**MINUTES OF MAY 17, 2016**

**Board of Commissioners of**

**Bayou D’Arbonne Lake Watershed District Regular Meeting**

Union Parish Courthouse Annex

303 East Water Street

Farmerville, LA 71241

1. Roll Call – President Bruce Hampton called the meeting to order. Commission members present were Bruce Hampton, David Hopkins, Trotter Hunt, Terri Towns and Cary Brown. Absent was Steve Cagle. Also present were Bill Carter, Ron Riley, Robert Lemoine and John Kelley.
2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance – Cary Brown led the invocation, and Trotter Hunt led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Public Comment Registration – Quentin Durr signed up to speak about the upcoming fireworks show and boat races. John Kelley signed up to speak about Maricopa Island.
4. Agenda Approval – Motion was made by David Hopkins and seconded by Terri Towns to approve the May 2016 Agenda. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Approval of Minutes – Motion was made by Trotter Hunt and seconded by David Hopkins to approve the minutes of the April 2016 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.
6. Treasurer's Reports – The April 2016 treasurer’s report was presented. Motion was made by David Hopkins and seconded by Terri Towns to approve the report. The motion passed unanimously.
7. Old and New Business:

1. Channel Markers – (a) FEMA Claims – Ron Riley stated that we previously discussed the possibility of obtaining FEMA money. They will meet with FEMA officials Tuesday in Ruston. He briefly recapped how the program works. Mr. Riley stated that this is a 75/25 percent project wherein FEMA will give 75% and we have to come up with 25%. At first, we were talking over $100,000. Then FEMA stated that you can treat volunteer labor as “in kind” services at $12/hr. We have a lot of hours, but we have to prove it, certify it, initial it and date it. Many of our hours are prisoner hours with Sheriff Gates. They will also pay per hour for boats used. We have a schedule of what they will pay. Mr. Riley emailed the application yesterday and received notification later that afternoon that we are eligible and are in the system. We have a log-in and password. The FEMA money comes through the Governor’s office of Homeland Security (GOSEP). Once GOSEP approves it, then FEMA will come in and we will have to ride the lake with them to show them the damage. In terms of damages, there appears to be in excess of 100 poles with green and red markers that are gone. Just the green markers are $60/each with no labor to install them and no boat to transport them. Mr. Riley believes there are 12 poles with either one or two missing and the rest leaning badly. He was not sure if they can be straightened but he would prefer to replace them, and that cost is approximately $2,500 each. If there are 10 poles that need to be replaced, the cost to replace them would be approximately $25,000. Mr. Trotter questioned whether Steve Cagle’s time will count, and Mr. Riley said it would count because it is volunteer labor. Mr. Riley further stated that he did not know how long it would take to get the money.

(b) Repair Status – Mr. Cagle was not present, so this discussion was postponed. However, Ron Riley indicated that Mr. Cagle has already put out 80 or 90 markers.

2. 2016 Drawdown – Mr. Carter stated that they have been trying to find the old policy for the past few months but have been unsuccessful. Therefore, he prepared a rough draft of a policy as a start and emailed it to all the Board members. He stated that Ron Riley has made some suggested revisions and he will add some of Mr. Riley’s comments before the next meeting. He reiterated that the spillway and the tainter gate are owned by the DOTD so we have no authority pertaining to the drawdown. He welcomed suggestions to modify the policy. The drawdown is already set in motion for this year. Mr. Carter stated that we did not address the depth of the drawdown and whether it is four or five feet. It has typically been four, but we did lower it to five feet one year. He noted that when the lake is drawn down five feet, boat trailers will drop off the end of some of the concrete ramps which causes problems. Mr. Carter stated that the drawdown has been on a four-year cycle, and each time there is discussion with DOTD as well as Wildlife & Fisheries. Wildlife and Fisheries prefers to hold the lake down as long as possible for exposure to freezing weather to kill vegetation.

3. Lake Information Pamphlet Update – Ms. Towns stated that she is still working on the pamphlet but she needs additional information and input. For instance, she said there is a section about the boat ramps and we need to include the new names, the new coordinates, and the new rules so it will read the same in the pamphlet as on the signs. There is also some information about the drawdown that we need to make sure is consistent. She has also thought about fish limits and whether we want to put that in the pamphlet, or whether we should refer them to the Wildlife & Fisheries manual which comes out annually. Mr. Hampton agreed that we should refer them to Wildlife & Fisheries because they may change the rules. She said the questions she is asked most frequently are how far a pier can be built out and rules about duck blinds and duck hunting. Mr. Carter said the website will help with those questions and once it is operational, persons can print from it. Mr. Hampton stated that all the Board members will try to get their comments to Ms. Towns before the next meeting. Ms. Towns also asked that everyone keep the website in mind and what they will want to put on the website and what they will want to put in print. She stated that we will need some items in print because some of the older residents do not know how to use a computer. Mr. Hampton stated that we can also provide links to Wildlife & Fisheries.

4. Boat Ramp Rules/New Signs – Update – Mr. Riley stated that they have the final addresses for all the boat ramps. He stated that 12 boat signs have been ordered. He stated he did not receive any input about where to place the signs. He stated that we cannot place them too close to the lake because of wave action and likes the idea of placing the signs where they can be seen from the road, so people do not have to drive down the road a long distance to find out where they are. He stated that the signs are 4x8 metal signs with metal posts and he welcomed ideas about where to place them. Mr. Hunt made a motion that we approve the location of the signs as recommended by Mr. Riley with slight changes that he and Mr. Cagle discussed at the last meeting. David Hopkins seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

5. Mega Ramp – Update – Mr. Riley stated that they sent the preliminary application to State Parks and a decision may be made by the end of the year. He reminded everyone that this is a 50/50 grant, and he is not certain we want it to happen until we get the land match. He has not reviewed House Bill 2 so he does not know whether the project is listed or not. Mr. Carter said many projects have been removed from it, and he suggested that Mr. Riley or someone else check with one of the legislators for information. Mr. Hampton agreed to contact Rob Shadoin, and Mr. Riley suggested Rep. Shadoin or Sen. Walsworth, since Sen. Walsworth was pushing it. Mr. Carter stated that the Bill will go back to the Senate and then will go to a Conference Committee, but everyone is aware of the fiscal issues in Baton Rouge.

