

State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
DeGray Lake Resort State Park, Bismarck, Arkansas
July 17-18, 2014

Commissioners Present

LeRoy Dangeau, Chair
Bill Barnes
Jim Dailey
Barbara Harvel
Weston Lewey
Jim Shamburger
Mike Wilson

Mike Mills, Vice Chair
Jay Bunyard
John Gill
Bob Knight
Montine McNulty
Cindy Smith

Commissioners Absent

Steve Arrison
Jim Gaston
Billy Lindsey

Danny Ford
Shash Goyal
Ness Sechrest

Department Staff Present

Richard Davies, Executive Director
Greg Butts, Director, Arkansas State Parks
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director
Marla Crider, Deputy Tourism Director
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant
Cynthia Dunlap, Central Admin. Director
Jon Brown, Park Operations Manger
Randy Roberson, Planning & Development Manager, Parks Division
Joe Jacobs, Marketing & Revenue Manager, Parks Division
Joan Ellison, Public Information Officer, Parks Division
Kristine Puckett, Tourism Development Manager
Kat Robinson, Communications Manager
Tracy Morales, Group Travel Manager
Jennifer Neubauer, Research Project Analyst
Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist, Parks Division
Erik Holbrooks, Administrative Specialist, Tourism Division
Tom Stolarz, Region 1 Supervisor
Tony Perrin, Region 2 Supervisor
Marcel Hanzlik, Region 3 Supervisor
Shea Lewis, Region 4 Supervisor
Grady Spann, Region 5 Supervisor
Theresa Helliwell, Agency Controller
Linda Eisenhart, Administrative Analyst
Mike Wilson, Superintendent, DeGray Lake Resort State Park

Aristotle

Rhen Wilson

CJRW

Shelby Woods
Joy Phillips

Wayne Woods
Brian Kratkiewicz

Guests

Bill Ott, Director of Marketing and Communications at Eureka Springs Landmark Hotels
Clark Hall, Governor's Office
Brandon Robinson, Attorney General's Office
Michael Sindelar, Lodge Manager, DeGray Lake Resort State Park
Dan Honey, Deputy Commissioner, Insurance Department
Scott Simon, Nature Conservancy

Roll Call

Chair LeRoy Dangeau called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm on Thursday, July 17, 2014.
Gloria Robins called the roll.

Welcome

Superintendent Mike Wilson welcomed the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) to DeGray Lake Resort State Park, and invited everyone to take advantage of the many amenities that the resort has to offer.

Approval of Agenda

Jim Dailey moved to accept the Agenda as presented. Mike Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Mike Mills moved to accept the Minutes from the June meeting. Bob Knight seconded and the motion carried.

Financial Report

Cynthia Dunlap presented the year-to-date financial report for the period ended June 30, 2014. The expenditures were: Parks Division, \$78,914,386; including construction and grants; Tourism Division, \$16,802,067; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$633,785; Administration Division, \$3,277,788; and History Commission, \$1,804,825. Expenditures for the Department totaled \$101,432,851; a decrease of .4% over the same period FY13. The year-to-date operating revenue Parks Division totaled \$23,836,203 an increase of 6.0% over the same period FY13; 1/8% Cent Tax \$28,828,109 a decrease of 1.85% over the same period FY13; and 2% Tax \$13,090,958 an increase of 3.1% over the same period FY13.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve the Financial Report as presented. Cindy Smith seconded and the motion carried.

Certificate of Appreciation for Jan Luyet

Cynthia Dunlap asked the Commission for approval of a Certificate of Appreciation for Jan Luyet after 13 years of service in Accounts Payable.

Mike Mills moved to approve a Certificate of Appreciation be given to Jan Luyet. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.

Executive Directors Report

Richard Davies recognized Weston Lewey as the newest member of the State Park, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC). Weston Lewey stated she lives in Forrest City with her husband and daughter. She is the Publisher and owner of the Times-Herald. Lewey was previously a Commissioner for the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC).

Richard Davies announced to the Commission that the St. Francis County levee will soon have a trail for cyclist and pedestrians to use.

