

SDAFS RESERVOIR COMMITTEE  
**Meeting Minutes**  
2026 Spring Meeting  
March 5, 2026 – 9:00 am to 2:00 pm  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**Action Items** and **To-Do** List:

- 1) Approve the fiscal report
- 2) Request 25% of this year's SDAFS check from the *John "Jack" Dequine* estate to be donated to the scholarship endowment. **Completed and check deposited shortly after the meeting.**
- 3) Contact the TVA to seek approval for moving the \$10,000 earmarked for microplastic research to the scholarship endowment fund.

**Attendees:**

Sean Kinney, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (*Chair*; Rep) – In-person  
Jeremy Risley, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (*Secretary-Treasurer*; Rep) – In-person  
Casey Joubert, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (Rep) – In-person  
Shane Bush, Missouri Department of Conservation (Rep) – In-person  
Cliff Sagar, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (Rep) – In-person  
John Hammonds, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (Rep) – In-person  
Emily Watling, Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources – In-person  
Maddy Ruble, Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources – In-person  
Spencer Phillips, Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources – In-person  
Nick Simpson, Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources – In-person  
Vic DiCenzo, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency – In-person  
Emily Freeman, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries – In-person  
Tyler Ham, Missouri Department of Conservation – In-person  
Seth Mycko, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission – In-person  
Ken Cunningham, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation – In-person  
Austin Emery, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation – In-person  
Blake Thornton, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – In-person  
Tom Miles, Tennessee Tech University – In-person  
Dan Shoup, Oklahoma State University – Virtual

**Introduction – Sean Kinney**

Reservoir Committee (RC) Chair Sean Kinney called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and welcomed the attendees. Jeremy Risley distributed the agenda (see page 19), the sign-in sheet (see page 20), and the financial report. However, it was noted that no quorum was present for the meeting.

**Financial Report – Jeremy Risley**

Secretary-Treasurer Jeremy Risley provided a brief update on the current finances of the RC (see Page 21-22). **As of January 2025, the beginning balance was \$27,404.57.** Transfers between accounts included \$1,500 to cover various expenses. Withdrawals from the account

consisted of a \$1,000 Jenkins scholarship awarded to Bobby Cope during the 2025 spring meeting, \$200 paid to North Carolina AFS for Bobby's registration, and a \$500 donation to AFS for the 2025 Black Bass Symposium. Additionally, we received a \$5,000 scholarship donation from the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame, which we greatly appreciated. Additionally, there was a deduction of \$228.48 due to account fees and an increase of \$1,832.25 due to changes in mutual fund value. **Consequently, the RC's account balance at the end of December 2025 was \$32,308.34. After accounting for the earmarked TVA grant, the remaining balance was \$22,308.34.**

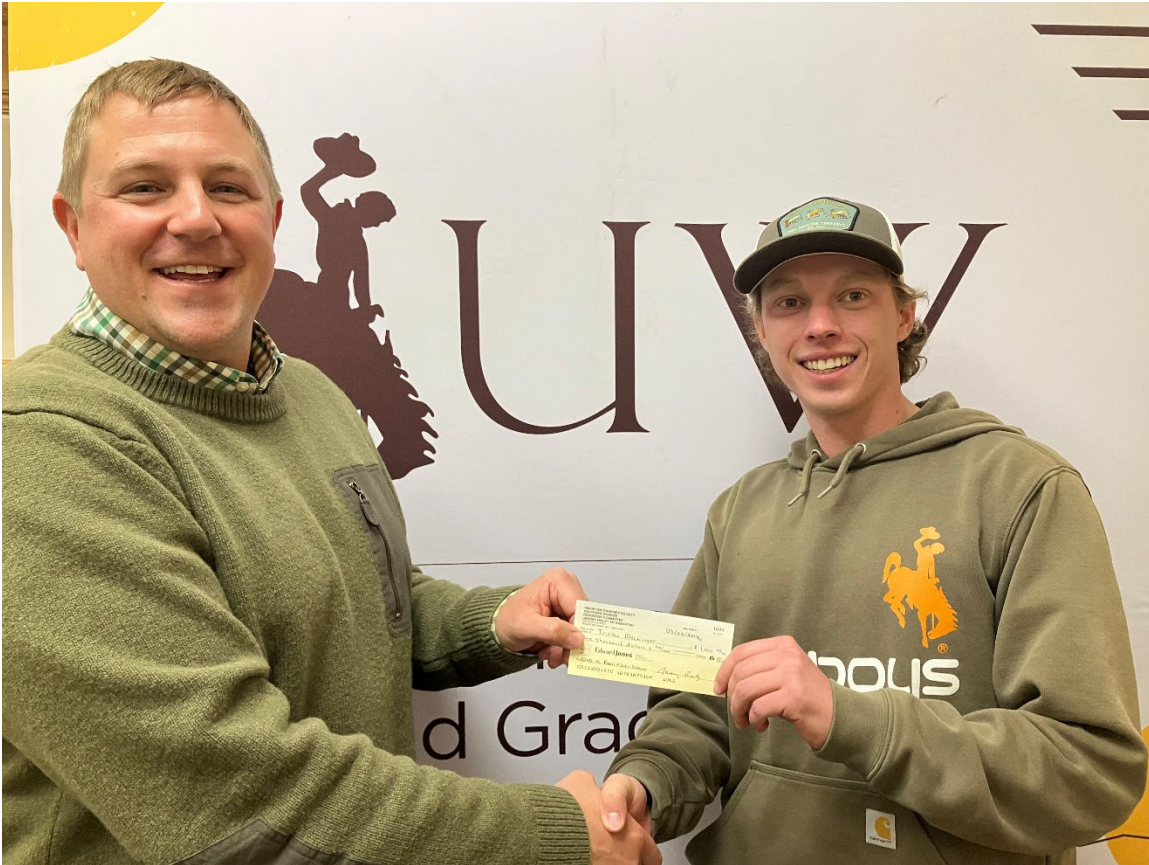
In addition, the Committee established a scholarship endowment fund for the Robert M. Jenkins Scholarship, aiming to support the scholarship through the endowment's interest. In January 2026, the endowment was created with an initial amount of \$10,000. Of this amount, \$5,000 was contributed from the Reservoir Committee's account, while the remaining \$5,000 came from the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame donation.

