

Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



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

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee Minutes

DATE: February 3, 2014

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m. by Al Gathright

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

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

Members Present:

Tom Butler	Al Gathright	Dan Watson
Phillip Carr	Larry Raney	Jerry Williams
Robert Cavanaugh	Jerry Shields	Howard Wright
George Dooley	Janice Vaughn	

Minutes in Review: The minutes from January 6, 2014 were provided to all the members and approval was postponed until the March 3, 2014 meeting.

Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO): Al G. related the deadline for submitting the audit information was extended until the end of February. Rick. S. is gathering all the paperwork for the audit. Jerry S related they were employing accountant until audit is completed. Jerry S. further related he had paid the \$50.00 Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) membership fee.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Lake Ouachita Vista Trail (LOViT): Jerry S. shared a historical summary of the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail with the committee from the original proposal in August of 2002 to the projected completion in 2014. Jerry S. highlighted the partnerships, design, layout, and funding acquisition for the trail construction.

Jerry S. related construction on the final leg of the trail will begin February 10, 2014 at the new Brady Mountain Road trailhead parking area. Progressive Trail Design's construction crew of three operators will be staying at Mountain Harbor in a condo provided by Bill Barnes. Construction will take from 6-8 weeks with a target completion date of April 1, 2014, weather permitting. Jerry S. further related the

planned section of new trail will not be as challenging to construct as the last two sections. Trail Dog volunteers will begin trail finish work on Thursday, February 13, 2014 and will work on Tuesday's, Wednesday's, Friday's and some Saturday's each week while the new construction is being completed. **Two volunteer groups, affiliated with the Arkansas Wildlife Federation, have expressed interest in assisting with the construction of the final leg of the LOViT, one group being students attending Arkansas Tech University and the second being from the Little Rock Air Force Base.**

Jerry S. stated vandalism had been found on approximately 1.5 miles of the Bear Mountain section of trail, rocks and logs had been moved and rolled down onto the trail's path. The U.S. Forest Service had been notified of the vandalism. Jerry S. further related he met with Brenda Meeks, Ouachita Project Manager and Tracy Phillips, Lake Ouachita Field Office, during their discussion, it was decided to extend the LOViT trail's termination point to Avery Recreation Area below Blakely Mountain Dam. The Corps offered to construct the Avery portion of the trail and assist with a spur to the Spillway Recreation Area off the main trail as well. **Jerry S. further related he had been contact by Mr. Jay Marsh, who has his houseboat moored at Brady Mountain Marina, concerning the possibility of constructing a spur from the LOViT Trail to Brady Mountain Resort. The spur would be approximately 1 mile in distance from the existing trail. Mr. Marsh has also inquired about constructing a spur from the resort to the end of Blakely peninsula, approximately 5 miles of additional trail. Currently there is no funding available for these spurs, but a meeting has been scheduled in February to discuss these proposals with Mr. Marsh.** Bill J. related Mike W. has been asked to GPS coordinates along the trail to aid in rescues of lost or injured parties. Trail markers will be placed with these coordinates and a book with these locations will be provided to all area emergency response agencies. Jerry S. related Tom B. arranged a meeting with Garland County Judge, Rick Davis, to ask him to be a part of the LOViT trail support group. Judge Davis said he would discuss the matter at the next Garland County Quorum Court meeting to seek the court's approval and support. Jerry S. stated he will provide the committee members of a copy of the plan being developed for the continuing maintenance the Trail Dogs will perform, once the trail has been completed. Bill J. related on Feb 22, 2014, there will be a 100k trail run (ultra-marathon) along the LOViT. Thirty participants are currently signed up for the event and as stated on the website advertising the race, the event is being organized through the Road Runners Club of America, a non-profit organization, with proceeds from the race being given back to the trail community. Jerry S. related he has been working with the local volunteer fire departments and first responders in preparation of the race, since the runners will be traversing Bear Mountain in the dark. Philip C. related the rules of the race will allow for pacers to accompany the runners on the section being traversed after dark.

Aquatic Vegetation: Bill J. informed the committee members that Johnny Cantrell, Ouachita Area Biologist and lead on the area's aquatic vegetation projects would be retiring in April or May of this year. Johnny has been instrumental in building the Corps' aquatic vegetation control program by using various methods, other than herbicide application, to control the evasive aquatic vegetation species in the area lakes.

