



Friends of Lake Ouachita, Inc.

1424 Blakely Dam Road, Royal, AR 71968

**MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD:** Friends of Lake Ouachita Committee Minutes

**DATE:** September 16, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER:** 6:00 PM by Jerry Shields

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:**

Stacy Sigman, Resource Manager, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Derick Walker, Supervisory Park Ranger, Lake Ouachita Field Office

Amy Shultz, Natural Resource Specialist, Lake Ouachita Field Office

**Guests Present:**

Chris Ham-Recreation Heritage Officer, USFS

Ich Stewart-District Ranger, USFS

**Members Present:**

Alan Atkins	George Dooley	John Simpson
Bill Barnes	Al Gathright	Jo West Taylor
Tom Butler	Ron Mayfield	Dan Watson
Phillip Carr	Bill Pell	Jerry Williams
Robert Cavanaugh	Jerry Shields	

**Review of Minutes:** Minutes from March 3, 2020 meeting were approved as written

**Hickory Nut Mt. Road Maintenance Contract:** Jerry shared the Montgomery County Judge, Samuel Jones, could not attend the meeting, but shared they have not been able to work on the Hickory Nut Mountain road yet due to the flooding rains and repairing flood damage, but as soon

as they are done, they will be taking 50-55 loads of gravel and working on Hickory Nut Mountain Road.

**Lake Ouachita Cleanup:** Jo West Taylor shared the island cleanup proposal plan –to work on islands 26 and 30-42 on October 3<sup>rd</sup> from 8:00-11:00 am. The Corps was asked to use the work barge again to pick up large items and haul trash. Derick stated he could get GPS points on locations of large amounts of trash before the cleanup. Amy S. asked which ramps the volunteers would meet to go out. Jo W. stated Crystal. Jerry S. believes it would be more beneficial to use three ramps (Brady, Crystal, and Mountain Harbor ramps.) Bill B. suggested cleaning islands 18 and 26. Jerry asked if it would be beneficial to place grab-a-bag dispensers at the most popular island sites. Derick W. stated they would most likely get destroyed. Bill B. stated supplying the bags would also be an issue. Stacy S. and Bill B. related that this year, due to an increase in first time lake users and an increase in visitation, there has been an increase in litter. Bill stated there isn't enough education and awareness for new users to keep the areas clean. Stacy related once the cleanup plan is finalized, he would draft a request to Arkansas Health Department for approval to host the event. Phillip C. moved to hold the lake cleanup Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, Robert. C. seconded. Motion unanimously approved.

**Great American Outdoors Act 2020 Impact on Ouachita National Forest:** Jerry S. introduced Chris Ham-Recreation Heritage Officer for the Forest Service who will be speaking on the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020.

Chris H. shared the purpose of the act is to create a recreation fund for deferred maintenance backlog projects. The agencies who receive this funding are as follows: National Park Service, Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Education. The funding is 8.9 billion/year with 70% going to the National Park Service, 15% going to the Forest Service, 5% going to the USFS, 5% to BLM, and 5% to Bureau of Indian Education. The focus is on eliminating deferred maintenance. Only 35% of the Forest Service funding can be used for Trails. Current projects planned for these funds are rehab of Shady Lake Campground facilities and Cedar Lake Campground Facilities. Chris shared leveraging with partner organizations helps get funding. The funds from this act are good for five years. These funds are based on money from off-shore and gas fund. Bill B. asked if normal funding will be cut due to receiving the supplemental funds. Chris H. stated that was not the intent of the bill....the Great American Outdoors Act is to supplement their existing funds. Ron M. asked if money goes toward maintaining legacy buildings. Chris stated that some of it does. New construction is not a deferred maintenance item.

**Arvest Bank Grant:** Jerry shared FOLO received a \$5000 grant from Arvest Bank for purchasing informational signage on the LOViT. Jerry asked if the Forest service had any designers. The Forest service suggested a meeting to sit down and look at the subject matter and discuss what they want on the signage. Jerry asked if there was any regulations for the signs on Corps property. Stacy shared they are pretty flexible on signs.

**USFS Walnut Creek Study:** Ron M. shared the information on Walnut Creek study came out May 20<sup>th</sup> and there was a 30 day comment period. Ich Stewart, District Ranger, Forest Service, shared there were no comments during this period from the tribal councils. The next phase would be moving to an objection period, then drafting a decision. Currently, progress has been halted due to a new SHIPPO officer. Mr. Stewart further shared, no decision has been made on Walnut Creek from the NEPA. If NEPA passed for Walnut Creek area/Hickory Nut Mountain Project, then they would need to sit down with FOLO and look at the planned details to see what projects they could support. Mr. Stewart shared the biggest hurdle is the strained relationship between FOLO and the Forest Service, and the more they can do to strengthen the relationship, the better. Best case scenario- the plan might move forward by the first of the year. Jerry S. invited and welcomed the Forest Service to attend every FOLO meeting.

**LOViT Trail Update:** Jerry related the users of the trail are the ones who report maintenance issues and the Trail Dogs have gone out and taken care of these issues as needed. Jerry shared they are using electric saws now instead of gas. Al G. shared the Walton Foundation is again funding an IMBA trail crew that will help out on the LOViT.

**USACE Operational Review:** Stacy Sigman report the Tompkins Bend courtesy dock has been repaired. Stacy further shared that during the shutdown, the Brady Mountain and Stephens Park road was paved. Plans are to pave the same amount in 2021. The Courtesy dock has been moved from Crystal to Mountain Harbor. Plans are to complete the Joplin loop (currently closed) this winter. Highway 27 campground road is a main priority project. The road has washed out several times, and plans are to replace the culverts. The recreation area will have to be closed for 3 days to complete this project. Stacy related boat patrol was out every weekend this summer and rangers wrote over 90 citations, a large increase from past years. Stacy also shared that due to the rain events, the Corps has not been able to catch up on mowing, so the stakeholders might receive complaints, and the rain is the reason. Plans are for purchase/install of a bathroom for the Little Fir boat ramp in July 2021.

Lake Recreation Area's planned winter schedule: Derick W. shared the Corps will have 100 additional campsites open this year as opposed to previous years because no one knew if COVID would close schools or cancel football season resulting in additional visitation. Derick further shared there was an increase in visitation in all recreation areas, with a 42% increase at Little Fir and over 30% increase in Brady Mountain. Bill B. shared his appreciation for the Corps and the personnel in place and how well they perform their jobs.

**Executive Session:** FOLO entered into executive session.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 7:32 P.M.