



Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission

# River Currents

Volume 7 Issue 1

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## Commissioners

Steve Randall  
Chairman  
Dr. Riley Needham  
Vice-Chair  
Rick Stubblefield  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Monte Bradford  
Larry Clark  
Randy Corp  
Gerald Hilshire  
John Larson  
Trey Peyton, III  
David Spears

## OSRC Staff

Ed Fite  
Administrator  
Cheryl Allen  
Administrative Manager  
Kevin Stevens  
Operations Manager  
Larry Setters  
Administration  
Cassandra Carter  
Administrative Assistant  
James Hickman  
Maintenance Supervisor  
Josh Baird  
Maintenance Department  
Stephanie Stephens  
Ranger Supervisor

## Consolidation of the OSRC?

There have been many questions about a recent piece of legislation, House Bill 3173, that many scenic rivers enthusiasts fret may do away with the functions of the present Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission. This article will clarify the purpose and status of that bill.

House Bill 3173, introduced this Second Session of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Oklahoma Legislature by Representative Jeff Hickman and Senator Brian Bingman, proposed to consolidate the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission (OSRC) into the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department and Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

The bill passed out of the House Government Modernization Committee on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and was subsequently approved by the full House on March 8<sup>th</sup> with a vote of 78 Ayes and 18 Nays.

Once the bill made its way over to the Senate, Senator Brian Bingman requested the bill's title be stricken in the Senate Natural Resources and Regulatory Services Appropriations Subcommittee to allow time for Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department and Oklahoma Conservation Commission to work on alternative language to improve the bill. When the bill was considered on General Order, Senator Jim Wilson amended the bill on the floor of the Senate nixing the proposed OSRC consolidation by proposing replacement language creating a new Oklahoma Department of Natural Resources where approximately thirty agencies with water and environmental responsibilities would be consolidated. With that amendment attached, the Senate approved the bill with a vote of 25 Ayes and 19 Nays.

The amended bill was then sent back to the House for consideration where the changes were rejected and the bill was then scheduled for consideration by action of Joint

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A view of the  
river from  
Comb's  
Bridge.



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# OSRC Board News

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## Board Meeting

The first Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission Board meeting of 2010 was held on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Gerald Hilshire opened the meeting by presenting Ed Brocksmith with a certificate of appreciation for his services on the OSRC Board of Commissioners. Brocksmith was first appointed to the Board for a 4 year term in 1986 by the president of the Oklahoma senate. He was once again appointed to the board in 1998 and served until 2002. In 2005, he was elected as an At-Large Commissioner. The most recent appointees, incumbent Larry Clark and Trey Peyton, were then sworn in as the boards At-Large Commissioners.

An election for board officers was also held during the meeting. Commissioners voted to fill three positions. Steve Randall was elected as board Chairman, Dr. Riley Needham was elected as Vice Chairman, and Rick Stubblefield was elected as the Secretary/Treasurer.



## Trey Peyton



I am happy to serve the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission (OSRC) as the newly elected Commissioner for Cherokee County. I grew up on the Illinois River and have been a part of Peyton's Place Resort, a family owned livery business located

along the banks of the Illinois River, all my life.

Shortly after college I spent ten years working for an environmental consulting firm based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I spent a lot of time on the road visiting numerous parts of the country performing various environmental surveys. During the long hours on the road I missed the river and the beauty of the surrounding area and decided to come back to the family business full time a few years ago.

As one of the newest Commissioners of the OSRC, I hope to use my environmental background to help the OSRC find an acceptable balance between use and conservation of the watershed. I look forward to helping the OSRC throughout the next four years and appreciate the opportunity the community has bestowed on me.

## In Our Thoughts



The OSRC staff would like to extend our condolences to the family and friends of Gene Quarles, who passed away on April 11th, 2010.

Quarles founded prominent Tulsa insurance agency The Quarles Group in 1979, and was dedicated not only to his clients but to the cause of conservation as well. In 2005, he took interest in the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma's project to reintroduce elk to the Nickle Creek, and soon joined the board. He was appointed to the OSRC Board of Commissioners in 2007.

When he wasn't working or volunteering, Quarles was enjoying the outdoors and time with his family.