The Committee could not approve the budget due to a lack of quorum.

#### **2026 Jenkins Scholarship – Maddy Ruble on Jeremy Shiflet behalf**

This was the second year it was advertised nationwide. This year, the Committee received 16 applications from 11 different universities. Of these applicants, 13 came from the SDAFS states. **The 2026 Robert M. Jenkins Memorial Reservoir Research Scholarship winner was Tristan Blechinger from University of Wyoming. Tristan's research title:** Quantifying the forage ecology for two introduced apex predators in Wyoming reservoirs. Tristan gave a presentation to the Committee via Zoom. **Tristan's research statement:** My research directly addresses gaps in knowledge regarding the role of introduced apex predators in structuring reservoir food webs. While my two study species, Lake Trout and Walleye, are both prevalent and often highly sought after, they often come with unintended food web consequences. Side effects like low stocking returns, reductions in native fish densities, or altered size structures of other sport fish populations commonly occur at some point following the introduction of one of these two species. To understand the role that Walleye and Lake Trout play in these dynamics, I am quantifying the foraging behavior of these species using stable isotopes and diet analysis. Classifying predator populations as generalists or specialists at both the population and individual level allows for an in-depth analysis of how each unique population is utilizing the resource base accessible to them. Understanding specific patterns of resource use allows managers to adopt population-specific strategies, maximizing returns while maintaining the typically desired predator populations. Foraging behavior results can also then be compared across systems to identify patterns and drivers of foraging behavior as additional food webs are added. This not only will provide a useful piece of the complex reservoir management puzzle but also provide valuable support for ecological theory. Although this study is taking place in Wyoming, the results are relevant to any reservoir that is currently home to either Lake Trout or Walleye or that is at risk of invasion by either species. Lake Trout and Walleye are widespread across much of the U.S. and are expected to continue to spread outside of their current ranges through both intentional and unintentional introductions. Understanding how food webs might respond to one of

these two species invading a waterbody allows for important preemptive management to occur, balancing multispecies management for maintaining desirable fisheries.



Dr. William Fetzer (left; Assistant Professor at University of Wyoming) presented Tristan Blechinger (right) with a \$1,000 scholarship check for the 2026 Robert M. Jenkins Memorial Reservoir Research Scholarship.

**Website/Social Media – Maddy Ruble on Jeremy Shiflet behalf**

There will be no discussion on this item. However, the Committee is always looking for volunteers to help manage its Facebook account. If you have any content you would like to share on the Committee's Facebook page, please send it to Sean or Jeremy S.

**Discussion on Endowment Funding – Sean Kinney**

The Committee has spent several years discussing establishing an endowment to fund the scholarship. As noted in the financial report, an endowment account was set up in January 2026, with \$5,000 contributed from the Reservoir Committee's account and an additional \$5,000 donated by the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame. Sean suggested that more funding from the RC's account should be transferred to the endowment account; however, no action was taken on this suggestion.

Additionally, Sean pointed out that the Committee has not yet utilized the \$10,000 from the TVA earmarked for microplastic research, as funding for this research has not been secured. He

noted that there appears to be little interest in continuing this type of microplastic research on fish, water, and soil at this time. Sean mentioned that the agreement with the TVA stipulates that at least one of their reservoirs must be sampled for microplastics. Therefore, the Committee would need to identify a reservoir to sample and find a university to process the samples. Sean suggested that the Committee seek approval to transfer the \$10,000 from the TVA to the scholarship endowment fund, as returning that funding to TVA would be difficult.

The Committee discussed the type of account used for the endowment funds. Sean and Jeremy R. noted that the Committee is utilizing Edward Jones and its financial advisors for both the endowment account and the main RC account. Sean mentioned that the goal for the endowment account is to reach \$40,000, allowing the Committee to fund the annual scholarship (\$1,000 scholarship and \$500 travel stipend) solely through interest.

#### **Microplastic Research Update and Request for Funding – Sean Kinney**

Sean mentioned that he has not received any funding requests related to microplastics research. If any committee members are looking to coordinate on microplastic research, please email Sean, as he was unable to find any interest from universities to complete the research. There were no further discussions on this item.

#### **Forward Facing Sonar Issues and Discussions – Sean Kinney**

Sean mentioned that this is an ongoing issue that all states will eventually need to address. The discussion began when Spencer asked whether any legislation had been introduced to regulate forward-facing sonar (live sonar). Sean expressed concern about crappie, noting that anglers are now able to catch much larger crappie than previously believed, both by anglers and biologists. Regarding bass, he noted the issue of catch-and-release mortality. He also heard from anglers that bass appear to be reacting to the sounds produced by live sonar. Sean believes that measures will eventually be taken to protect fish populations, but at this point, he is unsure of what those measures might entail. Maddie mentioned their concern about the impacts of live sonar use on smaller reservoirs (500 acres or less) and anglers catching larger fish than staff are collecting in their samples. Cliff asked whether they suspected that anglers were harvesting any of the larger fish. Maddie responded that she did not believe this was happening. She also mentioned that it was encouraging to hear about the presence of larger fish in the reservoirs. Cliff questioned whether the Enforcement staff would want to enforce technology-related regulations. Nick pointed out that there are two sides to the live sonar discussion from an angler's perspective. One side wants to completely ban live sonar use due to the perception that it harms fisheries. On the other hand, some anglers enjoy using it, believe it enhances their skills, and have it installed on their boats. Additionally, Nick noted the age gap among users: younger anglers are generally more willing to accept and use the technology. In contrast, older anglers tend to be more reluctant to adopt new technology. Sean mentioned that Major League Fishing has adjusted its rules regarding the use of technology during tournaments; for instance, anglers may be allowed to use it on one day but not the next. Jeremy R. noted that, in some of their events, an angler can use the technology during one of the three quarters each day.

