

# Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



**1424 Blakely Dam Road  
Royal, Arkansas 71964**

**MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD:** Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee Minutes

**DATE:** April 7, 2014

**CALL TO ORDER:** 6:00 p.m. by Arnie Habig

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:**

Brenda Meeks, Project Manager, Lake Ouachita Project Office  
Stacy Sigman, Resource Manager, Lake Ouachita Field Office  
Bill Jackson, Supervisory Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office  
Amy Shultz, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

**Members Present:**

Bill Barnes	Al Gathright	Rick Stokes
Tom Butler	Arnold Habig	Janice Vaughn
Phillip Carr	Larry Raney	Dan Watson
Mike Drake	Jerry Shields	Howard Wright

**Minutes in Review:** The minutes from the March 3, 2014 meetings were approved as written.

**Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO):** Rick S. relayed that he had not received any news from the FOLO audit. Arnie H. inquired if they could be holding off because of pending legislation. Rick S. stated that although it was possible, he believed they would go ahead with the audit regardless of legislation pending concerning the re-establishment of the Corps' Cooperative Joint Management (CJM) program. Arnie H. related Senator Boozman's proposal, the Corps of Engineers Cooperative Joint Management Restoration Act (S.2055), was approved in the committee with no opposition and would be presented before the full Senate in two weeks. Bill J. related that the only amendment to Boozman's bill was an amendment to make it easier for non-profit organizations to utilize the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) system. Arnie H. passed around the bill with approval signatures on it. Arnie H. shared he had again received a phone call from Caleb Taylor, a reporter at The Sentinel Record, Hot Springs, concerning the termination of the cooperative agreements between the Corps and FOLO. Jerry S. stated the article on the front page of The Sentinel Record was very informative and provided some good press for FOLO.

### **Sub-Committee Reports:**

**LOViT Trail:** Bill J. showed the committee the detailed map of LOViT and booklets, with correlating maps that Mike Wade, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office, had developed for the emergency response agencies to use in responding to emergency issues on the LOViT. Bill J. went on to share that on March 27, 2014, a meeting was held at the Lake Ouachita Field Office for all area emergency response agencies, where Mike Wade provided training on the utilization of the maps and booklets when an emergency call is made. Bill J. continued in stating that Mike Wade had done an outstanding job in developing these detailed maps and working with the local emergency response agencies in their development to meet their need. Dan W. stated it was a great presentation for all the emergency response agencies. Bill J. shared that one of the challenges faced by the Corps is that it is unable to communicate with a number of the emergency response agencies due to not having radios with Arkansas Wireless Information Network (AWIN) capability. Bill J. further related that the Garland County Mounted Patrol had conducted a few exercises along the LOViT. Stacy S. shared that in areas difficult to reach, like Hickory Nut Mountain, it will be the first responder's decision on how to extract the injured persons. They can utilize the books as a reference. Phillip C. requested a copy of the wilderness book. Arnie H. asked how many books were distributed. Bill J. stated every emergency response agency received two reference books and area emergency dispatchers received a book to refer to when an emergency call comes in to the dispatch center.

Jerry S. related they would not be able to use Progressive Trail Design to complete the last 800 feet of trail due to funding issues. Bill B. had sent out a request for donations and the concessions each donated \$200.00 toward the trail. FOLO would like to raise enough money to finish the trail and install signage. Jerry S. inquired about sponsoring an event on the trail with the proceeds going to raise money for the trail, in which Stacy S. stated a meeting could be held to discuss the possibility of holding such an event. Arnie H. shared an article about the LOViT that had been published in the Arkansas Life magazine.

**Aquatic Vegetation:** Bill J. related Johnny C. is finalizing the fisheries grant report. Bill J. further related in a note from Johnny C., the Mountain Pine EAST Lab, a group of 11 students, worked on Friday, April 4, 2014 and constructed 68 additional exclusion cages. Leslie Abbott, Henderson State University Student Intern, helped to keep the students on task. There is enough wire to construct 45 additional cages, so the construction of the cages is almost complete. Bill J. also shared that Johnny C. and Park Rangers, Josh G., Joe B., Derick W., and Daniel A. went out to inspect the cages on March 20, 2014, but was unable to observe the condition of the plants due to the depth of the water.

