John K. Kelly – Grand Bayou Reservoir Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Nov. 9, 2023, 4 pm

Grand Bayou Resort

5286 Hwy 784

Coushatta, LA 71019

Commission Chairman Peggy McCoy called the meeting to order. Other commissioners present were Anita Hinds, Tom Jones, Faerie Sledge, Antony Thomas, and Richard Worsham, along with resort manager David Pickett. Becky Craig was absent due to family business. Guests present were LA Wildlife and Fisheries biologist Villis Dowden, local residents Freddie Blanchard, Lisa Blanchard, Richard Blanchard, and Seth Jones.

The minutes of the meeting of Oct 12, 2023, were reviewed. Commissioner Hinds moved to approve them as written; Commissioner Worsham seconded. Motion carried.

Under old business, the commission and Mr. Dowden discussed the salvinia and water hyacinths that are beginning to show up in some areas of the lake. Some areas will be difficult for spray crews to access due to very low lake levels. Mr. Dowden also noted that LDWF recently conducted studies of largemouth bass populations in the lake. Sampling methods and slot limits were also briefly discussed.

Under new business, the Blanchard family and Seth Jones had some questions and concerns about the commission’s recent decision to prohibit bass tournaments from June 1 through Sept. 30 each year. As commissioners and Mr. Pickett explained, there have been problems with tournament fishermen sometimes being unable to keep bass alive, even in live wells, during long periods in very hot weather. Unfortunately, some fishermen have improperly disposed of dead or dying fish at water’s edge or other locations. A lengthy discussion followed with all present, including Mr. Dowden, taking part. The commission explained that the decision could be reviewed as needed in the future.

Various other topics discussed by the commission, Mr. Pickett, and Mr. Dowden, included the problem of some tournament organizers who do not pre-register their upcoming tournaments with the GBR office ahead of time as required to do so and as noted on signage at the boat launch; the crowded parking lot on fishing tournament days; and game warden presence on the lake.

Under the manager’s report, Mr. Pickett advised the commissioners that an employee had had a question about the board’s policy of reimbursing employees for one pair of shoes and/or boots on an annual basis. At present, the resort has 16 employees. The commission, as in the past, will continue to reimburse each employee who wishes to participate up to $150 annually for one pair of work shoes or boots per calendar year. The employee shall provide Mr. Pickett with the receipt for their shoes/boots. Mr. Pickett noted that the employees will receive, as is customary at the end of the year, their choice of a work shirt, jacket, or hoodie. The latter items are also available to commissioners at their own expense.

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Commissioner Jones also mentioned that local businessman David Beard is available for hire if lake residents or the commission need him to bring his equipment to remove water hyacinths, salvinia, or other similar growth from shoreline areas.

Mr. Pickett reported on information he received about a new open meeting law regarding the disabled who wish to attend agency or commission meetings and are unable to do so. There is a virtual meeting process that can be used if needed. (This is different from handicapped access to buildings which is always available).

Mr. Pickett presented the board with the October bills. Commissioner Jones moved to pay the bills; Commissioner Thomas seconded. Motion carried. The October financials were reviewed and verbally approved. There was no other business to come before the board. Commissioner Jones moved to adjourn; Commissioner Worsham seconded. Motion carried; the meeting was adjourned.

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Faerie Sledge, Secretary