

Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



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

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee Minutes

DATE: May 5, 2014

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

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

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

Members Present:

Bill Barnes	Al Gathright	Dan Watson
Robert Cavanaugh	Arnold Habig	Jerry Williams
George Dooley	Larry Raney	Howard Wright
Mike Drake	Jerry Shields	

Minutes in Review: The minutes from the March 7, 2014 meetings were approved with changes made.

Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO): Al G. stated he had not received any updates concerning the audit being performed on the Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO) financial records while operating Crystal Springs and Tompkins Bend Recreation Areas. Arnie H. stated he had participated in the recent Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL) webinar and learned APPL has requested that Congress include the Corps of Engineers in the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which would authorized the Corps to maintain a portion of the recreation use fees collected to be used for operation and maintenance of the areas. Arnie went on to state that a decision on the Federal Land Restoration Enhancement Act must be made by Congress by December 2014, deciding whether to extend or cancel the act. Arnie also related he had written **an e-mail letter** to **Executive Director of APPL** stating the Corps would like to retain 100% of recreation use fees collected to be utilized in local recreation areas improvements. Arnie further related there had been no further action on the legislature that Senator John Boozman had introduced in the Senate, authorizing the re-establishment of the Corps' partnership program. Jerry S. shared that Senator Mark Pryor will be visiting Mount Ida on Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., and he might talk with him about FOLO.

Sub-Committee Reports:

LOViT: Jerry S. updated the committee on the status of the final leg of the LOViT Trail, stating the last leg of the trail had been completed last month. Jerry went on to say, with the trail completed, now the Trail Dogs would be working on maintenance of trail, starting at Denby, working their way east. Jerry stated Diamond Lakes Master Naturalist organization has volunteered to adopt and help maintain the section of trail from Brady Mountain Road to Blakely Dam Road. Jerry further related the Trail Dogs were trying to get the trail declared an International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) Epic Trail, the nomination request has been submitted, and it looks favorable to receiving the designation. This would make two IMBA Epic trails located in Montgomery County, the LOViT and the Womble trails.

Jerry said he had accompanied Al G. and Mike Curran on the second leg of the trail to measure two large pine trees to be considered as an Arkansas State Champion Tree. One of the pine trees measured at 9 feet and the other 10 feet in circumference. The second pine tree is eight inches larger than the current State Champion Pine Tree. Officials from the Arkansas State Forestry Commission will need to come out and verify the measurements of the trees before being given the State Champion Tree designation.

Stacy S. shared that a trailhead parking area had been constructed at Avery across the road from the LOViT trail entrance. Jerry said they had started using trail designation signs instead of painting blazes on the trees and the signs looked nice on the trail. Jerry requested that a large trailhead sign and entrance gate be constructed at the Avery trailhead. Jerry said he would send a design to Stacy for approval. Jerry asked if the Corps could construct a parking area along Rick's Road for parking. Stacy stated there are logistical problems with the public parking along the road behind the entrance gate on Rick's Road. The gate is closed each day at 5:30 p.m. and if parking is allowed along the roadway, visitors may be locked inside the area. Jerry asked if a sign could be placed at the parking area, advising trail users the gates will be closed at a certain time. Stacy stated he would check on some alternative solutions. Jerry related they ran out of grant funding before the last 700 feet of trail could be finished by Progressive Trail Design. Jerry went on to say that he contact Bill B. and through donations being made by members of the Lake Ouachita Association, enough donations were received to complete the last 700 feet of trail. Jerry expressed his appreciation of Dan Watson who assisted with the donations by setting up a Pay Pal account and those who donated to the trail fund to get it completed. Jerry specifically thanked Larry R., who donates all his travel reimbursement money to FOLO to maintain their account and use the funds for the betterment of the project.

Aquatic Vegetation: Bill J. shared that Johnny Cantrell had submitted the final performance report and the performance measures report for the fisheries grant. Bill J. further related on April 26, 2014, Boy Scout Pack 65 constructed 85 additional exclusion cages for Johnny and the exclusion cage project is nearly complete. Bill J. also shared that the Garman Company had their survey boats out on the lake doing underwater sonar scans of the lakebed for their database. They are doing what is referred to as "bathymetry", they have two boats with side scan and bottom sounders to capture the underwater topography data to be used for underwater mapping of the Lake Ouachita lakebed, the survey will be concluded on May 16, 2014.

Campgrounds: Bill J. related that all the Park Attendants began working on May 1, 2014 in the campgrounds. George and Diane Dildy, from Oden, Arkansas, are the only new Park Attendants working this year and they are at Crystal Springs. Bill J. further related the Brady Mountain Campground comfort station project is scheduled to be completed by May 16, 2014, weather permitting. Rangers will be answering the telephones at the Lake Ouachita Field Office on Friday, May 23, 2014 until 9:00 p.m. and Saturday, May 24, 2014, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., providing information and assistance to visitors during the Memorial Day Holiday weekend. Bill J. also shared the FaceBook page will be updated daily, Thursday through Saturday, during the week leading up to the Memorial Day weekend to advise visitors what first-come, first-serve campsites would be available in the campgrounds. A designated overflow camping area will be established at Crystal Springs Recreation Area for the Memorial Day Holiday. Bill J. passed out a copy of the campground maps used at Table Rock Lake and advised that Stacy S. was working with the graphics contractors to update the individual campground maps to look similar to those from Table Rock Lake. The graphics contractors will be sending Stacy a template to review and once approved, copies will be made of each campground. The current campground maps have not been updated since 1978.