Sean mentioned that Mark Rodgers has planned live sonar research in Kentucky. John noted that they are inquiring about the use of live sonar during creel surveys in Tennessee. Sean added that live sonar is also being utilized in Louisiana. Cliff and Jeremy R. indicated that Oklahoma and Arkansas are doing the same. Additionally, Jeremy R. highlighted that Arkansas has partnered with Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University to study the release mortality of crappie caught using live sonar. He further mentioned that, from a bass perspective, Arkansas is not concerned about the impacts of live sonar from a harvesting standpoint. However, during the fall BASS Nation state tournament on Bull Shoals Lake, it was evident that anglers were not providing adequate fish care, particularly in terms of flogging bass caught in deep water using live sonar. He believed that many anglers are now fishing in deeper water due to this technology and are unaware of how to address barotrauma. He suggested that delayed mortality, resulting from anglers not flogging fish caught with live sonar, could be a much bigger concern than the harvest of bass. Sean mentioned that he has observed instances on Toledo Bend where tournament staff will flog every fish, whether they need it or not.

Sean questioned how states could impose limits on live sonar technology. Cliff suggested that instead of restricting technology, states should consider adjusting bag limits for Paddlefish. Sean raised the issue of Paddlefish, noting that anglers are now targeting them year-round by snagging with the aid of live sonar. Cliff expressed concerns about Paddlefish in Oklahoma, specifically regarding the catching of these fish during the summer months, which represents a shift from their historically spring-focused fishery. John mentioned that Tennessee has observed an increase in the catch of Paddlefish due to the use of live sonar. Shane pointed out that Paddlefish exploitation on Table Rock Lake increased from 8% to 23%, attributing this rise to live sonar usage. He also noted that guides are taking multiple trips each day during the snagging season because they can catch Paddlefish more quickly. Additionally, people are coming to this fishery to harvest Paddlefish for caviar, meaning they are targeting the largest and oldest Paddlefish. Shane mentioned it may be necessary to adjust Paddlefish regulations to account for the use of live sonar. There was a brief discussion about Paddlefish and the black market harvest of caviar.

### **Christmas Tree Use as Artificial Structures – Jeremy Risley**

Jeremy R. reported that Arkansas's Fisheries Administration raised concerns about the chemicals (herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides) used on Christmas trees and their potential impact on aquatic invertebrates and fish when the trees are placed in lakes. Vic mentioned that the Agency has received several inquiries from anglers and local communities, expressing concerns about the chemicals used on Christmas trees and the implications of placing them in water. While researching this issue, staff discovered that Michigan has already banned the use of Christmas trees for this reason. Our Agency was curious if other agencies have taken similar actions and whether this is a topic worth discussing. Was Michigan's ban primarily due to these environmental concerns? Jeremy R. mentioned he has received replies from five states, and here is a brief summary of those responses: State agencies consider the use of recycled Christmas trees as fish habitat to be a negligible risk. They cited the large dilution capacity of reservoirs and the short half-life of farming chemicals as key reasons. Although they acknowledged a lack of formal research on this topic, they believed that any remaining

pesticides or fungicides would likely become inactive after months of exposure to the elements before the trees are submerged. Ultimately, these agencies prioritized larger environmental threats, such as marine fuel leaks and agricultural runoff, particularly as the popularity of using Christmas trees for habitat projects continues to decline.

#### **SDAFS EXCOM Update – Jessica Baumann**

Jessica provided an update to the Committee on SDAFS's operations. The past year has been challenging for the Division, and Jessica emphasized that it is a good time to reassess its operational methods. They are focusing on aligning roles and responsibilities. Her goal is to improve communication between the Executive Committee, technical committees, and state chapters. To achieve this, they have taken several steps. They sent out a form for leadership changes to identify gaps in committee representation, and then they will contact state fish chiefs to work to identify and fill leadership roles. Also, they developed a Google Form for the briefing book and are adjusting the deadline based on the meeting date.

#### **Florida Bass Genetic Testing and Stocking – Sean Kinney**

Tyler initiated the discussion by referencing the email he sent to the Committee. To summarize, he is seeking recommendations for laboratories specializing in black bass genetics, specifically for distinguishing between Florida Bass and Largemouth Bass and identifying hybrids. They initially considered the Southeast Conservation Genetics Lab, but they are uncertain about its current capacity due to recent leadership changes. Tyler would appreciate any insights regarding sample costs and experiences from similar projects. Any recommendations for state, university, or private labs would be greatly appreciated, along with information about sample costs or lessons learned from comparable projects.

Additionally, their Director's office has requested a position statement on Florida bass stockings to address potential inquiries from lawmakers and stakeholders. They were looking for the staff's perspective on this issue and the reasoning behind it. Shane, Tyler, and others are expected to finalize that position statement soon. Tyler also expressed gratitude for the information that Kentucky has provided on this subject.

#### **Crappie Regulations, Mortality, and Length Restrictions – Sean Kinney**

Sean provided some background to start the discussion. Several years ago, they were essentially required to adopt new crappie regulations for Lake D'Arbonne. Historically, the regulations allowed a creel limit of 50 crappie with no minimum length requirement. However, this limit was reduced to a creel limit of 25 fish, with only seven allowed to exceed 12 inches in length. He mentioned that the City of D'Arbonne has a sign proclaiming, "Home of the three-pound crappie," but biologists have never sampled a three-pound crappie from the lake. While anglers using live sonar are catching a few large crappie over three pounds, they are facing increasing pressure from their legislature and anglers to implement minimum length limit regulations for other bodies of water. He also noted that biologists in Texas are under pressure to make crappie regulations even more stringent for Lake Fork, which currently has a 25-fish limit with a 10-inch minimum length requirement. Given the estimated mortality rates in many reservoir crappie populations, Sean wanted to gather the Committee's thoughts on effective

regulations that could positively impact the fishery, especially as the public is pushing for regulations that may not be scientifically sound.

Maddie asked how many people keep fish that are over eight inches long. Sean responded that anglers in Louisiana rarely release any legally caught fish. He also noted that water quality is a significant factor in southern Louisiana, which can lead to fish kills. This is one of the reasons he opposes a minimum length limit on crappie. Maddie mentioned that the anglers in their area have requested a 10-inch minimum length limit, and their modeling indicated that this would reduce the number of fish harvested by one per angler. There was a brief discussion about Toledo Bend and the different regulations for crappie in Louisiana and Texas. After population assessments, Texas decided to remove the 10-inch minimum length limit on its side of the reservoir.

