

## LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES ADVISORY BOARD SUMMARY OF MEETING

March 27, 2024

The Land Between the Lakes (LBL) Advisory Board (Board) convened at 9:00 A.M. on March 27, 2024, at the Forest Service Administrative Office Building, 100 Van Morgan Drive, Golden Pond, Kentucky, 42211.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public, and it was also made available through a virtual USDA approved meeting tool. To view the recording of the meeting visit: <https://landbetweenthelakes.us/advisoryboardpastmeetings>

### Board Members Present:

Walter Battle  
Patrick Lemons-Virtual  
Abigale Smith  
Johnny Wall  
Susan “Ski” Witzofsky  
De’Etra Young  
John Zimmer  
David Nickell  
Mark Turner  
Lori Anne Oakley  
Melissa Parker

### Board Staff Present:

Rick Lint, Chairperson  
Jim McCoy, Designated Federal Officer  
Christine Bombard, Administrative Liaison

### Facilitators:

Jordan Crain and Chris Thornock

### Forest Service Staff Present:

Jared Baker, Acting Deputy Area Supervisor  
Greg Barnes, Acting Business Performance Staff Officer  
Jamey Thweatt, Customer Service Staff Officer  
John Westbrook, Environmental Stewardship Staff Officer  
Emily Cleaver, Visitor Information Specialist

### Others Present for all or a Portion of the Meeting:

Donnie Holland	Randal Kot	Doris Battle	Lincoln Bramwell-Virtual
James Oakley	Stan Humphries	Elaine Jackson	Austin Wetherington
Edward Marlowe	Jaime Smith	Morgan Alvey-Virtual	

Jim McCoy, Designated Federal Officer welcomed everyone and began the meeting with reading a land acknowledgment statement. A land acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes the communities that inhabited this land prior to their removal. [Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area Land Acknowledgment Statement](#)

Rick Lint, Chairperson shared with the Board that our intent is at the end of the day that LBL is cared for and the public is served. It is an awesome responsibility for the Board to be representing the interests of 350 million Americans.

### **Old Business, Updates, Questions & Answers by Jim McCoy, Jamey Thweatt, John Westbrook**

Hematite Bridge: The bridge was condemned after an inspection. It will likely be mid-late April before completion due to a supply chain issue with the girders. In collaboration with the state of Kentucky the replacement cost is approximately \$300,000.00. They have an inhouse bridge crew which will save the taxpayers roughly \$1.5 million dollars.

Golden Pond Overlook: We are coordinating with Trigg County Judge Executive Stan Humphries to find a way to improve accessibility to the overlook by adding a drive-up route. The details will be sorted out after we complete the survey and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work.

Chestnut Planting: The sites have been determined and we are in the process of sampling the soil. We anticipate receiving approximately 60 seedlings from the Forest Service nursery in Mississippi where the grafting was done.

Canal Loop: This accessible trail system is degraded and worn so we plan to repave it.

Feral Hog Efforts: Year to date 1,300 hogs have been dispatched utilizing a combination of trapping and aerial gunnery.

Fee Structure: Due to the Recreation Enhancement Act we will no longer charge for children under 16 at the Nature Station and Homeplace 1850s, with the exception of special events/programs and school groups. This does not apply to the Golden Pond Visitors Center, Planetarium & Observatory. [LBL Rates & Hours February 2024 - March 2025](#)

Law Enforcement: We were near full staff before receiving two requests for transfers in one week. We have successfully recruited two replacement officers. We are starting the advertisement process for the permanent patrol captain position. In the meantime, we have some detailers lined up. We are also working on cooperative agreements with Trigg and Stewart Counties and in negotiations with Lyon County.

Operations & Planning (O&P) Meeting: We have made a shift in the way we conduct our meetings and how we discuss daily business and communicate with each other. Forest Service staff at the program manager level along with the Land Between the Lakes Association (LBLA) and our contractor Tipton FSI meet once a week for 90 minutes. Each area had three minutes to report out on what everyone else needs to know as well as what they need assistance with. In the

future, once a month the Board will be invited to view the meeting virtually so they can get a glimpse of what it takes for LBL to function.

Strategic Investment Program (SIP): The basis of funding for the SIP shall be five percent of the total collected revenue on the unit. The purpose of SIP funds is implementation of any improvements, enhancements, or deferred maintenance across LBL. SIP funds are not limited to use in facilities; they are available to be used anywhere within LBL, for the overall good of the unit. [Strategic Investment Program](#)

Local Historical Societies: We are engaging with our historical societies and seeking cooperative partnership agreements so they can assist us with perpetuation of the heritage at LBL.

