

State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
Garvan Woodland Gardens, Hot Springs, Arkansas
February 19, 2015

Commissioners Present

Mike Mills, Chair	Mark Givens
Bill Barnes	Shash Goyal
Jay Bunyard	Montine McNulty
LeRoy Dangeau	Jim Shamburger
Danny Ford	Cindy Smith
John Gill	

Commissioners Absent

Jim Dailey	Ness Sechrest
Jim Gaston	Mike Wilson
Bob Knight	Randy Wolfingerbarger
Weston Lewey	

Department Staff Present

Richard Davies, Executive Director
Cynthia Dunlap, Director of Administration
Greg Butts, Director, Arkansas State Parks
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director
Ron Maxwell, Deputy Tourism Director
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant
Jon Brown, Park Operations Manger
Randy Roberson, Planning & Development Manager
Kelly Farrell, Administrator of Program Services
Joe Jacobs, Marketing & Revenue Manager
Joan Ellison, Public Information Coordinator
Leah DiPietro, Communications Manager
Tracey Morales, Group Travel Manager
Tiffany Knox, Welcome Center Administrator
Jennifer Neubauer, Research Project Analyst
Kristine Puckett, Tourism Development Manager
Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist, Parks Division
Erik Holbrook, Administrative Specialist, Tourism Division
Tom Stolarz, Region 1 Supervisor
Marcel Hanzlik, Region 3 Supervisor
Shea Lewis, Region 4 Supervisor
Richard Boyes, Superintendent, Lake Catherine State Park
Caleb Howell, Superintendent, Crater of Diamonds State Park
Mike Wilson, Superintendent, DeGray Lake Resort State Park
Mike Sindelar, Lodge Manager, DeGray Lake Resort State Park

Aristotle

Marla Johnson
Jennifer Pepper
Chris Stacik

Hallie Shoffner
Matt McClellan
Sarah Stacik

CJRW

Shelby Woods
Darin Gray
Brian Clark

Wayne Woods
Joy Phillips
Brandi Childress

Guests

Chrissy Egleston, Visit Hot Springs
Scott Simon, The Nature Conservancy
Perry Webb, Springdale Chamber of Commerce

Roll Call

Chair Mike Mills called the meeting to order at 8:30 am on Thursday, February 19, 2015. Gloria Robins called the roll.

Approval of the Agenda

Mike Mills requested approval of the agenda. Joe David Rice requested to add two items to the agenda:

- Proposed Rate Increase to Cranford, Johnson, Robinson, & Woods Account
- Proposed Roll Out Schedule for the Remainder of FY 2015

LeRoy Dangeau moved to approve the agenda as amended. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Jim Shamburger moved to approve the Minutes from the January meeting as presented. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.

Financial Report

Cynthia Dunlap presented the year-to-date financial report for the period ended January 31, 2015. The expenditures were: Parks Division, \$42,571,588; including construction and grants; Tourism Division, \$7,676,002; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$284,856; Administration

Division, \$1,864,705; and History Commission, \$1,115,576. Expenditures for the Department totaled \$53,512,727 a decrease of 9.5% over the same period FY14. The year-to-date operating revenue Parks Division totaled \$14,218,148 an increase of 8% over the same period FY14; 1/8% Cent Tax \$17,355,481 an increase of 2.48% over the same period FY14; and 2% Tax \$8,995,401 an increase of 7.5% over the same period FY14.

**Jay Bunyard moved to approve the Financial Report as presented.
Danny Ford seconded and the motion carried.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Legislative Session Update

Richard Davies reported that the Arkansas 90th General Assembly is in full swing and provided an overview of the legislative session and bills that are of interest to the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT).

Davies reported that ADPT's operating budget SB 209 passed through the Personnel Subcommittee of Joint Budget with approval for ADPT staffs and salaries as proposed and stated he was pleased with the result. An amendment in Special Languages proposed to take \$150,000 of the 2% Tourism Tax to create a line item for small festival expenses, advertising and grants. It would be managed through ADPT, rather than the regional tourism association, with details to be determined.

Act 17 will eliminate any future emeritus status for the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commissioners. Current emeritus commissioners will remain but there will not be any additional emeritus status in future. HB 1464 would reorganize the categories of the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC), generalizing a number of positions (i.e. hospitality/tourism) rather than specific number for each area (i.e. owner operators). Media positions would be combined. All congressional districts would be covered in the 15 positions. There would be two additional designations added to the SPRTC consisting of one Arts/Cultural position and one Conservation/Recreation position.

