

**Tri-County Lakes Administrative Commission
Board Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2024, 3:00 p.m.**

Members Present:

Lorie Smith, Chairman
David Arnold
Dick Grabowski
Robert Hiss
Neil Holthouser
Roy Kelley

Tom Lawton
Frank Rogers
Jeff Salmon
Edgar Tuck
John Vidovich
Chris Whitlow

Members Absent:

Darrell Dalton
Emily Ragsdale
Vincent Shorter
David Wells

Staff Present:

Kristina Sage

Guests Present:

Joy Manning, Wake Education Task Force, Secretary (Remote)
Jason Dunovant, Reporter
Randy Stow, Navigation Committee Chairman
Ben Vidovich, Wake Education Task Force
Mike McCord, Wake Education Task Force
Barbara Ferrell, Sedimentation Task Force
Randy Hodges, Sedimentation Task Force
Tammy Hazlett, Resident
Cheryl Ege, Resident
Kenny Hayes, Wake Education Task Force

1. Call to Order

Lorie Smith called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

2. Invocation

Roy Kelley delivered the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Robert Hiss led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public Comment

Tammy Hazlett spoke on the positive effect that the Wake Education Task Force has had on the community and visitors. In summary she noted that everyone seems willing to help each other and is

communicating in a way that makes everyone feel welcome to the lake. Written statements were read aloud by Chair Lori Smith, from Troy Rech and John Stroebel which support keeping the moratorium in place.

5. Approval of Consent Agenda

Ms. Smith inquired if there were any questions on the Consent Agenda or if any items needed discussion. The Board had no questions.

Jeff Salmon made a motion to approve the consent agenda. John Vidovich seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The item approved is as follows:

- a. Approval of minutes: August 13, 2024

6. Project Update

- a. Wake Education Update: Joy Manning of the Wake Education Task Force provided an overview of the task force's recent activities. The update included information on material distribution and future plans. Postcards and flyers have been delivered to Rock Outdoors. There were two locations at the wine festival where banners were placed. Development of educational curriculum is progressing in consultation with the Smith Mountain Lake Christian Academy. Dates to present education sessions next spring will be determined at a meeting in January 2025. There was an article in the Smith Mountain Lake Insider magazine that included some highlighted safety tips.
- b. Sedimentation Task Force Update: Randy Hodges and Barbara Ferrell provided a brief update on the status of the Sedimentation Task Force. Barbara Ferrell mentioned that the SML Sediment Community Action Group on Facebook now has 339 members where she can capture information to produce reports on locations experiencing sedimentation concerns. The task force now has 15 members from a variety of sectors and held its inaugural meeting in July. The next meeting will be held on October 28, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. The Task Force meets on the fourth Monday of each month.

7. Financial Report

- a. A new Financial Report format, reflecting the requested changes of the board, was provided for year to date status through August 2024.

Chris Whitlow made a motion to approve the Financial Report through August 2024 as presented, Jeff Salmon seconded the motion. Motion carried.

8. Action Items

- a. Consideration of revised Instructions and Application for Buoys on Smith Mountain or Leesville Lake:

Jeff Salmon made a motion to approve the Instructions and Application for Buoys on Smith Mountain or Leesville Lake with changes to section 3B to be brought to the Board in December, Roy Kelley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- b. Consideration of Recommendation to lift the period of suspension for No Wake Surfing Zone applications:

John Vidovich made a motion to leave the moratorium in place for one year. Edgar Tuck seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

- c. Consideration of Recommendation – Application for Establishment of Regulatory Markers on Public Waters of Virginia – Shoal Marker Request: TLAC – SML State Park, Huddleston:

Edgar Tuck made a motion to accept the application as submitted, Jeff Salmon seconded the motion, and the motion carried with abstention from Frank Rogers and Dick Grabowski.

- d. Consideration of Recommendation of Modification of Authorized Markers on Smith Mountain Lake – Gills Creek Marina & Lodge, Inc.:

Jeff Salmon made a motion to recommend denial of the application to DWR as submitted, Robert Hiss seconded the motion, and the motion carried with abstention from Frank Rogers and Dick Grabowski.