Healthy Forests Restoration Act Designation (HEFRA): A letter was signed by the regional forester removing the authority. If there is a need to exercise that authority in the future it will be in consultation with and upon agreement with the Board.

Jim was contacted by a Board member prior to the meeting asking to discuss openlands today. He acknowledged we have an issue and that we need to strategize and come up with a better plan to manage our openlands.

Thanks to Elaine Jackson, LBLA Executive Director for securing transportation (school bus & driver) for yesterday's field trip. It takes about 200 souls (Forest Service, LBLA & Tipton FSI) to operate LBL daily. It is a real team effort.

What came of the concerns expressed by the Departments of Transportation at the last meeting regarding lack of funding for LBL roads maintenance? Jim and Rick explained it is out of our bounds since it is Federal Highway Administration funding. The issue is the enabling legislation that provided funding for this responsibility by the States of Kentucky and Tennessee has expired. All parties are aware of the situation.

What is the status of the Executive Order 14072 regarding old growth? The Forest Service has decided to simultaneously update every Forest Service plan. This is a national effort to amend 128 forest plans across the country, this is a huge undertaking and a complicated process. Please refer to our website for future information on this process.

Is there an opportunity to reintroduce the red-cockaded woodpecker? We can discuss it; however, it is unlikely due to the needed habitat size. Rick explained the type of habitat necessary for a healthy population to thrive.

What is the status of the Devils Backbone area? Currently, there are other higher priority issues in front of us.

Field Trip: Yesterday the Board took a field trip on the south end of LBL, stopped at six locations to look primarily at tornado damage to have an impromptu question and answer session on what can be done to help those ecosystems recover. We are going to need access to a wide variety of tools to get the job done because the areas were not impacted the same and the areas were not in the same condition when the tornado hit. The Board expressed appreciation for the

field trip and would like to continue them in the future. It was helpful to learn about the timber sale process and carbon dioxide. Is doing nothing a viable option? Per Jim, that is unlikely. For example, in some areas that would result in a non-native loblolly pine infestation. Another example is a brush field of epic proportions. That is not a desirable outcome for our ecosystem.

From a wildlife standpoint we have been given a blank canvas as far as early successional habitat. We have the opportunity to use some different management techniques. Everything we do is guided by our Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The right tool in one area may not be the right tool in another area. The toolkit includes prescribed burning, timber stand improvement, herbicides, and stream work. When using fire as a tool, what is to protect the healthy trees? The answer is nothing. There is a lot of fuel on the ground. White oak adapts well to fire and will resprout. We are looking at a 15-20-year process. Jim would like to have a plan in place so that the fire crews can start this fall.

The role archaeologists play in prescribed burning was explained. They do survey work to verify that nothing of culture significance will be disturbed by this undertaking and consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The tornado did not allow for us to do survey work in advance. We are going through the contracting process to get a firm to assist due to the large-scale tornado damaged areas. SHPO will want to see the results from the archaeology report before we burn. How do you protect something like the remnants of an old split rail fence? Leaf blowers are used to blow debris from around the fence posts and fencing for protection. Then after the prescribed fire comes through, we go back and check it again. It would be good if you did some kind of scoping and asked the public for information, if they know of anything in these areas before you burn.

A Board member cautioned about the use of fire in core areas. Jim commented that we have some work to do on this. Some interpretation has shifted, and we need to look into this. When we talk about prescribed burns we are asking ourselves what do we need to do in there and what do we not know in there? We want to make informed decisions.

The group was able to view a short video by Tennessee Heartwood. It is side-by-side comparison of drone footage that shows the tornado damage and the post salvage landscape.

Kudos to your contractor they did a good job in getting the roads back open. Jim explained that the loggers are required to get the roads back up to specifications to avoid sediment yields. Some of those roads are temporary roads, and the authority is really clear that those roads have to go away and will no longer be available after the logging is completed. Yet some of those roads are really great, and the public has come to like some of them. I am open to the idea of retaining some of those roads into the future, but I want to be really clear that I do not currently have any authority to do that. This is part of the NEPA environmental analysis process. The decision could be made to give public access to those roads. We need to consider that some of the temporary roads we might want to retain could draw more visitors than some people may want (i.e., St. Stephens Church), we have to think this through before we make any decisions.

## **History of the Forest Service Presentation by Lincoln Bramwell PhD, Chief Historian**

Why the national forests were created and why we manage them the way that we do.

