**MINUTES OF MARCH 21, 2023 REGULAR MEETING**

**Board of Commissioners of**

**Bayou D’Arbonne Lake Watershed District**

Union Parish Courthouse Annex

303 East Water Street

Farmerville, LA 71241

6:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call – Terry Morris called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Commission members present were Terry Morris, Richard Royal, Steve Cagle and Steve Adams. Todd DeMoss, Clint Graham, and Ken Myers were absent. Also present were Bill Carter and Neal DeForest.
2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance – Richard Royal led the invocation and Steve Cagle led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Public Comment Registration – No one signed up for public comment.

D. Agenda Approval – Motion was made by Steve Cagle and seconded by Richard Royal to approve the March 2023 Agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Approval of Minutes – Motion was made by Steve Cagle and seconded by Richard Royal to approve the minutes of the February 2023 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Financial Reports/Budget/Audit:

1. Approve February 2023 Bank Account Summary – Motion was made by Richard Royal and seconded by Steve Cagle to approve the February 2023 Bank Account Summary. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Approve February 2023 Bank Statement Reconciliation - Motion was made by Richard Royal and seconded by Steve Cagle to approve the minutes of the February 2023 Bank Statement Reconciliation. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Approve February 2023 Financial Report – Motion was made by Richard Royal and seconded by Steve Adams to approve the February 2023 Financial Report. The motion passed unanimously.

G. Old and New Business:

1. Boat Launch Areas - General Maintenance / Improvements – Richard Royal said that the Terral Island boat launch area needs some repair work in the area of the ramp. Steve Adams suggested waiting on any repair until it was feasible to repair or replace the ramp. The Commission members agreed to look at options and prepare a plan to address the ramp.
2. Boat Launch Fees - Status – Richard Royal said that to date for 2023, $13,236.94 has been collected in daily launch fees and permit sales.
3. Channel Markers – Neal DeForest said that he received an email indicating the final reimbursement from FEMA for the 2016 channel marker project would be received in two weeks. He also stated that the new buoys and lights have not shipped yet.
4. Annual Lake Report – Ryan Daniel of DWF – Mr. Daniel began his report by discussing the electrofishing samples taken in Spring and Fall of 2022 and handed out documents relative to the results. He indicated that since 2000, DWF studies have shown an upward trend in all sizes and classes of bass. He also said that the 2022 samples showed an abundance of all sizes and species of fish.

Mr. Daniel said that the DWF stocked 283,900 one-inch fingerlings in 2022.

He also indicated that the DWF is currently working on a bass genetics project which is organized by LSU statewide wherein DWF is comparing bass genetics caught in tournaments to bass genetics of the general population of lakes to determine if stocking has any influence on tournament success.

Mr. Daniel stated that the new crappie regulations took effect on November 22, 2022, and said that the DWF would reevaluate the regulations in 2025. He said that he has spoken with agents who are working D’Arbonne and hundreds of boats have been checked but no tickets have been issued for catching over the allowed creel limit of crappie.

Mr. Daniel said that heavy spraying took place in 2022 for vegetation, mainly for giant salvinia. He said there is other vegetation in the lake but salvinia is the main problem.

Mr. Daniel noted the discussion from last year regarding the possibility of implementing a bass fingerling rearing pond near the Stowe Creek ramp utilizing the existing borrow pit. However, after researching the matter and consulting the fish hatchery staff, it was determined that was not feasible, mainly because of the high cost to operate correctly. He indicated that the better option would be to purchase larger fingerlings from a private hatchery.

Mr. Daniel was asked if he would recommend purchasing advanced size fingerling bass for the lake from private hatcheries and he said that would be a good way to increase the bass population because they have a better chance at survival than the one inch fingerlings that DWF supplies, although the larger fingerlings are more expensive. He said the cost for each two-inch fingerling from a hatchery is $1.50 and another hatchery has a 6-8 inch fingerlings available and the cost is $320.00 per 100 fingerlings ($3.20 per fingerling). He provided information for two private hatcheries: (1) Dunn’s in Oklahoma, and (2) American Sport Fish in Alabama.

Mr. Daniel entertained questions on a variety of topics, including the effects of the crappie creel limit regulations and why the size limit was set at seven per person.

1. Lake Drawdown Schedule – Mr. Daniel gave a brief overview of the history of lake drawdowns, including the first drawdown in 2004, which represented five-foot drawdowns every four years, beginning on Labor Day and extending through November 15, with the latest extension, if necessary, to January 15. He said the reasons for the drawdowns include homeowner property maintenance, boat lane construction, boat ramp repairs, vegetation control, and fisheries habitat improvement.

He then discussed the data gathered by the DWF and the impacts of the past drawdowns in comparison with the fisheries samples to determine if there were any negative impacts caused by the drawdowns on the fish population. He stated the data reflected that there was none and added that the drawdowns were in fact found to be beneficial to the fish population. Mr. Daniel discussed the drawdown process on several other area lakes and how the drawdowns affected their fish population.

Mr. Daniel suggested evaluating the need for the 2024 drawdown at the beginning of 2025. He said that as of now, the vegetation on the lake represents an optimal fish habitat. He indicated that if there was no necessary work needed on the tainter gates, ramps or other compelling reason for drawdown, the DWF may recommend skipping a year.

Mr. Daniel also discussed reducing the creel limits during a drawdown, performing a creel limit study during a drawdown as well as planting beneficial vegetation during a drawdown.

Terry Morris thanked Mr. Daniel for all of the information and said that the information will help the Commissioners make decisions on what will work best for the lake.

1. Tainter Gate Report - Terry Morris said that he spoke with Jeff Shapiro of DOTD and the gate which has been removed is in Houston and DOTD is hoping to hear something soon. Several of the Commissioners discussed the options on closing the gate if necessary.
2. Reminders: (a) Louisiana Annual Ethics Training (Due December 31), and (b) Annual Financial Disclosure (Due May 15) – Terry reminded everyone about the Ethics training and Financial Disclosure filing.

H. Public Comment – No public comment.

1. Adjourn - A motion to adjourn was made by Steve Cagle and seconded by Richard Royal. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned.