

No word yet on future of McCarty's Ferry

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER – More than a year after it was shut down by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, McCarty's Ferry boat landing and riverfront park remains closed to the public, much to the consternation of local residents who want the facility reopened.

Located in the Ararat community just off CR 23, the landing was for years one of the county's most-used boat-launching areas, as well as a favorite spot for picnics.

However, even though county officials have been in off-again, on-again

contact with Corps officials, nothing has been decided as to if, or when, the park will ever reopen.

"It appears that, from my research, the property is still owned by the U.S. Government, and there is no clause in the deed that allows it to go back to the county or to the original property owner if it ever ceases to be used for a public boat landing," attorney Lee McPhearson reported at the Feb. 12th meeting of the Choctaw County Commission. "It is currently being assessed to make sure that they haven't deeded it away." McPhearson said he would have a more detailed report for the March 5th meeting.

Commissioner Henry Lovette asked the board if anyone had knowledge of a Corps representative making a statement that they would give the property to the county if the Commission wanted to take it over.

"Does anyone remember that?" he asked.

Commissioner Dandy Brown said he recalled several meetings with the Corps, but he understood that it would be a joint project with the county and federal agency cooperating to maintain the park.

"We forwarded some information last year by (U.S.) Senator Richard Shelby asking the Corps to keep it open

but we have not received anything back yet," Commissioner C.D. "Budd" Ruffin said.

"At one time there was some type of agreement, because we took equipment from Scott Paper Company and went down and worked that landing," Dixon said. "The Corps was there because I helped to work it."

Ararat resident Mark Gibson, who has been one of the most outspoken voices calling for the park to be reopened and properly maintained, was at the meeting Monday, and said he sees no reason why it should take so long to get a response from the Corps.

Sessions announced Fire Grant workshops

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL) announced this week that the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security will hold workshops in eight Alabama locations for firefighting personnel interested in applying for federal grants. Workshops will be held in February and March in several cities around the state.

The workshops will provide information on the Assistance to Firefighters

Grant Program, which assists local fire departments to purchase firefighting equipment, fund firefighter health and safety programs, enhance emergency medical services programs, and conduct fire education and prevention programs throughout the United States.

According to DHS, the workshops will explain the competitive grant application process and provide helpful tips

for applicants.

"These workshops will provide valuable guidance for grant applicants, and I urge fire service personnel to attend," said Sessions.

Some of the workshops will be held as follows:

■ Selma on Wednesday, Feb. 14th, from 1-3 p.m., at 105 West 1st Street (St. James Hotel);

■ Saraland on Thursday, Feb. 15th from 1-3 p.m. at 1200 Water Avenue (City Hall); and,

■ Birmingham on March 7th from 9-11 a.m. at 3011 Sparkman Drive (Fire Administrative Office).

For a complete list of cities/dates, and more information, readers may visit www.firegrantsupport.com.

Obituaries

Willie Prince Curtis

BUTLER – Funeral services for Willie Prince Curtis were held Saturday, December 30, 2006 at St. Mary United Methodist Church in Butler with Rev. Joseph Mason officiating. Interment was in the St. Mary Cemetery.



Curtis, 92, died Dec. 24th. He was a veteran of the U.S. Army and served in World War II.

Survivors include three children Willie (Linda) Curtis, Jr. of Detroit, MI, James (wife, Berline) Curtis of Putnam, Bonnie Gaines of Butler; one brother Charlie Smith, of Mobile; two brothers-in-law, four

sisters-in-law, seven grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and other relatives and friends.

Pallbearers were family members and friends. Hayden and Butler Funeral Home in Lisman was in charge of the arrangements.

Sadie Evelyn Stewart

YORK – Funeral services for Sadie Evelyn Stewart, 84, will be held at the Episcopal Cemetery on Tuesday, February 13, 2007 at 2 p.m. Interment will be in the Episcopal Cemetery.



Ms. Stewart died Feb. 12 at Riley Memorial Hospital in Meridian, MS. She was a retired nurse for the U.S. Army

and Sumter Nursing Home. Survivors include a friend, Jessie Myrick of York; her caregiver, Sylvia Dawson; and several nieces and nephews.

Bumpers Funeral Home in Butler was in charge of the arrangements.

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Airport

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who is on what board or when their terms expire.

"We've got so many authorities in that are half-functional or non-functional, and it would be good for the Commission to look at all of them to see if action needs to be taken," May said. "Some can't even meet because their board is almost inactive."

The judge also recommended that the next "authority" that comes before the Commission for appointment be studied from every angle before a decision is made.

"We need to thoroughly understand it, and if we don't want to have anything more to do with it, then we need to make that clear," he said. "In the past, the county may have tried to rid itself of entities like the airport and others, but as it turns out, it does not lessen the

headaches for the commission. Before we ever vote on another authority, or before we transfer anything that Choctaw County owns, I wouldn't be opposed to holding a public hearing."

Most of the various board appointments were done with good intentions, he said.

"But I'm not going to sit here and not ask questions, because I intend to understand it thoroughly,"

the judge continued. "We are in a financial bind and a lot of that stems from various authority agreements that the county was not fully aware of, and frankly, in my opinion, the county was misled on. There's nobody in this room right now that could tell you who is on every board that this county commission set up. Parks, landfill, medical clinic board, you name it. Six months from now, everybody is going to know whose on those boards."

Roads

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meeting, was made by Commissioners Dandy Brown and C.D. "Budd" Ruffin and passed unanimously. However, the minutes reflect that only the Linder Road was included in that motion.

(ED. NOTE: The Choctaw Sun was at both of those August, 2006 meetings. Our notes show, and this newspaper

reported, that all three roads were discussed and a vote taken to ban commercial truck traffic on all three at the Aug. 14th session.)

To clarify the action, Commissioners Ruffin and Lovette on Monday made a motion to prohibit commercial through-truck traffic on all three of the roads effective immediately.

Signs noting the ban will be put up as soon as possible.

Last summer, the board said its vote did not include trucks that have to make deliveries to addresses on those roads, or log trucks that are involved in timber-cutting operations on property adjacent to the roads.

Commissioner Brown initially brought up the matter of the Linder Road at the Aug. 7th meeting. The next week, former Engineer Jason Sturdivant recommended that the two other roads be

added to the ban.

The heavy truck traffic is damaging the roads and the narrow width of the highways makes it dangerous for oncoming traffic to meet a commercial truck, especially in a curve or on a hill, commissioners said.

It was agreed at the Aug. 14th, 2006 meeting that all three roads would be posted with "No Commercial Traffic" signs and the ban enforced by law enforcement officials. That decision, for some unknown reason, was not recorded in the minutes.

Time

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The Secretary of Energy is authorized to conduct the special study and to report the impact

of the change to Congress. As part of the Act, Congress retained the right to revert DST back to the 2005 time schedule once the study has been completed.

Now, however, officials with various com-

puter software packages, internet services, credit card companies, banking firms, airlines, and other businesses that operate largely with computers, electronic forms of communication and record keeping databases are concerned that the revamped time-change may cause a number of problems.

Some of the possible pitfalls could range from minor irritations on smaller computer networks to major shutdowns of large systems.

According to reports, if banks fail to make the necessary adjustments in their software, electronic bank drafts or direct deposits could be debited or credited at the wrong time. Another problem could be with cell phone users and those whose computer systems that automatically and regularly update their clocks by logging onto networks that provide the accurate time. Officials said that computers running Windows XP, SP2, and Apple's OS-X (System 10) should be OK as long as the user has downloaded regular system updates from the software companies. Users of older operating systems may need to manually adjust the clocks on their computers once the March 11 date arrives.

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