SB 403 would create an Arkansas Bikeways Commission to promote cycling and manage best practices, education, safety, etc. for cyclists. The commission would be comprised of 13 members. ADPT would manage the commission; however there is no funding proposed for the new commission.

HB 1229 would prevent any military dedicated monument from being relocated by any city, county or state agency. Relocating a monument would warrant a felony charge.

SB 382 would study restructuring various state agencies into 10 principal departments and the efficiency and cost savings of consolidating the agencies. ADPT would be placed in the Department of Interior, merging with the Department of Arkansas Heritage, Arkansas State Library and Arkansas Martin Luther King Commission. Within 30 days of being passed, the governor would appoint a provisional secretary for each to study perspective department and report back to the legislature by July 2016.

Montine McNulty reported that HB 1112 would affect festivals throughout Arkansas. Anything sold in Arkansas is subject to sales tax. Previously, festivals have not had to pay sales tax. The bill proposes tax to be charged on all items sold at festivals i.e. merchandise, admission, alcohol, etc, including non-profit entities. This would financially impact festivals of all sizes.

Richard Davies reported that staff is tracking approximately 180 bills that may affect ADPT directly or indirectly and the SPRTC need to be aware of the impact of the proposed bills. Discussion ensued regarding the proposed bills and ramifications if passed.

Miscellaneous

Richard Davies reported that ADPT is converting to an electronic expense reporting process. Expenses can be entered electronically for commissioners with verification of attendance. SPRTC expense information will be entered on your behalf, providing commissioners furnish a signature as certification of attendance for the meeting.

PARKS DIVISION

Public Meeting – 11:00 am

At 11:00 am Chair Mills invited public comments regarding PD 3155- Pet Policy for State Park Cabins and Lodges. There were no comments received at the public meeting or during the comment period.

Bill Barnes moved to approve Policy Directive 3155-Pet Policy for State Park Cabins and Lodges. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.

Mike Milles invited public comments regarding PD 1025- Arkansas State Parks License Fund. There were no comments received at the meeting. ASP received two comments from Arkansas Tech University professors during the comment period with questions/comments on the program. After reviewing comments, Greg Butts reported the following revisions would be made to PD 1025:

V. Internships -

- Revision will state **up to 600 target hours, but may be exceeded.**
- Revision will state interns may be enrolled in **fall or spring** courses.
- Revision will state work plans will be approved by supervisor, requesting park, superintendent, manager of park operations and **university or college designee.**
- Clarification will state that interns **will work on park management functions** not just replace extra help.
-

VI. Education Programs –

- State Park Field Trip Grants **will be subject to funding.**
- State Park Field Trip Grants **will be offered to K-12.**

General Questions –

- College or university staff will not be permitted to participate in scoring and ranking to avoid any biases.
- Statistical data of gender and race are requested so that data may be collected for demographics interested in the program and the industry. The information will be redacted from the applications for the selection committee.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve Policy Directive 1025-Arkansas State Parks License Plate Funding as amended. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.

Greg Butts stated he will copy the SPRTC on his written response to public comments. The next step in the process will be review by the Administrative Rules and Regulations Committee. They do not meet during legislative session with next meeting anticipated in May or June.

Spring TV & Radio Spots

Joan Ellison requested approval for proposed spring radio and TV spots to be aired in March, April and May in conjunction with the Arkansas Broadcaster's Association partnership.

Jay Bunyard moved to approve the spring radio and TV spots as presented:

Radio spot (60-second spots)

Radio Cut #1: "Arkansas State Parks Adventure and Accommodations"

Radio Cut #2: "Arkansas State Parks Website"

Radio Cut #3: "The Golf Courses of Arkansas State Parks"

TV Spots (30-second spots)

TV Cut #1: “Arkansas State Parks: Making Extreme Memories”

TV Cut #2: “Arkansas State Parks: Making New Memories”

Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Mount Nebo – Proposed Land Trade

Randy Roberson reported that Al and Lina Davidson live adjacent to Mount Nebo State Park. They have proposed a fair market land exchange with Arkansas State Parks (ASP). Their property is located in the Southwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 33, Township 7 North, Range 21 West, Yell County, Arkansas, containing 40 acres more or less. ASP owns the North half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 33, Township 7 North, Range 21 West, Yell County, Arkansas, containing 80 acres more or less. Arkansas Highway 155 cuts across both of these parcels in a general southwesterly direction leaving approximately 4.6 acres of the Davidson’s property north of the highway, while leaving approximately 2.9 acres of ASP’s property south of the highway.

The Davidsons would like to exchange these properties with ASP so that the ASP’s entire tract is north of the highway and their entire tract is south of the highway. A survey and fair market value appraisal would be conducted on each parcel to determine their exact acreage and fair market value.

