



**LOUISIANA OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION**  
**Annual General Membership Meeting 2009**

1. **Call to Order by Chairman Chris Holmes (10/17/2009 – 3:00 P.M.)**
2. **Roll call by Secretary John Flores**

**Present;**

**Executive Board**

President Lyle Johnson

Vice President Mike Lane

Secretary John Flores

Chairman of Board Chris Holmes

Executive Director Vicki Holmes

**(Board)**

Gerald Gaspard

Dave Moreland

**(Committees)**

Deb Burst

Rex Caffey

Don Dubuc

Mike Lane

Gordon Hutchinson

**Absent;**

Bill Ford

Kevin Diez (Parliamentarian)

Bob Dennie

Chris Ginn

Helmut Ermlich

Rusty Tardo

**3. Reading of Minutes**

A motion was made by **Joe Macaluso** to dispense with the reading of the previous board meeting minutes, and seconded by **Gordon Hutchinson**. All members present were in favor.

#### **4. Financial Report;**

Executive Director Vicki Holmes presented the financials. Money Market is \$4,943.96. The interest rate is down to 1.00 percent. Earned interest was \$49.67 this year. The checking account balance is \$11,947.36. No checks have been written for the conference and no checks for E.I.C. or Y.J.C. have cleared. Total in all accounts is \$16,891.32. A financial update will be forwarded to the board following distribution of checks.

#### **5. Executive Director's Report;**

##### **2009 Annual Conference Report**

Executive Director stated, "The 2009 LOWA Annual Conference is going well. There have been no complaints from attendees concerning the hotel at all. The attendance is up from our Morgan City Conference. We had 23 register last year and we have 28 this year for Lake Charles, along with about 10 wives. The CVB has been available continuously, asking if there was anything they could further help us with. We are expecting approximately 90 people at the banquet. And, all of our award winners will be present, which is exciting."

"The economy seems to be loosening a bit; we've had a lot more supporting member interest lately. Chris (Holmes) made a couple of contacts at SEOPA that we're going to follow up with to see if we can get them on board. Additionally, there is a possibility that our G.M. contact may be coming back on board for another sponsorship next year. He indicated he needed to submit the sponsorship in his budget that was pending.

##### **2010 Annual Conference Update**

The ED reported that conference packets had been sent out to Sabine, Toledo Bend and St. Tammany. However, none have been received back as yet. It was brought up that with Houma CVB on board would Houma be in consideration for submitting a bid to, since the conference had not been held there since 2005. Chris Holmes suggested table that for the full membership meeting, but additionally the Lake Charles CVB had asked if LOWA would be interested in coming to Lake Charles again in 2010. The Chairman pointed out, though it is not usual for LOWA to do this, Lake Charles had been excellent hosts and it was nice to know that they are someone to go to if needed. Additionally, that LOWA had decent attendance in Lake Charles and the logistics had been great.

##### **Supporting Members**

Stylecrest, a provider of camo vinyl siding will be coming on as a supporting member this year.

## **6. President's Comments;**

The president said in addressing the board, "It's been an enjoyable first year serving as LOWA President and I look forward to next year. I've been in the organization for nine years and it has really helped me with my career a lot. It's an honor for me to do anything that I can to help and enhance our organization. We've had more members this year sign up for the conference and so I look for that to keep going on. I appreciate everybody's efforts because it takes everyone to pull off what we do – especially the conference – I appreciate that.

## **7. Chairman's Comments;**

Chairman Chris Holmes said, "Thanks to everyone that here again. And, thanks to all of the conference people for getting it set up and done. Running through everything has been absolutely seamless for us and it makes everybody's job a lot easier. There are many people to thank and we will try and thank them tonight at the banquet. But, I am glad everyone is here and hope you are enjoying the conference."

## **8. Committee Reports;**

### **A. Ethics (Don Dubuc):**

No ethics violations, concerning the membership, were reported.

