

United States Forest Service
Land Between The Lakes (LBL)
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
October 29, 2009

The Land Between The Lakes (LBL) Advisory Board convened at 9:00 a.m. on October 29 at the Kenlake State Resort Park in Hardin, Kentucky. The meeting was open to the public. Two members of the public and five Forest Service (FS) employees were in attendance.

Advisory Board members present:

Vernon Anderson	Bobby Cassity	Sam Tharpe
Joe Baust	Ed Clebsch	Jesse Thomas
Pat Brandon	Steve Morgan	Jim Wallace
Ben Helen Burkeen	David Smith	
Jim Byford	Bob Smith	
Terry Calhoun	Ben Stone	

Advisory Board staff present:

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

Jared Baker opened the meeting by introducing himself and asking everyone attending to do the same. He reviewed the purpose of the board, which is to provide advice on environmental education (EE) and a means of promoting public participation for the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). After reviewing the agenda and providing general logistics information, Jared introduced Jerome Thomas.

Jerome welcomed everyone and went over the minutes from the last meeting. He mentioned several issues discussed in June, noting members had asked about the information they provide reaching the Secretary. Information obtained through these meetings is being used by the Forest Service, and the Regional Forester is very aware of the board's accomplishments. Jerome said the minutes can be shared at the Washington Office level; but does not expect the Secretary to scrutinize Advisory Board meetings. This board has accomplished much toward the established mission it has been given.

Jerome recognized Ed Clebsch and Bob Smith who completed their five-year terms on the board. Jerome thanked them for their service, and they were each given a picture collage of LBL as a memento. Bill Lisowsky and several members expressed their appreciation to Ed and Bob for the support they have provided to the Advisory Board.

Jerome welcomed Sam Tharpe, recently appointed as a member on the board by the Governor of Tennessee, to replace Don Cherry. Sam was given a letter and certificate of appreciation, and a

padfolio with background information for the Advisory Board. He said he was glad to be able to serve and that he and Governor Bredesen are both proud of all that LBL has accomplished.

Jesse Thomas was also welcomed to the board. He was appointed by the Judge Executive of Trigg County Kentucky to replace Bob Smith as a primary member. Bob will be the alternate member from Trigg County.

Jerome thanked the members for making this board a priority. He appreciates their service and the commitment they have made to work with the Forest Service.

Darrin Samborski led the first agenda item, a discussion about revisions being made to the LBL website. Many of the changes being developed were made using suggestions generated by this board. The revised website is not online yet, but a mock-up was available for review. Darrin went through the planned set-up for the main page, explaining the buttons and links, and information available through each. He said 2,300 people visit the current website daily and staff hopes the new format will make it even easier for visitors to use. The Plan Your Visit page will be a prime location for educators. Staff tried to look at this from the perspective of groups visiting LBL. They're still working out some of the details, but individuals planning their visit should be able to find the information they need on this page. LBL's Heritage Program Manager, Jamie Bennett, is working on an extensive page for the website, including a way to access cemetery records. Respect the Resource is now a prominent feature. This was initially a rough idea the board worked on and it is an important way to help people change their behavior. Several people are involved with the website update and it's moving along well. Comments from the board have been very helpful.

- Ben suggested a location for current photographs of cemeteries.
- Bob said the updates being planned are a big step forward.
- Joe mentioned it was difficult to see black text on the green buttons; more contrast might be needed. He also asked if there would be a link to the No Child Left Inside website?
 - *Staff is looking at the appropriate links to provide and where to put them. This link would be good; also, links to teachers' websites for EE.*
- Jesse noted the Neighbors and Communities button, asking how far staff was going with links. Surrounding communities may have information that might be helpful to visitors.
 - *The level of detail is yet to be determined, but staff will be highlighting local areas, activities, and partners.*

Next, Sharon Waltrip talked about what has been happening with EE since the board met in June.

One item discussed at the last meeting was the agreement with Stewart County to do field trips at Devils Backbone. Last week a team of foresters went with Sharon to a science club meeting to explain the Devils Backbone project. Students and teachers were excited about the project and they will be designing their objectives, including having students confirming some of the plots put in by the foresters.

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EE staff continues to work on self-guided tours. Initially, three tours are being planned: a tour giving an overall view of LBL, a wildlife-themed tour, and a history-themed tour. Progress is being made; staff is working on planning the timing for the tours and signage on the ground.