Richard Davis reported to the Commission that the Arkansas Entertainers Hall of Fame currently has a net loss of \$17,714.47. He asked that the Commission forgive the debt that is owed by the Hot Springs Advertising and Promotion Commission.

Bill Barnes moved to absolve the Hot Springs Convention Center \$4,870.41 owed to the Entertainers Hall of Fame from ticket sales to the 2013 induction ceremony. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Queen Wilhelmina Report

Representative Nate Bell of Mena stated to the Commission that his community is hurting due to the on-going closure of Queen Wilhelmina State Park Lodge. Bell stated that the lodge renovation is 2-3 months behind schedule again and that the mold remediation is still causing problems. Completion of the lodge was originally scheduled for July 2013. Bell stated that he believes Travelers Insurance is the cause of the delays. Bell informed the Commission that the community is losing an average of \$11 million a year due to the lodge not being open. Greg Butts reported there were several construction deficiencies Travelers inherited from the terminated contractor, Wade Abernathy Inc. A transformer concrete pad was poured too close to the electrical panel and Nabholz Construction (Travelers' contractor) had to move the panel over. Another problem that Butts reported was that the tyvek wrap was installed incorrectly, which voided the warranty on the windows; Travelers had to make it right. Butts also reported that Nabholz Construction had difficulty hiring a sub-contractor for the exterior siding work. Representative Nate Bell stated small business owners in the community rely on the lodge being open and are losing their life savings each day the opening is delayed. Representative Bell pleaded that the Commission direct Travelers Insurance and Nabholz Construction to get the project finished. Chair LeRoy Dangeau suggested that the department, Travelers Insurance, Nabholz Construction, Arkansas Insurance Department, Attorney General's Office and Representative Bell sit down for a face-to-face meeting to work this out. Bill Barnes and Jim Shamburger both agreed that someone from Travelers Insurance should be onsite daily. Richard Davies said a meeting would be set with the concerned parties.

**John Gill moved that the Arkansas Insurance Department question
Travelers Insurance authority to do business in the state of Arkansas. Jim
Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.**

TOURISM DIVISION

Cabela's

Joe David Rice presented a *Cabela's* catalog cover to the Commission that had a picture of the Buffalo River on it.

Rejuvenation Tour II

Joe David Rice reported that he and a small team of colleagues had just returned from the Rejuvenation Tour II. The tour totaled 1,500 miles between Van Buren, Springdale, Harrison, Mountain View, Blytheville, Helena-West Helena, Benton and Texarkana. Rice announced that around 75 people attended the meetings in total, but would like to see a much higher turnout for future meetings. Jim Shamburger agreed that the attendance numbers were poor and would like

to see a better connection being made state wide. Richard Davies stated that it comes down to personal recruiting.

Marla Crider informed the Commission of some possible changes to the 2016 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism. Crider stated that attendees would gather on Sunday with a Reception and Auction that evening, General Sessions would be held on Monday with the Henry Awards that evening, and conclude with lunch on Tuesday with a Key Note Speaker. Crider expressed interest in raising the fee to \$225 in 2016 and that others agree this would be a fair amount. Montine McNulty stated that she supports raising the cost.

Research and Information Services

Jennifer Neubauer presented the Research and Information Services report, stating that the section processed 15,898 requests for travel information during June 2014, an increase of 50.3% from June 2013. The calendar year 2014 inquiry total is 104,137, up 42% from 2013. The Section received 695 requests for retirement and relocation information in June 2014, up 67.5% from June 2013. Arkansas Welcome Centers received 98,989 visitors during June 2014, down 6.4% over last June. Welcome Center calendar year visitation is 368,203, down 5.4% from calendar year 2013.

Jennifer Neubauer presented pictures of a Corvette Club visiting Siloam Springs Welcome Center.

Communications

Kat Robinson announced to the Commission that the Communications section is working to schedule a 12-day span of research gathering and riding throughout the state with Carolos Ferrari, a journalist with Italian bicycle magazine *Ciclismo*. Robinson stated that this will be his first visit to Arkansas and he should be visiting in late October.

