

Minutes

**The Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas
Edwardian Inn
317 Biscoe Street
Helena-West Helena, Arkansas
April 26, 2010**

Commissioners Present

Garland Hayes
Eva Hollowell
Taralou Dunklin
Molly Houseworth Jackson
Phyllis Stinson
Carole Bulloch
Joe St. Columbia
Terri Austin McCullough

Commissioners Absent

Bobby Kennedy
James Banks

Technical Advisors/ Department Staff/Guests Present

Nancy Clark, Great River Road Division Director
Dr. Ruth Hawkins, Executive Director, Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association
Paula Miles, Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association
Larry Binz, *Helena Daily World*

Call to Order

Chairman Garland Hayes called the meeting to order, and thanked everyone for taking time from their busy schedules to participate in the meeting of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission.

Approval of the Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Terri McCullough moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Eva Hollowell seconded and the motion carried.

Per Diem Rates for 2010

Nancy Clark explained that Arkansas Statute sets the per diem rate for the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas at \$60.00 per meeting day. Ms. Clark said that a vote must be taken at the first meeting in the calendar year to re-establish the per diem rate for each commission for 2010, and to authorize travel reimbursement not to exceed the rates established for state employees. Ms. Clark said the Commission could vote to lower the rate of per diem, but not to raise it.

Terri McCullough moved to establish the per diem rate at \$60.00 per commission meeting, and to authorize the reimbursement of travel expenses for each board member performing official duties with the reimbursement not to exceed the rate established for state employees. Joe St. Columbia seconded and the motion carried.

Arkansas Great River Road Geocaching Project

The Arkansas portion of the Great River Road geocaching project now includes 25 caches which have been found a total of 859 times, up from 826 earlier in the month. Cachers log each of their finds daily, and many make comments about the cache spot being a nice place to visit and they plan to return in the future.

Schedule for “Endless Feast”

Nancy Clark reported that the California firm, The Film Garden, is producing a series of films which brings together local farmers and food artisans, food lovers and star chefs to explore the connection between the land and the food on our tables. In each episode, a chef celebrates the bounty of a particular region by creating tantalizing menus with local specialties. The dinners are staged in outdoor locations, from farm fields to vineyards to urban community gardens, celebrating food at its source. During the feast, guests hear about the origins of each dish, including how it is grown, raised or prepared. Last October, The Film Garden filmed an episode with local produce growers, Jill and Keith Forrester at Whitton Farms near Tyrone. Ms. Clark attended the filming and the celebration feast prepared by Chef Lisa Godsey of Godsey’s Grill in Jonesboro, with wine served from Chateau Aux Arc Winery near Altus. A banquet table for over 100 people was dressed with white table cloths and decorations from Whitton Farms flower gardens—it was an impressive site. The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) will be airing this segment on Arkansas PBS stations on ten dates with a total of twenty-eight showings. The first showing is May 22, 2010 on AETN.

Delta Byways Update

Dr. Ruth Hawkins reported that the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) had recently completed (April 12-17) a bicycle ride on Crowley’s Ridge Scenic Parkway which began in Cape Girardeau, Missouri and ended in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas. This was a six-day ride over 340 miles, and the riders had four great categories of things to say about the Delta: (1) they loved the hospitality and friendliness of the people, (2) they could not believe how clean the state parks were, (3) they were impressed by the scenic beauty, and (4) they liked being able to stop and learn about each community. Riders were from Mississippi, Minnesota, Tennessee and Arkansas.

Dr. Hawkins said that four individual grant proposals and one joint proposal have been submitted for National Scenic Byway funds: (1) to develop a biking trail along Crowley’s Ridge, (2) to continue Phase II of the West Memphis Gateway Project, (3) restoration of Pickens Baptist Church for an Arkansas Delta Gospel Institute in Dumas, (4) a feasibility study/engineering survey for paving the route through the St. Francis National Forest and part of the Mississippi River State Park, and (5) the joint application (Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana) for marketing the Civil War heritage sites in all three states.

Dr. Hawkins also said Mangan Holcomb agency will submit the marketing plan for Delta Byways for review later this month.

Economic Research Associates/Longwoods Report

Nancy Clark distributed copies of the executive summary from the Economic Research Associates/Longwoods Report which was commissioned by the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism to provide strategic recommendations on how to strengthen and expand the successful state tourism program.

Ocean Life and Horse Life Magazine Reports

Nancy Clark presented copies of the two magazines which have articles and great photos of Arkansas destinations including the Edwardian Inn. These articles are the result of media trip to Arkansas sponsored by Mississippi River Country for a Japanese travel writer and photographer. Dana and Lynn Chadwick, owners of the Edwardian Inn hosted them while they visited Helena-West Helena.

2010 Annual National Mississippi River Parkway Commission Meeting Report

Chairman Garland Hayes said one of the highlights of the meeting in Baton Rouge was the ten-state National Scenic Byway Designation/Celebration. Members of the ten-state Mississippi River Parkway Commission gathered under the centuries-old oak trees at Oak Alley Plantation to celebrate the designation of Louisiana's "Great River Road" as a National Scenic Byway. In October the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration added segments of the Great River road in Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky and Mississippi to its National Scenic Byway Program. The addition of the final states means the Great River Road is the longest National Scenic Byway in the country.

Chairman Garland Hayes reminded Commissioners to return their TR1s to Nancy Clark for processing.

A discussion ensued as to the next meeting date, and Commissioner Taralou Dunklin offered to host the meeting in Dumas in July.

The meeting adjourned. Commissioner Joe St. Columbia hosted a luncheon in the dining room at the Edwardian Inn.

Respectfully submitted:

Garland Hayes, Chairman
Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Nancy Clark, Director
Great River Road Division