Numbers for the field trip grant program for this year are close to last year. At the last meeting, Sharon announced that \$1,900 was needed to fully fund requested trips. The Forest Service Regional Office was able to provide some funding for the program, which covered the amount needed. Introducing LBL to new groups was one criteria used when proposals were rated, and new areas were targeted when requesting schools to apply for the field trip grants.

- Joe said he thought about 20% of this year's groups were new. Schools in need was another criteria considered. Some of the groups were repeats, but were in the 50-90% reduced or free lunch program range.

A new apprentice has been selected to concentrate on reviewing LBL programs and adjusting them, as possible, to help meet the needs of schools.

Lastly Sharon told the board about a recently completed project that was started as a result of trying to meet EE goals outlined in LBL's Land and Resource Management Plan, and in the board's Recommendation on Strategic Planning for Environmental Education. The goal was to integrate EE in on-going projects. Staff has worked over the past several months to develop a way to explain that prescribed fire is a tool in developing a healthy forest. After several revisions and a review by a fifth grade class to ensure the sign was easily understood, a mobile panel has been developed to explain the purpose and objectives of prescribed fire in helping create a healthy forest. The final product is now available and will be placed in several locations to provide this valuable information to visitors during planned prescribed burns. One of the first locations will be near the Golden Pond Visitor's Center, where a prescribed burn is planned for this fall.

- Jim Byford questioned whether ninth graders would have been a more appropriate group to review the sign, because they're at a level that would use it as an educational medium. He also suggested the FS focus on one bite of information at a time, such as "fire to do good", because it's more effective to focus on one audience and one bite of information at a time.
 - *Sharon said they were not necessarily trying to educate the fifth graders, but rather ensuring they could understand the sign. National data shows reading levels for this type of project should be at the fifth grade level. Jim's suggestion is a good one, and other grade levels may be used in the future.*
- Jerome clarified that the audience for this sign will be the general public; all ages.
- Bill said the majority of visitors do not have contact with a person and it is not always easy to meet the needs of individuals driving down the road. It is a challenge to determine what and how we communicate to help them take away something important.

After a short break, Bill provided general updates from LBL.

- The Federal Highway Administration announced recently that the Trace has been designated as the Woodlands Trace National Scenic Byway. Richard Lomax was the coordinator for this nomination and each of the three surrounding counties nominated individuals to work on the committee with him to prepare the proposal package. This designation is not only good for LBL, but also the gateway communities.

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- LBL is now the lead FS unit for the Great Onyx Job Corps Center at Mammoth Cave. The FS is connected to Job Corps centers around the country and three that were being managed by the Park Service, including Great Onyx, have now become part of the FS. These centers work with students, ages 16-24. There are 211 students rotating through Great Onyx; 10 were at LBL last week learning about fire management. Over time, they will help LBL with various trades. This provides a perfect connection with EE, as LBL may be the first comfortable experience many of these students have with the “wild”.
- This summer LBL introduced laser shows at the Planetarium. This was a “hook” to get non-traditional groups to visit, and once here, most walked through the Visitors Center and starting asking questions about other areas at LBL. All of the planned shows were sold out and extra shows were scheduled to meet requests by visitors. As a result of this test, next summer laser shows will be an expanded offering at LBL. This effort also allowed LBL to partner with tourist organizations and surrounding communities, providing an opportunity for them to display information about their areas.
- Visitation at the end of the year was very strong. In September, there was a dramatic increase at day-use facilities and campgrounds. Overall for the year, visitor counts were down and staff is trying to determine the reason. Driving for pleasure seems to be dropping off, but people are making more point-to-point trips. The price of fuel, highway construction, and downed timber in hunting areas could all be reasons.
- Construction on Highway 68/80 is about a year behind schedule. In the next two months, the new intersection on the Trace should be in use, which will make the Golden Pond Visitor’s Center more prominent. Plans for the bridges are moving along; final design is expected in 2010 with construction starting in 2011.
- LBL is looking at alternate forms of energy, utilizing woody biomass as a potential energy source. Because economic recovery initiatives came as LBL was digging out from the ice storm, we were able to get \$2.5 million to help open LBL, about 20 days earlier than expected. There were 65 jobs created with those dollars. There were also piles of woody biomass in the surrounding counties and LBL had been in discussions with them as to how to utilize materials that wouldn’t normally be used as an alternative energy source. Two projects qualified – a grant for fuels to schools in Lyon County and a grant with the hospital in Trigg County. We are working with wood chips because pellets are not available yet, but there are groups in the area looking at the pellet option.
- The Regional Forester has announced the winners for this year’s annual awards and LBL received four:
 - ❖ Respect the Resource won for being the best example of environmental sustainability. This is an idea that took shape with this Advisory Board.
 - ❖ Our Law Enforcement Unit won as the best Law Enforcement & Investigations Unit. By approaching their jobs professionally and kindly helping individuals, they have changed the impression of LBL. There was a time when families weren’t comfortable coming here and things are definitely better now.

