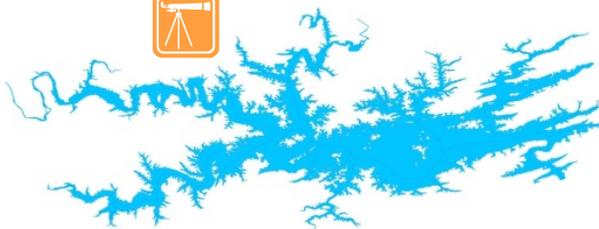


Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee



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

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee Minutes

DATE: October 6, 2014

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

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Brenda Meeks, Operations Project Manager, Ouachita Project Management Office

Bill Jackson, Supervisory Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Jason Mothershed, Facility Manager, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Dustin Thomason, Biologist, Lake Ouachita Project Management Office

Amy Shultz, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Members Present:

Tom Butler	George Dooley	Larry Raney	Janice Vaughn	Howard Wright
Phillip Carr	Mike Drake	Jerry Shields	Dan Watson	
Robert Cavanaugh	Arnold Habig	Rick Stokes	Jerry Williams	

Announcements: A copy of the Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee (LOCFC) news article was distributed to the committee members. Rick S. shared that Jerry S. and Arnie H. assisted him in writing the LOCFC article for the Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) newsletter. Rick further shared he sent pictures to Bill Hobgood to accompany the article, but hasn't received a response from Mr. Hobgood as of this date.

Minutes: The minutes from the September 8, 2014 meeting were approved with changes made.

FOLO: Rick S. shared the latest update he had received concerning the status of the Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO) use fee audit. Rick went on to say Mr. George Sullivan, Vicksburg District, Internal Review Office, related he was hoping to receive a final audit report by October 20, 2014. Rick continued in saying it is his understanding that the Corps' Headquarters office (HQUSACE) would send a "letter of demand" to Major General Michael Wehr, Mississippi Valley Division Commander, who, will in turn send a letter to Colonel John Cross, Vicksburg District Commander. Colonel Cross will make contact with FOLO representatives to set up a meeting to discuss the "letter of demand", of which the letter will state the amount to be returned to the Treasury. Rick went on to state that as of the end of September, there is \$212,764.00 remaining in the FOLO bank account. Rick continued in saying, his concern is that there are currently funds being distributed from the bank account, such as the insurance payments and payments for

the accounting services to maintain FOLO's books over the last year. Rick expressed his concern that the Lake Ouachita Field Office (LOFO) may be required to provide funds to cover the discrepancy from the current amount and the original amount reported when the audit process began a year ago. Also, LOFO may be required to reimburse FOLO for the tangible property purchased with the use fee funds collected by FOLO. Brenda M. stated tangible property is considered to be anything over \$1,000.00, such as the playground installed at the Crystal Springs Camper's Beach. Rick believes it will be at least November before a meeting is set up with FOLO and Colonel Cross. Arnie asked what will happen if the audit results state there is more money to be paid back than what is currently in the FOLO bank account? Rick stated his belief is that HQUSACE will take the funding from the LOFO budget to make up the difference. Larry R. inquired if they would be asking for actual cost, dollar for dollar, of the tangible items or if they would take into account depreciated value. Rick related he had provided copies of all receipts for the funds spent and provided them to the auditors in order for them to know, dollar for dollar, on how much money had been collected and how much had been spent. Rick continued in saying his understanding is that it will be actual cost FOLO or Lake Ouachita will have to pay back to the Treasury. Rick said he would contact Vivian and Kyle Garner prior to the meeting and get all FOLO records. Jerry S. suggested they meet with Vivian and Kyle to get an idea what re-payment amount should be prior to the meeting with the Colonel.

Sub-Committee Reports:

LOViT: Arnie shared a letter from the U.S. Forest Service concerning the proposal to re-locate a portion of the Womble Trail due to damage suffered during a recent prescribed burn in the area. The proposal is to construct a new section of the trail to a higher elevation to help prevent further erosion of the current trail. Arnie passed around a map indicating the location of the proposed new trail. Jerry S. stated anytime prescribed burns, timber cutting or other projects occurring in the Ouachita National Forest, he, Robert C. and Arnie H. have requested that an email be sent to them advising them of the activities at least 30 days in advance of the start of the project.

