

Quarterly Whitewater Commission Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2013

Location: Division of Natural Resources, South Charleston, WV

Chaired: DNR Capt. Larry Case, in absence of Director Frank Jezioro

In Attendance: Don Beyer (private river user); Tim Barton (Alpine Ministries); William Miller (Division of Tourism); Brian Campbell (Adventures on the Gorge); Bobby Bower (WVPRO); Chris Ellis (private river user) via teleconference; Matt Knott (River Riders); Lt. Colonel Jerry Jenkins (WVDNR); Bret Preston (WVDNR Wildlife); Tom Dragan (Sandstone Jetboats); Rob Dobson (West Virginia Adventures); Deanna Simms (WVDNR); Kelly Crago (recording secretary).

Approval of December 18, 2012, Minutes

Tim Barton advised the Commission that the word “accident” should be changed in the sentence “After the swimming accident, AWVR changed its guidelines to be stricter for running such trips.” His reasoning was that the incident required no actual reporting and therefore was not technically an accident. Brian Campbell motioned to accept the minutes from the December 18, 2012, meeting, providing the word “accident” was changed. Tim Barton seconded the motion, and the Commission approved it.

Website Update

Kelly Crago informed the Commission that the whitewater website that the WV Office of Technology has been working on is not ready. The Commission had given WVOT a deadline of March 2013 so the system could be launched for this year’s season. However, the testing has revealed more problems than anticipated. Kelly still hopes the system will be ready for launch the beginning of April.

The Commission decided to have WVOT complete the project for launch as soon as possible. Until then, the Whitewater Outfitters & Guides will continue to submit reports as they did in 2012. Kelly will send an e-mail to all Whitewater Outfitters & Guides to convey that message.

Budget

Matt Knott reviewed the budget and also presented the proposed budget for fiscal year 2015. He noted a new item for HIDTA personnel reimbursement. Kelly Crago said she wasn’t sure that was supposed to be there, and that she would double-check that with Keith Wilson in DNR Administration.

Matt motioned to approve the proposed budget for fiscal year 2015. Brian Campbell seconded the motion, and the Commission approved it.

DNR Officers’ Swiftwater Rescue Course

Captain Case asked about exploring the possibility of DNR officers in his district taking a swiftwater rescue course with training money from the Commission’s budget. Brian Campbell and Bobby Bower responded that the state’s southern portion has already been allocated for the year. They are doing Rescue III, OEC and First Aid/CPR courses. Matt Knott noted that he believed the northern outfitters did not intend to spend their full \$5,000. The discussion ended with the decision that Captain Case would work with Bobby Bower about the possibility or such an arrangement.

Trout Stocking

Due to a dramatic decrease in commercial whitewater numbers on the Gauley River, an increase in gas prices and an increase in trout costs, the Commission's budget for trout stocking on the Gauley River has been squeezed.

Bret Preston reported that the Commission's budget for trout stocking on the Gauley River usually buys 1500 lbs. of 1-2 lb. rainbow trout and five hours of helicopter time. Last year, the Wildlife Section asked for five bids and only received one. The bid was for \$5.47 per pound. Bret has seen prices closer to \$4 per pound and hopes to get more bids for this year.

The Commission mentioned using something other than a helicopter to stock in order to cut the cost. Bret said that idea had been visited before. They thought about fitting a stocking tank on a boat. He said that, based on access to the river, the helicopter is still the best option.

Brian Campbell noted that a road had been cut due to logging. He said that the last time he checked, the road was cut within a quarter mile of the river. He thinks that the Commission might gain access via that route. Bret reminded the Commission that increased handling of the trout results in a higher mortality rate. Whereas the fish are loaded onto the helicopter and then dropped into the river, the road would require trucks and ATVs over a potentially rough path to the river.

The Commission asked that Bret Preston work with Bobby Bower throughout the bid process.

Adventure West Virginia Resort- Update on New River Trip

Brian Campbell updated the Commission regarding Adventure West Virginia Resort's special family trip on the New River, which was launched in 2012. He reported that the age limit has been officially raised to nine and that AWVR will require a birth certificate for anyone younger than twelve. He reminded the Commission that this trip is a very specific product with lower intensity, risk and participation levels.

Releases on the Dries

Bobby Bower reported that he and others are working on a response to the proposed study plan for releases on the Dries. The response is due in April, after which groups will study factors related to environment, flow, recreation and habitat. The groups will work through 2013 and 2014 and present in 2015. The earliest anything concrete will be known or will occur will be 2017.

Relicensing on the Millville Dam

Matt Knott reported that the Millville Dam license is expired in 2015. Three outfitters are requesting artificial adjustments from Memorial Day through Labor Day to the water.

Next Quarterly Meeting

The next quarterly Whitewater Commission meeting locale will be tentatively hosted by Alpine Ministries on Tuesday, June 11, 2013 at 11:00 AM.

Adjournment

Tim Barton motioned to adjourn the 2013 1st quarterly Whitewater Commission meeting. Brian Campbell seconded the motion, and the Commission accepted.