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- ❖ LBL won a forest-wide award for their response to multiple emergencies. The remnants of Hurricane Ike, the ice storm, and major flooding all required extra time and effort from staff during the past year, and we are proud to be recognized for the special effort.
- ❖ LBL is also being recognized for completing the Motorized Vehicle Utilization Map.
- The majority of members on the Advisory Board are entering the fifth and last year of their term on the board. We will begin outreach for new members soon and we want to get the word out as far as we can. Please send us the names of anyone you think will be perfect to keep up the tradition the board has established, or talk with them and have them contact us.
- Bob said that many law enforcement officers with TVA originally came from urban areas and it took them awhile to get acclimated to LBL. When the FS took over, the word got out quickly, after a few initial incidents, that visitors were now dealing with a professional group of officers and that helped the situation.
- Ed mentioned that with gas prices up and changes in the economy, families that would normally visit other areas may be staying closer to home to reduce costs. To understand what is happening with visitation, LBL needs to know the origin of the visitor.
- Ben reminded the board that at the last meeting he presented a framed photograph of the Brandon sisters for display at LBL. Today he brought an article that documents the Brandon family's move, to be included with that display.
- Ben also said he would like to see more information about cemeteries on LBL's website, such as including links where visitors can enter GPS information and get directions to a cemetery. He would also like to see photographs that visitors can select to get a digital image of a cemetery. Ben knows a photographer that would assist with this project if staff is interested.
 - *Bill thanked Ben for the idea and offer. Jamie Bennett is working on heritage issues like this and will respond to Ben on this.*
- Sam asked how we handle cancellations and no-shows at Piney Campground through the reservations website.
 - *Brian Beisel, Customer Service Department Manager, said there are two ways to access reservations -- through the call center or the web. It's a simple process and cancellations can be done through those avenues. When individuals show up at the campground, if a site is open and hasn't been reserved, they can take that site, even if it's a site that's available to reserve. There have been changes in the reservation process this past year, which have greatly improved the service LBL can provide.*
- Bill told the members they will often be tapped for information and he asked them to encourage individuals with questions or comments to contact FS staff as soon as possible. The LBL staff takes information throughout the year, but makes changes at one time – policies are not changed daily. Please ask those providing comments not to get frustrated; their comments will be reviewed and considered each year when we evaluate our programs and make changes. Even though the Advisory Board does not deal with all issues at LBL as part of their mission, comments and suggestions are still getting forwarded to the appropriate staff for consideration.

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- Jim Wallace said there are thousands of people with an emotional attachment to the area and cemeteries have been an issue from the beginning. It is a great idea to put cemetery information on the website, but it would be a massive project. In Jim's opinion, the FS has been very sensitive to heritage. After the ice storm, he was called as the contact person for a cemetery to be made aware there were trees down and was asked for permission to remove them. The trees were removed quickly. Little things like this have helped him understand there is sensitivity from the FS, and he thanked the staff for that. He said that being able to provide a sensitive attachment to the area may bring more visitors.
- Vernon asked for food plot information and about progress on Prior Bay.
 - *A fair amount of planting was delayed this spring because of weather. Fall planting is being done to catch up, but is not done yet, again, partially because of the weather. Planting is being done through Swift & Staley. A representative from the National Wild Turkey Federation works with FS staff to look at food plots and habitat needs, helping advance LBL's programs. Nothing about the lawsuit is affecting this program. Work on Prior Bay is in process and we're ahead of schedule.*
- Ed suggested that decedents of former residents of LBL maintain an interest in where their folks lived on the property. TVA did all the land acquisitions and should have records of transfers. Could these records be found, digitized, and linked on our website?
 - *Some of these records may already be available in digitized format and this is a suggestion the staff can consider.*
- Joe mentioned that with LBL as a demonstration site, what is the possibility of using some grant money so LBL can continue to be a site for using clean energy and less beholding to retrofitting some facilities?
 - *We are in that process. Energy audits are back and improvements are being made; however, there is a physical limit for what we can accomplish. Biomass is the best utilization of our resources for now to help stimulate the communities.*
- Jim Byford applauds what the staff is doing. He suggested that a separate building, a complete one-stop shop for green energy, would be a great educational site.
- Sam said TVA is visiting Henry County in December along with all the utility groups in northwest KY and TN. Biomass will be discussed and LBL will be invited to attend.

