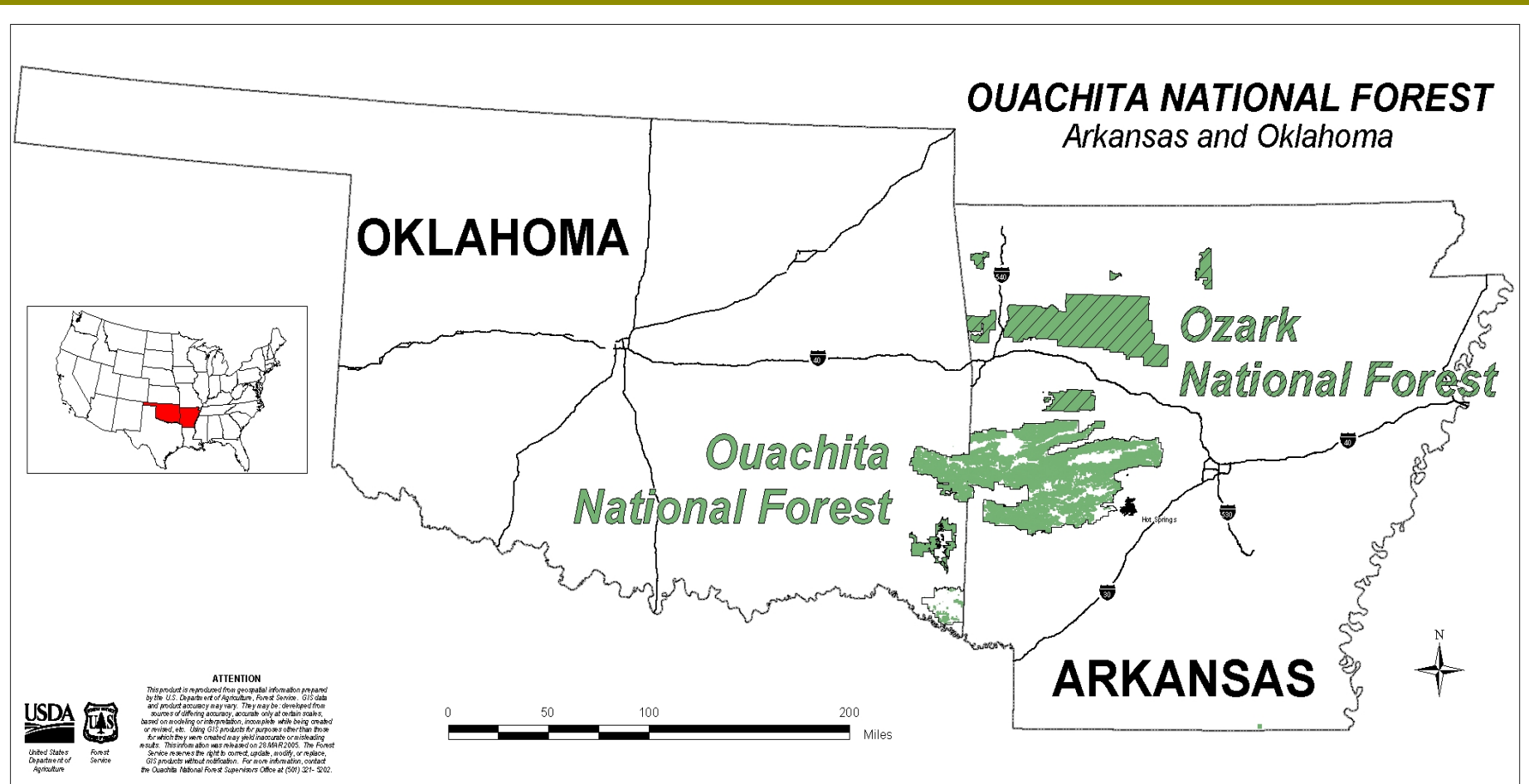
OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- **At one location, the Forests are separated by only five miles.**

