

Mingo Swamp Friends Quarterly Meeting April 10, 2018

Present: Amanda Mossman, President; Leroy Romine, Vice President; Bruce Beck, Secretary; Ray Greenlee, Member; Steve Shelton, Member; Kara Ogilvie, Student Conservation Association Intern; Ben Mense, Refuge Manager

Call to Order: President Amanda Mossman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., in the Mingo NWR Visitor Center.

Minutes of the January 9, 2018 Quarterly Meeting were read by secretary Bruce Beck. Motion by Romine, second by Greenlee, to approve the minutes. Motion approved.

Financial Report

A summary of the income and expenses of the first quarter of 2018 was given by Bruce Beck. The printed report is attached. Motion to approve made by Shelton. Second by Greenlee. Motion passed.

Committee Reports

Facebook and Website Report: Amanda has been making regular Facebook posts of Swamp Friends business and meetings, and re-posting Mingo NWR activities that Ranger Debbie Koenigs has posted on the refuge Facebook page. The GoDaddy Business Website Builder program was renewed for one year at \$143.88.

Bookstore Report: Amanda has been maintaining the stock of the bookstore. Kara and Debbie have been tending the sales. Sales at the bookstore have been variable week by week, reflecting visitor numbers at the refuge. According to the financial report, the bookstore has been making a significant profit for the Friends to reinvest in the refuge.

Photo Contest Report: Bruce reported that the contest display is currently at the Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center in St. Louis. The display was well-received at the Cape Girardeau Nature Center, the Sikeston Depot Museum and First Midwest Bank in Puxico (one of the contest donors). Librarians at the public libraries in Dexter and Poplar Bluff have praised the display and asked for its return this coming year. Beck is still working to confirm dates for the display to be shown at the Wappapello Corps of Engineers Visitor Center, and possibly at The Riverwalk Gallery in New Madrid. Steve Shelton recommended the display be shown at the public libraries in Cape Girardeau, Jackson and Puxico. He said he would inquire at those libraries. Mense said that he and Koenigs have discussed changes in the contest this coming year, particularly not requiring the contestants to mat their own photos. Instead, the student intern may do the matting. This might increase participation in the contest and also make the display more uniform. The August 1 deadline for submissions will be retained. Beck, Mossman and Koenigs will begin advertising this year's contest as soon as possible.

Pavestones Report: Mense reported that the pavestone display at the overlook below the Visitor Center has been cleaned up and improved. We will need to check with Koenigs on the new pavestones ordered for the Greenlees and James Ross. Beck reported that since 2017 pavestones have been ordered by James Ross and Connie Creager. They will also have to be included in the display. There was discussion with Mense about expanding the display area. We have yet to make a list of life members. We will ask for Judy Plunkett's help.

Old Business

Ag Expo in Poplar Bluff: Koenigs set up and manned a Mingo display booth at Ag Expo on January 19. However, because of the federal government shutdown on the 20th, she had to dismantle the display and not participate on the second day of Ag Expo.

Funding promised for food plots, bird feeders, new children's books and other projects: The Friends have yet to receive a request from Koenigs for the purchase children's books and for feeders and bird feed. Funding of food plots was discussed again since the January meeting. It was agreed that Amanda would work with Mense to set up a meeting with refuge staff to discuss and prioritize projects and activities that the Friends could fund or help fund. Projects discussed included food plot seed and fertilizer, a fishing pier each at the Binford Unit and at Flat Banks, roofing Sweet Cabin, an overlook in Rockhouse Marsh, and matching grants for Kids in Nature, Nature Trails and others. With ~\$17,000 in our checking account, we are open to more ideas for projects to fund.

Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern: Jessica Reker left Mingo for a position with a New York state park on January 17. Kara Ogilvie came to fill the student intern position in February. She has been active at the Visitor Center front desk, tending sales at the bookstore and assisting Koenigs with educational activities. She has volunteered to study QuickBooks, which program the Friends have installed on our laptop, and to help set up the program for us to use for bookstore inventory and for keeping track of Friends' income and expenses.

New Business

No new business was conducted.

Staff Report

Refuge Manager Ben Mense reported that the refuge is now fully staffed with eight full-time employees. Kasey Bryan will continue as Pathways trainee this summer. A second Pathways intern has been requested for the refuge. Pathways is a four-month internship to prepare qualified persons for permanent USFWS positions. A temporary maintenance worker is being sought to help with upcoming projects, including replacement of the eastern loop of the swamp boardwalk. Mense is requesting a full-time biologist tasked with feral hog control.

Mingo and the other refuges are still operating without a USFWS budget. The refuges are spending on the outline of last year's budget.

Mense says that his priorities for the refuge are feral hog control, waterfowl management, farming (with newly-selected contractor Chuck Stewart, and improved drainage of the farmed fields), and improved lowland forest management (including a regional forester position proposal). Work priorities for the refuge this summer include replacing the eastern half of the swamp boardwalk, reroofing Sweet Cabin, continued clearing of the moist soil units and planting food plots.

Next Meeting: The Friends Annual Meeting will be Tuesday, July 10, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. at the Mingo NWR Visitor Center.

Motion to adjourn: Motion by Beck. Second by Shelton. Motion passed. Adjourned at 7:40 p.m.
Bruce Beck, Secretary