### **B. Internal Awards (Rex Caffey):**

Rex Caffey reported that for EIC there were 110 entries received for 2009. Generally LOWA has one category that they wind up funding each year, but in 2009 there was two. But, considering the economic conditions it was felt that this was good. The ED mentioned that SEOPA funded several of there own. A press release would be sent out to all membership of the winners following the banquet. Mr. Caffey mentioned in adding up the awards over the last five years LOWA has awarded \$30,000 in winnings and this is a good recruitment tool. And, that these winnings went straight to the members.

Mr. Caffey mentioned that 2009 would be his last year as Chairmen of the EIC committee as he announce at a previous board meeting. Mr. Caffey graciously offered his expertise and assistance with graphics and video presentation of the awards next year, he would be happy to help them next year and be a mentor for them. Mr. Caffey said, the ideal person who would consider doing EIC would be one, where the network and connection with LOWA would be a benefit to them, such as it was with his position as a fishing community specialist for his department. Mr. Caffey estimated the work as being as much as 17 to 18 full days

of work with all of the things that have to be done for EIC. One of the benefits a new Chairman would receive is the excellent organizational work that Mr. Caffey accomplished during his tenure. Essentially, all forms and processes have been developed for the position and the work would be more seamless going forward.

Two possible candidates' names were brought up and suggested to contact them to see if an interest was there.

#### C. Conservation Awards (Bob Dennie):

Mr. Dennie was not present at the meeting to give a report. The President (Lyle Johnson) stated though Mr. Dennie would be absent, LOWA is awarding the Van Pelt Award this year.

#### D. Fish Records (Bill Ford):

Though the Chairman of this committee was not present, Committee member Don Dubuc reported, "We have the Fish of The Year" presentation being made this evening. We also had a request from the LDWF that they would like to get closer with our organization with regard to fish records. What we are looking at is having Bill Ford (Fish Record Chairman), on a monthly basis come up with a report that basically listing all of the records that have been accepted and approved and provide the details (who, what, and where) and send them the report. It will be on the agenda of the commission meeting report, which means in there press releases that go out, we'll be getting monthly coverage. It'll be a great for our relationship with the LDWF to do that. It shouldn't be difficult, because as he gets them each month there aren't that many. The fish committee will make this process happen per rules and by laws for the committee. Glen Thomas is stepping down from the Fish Records Committee. So, with that in mind, we could use a couple of extra people. The bylaws say the committee chair selects the committee member; therefore, perhaps what we need to do is ask if anyone is interested in volunteering and get those names to Bill Ford and say here's the choices, who do you want to serve on the committee? So, get that list and get it to me and I'll get it to Bill Ford."

Discussions centered around the stamp that LOWA has on the Fish Records and the importance of them to the organization and the importance of this opportunity to present a report at the LDWF commission.

#### E. Nominations (Rusty Tardo):

2009 is not an election year; therefore, nothing was reported with respect to nominations.

F. Craft Improvement (Mike Lane):

Thanked the LDWF for their presentations at the conference and Gerald Gaspard from PURE FISHING for doing a great job as well as all of those attending. The craft improvement chairman asked if anyone had any suggestions for next year to please contact him and let him know.

G. Membership Committee (Deb Burst):

Burst reported the joining of two new members and completion of the full membership audit cycle; auditing 1/3 of the members annually and will continue the process going forward.

H. Youth Journalism (Gordon Hutchinson):

“The turnout for this years YJC contest wasn’t good as in years past, mainly because of budget constraints with the Advocate who usually turn out 12 to 14 ads for the program annually. They ran two this year, where in years past they had an unlimited budget, where they ran a lot. You were looking at perhaps 9 to 10 thousand dollars worth of ads, because of cut backs, were stopped. The bottom line is we didn’t have many entries, even though we extended the deadline to try and get more entries. But, we had a decent contest with 60 or 70 entries total. It was down from 200 or 300 entries we had in the past, but when considering the promotion provided at that time it really made the difference.”

“Ten of the twelve winners will show up tonight, so that is a positive. I ask that you make sure you go up to these young people and welcome them.”

Discussions following the Committee Chairman’s report centered around consideration and emphasis for getting the word out in 2010 through other media or educational methods. Additionally, it was discussed to adjust the date for the contest deadline to coincide with the final weeks of the school year, to enhance the possibility of student participation.

