

# Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



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

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

**DATE:** October 5, 2015

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

**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	Mike Drake	Dan Watson
Robert Cavanaugh	Tammi Spurlin	Howard Wright
George Dooley	Rick Stokes	

**Minutes:** The minutes from the September 14, 2015 meeting were approved as written.

**Announcements:** Robert C. provided an update on Jerry S. Robert related he had recently spoken with Jerry and he sounded good, was stronger, was eating a little better, and may come home from hospital in next few days.

**Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO):** Robert stated there were changes to the FOLO Financial Statement from the September meeting. The Board has been contacted by a person interested in donating money for a memorial bench to be placed along the LOViT, but the funds have not been received as of yet. Rick S. stated there had been some interest in what FOLO will be using the remaining funds still in the bank accounts for in the future, Rick went on to related that the proposed plan is to use these funds as matching funding, when applying for grants in the future. Robert continued in stating that the FOLO Board has all agreed that these funds will be utilized for the betterment of projects on Lake Ouachita, as a whole. Tom B. inquired if there was any issue with using funds on projects outside campground enhancement in those specific locations where the funds were collected, Crystal Springs and Tompkins Bend. Bill J. stated that although he couldn't speak for Stacy S., it is of his opinion that there would be no issues if the funds were spend on projects for the betterment of the lake for the visiting public and not specifically in those two campgrounds.

**Discussion of Mission Statement:** Dan W. inquired if Stacy S. had reviewed the new mission statement and sent it forward to office of council. Rick S. stated that the new Chief, Office of Council in Vicksburg, may or may not want to review the proposed mission statement. Bill J. stated that although it has not been sent forward yet, he will ask Stacy about sending it to Rick D. and Office of Council tomorrow.

**General Discussion:**

**Behind the Scenes Tour:** Dan asked the committee members to pick which day this week October 6-8, 2015 would be best to meet with Bill J. for a behind the scenes tour of Lake Ouachita. Those committee members that were able to attend the tour all agreed to meet with Bill J. on Thursday, October 8, 2015. Dan related he would send out an email to all the members reminding them of the tour date, so those who were not in attendance could plan to make the tour as well. Bill J. explained the tour would consist of looking at water/sewer treatment facilities, comfort stations, recreation area amenities, and possibly a tour of more primitive campgrounds on the north side of Lake Ouachita to get an idea of improvements needed in the recreation areas.

**Usage of “Drop Box” for LOCFC documents:** Dan W. proposed gathering LOCFC documents and placing them in a program called “Drop Box” for all Committee Members to access, to review, use for reference and make comments. Dan stated he would set one up and see if it is useful.

**Corps of Engineers Report:** Jason M. related during the off-season, the underground high voltage electrical lines will be replaced in the Joplin Campground. The installation of the playground has been completed and work will begin soon on the pavilion at Tompkins Bend Recreation Area.

Bill J. stated he would send a copy of the spreadsheet indicating the total amount of use fees collected in 2015 to the committee members and further related that Lake Ouachita had collected over \$500,000.00 for the year, which is approximately 17% more than 2014. Bill J. also shared the Park Rangers assigned to the Fall Natural Resources Management (NRM) program were performing the annual Deer Survey from 6:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. The number of deer counted has been good so far, and Bill J. will send out the survey numbers when completed.

Bill J. shared that there were seven volunteers who came out to the “Volunteers in the Park” event held at the Joplin Campground for National Public Lands Day on September 26, 2015. The volunteers were able to pick up trash along the shoreline and trim vegetation back from the roadways around the Joplin Fee Booth.

**Project Progress Reports:**

**LOViT:** Robert C. stated Jennifer Sweeny, Mount Ida Chamber of Commerce, was planning a workday event on the LOViT on October 31, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Plans are to meet at the ADA/Watchable Wildlife Trail pavilion, work on the elevation walkway, clear limbs from trail, wash the vandalism paint off the bird identification sign, and work on the trail from the Hwy 270 Bridge to Gap Creek. Robert said he believes the U.S. Forest Service will purchase some additional trail signs for the LOViT.

Robert passed around the Arkansas Mountain Biking Guide that featured a picture of the LOViT listed as an EPIC trail. George D. asked about the possibility of hosting a bike race to raise money for projects around the lake. Robert stated that although it is a possibility, these large events must be planned at least a year in advance, and there is a lot of work that goes into the planning of races on the trail.

**Projects:**

**AED:** George D. stated he had learned that St. Vincent's Hospital cannot donate Automated Electronic Defibrillators (AED) to FOLO. He continued in stating he will make contact with National Park Hospital and see if there is a way the AED's could be purchased through their purchasing office to possibly receive a break in the cost of the AED. George stated the new AED's have come down in price from \$1900 to \$1200, and they also have recertified AED's for as cheap as \$795. Rick S. stated Phillip C. might be able to get some grants through the local ambulance service for AED purchase.

