

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**OF**  
**WHITE LAKE PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD**

**Friday, May 22, 2007**

Chairman Steve Linscombe opened the White Lake Property Advisory Board meeting held at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in Baton Rouge, LA and asked Ms. Lana Guidry to call the roll. The following members were present:

Steve Linscombe  
Richard Hines  
Sammy Noel  
Don Hale (arrived at 11:00)  
Karl Connor  
Sean Gayle  
Gay Gomez  
Nathan Granger (arrived at 9:42)  
Dr. Beverly Wade  
Eddie Young

The following members were absent:

Buddy Leach  
Darwin Miller

**Approval of Minutes of January 26, 2007 Meeting**

Chairman Linscombe called for a motion for approval of the minutes of the January 26, 2007 meeting. A motion for approval was made by Mr. Sean Gayle and seconded by Dr. Beverly Wade. The motion passed with no opposition.

**Department Financial Report**

Ms. Wynnette Kees presented the board members with a financial report as of April 30, 2007. Ms. Kees reported to the board that the fiscal year 2006-2007 projected revenue for the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area was \$1,200,750 and the actual revenue is \$1,068,616, as well as the approved budget was \$902,458 and expenditures are \$514,216. Chairman Linscombe inquired if the \$250,000 that was requested to be earmarked for outreach and education in a motion which carried at the January 26, 2007 meeting was included in revenue and was informed it is still listed in the revenue. Ms. Kees stated that she can separate it on the report but there is no way in the accounting system for the amount to be separated. Chairman Linscombe said that with the understanding that that money is to be earmarked he did not see a need for her to do that.

Chairman Linscombe called for a motion to accept the financial report. Mr. Richard Hines moved to accept the financial report and Mr. Sammy Noel seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Finance Committee**

There was no report from the Finance Committee.

#### **Education and Outreach Committee**

Dr. Wade addressed the Board and thanked Dr. Gay Gomez for her report at the last board meeting. Dr. Wade stated that the nature trail is in a good developmental stage and is ongoing. Dr. Wade said she polled the committee members if there were any concerns and unfinished business of the committee and she had one respondent, Mr. Gayle, who addressed the Board regarding the master use plan. Mr. Gayle stated that a while back there was a request to check into hiring someone to create a master use plan. Chairman Linscombe stated he has been working on that and he has contacted the Director of the School of Design on the LSU campus. He stated he had some very good discussions with him about the possibility of using advanced students in their senior year to come in and do a comprehensive design project. Chairman Linscombe stated the Director is very interested in what we would be requiring and thought it would be a very appropriate project for that group to take upon themselves. Chairman Linscombe said as far as the finances, it would not be that expensive. He said it would actually only require some travel monies, overnight monies and things like this. Chairman Linscombe stated he found out this past week in speaking to Dr. Mike Liffman, who is with the LSU Sea Grant Program on the LSU campus, that this project would qualify as some coastal work that would fall under Sea Grant and they have used this same group on projects they had in the past. Dr. Liffman informed Chairman Linscombe that the Sea Grant Program actually has some money in credit that Sea Grant could probably provide for us to use for this project. Chairman Linscombe feels this is a very good approach to do this and believes we can get quality work done without spending a substantial amount of money. Chairman Linscombe said the next step is to bring the appropriate people from the School of Design to visit with Mr. Brandt Savoie and Mr. Phil Bowman and get some ground work put together. Ms. Kees informed the board that preliminary discussions are fine, but once it is determined what work will be performed and how much it will cost, there will need to be a formal written contract which must go the approval process within the Department.

#### **Natural Resources Committee**

Mr. Hines addressed the Board and stated the Natural Resources Committee has not met but there has been some activity out on the area. Mr. Hines commended Mr. Wayne Sweeney and Mike Windham for putting together very good surface lease agreements. He said BP had some leases left on the property and the area was able to get some new

pumps, a new boat dock in the impoundment, and some surface lease money through the work of Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Windham. Mr. Hines stated there are some other activities that will occur in the future and there is a very good agreement in place.