Robinson reported that the section is working diligently on compiling the 2015 Arkansas Tour Guide. The section is required to identify locations to feature, write synopsis pieces on each and every attraction in the state and work with CJRW to ensure that every listing is correct. Robinson stated that this is a 60,000 word book plus advertisements.

Tourism Development

Kristine Puckett reported that the Regional Tourists Association annual meeting will be held at the Arkansas Hospitality Association in Little Rock on Friday, August 22, 2014 between 10-3.

Puckett announced that the Welcome to Arkansas's Secret Shopping program has visited the following towns; Ash Flat, Benton, Bentonville, Bryant, Clarksville, De Queen, Eureka Springs, Hardy, Lake Village, Russellville, Siloam Springs, Spring River, Texarkana and West Memphis.

Puckett presented the 2015 *Living in Arkansas* magazine to the Commission; the cover will feature Nick & Julie Malinowski of Helena-West Helena.

Group Travel

Tracy Morales shared that the Group Travel Section processed 1682 leads for June 2014 YTD, as compared to 714 leads in June 2013 YTD.

Morales reported that Arkansas was featured in two publications, *Small Market Meetings* and *TAP into Dream Destinations*.

Morales mentioned that *USA Today* nominated the Pig Trail Scenic Byway as the 10 Best Reader's Choice for a motorcycling trip.

Morales informed the Commission that the South Central Motorcoach Association tradeshow will be August 17-20 in Shreveport, LA.

Internet-Related Items

Rhen Wilson presented Aristotle's internet-related items to the Commission. He reported that the total organic search accounted for 71% of all traffic to the site for the month of June. There were 351,040 total tablet/mobile device visits to both the main website and the mobile website in June 2014 vs. 289,369 visits in June 2013; with mobile traffic increasing 21% over June, 2012. June 2013 provided 1,471 reads of the new online Arkansas Motorcycling Guide with readers spending 5:58 minutes on the guide. There were 5,246 requests online for the printed Vacation Kit in June 2014 compared to 4,790 for June 2013. Wilson informed the Commission that Arkansas.com ranked #6 out of the 50 state tourism websites for June 2014. Lastly, Wilson reported that Aristotle is currently developing better e-mail marketing for the Department that will target individual interest.

Advertising Items

Joy Phillips and Brian Kratkiewicz presented CJRW's advertising items to the Commission. A revised Fall/Winter 14-15 campaign which will now include a larger hunting and outdoor presence was presented to the Commission. The new campaign will have a lower

percentage of video with a hunting and outdoor presence. An Outdoor Life video ad, Field and Stream ad, along with two hunting and watchable wildlife banner ads were presented to the Commission for approval. The revised plan will have an added value of \$46,531.

Several late summer value campaign radio ads were presented to the Commission; the first being one which pushes visitors to plan for that last summer vacation before school starts. The second spot features a summer fling, such as a romantic getaway. The third radio spot features a vacation without the kids. All radio spots promote the Deals and Coupons section on Arkansas.com.

Two videos entitled *Meet the Locals*, were presented to the Commission. Both videos feature Helena-West Helena; one with Nick & Julia Malinowski, the other Sonny Payne.

Jim Dailey moved to approve the revised campaign. Mike Mills seconded and the motion carried.

PARKS DIVISION

CY 2015 Fees & Rates Preliminary Recommendations

Greg Butts provided staff recommendations for the CY 2015 Fees and Rates for Arkansas State Parks recommending minor adjustments at various state park locations. The minor adjustments include: camping and rental facility options; pavilions and meeting rooms, cabins and lodge rooms; marina and boat rental fees; interpretive services; swimming miscellaneous equipment rental and golf fees. The overall increase is an estimated \$400,000 or approximately 2% modification to keep pace with inflation.

Butts noted that the July State Parks, Recreation and Travel (SPRTC) meeting is the second step of the process with the final approval requested at the August meeting. He reported that the legal notice has been published in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette with the public comment period commencing July 8 – August 7. The public meeting will be held at the SPRTC meeting on August 21, 11:00 am at the Bois d'arc Conference Center of the Ozark Folk Center, 1032 Park Avenue, Mountain View, AR to receive any public comments regarding the proposed fees and rates. Final approval will be requested at the August SPRTC meeting and upon approval will continue on to the Administrative Rules Committee in October for review. Butts requested preliminary approval for the CY 2015 Fees and Rates for Arkansas State Parks.

