

**State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission**  
**Days Inn, Pocahontas, AR**  
**October 16, 2014**

**Commissioners Present**

LeRoy Dangeau, Chair  
Mike Mills, Vice Chair  
Danny Ford  
Jim Gaston  
John Gill  
Shash Goyal

Barbara Harvel  
Weston Lewey  
Jim Shamburger  
Cindy Smith  
Mike Wilson

**Commissioners Absent**

Steve Arrison  
Bill Barnes  
Jay Bunyard  
Jim Dailey

Bob Knight  
Billy Lindsey  
Montine McNulty  
Ness Sechrest

**Department Staff Present**

Richard Davies, Executive Director  
Cynthia Dunlap, Director of Administration  
Greg Butts, Director, Arkansas State Parks  
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director  
Marla Crider, Deputy Tourism Director  
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant  
Jon Brown, Park Operations Manger  
Randy Roberson, Planning & Development Manager  
Joe Jacobs, Marketing & Revenue Manager  
Kelly Farrell, Program Service Administrator  
Tracy Morales, Group Travel Manager  
Jennifer Neubauer, Research Project Analyst  
Kristine Puckett, Tourism Development Manager  
Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist, Parks Division  
Tony Perrin, Region 2 Supervisor  
Marcel Hanzlik, Region 3 Supervisor  
Shea Lewis, Region 4 Supervisor  
Kim Williams, Travel Writer  
Barbara Harmon, Manager, Corning Welcome Center  
Kendra Harris, Park Superintendent, Davidsonville Historic State Park  
Anna Pfeifler, Park Interpreter, Davidsonville Historic State Park  
Gretchen Sacotnik, Park Superintendent, Crowley's Ridge State Park  
Kristyn Watts, Park Superintendent, Powhatan Historic State Park  
Robin Webb, Assistant Superintendent, Crowley's Ridge State Park

**Aristotle**

Marla Johnson  
Laura Kirk

Christopher Stasher  
Hallie Shoffner

**CJRW**

Wayne Woods  
Brian Clark

Darin Gray  
Joy Phillips

**Guests**

Bill Ott, Crescent & Basin Hotels, Eureka Springs  
Kimberly Torres, Little Rock CVB

**Roll Call**

Chair LeRoy Dangeau called the meeting to order at 8:30 am on Thursday, October 16.  
Gloria Robins called the roll.

**Welcome**

Chair LeRoy Dangeau welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked Davidsonville  
Historic State Park for a great dinner and wonderful evening of activities, most enjoyable.

**Approval of the Agenda**

**Jim Shamburger moved to approve the Agenda. Danny Ford  
seconded and the motion carried.**

**Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

**Shash Goyal moved to approve the Minutes from the September  
meeting. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.**

**Financial Report**

Cynthia Dunlap presented the year-to-date financial report for the period ended  
September 30, 2014. The expenditures were: Parks Division, \$18,262,038; including  
construction and grants; Tourism Division, \$2,972,472; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$115,596;  
Administration Division, \$753,932; and History Commission, \$435,714. Expenditures for the

Department totaled \$22,539,752 a decrease of 13.4% over the same period FY14. The year-to-date operating revenue Parks Division totaled \$8,127,343 an increase of 12.0% over the same period FY14; 1/8% Cent Tax \$7,440,137 a decrease of 1.43% over the same period FY14; and 2% Tax \$4,294,033 an increase of 7.3% over the same period FY14.

Cynthia Dunlap presented a report reflecting General Revenue growth compared to inflation (FY 2000 to FY 2014) which provided a good overview of the General Revenue received in comparison with inflation incurred over the past 14 years. The report reflects that inflation has grown on average 2.50 % and the department's General Revenue has averaged 1.24 % over the same time period. Commissioners requested the report (page 10 of Financial Report) emailed to the commission.

Cynthia Dunlap advised that the Sales Tax Division of the Department of Finance and Administration is researching the issue of Washington County's significant decrease in the 2% sales tax as reported last month. They will continue to research and information will be shared with the commission.