### **Agriculture Committee**

Mr. Noel addressed the Board and stated that letters were sent to all of the agriculture lease holders. He stated there was not much desire to plant a rice crop this year due to the land situation and costs associated with planting. Mr. Noel stated the notice that was sent out to leaseholders said the leaseholders would have to pay their rental no later than May 31, 2007. Mr. Noel informed the board that no payments have yet been received but indications are the majority, if not all, will pay their lease and with that they will have the obligation of maintaining the property. This includes keeping it pumped off so it does not revert back to wetlands, maintaining control over the Chinese Tallow trees, and keeping the property mowed. Mr. Noel stated the Department has exempted the farmers from having to plant a rice crop this year. He presumes this is a one year exemption; however, they are mandated to pay their lease so the area will have the income from the lease. Mr. Noel stated if they refuse to pay the lease or they decide they want to get out of their lease, those contracts will be opened up for public bid. Mr. Sweeney stated he has talked to all four of the farmers and two have indicated they are definitely paying but he is unsure about the other two. Mr. Noel requested the Department contact the Agriculture Committee if any of the leaseholders decide not to stay before the lease(s) are placed out on public bid.

Chairman Linscombe inquired of the situation with the leaseholder that had the lease that contained land owned by White Lake and by the School Board. Mr. Sweeney stated that lease is going to have to be placed on public bid. Mr. Sweeney said he has talked to the School Board and they may be interested in possibly doing a swap for the property in the refuge that we are leasing from them for \$11,500 per year for Section 15, the property that Mr. Stelly leases from us which adjoins the section Mr. Stelly leases from them. In the past, Mr. Sweeney said Mr. Stelly has leased our property and also the property from the School Board and it has worked out well. Mr. Sweeney feels if the School Board would agree to a lease swap and if we can legally do that, it may be something we would want to consider because the revenue we receive off that piece of property is approximately \$8,000 per year. Mr. Sweeney stated if the swap does not take place we would have to open that piece of property for public bid. Mr. Noel stated that the School Board would not be able to pump off their property without our property and that it has been a tradition for years that the same tenant leases both pieces of property. Mr. Noel feels that we would not create a real good working relationship with the School Board if we went out there and refused to allow them to continue draining through our property, especially while they have a section of land sitting right in the center of the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area. Mr. Hines stated that it sounds like a swap would be more beneficial to both parties at this point. Mr. Puckett stated that this is a possibility and he met with officials from the State Land Office a couple of weeks ago and there is a statute that would permit this swap to take place, if agreeable with the School Board. Mr. Puckett said we would, at that point in time, need to get express written approval in some

form from BP since the land would be swapped, not a swap in title, but rather mutual leases and the title would remain in the respective parties. He said we would have to get permission from BP to allow that to take place because of the donation that was made says all land within the four corners of the donation has to be used for conservation purposes. Mr. Puckett stated technically, we would be taking that land out of conservation purposes and putting it in use of the School Board. Mr. Noel requested that Mr. Puckett keep the Agriculture Committee updated on this issue and if there is something they could do to address the School Board in Vermilion Parish they would be glad to do so.

Chairman Linscombe asked Mr. Sweeney to address the Board on vandalism occurring on the property. Mr. Sweeney informed the Board of the kiosk being vandalized a couple of times and said that is the only problems that have occurred on the property. Mr. Sweeney said he feels that with the small amount of vandalism which has occurred he is not sure if anyone living in the house on the property could have prevented this from happening since it is probably kids doing this in the early hours of the morning. Mr. Sweeney stated that they may want to start locking the gate and see if any other problems occur and/or possibly talk to the Sheriff's Department and ask them to patrol a little more, but he is not sure this is anything that can be prevented by putting Roger in the house or not. Mr. Gayle stated he has concerns for when the property becomes utilized more in the future and more activity occurs on the property and at the lodge, he is concerned that nobody will be there with regards to the major asset of the property. Mr. Gayle feels there will be more opportunity also with the fishermen because they could go under the cable and if they wanted to do harm they could. Mr. Sweeney suggested perhaps putting a better gate up at the entrance canal where the skeet range is to possibly prevent people from going there. Mr. Gayle added that putting up some surveillance or security system may be an option.

### **Re-consideration of Non-Consumptive Component WLWCA Management Plan**

Mr. Puckett addressed the Board and stated there are a few proposed changes on the Non-Consumptive Component Management Plan.

