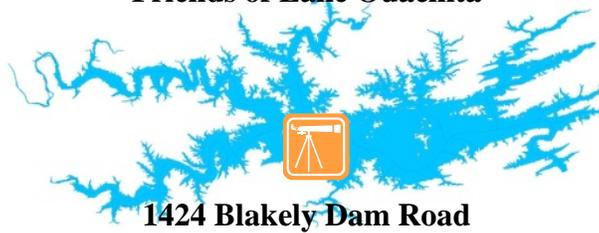


Friends of Lake Ouachita



1424 Blakely Dam Road

Royal, Arkansas 71968

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD: Friends of Lake Ouachita Committee Minutes

DATE: February 04, 2019

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m. by Jerry Shields

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Amy Shultz, Natural Resource Specialist, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Members Present:

Alan Atkins	George Dooley	Jerry Shields	Dan Watson
Tom Butler	Bruce Engstrom	John Simpson	Jerry Williams
Bill Barnes	Al Gathright	Rick Stokes	
Robert Cavanaugh	Ron Mayfield	Jo West Taylor	

Guests Present: Bill Pell : Traildog and Forest Service Retiree

Mike Curran: Traildog and Forest Service Retiree

Tracy Berry: North Woods Trail coordinator/guest speaker

Jake Meredith: North Woods Trail builder/guest speaker

Review of Minutes: Jo W. moved to approve minutes from the January 7th meeting as written. Robert C. seconded, Minutes approved.

Al G. shared the minutes from the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force meeting have not been published yet, but he will send them to the members once they are published.

Hot Springs North Woods Trail presentation:

Jerry S. presented a brief overview of the history of the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail, its funding, construction, who participated in the coalition to get it done, etc... for the benefit of the guest speakers, Tracy Berry and Jake Meredith who represented the North Woods Trail systems. Jerry further shared there was interest in connecting the LOViT and North Woods trail systems. Jerry then introduced and welcomed the guest speakers, Tracy Berry and Jake Meredith.

Jake Meredith distributed maps of the North Woods trail system and stated there is currently approx. 15 miles of trail completed.

Tracy B. shared there are four small lakes on the property which were utilized by the city for drinking water in the past, but currently three of those lakes are no longer used for drinking water. North Woods is a city owned property leased by Visit Hot Springs who manages and promotes the property. Tracy shared that Garland County was ranked #2 in tourism in 2017, and the city leaders are realizing the value of building trails to promote tourism while also promoting healthy recreation.

Tracy went on to say, the North Woods trail characteristics have “flow”, jump lines, single track, and sections for both novice bike riders and for advanced riders. The trails have “greens”, “blues”, and “blacks”.

Tracy shared that Jean Wallace had visited with Steve Arrison about the possibility of constructing North Woods. They both presented their plans to the Walton brothers who are supporters of NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association). (<https://www.nationalmtb.org>) NICA now has a team in Hot Springs. The Walton Foundation, who support many trail projects in Arkansas, is funding the North Woods Trail. They gave \$600,000 and Visit Hot Springs will match this amount.

Completion of Phase 1 of the construction will result in approx. 17 miles of trail. The International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) was contracted to manage the layout and construction of trail. They will be in Hot Springs area until May 2019. Tracy stated they didn't know when the second phase of the trail construction will begin, but when completed, there will be approx. 50 miles of trail. Josh Olson is the supervisor for IMBA on the project. Jerry S. noted the early assistance the LOViT project received from IMBA.

Tracy shared the North Woods project is a “stacked loop” system of trails. There are currently two main trailheads: Cedar Glades and Water Works. The estimated cost of trail construction for the project is \$6.50 to \$14.50 per linear foot of trail. Jerry asked whether the City of Hot Springs would help keep up the maintenance of the North Woods Trail. Tracy stated she and Jake would manage the trail, and would work with the City (Visit Hot Springs). She went on to say, they are

trying to recruit volunteer groups to help with the maintenance and they would like to establish a “core” volunteer group. Tracy shared retired Parks and Recreation director, Jean Wallace, along with CEO of Visit Hot Springs, Steve Arrison, and Deputy City Manager, Bill Burroughs had all advocated the trail and were instrumental in the formation of North Woods. Tracy shared the Nature Conservancy conducted an environmental assessment and located some locations where the flora and fauna needed to be protected. The trail was re-routed from these areas.