Jerry shared that the LOViT Trail dedication ceremony has been scheduled for Tuesday, October 28, 2014, at 1:00 p.m., at Avery Recreation Area. Invited guests include representatives from the original coalition of partners to include Arkansas Parks and Tourism, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Montgomery and Garland County Judges, International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) leader, Arkansas State Trails coordinator, Friends of the Ouachita Trails (FOOT), Hot Springs Cycle Club and Ouachita Mountain Bikers Association. Representatives from each organization have been asked to provide a few statements about the trail or the coalition. Jerry went on to state that Arkansas has four trails designated as Epic Ride trails, which is more than any other state in the Nation. This includes the LOViT trail and a number of Mountain Bikers place on their "bucket list" to ride all the Epic trails during their lifetime. Tourists from around the country and abroad have visited the LOViT because of the added publicity of being named an Epic ride trail. Jerry continued in saying that after the ceremony, a fun walk or fun bike ride will be held from Ricks Road to Avery along the LOViT. Jerry asked if the Corps could construct and install some type of grand entrance way, an arch or something similar prior to the scheduled ceremony. Brenda M. assured Jerry the Corps would do their very best to have something installed prior to the scheduled ceremony on October 28, 2014.

Jerry also related that the U.S. Forest Service had been installing the nice large trailhead signs along the trailheads at Brady Mountain Road, Joplin and along other road crossings of the trail. Jerry further stated the U.S. Forest Service had cut a spur from the parking area on Brady Mountain Road to the trailhead.

Jerry continued in saying that the Trail Dogs had been doing maintenance along the trail and they have noted one serious problem found was the weeds/briars along some sections of the trail on Bear Mountain. He asked if herbicides could be used to help control this problem. Rick stated if the herbicide used was on the list of approved herbicides, they could use it. He further shared that *Round Up* was on the list. Robert C. shared he had a meeting with the U.S. Forest Service concerning the weed/briar issues along that section of trail, Robert continued in saying that the U.S. Forest Service is considering to provide equipment and herbicide for this section to knock down the problem weeds. One of the issues is, a person must hike approximately ten miles to access this section of trail. Rick asked if All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) could be used to apply the herbicide. Jerry continued in stating the U.S. Forest Service had granted the Trail Dogs permission to use ATV's for trail maintenance along the trail, but first some of the weeds will need to be knocked down before an ATV with a sprayer attachment can access the area.

Campgrounds: Bill J. introduced Dustin Thomason, Area Biologist, Ouachita Project Management Office, to the group and shared his work history and experience. Bill stated Dustin had been very active in the Wounded Warrior program and Kids Fishing Days at his previous lakes. Dustin shared he had worked with a partnership group at Millwood Lake that is very similar to the LOCFC and he was looking forward to working with the group here at Lake Ouachita.

Bill related that the micro group of the Partnership Advisory Council (PAC) was meeting with HQUSACE to develop guidelines in interpreting what Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) had authorized the Corps to do under the new authorization concerning use fees retention and the development of partnerships at the projects. Heather Burke, Natural Resource Management Partnership Program Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, related that until the group had come to a conclusion on what had been authorized for the Corps to do under the new WRDA authorization, there will not be any updates shared. Bill further shared Stacy S. is the Vicksburg District's Partnership Advisory Council (PAC) Representative.

Bill stated the U.S. Forest Service will be conducting a control burn in the Crystal Springs area from Crystal Springs Road to Forest Service Road #47. Bill continued in relating that on September 8, 2014, campsite reservations ended in the campground for the winter season and all campsites were first-come, first-serve. Rangers are reporting that the campgrounds are filling up on the weekends, with approximately 60-80% occupancy in each of the open campgrounds. Bill continued in stating the Lake Ouachita Field Office had begun issuing camping extensions on September 9, 2014, allowing individuals to remain on one campsite for a period up to 56 days before being required to vacate the site and move to another campsite site in the campground. Bill further explained that only a few individuals who have created problems in the campgrounds would not be granted camping extensions. Arnie asked if the people had been informed they were not eligible for the camping extensions. Bill stated yes, the campers had been informed. Currently only a couple of individuals are on the "no extension" list and these campers have either been violent to other campers, drunk and disorderly, or habitually rude and disorderly with Corps personnel. Bill further shared there has been a change to the winter season schedule: Twin Creek and Avery restrooms will remain open through the winter. Other open areas are: Stephens Park, Crystal Springs and Denby Point. Tompkins Bend will remain open until December 1, 2014, then close for maintenance to the wastewater treatment plant.

Tom B. asked Dustin if any of the cages were left in the exclusion cage project. Dustin related that there are still some cages that haven't been installed and a school group is coming out next week to "plant" some cages. Bill J. related the rebar for the exclusion cage project had been picked up last week from Craft Manufacturing.

