

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF
WHITE LAKE PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Chairman Armond Schwing opened the White Lake Property Advisory Board meeting held at the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area in Gueydan, LA and asked Ms. Lana Guidry to call the roll. The following members were present:

Armond Schwing
Charles Toups
Brandan Duhon (arrived late)
Sean Gayle
Steve Linscombe
Karl Connor
R. Martin Guidry
Miriam Davey
Sara Simmonds

The following members were absent:

Lloyd Suire
Sherman Wilson
Guy Boudreaux
Larry Thomas
Eddie Lyons

Approval of Minutes of May 28, 2009 Meeting

Chairman Schwing called for a motion for approval of the minutes of the May 28, 2009 meeting. Mr. Sean Gayle moved to accept the minutes and Mr. Marty Guidry seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

Introduction of New Board Member

Mrs. Sara Simmonds introduced herself to the Board and stated she is shocked to be here and was completely surprised when Senator Joe McPherson nominated her for this seat on the Board. Mrs. Simmonds said she has many years of involvement in nature activities. Mrs. Simmonds stated she is very fortunate to have access to 8,500 privately owned acres, which includes being involved in timber management, timber harvesting, planting, drainage, water levels, and agriculture. Mrs. Simmonds said she is also very fortunate to know many intelligent people who have shared their knowledge with her. Mrs. Simmonds stated she has visited White Lake three times in the past. Mrs.

Simmonds represents the President of the Senate and is excited about serving on the Board. Chairman Schwing welcomed Mrs. Simmonds to the Board and said he looks forward to working with her.

Introduction of Buddy Baker, Biologist Director, LDWF – Coastal and Non-Game Resources Division

Mr. Bob Love informed the Board that the LDWF Office of Wildlife has undergone reorganization recently and there are now two assistant chiefs, which are Biologist Directors. Mr. Love stated that Mr. Buddy Baker has been appointed by Secretary Robert Barham to be Director within the division, and the work units he is going to steward will be White Lake, Rockefeller, as well as the alligator and fur programs. Mr. Baker comes from South Carolina Department of Natural Resources where he retired after 26 years of service. His experiences there included alligators and fur. Mr. Baker received his Masters from LSU, so he is not a stranger to southwest Louisiana because he did his grad research at Rockefeller, and has lots of friends and associates he has maintained over the years. Mr. Love stated he is so pleased to add Mr. Baker to his staff and that Mr. Baker will be Mr. Wayne Sweeney's immediate supervisor, and the Baton Rouge contact, administratively, over anything that White Lake will need. Mr. Love introduced Mr. Baker to the Board. Mr. Baker stated that White Lake is a jewel within this region. Mr. Baker said he wasn't familiar with White Lake when he left here, but he has gotten quite familiar with the property over the last few months. Mr. Baker stated he is glad to be back in Louisiana.

Department Financial Report

Mr. Wayne Sweeney presented the board members with a financial report as of October 9, 2009. Mr. Sweeney reported that the current year actual expenditures are \$136,171 and the remaining budget for this year is \$565,000. Mr. Sweeney reported revenues received this year are approximately \$175,000 and the total income in the White Lake Fund is approximately \$2,197,000.

2010 Proposed Meeting Dates (March 11; June 17; October 14)

Chairman Schwing addressed the Board and stated that he has proposed dates for the three meetings to be held in 2010. Chairman Schwing said the reason for doing this is so everyone can properly plan and enable us to have a quorum at our meetings. Chairman Schwing stated the tentatively set dates are: March 11, 2010, and that meeting will be held at the LSU Ag Center Rice Research Station in Crowley; June 27, 2010, and that meeting will be held at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in Baton Rouge; and October 14, 2010, and that meeting will be held at White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area. Chairman Schwing asked that if any members had problems with any of the dates to please let him know and he also stated that Ms. Guidry will still notify all board members to poll their availability of the date prior to the meeting. Mr. Gayle moved to accept these three tentative dates for the 2010 meetings and it was seconded by Mr. Charles Toups. The motion passed with no opposition.

Committee Assignments

Chairman Schwing provided the board members with a list of committees and their members. Chairman Schwing asked Mrs. Simmonds to review the committees and let him or Ms. Guidry know which one she is interested in serving.

Ethics Ruling

Chairman Schwing stated that this matter does not pertain to anyone present, as it is with respect to Mr. Boudreaux and Mr. Suire who were unable to attend. Chairman Schwing said the only thing he had to report is that the Ethics Commission did address the questions and advised each one individually where ethic violations may occur.