6. Maricopa Island Project – Update – Mr. Carter stated that Mr. Farley and Dr. Kelley addressed the Commission last month requesting that we make a response to the Corps of Engineers. He sent a draft of a response to all the Board members, and he asked how they wanted to respond. Mr. Hampton asked that a vote be made to approve the response. Mr. Trotter was of the opinion that some of the wording needs to be changed, and he requested additional time to review it and make some suggestions on how it should read.

7. Commission Website – Update – Mr. Hampton stated that he has requested quotes from two vendors. He does not yet have those quotes. One vendor, Buster Craig, is an employee at Marion State Bank, and he designs websites on the side. The other vendor is Donny Ball. He should have those quotes by the next meeting. He said the website will have the Lake rules and links to Wildlife & Fisheries, the Weather Service, and the USGS for the lake levels. We can add other links later. Ms. Towns suggested a place on the website for anyone who is promoting an event on the lake. Mr. Hampton asked if that could be legislated. Mr. Carter stated it would be a challenge because it is a public lake and any number of people can decide if they are going to have a tournament, but planning events on the website is a good idea. Ms. Towns also said if anyone has a complaint, we can recommend that they go to the website and note it. One way to get people to participate is by offering free advertising, but Mr. Hampton questioned who would update the website. Mr. Hampton stated that is why he has not gotten quotes on the websites that the Chamber uses because those require more work on your part. He only wants someone to set up the website and we can add data ourselves.

8. Request to Use Road and Ramp by Union Parish Chamber of Commerce for July 4th Fireworks – Mr. Quentin Durr said he heads up this event every year. They are looking at doing the fireworks on July 2. They will shut down the ramp on July 1 at 11:00 p.m. and reopen on July 2 around 11:00 p.m. Each year this event has a huge economic impact for our area, good for tourism and it is good for local vendors. Mr. Carter asked if this was relatively the same length of time they usually use the ramp, and Mr. Durr said that it is. Mr. Durr also stated that he would email the insurance certificate on both the fireworks and the boat race events. Mr. Carter stated that he would send the Agreements that they enter each year to Mr. Hampton for his signature. Cary Brown made a motion to approve the use of Ramp Road by the Chamber for the fireworks show from July 1 at 11:00 p.m. through July 2 at 11:00 p.m., subject to proof of liability insurance and to authorize the President to execute the document. Mr. Hopkins seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Request to Use Road and Ramp by Union Parish Chamber of Commerce for Boat Races – Quentin Durr stated that the boat races will take place on June 25-26 and they are requesting use of the Ramp Road, as well as Jake’s Ramp beside the D’Arbonne Motel. He said they will shut down the ramp on June 24 at 11:00 p.m. and reopen on June 26 around 6:00 p.m. Trotter Hunt made a motion to approve the use of Ramp Road for boat races as described on July 24 at 11:00 p.m. through June 26 at 6:00 p.m. The motion as seconded by Cary Brown, and the motion passed unanimously.

H. Public Comment – Dr. Kelley again expressed some concern about the water management level in the lake. Dr. Kelley stated that the elevation level for the lake is 80’ MSL and, at the time the land was purchased, part of the purchase agreement was to go to 80’. In 2014, the water was at 80’ or less for only 18 days. In 2015, it was at 80’ or less for 98 days because of a severe drought. In 2016, it has not yet been at 80’ or less. He said that there are several reasons this is important. It makes it harder to maintain your shoreline with water levels running above the 80’. He said whoever maintains the website says full pool is 81’, but it is actually 80’. His concern is what they do and how they will get the gate managers to maintain the lake at 80’ rather than 81’. Also, Dr. Kelley stated that a person should have permission from the landowner under the lake before building a pier because most lake lots were sold to the 80’ contour. The person who owns the lake lot does not own the land under the lake in front of his lot. In the case of the lots he has developed, they informed people of that and gave them permission to build a pier. The same applies to duck blinds. If it is a floating blind, there is no problem, but if you are anchoring it to the ground, you need permission from the landowner to install a duck blind. He noticed on the deed to his property that it stops at the 80’ contour. He stated that something needs to be done to get some type of management program to manage the water level at the 80’ contour level now that we have the gates. Mr. Hopkins asked how you could maintain it at 80’ when you have different amounts of rain. He said he has dealt with ponds and lakes all over the US for many years, and most lakes do not have a problem maintaining levels. It’s a matter of somebody has to work out the system of how to maintain the gates to keep it at 80’. He said it can be done. He said without a good set of gates, it is difficult to maintain. Dr. Kelley said it was 6/10 of a foot above the 80’ level prior to the big flood event this year. He said we knew we were getting predictions of 12-14 inches of rain from the Weather Service but we got more than that. We knew the lake was going to come up. He stated that there should have been a conscious effort to get it down to 79’ before the rain event. If it had even been at 80’, it would have reduced our overall height of what was flooded. It makes a difference to maintain it at that level. If you are maintaining at a higher level and you get a big flood event, you are flooding more people than if you were maintaining it at 80’.

I. Adjourn – A motion to adjourn was made by Cary Brown and seconded by Terri Towns. The motion passed unanimously.