



C.O.R.A. Meeting Minutes **November 7, 2023**

Terry Lewis called the meeting to order at 7pm in the lower courtroom. Ron Lambert led the invocation. Mark J. Tidwell called roll with 11 members present and 2 present by phone. 3 members were absent. Tidwell continued with October's minutes which were accepted and approved. Coy Crutchfield gave the treasurer's report which was accepted.

Tidwell gave the newsletter report with plans to have an edition ready by the December meeting. Submittals are needed to round out the newsletter.

No trails, membership or publicity reports were given.

Old business concerned a short review of the annual BBQ held in October. Attendance was noted as being light. North Cumberland Manager Keith Thomas highlighted the recently concluded elk season. The reward of \$5,000 for information on a poached elk was also discussed.

In new business, the donation of \$250 to support high school youth involved in the Brandon Carr Fishing Tournament was approved.

The meeting then turned to the topic of "1660-01-28-03 Wildlife Management Area and Designated Area Permits and Fees". The Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission has proposed a new scale of fees for resident and non-resident users to access the NCWMA for OHV riding.

President Lewis opened the discussion with the caveat that much of the new proposal consisted of things CORA had been asking TWRA to consider in order to create more funding for the education of riders, trail maintenance and enhancing law enforcement.

Sheila Westray joined the discussion recognizing that the NCWMA is extremely affordable for riders to access and that a price increase is needed. However, she differed with the proposed prices and suggested a happier medium be reached. She spoke to the term of

"demand destruction" and how that works out in economic theory.

Several in the audience; campground owners, riders, etc., joined the conversation. Many questions were directed to the TWRA staff (John Mike, Joe Elkins, Keith Thomas, Brenden Marlow, and Fred Jordan were present). NCWMA Manager Thomas detailed the proposed price structure. Comparisons were drawn between other privately owned "riding parks" and what is the state owned and managed North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area. Places like Leatherwood, Wildcat, Black Mountain, Brimstone and Windrock were discussed.

Several suggestions came from various members of the audience: a flat rate per person, a set rate per OHV, etc. Most thought the proposed prices are exorbitant. Lambert suggested a re-evaluation of the proposed fees. Westray suggested a high impact permit "across the board" in lieu of the permit schedule.

Bill Stanley spoke to the past effects of mining on the area when he worked in the coal permitting process as compared to the overall effect of the exponential growth of OHVs on the same acreage.



Westray asked if CORA was going to make an official comment to TWRA on the fee proposal. Lewis responded that it would and that individual member comments could be made.

Lewis ended the discussion with the admonition to visit the TWRA website and contribute one's opinion(s) on the matter in the public comment section, or attend the next TN Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting (December 8th, 2023, Gatlinburg, TN) in person.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

"Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems."
Gever Tully, American writer and computer scientist.