There were no comments received from the public for review prior to this meeting.

The board discussed April 15 and April 22, as possible dates for the next meeting. Several members had conflicts with April 15. Vernon made a motion that April 22 be selected for the next meeting and Steve seconded the motion. The next meeting will be held on April 22, 2010.

Jerome thanked the members for their participation and for their valuable input. He noted they were near the end of the planned time for today's meeting, and that unless the members agreed, he would not extend the meeting past the time allotted. Ben moved the meeting time be extended and Ed seconded that motion.

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Jerome then proceeded with the last topic, which was to ask for feedback on how well the informative topics are serving the members and to allow them time to provide feedback to LBL staff. How is the FS serving the board's interests for things that need to be emphasized, and how does the board view the FS in following through?

- Ed said the format and organization of meetings was conducive to getting good work done. The staff receives the board's work and brings back details. Ed leaves meetings confident that he has been heard and said it has been an honor to serve on the board.
- Ben had similar sentiments and appreciated the members and staff listening.
- Sam said that, as a new member, he is excited about what he has seen today, about what he can do on the board toward serving its efforts. He's heard good things about LBL.
- Terry talks with many former residents, and almost 90% of the time when he asks them about how the FS is doing and what they can do better, the former residents just ask to have roads maintained so they can get to their cemeteries. Also, Law Enforcement Officers are the epitome of courtesy, and the former residents really appreciate their kindness and consideration.
- Jim Byford is impressed with the way LBL is managed. He was not aware until today that the role of the board covered only two areas. He wants to be able to comment on what's happening; be a liaison between management and constituents. Either structured or unstructured, he would like members to be able to tell the FS staff what they are hearing from constituents.
 - *Bill commented that he understands that when the Protection Act was crafted, the authors considered the most lingering things the FS would have to deal with, and thought the board would be most effective if they had a narrow mission with two big challenges. He believes their intent was always for the members to be ambassadors for LBL and that members can still find ways to do that – to share information about LBL and get people in touch with the right staff to help them with their concerns or to answer their questions.*
- Ben Helen said it was a great honor to serve. She continues to learn a lot from the staff and other members. Meetings are wonderful, informative sessions, which enable her to answer questions. She thinks it is important to be informed and to be an ambassador for LBL.
- David said that a deep love for LBL comes across from the members. So many times you put forth your ideas and nothing happens, but in this setting the board has seen things happen and that provides a sense of accomplishment. The FS has proved themselves to be good stewards. The FS staff does more with less than any organization he has seen; they are to be commended for that and he appreciates what they do.
- Vernon said it was an honor to serve. He has seen some things come to fruition that he was skeptical about at the beginning. Thanks to Bill and the staff, things are improving.
- Steve appreciates the staff and everything they have worked hard to do at LBL. He likes the opportunity to discuss general issues being heard. As representatives of the surrounding

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counties, board members get a lot of questions. He understands the scope and focus of the board, but likes the opportunity to learn about other issues and be able to answer questions. He appreciates the EE programs and likes to hear feedback from the schools.

- Jim Wallace said it is an honor for him to serve. As a former educator, he has had an interest in EE since the beginning. This board has helped put a little energy back into EE and it is moving in the right direction. He sees positive results with the change of management – communication lines are open and he feels they’re listening.
- Bobby enjoys serving as an alternate on the board. He liked the suggestion about the cemeteries, and also the new mobile panel to explain the benefits of prescribed burning.
- Jesse has seen a lot of things happen at LBL and sees us working closer together. He thinks things are going in the right direction. The staff is competent and interested.
- Pat believes this board is a good thing. He hears broad ideas from the board, and the staff comes up with specific ways to apply them.

Jerome thanked them for their input. People are enthusiastic and excited about LBL; they want to know about the history, be connected, and understand what the place means. He said there is strong leadership at LBL. The ability to work together and get things done will continue, and we will see the results. As to the quality of the agenda, Jerome’s sense is that we are talking about the right things. Bill and staff consider all input provided by this group and it will benefit the users. Jerome said the work Forest Service law enforcement officers do is inherently dangerous, but they approach it in the most professional way. He is pleased everyone recognizes that.

Jim Byford made a motion the meeting be adjourned and Jesse seconded that motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Certified by:

/s/ Jerome Thomas

JEROME THOMAS
LBL Advisory Board Chairperson

11/30/09

(Date)

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