

LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES ADVISORY BOARD SUMMARY OF MEETING

October 19, 2022

The Land Between the Lakes (LBL) Advisory Board (Board) convened at 9:00 A.M. on October 19, 2022, at the Forest Service Administrative Office Building, 100 Van Morgan Drive, Golden Pond, Kentucky 42211. Rick Lint, Chairperson introduced Leisa Cook as the new Designated Federal Officer (DFO).

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/about/working-together/advisory-board/>.

Board members present:

Walter Battle-virtual	Patrick Lemons	Abigale Smith
Derek Beard-virtual	Keith Murt	Russell Tilford
Brian Clark	Della Oliver	Ski Witzofsky
Nancy Dawson	Melissa Parker	Johnny Wall
Donnie Holland	Bill Purkes	De'Etra Young-virtual

Board staff present:

Rick Lint, Chairperson
Leisa Cook, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
Christine Bombard, Administrative Liaison

Facilitators:

Tina Blancett, Facilitator
Jeanne Thomas, Facilitator

Forest Service staff present:

Jared Baker, Business Performance Staff Officer
Chris Joyner, Public Affairs/Communications Staff Officer
Jamey Thweatt, Customer Service Staff Officer
John Westbrook, Environmental Stewardship Staff Officer
Carlin Lewis, Public Affairs Specialist
Emily Cleaver, Visitor Information Specialist

Others present for all or a portion of the meeting:

Jaime Greene, Lyon County Judge Executive
John Ruffli

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST:

The new appointees were welcomed, they are as follows: Brian Clark, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Nancy Dawson, USDA Kentucky, Keith Murt, Governor of Kentucky, Patrick Lemons, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Russ Tilford, Governor of Kentucky,

Susan “Ski” Witzofsky, Stewart County Tennessee, Abby Smith, USDA Kentucky, Melissa Parker, Stewart County Tennessee, Walter Battle, USDA Tennessee, De’Etra Young, USDA Tennessee, and Derek Beard, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

Rick Lint shared that this is the 50th Anniversary of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Advisory committees have played an important role in shaping programs and policies of the federal government dating back to when President George Washington sought the advice of such a committee during the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794.

Since this is the first time in five years that we are meeting he read the description of duties from the Charter. Today we will talk about the Board Bylaws, and Forest Service staff will provide an overview of LBL’s department areas including fiscal year (FY) 2022 accomplishments and engage with the Board on FY 2023 high-level planned projects.

We recently established an email inbox that is specific to the Board. Please use the following email address for Board business: SM.FS.LBL_AdBoard@usda.gov. Also, Board information is on our website: <https://landbetweenthelakes.us/about/working-together/advisory-board/>.

Special guest Andrew Tobin, Deputy Director of the Office of Ethics in Washington, D.C. for the Department of Agriculture joined the meeting virtually, to provide an ethics overview.

BYLAWS

Tina Blancett, Facilitator explained that the Bylaws date back to 2005, so we are going to review them and discuss changes.

The request was made to consider additional meetings besides the two per year as stated in the Bylaws. Board members expressed concern about not meeting during the past several years. Leisa Cook explained that was due to a range of factors (i.e., administrative hold, Charter expiring and COVID). She shared that we are planning to get a head start on the Charter renewal process to hopefully avoid that happening again in the future.

The recommendation was made to look into precedence. The request was made for clarification as to overarching authority. Is it the Protection Act (Act), FACA or federal law? The comment was made that Board member appointments and term limits should be looked into as well. Leisa will research precedence, appointing authority limitations, if any and term limits.

The suggestion was made to add diversity to the Bylaws. It is important to remember history and to enhance and encourage diversity of cultures. That piece is currently missing but if it is reflected in the Bylaws and it is encouraged; then, people will act upon it. The statement was made that heritage should be included as well.

Other items for consideration are the use of acronyms when it should be spelled out (i.e., DFO). Meeting access needs to reflect current technology to let everyone know that meetings are now accessible online to enhance public participation. Also, the request was made to formulate subcommittees if allowable and also the use of an online communication tool for the Board, so that communication was ongoing and information sharing could extend beyond the meetings.

The comment was made that there is nothing about any governance or anything by the parliamentary, typically boards operate with a motion and then a second, etc. A Board member cautioned that we need to ensure that the proposed changes to the Bylaws do not conflict with the Charter, the Act or FACA guidelines.

UNIT OVERVIEW

Leisa Cook explained that as DFO it is up to her to make sure that these meetings take place and that we collaborate with the Board. Building and maintaining partnerships is very important. We are talking to our neighbors and will soon be talking to the newly elected appointed officials about what we are thinking, what we need to do and see what impact it may have on them, if any.

