

West Virginia State Parks Foundation

Minutes of the 2012 Annual Meeting

April 26, 2012

The meeting convened at Stonewall Resort State Park in Roanoke, West Virginia at 10:07 am. President Jim Michael welcomed park and foundation representatives and made introductions.

Secretary's report: Bob Hoke presented the minutes from the 2011 meeting in written form. Jim Michael asked for any corrections. There was a **motion to accept the minutes as presented.** The motion was seconded and approved.

Treasurer's report: Bob Hoke presented the 2011 financial report in written form. He said there were two significant grants received in 2011. One was a \$166,000 bequest from the estate of Kenneth Cash-dollar for "maintenance, construction, and improvements of hiking trails, overlooks, and nature centers. Preference for Blackwater Falls, Twin Falls, or Tygart Lake State Parks." The money is residing in a restricted account pending expenditure on approved projects in the parks.

The Foundation also received an \$8K grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council to support post production and marketing of a video about the history of the land around Blackwater Falls State Park.

Expenses during the year included \$2.2K for cabin furniture for Lost River, \$2.2K for seven new disc golf course "holes" at the Greenbrier State Sores, \$766 for grounds maintenance equipment at Audra, and \$2.6K for paving at Tomlinson Run.

There was a **motion to accept the financial report.** The motion was seconded and approved.

Parks report: Ken Caplinger made the following comments about the state of the Park system:

- West Virginia's parks are doing well compared to parks in many other states. This is partially due to West Virginia's relatively good financial status. The State's parks are ranked 5th or 6th in self-sufficiency. He noted that the parks are a legacy for future generations.
- He thanked Jim Michael for his work in getting funding for the 82-room lodge and other improvements at Cacapon. Ken said that new capital projects are intended to make a profit and to help pay for their operations and maintenance costs.
- Governor Tomlin is very supportive of the parks.

- Ken hopes that \$2-5M in lottery money will be available for major repairs and equipment. This will help slow a major decline in expenditures for infrastructure projects in the parks. There are still funding problems, but overall the Park System is in pretty good financial shape.
- Responding to a question by Jim Michael, Ken that the Park System budget is about \$36M with \$22M coming from revenue and the rest from lottery and legislative allocations.

Smart phone applications for parks: Bob Hoke reported that he had been contacted by two makers of smart phone applications that are designed to allow park visitors to interactively get-location based information about attractions in and around the park. Both applications allow information to be stored with varying levels of detail and then users can see what is in their area and drill down to the information they are interested in. Both apps have provision for displaying ads that can help defray the cost of the software. Bob said he didn't have detailed pricing information for either product, but he would get it and send it to the attendees. One of the companies, BarZ Adventures, is based in Austin Texas and the other, I-Treks, is based in Lewisburg, WV.

Nominating Committee and Election: The Nominating Committee said that all current officers are willing to continue to serve and there has been no additional interest in any position. Jim Michael asked for nominations from the floor, but there were none. There was a brief discussion about whether to continue having one person serve as Secretary and Treasurer and the consensus was that it is acceptable and allowed by the bylaws. There was a motion to accept the proposed slate of officers by acclamation. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The officers are:

President: Jim Michael
Vice President: Dan Hopkins
Secretary: Bob Hoke
Treasurer: Bob Hoke

Mark Abbott suggested that the group should look for a Vice President to be groomed as the future president. He also noted that Bob Hoke is reluctantly serving as Secretary and we need to find someone to fill that position.

Philip McKnelly's Presentation: Philip McKnelly, the Executive Director of the National Association of State Park Directors and former Director of the

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation gave a very informative presentation to the group. Major points he made were:

- The average state park returns about \$10 for each dollar invested. Volunteers are critical to the operation of many parks. The Park System should be viewed as a single entity even though each park is different.
- He complimented Ken Caplinger on the smooth and effective operation of the West Virginia Parks.
- A National organization is being formed that will be an umbrella group for the individual state park foundations. He said the national group must be careful not to appear to step on the state foundations. Some corporations have expressed interest in helping fund selected activities in a number of states such as “first day” hikes, but no firm proposals have been made yet.
- There needs to be a concerted effort to get more young people involved in parks at all levels. Most people live in a relatively urban setting now and it is critical that the next generation be made aware of parks at all levels and persuaded to care about preserving and using them.
- Many park systems are having serious financial problems and some parks are being closed. Park closures and privatization can have many unintended consequences on endangered species, law enforcement, and other areas. When the Minnesota Park system shut for two weeks due to financial problems there was a significant spike in vandalism in the parks.
- Parks with land acquired with Federal Land and Water Fund money may not be able to be closed without possibly losing all federal funding.
- The average state spends 2/10 of 1% of its budget on state parks. West Virginia is slightly below the average.
- There is some good news. Several states have implemented dedicated funding sources for their park systems. Arkansas has a 1/8% sales tax dedicated to its parks and the money can't be redirected; Missouri has a 1/10% sales tax for parks that was initially temporary, but was recently made permanent with 80% of the voters approving. Virginia had plans to close five parks, but the legislature reversed that decision and actually increased park funding by \$2M. Idaho planned to close its parks, but the plan was dropped in three days after a public outcry. West Virginia parks are in pretty good shape and usually get reasonably good government funding.
- States with good park systems tend to have good local foundations to support those parks. When the public is asked about park support they always

want to support them. Foundations are critical for mobilizing public support and should always be prepared to lobby for their park system. The key point is to not be “asleep at the switch” when critical issues come up.