Bill continued in saying that Johnny, Amy S. and Joe B. have been working with the Mountain Pine High School EAST Lab students in setting up a partnership for them to construct additional exclusion cages for the protection of the native aquatic vegetation being re-introduced into Lake Ouachita. The students will be working on Wednesday's, using the materials and supplies obtained using the Fishery

Habitat Improvement grant funds awarded to the Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO) in support of the project.

Bill also related that due to the continued fluctuation of the lake level as a result of recent storm events passing through the area, the placement of additional exclusion cages for the aquatic vegetation had been impossible. The current Lake Ouachita lake elevation was 577.25 feet mean sea level (msl) which is just below summer pool and too high for exclusion cages to be installed. Upon returning to work after Government Shutdown in October, Park Rangers placed 25 additional exclusion cages, in and around, the Crystal Springs Recreation Area and confluence of Crystal Springs Creek above the Crystal Springs Day Use Area. Some of the cages placed nearest the Crystal Springs Campground were removed due to the concern of possibly creating a potential hazard to boaters entering/exiting the Crystal Springs area. Park Rangers installing the additional exclusion cages report that the cages installed above the Crystal Springs Marina area, confluence of Walnut Creek, had silted over, thus killing the *Vallisneria* plants that had been planted in those locations. However, the cages and plants placed near the Lake Ouachita State Park were doing well and the plants were thriving.

Campgrounds: Bill J. advised the committee members that the Fall/Winter camping visitation was down from previous season. Bill went on to share that due to varied weather conditions and the October Government Shutdown, campers may be hesitant about returning to the campgrounds until the Spring recreation season. Bill J. continued in providing an update on the various improvement projects for the campgrounds, the water installation project at Denby Point Campground has been completed and Area 4 re-opened and available for campers to use. The new electrical wiring installation at Tompkins Bend has been completed. Plans are to replace the electrical wiring in top area of Brady Mountain in October if funding is available. A timber sale for the Tompkins Bend Campground was awarded and loggers have been removing the timber from the campground. The timber sale was necessary due to trees along the roadways causing damage to the road's surface and to remove hazardous trees in and around the campsites. Rangers and contractors are working in Tompkins Bend to clear debris following the timber sale. Bill J. further related Park Rangers had performed a prescribed burn in the Brady Mountain Campground area, burning approximately 73 acres in the campground. Two of the comfort stations/shower buildings will have their flat roofs removed and new pitched roofs with vaulted ceilings will be constructed on each of them. On January 16, 2014, Park Rangers performed prescribed burns in the wooded area around Tompkins Bend and several of the islands on the lake, total acreage burnt was approximately 240 acres. Bill J. further related that everything except the day use areas are scheduled to open on March 1, 2014. It has been projected that the day use areas will open on April 1, 2014. Jerry S. asked if there were plans to add electricity and water in the Twin Creek Recreation Area. Bill J. stated, upgrading of the Twin Creek Recreation Area, adding electrical pedestals and additional water spigots through the campground has been placed on the long-term plan Stacy S. has developed for Lake Ouachita's recreation areas. Plans are to relocate the current entrance road into the campground away from the boat ramp access, thus reducing the congestion in the area and converting the old entrance roadway into a possible handicap accessible campsite.

Comments: After a brief discussion about hosting a Spring Clean-Up, Campground Workday, Al G. stated he would recommend this discussion and planning to the March LOCFC meeting agenda. Jerry S. shared the photo that had been published in the Arkansas Department of Tourism brochure/magazine, promoting the LOViT Trail and Lake Ouachita area.

FOLO Financial Report as of November 25, 2013

Month	November 25, 2013	December 31, 2013	January 31, 2014
Cash-Trail Account	\$6,371.00	\$6,371.00	\$6,371.00
Cash – Miscellaneous	\$698.00	\$698.00	\$648.00
Cash-Crystal Springs	\$158,057.00	\$157,907.00	\$157,299.00
Cash-Tompkins Bend	\$58,493.00	\$58,343.00	\$57,735.00
Total Assets:	\$223,619.00	\$223,319.00	\$222,053.00

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.