## Safety Reminders



As summer nears, more and more visitors set out to take their first float trip and dip in the river. Below are some reminders of how to stay safe while enjoying the Illinois.

- Wear life preservers, protective footwear, and other suitable clothing.
- Remember, styrofoam and glass are prohibited. Consumption of any alcohol other than 3.2 beer is also prohibited.
- Never swim, boat or float alone.
- Stay within sights of companions.
- Do not dive from trees, rocks, bridges or bluffs.
- Pack thirst-quenching drinks like water and lemonade. Alcohol impairs judgement.
- If you tip over, stay with your boat on the up streamside.
- Tie food and extra clothing in water tight containers.
- Shower with soap and water after swimming.
- Stay away from any area that has floating debris, oil sheens or dead fish.
- Don't swim after a heavy rain.
- Wear ear plugs and swim goggles.
- Don't swim in water with a temperature greater than 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

## New Part-Time Employee Cassandra Carter



The OSRC has recently added a new part-time employee to the administrative staff. Cassandra Carter graduated from Tahlequah High School in 2008. She is currently a sophomore at Northeastern State University majoring in Public Relations.

Cassandra began working for the OSRC in the summer of 2009 as an assistant to the administration. She has continued her position throughout the winter season. In addition, Cassandra has been working on printing the 2010 Floater's Guide and has begun publishing the River Currents newsletter. Welcome aboard, Cassandra!

## Floaters Guide



A new Floater's Guide has recently been posted to the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers website. The guide highlights guidelines for canoeing and rafting, as well as tips for enjoying the river safely. There is also an updated map which now shows the alcohol free public access zones. Download this guide and find other helpful tips at [www.oklahomascenicrivers.net](http://www.oklahomascenicrivers.net)

# Spotlights in the River Basin



## Highway 59 Access Area

The OSRC, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, has recently opened a new public access and boat launch area at Highway 59.

The bridge at Highway 59 has long served as a multi-purpose construction. It has not only been used for transportation but as an unofficial public access area. After being contacted by OSRC Administrator Ed Fite about possibly accommodating the area around Highway 59 for additional uses, the Department of Transportation constructed a boat ramp and created an area for public parking.

Both Fite and the Department felt that transforming the area into a designated river access locale would benefit the many visitors who flock to the Illinois River each year.

"The area can be used for access to the river, for fishing, launching boats, swimming and sunbathing," Fite said.

In addition to recreational uses, the access area can be used for water quality monitoring and other government activities.

The project began in November 2009. Work was completed in February of this year, and was opened for public use in April.

## New Fee Policies

Visitors to the Illinois River will notice a few changes in the Public Access policies this year, including a revision to the camping fees and the insitution of a nominal day use fee.

Due to budget cuts, the OSRC has changed the previously \$8 per night camping fee to \$12. This fee applies to a group of up to four people or one vehicle. If a group has more than four people, but is still traveling in one vehicle, they will be charged an additional camping fee. However, those

traveling with an additional vehicle will be charged a day use fee of \$4.

For example: a large family is camping at Round Hollow public access area. They have 4 vehicles and they want to use the electric at R-16. The family would be charged \$12 for the initial vehicle and overnight camping fee, then \$4 for the additional three vehicles, as well as \$20 fee for the use of electric. The family would be charged \$44 from that camp site per night.

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# on the **W**ild Side....

## Oklahoma Turkey Hunting

This spring turkey season began on April 6th and ended on May 6th. The spring season is always an exciting one for many hunters and this season was no exception.

For many dedicated hunters, the turkey season began long before the opening date in early April. The pre-season preparations began with hunters asking themselves one of the most important questions in relation to turkey hunting; to use a decoy or not to use a decoy?

Live decoys are prohibited for use in Oklahoma, but artificial decoys are allowed. Hunters who chose to use decoys must research their options carefully. Some of

distance should allow a hunter to properly lure the bird and to get a clear shot.

Another consideration for turkey hunters is which type of call they should use. Recorded calls are not allowed, but there are plenty of manual calls for hunters to choose from. There are three main types of turkey calls; box calls, mouth calls, and friction calls.

