

Executive Committee Meeting
West Tennessee River Basin Authority
February 18, 2025

The Executive Committee Meeting of the West Tennessee River Basin Authority was held at 9:30a.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, via in-person at the WTRBA office. Executive Committee members in attendance were, Mayor Nelson Cunningham, Dr. Jim Byford, and Mr. Joe McKinnon. Others attending in person were Executive Director David Blackwood, Paige Keith, Dustin Bennett, Kris Gordon, and Patrick Parker. In Chairman Massey absence Vice Chairman Byford verified a quorum and called the meeting to order.

The following agenda items were discussed:

Audit Committee Approval

Due to the absence of committee members, this item has been deferred to the March Executive Committee meeting.

Special Projects

- Wet Center
Blackwood provided an update on the WET Center, stating that work is underway to ensure the treatment system is properly configured. Various first responder groups that may utilize the facility have provided valuable input regarding potential feature enhancements. Blackwood noted that the final details are being refined, and the project is expected to be presented to the State Building Commission in April for approval to proceed with the development of construction drawings. Following approval, construction drawings will be finalized, and the project will be put out for bid during the summer. The anticipated timeline includes breaking ground in late summer or early fall.
- Hoosier Creek
Director Blackwood provided an update on Hoosier Creek in Union City, noting reported flooding issues. The creek serves as the primary drainage for the area, running from Rives through Union City and extending west of Highway 69. Blackwood stated a review identified several areas for potential flood mitigation, with two spots offering solutions for moderate rainfall. However, large-scale flooding, such as a 100-year flood, would not be significantly mitigated due to developments in a floodplain and floodway. The drainage system funnels water under a single bridge on Reelfoot Avenue, which may continue to cause flooding during heavy rains. Blackwood also informed the committee that an upstream drainage improvement was identified, where water could be redirected through a pipe to reduce flooding during moderate events. Further studies are ongoing in conjunction with assessments of the Obion River and Rives. Blackwood stated meetings have been held with city, county, and EMA officials to discuss solutions, including the installation of a drop structure to control localized flooding. The feasibility of these measures is still under review.
- Lewis Creek
Blackwood provided an update on recent issues with Lewis Creek, including flooding caused by heavy rainfall the previous week. The rain undermined an abutment on Harness Road, leading to a head cut and the collapse of the bridge deck. Investigations were delayed by weather, but the recent rainfall worsened the damage. Blackwood noted that the area around Lewis Creek is highly susceptible to erosion and landslides, particularly during wetter months when the soil becomes

saturated and liquefied. A temporary solution to the road damage could involve using rail cars, as bridge replacement would be costly. Blackwood also discussed the potential for a comprehensive watershed plan for Lewis Creek, which would require collaboration with several stakeholders, including the mayor, NRCS, the highway department, and other local agencies. The plan would address erosion and flooding while securing funding for necessary repairs. Blackwood requested approval to participate in a task force to lead the development of the watershed plan for Lewis Creek. Mayor Cunningham made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Dr. Byford. All members voted in favor, and the motion passed.

- South Fork Forked Deer

Blackwood provided an update on the South Fork Forked Deer project, which spans from the fairgrounds on Highway 45 through South Jackson to Riverside Drive and railroad tracks. This area has been identified for flooding concerns, particularly affecting low to moderate-income communities. Several organizations, including the Wildlife Federation and Nature Conservancy, are exploring solutions to address flooding through channel work. Blackwood stated The City of Jackson is interested in connecting the south side of town to Bemis with a greenway, similar to the floodplain management efforts in Middle Fork. A 1,000-acre property is for sale, with 40% of the funding secured from the Heritage Conservation Trust, and the remaining 60% may be covered by unused Greenway funding, set to expire at the end of the year. Adding, the proposal includes using state and local funds to purchase the property and support flood control projects, such as stream reconnection and floodplain restoration. The state will manage the property and transfer jurisdiction to appropriate agencies for ongoing stewardship. Blackwood highlighted the success of similar flood control projects in mitigating floodwaters, like the Middle Fork project. Blackwood concluded by saying the land is flood-prone but not agricultural, and the project will benefit nearby properties, including Mike Pearson's land, which faces drainage issues. Blackwood emphasized the importance of collaboration between agencies like TWRA and TDOT for the project's long-term success. The South Jackson bypass and Riverside expansion will intersect with this property, creating further partnership opportunities. Mr. McKinnon made a motion to approve the purchase and project, with Dr. Byford seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

- Restoration Property

Blackwood provided an update on a property in Threeway, which includes greenhouses, an indoor facility, and 10 acres adjacent to the Middle Fork Bottoms. The appraisal confirmed the asking price as reasonable, and all utilities and infrastructure are in working condition. Blackwood stated that SBC would need to secure an option and contract for purchase. Funds are available for acquisition, and he recommended proceeding with the purchase. Blackwood suggested the property could be used for stream restoration projects, material storage, and possibly a future AP office location. The committee discussed the possibility of relocating some technical staff to the facility due to limited space at the current office. The board's approval would be needed, with plans to bring it forward at the April meeting. The committee also discussed the potential for native tree species production on-site, which would provide immediate benefits. The greenhouse facilities were noted as valuable assets, and the current owner expressed willingness to assist with setup if the state acquires the property. A motion to recommend the purchase was made by Mayor Cunningham and seconded by Mr. McKinnon. The motion passed.

- TN River Bank Stabilization

Blackwood reported that Congressman Kustoff reached out for an update on Tennessee Riverbank stabilization efforts. This project, ongoing for several years, has focused on erosion control along the stretch from Pickwick to north of Savannah. A report conducted with TVA identified approximately

10 miles of severely eroded banks contributing significant sediment loss. The project is prioritizing high-erosion areas, with moderate zones included based on budget constraints and available funding.

Outreach

Director Blackwood provided an update on the TN Valley Farmers group, stating the group has successfully obtained their 501(c)(3) status and are now actively pursuing funding for a large-scale riverbank stabilization project. As part of this effort, they have submitted a \$50 million proposal to Congressman Kustoff and the TVA, emphasizing the critical need for action. A recent pilot study tested multiple stabilization methods, ultimately identifying a cost-efficient and highly effective approach. If funding is secured, the organization plans to hire dedicated personnel to oversee project management and execution, ensuring the initiative is carried out successfully.

Other Business/Adjourn

With no further business, Vice Chairman Byford asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Joe McKinnon made the motion with Mayor Cunningham seconding.

Mayor AJ Massey, Chairman

Joe McKinnon, Secretary

Upcoming meeting:
Executive Committee Meeting on March 18th, 2025, at 9:30am