

West Virginia State Parks Foundation

Minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting

April 23, 2013

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

Secretary's report: Bob Hoke presented the minutes from the 2012 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 2012 financial report in written form. He said that there was relatively little financial activity in 2012 and that the Foundation is in good financial shape. He said that the large bequest from Kenneth Cashdollar has yet to be spent. Ken Caplinger suggested that a press release should be issued telling about the bequest. 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:

- The June 29 windstorm and the November snowstorm both did significant damage to the whole system. The Greenbrier State Forest was one of the most heavily impacted facilities. Blackwater Holly River, Audra, and Cathedral also had major damage. Fortunately, most of the damage was to trees and not buildings, but a lot of revenue was lost. \$603K was lost in the first week of July alone. About \$500K of the loss was covered by insurance, but revenue was down about 20% for the rest of the season due to the June storm. The system was just recovering when the November storm hit and caused another \$160K in lost revenue, plus more damage to repair.
- The operating account is down about \$1.5M for the year. The \$500K insurance payment helped, but revenue still fell short. High government officials have promised to help with funding and the legislature gave a \$1M supplemental appropriation.
- The \$36M project at Canaan Valley is almost complete and looks great. Revenue at the Park is already increasing. The management contract for the new lodge gives the State, not the management company, most of the revenue.
- The \$24M project to expand the Cacapon lodge from 47 rooms to 82 rooms should start soon. It will include lots of new amenities and the golf course will be upgraded. Funding will be from an

upcoming bond sale that should happen in August, 2013.

- Beech Fork is getting a \$29M 75-room lodge.
- Other parks will benefit from the increased revenue from the large projects because more money will be flowing into the overall system.
- A dedicated funding source is still needed to pay for infrastructure upgrades, roughly \$3-4M per year. Possible funding sources are to be considered in the 2014 legislative session
- Ken is still looking for a staff person in the office to support the Foundation on a part time basis. Unfortunately, there is an employment freeze in effect so it isn't clear when a person will be available.
- Ken is still looking for candidates to fill the two at-large Board positions that were created a couple years ago. He asked the foundations to provide suggestions for candidates and he would pass them on to the Chief of the WVDNR. Keith Burdette said that it is unlikely that anyone will be appointed unless candidates are suggested.
- The program for making \$7,500 grants to Park foundations is being renamed the "Don Andrews Matching Grant Program" and a formal announcement of the change will be made soon.
- Cordie Hudkins died in October, 2012, and part of his large taxidermy collection is being donated to Cacapon for display there.
- Ken thanked all the volunteers in the foundations for their efforts and he thanked the park superintendents for their willingness to work with their foundations and communities. He noted that parks are not islands and that they need to be integrated with their local communities. He emphasized that parks are a legacy that must be passed to future generations.
- Personnel costs are increasing due to such things as technology support and employee benefit increases. He said that the salary of park superintendents is the lowest in the country and this is becoming a critical problem for recruitment.
- Parks can make donations of good or services to Foundations to use in Fundraising. This includes things like rounds of golf or lodging nights.
- The Strategic Tourism Study found that parks are a major reason folks come to the state. More public-private projects are in the works, including a Zip-line in Pipestem that will include a world-class canopy tour. Other projects may be done with

private sector help, but wholesale privatization seems to be unpopular these days.

- He concluded by saying that West Virginia's parks are still better shape than those in many other states.

Comments by Keith Burdette: Jim Michael introduced Keith Burdette, the West Virginia Secretary of Commerce, and Keith made the following comments:

- He thanked the foundation volunteers for their help in supporting the State's parks. He noted that the first Park (Droop Mountain) was established in 1928 and that the park system encompasses a wide variety of sites. Twenty eight counties have State parks and there is wide support for them, especially from some legislators.
- He commended Ken and the Parks staff for their continuing efforts to keep the system running. He noted that funds are tight because of a drop in coal revenue and other factors.
- West Virginia has a balanced budget and there are some reserves, and they have the best bond rating in 50 years. Workers comp rates have dropped since privatization. However, additional budget cuts were imposed recently and the austerity will last at least another year. Keith said he is optimistic that revenue will increase then and that will reduce the pressure on the Park System budget.
- He reiterated Ken's comments about the new projects coming on stream to create revenue and said that demand for park resources can only be met if there is money available.
- In response to a question from Jim Michael, Keith said the Park System is about 54% self-sufficient, but it still requires an 18M annual subsidy.
- Most money for lodge buildings comes from bonds that are paid for by lottery funds. Revenue from lodges goes to the Park System and is not used to pay off the bonds.
- There are no immediate plans for fracking on any State property, but the idea is being reviewed for some non-park State property. As a follow-up, Ken said that slant drilling should be ok, but no surface drilling should be allowed in any park. Slant drilling could become a viable revenue source if managed properly. He noted that fracking sites are big and ugly.

Park goals needed: Rudy Henley said that the DNR and the Foundation need a coherent policy on the conflicting goals of the State's parks. Are they to make money, provide outdoor recreation, or whatever? Dave Caplinger said that the Park System logo might be "where people and nature meet" and that parks mean different things to different people. Ken said the idea of out-of-state pricing has been consid-

ered and Keith said there will always be different prices at parks because they have different amenities.

At-large Nominations: Jim Michael said that all foundations need to consider candidates for the two at-large Board positions. He said he would send a reminder letter in a month or two and that any proposed names would then be forwarded to Ken Caplinger for review.

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 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. Bob Hoke said that the current term will be his last as Secretary and that someone needs to step in to fill that position.