John Gill moved to approve the proposed recommendations for the CY 2015 Fees and Rates for Arkansas State Parks as presented. Mike Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

Property Acquisition Preliminary Approval

A. Pinnacle – Ranch Property North

Greg Butts introduced Scott Simon, Director of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), due to the TNC's interest in a proposed acquisition at Pinnacle Mountain State Park (PMSP). He noted that ASP and TNC has a history of successful partnerships in land acquisition projects.

Randy Roberson reported that at PMSP, a 247 acre tract along the Little Maumelle River and adjacent to the park's southeast boundary has been offered to Arkansas State Park (ASP) before being marketed to the public. Based on comparable large tract home sales and adjustments for acreage, the property was appraised in October 2013 for \$4.45 million. The SPRTC approved seeking ANCRC FY 2015 grant funding in the amount of \$1.5 million, however the project was not funded due to other ASP priorities. The owners are willing to sell the property for \$1 million. TNC has offered to purchase the property and finance the sale to ASP over a mutually agreed period of 3 to 5 years. Acquisition of this property would prevent residential development, includes an additional 3.59 miles of shoreline along the Little Maumelle River, will further the park's mission of preserving open space and riparian habitats in the state's largest metropolitan area and provide expanded recreation and environmental education opportunities for students and visitors alike.

Scott Simon advised that Greg Butts and he have been working with the owners of the property for 19 months. The owners are interested in the conservation and preservation of the land, therefore willing to donate \$3.5 million towards completing the sale. Simon stated that the City of Little Rock and Pulaski County are also interested in partnering in the project. Although they do not have acquisition funds available they have operational options to contribute. Simon explained that the partner process would use TNC to accomplish the acquisition. Landowners intend to sell the property by the end of the year. As a partner, TNC would acquire the property with ASP's interest and hold it. TNC would work with ASP to transfer portions of the property to ASP as it is paid for. Greg Butts stated that Metroplan's 1960's land use plan envisioned PMSP as "a green oasis amidst a sea of urban sprawl." And this is a great opportunity to help bring this long term vision into fruition. It is important to preserve open spaces for future generations and the Ranch Property North is an opportunity to help fulfill ASP's mission.

Mike Mills moved for preliminary approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process to acquire the 247 acre tract at Pinnacle Mountain State Park as follows: A part of the South ½ of Section 12, Township 2 North, Range 14 West; and a part of the Northwest ¼ of Section 13, Township 2 North, Range 14 West; and a part of the East ½ of the Southeast ¼ of Section 11, Township 2 North, Range 14 West; and a part of the Northeast ¼ of the Northeast ¼ of Section 14, Township 2 North, Range 14 West; all lying in Pulaski County, Arkansas, containing 247 acres more or less. Bill Barnes seconded the motion.

Discussion ensued regarding the acquisition of the 247 tract with some reservations to move forward without a development use plan for the property. Others stated it is a unique track of land and would be a great opportunity to preserve the property for future generations.

John Gill moved to amend the motion for preliminary approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process to acquire the 247 acre tract at Pinnacle Mountain State Park, with a condition of a preliminary use plan prepared by Arkansas State Parks staff before the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission vote on expending any money. Bob Knight seconded the amendment to the motion.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed amendment to the motion. Chair Dangeau called the amended motion for a vote and the amendment failed. Chair Dangeau called the original motion for preliminary approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process to acquire the 247 acre tract at Pinnacle Mountain State Park for a vote and it passed.

Greg Butts noted that the SPRTC should reach an agreement before the November SPRTC meeting so that the TNC can have a decision before the end of year.

B. Petit Jean - 5 acres of vacant land adjoining superintendent's residence

Randy Roberson reported a five acre tract adjacent to the superintendent residence at Petit Jean State Park is currently on the market for approximately \$40,000, pending appraisal. Acquisition of this parcel would provide a buffer, prevent residential development in close proximity to staff housing and preserve wildlife habitat. Roberson requested preliminary approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process to acquire property.