**Campgrounds:** Arnie H. presented the first of two staff studies he had developed concerning campground operations on Lake Ouachita. The first staff study being where campers must notify the Park Attendants/Fee Collectors, in advance of the designated check-out time of 4:00 p.m., if they plan to extend their camping stay on the campsite they are occupying. Three options were presented on the optimal time the camper must make a decision and inform the fee booth. Jerry S. inquired if many complaints were made about this issue or about campers leaving tents to hold campsites for travel trailers. Bill J. related the Corps tries to be as accommodating as much as possible, but there have been some complaints especially around the busy holiday weekends. Stacy S. stated there could not be enough rules, regulations, or manpower during the busy holidays to insure everyone follows the rules. Dan W. stated he believed the goal of this study was to have campers make a firm decision as to whether

or not they are staying another night in campground. Stacy S. shared that it is also important to look at this from the campers' perspective. Bill B. shared the majority of the time his customers make their decision to renew for another night is the morning of departure, and Mountain Harbor always allows them to extend their stay if possible. He stated that only about nine days out of the year, during the holiday weekends, is this a problem, and they always try to accommodate the customer. Bill J. shared he attempts to keep the Lake Ouachita Facebook site updated with the number of campsites per campground that are available through the Memorial Day, July 4<sup>th</sup> and Labor Day Holiday timeframe. Stacy S. stated the Corps will always post the "Campground Full" signs on the highway when there are no spaces available. After further discussion Jerry S. moved not to approve or pursue the staff study. A vote was taken and approved, by nine of the twelve committee members present. The second proposed staff study was concerning the requirement of newly arriving campers and campers who wanted to change campsites being required to register prior to occupying the campsite. After discussing the issue, a decision was made to withdraw the proposal and not pursue making recommendations to the Corps.

Bill J. provided an update on the status of campgrounds:

Spillway Day Use - Due to some water issues, there have been some delays in opening the area for public use. In the Fall of 2013, the Spillway area was switched over to municipal water and there have been some glitches in the system with the switch over.

Brady Mountain - The maintenance contractor is finishing up with the new roof construction in Area 1, an advance crew began removing the roof on the third comfort station in the Brady Campground in preparation for the new roof to be constructed prior to the Memorial Day Holiday weekend. The comfort station in Area 1 will be re-opened within the next two weeks.

Joplin - The fish cleaning station has been repaired and re-opened.

Tompkins Bend - Power issues were discovered since last month's meeting, they are being addressed and will be corrected quickly to prevent disruption of use in the campground area.

Denby Point - Bill J. related all the campsites with power have been repaired and power restored. A number of campsites have been without power for a few years, and now with the new electrical lines being replaced and individual runs installed to the campsites, all power is working.

Little Fir - The raw water intake pump and line had to be replaced, water service has been restored to the area and everything is working.

Washita - Bill J. shared that a local group of volunteers living in and around the Washita area had been working to clear underbrush and stumps in the Washita Campground area that were a result of severe storms passing through the area. Rangers were able to burn some of the debris piles, but more work is being performed by the volunteer group. Bill J. provided pictures of the work done in Washita and the comfort station roof construction in Brady.

Bill J. also shared the law enforcement patrols began March 14, 2014 and will continue through the summer until September 8, 2014. Bill J. further shared that the Park Attendant/Fee Collector contracts

for Denby Point, Tompkins Bend, Joplin, and Crystal Springs Campground had been announced this last week with a closing date of April 11, 2014. Bill J. related that the Lake Ouachita would not be re-hiring temporary Park Rangers to work during the summer and there will be a reduction in the number of park volunteers and volunteer Camp Hosts this summer as well. Bill J. went on to state that Derick Walker, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office, had been installing white carsonite posts on those campsites designated as reservable campsites. Derick had suggested this project as a way to allow campers to quickly identify those campsites that are reservable and first-come, first-serve. New reservation collars are also being placed on the reservable campsites as well. All campsite markers now have the campsite prices posted to let campers know the price at each campsite.

Bill J. shared the new non-fee campground extension camping policy at Lake Ouachita. Campers wishing to stay longer than their 14-day camping limit will be granted one camping extension, allowing them to camp for a total of 28 consecutive days, and then the camper must **move** to another recreation area for a minimum of 14 days before being allowed to return to the original campground. Bill J. further shared that Lake Ouachita will initiate a pilot study to place suggestion boxes at all the fee booths in the Class A campgrounds, allowing campers to make suggestions or comments about their stay in the campgrounds.

**Comments:**

Amy S. shared the draft of the flyer being proposed to promote the “Volunteer in the Park” Day on May 10, 2014 in the Avery Park area below Blakely Mountain Dam, the flyer was approved by the committee members.

**FOLO Financial Report:**

Month	January 31, 2014	February 28, 2014	March 31, 2014
Cash-Trail Account	\$6,371.00	\$7,871.00	(\$24,002)
Cash – Miscellaneous	\$648.00	\$648.00	\$478.00
Cash-Crystal Springs	\$157,299.00	\$156,794.00	\$156,719.00
Cash-Tompkins Bend	\$57,735.00	\$57,230.00	\$57,155.00
<b>Total Assets:</b>	<b>\$222,053.00</b>	<b>\$222,543.00</b>	<b>\$190,350.00</b>

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 7:40 P.M.