

Western North Carolina Public Lands Council
May 13, 2011 Meeting Summary
9:30 AM – 10:15 AM
Great Smoky Mountain Railroad Station
226 Everett Street, Bryson City, NC 28713

Members In Attendance: Jonathon Douthit, Jason Love, Nelda Holder, Maxine Dalton, Eric Jenkins, Tom Massie, Delos Monteith, Myrna Campbell
Others in Attendance: Mary Noel, Kevin Fitzgerald, Nathaniel Jenkins, Judy Francis

Welcome by the Chair and Introductions

Maxine Dalton opened the meeting at 9:30 AM and welcomed all in attendance.

Old Business

Responses to letter to Western Delegation re: Trust Funds: Maxine said she received two responses back from the letter that was sent out on behalf of the Council regarding support for full funding of the conservation trust funds. Ray Rapp and Chuck McGrady responded and said they supported funding. She has not heard from any other legislators on the matter.

Open Meeting Law and E-Mail Decisions – Judy has asked the NCDENR Senior Attorney for an opinion concerning the applicability of public meeting laws on the Council's ability to make decisions via electronic means. She has still not gotten a response to her request.

New Business

Comments to the Forest Service re: Proposed New Planning Rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement – Maxine sent out two drafts for members to review prior to the meeting. Mary Noel provided handout about differences between the current and proposed rule and fielded several questions from staff and members. Jason suggested removing the term “poorly defined” from the extended version of comments.. Nelda Holder made a motion to approve the extended version with Jason's amendment. Jason gave a second to the motion and it was approved unanimously. Maxine will make the change and submit the comments electronically on the forest service website prior to the deadline.

Agency Reports

Great Smoky Mountain National Park - Kevin Fitzgerald provided a handout with information about the new visitor center opening on the NC side of the park. Work continues on Newfound Gap Road. The Elk Reintroduction Management Plan is underway. Tom Massie asked for clarification of some details. Nelda mentioned that a dead bald eagle was found in Maggie Valley. It had been shot and is the second one found in WNC. Kevin received Meritorious Service Award from NPS for work on visitor center.

U. S. Forest Service - Mary Noel said Weeks Act celebration at Biltmore went well and was well-attended. They did get funding for more land that enhances the corridor of the Appalachian Trail. Terry Seyden retired and Steven Westcott is new Public Information Officer. Deputy Supervisor Monica Schwalbach is going to Oregon to be a Forest Supervisor. Steve Loar is going to Alabama to be a Forest Supervisor. Joyce Kilmer Forest will celebrate its 75th anniversary in July. FMP revision for Pisgah Nantahala schedule being developed. Work of the Restoration Task Force is available on the US Forests in NC website.

NC DENR / State of NC: Due to the fact that the meeting had to adjourn quickly in order for the Council members to board the train, Judy gave a very abbreviated report concerning the NC DENR budget outlook which was very bleak. Tom Massie said the Clean Water Management Trust Fund might receive \$10 – 20 million and lose around 6 positions.

Adjourn

Nelda Holder made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jonathon Douthit gave a second to the motion which was approved unanimously at 10:15 AM.