

Mingo Swamp Friends Annual Meeting

July 10, 2018

Present: Amanda Mossman, President; Bruce Beck, Secretary; Sharon Beck, Treasurer; John Stanard, Member; Kara Ogilvie, Student Conservation Corps Intern and member; Scott Burge, visitor and new member; Ben Mense, Refuge Manager, Debbie Koenigs, Refuge Ranger

Call to Order: President Amanda Mossman called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm, in the Mingo NWR Visitor Center.

Minutes of the April 10, 2018 Quarterly Meeting were declared approved as printed by President Mossman.

Financial report

A summary of the income and expenses through the second quarter of 2018 was given by Sharon Beck. The report was declared approved as printed by President Mossman. The printed report is attached.

Committee Reports

Facebook and Website Report by Amanda Mossman.

Both have been updated, highlighting the Photo Contest.

Bookstore Report by Amanda Mossman.

Two orders are pending. There was discussion of what items are selling best and what items might be added.

Eagle-related items are being added in anticipation of Eagle Days this coming February. The bookstore has netted \$1,044.37 in the past two quarters. See the attached report.

Photo Contest Report by Bruce Beck.

As yet, only two entries are promised. We may need to extend the entry deadline as we did last year. Donations have been received so far only from Commerce Bank, one of five banks contacted. There will be adequate funds for paying premiums and for shipping to the various sites. There was discussion of the selection of five judges. The decision will be left to the Mingo director and ranger. It was reaffirmed that Kara would mat the placing photos and that the Friends would pay for the supplies. It was agreed that a single color would be used for all of the mats.

Pavestones Report:

Ben Mense reported that the pavestone display at the overlook below the Visitor Center has been cleaned up and improved with a border. There is room for five more pavestones. Judy Plunkett will soon have the information for a pavestone for Gerald Claussen, for which the Friends have previously approved payment.

Old Business

Photo Contest: Motion by Bruce Beck, 2nd by Kara Ogilvie, to pay for the lunches for the photo contest judges. Passed unanimously.

New banners and signage for the Friends: Debbie Koenigs presented several examples of banners, signage and canopies for the Friends to use at various events. After viewing the options and discussion, it was agreed that Debbie and Amanda would research more options to present for consideration at the October quarterly meeting. The consensus was

that we would opt for higher quality items that would be more durable over time and multiple uses. John Stanard offered to take samples of the various logos we have on file to Barbara Pelton at Artfully Framed in Poplar Bluff to see how the logos could be improved. **Motion** by John Stanard, 2nd by Sharon Beck, to make available up to \$500 to Amanda and Debbie to buy at their discretion.

Photo Blinds improvements: It was agreed that cleaning the photo blinds, adding clearer signage and making a brochure to identify the blinds and outline restrictions could increase use of the blinds. Ben offered to have a trail cleared and gravel placed to make a path suitable for reaching the photo blind in Pool 6 in the dark.

New Business

Annual Nomination and Election of Officers: **Motion** to retain 2017-2018 officers for the 2018-2019 year. Motion approved.

Pavestones: **Motion** by Bruce Beck, 2nd by Sharon Beck to donate a pavestone honoring past volunteer Dave Harris. Motion passed unanimously.

Ag Expo: **Motion** by Bruce Beck, 2nd by John Stanard, to pay the \$180 fee for a 10' x 10' booth space at Ag Expo in Poplar Bluff on January 18-19, 2019. Bruce will choose the booth site when paying at the Butler County Extension Office. Motion passed unanimously.

Staff Reports

Refuge Manager Ben Mense:

- The refuge is short one maintenance worker after one employee left two months ago, limiting the amount of work accomplished. A temporary maintenance worker began work yesterday, July 9. His first priority will be mowing and weed-eating.
- The priority for maintenance work this year has been wildlife habitat improvement, especially work on the moist soil units.
- A 3-year contract with a new farmer is working exceptionally well. Chuck Stewart has planted 150 acres each of soybeans and corn, and 40 acres of rice. The farmer will harvest 100% of soybeans and plant 100% of the acreage in a cover crop such as cereal rye. This will provide green browse for wildlife and also enhance soil health of the fields. The farmer will harvest 75 percent of the corn and rice, leaving the remainder for wildlife. He will harvest all of the soybeans. After harvest the fields will be allowed to grow up to annual weeds for wildlife.
- Wildlife food plots totaling 60-65 acres have been planted to sunflowers and milo. Winter wheat and cereal rye will be planted later.
- In the fall and winter work will be done on Sweets Cabin (new roof and other) and on replacing the eastern loop of the swamp boardwalk. The materials have already been bought and stored for use.
- A second Pathways intern has joined the staff. Neil Baalman joins Casey Bryan, who has been here since last summer. Pathways is an internship preparing qualified persons for permanent USFWS positions.
- The refuge has been spending on the outline of last year's budget. The budget, similar to last year's budget, finally arrived two weeks ago. Mingo is on track to meet the budget goals by the end of the fiscal year ending September 30.
- New national US Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines emphasize refuge access to hunting and fishing, and promoting hunting and fishing of more species. Another priority activity is wildlife photography.

- There are nine traffic counters on the refuge. They give a general indication of which parts of the refuge are most being used and what kinds of public activities are most popular.
- Mingo refuge, one of only three refuges in the North Central Region, has a daily entry fee. Annual income is \$~15,000, mostly from the \$3 daily use fee.

Refuge Ranger Debbie Koenigs:

- School field trips this past spring and into the summer have been excellent in number and quality. Home schooled groups have been coming.
- Collaboration has been very effective with the Missouri Department of Conservation's new education specialist with and with the ranger at Wappapello.
- Program announcements on Facebook have been effective.

Upcoming programs:

- Photography workshops the past four Saturdays and still continuing
- Poplar Bluff Library educational programs for children
- Pop-in fishing event
- Star Searchers, July 20 – night sky program
- Herps, August 11
- Preparations for the Puxico Homecoming
- Preparations for the SEMO Fair
- Preparations for the Managed Deer Hunt
- Preparations for Eagle Days, February 1-2, 2019

Next Meeting: October 9, 2018, at 6:30 p.m. at the Mingo Visitor Center.

Motion to adjourn by Bruce Beck, 2nd by Sharon Beck. Motion passed. Adjourned at 8:30 p.m.