Mr. Puckett stated that first change was suggested by the Chairman and is simply to make it clear that with regard to a non-consumptive use of the facility, which is day use or overnight use of the lodge, that an exemption from the cost would only take place when it is a state, federal or local agency or university conducting research or educational activities in cooperation with the Department or a benefit to White Lake or the Department. Mr. Puckett said the commission chairman had some concerns to tighten down the exemption language as much as possible and it does not make any real substantive change from what was approved at the last meeting. Mr. Puckett stated that language appears three times; it appears under daily use, overnight use, and boat tours.

Mr. Puckett said that was the only change suggested by the chairman. The Commission adopted the Notice of Intent in its present form. We informed them of the proposed change and that we would likely bring this change back to the Board and request your

approval. Mr. Puckett informed the Board that there were some individual changes that were suggested by some individual commissioners.

Mr. Puckett stated that the following are all suggested changes made not by the full Commission, but by individual commissioners as the Notice of Intent was discussed.

1. Suggested some insurance or indemnity provisions, simply out of concern that there may be some group staying at the lodge, and in the event of some property damage or slip and fall incident.

Mr. Puckett informed the Board that the Department came up with some language that is very generic. Mr. Puckett stated that he spoke to the individual commissioner and the language to be added would read to the effect "the Department shall insure that appropriate indemnity or insurance provisions are provided". He said he asked the commissioner to make it generic because if someone like Exxon or BP comes there for a retreat and already has general liability insurance to cover this, all we would need to do is get a certificate of insurance from them and it would not cost them anything. However, if a mom and pop organization comes out to the facility who is not so insured, at that point we may want to modify our insurance provision accordingly, if in fact we are trying to lure these people to the facility. Therefore, we tried to maintain the generic language. Mr. Puckett informed the board that he had some language and would read into the record at a later time if that was the pleasure of the board.

2. The facility shall not be made available for political fundraisers.

Mr. Puckett stated that language was added under section 5 which reads "the facility shall not be made available for political fundraisers. Mr. Puckett said again, that is proposed language that the board has to approve and then the Commission has to approve.

3. LDWF Commission members are prohibited from hunting or fishing at White Lake.

Mr. Puckett informed the Board that his suggestion was that we do not put language to this effect in the Notice of Intent; however, this can be addressed by Secretarial decree as it was for board members. Mr. Puckett stated he has not talked to the Secretary about this issue but he can recommend the Secretary issue a letter that would cover this matter.

4. LDWF Commission members, elected officials, or board members would/will be prohibited from renting the facility or attending functions.

Mr. Puckett stated that this is expressly relative to non-consumptive activities. He said consumptive activities would be covered otherwise, at least for commission members or board members. Mr. Puckett stated this is something the Board will have to deliberate among themselves. He said this is one individual commissioner who made this recommendation and is not necessarily the recommendation of the staff, but it is for the Board's consideration.

5. Costs should be increased.

Mr. Puckett stated that he knew this is a subject of a lot of debate and speculation, but certainly one could make the argument that it could be higher. Mr. Puckett believes that it is the Department's feeling that for the first year may be somewhat experimental in nature due to uncertainty of how many weekends will be booked, how many people will be clamoring to utilize the facility or if there will be a drought, we do not know the types of groups who will be interested in coming to the facility or for what purpose. Mr. Puckett feels it is fair to say that it is Mr. Savoie and Mr. Bowman's recommendation that the cost schedule the Board approved be maintained for the first year to get some empirical data and see if the cost schedule should be increased, decreased, or remain the same and then come back to the Board in one year with a recommendation.

Mr. Puckett read the specific proposed insurance language to be approved by the board for the record. The language is: "the Department shall determine appropriate insurance or indemnity requirements for use of the facility".

Chairman Linscombe inquired if the board agrees to number 4 if the sheriff would not be able to set foot on the facility. Mr. Puckett informed the Chairman that he was correct in that context that the sheriff, police jurors, senators, representatives, commissioners and board members would be prohibited from attending any function at the property.

Mr. Gayle voiced concerns regarding larger organizations that already have indemnity/insurance that we would have no problems with that because all they would have to do is present us with a certificate, but small organizations, perhaps concessionaires, would have a problem if they do not have insurance. Mr. Puckett said that the Department would develop a standard indemnity and hold harmless clause that they would ask all groups to sign regardless of the insurance provision.