- e. Resolution 2024-006 to Reappropriate FY23-24 Carryover Revenue:

Ms. Smith stated that she has been working with the executive committee on carryover from last year, which totals \$114,798.76. The executive committee decided to place \$89,798.76 into a revenue stabilization reserve and allocate \$25,000 to the sedimentation task force project. This task force funding gives a starting point as we actively seek grants for future projects. This resolution confirms the carryover and asks for the board's approval to set up these two accounts. Rather than returning funds to the localities, the revenue stabilization reserve will provide flexibility for next year's budgeting. It was noted that when the next budget is prepared, a decision can be made if we should use accumulated funds for sedimentation or to lower locality increases.

Chris Whitlow made a motion to authorize Kristina, as executive director, to work with Bedford to reallocate the \$114,798.76 carryover to create a \$25,000 sedimentation project account and a revenue stabilization reserve, Robert Hiss seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

- f. Resolution 2024-007 to Purchase Navigation Aids:

John Vidovich made a motion to authorize Kristina, as executive director, to process all expenditures necessary for the replacement of nine (9) TLAC navigation aids from the USCG Conversion line item of the FY2024-2025 budget, Jeff Salmon seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

- g. Consideration of Recommendation for "DANGER Congested Area" signage on Smith Mountain Lake:

Ms. Smith stated that this action item revolves around the need for improved signage in the S-curves on Smith Mountain Lake. There has been extensive deliberation in various meetings, including those held by the Water Safety Council, Navigation Committee, and Wake Education Task Force, about the necessity for more impactful signage to warn the community against watersports, particularly in these S-curves. These areas are narrow, and people often speed through them. Randy Stow, Navigation Committee Chairman, pointed out, some individuals might be towing their children on tubes without paying proper attention to other boat traffic through this hazardous area.

Additionally, Ms. Smith stated that back in 2006, there were three signs that simply read "Caution: Congested Area," but the Water Safety Council and Navigation Committees have since realized that these have not been sufficiently effective. After much discussion, it has been decided that the wording be changed, to read "DANGER: Congested Area," with the additional note "No Towed Watersports." While the "No Towed Watersports" directive is not enforceable, it was hoped that it would make people think twice before allowing their young children on tubes in such a busy part of the lake. There will be installation of two new signs in the S-curves area, with placement determined by the Navigation Committee, as well as placing three additional signs at Gills Creek—specifically at points B14, B16, and G1—which, although not officially referred to as S-curves, does have a sharp turn that can be dangerous due to the speed of boats navigating the waterway. The previous "Caution: Congested Area" sign had been treated as merely informational, but the aim is to create more visible signage using yellow backgrounds with red lettering to catch attention and signal a change in behavior. Instead of simply adding new signs, it is essential to replace existing signs to ensure consistency in messaging. If a navigable area is designated as dangerous, the signage should reflect that uniformly. Different signage sizes and types may lead to misunderstandings about the level of danger present. There was consensus that reflective signs would be beneficial.

Jeff Salmon made a motion to recommend to DWR, upgrades of the S-Curve Caution signage for approval, Edgar Tuck seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

10. Executive Director Updates:

Smith Mountain Lake - Ms. Sage reported an update to the Board on the following:

- To date, this year staff has forwarded 50 debris reports and 17 navigation aid reports to AEP on behalf of residents.
- The Vessel PumpOut Program has ended for the season. The final report will be distributed at the December meeting.

Leesville Lake - Ms. Sage reported that there have been very few reports from Leesville Lake recently.

- To date, this year staff has forwarded 213 debris reports with 7 reports total in September to AEP on behalf of residents.

Stray Voltage Update:

- Thank you to Mr. John Broughton, Franklin County, for the Quick Reference Electrical Inspection Guide and Dock Safety Best Practices, these sheets have been posted on the TLAC website, Facebook, and given to each of the Committees.

