

Western Oklahoma Wildlife Trail

“Connecting Communities, Conservation and Commerce”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 12, 2002

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Wildlife trail to share Great Plains with visitors

Plans for a new wildlife trail may soon have nature tourists rolling down the plains of western Oklahoma, if local citizens and businesses have their way. The project to develop a Western Oklahoma Wildlife Trail, funded initially by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), seeks to connect wildlife-viewing sites to attract visitors.

“Oklahoma offers a wealth of interesting wildlife species and landscapes that would appeal to out-of-state visitors, especially from urban cities,” said Ron Suttles, Natural Resources Administrator for ODWC. “Because of our place in the Great Plains, we can offer visitors a close-up view of such interesting and unique wildlife as scissor-tailed flycatchers, bison, “horny toads” and prairie dogs, as well as vast stretches of prairie, granite outcroppings and red-rock cliffs.”

ODWC intends to link visitors to these natural resources by developing an auto-driving trail that would offer several loops within the western half of the state, Suttles said. ODWC has retained Fermata of Austin, Texas, to assist in planning efforts for the trail. Fermata pioneered the auto-driving trail concept with the successful Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.

Nearly 100 people from western Oklahoma met at Woodward on August 22 to learn more about the trail concept and what will be needed to effectively promote the trail to out-of-state visitors. Participants also were provided with nomination forms to select local sites that meet both wildlife-viewing and tourism needs.

A series of meetings will be held throughout western Oklahoma during the week of September 23-27, Suttles said, to encourage more participation in the trail. The meetings are open to interested stakeholders, but RSVPs are encouraged.

- September 23: 1 pm – 4 pm: Guymon Chamber of Commerce Activity Center, 5th and Sunset
- September 24: 9 am – noon: Cheyenne, Roger Mills Agriculture Pavilion
- September 25: 9 am – noon: Lawton, co-hosted by Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge at Quanah Parker Environmental Education Center
- September 26: 9 am – noon: Cordell, Cordell Community Center, 116 N. College St.
- September 27: 9 am – noon: Waynoka, Saddle Club, Hwy 281 and Cecil Street

For more information on the Wildlife Trail or to RSVP, contact Melynda Hickman of ODWC (Tel: 405/424-0099, email: mhickman@odwc.state.ok.us) or Jeremy Garrett of Fermata (Tel: 802/244-8994, email: jgarrett@fermatainc.com). Also, please visit <http://www.greatamericantrails.com/oklahoma/>.

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ATTENTION MEDIA: You are welcome to arrange live media interviews with Melynda Hickman of ODWC and Jeremy Garrett of Fermata as they travel through western Oklahoma during September 23-27. Garrett’s cell-phone number is 802/777-6538.