She shared that staffing levels across the unit are down about 40%. We are working hard and using the tools (i.e., Demonstration Authority) available to us to recruit good people to come work here. I am hoping to use the fact that we have Demonstration Authority to bring folks here to help us come up with new ways to do business, be more effective and efficient while remaining cognizant of those that used to live here and the history of this place.

The timber salvage sales project and cleanup after the tornadoes has taken up a great deal of our time, but it is worthwhile time. This work will likely continue for another year and a half or more. As the recovery work continues, we hope to bring back more native species in terms of wildlife.

Civil rights and the safety of our visitors and staff are also priorities. For additional information: <https://landbetweenthelakes.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Area-Supervisor-Advisory-Board-Doc.-.pdf>

Jared Baker, Business Performance (BP) Staff Officer explained that the BP department is unique with the Forest Service, what they do revolves around the Act. They manage everything from finance to budget to accounting, as well as contracting, grants, agreements, and acquisition management. His staff assists the other departments by setting the budgets, strategic planning, and management. LBL operates approximately 50% off revenues. That is different than any other Forest Service unit. Since 50% of our operating budget is based on revenues, we have to look at every facility from a cost recovery standpoint. For additional information: <https://landbetweenthelakes.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Business-Performance-Advisory-Board-Doc..pdf>

Chris Joyner, Public Affairs Staff Officer explained that public affairs among federal agencies involves internal messaging, external messaging, and community relations. The Act says that one of our responsibilities is to stimulate the region. We take that to mean economically stimulate the region. We do this with what we call brand awareness marketing. You will not see other National Forests marketing to promote visitation, but because of the Act and our Demonstration Authority we can do that here. For additional information: <https://landbetweenthelakes.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Communications-Advisory-Board-Doc..pdf>

Jamey Thweatt, Customer Service (CS) Staff Officer shared that he replaced Jeff Laird, who recently retired. He explained that the CS department is responsible for recreation, engineering, environmental education, heritage, archaeology, and special uses. Under recreation, we have three developed campgrounds: Hillman Ferry, Wranglers, and Piney. These three campgrounds are

considered regional priority sites. We have over 450 miles of trails that include equestrian and water trails. There are approximately 80 water trail access areas now. Boat ramps and picnic areas also fall under recreation. For environmental education we have the Nature Station, Planetarium and Observatory, Brandon Spring and the 1850s Homeplace. For additional information: <https://landbetweenthelakes.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Customer-Service-Advisory-Board-Doc..pdf>

John Westbrook, Environmental Stewardship (ES) Staff Officer explained that the ES department is responsible for wildlife, timber, water, soil, South Bison Range, Elk and Bison Prairie (EBP) and the fire program. An advantage that we have here over other units is that we have control over our restricted hunts (i.e., turkey and deer) on our public lands. The Tenant Farmer Program also falls under his shop. The farmers represent an opportunity for us to keep our open lands open, many of the old home places are maintained by tenant farmers.

John addressed the timber salvage sales and assured everyone that we are staying way inside the footprint of the affected areas. We have over 10,000 acres that were impacted, and we are actively managing 4,500 acres that have been deemed severe and catastrophic. We are finding ways to put that money back on the ground at LBL. One of the first places you will see it is in the roads to the cemeteries and places that are frequently visited. For additional information: <https://landbetweenthelakes.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Environmental-Stewardship-Advisory-Board-Doc..pdf>

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FUTURE PROJECTS

Jared Baker explained that during the pandemic visitation was a little lower and that we were not able to accomplish some things that we wanted to. The BP department is gearing up to help all the program managers and staff to get their programs back to pre-pandemics levels. We will be working with them on their budgets, programs, projects, and business strategies.

Prior to the pandemic, BP implemented an Operations Analysis of the Nature Station (NS). We stood up a round-table group comprised of Forest Service and Land Between the Lakes Association staff to come up with ways to improve NS operations. He shared that he is a firm believer that the way to increase revenues is not by increasing fees, it is about increasing visitation. Currently, the NS is nowhere near capacity. The draft is in the process of being finalized. In FY 2023, we will start on the Homeplace Operations Analysis.

Chris Joyner commended the local elected officials for their continued efforts in keeping the Board in the forefront, having this forum to communicate is so very important. The input you provide to the Secretary of Agriculture is incredibly valuable.

Chris shared that Carlin Lewis has been working on a transportation project. Outdated kiosks will be replaced, and new signage is now on display at EBP. Also, the National Visitor Use Monitoring survey is a critical piece for trying to identify key markets and key groups to get our message out to. We have not had a good source for this information since the last survey in 2012. In the future, he would like a discussion about how to reach other communities and underserved populations. We will utilize the data from the survey to strategize our brand awareness marketing to improve visitation moving forward.