Sean asked whether Tennessee was under pressure to adopt more restrictive crappie regulations. John mentioned that they have a Friends of Reservoir chapter that is pushing for a 12-inch minimum length limit. He added that they are dealing with a lot of misinformation regarding crappie regulations. Cliff stated that they had been experiencing angler pressures in Oklahoma for several years. This was one of the reasons they partnered with Arkansas and Oklahoma State University to counter misinformation being spread on social media about live sonar and crappie harvest. Sean noted that a guide on Toledo Bend is using social media to encourage all guides on that reservoir to voluntarily reduce their boat limit from 25 fish per person to 15, thinking they are contributing to the perceived notion of overharvest of crappie. John and Cliff agreed that most crappie anglers are not reaching their daily limit of crappie. Sean mentioned that while conducting roving creels on Toledo Bend, he observed guides on party barges during late winter and early spring, harvesting crappie for everyone on the boat, but this is lost in a whole-year creel study because it is such a short window of time. Cassey mentioned that there are now six different crappie regulations in North Carolina.

Sean expressed his uncertainty about the best way to address this issue. He highlighted that efforts have been made to hold public meetings to inform anglers about minimum and maximum length limits, creel limits, etc. However, he noted that many attendees struggle to understand the data collected by staff, the statistics provided, or the decision-making process involved. Sean suggested that states should consider developing position papers to address anglers' concerns about regulations, management actions, stockings, etc. Casey encouraged states to work with influencers within their own states whom anglers trust to distribute information on fish management.

If any committee members have information they would like to share with the group about this issue, please pass it along to Sean, and he will distribute it to the rest of the committee.

## State and Member Reports – State Representatives

**Contact the State Representatives for more detailed information on the topics provided.**

### **North Carolina – Casey Joubert (In-person report; written notes provided from Casey below)**

#### Striped Bass/Hybrid Striped Bass

- Stocking Striped Bass in 12 reservoirs and Hybrid Striped Bass in 6 reservoirs
- Lake Farmer diet study on Hybrid Striped Bass.
- SB/HSB Management Plan for Reservoirs, awaiting final approval.
  - Identified management goals, hatchery limitations and needs, lake habitat availability, and future research needs
- Fishing and Natural Mortality Estimates using a High-Reward Tag Return Method
  - Hybrid Striped Bass, Lake Norman
  - Project completed in November 2020, used high-reward floy tags
  - 1,462 fish tagged. 64% of fish were recaptured. 68% harvested.
  - Highest fishing mortality in Spring and Winter
  - Approximately 41-48% total mortality annually



- Report:

#### Black Bass

- F1 Stocking of Largemouth Bass: Norman, Jordan, and Gaston
  - Started tournament sampling at Lake Norman in Spring 2025, ongoing.
  - Pit-tagging all Largemouth at tournaments.
  - Stocking in ~June, 4.5 fish/acre
  - Genetic results are slow to come in so stocking will occur for several more years than initially planned.
- Black Bass Management Plan currently being revised.
- Baseline state-wide black bass genetics survey completed.
- Funding NCSU study on Alabama Bass catch efficiency at Moss Lake.
- Alabama Bass have been found in 2 additional NC reservoirs: Lake Mackintosh (Alamance County) and Salem Lake (Forsyth County).
- The Lake Mackintosh collection means that every major River Basin within the western 80% of the state of NC contains ALB at some level. Only smaller coastal plain rivers remain unaffected.
- Lake James Smallmouth Bass (SMB) continue to show increasing levels of introgressive hybridization with Alabama Bass (ALB). Alabama Bass were first detected in Lake James during 2016.
- Currently, less than 15% of SMB collected in Lake James are pure fish ( $\geq 95\%$  probabilities). The numbers of pure SMB have decreased by 77% since 2018.

- Biologists will electrofish Lake James in April 2026 and take fin clips of all non-LMB to assess introgressive hybridization trends.
- Alabama Bass now account for 39.2% of the black bass species composition in Lake Rhodhiss since their first detection in 2016. Prior to 2016, Lake Rhodhiss was a sole Largemouth Bass fishery. EF in April 2026 to evaluate.
- Routine electrofishing at many reservoirs including High Rock, Falls, Harris, Mountain Island, Tillery, and many others. Contact for reports.

### Walleye

- New project starting at Lake Gaston. Tracking seasonal movement and determining spawning areas. Acoustic telemetry.
- A newly established Walleye stocking allocation protocol has been utilized to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's management program based on the successful response observed in the Lake James/Catawba River population.
- More Walleyes are now being stocked and evaluated within several western NC reservoirs given the recent production and management success.

### Habitat Work

- New NCWRC native aquatic plant greenhouse is nearing the end of the initial construction phase. This facility will help staff begin growing additional plants for at least 11 reservoirs throughout the state.

### ***Oklahoma – Cliff Sager (In-person report for Cliff Sager)***

- Habitat program is utilizing reef balls now. They have the molds and produce the reef balls in-house. They are utilizing them in large-scale habitat projects around the state. They have an upsale program that lets anglers donate money towards the habitat work.
- They recently completed a creel survey on Lake Texoma, which is known for its excellent Blue Catfish fishery. The survey was conducted over multiple years and included questions about catfish anglers' harvest and fishing effort. Additionally, through a partnership with TPWD, they incorporated a passive gear survey, which was just completed as a pilot study, to gather more information about anglers who use that type of gear.
- Their bass regulations, which were changed a few years ago to mirror Florida's, have been working well, as has their tournament reporting program.
- They want to improve communication with tournament directors, including providing guidance on handling bass and fizzing them, etc. They will be working with Gene Gilliland of BASS to develop short, informative videos featuring professional anglers to convey these messages. The anglers will be provided with scripts in the hope that other anglers will be more willing to listen to them than to biologists.

