MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF

WHITE LAKE PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

Chairman Steve Linscombe opened the White Lake Property Advisory Board meeting held at the LSU Ag Center Rice Research Station in Crowley, LA and asked Ms. Lana Guidry to call the roll. The following members were present:

Steve Linscombe
Richard Hines
Sammy Noel
Don Hale
Miriam Davey
Sean Gayle
R. Martin Guidry
Armond Schwing
Eddie Young

The following members were absent:

Karl Connor
Nathan Granger
Buddy Leach

Introduction of New Board Members

Ms. Miriam Davey introduced herself and stated she is from Baton Rouge, originally from north Louisiana, but has lived in Baton Rouge for approximately 30 years. Ms. Davey stated she has been hosting radio shows lately on the local public station WRKF about science, nature and public policy and she has also been a natural tour guide and participated in public natural history education. She is an active birder and an active hunter and fisherwoman, with a special interest in fly fishing and deer hunting. Ms. Davey represents the Louisiana Wildlife Federation and is pleased to serve the public in this capacity.

Mr. Marty Guidry introduced himself and stated he is from Baton Rouge. Mr. Guidry said he retired from Dupont about a year ago after 30 years of doing chemical research and environmental work. Mr. Guidry stated he is representing the Louisiana Ornithological Society.

Mr. Armond Schwing introduced himself and stated he is from New Iberia and is an insurance agent. Mr. Schwing said he is representing Ducks Unlimited and that he is the

2008 Louisiana State Chairman for that organization. Mr. Schwing stated that he isn't much of a birder although he likes to shoot a bunch of them. Mr. Schwing said he is glad to be a part of the Board and looks forward to learning what White Lake offers to the public.

Approval of Minutes of May 22, 2007 Meeting

Chairman Linscombe deferred approval of the minutes of the May 22, 2007 meeting until later in the meeting to give the new board members an opportunity to review.

Department Financial Report

Ms. Wynnette Kees presented the board members with a financial report as of April 30, 2008. Ms. Kees reported to the Board the current year budget, and revenues and expenditures for the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area. The actual revenue is $946,527 and the expenditures total $547,865, with a total remaining budget of $416,524. It was pointed out to the new board members that the fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30. Chairman Linscombe inquired if the FEMA reimbursements were received in full or would more payments be forthcoming and he was informed that the FEMA reimbursements have been received in full. Chairman Linscombe inquired if the agricultural lease payments were forthcoming and Mr. Sweeney stated that one farmer has put a check in the mail, but the other three farmers have not been able because of the Farm Bill not being signed yet and that he has been informed that those farmers will not receive their payments until October. Mr. Sweeney said the payments will be made, but not until in October. He said these farmers will be paying their leases all at one time later in the year. Mr. Hines inquired why the report was only showing approximately $30,000 for alligator egg collection instead of the projected $150,000. Mr. Sweeney informed Mr. Hines that the money from alligator egg collection is collected in June and July but that we should get an additional $150,000 from them in June before this fiscal years ends and then in July we should get another $34,000, depending on how many eggs he collects. Mr. Sweeney stated that revenue listed on the report was collected in July 2007. Mr. Hines also inquired about mineral rents and why the report isn't showing a rental check on the lease at Clear Lake for 2007-2008. Mr. Hines said that this is a three year lease and we received a bonus and a rental, but we are due another $43,102 rental this year. Mr. Hines asked Mr. Don Puckett or Mr. Benny Rousselle to check into this matter.

<u>Committee Reports</u>

Finance Committee

There was no report from the Finance Committee.

Education and Outreach Committee

Chairman Linscombe informed the Board that Dr. Beverly Wade who represents Southern University and is Chairperson for the Education and Outreach Committee, is no

longer able to serve on the Board and she has tendered her resignation. Chairman Linscombe said we will need to replace her as Chair of the Committee, as well as on the Board.

Natural Resources Committee

Mr. Hines addressed the Board and stated the Natural Resources Committee has not met but stated there was a surface lease that was given to an oil company who has yet to use that to drill a well. Mr. Hines reported that there is some ongoing construction and said Mr. Sweeney has some meetings with some of the companies doing business on the property in the upcoming week which he will report back to the Board.

Agriculture Committee

Mr. Noel addressed the Board and stated that Mr. Sweeney had touched on some of the issues regarding the agriculture leases. Mr. Noel explained to the new board members that we had existing leases with farmers when the property was donated and these original farmers are still on the property. Mr. Noel informed them of the damage to the property from Hurricane Rita left the protection levees in bad shape and had plenty of saltwater intrusion which in turn prevented the planting of rice on the property for one year and the economic downturn in the rice industry did not make it any better. Mr. Noel said the farmers were given a second year of reprieve from planting and they were given an opportunity to do in-kind work for their leases, which some fixed levees and things of that nature. Mr. Noel reported that the farmers will be planting rice this year. Chairman Linscombe reported that for most of the areas, due to the rainfall over the past 2 ½ years, most of the salt levels are low enough where rice can be planted. Mr. Sweeney reported that the farmers with the 800 acres south of the Intracoastal Canal had begun planting rice yesterday.

