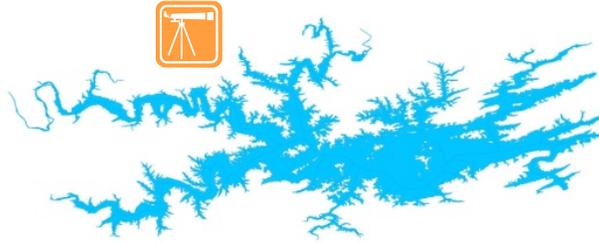


## Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



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

**MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD:** Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee Minutes

**DATE:** January 5, 2015

**CALL TO ORDER:** 6:00 p.m. by Rick Stokes, Chairman

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:**

Stacy Sigman, Resource Manager, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Bill Jackson, Supervisory Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Amy Shultz, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

**Members Present:**

Phillip Carr	Al Gathright	Jerry Shields	Dan Watson
George Dooley	Arnold Habig	Rick Stokes	Jerry Williams
Mike Drake	Larry Raney	Janice Vaughn	Howard Wright

**Announcements:** Rick S. informed the committee members that Brenda Meeks' retirement party would be Wednesday, January 7, 2015, beginning at 1:00 p.m. and members were all invited to attend. When asked who had been chosen to backfill Ms. Meeks' position, Bill J. related that Rick Dwyer, Deputy Project Manager, Ouachita Project Management Office, had been selected to backfill the position for a 120-day temporary assignment.

**Minutes:** The minutes for the October 6 and November 3, 2014 meetings were approved as written.

**FOLO:** Rick S. related that the Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO) would be meeting with Mr. James Ross, Chief – Operations Division and Johnny Kiser, Chief – Project Resources Management Branch, Vicksburg District, tomorrow at 2:30 p.m. to discuss the FOLO audit closeout. The audit report indicates that FOLO will be required to return \$184,589.00 to the U.S. Treasury for the use fees collected since the beginning of the Cooperative Joint Management Agreement (CJM) with the Corps. This amount would be due only if FOLO chose not to donate the playground equipment installed at the Crystal Springs Recreation Area. However, if FOLO chose to donate the playground equipment, which as part of the audit, the Corps had depreciated the value of the playground equipment, then FOLO would be required to return \$152,844.00 of the use fee funds collected during the agreement.

Rick continued in stating that \$31,000.00 of this amount is in tangible items purchased during the agreement, items such as vent fans for the comfort stations and other campground materials and supplies. Rick further related that in the audit, FOLO was not given credit for making these purchases for the betterment of the recreation areas FOLO had under a lease agreement with the Corps. Rick stated he had been informed the funds would be returned to the Mississippi Valley Division. Rick further shared that the FOLO Board Members had all agreed to move forward and spend the existing funds FOLO currently has in the accounts for Tompkins Bend and Crystal Springs. The funds will be used to purchase items that have been identified to enhance recreation opportunities for visitors to Lake Ouachita. Items such as courtesy docks to be used at the boat launching ramps, playground equipment, exhaust fans for the comfort stations, pavilions, and other materials and supplies that could be used at the Crystal Springs and Tompkins Bend Recreation Areas. Once these items have been purchased, they will be donated to the Lake Ouachita Field Office. Rick continued in relating that once purchasing the items identified, there would be only be approximately \$3,000.00 remaining in the FOLO bank account and a check will be written to the Lake Ouachita Field Office as a cash donation.

Arnie H. stated he was concerned that the volunteer hours put in by members of FOLO would not be counted as part of the off-set to the funding being returned to the Treasury. Arnie went on to say that those volunteer hours add up to several thousands of dollars in value. Rick asked Amy S. if she could provide the number of volunteer hours compiled during the agreement timeframe.

Jerry S. related Rick had informed Colonel John Cross, Vicksburg District Commander and Johnny Kiser, Chief, Project Resources Management Branch, during their meeting in November that FOLO would be moving forward with their plans to spend the funds acquired from collection of the use fees in Crystal Springs and Tompkins Bend Recreation Areas during the agreement period.

### **Subcommittee Reports:**

**LOViT:** Jerry S. stated the U.S Forest Service had provided road signs to be installed at the trailheads for the trail and Montgomery County Judge Alvin Black had the signs installed by the County Work Crew. Jerry continued in stating that the Trail Dogs had been removing downed trees and performing general maintenance on the trail and Dan W. had been updating their the LOViT website. Arnie H. shared that the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette published a very nice article on the trail. Jerry shared Corbitt Deary also had a good article on the Hickory Nut Mountain section of trail in The Sentinel Record recently as well. Jerry said the trail is gaining publicity thanks to being designated an “Epic Trail”. Plans are to purchase several interpretive signs for specific areas along the trail, such as the old homestead site along Shangri-La Road. Jerry shared that the Trail Dogs had logged a little over 1,000 volunteer hours over the last year and with the approval of the 1 ½ mile loop to traverse over Bear Mountain and to an old homestead site out on the peninsula, the Trail Dogs will continue logging volunteer hours. In addition there has been discussion between the Corps and Trail Dogs to construct a spur from the trail to the Spillway Day Use Area, approximately 900 feet in length.

