

# Lake Ouachita Citizen Focus Committee



1201 Blakely Dam Road  
Royal, Arkansas 71964

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

**DATE:** October 10, 2012

**CALL TO ORDER:** 1830 hours by Arnie Habig

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

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

**Members Present:**

Bill Barnes	George Dooley	Arnold Habig	Rick Stokes
Phillip Carr	David Doty	Larry Raney	Jerry Williams
Robert Cavanaugh	Al Gathright	Jerry Shields	

**Minutes in Review:** The minutes for September were approved as written.

**Comments:** Arnie H. introduced and welcomed Stacy S. to Lake Ouachita as the new Resource Manager.

**FOLO Update:** Arnie H. inquired when the proposed work would begin in Area #1 at Crystal Springs Campground. Jason M. stated work would begin around October 22<sup>nd</sup> or October 23<sup>rd</sup>. Al G. related that FOLO had signed Cooperative Agreement for the Tompkins Bend Recreation Area. Dave D. related the reservation season had ended and all campsites are now first-come first-serve until May 1<sup>st</sup>. Two couples are volunteering in Crystal Springs Campground Area and will be collecting campsites fees until May 1, 2013. The volunteers are working 7-days on/7- days off collecting camping fees. Dave D. continued in that Jeff Smith will be FOLO's onsite representative at Tompkins Bend. Jeff Smith was recommended by the Carr's and will handle the receipts for the Tompkins Bend Recreation Area. Arnie H. shared that at the Ouachita River Valley Association Conference he recently attended, Colonel Eckstein, Vicksburg District, District Commander made a statement during his presentation that the condition of the District's campgrounds were deteriorating and in much need of repair. Arnie H. stated discussed this issued with Colonel Eckstein and related he disagreed with his statement that the campgrounds were deteriorating. Bill B. stated that the campgrounds were outdated and are in need of upgrading facilities, but due to the lack of funding, this has been a real challenge for the project to accomplish. Jason M. related the Corps would begin installing the new electrical lines in the Denby Point Campground Area, tomorrow, October 11<sup>th</sup>. Once the project at Denby had been completed, the crews would move to Brady Mountain Campground and begin working on the electric lines in Brady Campground as well.

Dave D. asked when the chip and seal roadway resurfacing would begin in the Tompkins Bend area. Jason M. related that the contract had been approved and awarded, but the initial start date for the work to begin in Tompkins had not been given, yet. Bill B. inquired about the electrical outages in the Joplin Campground area. Stacy S. related there were 5 or 6 different breaks in a very long section of the underground electrical line and the line had to be spliced and repaired. Stacy S. continued that as more funding becomes available; the project will be purchasing additional electrical wire to replace the existing underground electrical wire through-out the campground. Rick S. stated that when 50 amp service was installed, the electrical wiring was not replaced and at times, due to the increased electrical load, may fail under the conditions. Dave D. related that the O&M contractor, RBS, had installed various crossings through-out the Tompkins Bend Campground Area for the water installation and future expansion of services, as needed. The Tompkins Bend Water Installation Project was moving along and RBS should have water service to most of the campground by the end of the month.

**Partnership Handshake**-Amy S. handed out the Partnership Handshake Grant nomination that was sent in for the Barrier Free/ADA Accessible Fishing Pond and Pier. Amy S. explained the proposed plans for the fishing pond and pier, further detailing the need for volunteer services to be counted as in-kind services as part of the grant. Bill J. stated the Corps was proposing to expand the established partnership with the Mountain Pine High School EAST Lab to get the local students involved in the planning, mapping and construction of an outdoor education center in the Avery area. This outdoor education center would feature the Avery Pond and trail area being constructed in the area. The EAST Lab is seeking opportunities to use their learned skills in computer technology and programs such as GIS. Bill J. further related there is a need to develop an area that could be used to promote Kids in the Outdoors activities such as annual fishing derbies and trail hikes. The area along the Ouachita River below Blakely Mountain Dam and Avery Recreation Area had been identified as an area of various flora and fauna, plus a wide diversity of land uses that could be used as an outdoor demonstration classroom for area schools. Rick S. stated the Corps would need to get started early in working the partnership with the EAST Lab due to the school schedule. Bill J. related the Corps is meeting with the EAST program within the next 2 weeks to start planning. Amy S. inquired about submitting an application for FOLO to apply for another "Everyday" grant again this year for the purpose of funding a possible FOLO website for the public to obtain information about FOLO's activities on Lake Ouachita. Jerry S. recommended that Amy S. move forward with the grant application for FOLO.

