

# **Board of Directors Meeting**

## **West Tennessee River Basin Authority**

### **April 10, 2026**

The Board of Directors meeting of the West Tennessee River Basin Authority (WTRBA) was held at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, April 10, 2026, at Lone Oaks Farm. Board members in attendance included: Mayor AJ Massey, Mayor Joseph Butler, Mayor David Quick (via Webex), Mayor Nelson Cunningham, Dr. James Byford, Mr. Joe McKinnon, Mayor Steve Carr, Mayor Todd Pulse, and Commissioner David Salyers. Advisory Board members and other guests in attendance were Executive Director David Blackwood, Congressman Kustoff, Mike Butler, Kris Gordon, Kristina Earley, Kim Rios, Rachel Lemons, Misti Pequignot, Caitlin Scott, Daniel Potts, Joshua Smith, Jake Sides, William Coleman, Crystal McCaslin, Kenny Jackson, Dustin Bennett, Nowfel Mahmud, Bryan Beard, Chris Jackson, State Senator Page Walley, Husam Alshareef, Patrick Lemons, Jai Templeton, Sarah Houston, Patrick Parker, Justin Marlow (via Webex) and Matt Fennel (via Webex). A quorum was verified. Chairman AJ Massey gave the invocation and called the meeting to order.

The following agenda items were discussed:

#### Public Comment:

Chairman AJ Massey asked if there were any public comments today. There was no response from the general public.

Congressman Kustoff took a few minutes to provide an update on the Department of Homeland Security and Operation Epic Fury. He expressed his appreciation for the West Tennessee River Basin Authority, Lone Oaks Farm, and the University of Tennessee.

Hardeman County Mayor Todd Pulse provided a welcome to everyone for coming to Lone Oaks Farm and Hardeman County.

State Senator Page Walley expressed his appreciation for the creation of something so invaluable [The WET Center] for our water and for the education it will provide many jobs, not only in our county, but for the nation.

Executive Director David Blackwood provided the Blueways update. He discussed how Blueways has gone to many counties regarding a study they are doing on selected rivers. For more information about Blueways, please visit

<https://www.bluewaystn.com/>.

#### Special Acknowledgements:

Executive Director Blackwood expressed his appreciation to Lone Oaks Farm staff for the use of the facility for our team building event.

### Board of Directors Business:

Chairman AJ Massey asked if there were any additions or edits to the January 2026 Board of Directors meeting minutes. Hearing no comment, Chairman AJ Massey asked for a motion to approve the January 2026 Board of Directors meeting minutes. A motion was made by Dr. James Byford and seconded by Mayor Todd Pulse. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Executive Director Blackwood stated that we had an Executive Committee member roll off and has been replaced by Obion County Mayor Steve Carr. Executive Director Blackwood welcomed Mayor Carr and expressed his appreciation for attending the meeting.

### WTRBA Staff:

Executive Director Blackwood provided WTRBA staff updates to include:

- Kristina Earley was selected to receive the TDEC Star Award.
- Kenny Jackson will celebrate 21 years of service in May 2026.
- James Lee Earnest celebrated 25 years of state service.
- Crystal McCaslin will celebrate 15 years of service this spring.

The employees each received a round of applause for their service.

### Fiscal Items:

Executive Director Blackwood reviewed the financial reports and charts with the board. Operating Funds (327.26) and Maintenance Funds (327.24) are on track and where we are estimated to be. Executive Director Blackwood stated that our financials are in good order. Copies of the financial reports and charts were included in the packets. Chairman AJ Massey asked for a motion to approve the financial reports. A motion was made by Mayor Nelson Cunningham and seconded by Mayor Todd Pulse. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