## Tennessee – John Hammonds (*In-person report; written notes provided from John below*)

### Region 1

- Changed regulations on Black Bass in Pickwick Reservoir due to inability to differentiate species – this is caused by hybridization from Alabama Bass
- Continued evaluation of Walleye stocking in Kentucky Reservoir headwaters – little return in sampling with experimental gill nets and a few short fish have been caught by anglers
- Received a Friends of Reservoirs grant through Beyond the Pond and Bass Pro Shops \$58k for establishing and evaluating 3 fish cities by using Mossback structures, including spawning habitat, artificial trees, sanctuary habitat, shallow and deep root wads, etc. – building these structures will be a partnership with UT Martin Wildlife Society
- Routine annual habitat enhancement on Kentucky Reservoir with Mossback structures and custom structures built in house with donated materials with expansions to Pickwick and Barkley Reservoirs
- Invasive Carp exploitation study on Kentucky and Barkley Reservoirs – tagging 1,000 fish in each reservoir annually and paying rewards on tags called in by anglers and commercial fishermen
- Invasive Carp movement study working with TVA, USFWS, USGS, TTU, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, and Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks – tagging Silver Carp in Kentucky and Pickwick Reservoirs on the Tennessee River and tagging in Barkley and Cheatham Reservoirs on the Cumberland River, monitoring by running receivers a couple of times annually
- Invasive Carp movement study on Reelfoot Lake – tagging 50 Silver Carp annually and monitoring by running receivers a couple of time annually

### Region 2

- Completed the first year of a multi-year study evaluating stockings of hybrid striped bass in Percy Priest Reservoir using parentage analysis. Learned that fingerlings stocked at the same size one month apart (May and June) differed in size by 0.5” by November, faster growing fish were caught more with rod and reel over gill netting, the ratio of fish originating from one stocking to another perfectly matched the percent contribution of the two stockings which appears to demonstrate equal mixing in the reservoir, and that it’s possible to only use the female for parentage studies involving hybrid striped bass (the white bass males don’t need to be fin clipped).
- Habitat work continued at Percy Priest Reservoir with the placement of TN Towers in deeper water (20-26 ft)
- Saunders Ferry boat ramp at Old Hickory Reservoir received a new ramp, courtesy docks, and parking area as part of the Bill Dance Signature Lakes Program

- Work with TN BASS Nation High School and Youth group has continued for the year with the Habitat Enhancement programs for Tims Ford, Woods, and Normandy.
- Franklin County boat ramp at Woods Reservoir has received a new and much needed courtesy dock.
- Evaluating percentage of Florida alleles for genetics of LMB on Woods Reservoir. With results pending from TTU.

### Region 3

- TWRA and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), along with volunteers and businesses, teamed up to install over 400 habitat structures into Center Hill Reservoir. These variety of structures were placed at varying depths within the reservoir. All fish attractor buoys on Center Hill were also refurbished and sites updated on the TWRA website.
- A habitat project was completed on Chickamauga Reservoir sponsored by Major League Fishing (MLF) and Kubota of Chattanooga, which installed over 30 Mossback structures.
- Another habitat project was concluded on Watts Bar Reservoir that was sponsored by an AFCTO Grant. This project included approximately 30 Mossback structures placed at multiple sites (5 new unmarked fish attractor sites and 3 spawning habitat sites for juvenile fish protection).
- 600 musky (~12" in length) were stocked into Parksville Reservoir as part of an ongoing Musky stocking project there that was launched in 2017.
- ANS management within Region 3 conducted summer-long surveillance for invasive carp below all TN River tailwaters in Region 3. Thankfully none were realized and haven't been since these efforts were initiated by TWRA in the year 2020. However, confirmations of a few tilapia were confirmed on Chickamauga Reservoir, and it is uncertain of where they derived from or whether they will be able to overwinter there.
- We continue to monitor and realize the effects of Alabama Bass on our native black bass species, especially Smallmouth Bass. Through genetic surveys, we are witnessing Alabama Bass take down the Smallmouth Bass fishery in Watts Bar Reservoir, the second largest reservoir in the state of TN. Nearly half of all Smallmouth Bass collected in recent targeted surveys have Alabama Bass representation in the genetic analysis.
- Positive ID for black bass that have been hybridized is often hard to distinguish from pure species. Therefore, TWRA recently had to adjust black bass regulations in Region 3 TN reservoirs (Watts Bar, Chickamauga, and Nickajack reservoirs) to alleviate this ID confusion by Law enforcement, the angling public, and fisheries personnel. The new regulation lumps Spotted Bass, Alabama Bass, Smallmouth Bass, and black bass hybrids into one category regarding creel and length limits. Additionally, a "no live bass

removal” regulation was installed regarding Parksville Reservoir because of the potential for pure Alabama Bass being transported from there and illegally stocked elsewhere.

- Genetic studies are ongoing to evaluate any advancement geographically or in density of Alabama Bass within Tennessee’s waters. A new state record Alabama Bass (genetically confirmed) was recently caught from the Ocoee River that weighed 7 lbs., 3 oz. This record Alabama Bass is not a point for celebration, but it does illustrate the potential for these pure fish in non-native waters. Hybrids produced over time from Alabama Bass occurrence will result in an inferior product to our pure species with lower growth potential. TWRA continues their efforts to educate the public about the perils of Alabama Bass as well as relaying the fact that it is illegal to stock fish into public waters.
- A new Tennessee River Walleye stocking project was started on Watts Bar Reservoir in 2011. Since then, this successful program has expanded to Chickamauga and Nickajack reservoirs downstream. Walleye fingerlings are stocked by TWRA into these reservoirs annually. A walleye project was launched by University of TN and TWRA this year. Specifically, this is a telemetry study in which 150 Walleye were tagged and transmitters implanted. This study will evaluate spawning site fidelity, migrations, seasonal patterns, natural spawning success, habitat preference and seasonal refuges, among other findings. These efforts are led by Dr. Lisa Izzo and UT graduate student Brittnany Graham.
- We have been involved with several outreach events and career days across the region. This included a Cleveland State College class touring our Sugar Creek Hatchery to learn about warmwater hatchery production and to witness Walleye hatchery processes in action. In June, we had our annual Chuck Copeland Kid’s Fishing Event which had nearly 400 participants. We appreciate the continued support of the TN AFS with this meaningful event that introduces and promotes fisheries resources and recreation to youth and their families.

