

Lake Ouachita Citizen Focus Committee



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

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Lake Ouachita Citizen Focus Committee Minutes

DATE: August 1, 2016

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m. by Dan Watson, Chairman

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Bill Jackson, Supervisory Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Members Present:

Bill Barnes	Mike Drake	Jerry Shields
Robert Cavanaugh	Al Gathright	Rick Stokes
George Dooley	Arnie Habig	Dan Watson

Guest Present: Larry Drake

Announcements: Dan W. welcomed Mr. Larry Drake to the meeting and related his appreciation in Mr. Drake's interest in becoming a member of the LOCFC by submitting his resume for consideration.

Arnie H. announced to the committee members that, due to his recent physician's diagnosis, he might be forced to resign from the LOCFC. Arnie related that he had recently learned he is suffering congested heart failure and he may no longer be able to serve as a member of the committee. Discussion among the committee members were supportive of whatever decision Arnie made, but also encouraged him to remain a member as long as he felt he could without endangering his health. Arnie stated he would let the committee members know of his final decision later on.

Minutes: Minutes for the July 11, 2016 were reviewed, Arnie H. moved to have the meeting minutes approved as written, motion was seconded by Robert C., meeting minutes were approved and motion passed.

Consideration of Applicant(s) for Vacant Position –LOCFC: Bill J. related to the committee members that the Lake Ouachita Field Office had received 6 to 8 resumes from individuals interested in serving as a member of the LOCFC. Bill went on to relate that Stacy S. would present the resumes to

the committee members to review and consider selecting a candidate from the resumes. Bill went on stating that the committee members will be asked to submit their top three or four potential candidates to Stacy S. for the Corps to consider being selected to serve as a committee members. Bill continued in stating that the resumes that had been received were some very good candidates, who all have a viable interest in activities here on Lake Ouachita.

Mike D. inquired, his understanding was that the committee was going to choose a new member tonight, this is the reason that my Uncle came with me tonight. Dan W. explained to Mike that the committee must review the resumes, and then make recommendations to Stacy S., as the Resource Manager for Lake Ouachita, who will have the final choice, based on the recommendations of the committee members and their vote of the potential candidates for the vacant position. Mike continued in stating that he misunderstood the process and brought his Uncle with him to the meeting, because he was interested in joining the committee. Dan apologized to Mr. Larry Drake if he understood that would be the process during tonight's meeting. Mr. Larry D. stated that he was just happy to be able to observe and there was no problem with him and attending the meeting.

Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO) Update: Al G. informed the committee members that he had learned from Dan W. that he has not progressed very far in updating the FOLO FaceBook page, with the addition of the "Donation Button". Dan W. stated he is still working on it and trying to get the donation option working for those who wish to donate to the FOLO's activities around the lake.

Al continued in stating that FOLO Board Members had decided to renew the membership with the Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) and when items are on the agenda concerning recreation, continue to send a member of the LOCFC to participate in the annual meetings.

Jerry S. stated that he and Stacy S. are scheduled to meet with representatives from Super Duty Docks, company that manufactured the two courtesy docks for FOLO, to discuss installing longer "spud/gin" poles to allow the docks to remain stationary for longer periods of time due the fluctuation of the lake elevation and reduce the requirements of the lake staff in maintaining the courtesy docks when the lake elevation changes. Jerry went on to relate that he and Al are planning to leave on an extended vacation trip and want to meet with the representatives prior to their departure.

Jerry S. continued in stating that there had been no further official FOLO business conducted during the past month. He did state that FOLO continues to accept donations for advertising on the LOViT Trail Map FOLO had produced and provided to the area organizations and businesses for the promotion of the trail in the area. Jerry concluded in stating that there had been two bench plaques ordered to be placed on memorial benches along the trail route.

Lake Ouachita Vista Trail (LOViT) Update: Al G. related that the Mountain Bike Center for Hot Springs continues to receive strong support through the Hot Springs Convention and Tourism Center. The recent presentation at the Mount Ida Chamber of Commerce provided by the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Bureau also promoted more support for the Biking Center to be established in Hot Springs.

George D. related that he had learned in discussions with Steve Arrison, Hot Springs Convention & Tourism Center, that the City of Hot Springs has a contract with the International Mountain Bike

Association (IMBA) and the Walton Foundation to extend the LOViT to the City of Hot Springs. George went on to state that Steve A. will send him a copy of the proposed plans indicating the proposed trail routes, connecting the LOViT with the trails proposed for the City of Hot Springs. Jerry S. recommended the trail routes be on city-owned and U.S. Forest Service property, avoiding all private land along the route to avoid issues with private landowners.