Bill Barnes moved to approve preliminary approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process to acquire the five acre tract located as Petit Jean State Parks as follows: The East ½ of the Southwest ¼ of the Northwest ¼ of the Southeast ¼ of Section 33, Township 6 North, Range 18 West, Conway County, Arkansas, containing 5 acres more or less. Mike Mills seconded and the motion carried.

Structure Removals

A. Historic Washington – store and ranch house

Randy Roberson reported that two recently acquired structures at Historic Washington State Park need to be removed as part of the park's plan to remove modern structures from the historic core of the town. Roberson requested approval to remove the former convenience store and the circa 1960's ranch style residence, as both modern structures detract from the historic atmosphere of the town.

B. Plantation Agriculture – garage

Randy Roberson requested approval to remove a former storage building that is no longer needed by the museum.

Mike Mills moved to approve based on the information presented; the commission finds the structures obsolete notwithstanding their insured values and approves the removal of the former convenience store (Building No. 38.84/AASIS No. 120007292) and the ranch style residence (Building No. 38.88/AASIS No. 120007377) from the Historic Washington State Park inventory and a former storage building (no assigned building number or AASIS number) from the inventory of Plantation Agriculture Museum. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Certificate of Appreciation for Sharon Neely

Greg Butts requested approval for a certificate of appreciation for Sharon Neely, Museum Registrar at Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources, with 25 years of outstanding service to Arkansas State Parks.

Bob Knight moved to approve a certificate of appreciation for Sharon Neely for 25 years of service with Arkansas State Parks. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.

Village Creek – PFK Golf Course Feasibility Study Update

Greg Butts provided an update on The Ridges Golf Course at Village Creek State Park (VCSP). He presented an updated study provided by PFK Consulting USA. Butts reported that the club house, cart barn and restrooms in compliance with the Natural State Golf Trail criteria have been completed and it is time to review the next step for the golf course. As the economy has changed, the plan for the golf course too, has changed. According to the PFK updated study presented to the SPRTC, a hotel is not being recommended at this time. Although a hotel is not recommended, some type of enhanced lodging or accommodations is needed to increase business and accommodate golfer's needs. Discussion followed with various options to enhance the accommodations at VCSP and making it desirable to golfers. Butts advised that the issue needs more consideration and suggested assigning the topic to the Parks Committee for further review.

Bob Knight moved to assign the topic of lodging options at Village Creek State Park to the Parks Committee for further consideration. Weston Lewey seconded and the motion carried.

NASPD Annual Information Exchange Report

Greg Butts presented a summary of the Annual Information Exchange (AIX) Report compiled by the National Association of State Park Directors. The summary shows how Arkansas ranks nationally with other state park systems in various categories for FY 2013 i.e. acreage, attendance, revenue, support groups and more. Park systems vary in the number and type of facilities and activities provided and therefore the report is an "apples and oranges" comparison among park systems; however the AIX Report does provide a good overview of each state park system, budget, facilities, salaries and general information. Butts noted that Arkansas's revenue per visitor is ranking higher proportionally than the inventory.

CIP Quarterly Report

Randy Roberson provided the Capital Improvements Progress Quarterly Report advising that \$50 million in projects are completed or underway.

Miscellaneous

Greg Butts reported that Little Rock Family published a nice article featuring Stephanie Buckley, wife of Superintendent Joe Buckley at Petit Jean State Park for an insightful view of "The Park Wife." He commented that an article featuring Enders Fault, the new mountain bike trail at Woolly Hollow State Park, is receiving good reviews and good media coverage, along with wonderful comments from trail users. Butts mentioned an article addressing the new interest in operating unmanned aerial vehicles or drones in public areas and parks. As the

National Park Service has taken steps to prohibit the use of drones in its parks, other agencies have held off establishing specific policies for the devices as yet. Butts stated there has been minimal drone usage within state parks to date. ASP does not currently have a policy regarding drone use but may need to create one in the near future.

Adjournment

The SPRTC meeting adjourned at 8:36 am on Friday, July 18, 2014, at DeGray Lake Resort State Park in Bismarck, AR.