

Mingo Swamp Friends Annual Meeting
(by Conference Call)
July 14, 2020

Present: Amanda Mossman, President; Leroy Romine, Vice President; Bruce Beck, Treasurer; Stephen Sutter, Secretary; Debbie Koenigs, Visitor Services Refuge Ranger

Call to Order: President Amanda Mossman called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Minutes of the January 14, 2020 meeting were approved as presented via email.

Financial Report: Bruce Beck presented a brief treasurer's report including the account balance and recent payments. It was approved as presented.

Committee Reports

Facebook and Website by President Mossman. The website will be updated soon (current minutes and update about photo contest). There has been a steady amount of requests to join the Facebook group, especially this past spring.

Bookstore Report by President Mossman. The visitor center has been closed since March. A recent inventory has not been done.

Photo Contest Report by Bruce Beck. The photo display has been at the Puxico Public Library since February. It will remain there until the library reopens. President Mossman and Ranger Koenigs reported that no one has inquired about the next contest yet.

Pavestone Report: Stephen Sutter is still working on the wording for the John Toll pavestone. He proposed the idea of creating a path around the visitor center in order to access the overlook when the center is closed. Sutter also proposed adding a sign to the visitor center parking lot. Leroy Romine suggested looking into grant funds. Ranger Koenigs will research and confer with Refuge Manager Ben Mense.

Old Business

- Discussion of plants around the visitor center has been tabled until the October meeting.
- The Ag Expo was held January 31 from 1-8 p.m. and February 1 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Black River Coliseum in Poplar Bluff. Koenigs set up the booth with a fishing theme for both the refuge and Swamp Friends. Fishing rods were given away as door prizes. Tom Allen assisted with the booth along with Mossman, Romine, and Beck.
- Tara Brown was presented with photo contest director expectations at the January 14, 2020 meeting. She contacted Beck with her proposed fee. Beck motioned that the group pay Tara Brown as an independent contractor from January 2021-December 2021 in an amount not to exceed \$1,000. Expenses will cover Tara's time spent organizing, advertising, and managing the contest plus materials for the display, mileage and postage. Tara is to communicate regularly with the Swamp Friends president and the refuge ranger. Sutter seconded the motion. Beck will contact her. Evaluation will be discussed at the October 2021 meeting if not sooner.

- According to the bylaws, membership dues are collected at the annual meeting. President Mossman will send a reminder via email to current members. Those renewing will be directed to send their payments to the visitor center.

New Business

- After discussion the 2020 photo contest was officially cancelled. Typically, winning photos are kept in the refuge/Swamp Friends possession until August of the following year. It was suggested that the 2019 photos go back out for display later this fall/winter. Beck motioned that the group pay to print any photos that winners wanted back. Second by Sutter. Motion passed.
- President Mossman reported that the annual corporate registration is due August 31, 2020. Beck made a motion to approve the \$10 fee. Second by Romine. Motion passed.
- It was agreed that the officers will serve for another year in their current office in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - President: Amanda Mossman
 - Vice President: Leroy Romine
 - Treasurer: Bruce Beck
 - Secretary: Stephen Sutter

Staff Reports

Refuge Ranger Debbie Koenigs:

- Staff is doing a combination of telework and on-site work at this time. Telework is still being encouraged when possible, and some solitary fieldwork has been allowed through an approval process for the last 2 months.
- At the moment, Maintenance Mechanic Matt Fox is back on the refuge full-time and has been working on improving gravel roads and levees that have been deteriorating, and will turn to working on water control structure maintenance and installation soon. Officer Ryan Seward has been on-site throughout the closure. Bio tech Andrew Dropik is on the refuge daily checking and setting hog traps. Assistant Manager Corey Kudrna is on refuge full time working on moist soil units and wildlife observation areas – currently discing and planning to plant wheat and buckwheat in wildlife areas. Refuge Manager Ben Mense, Admin Technician Judy Plunkett, Biologist Brad Pendley and Park Ranger Debbie Koenigs are working a combination of telework and on-site. Ben continues to monitor conditions daily, and work adjustments are made regularly.
- Debbie's been completing a signage inventory and is working on ordering replacement signage for three of the kiosks. This will also give her an opportunity to order Friends signage as previously discussed.
- The cooperative farmer has planted all the upland fields – north end of auto tour and Hwy 51.
- The Boardwalk was significantly damaged during a storm in late May. Boardwalk repairs will require staff working without distancing. We hope repairs can begin soon, but CDC guidelines have to be followed.
- We're working on adjustments to the managed hunts for fall – in-person orientations and check stations will be changed to an online orientation and self-check out process. There are no concrete dates for attempting to reopen
- Eagle Days – discussions and planning – Debbie will be discussing Eagle Days with partners in the coming days and will provide updates on decisions moving forward.
- We're approaching the end of the fiscal year, and some of the budget has gone toward new hunt brochures, a new diesel tank, a new tractor, and chemical and seed for management areas. We have added a few contracts this year

to supplement a smaller staff and limited time on the refuge. The visitor center was power washed. The planting beds were cleared this spring, and there is a contractor doing the mowing in the visitor center area.

Next meeting: October 14, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. in the Mingo NWR visitor center.

Motion to adjourn: Beck made a motion to adjourn. Second by Romine. Motion passed. Adjourned at 6:30 p.m.