**Mike Mills moved to approve the Financial Report as presented.  
Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.**

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **Budget Hearing**

Richard Davies reported that Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT) management staff had attended the joint budget hearings the previous day. He reported that the ADPT budget request with executive recommendation (governor's approval) has been sent to the Personnel and Special Language Committees for review. Davies advised Arkansas State Parks (ASP) did receive approval for most reclassification of staff positions as requested.

Davies noted this would be a great opportunity for commissioners to discuss the biennium budget request with legislators. He noted that this budget hearing was for Governor Beebe's budget and approval by various legislative committees and there is a distinct possibility that the process may be repeated upon arrival of the new administration. In light of the report that compared General Revenue growth with inflation, discussion ensued if ADPT should be pro-active requesting additional funding in General Revenue or take heed to the governor's recommendation of not requesting additional funding at this time.

## **Miscellaneous**

Richard Davies advised on the permanent proposed closing of some Ouachita National Forest Campgrounds as previously mentioned by Bill Barnes. Representative Nate Bell has stated he is ready and willing to work with the US Forest Service, ADPT and the Arkansas Forestry Commission to facilitate a plan to allow for local management. Davies suggested to stay tuned for possible activity.

## **TOURISM DIVISION**

### **Conversion Study Comment**

Joe David Rice read a comment card from the conversion study survey. A tourist passing through Arkansas was fascinated by all Arkansas had to offer closer to home (Oklahoma) and that out of all the tourist information that she had requested, Arkansas was the best.

### **Ice Cream Trail**

Rice reported on an article of unusual culinary trails. A few of the trails include the 42 stops on the New Hampshire Ice Cream Trail, New Mexico's Breakfast Burrito Byway, and the upstate New York Finger Lakes Beer Trail. Culinary trails have become so popular that some areas boast more than one. The trails bring a little more foot traffic to their door, particularly if the businesses happened to be situated in an out-of-the way destination.

### **Magazines to Gauge Online Readers**

Rice reported the magazine industry's leading consumer trade group, the Association of Magazine Media, launched a new monthly audience-measurement tool—a dashboard that tracks consumption of magazine content across a range of categories. There are separate metrics for print and digital editions, the mobile Web and online video, for example, as well as a total audience reach calculation.

### **New York Times Plan to Eliminate 100 Jobs**

Rice reported the *New York Times* plans to eliminate 100 newsroom jobs, as well as a smaller number of positions from its editorial and business operations, offering buyouts and resorting to layoffs if enough people do not leave voluntarily.

The reductions were intended to safeguard the newspaper's long-term profitability. "The job losses were necessary to control the costs and to allow invest in the digital future of The New York Times.

### **Madison Avenue, Buzz in Digital**

Rice reported that top digital executives such as Yahoo Inc. are seeking to woo marketers such as PepsiCo Inc, Allstate Corp. who have been allocating even-greater portions of their marketing budgets to digital. Digital advertising continues to take up an ever-growing portion of the global advertising pie.

### **U. S. Rules Clip Drone Makers' Wings**

Rice reported that regulations are clipping the wings of U.S. drone makers. The FAA's actions weigh down American entrepreneurs while foreign rivals are getting flight clearance easier.

### **Certificate of Appreciation**

Joe David Rice requested a certificate of appreciation for Ralph Hall with the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department who is retiring after 42 years. Hall has worked with the department on many projects to include the new Welcome Centers.

**Mike Mills moved to approve a certificate of appreciation for Ralph Hall, AHTD who is retiring. Mike Wilson second and the motion carried.**

### **Research & Information Services**

Jennifer Neubauer reported that the Research and Information Services Section processed 8,729 requests for travel information during September 2014, an increase of 26.1% from September 2013. The calendar year 2014 inquiry total is 135,452, up 36.3% from 2013. The Section received 276 requests for retirement and relocation information in September 2014, down 52.7% from September 2013. This is due to changes in ordering patterns through the year. The retirement/relocation calendar year inquiry total is 4,288, down 14.0% from calendar year 2013.

