

United States Forest Service  
Land Between The Lakes (LBL)  
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
June 11, 2009

The Land Between The Lakes (LBL) Advisory Board convened at 9:00 a.m. at the Paris Landing State Park in Buchanan TN. This meeting was open to the public.

**Advisory Board members present:**

Mr. Joe Baust	Mr. Bobby Cassity (Alternate)	Mr. Steve Morgan
Mr. Pat Brandon	Mr. Ed Clebsch	Mr. David Smith
Ms. Ben Helen Burkeen	Mr. Gary Cook	Mr. Ben Stone
Mr. Jim Byford (Alternate)	Mr. Mark Cramer	

**Advisory Board staff present:**

Mr. Jerome Thomas, Advisory Board Chairperson  
Mr. Bill Lisowsky, Designated Federal Official (DFO)  
Mr. Jared Baker, Facilitator  
Ms. Sharon Byers, Advisory Board Administrative Liaison

Four members of the public and six Forest Service (FS) employees attended this meeting.

Jared Baker opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and introducing Jerome Thomas, Deputy Regional Forester for Natural Resources and incoming Advisory Board Chairperson. The board members, FS staff, and visitors introduced themselves, and Gary McEntire, General Manager, welcomed everyone to Paris Landing State Park.

Jerome Thomas addressed the board, providing information on his personal background, education, and professional experience. Jerome has been the Deputy Regional Forester for Natural Resources in Atlanta for the last month; before that he was the Forest Supervisor for the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests in South Carolina. He has worked with the Tennessee Valley Authority and also Tuskegee University, overseeing their forest resource program. Jerome is originally from rural Georgia and credits his home there for sparking his interest in natural resources. Jerome graduated from Tuskegee University with a degree in plant and soil sciences and has a doctorate in forest biology and wood science from Iowa State. He believes strongly in partnerships, building relationships, and the need to reach out to others with mutual interests. This board provides a great opportunity to work together.

Sharon Waltrip, Environmental Education (EE) Program Manager, told the board that while considering the potential for EE on the Devil's Backbone Project, a current project at LBL looking at the regeneration of short leaf pine, she saw a perfect opportunity to get kids involved using two of the program strategies/actions from the board's "Recommendation on Strategic Planning for Environmental Education" -- "build relationships with school systems and community groups within useable distance from LBL" and "provide EE outreach programs that relate to CORE content for kids and teachers." Since the project was near Stewart County schools, she contacted Leta Joiner, Supervisor of Instruction, and initiated discussions on ways the students and teachers might be able to

participate. Leta was excited about the possibilities and started talking with Sharon to develop a plan for proposed field trips, working out the details and building the requirements. As a result, there is now an agreement signed by all parties to work together on this project, which grew from an initial expectation of a couple of field trips to five teachers being involved and several field trips being planned. The first trips to LBL will start this fall.

Leta attended this Advisory Board meeting to tell the board how excited the school is to be a part of this collaboration with LBL. Tying a project like this to the required standards makes educators' jobs easier, and it's a wonderful opportunity for the students to be able to touch and feel, rather than just do the book work; LBL is a great resource that hasn't been utilized as much as possible. Leta initially looked at all grade levels, hoping one or two teachers would be interested; however, the project has high interest at all levels. She said you can feel the spark of energy in the room when it's being discussed.

Kathy Watson, a high school biology teacher, told the board that several teachers spent a half day hiking in the project area and while there, new ideas continued to pop up. They're very excited about working with the real data LBL needs for regeneration, and the opportunity to get the kids involved in real science, outside of the classroom. All agree that kids learn better when doing the real thing. In the past, logistics has always been a problem, but working together with LBL, they've been able to work out the problems and have a plan in place.