#### Region 4

- Black Bass Management Plan for the state, not just reservoirs
- Changed regulations on Black Bass in Tellico/Loudoun due to inability to differentiate species – this is caused by hybridization from Alabama Bass
- Still evaluating Musky stocking in Melton Hill Reservoir – have gotten a few returns and seems to be none or at least very limited natural reproduction – hope to capture enough tagged fish to get some valuable growth data
- Established a Friends of Reservoirs group on Douglas Reservoir to address putting fish habitat on private land – we only have a handful of permitted sites we can work on, and this group is getting landowners’ permission and assistance to brush private boat docks at residences and also to assist us with refurbishing existing sites
- Worked with TVA to evaluate Striped Bass stocking on Cherokee Reservoir – we have a year long creel survey asking anglers’ opinion of our stocking program – 100% of Morone anglers prefer us to continue stocking both STB and HYB – i.e. current stocking

rates – (even though the habitat conditions may not be ideal for STB, limiting the growth potential) – non Morone anglers results: current stocking = 8.8%, reduced stocking = 16.1%, no longer stock STB = 66.3%, no opinion = 8.8% - ALL anglers results: current stocking = 22.1%, reduced stocking = 13.8%, no longer stock STB = 56.6%, no opinion = 7.5%

- Working on a “habitat replacement” project with TVA to place fish habitat (large trees to simulate blowdowns) on Watauga Reservoir after debris was removed from Hurricane Helene in 2024 – they’ve given us a \$100k “grant” for the project for equipment and supplies – able to procure a stand on skid steer machine for moving large trees which will be beneficial for our reef ball program
- Working with VA to assess walleye stocking in Norris reservoir in which VADWR has identified “native” walleye in the headwater streams to Norris Reservoir in VA.
- Combined electrofishing with trap netting to assess crappie populations – results are in line with literature in that the larger crappie are collected with electrofishing and smaller are collected with trap nets.

#### ***Louisiana – Sean Kinney (In-person report)***

- They are developing a statewide black bass management plan through the statewide Black Bass Program Biologist.
- They are still developing a genetic program for Florida Bass in their hatchery system. They are conducting a selective breeding program to incorporate trophy-bass genetics in their broodstock.
- All their crappie sampling is done with lead-nets. They are basically two hoopnets with a lead between them. They are very effective for sampling crappie and Flathead Catfish, if crappie are present in the nets. They utilize a local vendor called Nets and More ([Click Here](#)).
- They are developing a habitat program to cultivate aquatic plants at one of the hatcheries by utilizing raceways that are not used in the summertime.
- For the third season, their Aquatic Control Section is now its own section rather than being under the districts. The section is subdivided into northern and southern areas. They are moving to hiring contractors to handle aquatic weed control rather than using the Agency technicians.
- Sean will step down as Chairman over the next year, and Jeremy R. will assume that position. If anyone wants to take over the secretary/treasurer position, please let Sean know.

#### ***Missouri – Shane Bush (In-person report and written notes provided from Tyler Ham below)***

- Flathead Catfish Population Assessments in Several of Missouri’s Large Reservoirs and Small Impoundments – FINAL REPORT AVAILABLE
  - Used low frequency electrofishing (15 Hz/30% duty cycle pulsed DC) to collect flathead catfish for population demographic and age and growth analysis.

- Age and growth from pectoral spines, 20" in 7-8 years, some living up to 25 years. Inform regulations to protect longer lived fish and improve size distribution.
- Blue Catfish Post-Regulation Evaluation at Lake of the Ozarks and Truman Lake
  - March 2014: 10 fish/day 20-34" protected slot with only 2 over 34" instituted Eight year interval for assessment; Jug line sampling began in 2022 and wrapped in 2025
  - Structures aged and final report due in 2026
- Understanding population demographics and angling impacts for Missouri's paddlefish fisheries
  - Using gillnets to capture and jaw band 1,000 paddlefish per reservoir (N=3) to update exploitation information from previous study in 2019 and characterize population demographics.
  - Conducting angler creel surveys during snagging season (March 15-April 30) to help determine harvest rates and impacts of FFS to the population.
  - First year of data suggests exploitation has increased from 8% in 2019 to 23% in 2025, with higher rates observed for larger fish.
  - Age and growth analysis from dentaries is ongoing. Preliminary analysis suggests slower growth for males.
  - Looking at potential regulation changes to protect larger females while still allowing harvest of smaller, slow growing males.
- Fish Habitat
  - Ongoing fish habitat work in all of our large reservoirs.
  - Truman Lake habitat project funded by Bass Pro Shops is ongoing (2025-2027). 130 of 400 brushpiles built to date.
  - Stockton Lake approved for Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership (RFHP) funding in 2026. 400 brushpiles planned.
- Bull Shoals Lake Walleye Assessment (MDC and AGFC) – REPORT AVAILABLE
  - Evaluated relative abundance, size structure, age and growth, mortality, and body condition.
  - Mean length age 3 is >18" mll. Annual mortality is ~28%.
  - Otolith microchemistry suggests 33% hatchery contribution.
  - AGFC summarized walleye movements throughout Bull Shoals Lake.
- Table Rock Lake Walleye Assessment
  - Partnering with Missouri State University (MSU) to evaluate Walleye population age structure, growth rates, contributions of natural recruitment versus hatchery augmentation via microchemistry, and fecundity of female broodstock in Table Rock Lake.
  - Use data to inform efficacy of current regulations (18" mll). Future exploitation project planned in 2027.
- Table Rock Lake Spotted Bass Regulation Change
  - Reducing spotted bass minimum length limit from 15" to 12".
  - Regulation goes into effect April 30, 2026.