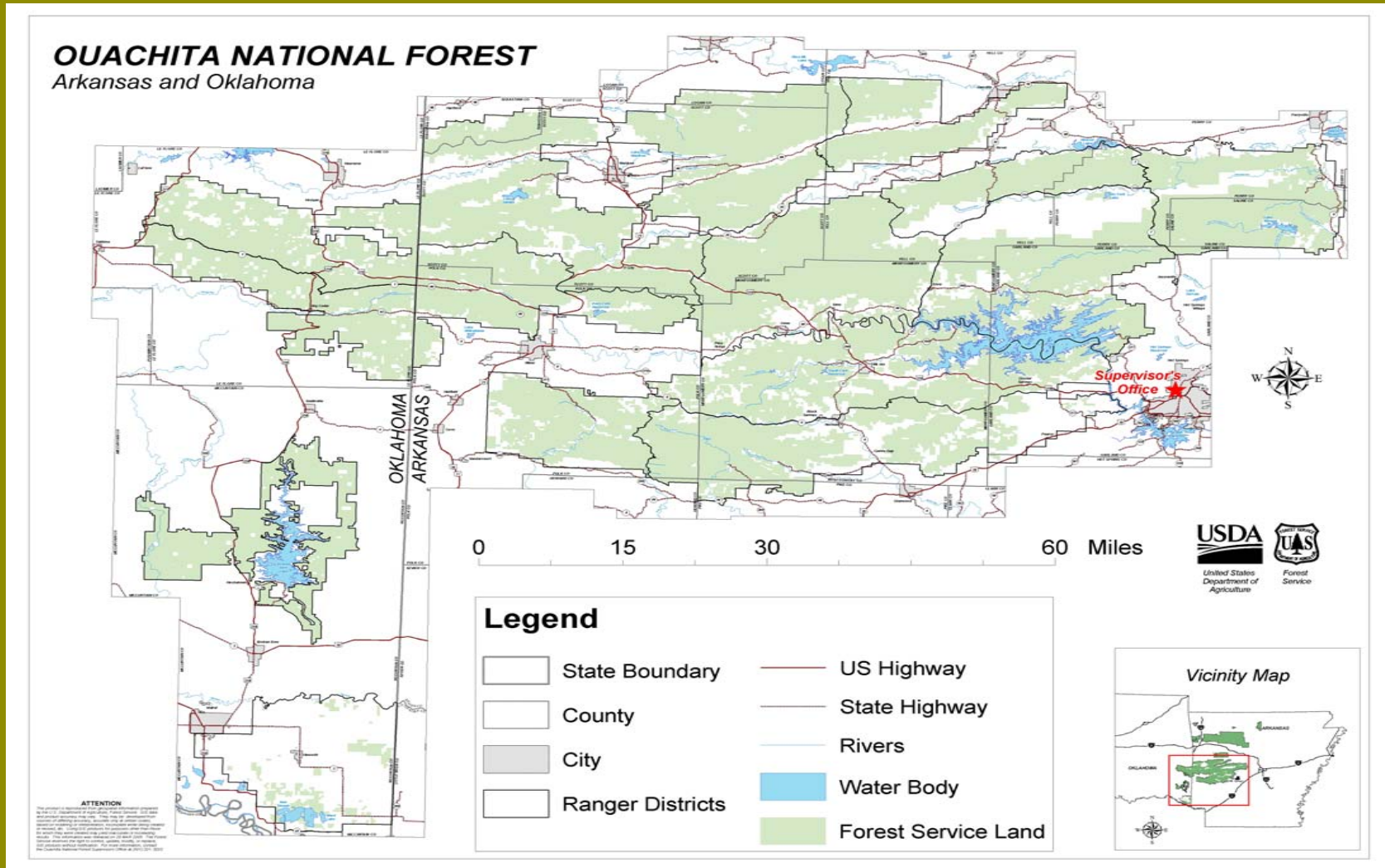
OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma



OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma



OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- OHV Planning Constraints: Time, Distance & Communication.
- Communications contract option explored.
- Contract developed, executed and managed in-house.
- Contract work was completed concurrent with plan revision activities.

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- The Ouachita NF identified OHV use as a major plan revision issue.
- The Chief identified unmanaged recreation (including OHV use) in the National Forests as one of the Four Threats to National Forest sustainability.
- As part of Ouachita plan revision, the Forest set out to investigate and implement a management policy for OHVs.

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- Selected local public relations firm knowledgeable of local affairs and “savvy” about user population expectations and desires.



OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- Consultant developed comprehensive public involvement plan.
 - Assisted with six public "Listening Post" meetings in draw area.
 - Established goals/format for data gathering.
 - Developed communication plan using free and paid media.
 - Created exhibits/materials for use at meetings.
 - Provided compiled results and analysis of gathered data.

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- 387 members of the public and local and state agencies attended the six "listening post" meetings. 46 groups, clubs and other organizations were represented at the meetings.

- A petition of 2.5K-OHV participant signatures was delivered to the Supervisor's Office. 104 e-mails and 12- letters containing OHV comments were received. 403 user surveys were completed.



OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- During the Forest's OHV planning process we learned of a National OHV policy initiative.
- How to mesh our developing plan with the new Nationwide requirement?



OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST
Arkansas & Oklahoma

So, what did we learn?

