

OUTDOOR COMMUNITY FORUM  
Healthy Habitats  
Saturday, June 29, 2019

Participants:

Daniel New  
Randy Holley  
Paul Skees  
Jan Gray  
Kevin Murphy  
Tony Black  
Patrick Lemons  
Mary Everhart

Forest Service Staff:

John Westbrook  
Chris Thornock  
Courtney Day  
Tina Tilley (part of the meeting)

Participants of the meeting were welcomed by John Westbrook. John discussed the purpose of the meeting:

- 1) First, to discuss 1 of 3 strategic sustainability goals for Land Between the Lake's recreation and environmental education programs. These goals were identified following a Community Visioning Session we held in December 2018.
- 2) Second, to help identify specific, community-supported objectives to support these goals, and
- 3) Third, to explore opportunities for collaboration to fulfill these goals.

John then discussed the desired outcomes of the meeting:

- Hope to have open, honest and respectful dialogue
- Hope to encourage a feeling of shared responsibility and aspiration towards meeting the goal
- To identify community-supported objectives to work towards
- To take advantage of the deep well of community creativity and expertise gathered at the meeting through brainstorming new, creative and innovative strategies
- Hope to strengthen our existing relationships and consider opportunities to expand our partnerships where there is mutual interest

John provided background information on the planning process that has taken place prior to this forum and reminded participants of the Vision, Strategic Areas of Focus and the Goals.

**Forward to the Future** is a strategic planning initiative which began in December 2017. It focuses on the future of recreation and environmental education at Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area. The purpose of this effort is to develop the organization's first Strategic Sustainability Plan. The plan will steer program-level direction, priorities and resources for the next ten to fifteen years through identification of 3 things:

1. vision, priority areas of focus, and set of goals and objectives
2. Strategies which will help Land Between the Lakes, as an organization, to be more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable; and
3. Ways in which Land Between the Lakes can help to cultivate regional sustainability through collaboration and partnership.

Public engagement has been an important part of this initiative from the beginning. There have been several opportunities for public input, comment and dialogue. Starting in July of 2018, LBL sought input

to better understand public needs, values, interests and concerns. This input was collected through an online engagement tool called MindMixer and through open houses. In December 2018, a Community Visioning Session was held to help understand what the public wants to see in the future. Many of you have participated in these engagement opportunities and we thank you for taking the time to be a part of this process.

The Outdoor Community Forum builds upon what has been done through the Assessment and Visioning Steps. It uses the vision, areas of focus and goals as its foundation and seeks to identify specific objectives and strategies that should be met to achieve the goals.

<b>VISION</b>		
<i>Working together with visitors and local communities to bring positive, sustainable change through exceptional nature-based experiences that inspire all generations.</i>		
<b>STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS</b>		
<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Recreation</b>	<b>Healthy Habitats</b>	<b>Inspire Youth</b>
<b>STRATEGIC GOAL 1</b>	<b>STRATEGIC GOAL 2</b>	<b>STRATEGIC GOAL 3</b>
Anticipate changing recreation needs, demonstrate innovative management practices, and sustainably transform to meet 21 <sup>st</sup> century expectations.	Restore and sustain healthy habitats to be a destination for hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing of abundant and diverse species.	Inspire youth in neighboring counties and states to connect with their natural lands and cultural heritage.
<b>MANAGEMENT AREA OF FOCUS</b>		
Create a Culture of Innovation		
<b>MANAGEMENT GOAL</b>		
Respect the past and innovate for the future.		

John then talked about the challenges that the Forest Service is facing:

- Invasive Species
- Loss of Natural Lands
- Habitat Conditions and Reduced Wildlife Populations
- Funding
- Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Viewing Trends

**The next part of the meeting was for the group to discuss the following questions and begin to brainstorm specific objectives.**

1. What do we ultimately want to achieve?
2. What does success look like?
3. What needs to be done to get there?
4. Brainstorm specific objectives.