## **A Heritage of Land and Resource Management Between the Rivers by Chris Thornock, Heritage Program Manager**

The prehistoric uses of the landscape here between the rivers, settling the frontier, the iron industry and their effects on the landscape and historic farming practices.

## **Land and Resource Management Tools & Forest Products by Jim McCoy** [Natural Resources Management Presentation](#)

Hopefully, you can see from today's agenda that the intention is development of a common language and understanding. There will be places that we are not common, but to the degree that we can, everybody being on the same page should help us go about the business of developing a program of work and promotion of LBL. We need a 5-year strategic plan for natural resource management. We also need a master recreation plan and a plan for environmental education.

Jim's Mission: "to protect and manage the resources of LBL for optimum yield of outdoor recreation and environmental education through multiple use management; to authorize, research, test, and demonstrate innovative programs and cost-effective management of the recreation area, to stimulate development of the surrounding region; and to extend the beneficial results as widely as possible."

Foundations:

- Land Between The Lakes Protection Act and the Recreation & Heritage Act
- Land and Resource Management Plan (governs, directs, limits)
  - Land allocation prescriptions, strategy, and design criteria.

National Environmental Policy Act

- National Forest Management Act, Clean Air/Water Acts, Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, etc.

Land Allocations:

- Natural Resource Stewardship Areas
  - General forest, core areas, oak grassland restoration demonstration area, managed wetlands, wildlife refuges and no hunting areas
  - Administrative areas (offices, facilities, infrastructure)
  - Recreation and environmental education areas (campgrounds and visitors centers)

Project Planning:

- Everything flows through NEPA
  - There is a prescribed process for content and public involvement. NEPA at LBL also requires advice from the Board.

- There are four levels of NEPA
  - ✓ Undocumented Categorical Exclusion – No decision required
  - ✓ Documented Categorical Exclusion – Decision Memo
  - ✓ Environmental Assessment – Notice of Decision
  - ✓ Environmental Impact Statement – Record of Decision

NEPA:

- Federal agencies are required to assess the impacts of their actions before they act.
- It encourages informed decision making.
- I am required to choose between alternative actions that might be taken to implement the LRMP.
- For each potential action I must analyze direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to soils, air, water, wildlife, heritage resources, vegetation, access, equity, and a host of other issues.
- My goal should always be to be informed and select optimum solutions.

Vegetation Management on LBL (not a production forest):

- General forest health (age class distribution, structure, species composition, insect/disease pests, resilience).
- Ensuring there is a healthy forest here for generations.

The overall forest condition on LBL is impressive. We have abundant forest cover and mostly large, mature trees that are predominantly white oak, mixed oak, and hardwood.

Challenges:

- Non-native loblolly pine is a serious issue.
- Non-native herb and shrub species are also serious issues.
- Few young trees
- Climate change resilience
- Disturbances (fire)

Lack of fire is a problem as fire favors grasses. The preponderance of science suggests a lot of our forest is overstocked and at risk in the event of a major disturbance baby trees cannot take root and grow. There are many very common disturbances in our forest, including ice and windstorms, drought, and fire. Over time, forest ecosystems adapted to and reached an optimized equilibrium with all disturbances including fire. With respect to forest health there are three factors which are of critical importance: sunlight, rainfall, and disturbances. Fire is the only disturbance factor over which we have even limited control. We cannot control natural disasters; however, we can attempt to control the use of fire to help restore the equilibrium and encourage resilience as well as use chainsaws to help undo the decision to suppress fire.

Fire and tree selection are conservation tools. There are several types of fires with different levels of severity (i.e., unburned/low, moderate, and high) as well as several types of tree selection (i.e., single, group, thinning and clearcut).

Data is needed to set priorities such as where, how, why, when:

- Forest metrics: type, size, age, and health
- Other metrics: soils, air, water, other uses, cultural resources, threatened and endangered species.

We need information, thoughts, and advice on the following pressing issues: tornado recovery, non-native invasive species, non-indigenous species, loblolly pine, sericea lespedeza, non-native olive, age class structure LBL wide, forest overstocking and urban forestry.

Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) is used in a wide range of land management and planning efforts, including hazard assessment, forestry, agriculture, geologic mapping, watershed, and river surveys. The old-fashioned way is putting foresters on the ground with a cost of approximately \$15.00 per acre. We can get LiDAR under \$3.00 per acre. This would be a major acquisition (\$500,000.00) and would be an amazing opportunity to engage with colleges/universities. The use of the data has the potential to go global. Jim asked the Board if use of the Trust Fund would be appropriate. The Board unanimously agreed to the acquisition of LiDAR using the Trust Fund.