Tracy is the point of contact for permits for events on the trail. There is no charge for getting a permit. Tracy shared they would like to have a Trailhead on Pullman Avenue, to connect to North Woods Trail. Pullman is the National Park Service, and Superintendent for H.S. National Park, Laura Miller, is in favor of linking Pullman to the trail system, and the proposal is currently out for public comment. Jerry asked Jake M. if there was any discussion about connecting the North Woods trail with the LOViT. Jake stated there was discussion about doing this, but the biggest challenge was the connecting trail might have to cross private land. Tracy noted that there was definite interest in finding a way to connect both trails. There was also talk about connecting North Woods to Lake Ouachita State Park. John S. stated that “Friends of the Parks” are looking at an old railroad right-of-way for the trail. Tom B. asked if there would be another round of funding for phase 2 of trail. Tracy stated, yes there would be. Bill B. asked how usage of the trail is tracked. Tracy replied that they have purchased 3 “TrafX” (<https://www.trafx.net>) trail counters for the cost of around \$5000. The devices are magnetic and detect the steel, etc... when a bike passes. These counters can also be converted to laser/infrared to count hikers on the trail. The counters were placed at Wildcat Crossing, Waterworks trailhead, and Bees Knees. Tracy said the device has detected an average of 500-700 passes on a “good week”, and they detected 1700 passes on their opening weekend.

Ron M. asked if they are hearing from the community regarding the “impact of biking”. Tracy mentioned that there are lots of bikes in town and Jake noted that one bike shop in town has had a “big jump in sales”

Jerry said that Hot Springs was established as the first “Ride Center” in the U.S. Jerry thanked Tracy and Jake for speaking to the group. They thanked Jerry and the committee for all the work they had done on LOViT.

Hickory Nut Mountain Coalition Plan: Jerry stated the coalition had their first meeting and shared Mike Curran and Bill Pell were also on the coalition team. As a result of their meeting, they have developed a plan and will be presenting/discussing this plan to the Forest Service at 10:00 A.M. tomorrow. Jerry distributed the 20 page “Hickory Nut Mountain Recreation Area Development Plan” to the committee. The purpose of the plan is to improve the Hickory Nut Mountain Vista and surrounding area to create a premier tourist destination.

The proposal is a three year plan that would expand and improve the vista, the camping area near the Vista, connections to the old fire tower site, and connections to the LOViT. The plan would be to renovate/construct pavilion at the Vista, install restrooms, pave a trail to the LOViT and the Old Fire tower, and convert picnic area into a 20 site camping area with a camp host onsite.

The plan will be discussed with Montgomery County and the U.S. Forest Service, and the current plan document will be sent to FOLO members.

It's noted that the long-term maintenance of the improved areas might be an issue.

Costs for the improvements are currently estimated at between one and two million dollars.

Jerry asked the members to email their comments to him after they read the proposed plan.

Bruce Engstrom said that he is in favor of the plan and noted the following: The road to the Vista is a "designated motorized trail", and this designation may prevent 4-wheelers and such on the road. Bruce shared his involvement with a Highway Department group that can help get grants for construction. He stated paving the road to the Vista, and paving the parking lot, are items that may not be available for these grants. Bruce wants the plan to be a compromise that would benefit both motorized and non-motorized use, and he notes that such a compromise would help get grants for the project.

Jerry S. would like to have Steve Arrison or a representative from Visit Hot Springs attend the Forest Service meeting and participate in the project. Tracy Berry is on Steve's staff and will present the proposal to him and may attend tomorrow's meeting at Womble Forest Service office.

FOLO Update: Jerry stated there is currently about \$80,000 in their funds, the Speers' family donated \$2000 to the LOViT. They are coordinators of the 100 mile endurance race.

LOViT Trail: Jerry discussed the re-planking of the Gap Creek Bridge and stated he appreciated the Corps support with materials and tools. Jerry passed around an article that was in the Sentinel Record about the Gap Creek Bridge renovations. Amy S. stated the bridge looked very nice, and thanked the Traildogs for their hard work.

USACE Operational Review: Amy S. shared the Corps conducted prescribed burns of the islands in Garland County. Amy passed around photos of the new Pyro Shot method for prescribed burning the islands. Plans are to burn the islands in Montgomery County as weather allows.

Amy also shared prescribed burns were conducted at Denby Point and Joplin recreation areas. Bill B. thanked the Corps/Derrick for ensuring local volunteer fire departments and the Montgomery/Garland County Sheriff dispatch were aware of the prescribed burns.

Amy also shared work in Brady Campground Area 4 was completed today. She passed around pictures of the renovated area. A new water treatment plant for Brady is scheduled to arrive February 14th.

Amy shared USACE is waiting on a logger to begin work in Joplin Campground.

Amy S. and Bill B. shared the Wounded Warrior Hunt was great with more people participating than anticipated. Bill noted it was the largest group of veterans and their families than ever, with about 50% of the attended being return visitors and 50% being new to the event. Bill further shared the veterans conducted a special ceremony to retire old U.S. flags that had been collected by Joplin Volunteer Fire Department.

Jerry shared FOLO had supported the event by donating several prizes along with True Value Hardware in Mount Ida.

Closing Comments: Bruce E. asked about the quartz mine that is intended to be developed near the Ouachita Trail on north Hwy. 27. His primary concern is how sludge runoff might affect the streams and Lake Ouachita. Jerry stated they would add this discussion to next month's agenda.

Adjournment: Bruce moved to adjourn, Tom B. seconded. Meeting adjourned @ 7:00 P.M.