

WHITEWATER COMMISSION

QUARTERLY MEETING SEPTEMBER 21, 2005

MINUTES

The quarterly meeting of the Whitewater Commission was held on Wednesday, September 21, 2005, at the Country Inn & Suites, Summersville, West Virginia. The following individuals were in attendance:

WHITEWATER COMMISSION MEMBERS

Frank Jezioro, Director, Division of Natural Resources (Presiding)
Mike Hunter, National Park Service
Ray Church, Division of Tourism
Eddie Lilly
Jerry Cook
Matt Knott
Randall Ballard

DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jena Kay Webb, Law Enforcement Section (Recording Secretary)
Lt. Larry Case, Law Enforcement Section
Sgt. Barry Kaizer, Law Enforcement Section

PUBLIC

Chris Dragan, Wildwater Expeditions
Len Hanger, Songer Whitewater
Jeff Proctor, Class VI
Brian Campbell, The Rivermen
Dave Holloway, Alpine Bible Camp
Tim Barton, Alpine Bible Camp
George Heffner, Butts Tubes, Inc.
Catfish Apperson, Butts Tubes, Inc.
Rick Johnson, Extreme Expeditions
Heather Johnson, Extreme Expeditions
Paul Breuer, Adventures Mountain River Tours
Skip Heater, New and Gauley River Adventures

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Director Jezioro at approximately 1:05 p.m. All commission members were present at this meeting with the exception of Bill Garten. Commissioner Garten was represented, with a letter of proxy by Eddie Lilly.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Lilly made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2005 meeting as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Church and was passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Skip Heater, New and Gauley River Adventures, stated that he felt that drug testing of river guides should be left up-to the individual companies. Mr. Heater suggested that a guide license card be addressed at the next Whitewater Commission meeting agenda and it be considered before mandatory drug testing of all guides.

DISCUSSION OF DRUG TESTING FOR ALL GUIDES

Commissioner Cook stated that the reason he ask that drug testing be put on the agenda was because some ski company's insurance companies are demanding to have mandatory drug testing for all employees and he felt that being proactive rather than reactive. He stated that he did not feel that the whitewater industry was any different than any other industry and if the whitewater industry was proactive and put something in place that was reasonable, perhaps 10 % of the guide staff over a period of 7 months, which would be 1.4 % of your staff a month and this, should be financially feasible. Commissioner Cook stated that he has heard that that insurance companies are discussing that testing be mandatory and he would rather take a stand and start something rather than a year from now reacting to it and trying to scramble, this way the companies could ease into something that was affordable. He suggested that a committee be formed to study and talk about mandatory drug testing.

After a lengthy discussion Commissioner Cook made the **MOTION** to form a Sub-Committee to study and discuss a drug testing program for whitewater guides. After a short discussion the motion was not seconded and the motion dies.

LAC SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Commissioner Ballard stated that Andy Whisman is finishing up the 2003 TL reports and is also working on the 2004 TL reports. There is no contract in place for the 2005 reports and there was a question as to where we could do a short contract to do the 2005 TL's. DNR Law Enforcement has come up with an on-line TL report (Attachment A) and would like to implement the system on-line in March of 2006 when the season starts. After a lengthy discussion it was decided that the LAC Sub-committee would meet to study and discuss the on-line reporting system and what information needs to be able to be extracted from the TL's to be able to complete that yearly study report. The committee will report back to the Commission at the next meeting with their findings and/or suggestions.

BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Commissioner Knott gave a brief description of (Attachment B) which shows budget information for fiscal year 2005 which ended on June 30th.

TOURISM SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

Commissioner Church stated that Governor Manchin appointed 3 new members to the Tourism Commission; the tourism commission is composed of 13 individuals located in different geographic areas of the state. Scott Rotruck is the new Chairman; he is president of the Morgantown area Chamber of Commerce. The second individual is Ron Marcus; he is from Charlestown and currently owns the Turf Motel next to the Charlestown Racetrack. The third member was Joseph Manchin, IV, the son of Governor Manchin. The Grants Committee is still chaired by Dale Myer; he is from the Mountaineer Racetrack in Chester.

Commissioner also reported that the Whitewater business, the Marketing Division of the Division of Tourism, did a random sample of the call center and mailed out 29 whitewater surveys and of the responded 60% of these had been rafting in West Virginia. The results were: 91.5% said that their rafting experience met their expectations. On a scale of 1 to 5, the lowest being 1 and the highest being 5, visitors rated their rafting experience at 4.41. Top States of origin for these visitors were: West Virginia 18%, Ohio 15%, Virginia 9%, and Florida 8%. When they were ask about returning for rafting trips 79% responded with a yes. Out of those who were not considering a visit for a return rafting trip 30% indicated they were not interested, 30% said it was cost prohibited and a few indicated they did not have time or were too busy. The additional demographics the ages: 18 to 34 were 17%, 35 to 54 were 51%, 55 to 64 were 19%, and over 65 were 13%. The gender: male was 45% and female was 55%; married was 70%, single was 30%. The Tourism would like to work with the whitewater industry in the future and periodically, possibly every other year and do a survey mailed directly from the Tourism Division.

As discussed recently, the last five years have been a down trend, but if you just take last year, which was not a good year, 2003 – 2004 there was a 1% decline in the New and Gauley and 87% of all the rafting was done on those 2 rivers. The Cheat and Shenandoah had a 13% of the total and it was down 1% there also.

Of the grants over the last 5 years of the commission, 6.987 million was granted to the whitewater industry. The industry needs to find out ways to advertise in different markets or do different things because you take that total 6.9 and multiply it by 2; that is a ton of money to have a decline in the business.

OTHER BUSINESS

Matt Knott referred to (Attachment C) pertaining to a request for a change in the start of the designated whitewater zone on the Shenandoah River. After a short discussion Commissioner Lilly made a **MOTION** for the Regulation Sub-committee look into the request to change the starting of the designated whitewater zone Shenandoah River. Commissioner Knott seconded the motion and the motion carried.

NEXT MEETING DATE AND PLACE

The next meeting will be held in Charleston, and everyone will be notified of the place and time.

A **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Commissioner Church, was seconded by Commissioner Ballard and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:30 p.m.