Lakes JAC — Meeting Minutes

Date: January 14 2026

Location: Board Room

Chairman: Matt Champagne
Vice Chairman: Kevin Attleson
Secretary: Jeff Retey

Committee Members: Michael Coughlin, Scott Sborov, Carol Phillips, Ross Gerner, Scott Hawes, Jeff Retey, Rob Montgomery, Kevin Attleson, Matt Champagne.

Meeting Starts

Called to order: Meeting called to order at 2:00 p.m.; agenda adopted (no changes).

Prior minutes: Approved (motion/second; carried).

Board member comments: None.

Staff Reports

Lake Management – Rick

- Loch Lomond drawdown: Ongoing; gravel removal at Granton courtesy dock/ramp nearly complete; courtesy dock repairs at Tyree nearly complete; grounds crew to follow at Stonykirk. Bank fishing area to be deepened at Tyree near kayak rack; fishing lanes maintained through aquatic vegetation to preserve shoreline vegetation.
- Lake Ranger contacts (Dec): 2,135; 278 non-members/guests removed. 32 boat contacts; 42 hours on the water. (Nov: 1,883; Dec 2024: 1,545.)
- Grounds/dam prep: Dams being prepared for annual inspections; outside engineer to inspect for permitting. Dam permit extension/recertification targeted for next year (20-year renewal); mowing/brush and tree removal underway; staff expects good condition for inspections.
- 2026 budget items: Three screening structures for select porta-potties (most visible locations); Fly Tyers funding to support up to two kayak launches (first at Lake Ann Park; second location TBD); three additional kayak storage racks to reduce waiting list.
- Fisheries: Trout stocking in Lake Brittany anticipated soon; Christmas tree drop-off available at Lake Windsor (Pontoon Park) for disposal of dried trees.
- Community outreach: Coffee and Cookies event scheduled February 3 at Bella Vista Bar and Grill (11:00 a.m.); open to the public; staff available to answer questions; attendees requested to call ahead for planning.

- Fly Tyers grant: Committee discussed ~$5,000 grant amount; Fly Tyers have provided conceptual plans; POA staff will incorporate plans and build launches in-house (subject to costs).

Event Updates

Non-Member Events – Tom

- Non-member events: Annual January review of requests for non-member events (typically youth/charity/community). Requests presented for (1) Kids Fishing Derby and (2) Kayak Demo Day.
- Kids Fishing Derby: Proposed for Medfield Pond (best parking; enclosed area). Event must be open to the public to qualify for free fish; historically ~90% of attendees are Bella Vista residents. Fish: catfish; Arkansas Game and Fish provides 300 at no cost.
- Kayak Demo Day: Proposed for June (historically first Saturday). Missed recent years; expected to resume; promoted locally with majority of participants from Bella Vista.
- Process change: Per updated policy, requests are presented this month; vote/approval to occur at next month's meeting to allow time for public comment from at-home viewers.
- Committee noted past approvals have been unanimous; members will be prepared to vote at the February meeting.

Discussion Items

Carp Removal & Fisheries Management Q&A (Rick/Chris/John)

- Background: Brett submitted literature/questions regarding grass carp control; staff met and provided written responses; discussion proceeded point-by-point.
- Netting & baited aggregation: Staff supports funnel-net strategy during current drawdown. Proposed locations: back of Tyree and "Waterfall Cove" (between Granton and Tyree). Design: wire-mesh fencing and T-posts forming a wall/funnel to allow entry and hinder exit; area baited; follow-up electrofishing within enclosed area until removed.
- Implementation considerations: Cost expected to be modest; lake drawdown allows installation and anchoring into substrate to prevent fish passage underneath.
- Scaling/volunteers: Staff noted effort is not manpower-limited but location-limited; sites selected for shallow depth, natural barriers, and manageable fence length.
- Carp behavior: Grass carp can jump when stressed; target sites provide ~2–3 ft clearance above water with 6-ft fencing. Sites sized ~0.5 acre to reduce stress and avoid deterrent chemical cues that could reduce aggregation.
- Barriers/deterrence: Bioelectric/bioacoustic fencing discussed; generally high-cost and geared to large reservoirs/spawning movement; not a fit given sterile (triploid) carp and limited migration concerns.

- Chemical/biological tools: Experimental options noted; commercially unavailable or heavily regulated. Rotenone delivery concepts reviewed; challenges include avoidance behavior, taste-testing/spitting, and lack of market-ready products.
- Stocking/food-web: Hatchery ponds currently focused on bluegill (four ponds). Goal is 4–8" fish after two growing seasons; estimated harvest up to ~40,000 fish across ponds (best-case). Priority stocking: Loch Lomond first; Windsor second. Other stockings (catfish, crappie, hybrid striped bass) on hold to prioritize bluegill; redear production trial unsuccessful.
- Habitat & productivity: Vegetation restoration remains a key objective; Fly Tyers collaborating on more durable, structured habitat using harvested natural materials (dam clearing) and improved bundling methods (e.g., wire) versus brush piles that collapse. Fertilization program to continue per state plan, targeting maximum allowable nutrient/visibility thresholds.
- Regulations, research, and budget: No-harvest policies cannot be mandated; staff can only recommend practices within Arkansas Game and Fish regulations. Fisheries management fundamentals largely stable; work continues on balanced approach (fertilization, vegetation, predator/prey balance). Combined annual budget for Lakes & Parks and Fisheries/Ecology cited at ~ $1.1M.

  Committee discussion emphasized the ongoing challenge of voluntary harvest of small bass; outreach (newsletter articles/recipes, creel survey insights) and incentive ideas (raffle with proof on ice) were suggested. Staff estimated active grass carp removal may continue for ~5 years, with vegetation recovery expected along that trajectory.

Public Comments

- Public comment: Members encouraged continued “outside the box” thinking and review of examples from other reservoirs; noted impatience with multi-year recovery timeline.
- Electrofishing question: Audience asked whether extensive electrofishing could reduce small bass numbers; staff noted collection permitting does not typically extend to wholesale removal but agreed to explore options with Arkansas Game and Fish.
- Carp clarification: Staff confirmed carp are non-game; removal is allowed without special permitting; electrofishing will be used as a removal method once fish are trapped.
- University partnerships: Audience suggested engaging colleges/graduate programs for additional ideas and assistance. Staff noted prior University of Arkansas involvement (fertilization work) and existing contacts; fisheries focus varies by department, and substantial external grant funding may be required.
- General appreciation expressed for staff responses and Fly Tyers contributions; committee encouraged continued collaboration and innovation.

Announcements

Next meeting: February 11. Meeting adjourned.