Way Forward Brainstorming Committee:

Dan W. shared he had not received feedback from any of the courtesy dock vendors he had contacted other than from representatives of Williamson Boat Docks. Dan also shared that the committee had met with David Milhollen, representing Wireless Etc. to discuss the best way to install Wi-Fi in the campgrounds and what would the cost be to install it through-out the campgrounds. During his presentation, Mr. Milhollen informed the committee that there are grants available to assist in the installation of Wi-Fi in remote areas. Mr. Milhollen provided an estimate of \$150,000.00 to install a system to provide Wi-Fi for each campsite in the campgrounds; in addition, a monthly fee would be required for the use of the equipment installed. If the committee chose to just install "hot spots" through-out the campgrounds, the cost would be considerably lower. Dan stated he would send out a copy of the Wi-Fi meeting minutes to anyone who may be interested in learning more about the meeting with Mr. Milhollen. George D. stated if the Corps was in negotiations with cell phone tower companies to install towers at Brady Mountain and Joplin, maybe a clause could be added in the lease agreement that Wi-Fi could be included as part of the tower installation. Jerry related that in several campgrounds he had visited around the country that had Wi-Fi, they also had Wi-Fi "free zones" for campers who didn't want their kids glued to a screen the entire time they were camping. He is concerned that installing Wi-Fi to every site might not be a good thing. Janice V. stated that would be a reason to have a "hot spot" installed in the campground versus having Wi-Fi access through-out the campground. Those individuals who may need to access Wi-Fi could go to the "hot spot" and access the internet. A "hot spot" could be set up at a designated location in the campground, allowing campers to still have access to the internet.

Dan requested the LOCFC members look at the published list of prioritized projects and pick a project from the list that they are willing to work on and support. Tom B. inquired who is responsible for the installation of the courtesy dock at the Brady Mountain Boat Ramp. Bill J. related that the Corps had installed the dock years ago, but the dock has issues and requires a great deal of maintenance and oversight. As the lake rises and falls, the dock must be moved to provide access for the boaters. Rick S. reiterated that each committee member needs to look at the project list and pick something they are interested in to work on.

Comments: Rick S. proposed to the committee members that discussions be initiated on the possibility of modifying the LOCFC meeting schedule. Rick continued in sharing that nine members had voted "yes", that they would like to discuss modifying the meeting schedule and four members had voted "no", they did not want to modify the meeting schedule and remain on meeting monthly, with the exception of December when no meeting was scheduled due to the Holidays. Arnie H. expressed concern that going to bi-monthly or quarterly meetings would harm the committee because the continuity would cease to exist. Arnie proposed meeting every month, but having Corps representatives only attend meetings bi-monthly, allowing the LOCFC members to have discussions without Corps representatives present and then present options to the Corps representatives at the bi-monthly meetings.

Robert C. agreed with Arnie in that the LOCFC committee should continue to meet monthly to maintain the continuity of the committee. Robert continued in stating his concern is that the committee may lose

focus on the issues being address if bi-monthly meetings were held. Rick shared the reason he proposed meeting less frequently, in reviewing the LOCFC committee meeting agenda's over the past several months, it appears that the same issues are being discussed, but no solutions are being proposed to address the issues, allowing the committee to move on to other topics for the meetings. Bill J. related this was the reason for the proposed "Way Forward" committee to be formed. This committee would "brainstorm" and identify new projects and ideas for the LOCFC committee to address and come up with suggestions to solve issues around the lake, thus, keeping the committee moving in a positive direction and not becoming stale. After continued discussion, Rick requested the committee to vote on the proposed change in the meeting schedule, committee members voted and the majority requested the meeting schedule remain to meet monthly, with the exception of December, no meeting would be schedule due to the holidays. Arnie made a motion and the motion was seconded requesting that the Corps representatives only attend the LOCFC meetings on a bi-monthly basis, beginning in January 2015. Again, after additional discussion, Rick requested a vote and the motion was denied, the Corps representatives will continue to meeting with the LOFC committee members on a monthly basis.

Mike D. inquired how the proposed projects that had been listed would be funded. Bill J. stated the same way that the other projects have been funded, much like the LOViT, through partnerships, grants being awarded, when project funds are available, etc. Jerry stated where there is a will, there is a way to get things done.

Rick requested Dan email the proposed project list out to all the LOCFC committee members. Jerry W. passed around a watershed issue book and recommended putting watershed issues on the project list.

Brenda M. shared that Stuart Woodridge, Biologist, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission would be attending the November meeting to discuss the recent mercury advisory initiated for fish in Lake Ouachita.

FOLO Financial Report:

Month	July 31, 2014	August 31, 2014	September 30, 2014
Cash-Trail Account	\$2,304.00	\$2,804.00	\$3,324.00
Cash – Miscellaneous	\$461.00	\$461.00	\$461.00
Cash-Crystal Springs	\$156,314	\$156,239.00	\$156,164.00
Cash-Tompkins Bend	\$56,750	\$56,675.00	\$56,600.00
Total Assets:	\$215,829.00	\$216,179.00	\$216,549.00

Meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.