- Habitat Evaluation Project
  - Inform planning, installation, and maintenance of reservoir habitat enhancement projects in Ozark reservoirs (Bull Shoals, Harry S. Truman, Table Rock and Stockton)
    - Define the current condition and physical longevity fish habitat structures in Ozark reservoirs.
    - Define seasonal and annual fish use of cedar and hardwood fish habitat structures in Ozark reservoirs.
    - Use this information to inform statewide installation and maintenance planning
  - Initial results: Modeling replacement probability shows that cedar brush piles reach a 50% replacement probability in ~12 yrs and hardwoods in ~10 yrs. Ultimately depends on what the lake manager wants to use as a replacement threshold.
- Updating Statewide Species Management Plans
  - Revise: Paddlefish, Trout, Muskellunge, Catfish, Walleye, Sturgeon Create: Smallmouth Bass & Rock Bass, Other Harvested Fishes Statewide Reservoir Sport Fish Management Plan
  - Templates for individual lake management plans and annual reports
  - Similar plan for small impoundments (<1,000ac)
- Fisheries Information Network System (FINS) Revision
  - FINS is the central repository for all fisheries data in MO. Originally built in-house in the mid-2000s, the system is beginning to become obsolete and buggy.
  - MDC is working with Real Time Research, a private company, to design a new database. Currently we are designing a desktop portal and an Android-based mobile app and will be rolling out for wider implementation soon. A public dashboard and age structure component are planned.
  - RTR will provide long-term tech support.
  - Database will generate graphs and tables for reporting.
- Lake Taneycomo Brown Trout & Grass Carp Acoustic Telemetry
  - Tested three different tagging methods for Vemco V13 tags in 11-13" fish, including internal, internal suture, and external tagging. Monitored fish in hatchery setting for 12 months to determine tag retention rates.
    - Grass carp shed 100% of internal tags, currently evaluating external tag retention.
    - Brown trout showed fair retention, but water quality issues complicated the study.
  - Using best tag retention method, stock approximately 225 tagged grass carp and brown trout into Lake Taneycomo and monitor movement, emigration, and habitat preferences for 3 years.
- Statewide Angler Creel Citizen Science Project with Angler's Atlas
  - Objective #1: Assess the feasibility of collecting self-reported statewide angler catch data for Paddlefish & Walleye by conducting pilot challenges and data

- collection through an existing angler data platform (MyCatch mobile app) and associated challenge framework.
  - Objective #2: Evaluate data quality, angler participation rates, and geographic coverage to determine suitability for long-term integration of this novel creel method into a statewide angler creel program.
  - One year pilot effort in 2027
    - Paddlefish: March 15-April 1, 2027
    - Walleye: April 1-June 30, 2027
- Ongoing Statewide Angler Satisfaction Survey
  - Previously MDC conducted a mail survey every 10 years to collect information and feedback from anglers.
    - Costly, labor intensive, and declining response rates for a snapshot in time.
  - We have transitioned to an online platform (Qualtrics) using a design that subsamples based on license sales each day and emails a survey link.
    - Survey went live in April 2025. Social scientists plan to start analyzing data after a full year of data collection. Plan for survey to continue indefinitely.
- Machine Learning Project
  - Collaboration with University of Missouri Computer Sciences Lab
  - Automated age classification based on hard structures (otoliths/spines) using a machine learning approach
  - Early results promising, but looking for more aged structure images (un-annotated)
  - If you have images you'd like to share, please reach out to Tyler. We are currently interested in really anything besides crappie.

***Arkansas – Jeremy Risley (In-person report)***

- The Legacy Lunker Program, our trophy bass donation and recognition initiative, officially launched on January 1. The Agency is accepting donations of angler-caught Largemouth Bass weighing ten pounds or more until March 31. As of the meeting, 12 trophy bass have been donated to the program. Last summer, the Agency hired a biologist to serve as the Legacy Lunker Coordinator to oversee the program. The Agency is appreciative of all the advice and time that TPWD gave to help develop this program.
- While growing a new program from the ground up, the Agency has been dealing with growing pains from a hatchery renovation at the facility where the Legacy Lunker Program is housed.
- The district in Northwest Arkansas has begun partnering with at least five local schools, especially elementary schools, to use their own nurseries and greenhouses to grow aquatic plants for use in aquatic restoration or establishment efforts. The kids even participate in the plantings at the local reservoirs.
- The Agency is partnering with Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University to study live sonar technology and the delayed mortality rates of crappie. Additionally, the Agency

has collaborated with Arkansas Tech University to develop protocols for using live sonar to assess fish habitat conditions and fish usage.

- The Agency is finalizing its fish sampling database with an out-of-agency source, which will be similar to those developed for Missouri and other states in the region.
- This summer, the Agency will go live with hydroacoustic sampling for shad in reservoirs, thanks to the partnership with Dr. Shoup and Oklahoma State University.

### ***Kentucky – Maddy Ruble (In-person report for Jeremy Shiflet)***

- They will continue working on their Thoroughbred Bass project, which aims to identify trophy markers for native Largemouth Bass, similar to the efforts made with Florida Bass by the Red Hills Hatchery. They have collected fin clips from Largemouth Bass weighing five pounds or more and will use the CAT Lab for the analysis. Although they have not yet received the results, they believe they have identified trophy markers in the sampled fish. They plan to use these results to test their broodstock to increase the production of trophy Largemouth Bass.
- One of their lakes in eastern Kentucky is being dredged by the state parks.
- The angler group that requested the F1 stocking stocked Threadfin Shad into the reservoir of concern. The past winter was pretty harsh, and it is believed they did not survive the winter.
- They had been using a heavy-duty staple gun to attach cinder blocks to trees for sinking, which seemed to be much more effective time-wise.
- They are starting to utilize ArcGIS Survey123 for their creel surveys and are creating standard questions to gather the most accurate data possible. Additionally, they are converting their old SAS files to R format. They are also interested in hearing which questions other states include in their creel surveys, particularly those related to angler attitudes.
- They are working to re-establish trees lost during drawdowns. They seem to have the best luck with trees from nurseries that are five feet tall. They have been planting them halfway through the drawdown.

### **Open Discussion –**

#### ***John “Jack” Dequine Estate – Sean Kinney***

Jack left a portion of his estate to the SDAFS. Initially, it was believed that his primary focus was on reservoir-centric biology; however, we later discovered that his true passion lay in supporting students and their professional development. Sean proposed that the Committee request 25% of this year's SDAFS check from the estate, or \$5,000, to be donated to the Committee's scholarship endowment. **He presented this proposal to the SDAFS, which approved the donation. Shortly after the meeting, the Committee deposited the \$5,000 check into the scholarship endowment.**

***Numbers to be harvested for Age and Growth – Seth Mycko***

Seth inquired with the Committee about the number of larger bass that should be harvested for age and growth samples. Sean responded that they collect ten fish for each inch group up to 15 inches, and then they collect all fish over 15 inches. There was a brief discussion, but no conclusion was reached.