Arkansas Welcome Centers received 63,137 visitors during September 2014, down 3.8% from last September. Welcome Center calendar year visitation is 627,710, down 2.7% from calendar year 2013.

Neubauer stated that she and thirty volunteers conducted an economic impact study for the King Biscuit Blues Festival. They conducted over 300 surveys with visitors to the festival.

Tiffany Knox reported in September, Welcome Center Managers held their annual Fall Manager's meeting.

Knox stated staff representing each Welcome Center attended the fall familiarization tour of the Arkansas Diamond Lakes and Arkansas River Valley. She presented a power point of the welcome centers tour,

Knox reported the Welcome Center staff are manning the Arkansas Tourism booth at the 2014 Arkansas State Fair from October 10-19, 2014.

Joe David Rice stated the Highway Department has decided to keep the Harrison Welcome Center on the footprint of the existing site.

### **Communications**

Assistant Tourism Director Marla Crider announced that Leah DiPietro was chosen as the department's new Communications Manager and will begin on Oct. 27.

The 2015 Arkansas Tour Guide is in the final editing stages.

Crider reported over sixty communities throughout Arkansas are participating in the 2014 Arkansas Trail of Holiday Lights. The Department is purchasing two life-sized Holiday Pig mascot costumes. The Holiday Pig will not speak. It will interact with children at holiday events, preside over lighting ceremonies, and ride in Christmas parades and will be accompanied by a handler at all times.

### **Tourism Development**

Kristine Puckett reported Henry Awards nomination forms were mailed in September. The deadline for submissions is October 31, 2014.

The Arkansas Retirement Symposium is being held Oct. 30 at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offices in Little Rock. The workshop will assist communities on ways to attract retirees and understanding the economic benefits of the age group.

Puckett reported the department received only one Feasibility Study Grant application from the City of Little Rock. Little Rock is looking at building an indoor multisport complex.

Pucket reported tourism is changing the name of the Industry Insider and redesigning the site for easier access and navigating.

### **Group Travel**

Tracy Morales reported the Group Travel comparison figures for inquiries generated through September 2014 indicate 1,972 leads versus 821 leads generated in September 2013, an increase of 140%. In September 2014, Group Travel received 38 new inquiries for industry partners. These leads were generated from 23 website requests, eight magazine requests, and seven phone inquiries.

Morales reported the Boomers in Groups Conference which will take place in Little Rock November 7-9, 2014.

Morales reported the department recently hosted Mark Juddery an Australian Travel Writer. Juddery is a member of the American Society of Journalists and Authors, Australian Society of Travel Writers and International Food Wine & Travel Writers Association. His works can be found in *The Australian*, *The Canberra Times*, *The Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Sun-Herald*, *The Weekend Australian*, *The Globe & Mail* (Toronto). Mark traveled to Arkansas through our partnership with Travel South USA for a tour of Natural Healings through Arkansas. Juddery toured the Two Rivers Pedestrian Bridge, Pinnacle Mountain State Park, Garvan Woodland Gardens, lunch at McClard's BBQ, bath and massage at The Buckstaff Bathhouse, tour of the downtown area attractions and the National Park Visitor Center. The Little Rock city tour also included: The Central High School National Visitors Center, Central High School, the Little Rock Nine Statues, The Old State House, The Governor's Mansion and Heifer Village.

Morales reported a new sport is foot golf, which is a golf course with soccer ball holes. The sport is very popular in Europe. Arkansas will have a new course to promote in the next few days. It basically involves the same set up as golf, except you are using your feet, a soccer ball and the foot golf cup is 21-inches in diameter.

### **Advertising Items**

Joy Phillips, Cranford Johnson Robinson and Woods presented the 2015 Spring/Summer Print Creative Revisions and the new videos in the "Meet the Locals" series. The videos featured Diamond Bear Brewery in North Little Rock and the Pumpkin Hollow near Piggott.

