

Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



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

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee Minutes

DATE: April 4, 2016

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

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Rick Dwyer, Project Manager, Lake Ouachita Project Office
Jody Dvorak, Deputy Project Manager, Lake Ouachita Project Office
Pam Herrin, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office
Amy Shultz, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Members Present:

Tom Butler	Mike Drake	Jerry Shields
Robert Cavanaugh	Al Gathright	Janice Vaughn
George Dooley	Arnold Habig	Dan Watson

Minutes: The minutes from March 7 were tabled until the May meeting.

Update on Fish Hatcheries Projects: Rick D. shared the fisheries update notes that Dustin Thomason, Biologist, had put together for the meeting. Notes were distributed to the members.

- **Exclusion Cages:** Rick shared only 50% of the cages had *Vallisneria* still growing in them, and only 25% had the *Vallisneria* growing outside the cage. There has been marginal success, but not enough to sustain this as an active program. Dustin will continue to monitor the *Vallisneria* success at the cages already placed (Denby, Crystal Springs, Walnut Fork Creek, and the State Park), but plans are to focus efforts on other forms of fisheries habitat including sinking trees, crappie condos and bream beds.
- **Bream Bed project-Spillway Area:** Rick shared that the Corps had spread out a layer of pea gravel/sand mix over a ¼ acre area. During the 2015 spawn, the density in number of bream beds in this area was 8X the density of the rest of the cove. Using the same method, plans are to increase the size of the area by an additional ½ acre and will survey the results after the 2016 spawn. Depending on the success of this project, plans are to implement bream beds in other areas of the lake.

- Brush/Tree Sinking: Rick shared that Dustin had placed 200-250 cedar trees in various locations near Cedar Fourche in 2015. So far, in 2016, approximately 200-250 trees have been placed in the Brady Mountain area.
- Pallet Structures: Rick continued Dustin has worked with Mena High School and Rich Mountain College Students to construct pallet structures consisting of 3 pallets screwed together to form an A-Frame shaped box with cedar limbs woven into the boards and extending 6-10 feet above the structure. A concrete weight was placed on and anchored to the bottom pallet. 30 pallet structures have been placed near the Spillway area.
- Crappie Condos: Rick also shared Dustin had worked with Boy Scout groups to construct and sink 30 crappie condos in the Crystal Springs area.

Dustin also shared in his notes that buttonbush is abundant on different areas of the lake. It provides good fisheries habitat as well as a food source for ducks and other birds when producing seeds. It's a hardy shrub that is adaptable to a wide range of soils. A good place to view buttonbush is from the pier at Tompkins Bend watchable wildlife trail. Another plant that seems to be fairly hardy and adaptable is Water Willow. Any efforts toward plant establishment will likely focus on these species and Bald Cypress. There are plans to plant Bald Cypress trees in shallow flats and on shallow islands that are suitable.

Rick shared some notes on number of fish stocked in Ouachita he had received from Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Brett Hobbs:

- 350,000 fingerling Crappie have been stocked
- 164,000 adult Crappie have been stocked
- Walleye are being raised in nursery ponds to be released in May
- 121,000 striped bass fingerlings have been stocked
- 16,000 walleye fingerlings were stocked
- 25,000 adult channel catfish were stocked
- 56,000 yearling catfish were stocked

Jerry S. asked how the pea gravel beds were put out for the bream. Rick stated they spread the gravel when the lake is low and the beds are expected to be covered by 4' of water when the lake rises. Tom B. offered to donate 12' pallets received by his business for the construction of Pallet Structures. Al G. inquired if AGFC would be having a yearly fisheries management meeting to update fisherman on stocking. Rick stated he would find out details on the meeting from Brett Hobbs. Tom B. inquired about the future of the exclusion cage project. Rick shared the success rate was not what they had hoped, so they will continue to monitor the ones in place, but will focus efforts on the Pallet structures and Crappie condos. Al asked about the state of the *Hydrilla*. Rick shared there was not a lot of *Hydrilla* right now, Pam H. shared that higher water in the spring usually means lower *Hydrilla* until at least August, and that the Pak. Flys have helped with the spread of *Hydrilla*.

FOLO: No report

LOViT Update: Al G. shared during the wildfire on Bear Mountain in Jan/Feb, the Forrest Service had used the trail as a fire line. USFS, Tom Ledbetter said they would fix the damage from cutting the fire line by adding reverse tread and switch backs to make sure that section of

trail drains properly. Al further shared a Texas Conservation Corps crew would be working on the trail the week of April 18th, and would be camping in Charlton Recreation Area. IMBA crew will also be coming to do handwork on the trail. Al went on to say the regional forester with the USFS will be visiting the LOViT from April 25-29 and wants to meet with some of the Trail Dogs and Corps personnel to find out how we work in partnership on the trail. He may also request boat shuttle service from Crystal Springs to Bear Mountain Cove. Jerry S. stated he had talked to Stacy about a 300-500 foot re-route on section 2 of the trail with one or two bridges due to continual problems with flooding on this section. The Trail Dogs will flag this section on Wednesday and measure the area to determine cost of the effort and Stacy agreed to purchase materials for the bridge construction.