Jamey Thweatt shared that archaeology/heritage staff is partnering with the National Park Service on a Trail of Tears project. Interpretive panels that will be installed at Fenton and the post timber salvage sales surveys will continue into FY 2023. Engineering has road maintenance planned for FY 2023 and a portion of the proceeds from the timber salvage sales will be put towards roads with culvert replacements planned as well.

We received a Recreational Trails Program Grant from the Kentucky Department of Transportation. We have approximately \$1.2 million to spend on trails. Those funds have to be spent in Kentucky, so we are planning work on the Central Hardwoods Trail, North/South Trail, Hematite parking area, blind overlook and two bridge replacements. Road improvement to enhance access to water trails is also on the list.

A new entrance sign is being designed for the Homeplace. We have been working with HistoriCorps, a nonprofit organization that does period type work. They also replaced the roof on the Double Pen House and other buildings there. Wi-Fi is being installed at Brandon Spring, we are considering additional future upgrades and plan to address deferred maintenance needs there.

We will be taking a look at parking challenges at Hillman Ferry and Piney Campgrounds due RVs increasing in size. At the dispersed areas and lake access, we will be working on routing access, road maintenance, hazard tree mitigation and just overall maintenance as needed.

Contracting has moved to the USDA level. So, we no longer have an in-house contracting officer. Procurement for big projects is awarded through contracts.

A Board member commented that there is a need to improve accessibility. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant improvements/upgrades should be made. The suggestion was made to consider scooter rentals. Jamey stated that we will look at the guidelines and see what can be done, we need to be sure we are being fair and equitable to all user groups.

John Westbook shared that he estimates that we will be putting half a million tons of salvage timber into the local economy over the next couple of years. Other things that we are doing, given our Demonstration Authority, is we have done work with the Geospatial Technology Application Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. They brought in specialized aircraft that allowed us to track the exact path of the storms and classify them into one of the four categories. Monitoring will continue to take place here over the next year.

The wildlife program is looking at Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and potential impacts to the elk herd. He explained that we are looking at the possibility of double fencing the EBP. We cannot keep CWD out because of avian predators/scavengers that are known to roost in the trees inside EBP.

Also, we have been utilizing agreements with our partners at the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for our invasive species program. They bring in aerial operations to assist us with the feral hogs. He also expressed support for our partners at Fish and Wildlife with the modified unified method to address the issue of Asian carp.

John was asked about the progress that was being made towards the eradication of the feral hogs. He advised that we are using all the tools available to us. There is no cost to us with APHIS; other

than, our personnel costs relating to safety and that the trapping program is active year-round.

The Forest Service was given kudos by a Board member for our response to the tornado damage. He stated that he has seen improvement from the way this situation was handled in the past. Before damaged timber laid on the ground so long it was no longer marketable. From what I am hearing, this is something that has been resolved. We are grateful for the improved management and for the funds that will be returned to LBL. John commented that our Demonstration Authority helped expedite the process and confirmed that revenues from the timber salvage sales would remain at LBL.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Board members generated the following list of topics for future meetings:

- Discuss duties and goals for new Board members.
- Tornado logging plan and proceeds.
- Recreational shooting and educational opportunities.
- Discussion of impacts and mitigation of invasive species.
- Usage of fee restructure of campgrounds.
- ADA issues
- eBike restrictions from all trails.
- Begin historical field trip/tours.
- Editing Bylaws.
- Fill vacant positions in the ES department, currently at 30%.
- Promote timber harvest to improve wildlife habitat, and as a funding source for cultural activities.
- Transition to native grass/forbs as primary food source for the Bison; not fescue.
- Heritage/culture.
- Possibly visit other national recreation areas/parks for ideas.
- Enhancement of early successional wildlife habitats for imperiled species.
- Concerned about the number of vacancies on the organizational chart.
- Education programs.
- Public awareness of LBL and its opportunities (regional and national).
- Have a discussion on the most effective way for the public to make comments.
- Add, study, highlight, encourage and enhance diversity of people and culture at LBL.

Board members generated the following list of ways to improve communication with the Board and members of the public:

- Getting internet to surrounding agencies/communication between organizations.
- Guidance for Board members on working with Forest Service staff.
- Need more emails regarding comments, projects, and environmental education.
- Sharing of events and other (i.e., mailing lists).
- Business performance.
- Committee development and involvement.
- Timely update of online collaboration tool.
- Marketing-promotion/brochures versus online.
- Improve/increase public awareness (i.e., NEPA projects/process).

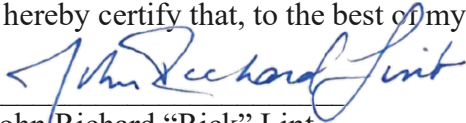
NEXT STEPS

Leisa Cook made the commitment to provide an update to the Board in January regarding the questions and concerns that were brought forth today. She also stated that we will refer to the list of topics that was generated when planning future agendas. The decision was made to hold the next meeting on April 11, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

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



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.