Box calls are arguably the simplest to use. A board is slid on top of the box, which produces a squeaking sound, similar to a turkey call. The ease of these calls makes them perfect for beginners. Mouth calls have been used



Shown Above: A CarryLite decoy. Shown Below: Two Tom turkeys.



the most popular decoys include the Pretty Boy and Pretty Girl from Carry-Lite.

However, there are many hunters who have a love/hate relationship with these devices. Using a decoy may give a hunter the edge in attracting a tom; it may also confuse the tom, who will sometimes stop several feet away from the decoy – and from shooting distance – and await the hen to approach him. Many experts advise placing the decoy between 15-20 feet from a hunters position; this

for thousands of years and, as the name suggests, are used orally. There are several types of friction calls, two of which are slate calls and the push-button call, which is similar to a box call.

After deciding which tools they will use, hunters spend weeks scouting out the perfect hunting locations. The longer a hunter scouts, the greater the chance he or she

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## Consolidation of the OSRC?, continued from pg. 1

Conference Committee to work out a compromise agreement for language. As of the writing of this article, there has been no action by that Joint Conference Committee.

As there are less than three weeks left in this present Oklahoma Legislature, it seems to me that House Bill 3173 will most-likely be left on the table in the Joint House-Senate Conference Committee for this Session as Legislators must get about the business of dealing with writing the State's FY-2011 Budget that takes effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Even though the OSRC may escape the axe this Session, its important to remember House Bill 3173 is a recurring issue that has been discussed by Legislators for many years and will certainly be resurrected again in the First or Second Session of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Oklahoma Legislature.

To that end, OSRC Board of Commissioners has drafted alternative language to be considered that would leave in tact the present agency and at the same time provide an opportunity to generate more funding at the agency level to lessen the need for appropriation of funds from the state's general revenue. Additionally, Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department also has partnered with Oklahoma Conservation Commission to develop other alternative language for consolidating OSRC functions into the Oklahoma Conservation Commission as a new 6<sup>th</sup> Division.

In conclusion, as the Oklahoma Legislature is comprised of one hundred fifty-one members, it's important that scenic rivers enthusiasts spend time with your local House and Senate members to ensure they are informed about the significance of these special rivers to our state.

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## Fee Policies, continued from pg. 4

The day use fees will also apply for any use of public access areas before 5:00 pm. These fees are vehicle specific, meaning a group is charged per vehicle, not per person. The OSRC Camp Host and River Rangers will collect fees from visitors at the public access area they are occupying.

Motorcyclists or bicyclists that wish to use the parks during daytime hours will be charged a day use fee of \$1 per person. However, after 5:00 pm, they will be charged regular camping fees.

People who use the access areas frequently may be interested in purchasing an annual day use permit at the cost of \$35. Visitors will be provided with hang tangs as proof of payment. The camping hang tag should be hung on the lantern post of the camp site for easy identification. Day use hang tags will be divided into separate colors; one color will represent a day use fee collection and the other color will represent an annual permit.

Veterans, people with disabilities, and senior citizens, aged 62 or over, are entitled to a 50% discount on camping fees. Boy and Girl Scout Groups are exempt from paying camping fees when they remove trash as they float. Senior citizens are also exempt from day use fees.

These policies will be set into effect this summer season. Visitors should educate themselves about these policies and direct any questions they may have to the River Rangers or camp host.

## Turkey Hunting, continued from pg. 5

has to track a prime bird for harvest. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation offers tips for successful pre-season scouting. There are several signs indicating turkey presence that hunters should be on the look for.

Tracks are an easily spotted sign of turkeys. A single tom track will measure 4 1/4 inches or more, and should have three marks from their three long toes. A track that measures shorter is most likely from a hen. Not only will tracks indicate the presence of turkeys, they can show the paths and directions turkeys like to travel. Turkeys leave many other visual signs, such as droppings and feathers.

Dusting areas, created when turkeys "bathe" themselves in dust, are also easy to spot.

Turkeys are challenging game; they have keen senses and are not easily taken down. A great deal of patience and determination is required for turkey hunting, but those who are not deterred by the difficulties will develop a passion for the sport.

More information about turkey hunting, including tips, season dates, and detailed regulations, can be found at the Wildlife Conservation's website, [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com).