

**Executive Committee Meeting
West Tennessee River Basin Authority
August 15, 2023**

The Executive Committee Meeting of the West Tennessee River Basin Authority was held at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 15, 2023, via in-person at the WTRBA office. Executive Committee members in attendance were Chairman Gary Reasons, Dr. Jim Byford, Mayor Joseph Butler, Mayor A.J. Massey, and Commissioner David Salyers (via call-in). Others attending in person were Executive Director David Blackwood, Paige Keith, Kris Gordon, Dustin Bennett, Jake Rogers (Kustoff), and Patrick Parker (Office of General Counsel). Chairman Reasons verified a quorum and called the meeting to order.

The following agenda items were discussed:

Office of General Counsel

Senior Counsel Member Patrick Parker presented a brief introduction and description of the states newly initiated Public Chapter 300 which took effect on July 1, 2023. Mr. Parker stated this act requires all governing bodies acting at public meetings to reserve a period for public comment to permit the public the opportunity to comment on matters pertaining to agenda items. Parker added that the notice of the public meeting must include how a person may provide public comment and that the governing bodies are allowed to put reasonable restrictions on the period of public comment.

W.E.T Center Design Selection

Director Blackwood informed the Executive Committee of the W.E.T Center designer selection committee meeting that took place on July 31, 2023. Blackwood stated that during this meeting the committee reviewed four different RFQ's from firms interested in providing full design services including architectural, engineering, and consulting services for the program, noting that the committee were all in agreeance on their top candidates. Director Blackwood also noted that the designer selection would be made official on August 21, 2023 at the Executive Subcommittee of the State Building Commission.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Ask

- W.E.T Center

Director Blackwood spoke of the three-year plan for the W.E.T Center, stating that postponing staffing until year two would be ideal and would like to see a Director appointed during fiscal year 2025, adding this position will be critical to the launch of the WET Center and establishing this position will ensure the effectiveness and preparedness of the WET Center to begin operations in FY26.

- Orphaned Lakes

Director Blackwood provided a brief overview of the orphaned lakes program, stating these lakes are NRCS and watershed lakes that have aged out and aren't being maintained properly. Blackwood stated a task force was assembled to investigate the fifty or so abandoned lakes and the costs that would associated with WTRBA adding them to its program and it was concluded that a new maintenance crew and one tractor would be needed to accomplish this.

- New Counties

Director Blackwood spoke of the potential growth of WTRBA and its expansion of the regional territory area to include four new counties in the portfolio. Blackwood stated that he proposes if the new counties are added that WTRBA meets the same boundaries as TWRA (Region 1), those being Humphreys, Perry, Stewart, and Houston counties. Blackwood added he will be making a one-time ask of \$750,000 and a

recurring cost ask of \$575,000, all will be for additional staffing, one tractor, mower, amphibious utility vehicle, and amphibious trackhoe, all of which will be aid in the adding of orphaned lakes and the four new counties.

- Conservation Initiative

Director Blackwood informed the Executive Committee of his attendance at the Conservation Summit hosted by Governor Lee. Blackwood stated the purpose of this summit was to bring together individuals involved with conservation and natural resources to brainstorm on the direction the State would like to head with plans regarding trail and natural resources and other topics in that general scope. Director Blackwood mentioned that one of the outcomes from the summit was a focus on stewardship and not having an individual to compile proposals and push items forward, as well as stewardship of the land after projects are completed. Blackwood stated a \$360,000 recurring staff cost will be made to establishment three positions within TDEC with which WTRBA will coordinate with to support implementation of a portion of the Statewide Conservation Initiative between public agencies, municipalities, and private entities. Positions will be regional and will ensure statewide coverage of watershed and conservation resources. Blackwood also noted these positions will provide a regional point of contact for watershed and conservation planning which will help rural partners identify and implement conservation projects.

- Equity Improvement

Director Blackwood stated he would like to request a \$160,000 recurring cost of equity improvement from the State to increase the WTRBA operations budget. Blackwood added by doing so it would potentially provide State funds to match increased County Reserve Funds which support operation costs. Director Blackwood also stated that WTRBA has seen increased salary, benefits, and operational expenses without adjustment in State or County allocations, and by asking for an equity improvement, it would ensure proper budget performance.

Director Blackwood concluded the FY '25 Budget Ask discussion by stating that the asks combined will total \$750,000 in one time asks and \$1.2Million in recurring costs. Blackwood asked for the Executive Committee to make a recommendation to pursue and bring before the Board of Directors during the upcoming October meeting. Dr. Byford made a motion to approve with Mayor Butler seconding. With no further discussion the motion passed.

ARP Grant Submittals

Director Blackwood informed the Executive Committee that ARP Grant submittals have been completed. Blackwood provided a brief description of the three proposals, one being the Jackson Tennessee Central Creek Restoration project. Blackwood stated the proposal is for the restoration and revitalization of the creek, adding it is an impaired stream in a historically underserved community with severe hydrologic alteration and ongoing threats from aging water and wastewater infrastructure and if restored will have the opportunity to restore hydrology in an urban stream and demonstrate good stewardship of natural resources in a setting that will educate and inform future projects in the region. Blackwood concluded by stating the Central Creek grant ask is \$5Million and if funded this project would be expected to be designed, constructed, and gain final acceptance by the stated deadline of September 2026. The second ARP proposal is the Hatchie River and Tributaries Reconnection, Blackwood stated this grant ask totaled \$750,000 and will aid in the restoration of an abandoned one-mile meandering section of the Hatchie River and restoring hydraulic connectivity at failing sheet pile grade control structures on Cub Creek upstream. The third grant proposal is the Trace Creek Low Hanging Dam Removal in Humphreys County, Blackwood stated this grant ask totaled \$750,000 adding this proposal is for the removal of a Low Head Dam on Trace Creek that is holding a vertical elevation difference of 6-feet which is disrupting the flow and function of Trace Creek and the structure is a degradation to the primary impairments of Trace Creek and a clear life safety hazard for a vulnerable community.

August Flooding Update

Director Blackwood updated the Executive Committee on the flooding that has occurred in the WTRBA territory during the month of August. Blackwood stated he has observed 12-to-14-inch flooding in Obion County, which caused acres of corn to be submerged in water. Blackwood also mentioned the sink holes caused by the excess flooding in Madison County in the Old Hickory Mall area as well as flooding in the Jackson Lift area.

October Board of Directors Meeting

Director Blackwood spoke of holding the October Board of Directors meeting, a clay shoot, and project site visits at Lone Oaks Farm on October 6, 2023, adding the date is being held for the group and approval is needed by the Executive Committee before moving forward with the exact planning of the meeting. All agreed to holding the meeting.

Other Business/Adjourn

With no further business, Chairman Reasons asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mayor Massey made the motion with Mayor Butler seconding.

Mayor Gary Reasons, Chairman

Mr. Hugh Adams, Secretary

Upcoming meeting:

Executive Committee Meeting on September 19, 2023, at 9:30am

Board of Directors Meeting on October 6, 2023, at 11:30am – Lone Oaks Farm

Executive Committee Meeting on November 14, 2023, at 9:30am