- Jim Byford asked Sharon about the budget for this project, commenting that it did not seem to be a major amount of money considering the many potential benefits.  
*Sharon agreed. The whole project (5-year period) is about \$39,500, with the FS putting in \$2500. The school is also putting in money and the teachers will get in-service school credit for their participation.*
- Joe Baust said Jerome should hear more about the school field trip grant program, which Joe thinks is vital to LBL.  
*Sharon said there would be an update on that program later in the agenda.*

Darrin Samborski discussed the emphasis in LBL's Land and Resource Management Plan for focusing on dispersed recreation and EE – expanding out from facilities. The staff is researching a variety of techniques, trying to reach more audiences and helping visitors with trip planning. Darrin described a few ideas being worked on:

- Digital picture frames strategically placed to pictorially show what's available throughout LBL. This technology is not meant to replace an experience, but rather to enhance what's already available. Pictures highlight seasonal features and suggest itineraries where visitors can go to find the things shown in the pictures.
- An interactive map is being developed for the web site. This map would allow visitors to select a specific area and a pop-up will describe the location and provide more detailed information about it. They plan to have the map easy to print and also available in an electronic format that can be downloaded. A survey will be done soon asking people for their input on how to narrow down the categories of interest and levels of difficulty.

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- Darrin handed out copies of a recently updated bird checklist, which includes all birds seen at LBL. Checklists have always been of interest to visitors. This checklist is only one of several to be updated/developed for LBL in the near future.
  - EE staff is working with Dr. Hart, Murray State, on a webcam system for LBL, starting at the Nature Station. Wireless technology makes it possible for the webcam to be portable, so it can be moved away from the building, enticing visitors to see what's happening. This is very early in the development phase, but everyone is excited about how it's coming along so far.
- Ben Stone asked Darrin to consider tying webcam videos to "Skype". There is no cost for using "Skype" to send pictures through the web via video and audio options.
  - Joe Baust suggested connecting with geo-cache activities.
  - Gary Cook mentioned a TV show that shows sunrise from many locations. He suggested Darrin check it out; an LBL sunrise could be included through use of the webcam.

Sharon announced another project at LBL that was also a result of the board's "Recommendation on Strategic Planning for Environmental Education". To accomplish the program strategy of "showing how to maximize pre- and post-trip activities", an apprentice position at LBL has been designated specifically to focus on updating EE programs, building curriculum around teachers' requirements, and designing pre- and post-trips. The apprentice will be working with Brandon, the Homeplace, and the Nature Station.

Sharon also provided an update on the school field trip grant program, which is a joint effort between the Forest Service, the LBL Association (LBLA), and Murray State. Grants are designed to encourage new school groups to visit LBL and to stay at Brandon. Through the grants, schools are reimbursed for transportation and program costs. The number of free and reduced lunches provided by the school is considered when determining which schools will receive grant money. For the 2009/2010 school year, \$12,681 was allocated to 22 groups (1568 students), from throughout a five-state radius of LBL. An additional \$1995 is needed to fund all of the remaining requests. The FS provides funding for this program, with LBLA working to raise the additional funds required. The schools also contribute toward their expenses by having fundraising events. John Rufli, LBLA Executive Director, told the board that LBLA has two other fairly consistent funding partners for this program – the Bicentennial Volunteers (a group of TVA retirees) and the Johnson Hanson Foundation out of Spokane WA. He asked the board for their assistance by using their sources to obtain names of anyone that might be interested in donating to this effort.

Jerome wrapped up the EE portion of the agenda, thanking Darrin and Sharon for the information they provided. He said the members had provided suggestions on improving coordination and working together. He appreciated their feedback and asked if they had any decision items they wanted to consider. There were no decision items at this time.

Before the next agenda item, Ben Stone, presented a picture of the "Brandon Ladies – Olivia and Helen Brandon", daughters of George Brandon, for whom Brandon Springs is named. Olivia was a dean of women and Helen a librarian. Ben said the picture was framed and donated to LBL by his cousin, Beverly Riggins Parker, to provide some history of the area. Jerome thanked Ben Stone, and Joe Baust for the suggestion of the photo. He said that recognition should be given to Beverly for her thoughtful donation and the board agreed a letter from Bill would be appropriate.

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After the morning break, Kathryn Harper, Communications Department Manager, took the board through a brainstorming process to obtain suggestions for the upcoming LBL website renovations. Kathryn's office has been receiving input from FS staff and the public, and today wanted to get ideas from the board. Members were asked to individually, then in groups of two, write down what they would like to see on the LBL web site that would support the EE component of LBL's mission. Each group selected their top five ideas, prioritized them, and then selected their top three. The top three ideas from each group were then placed on the wall, and from this combined list, each member selected their overall top six choices. The ideas are listed below starting with those selected the most times. Any comments from the general discussion are shown under the idea with an asterisk (\*).

