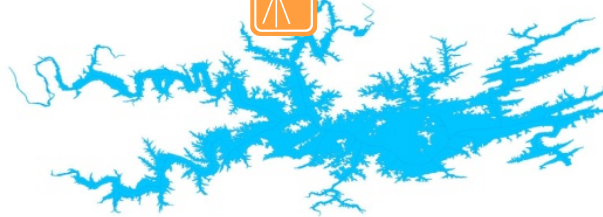


Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



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

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee Minutes

DATE: May 2, 2016

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m. by Al Gathright, Vice Chairman

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Stacy Sigman, Lake Manager, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Jason Mothershed, Facility Manager, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Amy Shultz, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Members Present:

Robert Cavanaugh	Al Gathright	Rick Stokes
George Dooley	Arnold Habig	Jerry Williams
Mike Drake	Jerry Shields	Howard Wright

Announcements: Al G. shared he had received letters from most of the absent committee members stating prior obligations.

Minutes: The minutes from the March 7, 2016 meeting were approved with amendment made to habitat boat project paragraph with the following added: "Committee decided not to pursue obtaining a habitat boat due to long term maintenance costs". The minutes from the April 4, 2016 meeting were approved as written.

FOLO Update: Jerry S. shared Dan W. will be setting up a FOLO website and FOLO has approved \$220.00 to form/maintain the website for 3 years. The website will have a donation/contribution button. Dan is also working on getting a donation button on the FOLO Facebook page.

Arnie H. shared that the accountant, Vivian, had sent out a FOLO statement and Arnie believes some of the items pertaining to NRRS funds should be deleted from the statement. Jerry asked Al G. if he would talk to Vivian and ask her to clean up the statement taking out some unnecessary line items. Jerry and Al stated Vivian does a wonderful job on FOLO's accounting.

Lake Ouachita Vista Trail (LOViT): Robert C. shared the USFS, Texas Conservation Corps were not able to work on the trail, as their trip was rained out and has been re-scheduled for June 6th. IMBA also has not worked on the trail since the last meeting. Jerry S. shared the Trail Dogs met with the USFS Regional Ranger. Jerry said the meeting was a meet and greet where they discussed USFS budgets and how staffing for Forest Service had dropped by 50% in the last 10 years. Jerry further shared 52% of the USFS budget goes toward firefighting, and this is expected to increase to 80% within the next 5 years. Robert stated they had the opportunity to talk to the Forester and tell him about the trail. Two county judges were there and they discussed the great working relationship the USFS has with the Corps and other government agencies in Arkansas.

Robert and Al attended the Mount Ida Chamber of Commerce presentation and Joe Jacobs, author of Arkansas Outside, told the Chamber you must promote biking and the trail system and suggested restaurants in Hot Springs and Mount Ida put in bike racks and motels install a bike wash area. Robert shared he never thought he would hear a key note speaker talk about mountain biking. Stacy S. shared Raystown Lake has miles of trails and they do a great job of promoting their trail system. Robert stated the LOViT is a linear trail, so shuttle service is very important for the Vista trail. George D. shared Steve Arrison, CEO of Hot Springs Convention and Visitor's Bureau, is promoting the trails and the committee needs to come up with a trail event to "pitch" to Mr. Arrison and get his promotional backing. Jerry shared the county judge stated they would begin widening portions of highway 270 in 2017.

Al and Jerry met with Stacy and Tom Ledbetter, USFS, to look at the necessary re-route of Section 2 of the LOViT due to problems with flooding. They are going to have to look at this section again to determine the best option for the re-route. A few options include an elevated walkway, or an extended re-route to create a low water and high water route.

Arnie H. inquired if they will need breakfast paid for the Texas Conservation Corps as they had done with the past Conservation Corps groups that have helped on the trail. Jerry stated this was a great suggestion, and he would look into it.

New Bench Locations in the Campgrounds: Stacy shared the Corps has six new benches in stock and will see about ordering more when he finds out what is needed.

