

# West Virginia State Parks Foundation

## Minutes of the 2010 Annual Meeting

March 16, 2010

The meeting convened at Prickett's Fort State Park in Fairmont, West Virginia at 10:00 am. President Jim Michael welcomed park and foundation representatives and made introductions. Secretary Melissa May presented the minutes from the 2009 meeting in written form. Jim Michael asked for any corrections or additions to those and one change was made (North Bend State Park membership fees are \$50 not \$150). Melissa May noted the correction. Mark Abbott **moved to accept the corrected minutes**. Sue Cool seconded and the motion was approved.

Treasurer Bob Hoke presented the 2009 financial report in written form, noting some of the special funds that have been established for individual parks and efforts, such as the DNR Nature Center and Environmental Programs Fund. He reported that nine foundations had paid dues for the year totaling \$180. Mark Abbott **moved to accept the financial report**. Sue Cool seconded and the motion was approved.

Consultant Terrell Ellis, hired by DNR to assess the foundation, presented her findings and recommendations for the future of the organization. She emphasized that the report was not a fundraising plan but simply looked at how to strengthen the organization and meet existing goals. These goals include facilitating communication between foundations, encouraging WVSPF donations and raising public awareness of the park system as a whole.

After presenting the research process and current challenges she identified the following findings. The group needs more representation statewide, more public engagement, a clear organizational vision, increased capacity and a focus on fundraising.

She recommended refocusing as a statewide umbrella organization to provide funding and technical assistance to individual parks and for statewide improvements. This would begin with changing the makeup of the board, evaluating mission, and policies, and developing a three year strategic plan that is responsive to a needs assessment. A detailed report with the specific findings and recommendations was provided in written form to all park representatives.

Jim Michael asked for the group to respond. Questions and concerns included how exactly a major transition of this sort would be managed. Ken Caplinger offered the services of the DNR offices to assist with facilitating changes.

*(Melissa May took the preceding section of the minutes, but she was unable to attend the afternoon part of the meeting. The rest of these minutes were taken by Bob Hoke).*

The Little Beaver representative said it seems premature to act on the recommendations immediately and suggested a follow-up working meeting to act on them. Other attendees commented that input is needed from parks not in attendance at the meeting. Little Beaver made a **motion to delay a decision on the Ellis Report's recommendations**. Cass Seconded it and the motion passed unanimously. Jim Michael said he would like written comments to be sent in with 30-45 days after the final report is distributed and another meeting to act on the recommendations about 30 days after that.

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

- The Park system recently underwent an extensive legislative performance audit and the system received a favorable review. The audit pointed out a number of maintenance shortfalls, but said that park system personnel have performed well. They said the maintenance problems are due to a shortage of about \$3M per year in funding and that new funding sources are needed. Ken said he is looking at possible sources of dedicated funding. The Governor has rejected the idea of imposing park entry fees and Ken said they would also be difficult to implement in many parks. He noted that West Virginia is one of the few states that don't charge park entrance fees. The auditors also suggested selling or closing some park operations that are losing money. Ken noted that some states (notably Arizona and California) are in far worse shape than West Virginia and are considering closing many or all of their parks. He said that Frank Jezioro, the head of the DNR, has refused to consider giving away any park system land.
- Park revenue is down about \$1M this year, probably due to the recession and disruptive construction projects at some parks. Due to recent cost reducing initiatives the park system's financial position looks reasonably good for the next 18-24 months, but there will still be more personnel and facility reductions.

- Gross park system revenue is about \$20M and expenses are about \$34M. The \$16M shortfall is made up from lottery and general revenue funds. Some new revenue sources will be operational soon (new cabins at Blackwater, the Twin Falls lodge addition, and the Berkeley Springs bath house). The new recreation center at Chief Logan will be operated by a local foundation and should be revenue neutral to the park system.
- New lottery supported bonds have been authorized and the park system may get about \$30M from them. Much of the money will go toward infrastructure repairs and improvements and toward the Canaan Valley reconstruction project.
- The Parks office in Charleston is fully staffed with six people for the first time in a few years. This will allow more time for strategic planning and not just doing the routine work.

**Insurance:** Ken Caplinger said the State Board of Risk and Insurance Management (BRIM) has sent him a letter saying that volunteers are covered under a park's liability policy as long as the volunteers are working on approved projects and sign a waiver prior to starting work. Ken also noted that BRIM already insures some foundations and any that are interested in coverage need to contact an insurance agent and ask for BRIM coverage (some agents may not be aware of it).

**Liability legislation:** Jim Michael reported that the legislation to further reduce foundation liability died in committee this year. It was Senate bills 79 and 84, and House bill 2517. He hopes they will be reintroduced next year.

### Foundation Reports:

**Berkeley Springs:** Three projects are in progress: money is being solicited for a \$13K project to upgrade and raise bridges in the park to reduce flooding; security cameras have been installed to reduce nighttime vandalism and drug dealing; and there is ongoing maintenance work in the park's gardens.

**Blennerhassett:** Access to the island is currently difficult because the Corps of Engineers is doing riverfront park work that will last for 18 months. Access is currently possible only from Ohio and this is hurting museum and gift shop sales. Additional projects to improve the museum and gardens are planned. Their very good superintendent has recently been transferred.

**Cacapon:** The foundation is doing well. Their Labor Day Homecoming event continues to be popular as is an annual gala. New grills and picnic tables have been installed, there is a new gazebo, trail work is ongoing, and a major focus is now on the park's historic inn. They also had a good superintendent transferred recently.