The proposed top five strategic priorities for the rest of 2024 are as follows:

- New Maintenance Contract Underway
- New LBLA Agreement
- Tornado Recovery (Environmental Assessment)
- Acquisition (service not equipment) of LiDAR
- Website/POS Up and Running Underway

We are also taking a deep look at the facilities and programming. An operations analysis of the Woodlands Nature Station was done, and we plan to do the same for the Homeplace 1850s, Brandon Spring and the Golden Pond Visitors Center. A copy of the document analysis will be emailed to the Board.

What is your plan for the loblollies and non-natives? Jim said the seed source will be removed with fire and chainsaw work. Other management techniques are herbicides and mastication. The process will be done in zones. Chainsaw crews cut smaller saplings and seedlings after burning. We would contract to sell the larger trees that have commercial value. The money would be used towards eradication efforts.

It seems reasonable to move forward simultaneously with the development of proposed actions for tornado recovery and the removal of loblolly followed by public engagement and analysis. The Board agreed with Jim's proposal.

When you start the process of the tornado recovery, you might want to put up signage explaining what happened here and why are we doing this to educate the public. Also, visuals are good too. A video and/or before and after pictures to tell the story.

How about ideas on education and outreach to student populations? We need to engage students, so they understand and to promote real life application.



- Student experiential learning (i.e., the NEPA process)
- Reach out to 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA)
- Offer junior apprenticeship opportunities to students at the high school level
- Taylor volunteer/community service opportunities to target various age groups

How do you determine where to burn? Where we have data and NEPA. What are some of the other criteria? Humidity levels and wind speed are factors. Seasonality matters as well as fire return intervals. How much staff do you need for fire? On average 10-20. In addition, to our fire staff we have militia. They are not full-time fire but are fire qualified. This was a record year here for acres burned and the number of burns, no fires got out.

Jim was commended for his transparency regarding the smoke from one of the burns. Smoke management is very important to him. Unfortunately, things happen and not everything goes the way we plan or is in our control. The Forest Service has an agreement with the National Weather Service. They are able to provide a spot forecast for the targeted burn area to include smoke density, altitude, and atmospheric instability.

Is there any reason to allow for the growth or expansion of cane breaks? Yes, they are very culturally important to native Americans as well as important ecologically. Soils and hydraulics matter. There are not extensive cane breaks in places where they used to be. This likely falls under our openlands management strategy.

Pre-COVID did you have prisoners assist with efforts on LBL? We tried trail work, but we did not have the resources needed to get it off the ground. It did not work out logistically at the time. We can take another look at it with the understanding that some states have legislation, and we would need to be cognizant of that.

Is there an opportunity to increase the quail population by improving their habitat? Yes, prescribed burning would manage briars and brambles. What about bringing them in and releasing them? That is typically not successful. Many species need fire to survive. Seventy five percent of species adapt to fire.

What is the plan for the Cleo Griffin house? There is no plan yet, but it is on the radar. Restoring and preserving it only makes sense if the story goes along with it. Some ideas for the home are to use it as an interpretive site or retreat for veterans or Fort Campbell.

### **Public Forum**

As no requests were received from members of the public to address the Board this allowed time for the Board to provide the following consolidated comments.

Openlands needs improvement. The brood habitat needs to be enhanced. The number of turkeys harvested from 2013-2023 have declined. They are being overhunted and the population cannot handle this level. Recommends a quota hunt system or possibly even having a closed season.



Would like to see an increase in youth visitation and getting kids outdoors. Suggested partnering with the National Wildlife Turkey Federation and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Resources on educational programming. Other ideas are living history walking tours and trivia nights.

Need to continue to work on roads maintenance and access to cemeteries, lakes and boat ramps as well as improving wildlife viewing opportunities.

Expressed concern about damage being done by vehicles operating in unauthorized areas and also trail damage caused by horses (i.e., mid-section of North South trail).

Please ensure all Board members are on the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) email list.

### **Closing Statement by Rick Lint, Chairperson**

The recent changes outlined in the Recreation and Heritage Act changes how we are required to interact with the Board. The changing of those few words from may to shall reframes our relationship. We shall provide you information and context on which you shall advise us. We do not want silent partners; we need and value your input. Thank you for your time and commitment.

The decision was made to reconvene on September 24 and 25, 2024, allowing for the option of a field trip on one of those days.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

**JOHN LINT** Digitally signed by JOHN LINT  
Date: 2024.06.10 21:14:57  
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John Richard “Rick” Lint  
Chairperson

These minutes will be formally considered by the Board at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.