

Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



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

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee Minutes

DATE: June 2, 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
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	Mike Drake	Rick Stokes	Howard Wright
Tom Butler	Al Gathright	Janice Vaughn	
Robert Cavanaugh	Arnold Habig	Dan Watson	
George Dooley	Larry Raney	Jerry Williams	

Opening Remarks: Arnie H. reminded the committee members to send their nominations for chairman and co-chairman to Bill J. Bill J. will then make contact with those who have been nominated to ensure they will wish to be considered for the position nominated before preparing the ballots for the members to make their selection during the July meeting.

Minutes in Review: The minutes from the May 5, 2014 meetings were approved with changes made.

Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO): Rick S. relayed he had e-mailed Mr. George Sullivan, Vicksburg District, Internal Review Office, who has been working on the audits for the Friends of Lake Ouachita's Cooperative Agreement with the Corps. Rick had asked Mr. Sullivan for any updates and when a final report may be made available for review. According to Mr. Sullivan's reply, a final report should be completed in late July or August, but that everything looks good with what FOLO had submitted to the District Office for review. Arnie stated a decision on the Federal Land Enhancement Restoration Act (FLERA) to retain user fees will probably be approved December 2014. Rick said he had read the House Bill #3080, and it states the Corps can work with state and local agencies to form partnerships where the Corps will retain the use fee money and the partners will assist the Corps in developing

enhancement projects. George D. asked what might be required of FOLO to return to the Corps, once the audit of the use fees collected was complete and how far back will the audit include on the use fees collected during the agreement. Rick stated the audit would go back to the beginning of the establishment of the cooperative agreement established with the Corps. Rick went on to state, in his opinion, he expects FOLO to receive a bill of approximately \$100,000 to be paid back to the Corps for the loss of revenue in the collection of the use fees. Rick went on to state that, in his opinion, it will be the Corps who will be responsible for paying back any costs related to the improvements made in the recreation areas, such as installation of vent fans and the new playground equipment installed at Crystal Springs. Al G. provided an update on the Trail Grant reimbursement, stating that Jerry S. had spoken with the Arkansas Department of Highway and Transportation Office, who related they were mailing the check to FOLO on Friday for the reimbursement of funds.

LOViT: Al G. related they were now working on maintenance of trail starting at Denby and working their way east. They are taking one section at a time and cleaning and installing additional signage. Bill J. related during National Safe Boating Week, the Corps set up an informational booth at the Bass Pro Shop store near Little Rock and a number of visitors to the booth were asking about the LOViT Trail and seeing information concerning maps for the trail. George D. asked if the trail has been mapped, and if there was a map application that could be used on a computer? Bill stated the entire trail has been mapped and Park Ranger Mike Wade has created a detailed map, but it is not currently one you can download easily to an iPhone or tablet for reference. Stacy S. is working with ACE-IT to create “tear-off” maps of LOViT for public distribution. Larry R. asked if GPS coordinates are posted along the trail. Bill J. said the benches and signs do not have to coordinates on them, but they are on the map to correspond with benches/signs.

Aquatic Vegetation: Bill J. shared that the Garman Survey Team were still out on Lake Ouachita using their underwater sonar scans of the lakebed to create a detailed map of the lakebed for their database. Bill B. said they were finished with this project on Friday. Tom B. asked if the sunken houseboat was found. Bill J. stated the photos that had been posted were of the boat’s cabin only, that apparently the boat had broken apart during the storm and only the cabin was found floating by the passing boater who reported it sinking.

Campgrounds: Bill J. related that the comfort station roofs at Brady Mountain Recreation Area had been completed prior to the Memorial Day Holiday weekend and several of the campers had make positive comments about how nice the comfort station were now. Bill J. went on to say that the campgrounds were packed over the holiday weekend, except for Twin Creek and Little Fir. The overflow area at Crystal Springs Campground was open, with seven campers utilizing the area. Bill J. continued in stating that over the holiday weekend, there were some issues with the campsites reserved in Joplin not being big enough to accommodate the campers being used on them and the roadway was partially blocked, but it was corrected quickly. There were only two accidents over the holiday weekend, one being where a young boy, who was swimming behind a houseboat near Northshores Resort, was overcome by carbon monoxide poisoning and treated by first-responders, then released to his parents. The second being a boat fire near Brady Mountain Resort and Marina, no injuries, the fire was quickly contained and under control due to the quick response of the Joplin and Jessieville Volunteer Fire Departments to the scene. In addition, there were two domestic disturbances over the holiday weekend that was reported by local law enforcement, but no arrests were made. Bill J. further