**MSR&LHA (Cass):** Volunteer work on restoring one of the park's steam locomotives continues, The Foundation donated the Cass Community Center to the state and there was a large donation from an automobile club to help fund needed roof repairs to it. The interpretative program continues to go well and gives visitors information about the historical significance of Cass. The Association funded major repairs to the foundation of the old fire tower at Bald Knob to keep it from collapsing. Association membership has remained steady despite an aging member population and the recession.

**Holly River:** The foundation's new \$25K building is almost complete, a very good new trail map is in development, the foundation bought a 17KW emergency generator for the restaurant, trail maintenance and building projects are ongoing.

**Little Beaver:** Work is continuing on the park's new RV park.

**North Bend Rails to Trails:** Membership has fallen significantly. The current major project is fixing the drainage in a 2200 foot tunnel. The North Bend State Park Foundation is helping with trail work around the park. The foundation is seeking a \$100K TEA-21 grant to do major trail repairs. The local historical society is working on maintaining a historic depot that is located adjacent to the trail. A new member of the foundation's Board has a house adjoining the trail and is very enthusiastic about the trail.

**Pinnacle Rock:** The last fishing rodeo was very successful and additional activities are planned.

**Prickett's Fort:** School tours will start soon. Last year over 3,500 students come to the park and over 10,000 tickets were sold (compared to 7,500 in 2008). There are 17 special events scheduled. Various repairs are planned, including work on the stockade and blacksmith shop.

**Stonewall:** They have received three grants totaling \$900K. One is for construction of three miles of trails, one is for two bridges (about a \$500K project), and the last grant is for sidewalk construction. Fundraising events included a golf tournament and culinary event. They have a new temporary wildlife exhibit using specimens donated to the Foundation. They hope to eventually make the exhibit permanent

and they are working to develop a museum telling the history of Roanoke, the town under the lake.

**Tygart Lake:** The foundation is paying for advertising for foundation events. They have established a memorial bench program and two benches have been donated so far. They have a Web site and are on Facebook, and have received \$30 in usage fees from the Goodsearch search engine. They built a picnic pavilion in 2009 and are hoping to raise funds to pay for a swimming pool. They buy insurance policies for each of their events.

**North Bend State Park Foundation:** They completed an observation deck and a trail to it. Their upcoming project is to construct a playground in the park's picnic area, and they have received one grant and expect to have the necessary funding by this summer. They will have a fundraising dinner in late March. They have requested a quote on liability insurance from the Cincinnati Insurance Company.

**Tomlinson Run:** A paved ADA-approved trail has been completed and a commemorative bench has been installed along the trail. They are constructing another new cabin. Their Easter Egg Hunt is coming up soon.

**Foundation financial reports:** Jim Michael asked Clisby Jennelle why he had recently asked for foundation's financial reports. Clisby said there was a project to determine the overall value of the state and the project folks wanted to include the assets of the foundations. He said the value turned out to be insignificant and he doesn't expect the reports to be requested again.

**Nominating Committee:** Jim Michael said that Stan Anderson, the Nominating Committee Chair, couldn't attend the meeting. He said the current officers, except Secretary Melissa May, are willing to run again. He asked for nominations for Secretary, but there were none. Bob Hoke said he would be willing to serve as the Acting Secretary. Jim then asked for other nominations for any office, but again the silence was deafening. 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 (acting): Bob Hoke  
Treasurer: Bob Hoke

**Future meeting:** There was general agreement on the schedule for acting on the recommendations in Terrell Ellis' report:

- Terrell will submit her final report to Ken Caplinger, probably by March 19.

- Ken will send copies to all foundations. A letter will go with the report asking that written comments on the recommendations be returned to the Foundation's Secretary, Bob Hoke, by May 1.
- Bob will make copies of the comments and send them to all the foundations shortly after May 1.
- There will be a meeting at Stonewall Jackson on Tuesday, June 1, decide what action to take on the Ellis Report's recommendations.

Ken Caplinger said that no matter what the Foundation members decide to do with the Ellis Report's recommendations, Parks continue to work with the Foundation.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 pm.

Robert B. Hoke, Secretary

#### Meeting Attendees:

Melissa May	Prickett's Fort
Bob Hoke	MSR&LHA (Cass)
James Michael	Cacapon
Lin Dunham	Cacapon
Tom Ambrose	Superintendent, Cacapon
Peggy Mills	Berkeley Springs
Cecil Childress	Blennerhassett
Mark Abbott	North Bend Trails to Trails
Jay Hayes	Stonewall
Sam England	Stonewall
Jesse Ulderich	North Ben Rail Trail
Andy Bennett	Superintendent, Cass
Dan Hopkins	Little Beaver
Dave Pruitt	Holly River
Matt Baker	Coopers Rock
Brad Reed	WVDNR Parks Office
Clisby Jennelle	WVDNR Parks Office
Ken Caplinger	WVDNR Parks Office
Mick Edsey	Superintendent, Tygart Lake
Sue Coole	Tygart Lake
Frank Ratcliffe	Pinnacle Rock
Judie Holly Marcum	Pinnacle Rock
James Harvey	Tomlinson Run
Sam Morris	Tomlinson Run
Kevin Wolfe	Pricketts Fort
Paul Redford	WVDNR Parks Office
Stephen Jones	North Bend