### Statements made by participants:

- Back country camping is mainly used by youth, wanting to use cell phones to be more involved with the youth.
- Want to see hunting and fishing numbers go back up
  - Wanting separate places for kayaks and boats to put in the water.
- The forest service is listening but not following through with action.
- More programs with schools showing them different things in LBL (wildlife, native plants, historic sites, etc.)
  - Stated the nature station has gotten better about outreach
- Want better communication to get more information to the public.
  - A list of activities that groups can volunteer for with details on what they can or couldn't do with that project.
- Previous meetings were not helpful because of how negative they were, felt they were mainly people complaining about the roads and cemetery conditions.
- The public has a perception that it's us against them.
- The way you manage the contracts will help the environment
- Backcountry Hunters and Anglers believes wildlife resources belong to the public
  - Backcountry Hunters and Anglers wants a list of habitat projects that they can be involved with so they can help communicate it further.
  - Want to return Land Between the Lakes to previous ecological state.
- Want more educational signs throughout Land Between the Lakes.
- Reference history to have a better leg to stand on with the public.
- Want more data on the groups of people coming into Land Between the Lakes.
  - Suggested boxes with voluntary surveys
- Utilize social media more, give people the opportunity to show what they see.
- An adopt a trail program
  - Restore old trails
  - Help with cleanup on certain sections of the trails.
  - Sponsorships will give the public a sense of ownership.
  - Backcountry Hunters and Anglers stated they have already discussed supporting this
    - Want a list of options of different things they can do and what restrictions they would have.
- More education on Chronic Wasting Disease
  - Allow state agencies to guide Land Between the Lakes on management/prevention.
- Tell the public how they can help.
- Tell the public how burning and thinning help habitats and wildlife.
- Tell the public why you are doing everything that were doing at LBL.
- Build trust with the public.
- Tell the public why the deer population at Land Between the Lakes has declined and how its being fixed.
- Make Land Between the Lakes a habitat "destination" that visitors will want to come to.
- Advertise to Nashville.
- Put more signs up around the Core Area explaining why its there.
- Put out maps and news articles and emails on the Core Area Biosphere in order to tell the public that there is 40,000 acres on LBL that are not managed. Perhaps then, the No-Management people (and the public) will see the difference between managed and unmanaged areas.

- Show the public where money is being spent.
- Talk to the public about unique habitats at Land Between the Lakes.
- Create a display or flyer that discusses the Oak Grassland Demonstration Area with 5 year, 10 year, and 20 year photo examples.
- Make other users pay more money.
- Add a donation box on fee payment website locations

**Draft Objectives:**

- Better communicate to achieve public buy in.
- Get public actively involved in habitat management.
- Contract with farmers to manage habitat to better benefit wildlife.
- Contract with loggers.
- Manage for access for specific user groups.
- Stop mudding and road damage.
- Include public and partners in communication.

**User groups ideal habitat/needs:**

- Hunters
  - Bump up open land
  - Make diversity
  - “Correct” habitat
- Hikers
  - Diversity in access points
  - Want more trails like the hematite trails (short loops)
- Bird Watchers
  - Access to bird locations
- Bikers
  - New trails or restoration of old trails.
- Kayakers
  - Access without power boats
- Historians/Farmers
  - Access

**Action Items:**

1. More signage/ make clear the protected and important areas.
  - a. Time frame: Two months (Two weeks for biosphere map)
2. Utilize select timber harvest to fund and improve habitat mixture
  - a. Time Frame: Six months
3. Grassland Oak savannah demonstration area.
  - a. Time Frame: Six months
4. Communications of plans and upcoming start of habitat projects (Oak Grassland Demonstration Area, Hogs, and prescription fire)
5. Actively manage invasive species
  - a. Use a variety of tools to eradicate hogs.
  - b. Time Frame: Ongoing
6. Use prescribed fire on a rotational basis. In successional, open land, and forest.
  - a. Time Frame: Ongoing

7. Develop sponsorships and partnerships for specific habitat locations (Trail sponsorship)
  - a. Time Frame: In process
8. Land Between the Lakes podcast with partners
  - a. Time Frame: One year
9. Daylight roads to improve condition and provide habitat.
  - a. Time Frame: 1 ½ years
10. Reduce mowing during nesting season
11. Chronic Wasting Disease education plan.