**Suggestions for LBL web site that would support EE component of LBL's mission:**

- Online interactive schedules for group trips
  - \* Where teachers can see on-line what field trips are available.
- Historical Tie
  - \* What was the eco-system prior to the dams - how has it changed and why was it necessary.
  - \* What was the wildlife like in the past?
  - \* Historical Interviews.
  - \* Lat/Long for locating cemeteries/homesites. An interactive map showing location of original properties and lat/long information would be helpful to visitors.
  - \* Include messages on the web site providing historical content.
  - \* Natural and cultural historical information.
- Interactive maps with written narrative and video clips
- LBL staff available to assist schools agenda
  - \* List what's available to teachers -- field trip guide, agenda, and how to contact staff.
- Grants/funds available to schools
- Info on EE Projects
  - \* More info on projects such as shortleaf pine project.
- Intern Programs – LBL's EE Program
  - \* Recruit for interns via the web; wider exposure for the program.
- Webcams of wildlife/nature "hot spots"
- Online interactive registration & grant application for group trips (allow credit cards)
- Site for kids to explore
- Market LBL to various interest groups
  - \* Schools – LBL is an opportunity to take classrooms to the field. Give them ideas. If they need a grant, provide that information and link to appropriate web sites.
  - \* Birders, cultural history interests, etc.
  - \* Short, virtual tour of each LBL facility.
- What is there at LBL for my home town; what is the take home message?
- Redo location sites (ALL CAPS) spread out
- Add music to videos and background
- Photos and maps
- Video clips (short) of actual visits by school groups
- LBL sounds (birds/weather/mammals/kids) when first accessed
- Grant sponsor recognition & links to donors (donations by credit card)
  - \* More ways to get donors and give them recognition.
  - \* Links to their donor and grant sponsor web sites.

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- Link to natural historical and scientific sites /resource sites
- Forest Management
  - \* Why forest management practices are good for the environment?
- Place for teachers to explore; links to sources
  - \* For all grade levels -- Pre-School, Elementary, Middle, Secondary.
  - \* Connection to their core content.
  - \* Include links to other EE sites when they can get free resources.
- Provide a map to larger cities
- Link to “Home” – LBL org
- EE Endorsement from the Chief of the FS, and/or Secretary of USDA
- Mini-class w/various messages
  - \* Interactive teaching tool that might tie to curriculum.
- Wildlife Mgmt
- Listing/description of EE areas – what is available at LBL
- Let people post photos; blog
- Hunting info forecast link
  - \* Include weather forecast link where hunters can check conditions for hunt days.
- Photos of staff
- Provide links to university sites for professional information
  - \* Link to web sites for wildflower and plant information.
  - \* Use embedded home link to ensure visitor gets back to LBL.org.
- Make pages easy to read and use.
  - \* List information in straight lines; don’t make visitors read sideways.

Bill Lisowsky referred back to the previous discussions on environmental education and shared information recently published in the Outdoor Foundation 2008 Recreation Report from their survey on why youth do not participate in outdoor activities. Survey results showed the number one reason youth do not participate in outdoor activities is a lack of interest. (Ages 6-12, 25% said they had no interest; ages 13-17, 46% said they had no interest.) After a lack of interest, reasons were a lack of time, competition with other responsibilities, and a preference for screen media. Youth ages 13-17 had a preference for time with their friends, and youth ages 6-12 blamed their parents saying the parents didn’t include outdoor activities as an option.

Bill provided the following general updates from LBL.

- The Federal Highway Administration is currently reviewing the nomination to have The Trace declared a national scenic byway. A decision is expected soon.
- The Transportation Cabinet and Federal Highway Administration are working aggressively on construction of 68/80. They have done a good job ensuring the public doesn’t feel the highway work is a major imposition. The intersection with the Trace, expected to be in place by fall, will be closer to the Golden Pond Visitor Center and should have a major impact on that facility.
- There are currently 17 geo-caching sites at LBL.