**NRRS Blackout Period:** In a previous meeting, an inquiry had been made about the proposed NRRS Blackout Period and how it would affect the Lake Ouachita campgrounds. Bill J. related the U.S. Forest Service was implementing a new accounting system and will not be sending any funds during this time. Dave D. stated the last distribution would be tomorrow, October 11, 2012. Arnie H. asked if they would be changing the system when you go to make reservations. Bill J. stated it would not affect any of the reservations.

**Crystal Firewood:** Arnie H. stated he could not locate the 5 cords of firewood at the Crystal Springs Campground that had been mentioned in an exchange of emails. Dave D. related that the trees had been placed in the overflow parking area, behind the locked gate, and that the trees would need to be cut into firewood lengths and split for firewood before it could be sold. The trees had been donated from a location, off Corps property, for FOLO to sell firewood in the Crystal Springs Campground. Bill J. related that firewood was a commodity and it could be sold in the campground as a "point of sell" POS, when the park attendant's are utilizing the NRRS campground computer system. NRRS would not receive a portion of these funds when sold as a POS. Dave D. stated these funds are sent to NRRS, just like the use fees collected, but then NRRS would return these funds to the FOLO bank account. Jerry S. stated he had a wood splitter that mounts on the back of his tractor that could be used to split the wood for firewood, but continued that he would not volunteer to split

it. Rick S. stated he would contact Tommy Trantham, owner/operator, Crystal Springs Resort, to see if he would be interested in splitting the wood to share in part of the profit and let Jerry S. know the outcome.

**Sub-Committee Reports:**

**Lake Ouachita Vista Trail:** Jerry S. presented the Conservation of the Year Award and Henry Award that had been recently awarded to the Trail Dogs at the Annual Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism recently held in Bryant, Arkansas. Jerry S. asked if there may be room in the display cabinet, located in the entrance foyer of the new office, for the awards to be placed and displayed. Brenda M. related that there would be no problem displaying the awards and space would be made available. Jerry S. related he, Robert C. and Al G. attended the annual event and there were a total of 9 various awards presented during the event in which approximately 300 people attended. The Trail Dogs set up an informational booth during the event to provide information concerning the LOViT Trail and various activities the Trail Dogs have accomplished around Lake Ouachita.

Jerry S. stated 5 volunteers finished installing the pavers around the exercise equipment, at the ADA/Watchable Wildlife Trail, last Monday and they needed some field stone to be installed around the border area of the gravel pave to delineate the surface area. Jerry S. further related that someone was utilizing the trail each time they were working on it. Gloria Chrismer, Womble District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service, usually tries to visit the worksite when the volunteers are there working on the trail. Jerry S. stated Robert C. had been very active in cutting trees that had followed across the trail. Robert C. had removed 12 trees from section 2 and the old fire tower spur in preparation of the December marathon that will occur on the LOViT. Jerry S. related that a very large oak tree has split and is hanging down over the trail at the Homestead parking area. Jerry S. continued with the request of assistance from the Corps' O&M contractor in the removal of the tree to ensure the tree is removed safely, due to the size of it. Jerry S. further related the need to construct a parking area where LOViT crosses the Crystal Springs Campground Road. Trail users have been parking alongside the roadway, creating a potential hazard to vehicles driving in and out of the area. Jerry S. stated he had attempted to contact the contractor for finishing section 7 of the trail, but had not been able to reach him.

**Aquatic Vegetation:** Bill J. related Johnny C. had constructed 390 exclusion cages and is working with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission on where would be the best locations to install the aquatic plant species to be protected by the exclusion cages. Johnny C. also passed along some of the recent Deer Survey results being that they are seeing lots of does, a few fawns, and a few 6 and 8 point bucks around the Lake Ouachita area.

**Fisheries:** Bill J. stated he had contacted Stewart Woolridge about the Twin Creek ADA Fishing Pier dedication that had been projected for October 2012. Mr. Woolridge stated they would wait until the parking area adjacent to the fishing pier had been completed before scheduling a dedication date.

