

3rd Quarterly Whitewater Commission Meeting Minutes

September 12th, 2017

Location: US Army Corp of Engineers, 2981 Summersville Lake Road, Summersville, WV 26651

Chaired: DNR LE Jerry B. Jenkins, Colonel, for Director Stephen S. McDaniel

In Attendance:

Commissioners: Ed Wooton (by phone private river user); Chris Ellis (private river user); Roger Wilson (AOTG); Rick Johnson (River Expeditions); Chelsea Ruby (by phone WV Tourism); Patrick McCann (by phone Blackwater Outdoor)

Others: Jerry Jenkins (WVDNR); Heather Kessel (WVDNR); Dennis Feazell (WVDNR); Isaac Colvard (Summit BSA); Duane Michael (by phone NPS); Sammy Pugh (New River Trophy Outfitters)

Call to Order

The Whitewater Commission meeting of September 12th, 2017 was called to order at 1:08 p.m. by Colonel Jerry B. Jenkins. Introductions were made. Attendance sheet provided for attendees to sign; attendance by telephone noted during introductions.

Approval of June 13th, 2017 Minutes

Roger Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 13th, 2017 meeting. Motion seconded by Rick Johnson. The motion carried.

Budget

Colonel Jenkins mentioned the budget reports were located in the meeting packets.

No discussion on the budget.

Update on WVU Injury Report Summary

Heather Kessel explains that the agreement with WVU was signed and work had begun on the Whitewater Injury Summary Report. Yinyang Deng with WVU had downloaded the data and had plans to create his own maps and reports. He expects to finish the report without needing the full 6 months provided in the agreement.

Heather Kessel advised the Commission that Mr. Deng asked permission to publish the summary once finished. She explained to the Commission that the previous report by the NC professor was published and currently could be found online. The Commission members agreed that once they reviewed the summary there would be no reason that Mr. Deng couldn't publish his work.

New River Zones – Sandstone to Meadow Creek – Evaluations

Sammy Pugh with New River Trophy Outfitters explains that he'd like to have the zones reviewed to allow rental kayaks in that area. He provided a map of the area outlining outfits that provide kayak rentals

along the New River. He mentions traffic is becoming heavier with cabin rentals and other activity. He feels there is great potential for more incoming revenue if the zones were opened up for kayaking and other types of rentals. Mr. Pugh explains that it's an ideal place for more economic boosts in that area because there are good access points to the river. He advises there are three (3) good points to enter and exit the river.

Colonel Jenkins suggested forming a committee to run trips and review those zones to check levels. Colonel Jenkins stressed that changes to the regulations was not an immediate process. He explained that any changes would need proposed submissions by end of May 2018. Rick Johnson asked Mr. Pugh if he felt kayak rentals would hinder the experience for fishermen. Mr. Pugh advised that, in his opinion, that rentals would not deter fishing in that area.

Chris Ellis made a motion to form a committee to explore the section of the New River between Sandstone and Meadow Creek for possible livery outfits in those sections for rentals. Committee will review and report back to the Commission on their findings regarding water levels and safety issues. Motion was seconded by Ed Wooton and Roger Wilson. Motion carried.

Suggested volunteers for the committee: Chris Ellis, Rick Johnson, NRPO Andy Lyons and Bill Parker with NPS. Others may be included at a later date.

Other Discussions

Safety Training Requirements for General Outfitters in Whitewater Zones

Roger Wilson requested that the Commission consider training and/or requirements for those outfits that conduct fishing trips in whitewater zones. Chris Ellis agrees that it is the Commission's duty to look into safety issues of any kind.

Roger Wilson made a motion to form a committee to research training and requirements for outfits that provide fishing trips in whitewater zones. Committee will be tasked to determine if an equal standard of training is necessary. Motion was seconded by Rick Johnson. Motion carried.

Chris Ellis asked that a list of outfits in specific areas are defined and allowed to represent those areas.

Letter of Support to Corp of Engineers

Rick Johnson requested that the Commission send a letter of support to the Corp of Engineers to evaluate and possibly include more water releases in their new lake management plan for Summersville. Rick Johnson made a motion to send a letter of support to the US Corp of Engineers asking for summer releases and any increases to recreational opportunities to be included in their new Summersville Lake Management Plan. Motion was seconded by Chelsea Ruby. Motion carried.

Chelsea Ruby offered a follow up from Tourism on this item. Ed Wooton mentioned it would be beneficial to request increases of recreational opportunities across the board....in all areas.

Gauley Numbers Down – Ideas for Economic Boost

Chris Ellis asked the Commission's input on the decrease in Gauley numbers and suggestions to increase media opportunities, advertising and other ideas for economic growth. Chelsea Ruby explains that WV Tourism has pushed social media posts, articles in the newspaper and other current advertisements geared at Gauley Season. Ed Wooton asked Chelsea Ruby if there are any plans to do a "film" regarding the whitewater industry. More discussion followed regarding whitewater and economic advertising plans.

Next Meeting

The 4th 2017 Quarterly Whitewater Commission meeting to be held at WV Division of Natural Resources office at 324 4th Avenue, South Charleston, WV on Tuesday, December 12th, 2017 at 1:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Rick Johnson motioned to adjourn the September 12th, 2017 3rd Quarterly Whitewater Commission meeting. Roger Wilson seconded the motion. The motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.