Roberson requested approval of the A.C.A. 22-4-108 process, sale or trade of land. The governor would then approve. ASP would like to propose that properties are exchanged but reserve a restrictive easement on ASP’s former parcel that prevents development of structures and timber removal on the property. The staff recommends approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-108 process.

Danny Ford moved for preliminary approval for the A.C.A. 22-4-108 process to proceed with the land trade of 4.6 acres owned by Al and Lina Davidson with the 2.9 acres owned by Arkansas State Parks. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.

AHTD Trail Grant Request

Randy Roberson presented two resolutions to the SPRTC seeking support of ADPT working in cooperation with Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) for federal funds to build trail options. He stated ASP would like to apply for two grants, the Federal-Aid Transportation Alternative Funds and the Federal-Aid Recreational Trails Fund to fund trail projects at Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Cane Creek State Park, and Mount Magazine State Park. If awarded grants, AHTD would reimburse ADPT 80% of project amount.

Roberson requested SPRTC express their support by approving the resolutions, to be submitted with grant applications.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve two resolutions, to express full support from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism to submit grant applications seeking federal grants to build trails at Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Cane Creek State Park, and Mount Magazine State Park. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Withrow Springs – Structure Removals

Randy Roberson reported that Withrow Springs State Park has two structures that will be replaced this year. The fuel shed is a deteriorated, circa 1990, 168 square foot structure. The tractor shed is a 468 square foot structure built in 1980. Both structures will be replaced by a new equipment shed this year and Roberson requested removal of the two structures.

Cindy Smith moved to approve based on the information presented; the commission finds the structures obsolete notwithstanding their insured value and approves the removal of the fuel shed (Building No. 58.21 AASIS No. 120006557) and the tractor shed (Building No. 58.20 AASIS No. 120006556) from Withrow Springs State Parks inventory. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Pinnacle Mountain – Ranch North Woods Property Acquisition Update

Greg Butts reported that The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has completed the acquisition of the Ranch North Woods property adjacent to Pinnacle Mountain State Park. After further discussion, he advised there is another option for ADPT to consider and introduced Scott Simon with TNC.

Scott Simon recapped that ADPT had agreed to acquire the Ranch North Woods property from TNC if it was acquired. TNC acquired the Ranch North Woods property in December 2014 for \$1 million with a gracious donation of \$3.5 million bargain sale donation, which made the sale possible. Simon recalled a concern from the commission and staff regarding the amount of money required for the acquisition. The acquisition was approved by the SPRTC, as the addition was thought prudent to protect the view shed along with having property available for ASP hosted environmental and recreation programs.

Simon advised after discussions with TNC Board of Directors, stakeholders and neighbors, there was substantial interest in TNC retaining ownership of the property. As a result, TNC had decided to retain the property, manage it, and develop an agreement with ADPT to use the property for ASP hosted programs. TNC would work with neighbors to develop land and river access. TNC would develop a management plan to make it available for the public to enjoy and maintain a partnership with ASP. ASP would be able to use funds planned for acquisition for other purposes. Greg Butts stated this is a great deal for ASP. He remarked that ASP is in the “forever business” just at TNC is. However, if there were changes in the property in future, Butts requested that ADPT have first right of refusal if TNC were ever to sell the property. Simon replied that TNC would give serious consideration to the request.

John Gill moved to enter into a partnership with The Nature Conservancy in which they maintain ownership of the Ranch North Woods property and Arkansas State Parks has access to the property with park hosted programs. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried. John Gill requested a resolution of appreciation be forwarded from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission to express appreciation to The Nature Conservancy for the acquisition and stewardship of the Ranch North Woods property, along with the opportunity to work together in future.

In addition, ASP will request first right of refusal from TNC in the event they would desire to sell the property in the future.

Richard Davies commented that it is great to have Scott Simon and the support of TNC in Arkansas. Greg Butts recalled that ADPT partnered with TNC to acquire the Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area and Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, both great assets to ASP.