Arnie H. recommended new shower heads at the campground comfort stations. Jason M. stated they have been buying and replacing shower heads and fixtures as funding becomes available.

Bill J. related Lake Ouachita is now five Park Rangers short going into the summer recreation season. Arnie H. asked if we had the suggestion boxes in place. Bill J. stated they would be in place by Memorial Day. Arnie also inquired if seaplanes landing on Ouachita were against FAA regulations. Bill J. stated it is legal for seaplanes to land on Lake Ouachita in designated areas, but upon landing, the plans are then considered to be a watercraft and must have the boating safety equipment onboard. Bill B. inquired if the Corps' patrol boat will be out through the Memorial Day Holiday weekend and what would be the best way to contact them in case of an emergency? Bill J. stated the Rangers will be performing boat patrol through the weekend, Friday-Monday from 11:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and the best way to contact them would be through the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office.

A suggestion had been made to install electrical power and water in the Twin Creek Campground, upgrading the campground's facilities. Stacy S. stated he had submitted a proposal to the State Historic Preservation Office for approval to install three small pavilions in the day-use area near the beach. Stacy went on to say that since the Twin Creek Recreation Area has been identified as a culturally sensitive area, he would wait and see if this smaller project would be approved before requesting a larger project, such as upgrading the campsites. Stacy further shared he had submitted a request to install showers in the Twin Creek Campground in the 2016 budget package. Jerry S. stated Twin Creek Campground was an ideal place for an ADA site because it already has the ADA ramp and pier.

Comments:

Cleanup: Bill J. shared with the committee members the "rain plan" for the scheduled "Volunteers in the Park (VIP)" workday at Avery/Stephens/Dam Area on May 10, 2014. Bill J. went on to say if it is raining, volunteers will be asked to help separate and pot *Vallisneria* plants for distribution planting later.

Nominations for Chairman/Co-Chairman: Arnie H. advised the committee members that in accordance with the LOCFC By-Law’s, the month of June is the time to nominate and elect the committee member positions of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. Arnie went on to say that he requested that his name not be considered for the position as Chairperson **and felt someone else needed to be the Chairman, since he has chaired LOCFC for 13 years. He would continue to be an active Member.** Arnie requested members to send Bill J. their nominations for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson and he will set up a secret ballot.

Way Forward Brainstorming Committee: Arnie H. related to the committee members that it had been suggested to him to establish a “way forward/brainstorming” committee, where a group of committee members would “brainstorm” projects that the LOCFC could champion for the betterment and enhancement of Lake Ouachita. Arnie went on to state that the Corps’ Recreation Strategic Plan has a lot of projects that can be worked on and he will send a copy to committee members. Arnie requested volunteers for a committee to serve on the committee, continuing in stating Janice V. had already sent him an email volunteering to serve on the committee. Arnie, Robert C., Dan W. and **George D. Howard W.** volunteered to serve as members of the committee. Bill J. shared that since the construction of the LOViT Trail is coming to a close, the LOCFC can begin working on other issues that need to be addressed such as wireless capability in the campgrounds, an official bass tournament weigh-in facility for tournaments, better fish cleaning stations and courtesy docks. Bill J. stated the committee could assist the Corps by doing the leg-work to obtain cost estimates, equipment needed, construction requirements, vendors and contractors, etc. Stacy S. shared if it is a smaller project that has been identified, then he may have the funding available to complete the proposed activity.

Bill B. shared that the Little Rock television station KATV’s morning show, “Daybreak Arkansas”, would be airing their morning show from Mountain Harbor Resort on Thursday and Friday, feature areas around the lake on their show, along with interviews with those responsible for special projects for the enhancement of the facilities available to the public. In addition, 25 Travel Writers would be visiting the Lake Ouachita and LOViT Trail area, Sunday-Tuesday, these writers are pre-qualified writers from all over the United States, who generate 100-200 articles over the next 2-4 years from information they obtain on an area.

Jerry S. shared that Robert C. has been nominated for the Arkansas State Trails Council’s 2014 Volunteer of the Year award and he has been nominated for the 2014 Advocate of the Year award.

FOLO Financial Report:

Month	February 28, 2014	March 31, 2014	April 30, 2014
Cash-Trail Account	\$7,871.00	(\$24,002.00)	(\$41,083.00)
Cash – Miscellaneous	\$648.00	\$478.00	\$461.00
Cash-Crystal Springs	\$156,794.00	\$156,719.00	\$156,539.00
Cash-Tompkins Bend	\$57,230.00	\$57,155.00	\$56,975.00
Total Assets:	\$222,543.00	\$190,350.00	\$172,892.00

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 P.M.