**The RC meeting was concluded at 12:50 pm.**

**Minutes recorded and submitted by Jeremy Risley (*Secretary-Treasurer*).**



# 2026 SDAFS Reservoir Technical Committee Meeting

March 5, 2026 from 9:00 – 16:00 Central Time

[Zoom Link](#) for the Scholarship presentation ONLY @ 11 am

Meeting ID: 997 1421 7462 Passcode: 639896

1. Introduction – Sean Kinney
2. Financial report – Jeremy Risley
3. Jenkins Scholarship award – Maddy Ruble
4. Website – Maddy Ruble
5. SDAFS EXCOM
6. Presentation by 2026 scholarship winner at 1100 via zoom/ Tristan Blechinger
7. Discussion on Endowment Funding
8. Update on micro plastic research/plans/grant
9. Request/s for funding
10. Forward Facing Sonar issues and ongoing discussion
11. Christmas tree use as artificial structure: adding pollution to water?
12. Florida Bass genetic testing and stocking
13. Crappie regulations, mortality, and length restrictions
14. State Updates
15. Open Discussion
16. Adjourn

Name	Affiliation	Email	In-person/Virtual	State Rep.
Casey Joubert	North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission	<a href="mailto:casey.joubert@ncwildlife.org">casey.joubert@ncwildlife.org</a>	In-person	X
Cliff Sagar	Oklahoma Department of Wildlife	<a href="mailto:clif.sagar.odwc.ok.gov">clif.sagar.odwc.ok.gov</a>	In-person	X
Jeremy Risley	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	<a href="mailto:jeremy.risley@agfc.ar.gov">jeremy.risley@agfc.ar.gov</a>	In-person	X
John Hammonds	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency	<a href="mailto:john.hammonds@tn.gov">john.hammonds@tn.gov</a>	In-person	X
Sean Kinney	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries	<a href="mailto:skinney@wlf.la.gov">skinney@wlf.la.gov</a>	In-person	X
Shane Bush	Missouri Department of Conservation	<a href="mailto:shane.bush@mdc.mo.gov">shane.bush@mdc.mo.gov</a>	In-person	X
Austin Emery	Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation	<a href="mailto:austin.emery@odwc.ok.gov">austin.emery@odwc.ok.gov</a>	In-Person	
Blake Thornton	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	<a href="mailto:blake.thornton@tpwd.texas.gov">blake.thornton@tpwd.texas.gov</a>	In-person	
Emily Freeman	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries	<a href="mailto:efreeman@wlf.la.gov">efreeman@wlf.la.gov</a>	In-Person	
Emily Watling	Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources	<a href="mailto:emily.watling@ky.gov">emily.watling@ky.gov</a>	In-person	
Ken Cunningham	Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation	<a href="mailto:kenneth.cunningham@odwc.ok.gov">kenneth.cunningham@odwc.ok.gov</a>	In-person	
Maddy Ruble	Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources	<a href="mailto:madelyn.ruble@ky.gov">madelyn.ruble@ky.gov</a>	In-person	
Nick Simpson	Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources	<a href="mailto:nick.simpson@ky.gov">nick.simpson@ky.gov</a>	In-person	
Seth Mycko	North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission	<a href="mailto:seth.mycko@ncwildlife.org">seth.mycko@ncwildlife.org</a>	In-Person	
Spencer Phillips	Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources	<a href="mailto:spencer.phillips@ky.gov">spencer.phillips@ky.gov</a>	In-person	
Tom Miles	Tennessee Tech University	<a href="mailto:tpmiles42@tntech.edu">tpmiles42@tntech.edu</a>	In-person	
Tyler Ham	Missouri Department of Conservation	<a href="mailto:tyler.ham@mdc.mo.gov">tyler.ham@mdc.mo.gov</a>	In-person	
Vic DiCenzo	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency	<a href="mailto:vic.dicenzo@tn.gov">vic.dicenzo@tn.gov</a>	In-person	
Dan Shoup	Oklahoma State University	<a href="mailto:daniel.shoup@okstate.edu">daniel.shoup@okstate.edu</a>	Virtual	

SDAFS Reservoir Committee Edward Jones Mutual Fund Account Balance ending February 2026							
Prepared on 03/02/2026 by Jeremy Risley - Sec/Treasurer							
Date	Beginning Balance	Deposits	Withdrawals	Fees	Change in Value	Ending Balance	Comment
Jan-25	\$27,404.57	\$1,500.00	-\$1,500.00	-\$20.19	\$346.98	\$27,731.36	\$1,500 transferred between accounts (01/29_30)
Feb-25	\$27,731.36		-\$1,200.00	-\$19.91	-\$96.29	\$26,415.16	\$1,000 scholarship (Bobby Cope, 02/18; check #1043), \$200 to NC AFS for Bobby Cope's registration (02/19; check #1044)
Mar-24	\$26,415.16			-\$16.75	-\$484.95	\$25,913.46	
Apr-25	\$25,913.46			-\$17.99	\$41.81	\$25,937.28	
May-25	\$25,937.28			-\$16.90	\$568.96	\$26,489.34	
Jun-25	\$26,489.34			-\$18.26	\$538.91	\$27,009.99	
Jul-25	\$27,009.99		-\$500.00	-\$18.12	\$202.99	\$26,694.86	\$500 to 2025 Black Bass Symposium (AFS, 07/10; check #1045)
Aug-25	\$26,694.86			-\$19.16	\$199.84	\$26,875.54	
Sep-25	\$26,875.54			-\$19.41	\$248.87	\$27,105.00	
Oct-25	\$27,105.00			-\$19.15	\$349.41	\$27,435.26	
Nov-25	\$27,435.26	\$5,000.00		-\$19.97	\$9.80	\$32,425.09	\$5,0000 Bass Fishing Hall of Fame scholarship donation
Dec-25	\$32,425.09			-\$22.67	-\$94.08	\$32,308.34	
<b>Jan - Dec 2025</b>	\$27,404.57	\$6,500.00	-\$3,200.00	-\$228.48	\$1,832.25	\$32,308.34	2025 Assets deposited to acct / 2025 Assets withdrawn from acct
						\$4,903.77	17.89% increase
						\$22,308.34	Account balance without TVA Grant
Jan-26	\$32,308.34		-\$10,000.00	-\$25.92	\$28.16	\$22,310.58	\$10,000 transferred from this account to the new scholarship endowment account
Feb-26	\$22,310.58			-\$22.24	-\$24.31	\$22,264.03	