### Technical Services:

Executive Director Blackwood presented to the board that Decatur County Mayor Creasy asked for assistance with a pond at the Decatur County fairgrounds that is leaking through the embankment. Executive Director Blackwood stated that we can provide technical assistance with the design and use our own equipment to assist with drawdown to make the pond safe. Chairman AJ Massey asked for a motion to work on Mayor Creasy's project. A motion was made by Mayor Steve Carr and seconded by Commissioner David Salyers. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Executive Director Blackwood discussed another project at the Middle Fork Obion River near Greenfield with a levee concern. A landowner called asking if the levee could be moved back to help with long term stability of the river. WTRBA looked at the concern and feels like it is a long enough continuous length of the levee and in the headwater area so assisting will be beneficial to the system. The first step was mentioned to be a conceptual design and assessment. Chairman AJ Massey asked for

a motion to approve the levee setback project. A motion was made by Dr. Byford and seconded by Commissioner David Salyers. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

#### Maintenance Services:

Executive Director Blackwood informed the Board that the Beaver Damage Management contract is up for renewal with the USDA Wildlife Services. This is our county road partnership contract with an approximate spend of \$300,000. There is no suggested increase in contract price. The timeline for federal contracts is five years, and this is a standard renewal. Chairman AJ Massey asked for a motion to approve the Beaver Damage Management contract renewal. A motion was made by Dr. Byford and seconded by Mayor Nelson Cunningham. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Executive Director Blackwood discussed the impact of the ice storm in January 2026. The ice storm did impact the lower half of our region and decimated many areas in Hardeman County, McNairy County, Hardin County, and on to the Mississippi state line. WTRBA has received many calls about trees and other blockages in the local rivers.

Executive Director Blackwood reminded the Board about a major project for the maintenance crew this year, the conversion of our Amphibious Trackhoes to chain drives, to be completed this summer.

#### Special Projects:

Executive Director Blackwood gave an overview of the Special Projects. He stated that this is the year of construction.

- 2026 Bids/Construction Season: Big Muddy, Reedy Creek, Central Creek ARP, Trace Creek ARP, Running Reelfoot Bayou
- Obion River Planning Assistance to States Scope Completed: This is a program with the US Army Corps of Engineers with a draft contract in progress. The project will be a comprehensive assessment of the Obion River watershed looking at opportunities to enhance flood protection and many of the beneficial uses of the river. The estimated sponsor match is \$400,000 over the next two years. These funds are available in our matching account, so it is not a new request for funding, but a request to move forward with the project. Chairman AJ Massey asked for a motion to approve moving forward with the Obion River project. A motion was made by Commissioner David Salyers and seconded by Dr. Byford. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

#### Regional Leadership/Outreach:

Executive Director Blackwood shared that the WET Center groundbreaking was being held shortly after the Board meeting. He explained to the attendees that the renderings around the room are of different parts of the WET Center project. He also shared that contracts have been started on developing the curriculum with partners such as the Tennessee Board of Regents.

Executive Director Blackwood shared with attendees that the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual WTWR Symposium was held in March. WTRBA requested a budget that was approved by the Board of \$10,000 to cover the cost of the Annual Symposium. Half of the cost of the Symposium was covered by several sponsors. Executive Director Blackwood shared that he received several positive comments about the Symposium and a general excitement from the 150 participants to return next year.

Executive Director Blackwood provided a brief update on the WTRBA Team Building held at Lone Oaks Farm prior to the Board meeting. The purpose was two-fold; to reward equipment operators for their dedication to emergency response on federal disasters almost every year for the last five years as well as enhancing interagency relationships and communication. He noted that a particularly engaging activity was an “Amazing Race” challenge with the finale of the teams building a boat out of cardboard. The WTRBA team spent time getting to know each other better, how to work together on different tasks, and communicate better. The WTRBA team was very appreciative of this opportunity and appreciative of the Board’s suggestion to hold the event.

Other Business/Adjourn:

With no further business to discuss, Chairman AJ Massey called for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Todd Pulse and seconded by Mayor Nelson Cunningham.

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Mayor AJ Massey, Chairman

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Mr. Joe McKinnon, Secretary

Upcoming meetings:

Executive Committee on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, 10:30am

Executive Committee on Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 10:30am

Board of Directors on Friday, July 10, 2026, 11:30 am