Pending Legislation

Mr. Benny Rousselle gave the board members a copy of Senate Bill 12, which has already passed through the Senate. Mr. Rousselle informed the Board that SB 12 revises the membership composition of the White Lake Property Advisory Board by allowing one member be appointed from a list of two nominees submitted by the Vermilion Parish School Board. Mr. Rousselle stated that SB 12 was being heard this morning by the House Natural Resources Committee and according to Secretary Angelle there may be some technical amendments, but he isn't sure what the technical amendments will be.

Mr. Don Puckett addressed the Board regarding SB 12 and stated he suggested the removal from section 799.4 of Paragraph 7 (b), which makes reference to White Lake Preservation, Inc., since that corporation is in the process of dissolving itself, and will not be submitting any nominees for the Board. Mr. Puckett said he also suggested taking the words "At-Large" out of Sub-Paragraphs (8) and (9) because technically if they are representing the Ward and the School Board, they are not "At-Large" members. Mr. Puckett stated that these may possibly be some of the technical amendments.

Mr. Hale inquired if Mr. Puckett or Mr. Rousselle knew what they as board members would have to disclose under this disclosure process that has come about in the last year. Mr. Puckett informed the Board that he submitted a letter to the Board of Ethics requesting a formal opinion as to whether the White Lake Property Advisory Board members would have disclose under Act 1 of the First Extraordinary Session of 2008. Mr. Puckett informed the Board, for those who are not aware of Act 1, this Act requires for any board that spends $1,000,000 or more annually, its members have to file an individual financial disclosure statement. Mr. Puckett stated that he doesn't feel this will apply to the White Lake Property Advisory Board members, but he will let the Board know the formal opinion once the Board of Ethics rules.

Mr. Hale also inquired if there was any way that the board members could be reimbursed from the State for their traveling. Mr. Hale stated he was not referring to food or lodging, but only to be reimbursed for traveling to and from board meetings. Mr. Hale said he felt like there may be some consideration given to how much money a member has involved in gas to travel to and from meetings. Mr. Puckett said he would have to consult the Act to determine if they could be reimbursed.

Update on White Lake Hunting Season

Mr. Sweeney addressed the Board and reported that they received 326 applications for the teal lottery hunt with a total of 9 hunts and 108 participants. He reported for the youth hunt they hunted 2 mornings and received 94 applications and they hunted 8 kids each morning for a total of 16 hunters. Mr. Sweeney said they hunted 8 mornings for the marsh lottery hunt with a total of 652 applications received. He said 48 participants were selected and each participant was allowed to bring a guest for a total of 96 hunters. Mr. Sweeney reported for the rice field lottery there were 207 participants out of the 1220 applications received, which was quite an increase from the previous year. Mr. Sweeney stated there was a total of 14 two-day group hunts granted for the 2007-2008 season. Mr. Sweeney said these are completely outfitted hunts that we charge $25,000 for and there were 140 participants. He stated those hunts generated $350,000 in gross revenue.

Mr. Sweeney reported for the marsh hunt they had an average kill per hunter of 4.48 ducks, with a total kill of 2,954 ducks; and an average kill per hunter of 0.3 geese, with a total kill of 198 geese. Mr. Sweeney reported for the rice field hunt there was an average kill per hunter of 1.97 ducks, with a total kill of 373 ducks; and an average kill per hunter of 0.43 geese, with a total kill of 82. He said this is a slight decrease from the previous two years.

Mr. Hines inquired if Mr. Sweeney thought the marsh or rice fields could sustain an increase in all of the hunts. Mr. Sweeney stated they hunted 36 mornings and he said the first year the property was donated when White Lake Corporation managed it; they hunted 40 mornings and the group hunters that had been coming thought that was hunting too much and if they continued to hunt the property that much they would not come back. Mr. Sweeney said he doesn't know if it was a result of over-hunting or slack periods

because there were several hunts in January that weren't good. Mr. Sweeney said he would hate to see it increase too much more than that. Mr. Sweeney said the east side marsh that hasn't been hunted too much, if staff were available, as well as boats and other needed equipment, may be a good place to put four blinds. Mr. Sweeney said the hunting would be just as good as what is on the west side. He said they could hold 20 – 25 morning hunts per year and still hold hunts on the west side marsh. Mr. Sweeney stated this is one possible way to increase hunts without over-hunting the marsh. Mr. Hines asked Mr. Sweeney to look into the costs of this and report his findings back to the Board at the next meeting. Mr. Young moved to increase the costs of the group hunts from $25,000 to $30,000 and it was seconded by Mr. Gayle. The motion passed with no opposition.

White Lake Area Master Plan

Dr. Bruce Sharky introduced himself and graduate student Jack Milazzo to the Board. Dr. Sharky stated he is Professor of Landscape Architect at LSU and said he, Jack and Reily Strauss have been working on the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area Master Plan for approximately nine months. Dr. Sharky provided a model of a visitor's/education center. Dr. Sharky informed the Board that he would provide a budget at a later date. Dr. Sharky provided board members with a draft White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area Visitor and Education Facilities Master Plan. This Master Plan includes building designs, trails, proposed parking and boat launching, and is attached hereto and made part of the record.