related that Park Rangers had made 1,800 face-to-face contacts with the public and overall, the weekend was pretty quiet for a heavy use holiday weekend. Mike D. asked if there were any comments about the geese at Brady Mountain. Bill J. stated that there are about 50 geese at Crystal Springs Recreation Area and approximately 100 at Brady Mountain Recreation Area, the problem being, visitors are feeding the geese in the parks, thus creating a real problem in dispersing the geese out of the parks. Bill J. stated the Field Office will be posting "Do Not Feed the Geese" notices, and are researching ways to take care of this problem.

Way Forward Brainstorming Committee: Dan W. shared that he, George D. and Arnie H. had met the week before to begin developing the exact purpose of the committee and to develop a list of potential projects to be presented to the committee. Dan went on to say he would email a copy of the meeting minutes to the committee members for their review and to stay informed on what the Brainstorming Committee is currently developing. They formed a list of long range projects on or around Lake Ouachita, and he will provide that list to the members. Dan requested feedback forms from the Corps and asked Bill J. to provide a list of park attendants. Dan requested that the members send the committee any suggestions to add to the list. Dan also requested occupancy numbers from the Corps for the recreation areas. Bill J. stated he could provide 2012 visitation numbers, but will not receive 2013 numbers until July. Arnie stated they could get the entire list from NRRS. Bill J. cautioned about using the occupancy numbers from the NRRS reports, simply because often the correct occupancy numbers are not being entered for each campsite upon registration. Bill J. went on to state that once the visitation program has been completed, the visitation data from the traffic counters will provide a much better occupancy number than the NRRS data. Rick S. shared that he used to look at the under-utilized sites to see what could be done to improve those sites. Arnie shared he had visited Topsail State Park in Florida and they provided WI-FI at a store location inside the park. They also have a nice brochure of the park. The State Park does not pay for WIFI or the brochure, but "The Friends of Topsail" are able to fund them. They put advertisements on the back of the maps to pay for map production. Bill J. stated the Corps could not promote advertisements, but Stacy S. is working through ACE-IT to get more detailed maps of our recreation areas. Arnie requested the website address/QR codes be added to the new maps.

Comments:

Cleanup: Amy S. shared that the "Volunteers in the Park" event held on May 10, 2014 went really well, with 25 volunteers cleaning nature trails, clearing the Blakely Dam Roadway, installing orange "Lake Ahead" markers on the roadway entering the Avery Boat Ramp, installing several directional signs, and painting the gate to Dam and trash receptacles in Avery/ Stephens area. Amy further shared that seven of the volunteers were airmen from the Little Rock Air force Base. Amy thanked Dan and Anita W. and Howard W. for helping during the cleanup.

Arnie stated the Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) annual convention will be held in West Monroe, Louisiana this year and the new Mississippi Valley Division Commander will be the guest speaker at the event. Also in attendance will be Colonel John Cross, Commander, Vicksburg District will also be there. The Convention costs \$250.00 to attend and Rick S. attended last year, providing an overview presentation on the Friends of Lake Ouachita and their activities in partnering with the Corps.

Mike D. asked what he needs to do if he witnesses a person cutting down trees on one of the islands. Bill J. stated to give him a call and provide as much information as he can on those involved in cutting down the trees.

FOLO Financial Report:

Month	March 31, 2014	April 30, 2014	May 31, 2014
Cash-Trail Account	(\$24,002.00)	(\$41,083.00)	(\$40,598.00)
Cash – Miscellaneous	\$478.00	\$461.00	\$461.00
Cash-Crystal Springs	\$156,719.00	\$156,539.00	\$156,464.00
Cash-Tompkins Bend	\$57,155.00	\$56,975.00	\$56,900.00
Total Assets:	\$190,350.00	\$172,892.00	\$173,227.00

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