- The ice storm and flooding shortly before Memorial Day caused major damage at LBL.
  - Turkey Bay and Wranglers were most affected by the flooding; however, it also cut the Trace in half at one point. The trail system had significant damage.
  - The ice storm affected everyone. The first priority was on people, ensuring staff and those in the surrounding communities were cared for. Regaining access at LBL came next. All of LBL was closed for several weeks, which was difficult, not only on LBL but also the surrounding area, as it compounded economic problems of the tourism industry. There were 267 miles of roads closed and 270 miles of trails were unusable. The \$2.5M received from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) helped accelerate recovery work, accomplished partly through our existing partnerships with Swift and Staley and the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf). They were able to hire an additional 49 individuals to accelerate recovery efforts, and in turn, help local economic conditions. As a result of the accelerated recovery efforts, LBL was able to open by March 20, instead of April 1 as originally projected. There is more work to be done, but a huge dent has been made. Main trail systems are open and some secondary trails are being worked on now.
- There are huge log piles remaining from the storm damage. The FS is researching the opportunity for using our stewardship agreement with NWTf to let them take the logs and then use the proceeds to do work at LBL. Some piles of logs may also become an alternative energy source (biomass). There are some incentives and requirements in the energy bill for renewable energy sources. Companies have been mandated to change their power supply and they are looking at these options. There has been a lot of discussion in the local communities about what can be done.
  - Jim Byford mentioned a company from Paris TN he thought had been in contact with LBL about biomass. He also said the University of Tennessee is working on a switch grass project.

*FS has talked with several people about biomass.*
- An ice storm assessment team of FS resource specialists is considering how to address the larger interior general forest area. They are obtaining data to make evaluations and then recommendations of what type of treatments would be appropriate to offset long term impacts for the areas with high and moderate level disturbance from the ice storm. Comments were solicited from the public, and comments from the board are welcome and can be e-mailed to LBL.
- Visitation numbers are off by 8% from last year. Considering gas prices, economic issues, and storm related events, an 8% decline probably isn't bad. Great Memorial Day Weekend.
  - Pat Brandon complimented the FS staff, especially at Wranglers, on the big improvements that have been made since the recent ice storm and flooding.

Jared told the board no comments were received from the public for this meeting. He also updated them on an electronic survey members had been asked to use to indicate their availability for a fall meeting. The results of that survey are leaning toward Oct 22 or Oct 29, and a firm date should be decided on soon.

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Jerome asked the members for comments about the information they'd received today, and in response, Ben asked how the FS intended to use the input the board had provided, and also what the board could do to assist Bill in amplifying what is being done at LBL and putting it in place throughout the FS.

*Jerome said the discussions on EE would be very helpful for Bill and the staff to use as they moved forward at LBL. The members also provided great suggestions that will be helpful in redesigning the LBL website. The suggestions for ensuring visitors can easily get back to the main LBL page and for adding historical information were just two of many good ideas to consider in the redesign. Tom Peterson, as chair of these meetings in the past, used information from this board when trying to help with needs in other units and to influence the implementation of various projects in resource management throughout the region. Jerome expects he'll also be able to use information he obtains during these meetings. The work done at LBL flows through the Regional Office and is not lost when staff is dealing with higher levels.*

Jim mentioned other boards have a report that goes to the Secretary.

*The minutes from all Advisory Board meetings are submitted to the Washington Office as part of a report prepared for the Secretary. This information is also available on a public web site. During visits to Washington, Bill said he shares accomplishments of the board, such as their efforts with the public participation process, with Forest Service staff in the Washington Office, as well as congressional staff. If the board has a specific accomplishment they'd like to highlight, it is always their option to prepare a document they could forward to the Secretary.*

Joe asked what this group can do to help LBL and the RO with teachers and kids in the Region.

*Jerome said the Chief is working hard for programs like EE. The chief is also talking with political leaders so they have a good understanding of how the budgets for the agency are being affected by wildland fire suppression. That money is starting to affect other programs. The FS wrestles every day with not being able to meet all needs. We're always looking for partners and possibilities. We all need to be looking to find those solutions.*

When there were no further comments or questions, Jerome asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ben made the motion to adjourn and Ed seconded that motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Certified by:

*/s/ Jerome Thomas*

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JEROME THOMAS  
LBL Advisory Board Chairperson

6/26/09

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

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