**Fishing Tournament Weigh-In:** Rick S. stated he would contact Brett Hobbs, Biologist, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, this week and set up a meeting to gain information on weigh-in stations.

**Demolition of Out of Date Facilities:** Rick S. stated that before any of the "out-of-date" facilities can be demolished, the Corps' Real Estate Office in Vicksburg must remove the buildings from the Lake Ouachita Real Property Listing and approve the removal of the structures. Rick went on to say that Stacy S. said he would contact Real Estate to see what must be done prior to a building being demolished. Bill J. stated the desire is to remove the old equipment from the former well stations that provided potable water to the recreation areas before connecting with local municipal water systems, at Tompkins Bend and Denby Point. After some modifications, the old building structures could be used for local storage for volunteers to perform tasks in the recreation areas. Rick stated it had been discussed maintaining the old office/lab for the former wastewater treatment plant, but removing all the other items around it. Jason M. stated the Lake Ouachita Field Office would be required to work through the General Services Administration (GSA) to sell the scrap metal from the old wastewater treatment plant. Jason went on to explain that the Field Office had done this in the past and the process was relatively easy to get accomplished without a great deal of work required of the staff.

**Recycling:** Tammy S. asked what the main purpose of this project was. Bill J. stated it was education in the campgrounds. Bill J. further related the Corps' office generates a great amount of paper and we need to get a recycling program going. Bill J. went to state that with Park Ranger Dave Pennington retiring, Park Ranger responsible for the current Corps' recycling program, he would assign Park Ranger Karl Studenroth to coordinate the program with Dave's retirement after the first of the year. When asked what types of recycling the Corps would be interested in tracking, Bill J. related that currently the list includes white office paper, newspapers, telephone books, shredded paper and cardboard. George D. asked if it would be beneficial to purchase a baler to bale the cardboard if there was a significant amount being generated and a vendor could then pick it up at the office.

**Non-Potable Water:** Rick S. stated he had talked with Stacy S. about potentially putting non-potable water at the point in Brady Mountain, but after he thought about it, he would rather try first putting non-potable water at the restroom located at the Brady Mountain Boat Ramp instead, simply due to the ease

in plumbing the system through existing waterlines to the restroom. Rick went on to state he will contact Stacy regarding recommended location for the test.

**Campsite Evaluations:** Bill J. will send out campground maps from other campgrounds around the Corps that indicate campsites offering double occupancy for campers to the members. Bill J. stated that while the new electrical lines are being replaced, there will be campsites identified to revert to a double occupancy campsite in the Joplin Campground Area. Bill J. went on to say that another column would be added to the Campsite Evaluation Spreadsheet to identify campsites that could be converted to “pull-through” campsites relatively easily, without the removal of a great number of trees at the campsite.

**Donation Box:** Bill will ask Stacy S. if these can be mounted to the fee booths in the campgrounds. Committee discussed the need to specify what the money would go toward and put this on the sign by donation box.

**Comments:** Bill J. shared with the committee members around the Corps’ Nationwide initiative, “Every Kid in the Park”, which targets fourth-grade students in an effort to get kids outdoors. Bill J. went on to explain that every fourth-grade student will be issued an annual pass, which will be good from September to August during their fourth-grade year. This pass will enable for the student, and their families, to use the day use facilities at all Federal agencies participating in the program, such as the Corps of Engineers, National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

Bill J. also related the seasonal closure of the recreation areas on October 1, 2015 had gone extremely well. George D. inquired why the campgrounds weren’t left open through the Fall/Winter season. Bill J. stated Joplin and Tompkins Bend Campgrounds were closed due to maintenance issues being addressed during the month of October. The remaining recreation areas were closed for the season, allowing the O&M contractor, RBS, to perform maintenance tasks delayed during the Spring and Summer months. RBS will reduce their staffing levels after October and by closing the areas and reducing the workload to clean and maintain these recreation areas, will free up the workforce to work on other maintenance tasks needing to be addressed before the winter months. Bill J. continued that the Corps did decide to leave the Twin Creek Campground open because it is a low-cost area and the restroom facilities were heated to protect the waterline during freezing temperatures. The decision was made to close the Little Fir Recreation Area because the potable water is provided by the Corps, closing the area allows for the Lake Ouachita O&M staff to perform needed maintenance and repairs to the water treatment plant, plus it reduces the workload for sending staff to maintain the plant for another month before closing in November. These decisions were all based on what’s good for the public and what is good for the Corps’ infrastructure to allow for maintenance and personnel.

Camping facilities at Stephens Park, Crystal Springs, Denby Point and Twin Creek remain open through the Fall/Winter camping season for the public to camp around Lake Ouachita. Volunteer Camp Hosts and Patrolling Park Rangers are available to collect campground use fees from the campers. Campers may also use the newly installed self-deposit “honor boxes” as well to pay their camping use fees.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.