Jerry S. informed the committee members that there had been no progress on the proposed re-routing of the trail section between Tompkins Bend and Joplin, but as soon as the weather cools, the necessary approvals have been granted, the section of the trail will be re-routed to avoid high water issues along the trail.

Jerry and Al provided an update on the recently meeting with Mr. Steve Schneider, International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) concerning the Mountain Bike Center in Hot Springs. Jerry related that Mr. Schnieder informed them that IMBA has agreed to hire a Program Manager for the Hot Springs Bike Center. Jerry went on to state that IMBA is interested in the history of how the LOViT was established, the issues that were faced during the construction of the trail. The possibility of using the “lessons learned” as a template for other organizations seeking advice on how to construct a similar trail at other locations.

Robert C. and Al G. shared with the committee members on the progress of getting the storm damage removed from the LOViT’s route left from the recent storm events that had passed through the area. Robert related that the progress is slow, only have three or four volunteers working on the damage at a time, but progress is being made. Robert expressed his appreciation of the help provided by Dan W. and Al G. on the section of trail from Joplin Road to the top of Hickory Nut Mountain.

Bill J. provided the committee members a map, provided by Joey Powell, U.S. Forest Service, on the locations of the various trees blown down by the recent storms on top of Bear Mountain. Joey was able to GPS the location of the largest bunches of trees blocking the trail’s route between Crystal Springs and Brady Mountain Roads. The U.S. Forest Service and Corps have closed the sections of trail between Crystal Springs and Spillway Roads, for the safety of those using the trail. Jerry related that he would give Bill Pell, U.S. Forest Service, a call and request assistance in removing the debris along the trail. Robert C. stated he would contact Tom Ledbetter, Trail Coordinator, U.S. Forest Service, to see if he can provide assistance as well.

Al G. discussed the proposed action being taken by the U.S. Forest Service in cutting timber along the LOViT Trail route in the Gap Creek Watershed. Al went on to state that the proposed timber removal would adversely affect the trail’s sections from Denby Bay to Joplin Road. Jerry related that for years, the U.S. Forest Service agreed to maintain a corridor along the trail’s route to avoid removing the canopy from the trail and allowing weeds, Devil’s Stick and briars from growing up along the route.

Jerry recommended that members of the LOCFC initiate a letter writing campaign to the U.S. Forest Service making comments about the impacts the timber removal would have on the LOViT in those sections of the trail. Bill Barnes made a motion and Jerry S. seconded the motion that the LOCFC members write to the U.S. Forest Service, expressing their extreme frustration and disappointment in the proposed plans and management of the forest canopy along the trail route in Sections 1 and 2. In the

letters, the committee members are requested to state that the U.S. Forest Service agree to maintain at least a 100 feet corridor on both sides of the trail and not cut any of the canopy in these areas. Arnie H. recommended contacting the American Trails Council to advise them of the U.S. Forest Service plan of action has been proposed.

Corps of Engineers Report: Bill J. related that the Corps' campgrounds are still staying relatively full for this time of the year and that with school starting in the next few weeks, the campground occupancy should start dropping.

Bill J. provided the proposed recreational seasonal closure for the Fall/Winter 2016/2017 Camping Season: Stephens Park, Crystal Springs, Tompkins Bend and Twin Creek would remain open through the Fall/Winter Camping Season with full services; Brady Mountain Campground closing October 1, 2016; Joplin and Denby Point Campgrounds would be closing November 1, 2016; Little Fir Campground, electricity and water would be turned off on November 1, 2016, but the campground would remain open with limited services. All remaining campground would remain open, but no trash pickup or cleaning services would be provided through the Fall/Winter Camping Season after November 1, 2016.

One of the committee members asked about problems in the campgrounds? Bill J. related that this year had been one of the worst years he had seen in 11 years of visitors fighting over campsites in the campgrounds. The Rangers have had to respond to more visitor complaints and arguments concerning which one would be able to claim a first-come, first-serve campsites. Bill J. went on to state that because of the visitors leaving their campsites unattended an increased amount this summer, the Field Office had provided a letter posted in each of the Fee Booths, reminding visitors they must occupy their campsites every 24 hours to avoid the possibility of receiving a violation notice for abandonment of property at the campsites.