RESOLUTION

- WHEREAS, The Nature Conservancy and the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism share common missions, joint efforts and a long standing cooperative relationship in conservation and preservation of Arkansas’s outstanding natural resources; and
- WHEREAS, The Nature Conservancy and the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism collective efforts have resulted in many successful projects to include land acquisitions at Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area, Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, and Toltec Mounds Archeological state parks; and
- WHEREAS, The Nature Conservancy generously provides technical assistance and manpower in conducting prescribed burns at numerous state parks; and

WHEREAS, The Nature Conservancy reciprocates broad support and cooperation with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism in areas of conservation and land preservation issues throughout Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, The Nature Conservancy has acquired the Ranch North Woods property, adjacent to Pinnacle Mountain State Park, as a result of a generous bargain sale from the former land owners. In addition, The Nature Conservancy and the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism mutually agree to enter into a partnership in which The Nature Conservancy maintains ownership and management of the property and provides Arkansas State Parks access to the property for park educational and recreational programs; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission hereby congratulates The Nature Conservancy for its exemplary leadership role in the conservation, preservation and management of special places throughout Arkansas for hundreds of thousands of visitors, to include acquisition of the Ranch North Woods property; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission extends its appreciation to The Nature Conservancy for the past acquisitions, continued stewardship of Arkansas lands and the opportunity to work together in the future. This RESOLUTION was adopted by the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission on the 19th day of February 2015.

STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL
COMMISSION

/S/ Mike Mills, Chair

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND
TOURISM

/S/ Richard W. Davies

Hampson Museum Update

Greg Butts reported that an agreement on the lease with purchase option has been signed by Wilson City LLC and is awaiting signature from the Arkansas Building Authority, with consummation anticipated very soon. Wilson City LLC is eager to have a ground breaking ceremony and get construction underway. Butts stated date for ground breaking event will be set soon and will advise SPRTC once scheduled, possibly March. Architectural design meetings will be underway soon. Kelly Farrell and staff will work with an exhibit design consultant and Wilson City LLC to develop themes and messages for interpretation. Butts noted things are progressing.

Miscellaneous

Greg Butts noted there was a two carat diamond found recently at the Crater of Diamond State Parks. Caleb Howell, park superintendent of CDSP, remarked that visitation is picking up as the weather warms up and he is anticipating a busy spring break.

Greg Butts mentioned that Julie Lovett, interpreter at Bull Shoals-White River State Park, was recognized in Marvelous! magazine for her long standing contribution in interpretation and the park system. Congratulations to Julie.

Greg Butts reported that the renovation of the lodge at Queen Wilhelmina State Park is progressing. Randy Roberson advised that things are coming together with carpet and countertops going in and furnishings expected to arrive soon. Greg Butts suggested ASP may take partial substantial completion of the lodge wing in March and begin furnishing the rooms.

TOURISM DIVISION

Advertising Agency Contract

Joe David Rice informed the Commission of the proposed FY16 rates for CJRW, ADPT's Advertising Agency Contract. He announced that the last rate increase was several years ago, and that this would be a 10% increase over a three year span. Rice stated the rate was considerably less than other advertising agencies. (attached for the record)

Shash Goyal moved to approve the proposed FY16 rates as presented to the Commission. John Gill seconded and the motion carried.

Research & Information Services

Jennifer Neubauer presented the Research & Information Services report to the Commission. The Section processed 8,391 requests for travel information during January 2015, an increase of 55.8% from January 2014. The calendar year 2015 inquiry total is the same. The rise in inquiries is partially due to better reporting practices such as reporting Bing CPC, and more accurate track of literature requests out of the Little Rock Welcome Center.

There were 423 requests for retirement/relocation information in January, up 151.8% from January 2014. This is due to last winter's storm lowering request totals, and this year's mild winter for Arkansas compared to states North of Arkansas.

Neubauer announced that Welcome Center visitation was up 10.59% from January 2014 to January 2015.

Neubauer presented a video about workers using their paid vacation time. The video was titled "Project: Time Off" by the U.S. Travel Association.

Welcome Centers

Tiffany Knox shared with the Commission that Mountain Home Chamber of Commerce delivered a gift basket to all of the 14 Welcome Centers.

Knox stated that she assisted Group Travel in Memphis and Dallas with Bridal Shows. Knox shared a picture of a wedding display set up at the Corning Welcome Center.

Knox announced that The Natural State Gift Shop will be set up at the 2015 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism again this year with all new merchandise. Knox shared various pictures of the new inventory with the Commission.

Communications

Leah DiPietro announced that there have been updates to the online media room; "What's new for 2015" along with "Story Ideas" has been added.

DiPietro commented on the various social media pages that are promoting the 2015 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism; she stated the Facebook page has 738 likes.

DiPietro shared that Renee Blodgett, who was named #12 of professional bloggers by *Forbs* Magazine, of *We Blog the World* wrote a wonderful article about her travels thru Arkansas. Blodgett traveled thru Mount Ida, Hot Springs, Little Rock and West Memphis.

DiPietro shared that Arkansas is still getting great recognition from the November 2014 Geiger & Associates tour.