Foundation Reports:

Cacapon: (Jim Michael) The Foundation received a local grant to help with their nature program. The Park has a historic inn and they received a \$30K grant for a new heating system and a \$80K grant to restore the outside of the building. They have an annual Gala that is a fundraiser and helps raise community awareness of the Park. Their Labor Day “homecoming” event had about 1,000 people attend. He said the current Superintendent is getting lots of good things done at the Park.

Holly River: (Donna Boggs) New trail markers have been installed, washer/dryers have been put in the bathhouse, many worn and damaged Park tools have been replaced, and a new air conditioner has been put in the activities building. Future plans include getting a new pool heater, installing a footbridge to make restaurant access safer, and installing new dusk to dawn lights.

Kanawha State Forest Foundation: (Bill Hall) His foundation recently joined the statewide foundation. He said their foundation is about 20 years old and has about 250 members. Each year they sponsor annual events such as wildflower and fall foliage walks, a summer concert in the forest, and they serve food at Forest events. A recent photo contest turned out to not be very popular. They have a Web site (www.ksff.org) and a quarterly newsletter. The Forest is popular with hikers and the foundation has produced a book on the flora and fauna of the forest. They plan to reprint their trail guide and map soon. Other recent projects include installing a wrought iron fence around a graveyard, purchasing a defibrillator and radio for the Forest, and helping with trail maintenance. A major future project is to convert a large horse barn to offices and other uses.

Little Beaver: (Dan Hopkins) His foundation is getting along very well with the current Park management and they are trying to implement programs to get kids more involved at the Park.

MSR&LHA (Cass): (Bob Hoke) The annual Cass Railfan Weekend is coming up and the Association is continuing to support the Park's interpretative program. The ongoing locomotive rebuilding project is continuing to make progress.

North Bend State Park Foundation: The Foundation sent a written report saying the Foundation completed the paving of a trail between the picnic and sports areas. Planned events include a soup luncheon, selling tickets to the Ellenboro Bash, a bike race, and bingo in the fall. They plan to install a solar-powered dusk to dawn light at one of the lake marinas this year.

North Bend Rails to Trails Foundation: (Mark Abbott) Twenty-two miles of trail are going to be re-surfaced and they have received a \$22K grant that will purchase gravel for an additional 10 miles. They hope to get funding for a band venue. A new bike security system in Ellenboro has been installed. They are looking into preserving some historic artifacts along the trail and installing interpretative signs.

Pipestem: (Superintendent Dave Caplinger) The local foundation is currently dormant, but there is some hope that there may be a core of people interested in reactivating it soon.

Pricketts Fort: (Melissa May) The fort recently opened for the season and Melissa passed out a brochure describing the ongoing activities. There are lots of school tours in the spring. The amphitheater has been rebuilt and now has 440 permanent seats, new electric service, lights, sound, and landscaping. New programs include family archaeology, family weekend events, and an academic lecture program.

Stonewall Jackson: (Rudy Henley) Rudy suggested that all Park foundations increase their visibility in their communities to help people appreciate their local parks. A cell tower is being built in the park and the state will get some revenue from it even though it is on Corps of Engineers property. His foundation is working with local colleges to implement best practices forest and lake management. They are also working with the local school board to bring kids to the park to learn science, get exercise, and see some potential jobs. The goal is to make the park an “outdoor classroom”.

Tomlinson Run: (Superintendent Jesse Mestrovic) The basketball court has been paved, the 9-hole disc golf course is installed, and three bat boxes have been installed. The local foundation purchased a four-person cabin. Kids helped plant trees and clean litter.

Tygart Lake: (Mary Densmore) Electric power has been run to the restrooms and picnic area. The haunted hayride is popular and raises money, with many people ride multiple times. They also have a fishing derby, Easter egg hunt, and other events. Long range plans include developing a handicap accessible trail.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 pm.

Robert B. Hoke

Robert B. Hoke, Secretary

Meeting Attendees:

James Michael	Cacapon
Robert Hoke	MSR&LHA (Cass)
Dan Hopkins	Little Beaver
Tom Ambrose	Cacapon
Sue Coole	Tygart Lake St. Pk. Foundation
Mark Abbott	North Bend Rail Trail Foundation
Kathy Abbott	North Bend Rail Trail Foundation
James Jones	North Bend Rail Trail Foundation
Melissa May	Pricketts Fort Memorial Found.
Donna Boggs	Holly River State Park Foundation
Rose Ann Cowger	Holly River State Park Foundation
Eddie Skidmore	Holly River State Park Foundation
Clisby Jennell	WV State Parks Business Manager
Sam England	Stonewall Resort State Park
Ken Caplinger	WV State Parks Chief
Mary Densmore	Tygart Lake
Brennan O’Sullivan	Tygart Lake
Dave Caplinger	Pipestem
Rudy Henley	Stonewall State Park Foundation
Bill Hall	Kanawha State Forest Foundation
Philip McKnelly	Nat. Assoc. of State Pk. Directors
Jesse Mestrovic	Tomlinson Run State Park
Monte Pearson	Tomlinson Run State Park