Mr. Karl Connor moved to accept the Non-consumptive Component WLWCA Management Plan as follows: 1) accept insurance/indemnity provisions be incorporated into plan; 2) accept the facility shall not be made available for political fundraisers be incorporated into plan; 3) recommend that commission members be prohibited from hunting and fishing at White Lake by secretarial decree and not incorporated into plan; 4) strike LDWF commission members, elected officials, or board members would/will be prohibited from renting the facility or attending functions in its entirety; 5) leave the costs as they were approved at the January 26, 2007 board meeting and have the Department come back in one year with any suggested changes; and 6) add language relative to exemptions be incorporated into plan. The motion was seconded by Mr. Nathan Granger and passed with no opposition.

Mr. Gayle moved to request the Department develop general guidelines for the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area and present to the Board at a later date. The motion was seconded by Dr. Wade and passed with no opposition.

## **Update on Agricultural Leases**

This agenda item was covered during the Agriculture Committee Report.

## **Biologist Report**

Mr. Jeb Linscombe introduced himself to the Board and informed them that the bulk of his job revolves around coastal management, but specifically applies to waterfowl. He stated that he is now assigned part-time to the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area. Mr. Linscombe said that as of now, his duties at White Lake centers around the potential for whooping crane re-introduction. Mr. Linscombe stated the Whooping Crane Recovery Team needs a tremendous amount of data to make a decision about whether or not the property will actually be suitable for their re-introduction. He said it is his job to facilitate that and make sure that the required data is obtained, and this will be done primarily by hiring graduate students under Dr. Sammy King at LSU. Mr. Linscombe stated that he and Dr. King are currently trying to secure a grant and he feels that they will most likely receive that funding and the funding will only provide what is needed for White Lake. Mr. Linscombe said he and the graduate students will personally be on the property collecting data which has already begun, and setting up sites for continuous water level recorders that will record both water level and salinity. Initially, six sites have been selected. One site is in the hunting area, one site is on the west side of the hunting area, one site is in the refuge area, two sites are on the least hunted area on the east side of the Florence Canal and one site is in the Florence Canal. Mr. Linscombe stated that this should be a minimum of six to seven years process, but there has been talk that due to the failed population in Florida that they may move some of the birds over here but he does not know the details. Mr. Linscombe said he and the graduate students will be collecting data for three to four years and it will be four years before a report is in hand to the International Crane Foundation and the Recovery Team.

## **Update on Whooping Cranes**

This agenda item was covered during the Biologist Report.

## **Other Business**

Chairman Linscombe inquired if it has been determined when the facility will become available for daily, overnight use and other uses and if dates had been set. Mr. Sweeney explained that dates have not yet been set and said that for overnight use he would need to know several weeks in advance so he would be able to set up staff for cooking. Mr. Sweeney said if they could hire a concessionaire for the property they would be able to do birding trips three to four days a week. Mr. Sweeney stated he would like to see us work towards having a concessionaire at the property or somebody who can dedicate one hundred percent of their time to accommodate the general public on these tours. He said we would have to be involved in the overnight stays, but right now without a concessionaire or someone dedicating their time, it requires his staff and boats to be there to transport people back and forth and he thinks we are looking at one day a week to do

that in order for them to still get their other duties accomplished. Mr. Sweeney stated they are waiting for the fee schedule to be implemented and finalized before they can begin and he doesn't know when exactly they will be able to start this but it has to be decided. Chairman Linscombe said he is a little concerned that there would be some, for lack of better term "Master Plan" on how this is all going to be implemented so Mr. Sweeney and his staff are not put under constraints. Chairman Linscombe stated he thinks there needs to be a calendar set up with dates that the facility is available. Dr. Wade recommended that Mr. Sweeney submit a written proposal of the plan to the Board at the next meeting which will include set dates available and the time frame for scheduling the various activities.

There was discussion amongst the Board that once everything is finalized and approved to invite some reporters for a tour of the property for a press release.