Tourism Development

Kristine Puckett presented the 2015 Spring/Summer Calendar of Events to the Commission; she announced that both the front and back cover feature World Championships.

Puckett announced that the Festival & Events Association held its annual conference on January 29-30 2015. Puckett shared the various winners with the Commission below:
Color Brochure – Bradley County Pink Tomato Festival, Warren
Newspaper/Tabloid – Daffodil Festival, Camden
Souvenir – Bradley County Pink Tomato Festival, Warren
T-Shirt/Sweatshirt – Hot Springs Blues Festival, Hot Springs

Poster – Ozark Mountain Music Festival, Eureka Springs
Event Photo – Stuart Pennington Running of the Tubs, Hot Springs
Event Website – MusicFest, El Dorado
Social Media Campaign – MusicFest, Eldorado
Best New Festival or Event – Hot Springs Craft Beer Festival, Hot Springs
Outstanding New Idea – Bradley County Pink Tomato Festival, Warren
Volunteer of the Year – David Hughes, Hot Springs
Event of the Year – First Ever 11th Annual World’s Shortest St. Patrick’s Day Parade, Hot Springs
Festival of the Year – MusicFest, El Dorado

Puckett announced that the new 2016 *Living in Arkansas* is in the works.

Group Travel

Tracy Morales shared that she worked the American Bus Association tradeshow in St. Louis January 10-13; she stated there was more visitation than in years past. Morales shared that the “I Dig Arkansas” map was a success and shared it with the Commission. Morales shared pictures of a 6X4 custom table, where guest could dig for diamonds; actual bags of dirt from the Crater of Diamonds State Park were brought to the tradeshow.

Morales announced that she worked four Bridal Shows; Oklahoma City, Dallas, Memphis & Bossier City. A fifth Bridal Show will take place in Branson in late February.

Morales also worked the Progressive International Motorcycle Shows in Dallas, Cleveland, and Chicago. Morales stated that over 4,500 motorcycle guides were distributed at these tradeshows.

Advertising Items

Brandi Childress presented the 2014-15 Fall/Winter Post Buy Analysis to the Commission as followed:

- Five markets purchased
- Overall average – 96%
- 1 market came in over 100%
- 1 market performed below the industry standard at 86% - Shreveport, LA

Childress presented the 2015 Spring/Summer Television Schedules to the Commission as followed:

Cable TV:

Run a total of 5 weeks, April 6 – May 24

Average reach 80.9% of adults 25-54
Average number of times seen/frequency: 4.7
Total budget: \$865,957

Broadcast TV:
Runs concurrently with Cable, April 6 – May 24
Average reach 54.4 % of adults 25-54
Average number of times seen/frequency: 8.4
Total budget: \$1,086,900

Hispanic TV:
Runs concurrently with Cable, April 6 – May 24
NW Arkansas, Central Arkansas, Dallas/Ft. Worth and new for 2015 – Houston
Total budget: \$57,600

Joy Phillips presented a Spring/Summer television spot which featured the “Shazam” app.

Two new Meet the Locals videos were presented to the Commission; Turpentine Creek, featuring Tanya Smith and Buffalo Outdoor Center, featuring Mike Mills.

Danny Ford moved to approve the 2015 Spring/Summer rollout media options. Cindy Smith seconded and the motion carried.

Montine McNulty moved to approve the Meet the Locals videos. Leroy Dangeau seconded and the motion carried.

Internet-Related Items

Marla Johnson updated the Commission on the status of the redesign of Arkansas.com. She stated this was the first full redesign of the website since 1998. Johnson shared photos of the website throughout the years. She gave the analogy that this is like building an entirely new building, not just a remodel of a current building. She stated there are 349 content pages to redesign, 99 brand new pages, 57 pages newly optimized for SEO, 5 microsites, 7,899 business listings, and 562 events. She shared that one of the main reasons the site is still not active is because there are 6,192 listings that do not have photos.

Johnson stated that for 2014, there were 6,112,279 visitor sessions, 1,302,918 sales leads with an average of 3,550 sales leads per day and an average of 108,557 sales leads per month. Johnson shared that 2014 was the best year yet for visitor sessions.

Johnson shared that Oklahoma was outspending Arkansas \$4 to \$1, is using Google+ and Pinterest better, and is doing monthly promotional and social campaigns.

Shash Goyal asked if the website would be ready by the 2015 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism, Johnson responded that it would be ready by then.

Nomination of the 2015 Vice Chairman

Jay Bunyard announced that the committee's recommendation to replace Barbara Harvel for Vice Chairman was Jim Dailey.

The SPRTC moved to approve Jim Dailey as Vice Chairman, and the motion carried.