Arnie H. related that if the Corps would implement a more strict "check in-check out" policy, these altercations over campsites would not occur. Arnie reminded the committee members of his proposal submitted to the Corps a few years ago concerning the initiation of a proper and enforceable "check in-check out" policy, along with assignment of campsites by the Park Attendants and not allowing the visitors to chose their own first-come, first-serve campsites. Jerry S. informed the committee members that the demand for more campsites will only increase, he continued in stating that there has been a 30% increase in the sales of RV's and campers over the last year. More and more folks are retiring and a number of them are camping more these days. One of the issues being, no one is building more campsites and are actually closing recreation areas and campgrounds due to budget restraints, therefore pushing more and more visitors to those campgrounds that are still available for use.

One of the committee members asked whether the Corps limits the type of equipment used in the campgrounds. Bill J. informed the committee members that only those campsites that have been specifically designated for tent camping only have been limited to the type of equipment that can be used on those campsites. The plan for Brady Mountain is to convert as many of the tent only campsites to RV/Tent sites, therefore making more campsites available for dual use. The Corps allows tents to be placed on any campsites in the campgrounds at Lake Ouachita.

New Bench Locations in the Campgrounds: Dan W. asked Bill J. if there had been any additional benches installed since the last meeting. Bill J. related that he would mark two more locations in the Tompkins Bend Day Use Area and make arrangements for the RBS Staff to install the new benches when their workload would allow it to be done. Bill J. went on to share that he had received a number of positive comments from the public concerning the new Day Use Area at Tompkins Bend, even a recent major Mount Ida High School Class Reunion held at the Tompkins Bend Pavilion.

Jerry S. asked if the Corps could herbicide the area along the ADA Trail, around the workout facilities, that a great deal of grass and weeds are growing up around the workout sites and need to be knocked back down. Bill J. related that he would get it on a work order and see what could be done, but not sure when the work could be done. Jerry asked if the Corps might have some herbicide they could provide for the Trail Dogs to do the spraying, Bill J. said he would check and get back with Jerry on what he learned.

Resumption of the Way Forward Brainstorming Committee: The new team members for the Way Forward Committee are Arnie H., George D., Robert C., Janice V., and Mike D. Arnie stated that the committee has not had a chance to meet and discuss potential projects for the committee members to consider. Arnie went on to state that Stacy S. has stated that he already has a developed 5-year work plan established and currently, whatever the Way Forward Committee may come up with to add to the work plan would just be additional workload and under current budget restraints and work scheduling, the Corps would not be able to address new proposals. Arnie went on to state the recommendation from Stacy was to eliminate the Way Forward Committee and concentrate on work items already proposed.

George D. recommended that the Way Forward Committee seek some of the projects already identified and seek solutions that will better the visitor's experience at Lake Ouachita.

Project Progress Reports:

- A. Demolish of Out-of-Date Facilities at Crystal Springs:** Bill J. informed the committee members that the destruction and removal of the old wastewater treatment plant is still on the work schedule for this Fall.
- B. Create an Area Campground Map:** Arnie H. informed the committee members that Stacy S. had informed him that all the campground maps are Corps property and cannot be used for advertisement. Arnie related that he has recommended a multi-page map that does contain advertising for local business around the lake. Bill J. reminded the committee members that there are certain restrictions about businesses advertising on Corps property and that if the LOCFC created its own map, containing advertisements, distribution of the maps must be off Corps property, the Corps' Fee Booths would not be allowed to distribute the maps with the advertisements listed on them.
- C. Additional Ventilation in Comfort Stations:** Dan W. related that Stacy S. had informed him that the fans would be installed as time allows. The projected plan was to have a few installed by Memorial Day Holiday, then work on the others through the summer as the workload allowed. of those buildings.

- D. Campsite Revitalization, including Identifying Pull-Through Sites – Corps:** Dan asked Bill J. if he had been able to make any progress on the spreadsheets indicating the evaluations completed on the campsites. Bill J. informed the committee members that he still has this task on his list to get done, but just has not been able to work on the project since the last meeting.
- E. Donation Boxes at Fee Booths and Other Places –** Rick S. informed the committee members that the two boxes and signs have been installed. Rick went on to state he will check the boxes before the September meeting and provide a progress report then.
- F. Fundraising Events On/Around Lake Ouachita:** Tom B. had informed Dan W. he is still working on this project and he had not been able to attend the “Trash Bash” meetings, but would still like to explore a joint Lake Hamilton/Lake Ouachita effort for a clean-up day.

Closing Remarks: Dan W. related he had not been able to establish a “Crowdfunding” site for FOLO yet, but he’s still working on it. Dan W. reminded everyone that the September meeting would be moved to September 12, 2016, due to the Labor Day Holiday falling on the first Monday of the month.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn was made by Bill B., motion was seconded by Jerry S., motion was passed and the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.