**Old Business;**

1.) Attendance Survey. Mr. Joe Macaluso reported that a survey was sent out to the members requesting there thoughts on the annual conference. “After reading through the comments and surveys returned, there was nothing in there that may indicate why

we dropped from 40 plus people attending the conference to attendance in the 20s. There was no consensus as to why the numbers fell – not even time of the year – although that trend is showing up a little bit. If you saw the survey and John Flores and I talked about it, it's pretty comprehensive in the range of what you tried to dodge or not dodge; or what you wanted to include or didn't like. It seems like everything that we do, everybody likes; it just may be that the time of the year might be something we're going to have to look at. That's about it. Nothing in the survey other than some of the people said that they wish we could include some of the fishing part back in it. But, some of those same folks also said, it was getting too expensive. So, you can't have it both ways."

Discussions: Gordon Hutchinson mentioned though the trip cost may not be expensive, when it's moved back to Thursday morning it's an additional hotel night, having to come in on Wednesday to do it – indicating that it's an \$80 to \$100 night to pay. Mr. Hutchinson suggested that the fishing trip be incorporated into the Friday schedule like it formerly was and it will draw people back to the conference. Mr. Macaluso also suggested what we do with the schedule is perhaps what needs to be changed and the need to look at it. He suggested activities outside and earlier; seminars in the afternoon inside; and events in the evenings. Mr. Chris Holmes pointed out that last years annual conference discussions indicated no one wanted to fit the annual general membership meeting into a Sunday schedule. Additionally, the full schedule of shooting, fishing, seminars and the rest is difficult in a two day format and at one time shooting wasn't included. Fitting in the general membership meeting is part of what's difficult. Balance of Discussions dealt with changing of the schedule, agenda, and time of year; the impact of EIC banquet attendance; expectations; and activities. Mr. Macaluso also stated the need to make the conference more attractive to spouses in the future, as a consideration and effort to increase attendance.

Lyle Johnson (President) stated the conference will be moved back to August as voted by the board. But, an effort will be made to adjust the schedule and events in future board meetings to better suit the needs of the members for upcoming meetings. The balance of the discussions, were tabled for future board meeting discussions in order to go on with meeting business.

2.) The website was discussed and presented as up and running, but continues to be a work in progress. Committee members are able to up date their respective information. All members were encouraged to use and get the word out of the LOWA website.

### **New Business:**

1.) Mr. Andy Crawford brought up to the general membership that he disagreed with last years Board and General Membership's decision to change the bylaws of LOWA to reflect separate criteria for membership in LOWA that differs from that of EIC.

Discussions centered on the time spent during the 2008 annual full board and general membership meetings to change the bylaws and rules that currently reflect EIC criteria. Mr. Crawford was not in attendance at the 2008 meeting but his input suggested the two tier membership criteria was not in the best interest of LOWA as a national organization and should be open to people that live out of state if they are LOWA members. Additionally, the organizations professionalism is respected and it would be in the benefit of LOWA to advance the contest eligibility beyond our borders. It would also benefit the location of the conference such as Lake Charles, where the conference is held. Other input – from Chris Holmes – pointed out the extensive discussions that went into the new residency criteria for EIC, the subsequent approval by all committees and general membership, plus changes in the bylaws. After additional debate:

Mr. Don Dubuc made a **motion** that the LOWA Constitutional Bylaws be changed to reflect membership inclusion in LOWA to require the same Louisiana residency requirements of EIC. A **second** of this motion was made by Gordon Hutchinson and **agreed on by a majority of the membership** present to move forward with the change. The rules will be voted upon at next year's general membership following board approval during the upcoming year.

2.) Mr. Macaluso asked for the floor to make a statement that, the LDWF depends mainly on self funding and implored every member to write and use their media outlets to push the legislature to fund the LDWF as it has passed unanimously the past two years in the legislature to dedicate funds.

3.) Lyle Johnson reported that Mr. Dave Moreland agreed to work with CCA to develop criteria for rules that would match LOWA standards for a "Youth Angler of the Year Award."

### **Meeting adjourned.**

A **motion** was made by Gary Rispone to adjourn the meeting; **seconded** by Lyle Johnson; **all were in favor.**