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

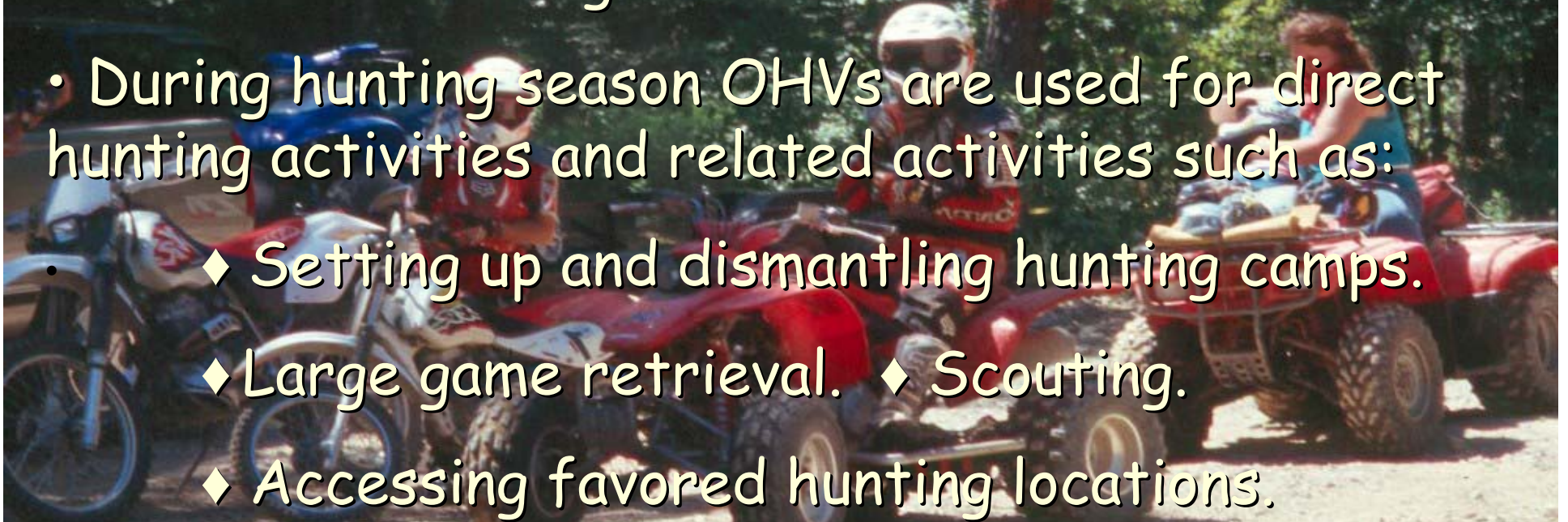
- Typical User

- Upper middle-aged male . Use by females, couples and families is increasing (20% of "Listening Post" attendance was female).
- OHV used for pleasure riding and activities related to HUNTING!
- User is protective of his "ownership" of the Forest.

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

- OHV use is a growing family activity with adults, children and less mobile older adults visiting the Forest together.
- During hunting season OHVs are used for direct hunting activities and related activities such as:
 - ◆ Setting up and dismantling hunting camps.
 - ◆ Large game retrieval. ◆ Scouting.
 - ◆ Accessing favored hunting locations.



OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

Some Needs to Consider:

- Firefighting access.
- Search & rescue.
- Timber scouting on adjacent, private lands.
- Administrative use.
- Resource management.
- Law enforcement.



OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

Concerns to be addressed:

- Environmental impacts of unmanaged OHV use.
- Aging /disabled population access to the forest.
- Impacts to adjacent and in-held private property.
- Lack of OHV rider personal protective equipment.
- User defined Stream crossings.
- Local economies.
- Cultural expectations of local and visiting population.

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

OHV Users Are:

- ***Motivated, concerned and involved.***
- ***Willing to purchase a permit and "license" sticker if funds are used to improve OHV facilities.***
- ***Willing to aid in design, construction and maintenance of OHV trails.***
- ***Self-policing, support managing "bad apple" behavior that may curtail Forest access to responsible users.***

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

How have we used this information?

- Draft Revised Forest Plan OHV policy moves OHV use from cross-country to designated routes and trails.
- Public education and interagency coordination - newsletters, posters, meetings, partner meetings, newspaper articles, etc.
- In development of Forest criteria for establishing OHV routes and trails.
- In the analysis on-going currently at District level to identify qualifying routes and trails.

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

Arkansas & Oklahoma

What's To Come?

- After final Forest plan is approved, the District OHV route analysis will be compiled into potential routes and trails.
- Public working groups will be formed to review and comment on potential routes and trails. Routes and trails will be finalized.
- Route maps, user brochures, trail and route identification on the ground and a public education program will be implemented.

Party Time!