Mr. Gayle requested permission to discuss an item that was not on the agenda. Mr. Gayle stated the Chamber of Commerce has been working ever since Hurricane Rita hit the area to put new signs up at the three entrances to Gueydan, which costs \$3,500 per sign. Mr. Gayle informed the Board the signs will read "Welcome to Gueydan, Louisiana, Duck Capitol of America, Gateway to White Lake". Mr. Gayle informed the Board that at the present time they have approximately \$7,000 donated and are looking for another \$3,000. Chairman Linscombe called for a motion to discuss the item and a motion was made by Dr. Wade. The motion was seconded by Mr. Granger and passed with no opposition. Mr. Gayle stated he was asked by the Chamber of Commerce to request that the Board recommend the Department donate approximately \$3,000 for the signs. Mr. Gayle stated the signs are up to DOTD standards, which means they will be breakaway signs. He said there are no signs at any of the entrances to Gueydan. Dr. Gomez suggested to Mr. Gayle that they check with some of the hunting clubs in the area and he said that is who has donated a large amount of the money they now have. Chairman Linscombe feels they cannot do anything to help with this matter, and Mr. Puckett stated he would not proceed with a donation without receiving an Attorney General's opinion due to the language in the Act of Donation. Mr. Granger asked Mr. Gayle to talk to him later about the possibility of other organizations making a donation.

Chairman Linscombe informed the Board that he received a letter from Ms. Annie Smith stating that she is tendering her resignation from the Board. Chairman Linscombe stated that BP has made a recommendation for a replacement for Ms. Smith's position on the Board with Ms. Marti Powers. However, the Governor has not yet made the appointment for the replacement of Ms. Smith.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Ron Duplessis introduced himself to the Board. He stated he had the pleasure of visiting White Lake before Hurricane Katrina at Secretary Landreneau's request. Mr. Duplessis stated they would like to have a youth sporting clays tournament which will be funded by the National Shooting Sports Foundation and brings in kids from all walks of life from the NRA's, 4-H Clubs, etc. He said it has about 45,000 to 50,000 kids

nationally. Mr. Duplessis wanted to offer up to the White Lake Board the opportunity to see if they would be interested in help hosting the sporting clays competition at White Lake. Mr. Duplessis said there is already a tower and a course at White Lake and he has a foundation that helps support the program and they would bring in any additional machines needed. He stated they also plan for a big press release, as well as a Paradise Louisiana to cover the event. Mr. Duplessis said they have a good bit of television time available and he feels it would be a great way to get some exposure to White Lake and see what it is instead of someone's perception. He stated there is a real decent sporting clay facility and asked the Board to consider his offer. Mr. Duplessis stated they would propose to do it probably the third weekend of June 2008. Mr. Duplessis said they could put together a small event for a press release at White Lake this year sometime if desired. Mr. Duplessis stated there would be no additional expense to White Lake because they cover the costs of the clays, shells, and entry fees. Mr. Duplessis feels this could be very good exposure for both parties. Chairman Linscombe inquired how many days this event will take place and was informed it is a one day event and they could probably get the results to press in the paper Sunday and the television coverage would probably be aired on Thursday of the following week. Chairman Linscombe asked how many participants would be involved and Mr. Duplessis stated for the first year approximately 35 to 50 and the following year there would probably be over 100 participants and there would only be Louisiana kids participating. Mr. Duplessis informed the Board that the age group is 12 to 19 years of age. Mr. Duplessis stated that he had met the previous week with Secretary Hammett and John Sturgis and that he and Mr. Sturgis had been working on this project for several years prior to Hurricane Katrina and after Katrina everyone was very busy so it was put on the back burner. Mr. Duplessis stated they have been doing this for three years and he has been involved with the Professional Shooters since 1995. He said it would be very little work for the employees at White Lake and no expenses. Chairman Linscombe said speaking for the Board that they would be very interested in working with him and would like to see a formal proposal at a later meeting. Mr. Young asked Mr. Sweeney if this project is workable and Mr. Sweeney stated it is workable. Chairman Linscombe asked Mr. Duplessis when he would need a commitment from the Department in order to plan for the 2008 event and he stated that he would like to know by January 1, 2008.

Mr. Randy Lanctot of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation addressed the Board regarding their talks about hiring a concessionaire and pointed out to them that there is a sales tax dedication hopefully passing through the legislature that will represent about \$40,000,000 per year to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Mr. Lanctot said other states that have such funding, staff within their agencies, naturalists that work on their state facilities to do this sort of thing. Mr. Lanctot said if this funding comes through some good uses of this would be to fund some things that the Department should very well be doing but just doesn't have the funding to do so.

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. Hale moved to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Mr. Gayle.



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Robert J. Barham

RJB:lg

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