**Campground:** Arnie H. asked if the Vicksburg District was asking for permanent 35% to 65% Reservable to Non-reservable ratio for all the Lake Ouachita campgrounds. Brenda M. stated that she and her staff were working on the possibility of making the ratio a permanent ratio, but current plans are to continue the 35%/65% ratio through the 2013 Reservation Season. Rick S. asked if FOLO can adjust the ratio in the FOLO leased campgrounds? Brenda M. stated they have not asked that question yet.

Dave D. inquired if FOLO had a lease document to sign to include the Tompkins Bend Recreation Area? Stacy S. stated he had the signature sheet, but Vicksburg had not sent the entire lease agreement to his office. Dave D. requested to see the updated lease agreement and how it was written to ensure those items of concern had

been addressed before FOLO members signed the agreement. Brenda M. asked Stacy S. to check with the District's Real Estate Office to obtain a full copy of the proposed lease agreement.

**Campfire Interpretive Program:** Jerry S. related the Trail dogs had discussed creating 13 different interpretive programs for presentation during the summer camping season in the Tompkins Bend and Denby Point amphitheaters. They have contacted the following people and asked if they would be willing to present one program during the summer months:

Master Gardeners-Flowers and Fern program  
Audubon Society- Bird Island program  
Beverly Bise- Native American program  
B&F Engineering- Survey of Arkansas  
Amy Shultz-Snake Program  
Trail Dogs-Trail Construction program/History

Jerry S. also stated they would like to add a program on Quartz and Lake Ouachita History. He believed one program could be given every Friday night of the summer. Jerry S. related some work would have to be done on the amphitheaters. Brenda M. stated it was a great idea, and the Church Arbor at Crystal Springs had been utilized for programs in the past. Jerry S. further related they were considering a program to be presented at the Lake Ouachita Vista on "Star Gazing and Constellation Identification" by a local college Professor. Bill B. made a motion for the committee to support FOLO's efforts to establish the campfire programs, motion was seconded by Larry R., motion was approved by the committee members.

#### **Lake Ouachita Cleanup:**

Amy S. expressed appreciation for Arnie H., Al G. Jerry S. and those who helped with the Campground Beautification Day on September 29<sup>th</sup>, as part of the Public Lands Day volunteer program. Amy S. related 16 volunteers picked up 11 bags of litter, removed 20 tires from the shoreline, painted signs, and cleaned rocks and limbs from swim beaches. Arnie H. stated he thought the campground workday was a great idea and requested we have one in the spring also. Jerry S. requested the poison ivy at Tompkins Bend be treated with a herbicide to reduce the encroachment on the campsites. Bill J. stated we would ask the contractors to do that.

#### **Comments:**

Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) Conference: Arnie H. stated that Bill Hobgood, Chairman, ORVA, asked if someone from LOCFC could provide a presentation at next year's conference, detailing the efforts put forth by the committee since its beginning. Arnie H. volunteered to put together a presentation and present at next year's event, if the committee members approved. Bill B. stated it was a great idea and was fully supportive of the possibility of being able to promote the awareness of recreation and its significance at the ORVA event. Bill B. went on to explain that in years past, the primary focus has been centered around dredging and the effects of low water conditions on the Ouachita River and Valley, very little awareness has been given to importance of recreation. He stated if Arnie would highlight the positives, it would be great to give a presentation. Arnie H. also stated if an article could be prepared to get into the fall newsletter. This article would need to be sent in by October 28<sup>th</sup>. Arnie H. stated he would draft the article and give it to Al G. to pass on to FOLO for approval.

Bill J. related that the current visitation figures indicated Lake Ouachita was in the top 25 most visited Corps of Engineers destinations in the Nation for fiscal year 2012, and the most visited lake in the Vicksburg district. Dave D. related the gross revenue at Crystal was approximately \$160,000.

**FOLO Financial Report as of September 30, 2012:**

<b>Assets:</b>	
Cash-Trail Account:	\$10,437.00
Cash-Miscellaneous:	(\$5,099.00)
Cash-Crystal Springs Rec. Area	\$115,668.00
<b>Total Assets:</b>	<b>\$ 121,006.00</b>

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 P.M.