Foundation Reports:

Cacapon: (Jim Michael) Their Foundation's recent emphasis has been on working with the community. They get some revenue from the hotel/motel tax. They try to do projects that the State can't afford like new picnic tables, pavilions, the nature center, an overlook, signage, and trail clearing. One current project is trying to obtain grants to refurbish the Park's historic log inn, but administration and coordination are proving to be difficult. Homecoming is still a major fundraising activity and gets the public involved. June 22 is West Virginia day and a gala and other events are planned.

Holly River: (Donna Boggs) The Park suffered major damage from the 2012 storms and electricity was only recently restored. Their Foundation has had some turnover recently. They received memorial donations in memory of a park visitor. They have done work on the one-room school and other buildings. Trail markers have been installed, conference rooms were stocked, and the annual newsletter was produced.

Kanawha State Forest Foundation: (Bill Hall) Their Foundation has 230 members and hosts four major events during the year. The recent Wildflower Walk had record attendance and made over \$1,000. There were lots of student attendees. There is a concert in the Park in June, a fall nature walk in September, and

a winter walk in January. They produce a quarterly newsletter and have a Web site. The trail map was recently updated and reprinted and a book describing all the plants in the Forest has been produced. They bought heating units for the multipurpose building and Memorial Garden landscaping is in progress. The arboretum is being expanded and they hope to erect markers at some CCC structures in the Forest. Rest room construction is still in progress due to various bureaucratic delays. They hope to develop an e-mail list of members to facilitate communications.

Little Beaver: (Dan Hopkins) Dan commended the Park System's management at all levels for their continuing efforts. He said he plans to try to increase community awareness about his park and how well it is currently running.

MSR&LHA (Cass): (Bob Hoke) The Association is doing very well. The major fundraising effort is the annual Cass Railfan Weekend each May. The Association's largest project is the complete mechanical restoration of one of the Parks steam locomotives. It is going well, but is taking longer than initially expected.

North Bend State Park Foundation: Fundraising has been very successful and they have an optimistic project list to accomplish this year. Their foundation bought the materials for a bridge on the Nature Trail close to the park entrance. It is to be completed before the June 2, 2013 mountain bike race. This bridge, along with the rerouting of the trail, will alleviate an extremely steep section of trail that is currently experiencing an erosion problem. Their Foundation is currently putting a funding package of grants and money to purchase and plant 130 trees at the campground at the Cokeley recreation area. This area is void of any trees as the campground was developed in a meadow. They hope to accomplish this project by the fall of 2013. They are also attempting to purchase solar dusk to dawn lights at the marina at the Cokeley recreation area. This will allow lighting for boaters to load their boats after dark. The lights will be self-sufficient with the solar charging system. Other fundraising will be the third annual "Race Around the Bend" mountain bike race, assisting with the Ellenboro Summer Bash, and business and personal contributions. They had a very successful bingo event last fall that was well attended.

North Bend Rails to Trails Foundation: (Mark Abbott) The trail sustained severe damage from the 2012 storms. Their Foundation bought the Park a \$5,000 trailer and a pole saw to facilitate storm damage clearing. They received a \$22K grant to resurface about 22 miles of trail instead of the usual three miles that would have been done under Federal guidelines. A \$100K TEA-21 grant request is pending to fund

additional maintenance. A new playground was constructed along the trail in Ellenboro. They received a grant to clear trees over the tunnel and raised \$10K in donations for resurfacing. There are recurring problems with a Marcellus drilling company blocking access to the trail at times. The Foundation is trying to get a 3-mile connector route into downtown Parkersburg. Mark mentioned a "Master Naturalist" program that may be able to supply guides to lead tours in some parks.

Pipestem: (Steve Robertson) The Pipestem Foundation was recently restarted. Projects include reshingling a historic overnight cabin, installing carpet on the mini golf course, purchasing a new 55" TV to be used for group functions. Future plans include building a new picnic shelter. They received a donation to pay for golf course fountains. The cooperation of the Park's staff has been critical in getting the projects completed.

Pricketts Fort: (Greg Bray) Melissa May has left their Foundation. Seventeen programs are planned for 2013. There will be 12 workshops and several concerts. Greg said he hopes to improve the volunteer program.

Stonewall Jackson: (Rudy Henley). The bridge and connector project is finally completed. This will provide a valuable connector route. Rudy introduced Samantha Morris. She said she will be coordinating several concerts this year and that they want to bridge the generation gap with music. She is also trying to convince area doctors to prescribe physical activity to get patients to come to the Park. Their Foundation and Park will participate for the first time in National Trails Day on June 1.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Robert B. Hoke

Robert B. Hoke, Secretary

Meeting Attendees:

James Michael	Cacapon State Park
Robert Hoke	MSR&LHA (Cass)
Dan Hopkins	Little Beaver State Park
Tom Ambrose	Cacapon State Park
Mark Abbott	North Bend Rail Trail Foundation
Kathy Abbott	North Bend Rail Trail Foundation
Donna Boggs	Holly River State Park Foundation
Rose Ann Cowger	Holly River State Park Foundation
Sam England	Stonewall Resort State Park
Ken Caplinger	WV State Parks Chief
Clisby Jennelle	WV State Parks Business Manager

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Keith Burdette	WV Secretary of Commerce
Dave Caplinger	Pipestem State Park
Steve Robertson	Pipestem State Park
Rudy Henley	Stonewall State Park Foundation
Samantha Morris	Stonewall State Park Foundation
Bill Hall	Kanawha State Forest Foundation
Kevin Wolfe	Prickett's Fort Mem. Foundation
Greg Bray	Prickett's Fort Mem. Foundation
Lin Dunham	Cacapon State Park
Paul Kline	Cacapon State Park
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