Use of Facility by Board Members

Chairman Schwing stated that at the last board meeting, Mr. Randy Lanctot spoke during the public comment section and said he thought all of the board members were doing a good job and being good stewards of the property and wanted to approach the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries about clearing up some issues with respect to board members use of this facility individually and aside from just coming here for a meeting. Chairman Schwing said that Mr. Lanctot sent a letter to Secretary Barham asking about board members ability to utilize the facility here. Chairman Schwing said Secretary Barham responded back to Mr. Lanctot. In Secretary Barham's response, his take on the subject was that board members do not need to be venturing into any area that may reflect a bad light on the great things that are happening at White Lake and he suggested that board members may be able to utilize the facility for any non-consumptive activity but no consumptive activities, which would include hunting and fishing. Chairman Schwing said he personally agrees with Secretary Barham and even feels that board members should restrict themselves further with respect to some of the non-consumptive activities, such as avoid renting the lodge for a retreat. Chairman Schwing stated he knows that board member's money spends like anyone else's, but public perception could be that we utilized some favor or position of power to be able to do that, and to him, public perception is a big deal. Dr. Linscombe stated he agreed with the Chairman and will not rent the lodge even if he could due to public perception, but he has no problem going on the birding trail. Dr. Linscombe said he thinks as long as everyone uses common sense it should not be any problem. Ms. Davey stated she feels the lodge is really in the category of a scarce resource and is special and exclusive and not easily accessible, whereas the birding trail can be driven up to and is not such a scarce resource. Mr. Toups stated he disagrees because the company he works for, Coastal Chemical, has meetings and retreats throughout the United States which costs thousands of dollars. Mr. Toups said if the company held one of these retreats here, he feels that it would benefit White Lake by bringing in out-of-state constituents who may come back for future meetings and/or retreats. Mr. Toups stated this is his view on this matter. Dr. Linscombe stated that based on Secretary Barham's letter, board members have the option and he feels like it will be a personal decision for anyone on this Board. Chairman Schwing asked Ms.

Guidry to forward the letters to all board members. Chairman Schwing asked Mr. Sweeney how often the lodge has been utilized in the past and Mr. Sweeney reported that during the last two years only one birding group utilized the facility this past season. Mr. Sweeney said a fellow out of Houston contacted him to hold a company retreat at the facility for an overnight stay, but later cancelled. Mr. Sweeney reported that he has not yet sold an overnight trip. Mr. Sweeney also reported that although White Lake takes in money, White Lake does not make any profit from any of the lodge rentals; he stated the fee only cover the costs of hosting such events. Chairman Schwing stated he asked Mr. Sweeney about the usage of the lodge because if there were an overflow of applicants but not enough space for everyone, then maybe it might be prudent on a board member's part to be taken out of the mix. Mr. Sweeney informed the board members that the available dates for non-consumptive usage of the lodge are listed on the website and is a first come first serve basis.

White Lake Website Discussion

Chairman Schwing said that an idea he has, along with other board members, is to have easier online access to White Lake. Chairman Schwing stated that when accessing the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries website, it is hard to actually get to the section on White Lake unless you really know where to go to look for it. Chairman Schwing said they would like to make this information more available to the public and one of the things he thought of is to try to obtain its own domain name, such as WhiteLakeProperty.com. Chairman Schwing said that when someone clicks on that name, it will redirect back to the White Lake section of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries website. Mr. Gayle stated that he feels the bottom line is that the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries does not advertise. However, Mr. Adam Einck, Assistant Webmaster, explained that the Department can and does advertise certain events, but that it is rather expensive. Mr. Gayle said that because of the unique nature of this facility and the property, he thinks we need to make the facility more visible. Mr. Gayle stated that he feels we should offer more educational opportunities on the website, such as movies, videos, pictures, etc. Mr. Einck informed the board that the Department created a special domain name for the alligator program because they were having the same problem with people having difficulty accessing that program on the website. Mr. Einck said this domain redirects them to that program on the original website. Mr. Einck said that if the Board wishes to do this with White Lake he doesn't see why it can't be done. Mr. Einck stated this is something that can be easily accomplished and can be done within weeks. Mr. Einck said that they can work with the Board regarding the contents of the website and suggested the Chairman appoint a couple of members to work with them on this matter. Chairman Schwing suggested that the Board's contact be the Education and Outreach Committee and that the Department work with them to develop whatever new look is wanted for the information that is on the website. Mr. Marty Guidry moved to allow the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to obtain a separate domain name and to also update and redesign all information currently on the website for the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area. The motion was seconded by Mr. Karl Connor. Mr. Gayle moved to amend the motion to include the domain name be WhiteLake.com or something similar. The amendment to the motion was seconded by

Mr. Guidry. The motion and the amendment passed with no opposition. Mr. Einck stated that he will check into what domain names are available and get this information back to the Board for their final decision. Chairman Schwing assigned the Education and Outreach Committee to work on the redesign of the web content and report their findings back to the Board at the next meeting to take any action necessary.