**NRRS Issues for 2015:** Arnie H. shared his concern that the National recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) website was down and he had been unable to book a campsite reservation. The website said to check back later to make a reservation. Janice V. shared the same frustration in attempting to make a

reservation, as hard as she had tried; she continues to have difficulties in making a campsite reservation, on-line. Janice stated there are problems with the system. Dan W. stated the demand for campsites is greater than the current supply of reservable sites. Bill J. related that his sister had contacted me about an issue with NRRS as well, while she was checking out, after making a reservation, the system allowed someone else to take the site she had reserved before she could close out her transaction. Jerry stated the RV manufacturers are working overtime and building new factories to try and keep up with the public's demand to purchase RV's. He further shared that during his travels, many of the campgrounds he visited were full of RV's these days.

Arnie asked why the reservation window was changed from one year to six months for Corps sites. Bill J. stated he would try to find out why that decision was made.

**Way Forward Projects:** Dan W. stated he had forwarded a list of potential projects to the LOCFC members for consideration after the October meeting. Rick S. requested that each member review the list and pick at least one project they are willing to work on, the provide Dan their choice at the next meeting. Dan said he would email a revised list to members within the next week. Rick shared he had prices and sources for gravel, water heaters, and automatic flush valve purchases. Janice V. asked if the Corps plans to install above ground water spigots in the Tompkins Bend Campground. Bill J. stated yes, the Corps plans to replace the in-ground water spigots with above ground spigots as funding came available to purchase the new spigots. Rick asked if the automated external defibrillators (AED's) had been purchased for the fee booths? Bill shared that because of the high cost, the AED's had not been purchased for the fee booths, but the Way Forward Committee could research possible funding sources through grants or partnerships to obtain the AED's. Bill J. continued in suggesting the Way Forward Committee look into sending someone to a Grant Writing Workshop or training. Bill further suggested the Way Forward Committee go on a field trip and visit some of the other area projects in the Little Rock District to get some ideas on ways to improve the recreation areas.

Jerry suggested prioritizing the list of suggested projects and concentrating on 3-4 that can be accomplished fairly easily. Rick stated he would love to see some Group Use campsites constructed in the Tompkins Bend Campground. Janice stated it would be nice to open up the wooded area in Tompkins Bend by cutting and removing the brush along the shoreline to open up the view of the lake and allow for boaters to tie their boats along the shoreline. Bill J. shared that there were currently volunteers working on removing the brush from this area.

**Corps' Project Delivery Team (PDT) on Cooperative Agreements/Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)-COE:** Stacy S. stated the Partnership Advisory Council (PAC) has not received any additional guidance from the Corps' PDT concerning the interpretation of what may and may not be allowed in the passing of the new WRDA by Congress this last year. Rick asked who was on the PDT, and Stacy shared, Heather Burke and Mary Coulombe were two of the PDT members. Rick stated he would give Mary Coulombe a call.

**Comments:** Bill J. shared that the installation of the new underground electric lines in the Brady Mountain Campground was coming along very well and upon completion, every campsite, to include the tent sites on the point near the Camper's Beach, would have electrical power. Improvements to the Brady Mountain Water Plant are on schedule as well and will be completed well in advance of the

proposed opening date of March 1, 2015. Bill J. further shared that the Lake Ouachita Field Office Ranger Staff had completed the first day of the Annual Eagle Survey with a total of 36 eagles being counted on the first day. The two Day survey will conclude tomorrow. Stacy S. related there was a 45-50% success rate in the exclusion cages checked, and that the project is going well. Bill J. stated they are no longer using rebar to anchor the cages, but are tying the plants along with soil and rocks in burlap sacks to the center interior of the cages and by doing this, it weighs down the cage where the plants can be protected from fish and turtles eating the small sprigs of the plants. Over time, the burlap will disintegrate, allowing the plants to drop to the bottom of the lake and taking root.

**FOLO Financial Report:**

Month	October 31, 2014	November 30, 2014	December 31, 2014
Cash-Trail Account	\$4,098.00	\$4,098.00	No Report Available
Cash – Miscellaneous	\$461.00	\$461.00	
Cash-Crystal Springs	\$155,964.00	\$155,889.00	
Cash-Tompkins Bend	\$56,400.00	(\$20,443.00)	
<b>Total Assets:</b>	<b>\$216,923.00</b>	<b>\$140,005.00</b>	

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.