**Danny Ford moved to approve the 2015 Spring/Summer Print Creative Revisions and the "Meet the Locals" series videos. Mike Wilson seconded and the motion carried.**

### **Internet-Related Items**

Aristotle presented the budget for the second half of Fiscal Year 2014 (January 1-June 30, 2015).

Marla Johnson stated the Arkansas team is building a new design for Arkansas.com to launch in January 2015. Much of the work being done now has to do with user experience and creating a design using current content to engage visitors. In the first half of 2015, they will create an even more effective strategy and design for increased curated/shared/user-generated content. The new design consists of a redesign of Arkansas.com/outdoors/fishing which includes curated content from the Arkansas blog and the Deals & Packages database and looking at key pieces of Arkansas.com (focusing on great activities such as waterskiing, hiking and cabining) to find ways to curate user generated content for an even more user-friendly design. We will make 20 of Arkansas.com's landing pages more inspiring to direct visitors to the proper calls-to-action and deliver sales leads.

Aristotle will redesign the homepage and interior pages of the Group Travel microsite to maximize the primary goals and calls-to-action and increase sales leads to partners.

Aristotle will work with the Department to find, interview and curate content about 12 artists (two per Destination Marketing Area). Arkansas artists will include photographers, painters, writers, sculptors, glassblowers, woodworkers, architects, craftsmen, and chefs to be featured on Arkansas.com.

The redesign of Arkansas.com includes five primary content panels on the main page. Aristotle recommends these five panels be updated every month for a total of 30 updates in 6 months.

Aristotle will pay particular attention to each Destination Marketing Area page to ensure the design and content are fresh, and engaging, and that the pages are encouraging sales leads to our partners. Aristotle will work closely with the Department and CJRW to create and curate inspirational content such as photography, articles, database listings, etc. to create a fun, interactive page for each of Arkansas's Destination Marketing Areas.

Other projects will include development, Updates and Enhancements, Dual Sport Routes Update, Spring/Summer Campaign Support, Weddings Section Update, Keyword Buys, Social Media Marketing Coordination, Search Engine Optimization, Email Marketing, Online Conversion Survey, Hitwise, Analytics, Tracking and Reporting, Keeping Online Hosting Licenses, Email Delivery, and Bandwidth Usage and Renewals.



A new campaign named “BARKansas” will promote Arkansas’s many pet-friendly travel experiences and create buzz during late-summer 2015. Aristotle, the Tourism Division and CJRW will work with industry partners to create a user-generated content contest, BARKansas.” The contest will feature user-generated photos and videos of “dogs on vacation” in Arkansas. Prizes will be offered for the best content.

**Jim Shamburger moved to approve the Aristotle Budget of \$515,406.  
Cindy Smith seconded and the motion carried.**

Shash Goyal asked if there was a test site the commissioners could go out and look at the new changes. Marla Jackson state yes and they would get the commissioner the link.

Johnson also reported traffic to Arkansas.com increased 5.7% in September compared to September 2013. There were 255,893 total tablet/mobile device visits (50% of total traffic) to both the main website and the mobile website in September versus 210,878 visits in September 2013.

## **PARKS DIVISION**

### **Arkansas Broadcaster’s Association Agreement Renewal**

Greg Butts relayed greetings from Doug Krile, Executive Director of the Arkansas Broadcasters Association (ABA), who could not attend the meeting. On behalf of Doug Krile, Butts relayed, “Thanks to the commission for their continued support of ABA and the Non-Commercial Sustain Announcement program. The members continue to be pleased to provide air time above and beyond what’s specified in the contract. ABA looks forward to another successful year.”

Butts reported that with a \$75,000 investment, ADPT will receive a minimum of \$300,000 in value for 2015. Since the program began in 1987, ADPT has invested \$1.7 million and received \$28 million in TV and radio time. In light of a long standing successful partnership, Greg Butts requested approval to renew the agreement for another year with the same terms and conditions.