Corps of Engineers Report: Stacy shared there will be another EKIP field trip to Avery this week the Corps will be hosting. Stacy further shared the big issue right now is the high water, the lake level is 581.5msl and the reservation sites that are closed due to high water are being contacted and reservations have been cancelled. Stacy further shared the SB2 base is being installed at the Tompkins Bend playground and the Corps has the super fans in stock, and will start installing them after Memorial Day. Al G. referred to the Tompkins Bend Day use pavilion area pictures that were given to the members, and stated the Tompkins Bend Day Use area is looking really good.

Arnie H. asked Stacy about the status of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and the PDT. Stacy shared they have not started re-writing the regulations for WRDA. Stacy further shared the biggest change coming from the Recreation Leadership Advisory Team (RLAT) is how we collect our campground funds to insure there is not any theft. Stacy further shared the Corps tries to focus on the accomplishments of the partnerships in Operations and Maintenance Business Information Link

(OMBIL) instead of the amount of money saved, so the budget is not cut. Stacy went on to say, if user fees came back to the projects, he believes the operating budget would most likely be cut. This year Ouachita is having to compete for incremental money, and they look at visitation and efficiency of the parks to decide how to appropriate funding. Lake Ouachita will not know until fall 2018 how this will affect the budget. George D. asked why some recreation areas are closed in the winter. Stacy stated that if the visitation is low, the cost of operation per visitor skyrockets and it shows non-efficiency and kills our budget. Rick further shared that it shows you are wasting money to keep campgrounds open with low visitation, you are not cost-efficient.

Project Progress Reports:

Demolish Out-of-date facilities at Crystal Springs: Jason M. shared the facilities had gone up for bid and had been sold twice, but each time it fell through. Jason stated the Corps would demolish these facilities ourselves during the fall.

Create an area campground map: No Report

Additional Ventilation in Comfort Stations: Jason M. shared five super fans are available at the Corps and once the duct work and electrical supplies have been ordered, the installation of the fans will begin sometime after Memorial Day.

Campsite Revitalization: No report

Donation Boxes: Pictures of the draft for donation box signs were given to the committee for approval. Rick S. suggested replacing one of the photos with a photo of the Tompkins Bend pavilion and day use area. Robert C. made a motion to approve the signs with updated photos added and to approve spending \$250 on signs and setting up an account for donations to PayPal on the FOLO website.

George D. requested photos of kids playing on the playground equipment at Crystal Springs. Amy S. will send George the requested photos. George asked how large they want the signs. Rick suggested 3'X2' signs in landscape orientation. Stacy stated that corrugated signs are much cheaper than metal signs and hold up well. George stated his signs are all made out of alumilite.

Fundraising Events: No report other than the committee will be meeting with the Trash Bash organizers in June.

Campground Surveys: Arnie H. sent information and results from the Survey in 2009 to the members through e-mail. Arnie suggested conducting another survey next summer, and also recommended forming a committee to put together the survey. Jerry S. cautioned when you conduct a survey, you raise expectations that the survey will bring change/results. Al G. asked Arnie to come up with another survey proposal and present it to the committee. Rick suggested calling it something besides a survey. Robert proposed calling it "Needs assessment" and Jerry said you could call it "consumer input".

Project Recommendations: Arnie sent the committee some changes he made to the potential project list Dan had sent out, and believes it needs to go before the committee. Arnie H. stated he did not know the project priorities for the Corps. Stacy stated the infrastructure such as utilities and electricity were the number one priority, although other projects may be worked on simultaneously, also, project priorities can change depending on changes in funding. Arnie made a list of grants available and believes the revised project list and list of grants needs to be brought before the way-forward committee. Mike D. inquired about the campground host contracts. Stacy stated the contracts were signed today, and all areas have campground hosts in place.

Comments: Jerry S. suggested putting a railing on the north side of Blakely Dam Road where the trail crosses from Avery due to dangerous traffic coming around the curve. Pedestrians could walk behind railing. Jerry stated they had installed some directional signs to mark the trail after it crosses the road. Stacy said he will evaluate the crossing. Rick mentioned some dead pine trees near the entrance to the trail at Avery. Robert asked the Corps to install a sign on the road to Avery that says "Vista Trail Head" Stacy said this shouldn't be a problem to get this sign installed.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:05 P.M.