11. Reports from the Board and Committees:

Leesville Lake Association Report: Mr. Kelley announced that the Wake Education Task Force has confirmed their attendance for the quarterly meeting at the Altavista Train Station this Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and the Leesville Lake Association members look forward to seeing them there. The water quality has been good, but they are focused on debris following Hurricane Helene and comparing outcomes with Smith Mountain Lake and Claytor Lake.

Smith Mountain Lake Association Report: Mr. Vidovich reported the following:

1. Regarding the \$150,000 budget amendment from the Virginia legislature for a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) study, the DEQ plan has been developed. SMLA is meeting with DEQ and Virginia Tech on October 18th followed by a boat tour of SML to kick off the study.

2. SMLA and SML Regional Chamber of Commerce, on behalf of the Smith Mountain Lake Water Quality Alliance, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ferrum College. The project is intended to have Ferrum College approved and certified by Virginia Department of Health to conduct annual cyanotoxin testing for Smith Mountain Lake. SMLA is funding the initial purchase of equipment, and the Chamber is funding program training. All future work is expected to be funded by a combination of all SML stakeholders, including TLAC.
3. The Princeton Hydro final report on its study of the Blackwater River was received and is available on the SMLA website. The eye-catching line on the first page is that the main source of Phosphorus in the full lake watershed is agricultural land uses, but this has always been known to be the case. The conclusion drawn from Ferrum data is that algal growth in the lake is driven by external Phosphorus not internal load. More sampling/analyses in specific areas of higher HAB impacts from 2023 is necessary.
4. Weed Reports and Dive Surveys: more weed reports are coming into our office. Much appears to be Brittle Naiad, but some Hydrilla has been found. Particularly in Bull Run. Divers found similar results and dive surveys continue. Some Chara, a native alga, is also being reported.
5. Year-End Planning and Meetings:
 - a. The SMLA Annual Meeting was scheduled for September 27th, but due to the recent hurricane and has been tentatively rescheduled for November at Trinity Ecumenical Church.
 - b. The SMLA Volunteer Appreciation Event is October 18th at the SML Water Treatment Facility.
 - c. Recruiting for five new 2025 Board members and a slate of officers.
 - d. Developing 2025 Budget

APCo Report: Neil Holthouser reported the following:

- An update on the skimmer being registered and the Pigg River Diversion Device permitting progress will be provided to Mr. Kelley prior to the Leesville Lake Association Quarterly Meeting and a copy will be emailed to Ms. Sage.
- The New River Valley was hit incredibly hard with this storm. Amazingly, this side of the divide brought mostly rain and not the high winds. The lake level at Smith Mountain Lake never exceeded 795.
- This afternoon, Smith Mountain Lake was at 793.07, and Leesville at 609.44.
- Appalachian Power had 282,000 customers who lost electricity as a result of, Helene. That was in Virginia, West Virginia, and Tennessee. Apco had help from utilities in 27 other states. APCO has restored power to nearly all 282,000 customers in about 8 or 9 days' time. The repairs included restringing 214 miles of wire and replacing 438 transformers.

Ms. Smith stated that she appreciates the perspective shared, and to please convey the TLAC Board's gratitude for the service, linemen, and everyone who has played a part in recovery efforts.

12. Other Business

A small group meeting was held with the DWR, and a couple of the conservation officers, brought discussion on the topic of regulation for children's life vests, as well as the legislation on the 200-foot law.

Chairman Smith requested individuals to volunteer for a Nominating Committee to compose a slate of officers for the December Board meeting to be seated in February of the positions for Chair and Vice Chair of the organization.

13. Calendar and Reminders for the Board:

Ms. Sage reminded the Board that the next Board Meeting, December 10, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. is also the holiday social. She also stated that all members should contact the TLAC office as soon as possible if they realize they are not able to attend a meeting.

14. Adjournment:

Jeff Salmon made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chris Whitlow seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christina Matrangola