

**Executive Committee Meeting**  
**West Tennessee River Basin Authority**  
**September 19, 2023**

The Executive Committee Meeting of the West Tennessee River Basin Authority was held at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, via in-person at the WTRBA office. Executive Committee members in attendance were Chairman Gary Reasons, Dr. Jim Byford, and Mayor Nelson Cunningham. Others attending in person were Executive Director David Blackwood, Paige Keith, Kris Gordon, Michael Champagne, 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:

Middle Fork Bottoms – Manager Introduction

Director Blackwood opened the Executive Committee meeting by introducing the new State Park Manager of Middle Fork Bottoms, Michael Champagne. Following the brief introduction Mr. Champagne took a moment to provide his background with State Parks as well as what the future of Middle Fork Bottoms looks like and what it means to him. Mr. Champagne stated he is looking forward to the growth of the park and finding ways to implement community involvement, generate revenue through programs/events, and helping to support the Friends of Middle Fork Bottoms during the transition.

Updated FY 2025 Budget Request

- Service Capacity Increase

Director Blackwood stated this request is for an additional crew, one amphibious trackhoe, and one tractor. Blackwood added he believed these additions would help cover more river maintenance needs and support the Orphaned Lakes program. Director Blackwood stated the crew would consist of two Equipment Operators, one Equipment Operator Supervisor, and one Environmental Consultant.

- Operational Equity Increase

Director Blackwood informed the committee that after looking back at the past three years performance it was estimated that an increase of 37% on the Operationals budget. Blackwood noted that a 10% increase has been made to County Funds and a request has been asked for the State to match the increase with the State allocations which would average \$160,000.

- Regional Watershed Authority

Director Blackwood stated there has been neighboring pressure to include counties into the WTRBA program. Blackwood said that to define who WTRBA is, the organization needs to assist with setting up three regional watershed authorities across Tennessee. Blackwood added that the role WTRBA will take in this expansion, will only be guiding and providing a model on which to build off of. Blackwood also stated that OGC is requesting an additional lawyer be added to this to aid in legality while setting up the additional regional watershed authorities. Director Blackwood concluded the discussion by informing the committee that the first ask per region will include funding for three personnel and equipment needed for startup.

- WET Center Staffing

Director Blackwood reiterated the WET Center Staffing request will be for a Director of the facility. Blackwood stated he felt it key this individual be a part of the process from the beginning so they know the full ins and outs of the operation and will be best informed when making decisions for how to move forward with implementation of curriculum and programming of the facility.

### WET Center Designer Selection

Director Blackwood informed the committee of the designer selection process that had taken place for the WET Center, stating the selection committee met and reviewed all designer prospects and narrowed it down to the top three designers they felt best suited for the project. Blackwood added that through that process Kimley-Horn was selected to be lead designer and David Dowell will be the lead architect. Blackwood stated that Dowell has helped with multiple designs on the Lone Oaks campus and he his knowledge of the property and its aesthetic will be an added value to the design process. Blackwood also informed the committee that TLM will be conduction the construction of the WET Center. Blackwood concluded the update by stating the contract should be available in 60 days and initial design work on the facility will begin during the winter months.

### Grants Update

- ARP Grants

Director Blackwood informed the committee 1,166 total projects have been proposed across the state averaging \$1B in requests. Blackwood stated the project types include Stormwater, Wastewater, and Drinking Water, adding he feels confident the requests put in by WTRBA will be selected as they were all under the Wastewater project category and that a majority of all other applications were entered under the other two project types.

- USFWS Deloach Creek

Director Blackwood stated US Fish and Wildlife has \$750,000 for wetland restoration and because of this WTRBA was encouraged by USFWS to apply for the grant. Blackwood stated WTRBA's request will be to collaborate with the local utility on wetland water reuse on land adjacent to the Middle Fork Bottoms.

### USACE Running Reelfoot Project Discussion

Director Blackwood stated that after much discussion and deliberation the Running Reelfoot feasibility study it was concluded that WTRBA will be terminating its agreement with the USACE regarding the project and will pursue the project on its own. Blackwood added the Memphis District is supportive of the outcome and in complete agreement moving forward.

### Board of Directors Attendance Policy

Director Blackwood addressed his concern of the Board of Directors attendance this past year, stating he feels some type of discussion needs to be had with those that have not been attending on a regular basis, as stated in the by-laws. Blackwood stated WTRBA has a 50% attendance policy that must be met and if members do not meet that requirement, he can go in front of county commissions and ask that the member be replaced. Blackwood added he does not want to take this action and asked for suggestions from the executive committee on how to address the issue before taking such action. After deliberation it was concluded that Patrick Parker would help Ms. Keith draft a letter regarding attendance which once finalized will be signed and mailed out by the Board Chairman, Mayor Gary Reasons.

### Other Business/Public Comment

Kris Gordon brought before the committee an ask to help aid a resident in Benton Co. on Cotton Creek with a bridge replacement that has been causing flooding and debris issues. Gordon stated the resident is in violation because of the issue and would like to work with her to get it resolved in a timely manner. Blackwood added that the only access to the property is a makeshift bridge that is falling in and WTRBA along with TDEC and TDOT have all had discussion on how to assist and it was concluded that WTRBA

could assist with extra materials that are on hand to replace the bridge at no cost other than labor. Chairman Reason asked for a motion be made to approve. Dr. Jim Byford made a motion with Mayor Cunningham seconding. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Adjourn

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

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Mayor Gary Reasons, Chairman

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Mr. Hugh Adams, Secretary

Upcoming meeting:

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

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

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