New Bench Locations in Campgrounds: Janice V. shared that she met with Bill J. to survey possible locations for additional benches in the campgrounds. They went to Twin Creek, Denby, Joplin, and Tompkins. Janice believes two to three benches per loop in Denby, Joplin, and Tompkins Bend would be beneficial. Janice shared Stacy S. had asked about specific locations, and Janice volunteered to flag the areas she believes are the best places for benches and mark them on the campground maps. Jerry S. offered to provide Janice with survey flags to mark the locations. Janice shared that Crystal Springs, Brady Mountain, and Twin Creek already have benches. Al G. suggested placing benches at playground locations. Another suggestion for benches is the beach area in the Joplin campground.

Corps of Engineers Report: Rick D. shared the Corps is making good progress at Tompkins Bend playground and pavilion. Rick passed around photos of the area showing the composite borders that have been installed around the playground. Rick shared they are also finishing putting in the substrate. The barbecue grills have been ordered and they have the picnic tables ordered for the pavilion. The Corps expects to be finished with the work by the end of April. Amy S. shared the super fans have been ordered for the Tompkins Bend and Denby Point comfort stations. Janice requested installing showers in the restrooms in area 1 of Denby point. Rick stated it was in the plans to also add showers to the restroom at Little Fir. Rick shared he had requested funding due to high water damage and clean up, but hasn't heard if Ouachita received any yet.

Project Progress Reports: Dan asked about the contracts for demolishing the out-of-date Crystal Springs Facilities. Rick stated they had advertised the contract once more and will see if they get any bids. The committee suggested contacting Job Corps to see if they could demolish the facilities.

Create an area campground map-no report

Additional Ventilation in Comfort Stations-Super fans have been ordered for Tompkins Bend and Denby Point

Campsite Revitalization, including identifying pull through sites: Dan asked if Bill could provide the members a PDF copy to upload into the drop box. Amy S. stated she would follow up with Bill on the status of the spreadsheets.

Donation Boxes at Fee booths: George D. shared Jerry S. had created a couple of drafts for signs to be placed at the donation boxes. Dan stated that Arnie H. and Rick S. suggested placing future planned projects on the signs to identify what the donations would be funding. Dan asked if these projects had been identified and suggested putting the sunset benches and ventilation fans as projects since these can be easily accomplished. Jerry suggested being cautious about what projects to put on signs because they wouldn't want to put something that couldn't be easily accomplished. Jerry stated they needed a box with envelopes near the signs that include the donor's contact information so that FOLO can send a receipt and donors can claim the donations on their taxes. Jerry stated if the signs get too wordy, the people will not read them. Jerry will develop additional sign options and send to the committee for a preference vote, and he will also design a collection envelope.

Janice asked about putting memorial plaques on benches. Jerry stated that while memorials aren't really allowed on Corps property, they have benches "in honor of" on the LOViT.

Fundraising Events: Tom B. stated he had contacted Kimberly Bogart from Entergy and inquired about their trash bash event. Ms. Bogart invited the LOCFC members to attend the next organizing meeting. Tom passed around a document from the Trash Bash Council, Inc. who sponsor the "Trash Bash" and "Cash for Trash" events on the Ouachita River, and Lakes Hamilton and Catherine. Amy S. suggested LOCFC and USACE might be able partner with them on the Trash Bash event and host a cleanup on the east end of Lake Ouachita. Ms. Bogart's concern was that the luncheon and prizes were held at Garvin Gardens, and that was a long way from Lake Ouachita. Arnie noted in previous cleanups, they would go around to businesses to get donations of items to give away. Robert C. suggested working with the Trash Bash organization to include Lake Ouachita. Tom asked if the island marker signs will be replaced/repared. Rick D. stated that 10 of them had already been replaced, and plans were to replace ten of these at a time until all markers are new. Rick shared that the Corps had to get a national waiver from USACE to keep the diamonds as island markers, as USACE requires all signs to be square. Rick D. asked about the gofundme.com website, and whether it may be helpful for community funding of projects on Lake Ouachita. Dan W. will find out more about this. The subject of using PayPal for requesting donations to FOLO was raised, and Dan stated there was already a Pay Pal account that is used for donations to the LOViT. He will investigate adding a "donate" button to FOLO's Facebook page.

Recommendations/Comments: Arnie suggested initiating a campground survey like the one LOCFC did in 2009. He stated they had presented the results in 09 to Colonel Wehr who was very appreciative of the survey. Rick D. stated that the Corps had a comment card survey that had just recently been suspended, and that any survey must have approval from OMB. Dan asked Arnie to send out the survey by e-mail to the members and to Rick, and Rick stated he would check to see if LOCFC can get approval to administer the survey. Jerry asked Arnie if he could put together a list of the top 10 things visitors wanted to see improved on the comment cards to see how it compared to their project list.

Janice V. reported that Bill J. had noticed the "Swim at your own risk" signs were either in bad shape or missing from swim areas around Ouachita.

Dan stated he sent out copies of the revised table of contents for the proposed project list. He stated that since a lot of the projects had to be taken off the list, he would like the committee to

take a look at the table of contents and revise it. Dan stated he would send out the entire document if anyone requests it.

Georg D. shared that he was in a committee meeting with Steve Arrison, and Mr. Arrison talked about getting more publicity for the EPIC trails. Rick D. shared that Jean Wallace attended the Arkansas Parks and Tourism meeting and talked to the Sam Walton Foundation about biking trails in Arkansas. Jerry shared Arkansas has 5 EPIC trails. Jerry stated he had talked to the Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce about creating bike lanes from Hot Springs to the West, and he recommended the Chamber talk to the Highway Department.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 7:15 P.M.