

Lake Ouachita Citizen Focus Committee



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Lake Ouachita Citizen Focus Committee Minutes

DATE: September 13, 2011

CALL TO ORDER: 1900 by Arnie Habig

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Bill Jackson, Supervisory Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Amy Shultz, Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Members Present:

Tom Butler

Phillip Carr

George Dooley

David Doty

Rick Farmer

Al Gathright

Arnold Habig

Larry Raney

Buck Rodgers

Jerry Shields

Jerry Williams

Howard Wright

Minutes in Review: The minutes from July 12th and August 16th were reviewed and approved as written.

Opening Comments: At the request of Bill J., Arnie H. recommended the LOCFC members arrive early for the next meeting in order to get a new committee member photo taken for the LOCFC webpage. Arnie H. requested as many members that can, arrive at 6:45 pm on October 11, 2001 for the photo. Rick F. inquired about how the membership is determined for the Friends of Lake Ouachita? Arnie H. related the FOLO members were chosen to develop a Crystal Springs lease and Cooperative Agreement between the Corps and FOLO. It was more beneficial to have a small group of representatives that would be able to discuss issues and make it easier to come to a consensus regarding FOLO's partnership with the Corps in operating Crystal Springs campground. FOLO would keep the LOCFC members informed of their actions at monthly meetings, at which time the LOCFC Members would have an opportunity to make official suggestions and comments, FOLO, although a separate entity for Crystal Springs campground operations, is still affiliated with LOCFC

Sub-Committee Reports:

Aquatic Vegetation: Tom B. inquired if the fisheries grant proposal had been submitted? Bill J. related that the grant proposal was submitted prior to the deadline and Al G. had received a couple of questions by email from Brent Hess, Fisheries Biologist, Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership, who is reviewing the proposal. Johnny Cantrell provided Al G. with the answers to these questions in detail and the information was sent back to Mr. Hass. Bill J. also related that two of the individuals that will be evaluating the grant proposal have worked extensively in the past with Johnny on other programs around the area lakes. When Johnny contacted them requesting letters of support, they told Johnny they would have to excuse themselves from providing letters because they are involved in the review process of the grant. Colton Dennis, Federal Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) recommended to Johnny to apply for a fisheries habitat improvement grant through the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service as well, often these grants can provide more funding for fisheries habitat improvements than other sources. The deadline for the FWS grant application is October 11, 2011 and just like the Fisheries Habitat Partnership grant, this is a 1 to 1 matching grant, where in-kind services may be used as the matching portion for the group applying.

Dave D. made a motion that LOCFC request FOLO to submit a grant application to the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership for an Aquatic Habitat Restoration project in an amount sustainable by anticipated volunteer participation. Larry R. second the motion, the LOCFC committee members voted and all agreed to request FOLO to submit an application for the grant funding. Bill J. reported that the two test beds of *Vallisneria* that were hand planted by volunteer divers at DeGray Lake are now well established and are doing well. The *Vallisneria* plants that were separated and re-potted by volunteers have grown to the top of the Lake Ouachita nursery ponds and are ready to be planted in the lake as soon as the lake level stabilizes for the winter months.

LOViT: Watchable Wildlife Trail: Jerry S. reminded the LOCFC members that the dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony for the Denby Bay Watchable Wildlife/ADA trail has been scheduled for October 7th at 11:00 am. Jerry S. further related that two rock benches have been installed by the rock sign and the trail looks like it is in good shape. Two more benches are scheduled to be installed along the trail prior to the ribbon cutting. Jerry S. requested the Corps cut the grass in the field area prior to the October 7th ceremony.

Hiking/Biking Trail: Jerry S. stated he had visited with the US Forest Service personnel at the Womble Ranger District about the possibility of using their trail building machine to clear sections of trail. Jerry S. further related that Gloria Chrismer, Womble/Caddo District Ranger, said she would contact the Ozark Ranger District office about possibly using their machine. Jerry S. stated that 90% of the ADA fishing pier has been completed at Twin Creek. He further related that there has been an increase in the number of "hits", individuals visiting the sites, on the LOViT website and Face Book page. Groups are also sending complimentary e-mails to him concerning the trail and the area.

Campground: Dave D. handed out minutes from the Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO) meeting held on September 13, 2011 with Rick Stokes, Resource Manager, Lake Ouachita Field Office concerning the Crystal Springs Recreation Area Cooperative Agreement. Rick F. inquired why this was not put to the committee for discussion. Dave D. explained that the FOLO was approached by the Corps in 2009 about forming a cooperative agreement, but before an agreement could be established, the program was halted until further review of the program could be conducted. In May 2011, guidance and policy was provided to Vicksburg District for the establishment of the Cooperative Agreements with non-profit organizations for the operation and management of Corps facilities. Dave D. went on to relate that this proposal was brought before the LOCFC and discussed in length in 2009. Rick F. expressed concern that some of the public would not approve and there are rumors already circulating regarding this agreement. Bill J. related that the Corps is foreseeing a smooth transition. The only change the public will possibly see is a change in the uniform that the fee booth operators would be wearing and their name tags. Instead of being a Corps Contractor or Corps volunteer, the person will be a FOLO contract employee. Park Rangers would continue to patrol the recreation area and O&M contractors would continue providing service in the recreation area as well. Bill J. continued that the Crystal Springs Recreation Area was selected as a “test site” for the Cooperative Agreement program at Lake Ouachita and as inquires from the public came, those would be addressed to quell the all the rumors and miss-information provided to the public. Dave D. stated that the public should be informed that fees collected at Crystal Springs for camping, day use and boat ramp use will be retained by FOLO and utilized for the operation and maintenance of the recreation area. Bill J. further related that Lake Ouachita is the first project to establish an agreement in accordance with the new guidance and policy.

Lake Ouachita Clean-Up: Tom B. requested volunteers to distribute promotional flyers to businesses. Plans are to distribute flyers the first week in October. Tom B. also requested volunteers to work the ramp registration sites. Rick F. volunteered to work Little Fir boat ramp and Howard Wright volunteered to work Spillway boat ramp. Tom B. further related that at each registration site, we will have criteria for prize winners. Arnie H. inquired if we would have pictures of the prize winners for the newspapers? Tom B. related that pictures of every participant would be taken at registration.

Watershed Quality: Arnie H. related he had received two letters from the U.S. Forest Service, Womble Ranger District, concerning activities being proposed in the lake’s watershed area. One dealt with the proposed renovation project for the Hickory Nut Mountain Vista/Overlook Area. The U.S. Forest Service has decided to remove portions of the overlook, but save the stones for the construction of a new overlook area. The second letter was concerning a timber stand sale in the watershed area.

FOLO Financial Report: Jerry S. related the financial report was not available as he did not receive the last 2 bank statements in the mail, but would provide a full report at the next meeting. Arnie H. requested a \$300 check to purchase gift cards for the “Trash for Cash” clean-up event.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 7:50 P.M.