Update on Birding Trail

Mr. Sweeney reported to the Board that several pieces of machinery from the Department were moved to the property about four months ago. Mr. Sweeney stated that work had slowed down tremendously due to all of the rain received over the past two months. Mr. Sweeney said that they have started building some of the bridges. Mr. Sweeney stated they are going to put five bridges in, and Mr. Dennis Kropog from the Department had several of his employees assist with the bridge building. Mr. Sweeney stated that they have also started working on the parking lot. Mr. Sweeney reported that once the bridges are completed, he hopes to begin work on a birding tower and welcome center area, weather permitting. Mr. Toups inquired of the costs of this project and Mr. Sweeney reported that most of the costs are with materials since they are doing a lot of the labor for this project. Mr. Sweeney stated that approximately \$7,000 has been spent on the parking lot and if he had to make a guess, he believes they can get the whole project constructed for less than \$75,000 if the work is performed by staff employees.

Update on 2009-2010 Hunts and Prospects for Season

Mr. Sweeney reported the teal lottery hunt had 302 applications submitted and they hunted nine mornings during the season. He said six applicants were selected for each morning hunt and that those selected were able to bring a guest with them. Mr. Sweeney reported there was one cancellation. Mr. Sweeney said they were successful in bagging 362 teal and the average teal per hunter was 3.51, which was very good.

Mr. Sweeney reported the youth hunt received 204 applications, which is an increase from the 150 submitted last year. Mr. Sweeney reported that eight children were selected for each morning and there will be two morning hunts, for a total of 16 children hunting. Mr. Sweeney stated that the youth hunts are free of charge.

Mr. Sweeney reported the marsh lottery hunt received 750 applications, which is an increase from the 560 submitted last year. Mr. Sweeney stated there will be eight morning hunts accompanying six hunters each morning, and that 48 applicants had been selected. Mr. Sweeney stated that each applicant is allowed to bring a guest, so they are anticipating a total number of 96 hunters.

Mr. Sweeney reported that the rice field lottery hunt received 1,092 applications, which is a decrease from the 1,150 submitted last year. Mr. Sweeney stated there will be 23 morning hunts. Mr. Sweeney stated that 69 applicants were selected and each applicant is allowed to bring two guests, so they are anticipating 207 hunters to attend.

Mr. Sweeney reported that 13 of the 14 group hunts have been sold and there was approximately 50 applications submitted. Mr. Sweeney said several of the applications received contained the same dates selected, and that some companies had multiple applications submitted by different individual employees. Mr. Sweeney reported that after the initial selection, 12 hunts were sold but there were two dates still available and two groups who had submitted applications but did not get selected. Mr. Sweeney stated that he did go back to these groups and offered to sell them the two remaining available dates, but that only one of the groups accepted.

Report Results of 2009 Alligator Season/Harvest from White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area

Mr. Sweeney reported to the Board that they received 479 alligator tags for the White Lake property. Mr. Sweeney stated the hides were sold through the bid process which is the process that has been used in the past. Mr. Sweeney reported they advertised and accepted bids for the sale of the alligators, with the bid opening occurring on August 24. Mr. Sweeney stated they knew in advance that the prices would be pretty low and they would probably have a hard time getting bids. Mr. Sweeney reported that four out of their six trappers decided they would trap and they removed a total of 361 alligators from the property. Mr. Sweeney reported the prices for alligators as follows: up to a 4' 11" was \$1.00 per foot; 5' – 5' 11" was \$2.00 per foot; 6' – 6' 11" was \$4.00 per foot; 7' – 7' 11" was \$7.00 per foot and 8' and above was \$10.00 per foot. Mr. Sweeney stated this was a significant decrease compared to the prices in the past. Mr. Sweeney said the 40% percent share of this received by White Lake was \$3,648.10. Mr. Sweeney reported that there was no alligator egg collection this year.

Other Business

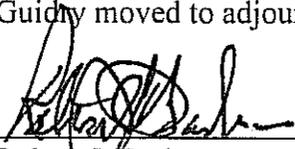
Mr. Gayle inquired of the number of fishing permits the Department will be issuing since they received approximately 200 applications last year and only issued 100 permits. Mr. Sweeney reported they will issue 100 permits and that the reports he received from the fishermen is that they did not have a great fishing season. Mr. Sweeney reported that when the fishing permits were first issued, they started out issuing 35 and it has since increased to 100 permits. Mr. Sweeney also reminded Mr. Gayle that the lack of parking and boat launches for the fishermen to utilize could pose a potential problem with issuing more permits.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Schwing asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Guidry moved to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Ms. Davey.



Robert J. Barham

RJB:lg

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