

August 14, 2007

H. Dale Hall, Director
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Hall,

I want to take this opportunity to share my strong support for continued rock climbing and other recreational access within the Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge.

As you know well, the Refuge has been a favorite destination for technical rock climbers from around the region for many decades. Both in application and in the reviews previously conducted by your agency, the climbers have proven themselves a compatible part of the refuge and your efforts to protect it for generations to come.

As your agency enters the newest phase of compatibility certification, I urge you do the following: 1) ensure that the process is fair and open to all stakeholders, including area rock climbers, 2) give due consideration to the considerable history between Wichita Mountain rock climbers and the refuge, and 3) finally, ensure that area rock climbers and other outdoorsmen continue to enjoy the same access as they have historically.

I believe experience demonstrates that rock climbers and other visitors to the Refuge are your greatest ally in protecting this resource. Many of the improvements seen in the refuge have been led, and strongly supported by rock climbers and other outside groups. They view the refuge with a long term outlook, and seek preservation and protection just as you do. I would encourage you to consider their unique and vital role in sustaining your mission, and avoid any effort—intentional or unintentional—that would limit their role in the future.

I will monitoring this situation closely, and would appreciate updates along the way. I believe that it is important the American public continue to have access to the Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge.

Thanks in advance for your efforts.

Sincerely,


Tom A. Coburn, MD
United States Senator