



**Ocoee River Recreation and Economic Development Fund Board
September 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

***9:00 a.m. Central Time / 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time**

Virtual via Teams

**Hiwassee/Ocoee Scenic River State Park
404 Spring Creek Road
Delano, TN 37325**

Roll Call:

In attendance:

Committee Members: Angelo Giansante, Lynne McClary, Carlo Smith, Angie Arp, Lance Luke

Melanie McCullough, Russ Abney, Tarryn Sanchez, Brent,

1. Discussion: continuation of discussion of marketing proposals for future
 - a. Suggestion to standardize subcommittee membership by position, allowing automatic inclusion based on job title for greater agility and efficiency. Proposal to motion at the 9/18/25 meeting to automatically add the following positions to the marketing subcommittee:
 - i. Members that hold the 3 outfitter positions
 - ii. State Park manager
 - iii. Local tourism/marketing position
 - b. S Page confirmed that subcommittee meetings must be publicly noticed and open to the public, and only board members on the committee may cast official votes

Motion made by C Smith to present the marketing subcommittee proposal and associated budget to the full board for approval at the next meeting.

Seconded by A Giansante

All approve and motion passes

2. Consensus that hiring a large marketing firm has been ineffective and divisive, failing to attract expected new visitors.
 - a. Proposal to implement a year-long, multi-event action plan across the river corridor focused on outdoor activities and family-friendly events to boost sustainable, year-round tourism.
 - i. Marketing and Event Planning including:
 1. May music festival / concerts ~\$300k estimated budget with expected \$315k in ticket sales and ~\$15k+ in parking, vending etc.

2. biking and whitewater competitions, upcoming “Bloom and Bike” event in April and “Gravel and Grit” in September will combine races with post-event festivals, Tennessee’s statewide “Bike TN” program phases are being rolled out, including paved and gravel routes; Polk County will be included in future expansions
 3. tubing events
 4. Fall festivals: events with associated vendors and festivals (food trucks, local music, breweries) will attract more spectators and generate additional revenue.
 5. Holiday lights by the lake
 6. Coordinate with Outfitters’ venues for multi-location festivals post-Whitewater Center rebuild
 7. Potential to purchase the Black Bear Rampage name and maintain the race brand --opportunity to engage the existing audience from the event for new races or activities.
3. Concerns around size and scale of events the first year.
 4. Budget approval and a discretionary subcommittee fund are needed to facilitate planning and execution.
 - a. A Giansante emphasized the potential value of involving the state procurement team to provide a mini-training on the process for using third-party contracted companies to manage event vendors. He noted that managing vendors in-house through the state would be more bureaucratic and time-consuming due to state processes.
 - b. A Giansante also suggested the possibility of leveraging the Chamber of Commerce to manage website and email communications, as the state already reimburses the Chamber for related services
 - c. R Abney emphasized that the board’s approval would focus on allocating an annual marketing budget, empowering the marketing committee to make decisions regarding event funding, staffing, and planning. He recommended using the Chamber as a liaison to manage marketing efforts and vendor recommendations.
 5. Next Steps
 - Approval of a subcommittee budget to enable detailed planning and event implementation.
 - Follow-up on commercial use permits for rental services and event logistics at the Whitewater Center.

Adjournment @ 11:05 a.m.