Chairman Linscombe requested to defer this agenda item to later in the meeting to discuss Agenda Item 12 – Fishing Permit Program Update in order to allow Mr. Hines to participate, as Mr. Hines had to leave soon to travel on other business.

Fishing Permit Program Update

Mr. Gayle inquired how many fishing permit applications were received this year and Mr. Sweeney reported there were 98 applications received and 75 permits were issued. Mr. Gayle wanted to see the Board's and the Department's opinions of whether or not the number of permits should be increased. Mr. Gayle proposes to increase the number of permits issued from 75 to 100. Mr. Hines stated the reason for not increasing the number of permits issued in the past is because of the accessibility; there is only one boat launch which is a couple of miles north of here and the only place to park is on the side of the road and the Police Jury has requested to keep it limited until a new boat launch is available. Mr. Sweeney said a boat launch is one issue and the levees are another issue. Mr. Noel requests department biologists monitor the fishing over the summer and determine if it is feasible to increase the number of permits issued. Mr. Noel moved to increase the number of fishing permits issued from 75 to 100 at the discretion of Department if determined this is feasible by department biologists. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gayle and passed with no opposition.

Status of Boat Launch

Mr. Gayle informed the Board that some people have approached him and stated they would be willing to fund the boat launch as a private matter. Chairman Linscombe asked if these people understood that a boat launch costs about $350,000 and Mr. Gayle said they can raise the money. Mr. Noel suggested they raise the money and donate it to the State. Mr. Sweeney reminded Mr. Gayle that a parking lot will be needed along with this boat launch. Ms. Davey suggested that the money be run through the Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation. Mr. Noel stated that if the State puts in a boat launch, it would be a public boat launch, and they could not prevent people from using it to access the Intracoastal Canal. Chairman Linscombe suggested to Mr. Gayle that he continue trying to raise the funds for this project.

White Lake Area Master Plan (Continued)

Dr. Sharky stated he is going to submit in a separate letter an estimate of probable costs.

Mr. Young moved to approve the work done up to this point on the Master Plan and it was seconded by Mr. Noel. The motion passed with no opposition.

Discussion on Vermilion Parish School Board Land Swap

Mr. Puckett addressed the Board and informed them that there is Senate Bill 352 authored by Senator Gautreaux and Representative Perry which has cleared the Senate and is the House Natural Resource Committee this morning. Mr. Puckett said essentially this legislation proposes to authorize a land swap between the School Board and the Department for those two parcels of land. Mr. Puckett stated the land the Department owns is 340 acres and the land owned by the School Board is a full section and is 640 acres. Mr. Puckett said it is going through the process and there is no apparent opposition that we are aware. Mr. Puckett also stated that on April 16, 2008 Mr. Karl Connor sent a letter to the staff of the Senate Natural Resources Committee conditionally indicating approval of this transfer from BP.

America's Wetlands Birding Trail Proposal

Mr. Gayle introduced Ms. Allison Miller, Vermilion Parish Tourist Commission to the Board. Mr. Gayle stated he would like to suggest to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to sponsor to get White Lake on the Birding Trail. Ms. Miller addressed the Board and stated after investigating she learned that only public places are selected to be on the Birding Trails and there are a lot of stipulations. Ms. Miller said it has to have public access, places for birders to pull off the roadway, and other criteria. Chairman Linscombe stated until there is public access and places to park, it wouldn't meet the criteria. Ms. Miller stated you can nominate the property once the Master Plan is in place. Chairman Linscombe said that some point in time when we have better accessibility we can make an effort to try to get the property included, but right now this is just informational.

Other Business

Chairman Linscombe asked Mr. Sweeney to coordinate with the new board members to give them a tour of the property. Chairman Linscombe also requested that Mr. Sweeney let the other board members know of the date in the event they would like to participate.

Mr. Noel requested to schedule the next meeting at the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area.

Approval of Minutes of May 22, 2007 Meeting (Continued)

Chairman Linscombe called for a motion for approval of the minutes of the May 22, 2007 meeting. A motion for approval was made by Mr. Guidry and seconded by Mr. Noel. The motion passed with no opposition.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Mr. Puckett addressed the Board and informed them that according to Act 613 that created the Board, the Board shall serve without compensation, and there is no specific provision for Board members to receive transportation expenses. That would take legislation. The Board sought to pursue adding expenses provision onto SB 12. Mr. Hale moved to request payment for mileage reimbursement for board members traveling to and from board meetings and Mr. Gayle seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

The next regular Advisory Board meeting will be held at the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area and will be scheduled at a later date.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Linscombe asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Gayle moved to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Mr. Noel.

Robert J. Barham

RJB:lg

(The preceding constitute minutes of the Advisory Board Meeting and are not a verbatim transcript of the proceedings.)