**Danny Ford moved to approve the renewal of the grant partnership between Arkansas State Parks and the Arkansas Broadcasters Association for another year. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.**

### **ASP License Plate Fund Policy**

Greg Butts presented a proposed rule for preliminary approval for the ASP license plate fund policy. He reported that the program began in 2011 and has generated \$96,000 to date. The program will provide college scholarships for students pursuing the state parks profession and funding for educational programs. The task was assigned to the Leadership Committee who took the language of the successful Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) program and customized it for ASP to grow the bench in the park profession. Butts reviewed the proposed policy and discussed the process, fields of study and requirements for the program which includes providing scholarships and internships and funding educational programs. Funding Education Programs consists of providing funding for State Park Field Trip Grants, the State Parks Explorer Program and various Education Programs. Discussion ensued regarding the criteria and guidelines for each component and what would work best for ASP. Butts noted he would incorporate the SPRTC's recommendations into the draft for public comment.

Greg Butts noted that the rule would go through the Administrative Rules and Regulations process; however the legislative committee does not meet in December, January or during a legislative session. He requested the proposed rule process proceed once the committee resumes, noting it will benefit students entering the fall 2015 semester.

**John Gill moved for preliminary approval to proceed with the process of finalizing the Arkansas State Parks license plate fund policy. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.**

Greg Butts recommended it is time to expand the ASP custom plate program by adding another design, bringing the total to two. ASP is bypassing the wildlife category as AGFC have various wildlife designs on their 12 custom plates. ASP is designing broad areas of interests with a focus on outdoors/nature, such as hiking or camping, in effort to appeal to large numbers of park visitors.

**John Gill moved to continue the process of designing an additional customized plate for Arkansas State Parks. Mike Wilson seconded and the motion carried.**

### **Structure Removals**

Randy Roberson requested removal of the following structures:

- DeGray – a 1971 former Corps of Engineers restroom located at the DeRoche Day Use Area is in deteriorated condition and does not meet the needs of park visitors.

- Lake Dardanelle – the circa 1994 entrance fee booth (approx. 75 square foot frame structure) is deteriorated and no longer needed in the operation of park.
- Mammoth Spring – the 1975 fuel shed (80 square foot frame structure) used for flammable substances, is deteriorated and poses a fire risk due to its proximity to the maintenance building.

**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 following:**

- **DeGray Lake Resort State Park**
  - **Former Corps of Engineers restroom (Building No. 14.24/AASIS No. 120005687)**
- **Lake Dardanelle State Park**
  - **Entrance fee booth (Building No. 25.28/AASISJ No. 120005903)**
- **Mammoth Spring State Park**
  - **Fuel shed (Building No. 32.18/AAISS No. 120006000)**

**Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.**

### **FY 14 ASP Awards**

Greg Butts reported that ASP held its annual superintendent's conference September 23-25, 2014, at Mount Magazine State Park and thanked Commissioners Shamburger and Gill for attending. It was a great conference with informative presentations from Arkansas State Police, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, Arkansas Attorney General's office, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission and Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Always a highlight of the conference, the annual Park of the Year awards (Regions 1-5) were presented to recognize the best of the best, with one overall winner. In addition, awards were presented for six specific categories to recognize the best of the best by category. Congratulations to the following Arkansas state park winners for FY 2014:

#### **Park of the Year -**

Park of the Year, Region 1	Lake Dardanelle State Park
Park of the Year, Region 2	Bull Shoals-White River State Park / Overall Winner
Park of the Year, Region 3	Lake Poinsett State Park
Park of the Year, Region 4	Historic Washington State Park
Park of the Year, Region 5	DeGray Lake Resort State Park

#### **Best of the Best by category -**

Interpretive Program	Parkin Archeological State Park
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Outstanding Hospitality	Ozark Folk Center State Park
Outstanding Park Maintenance	DeGray Lake Resort State Park
Outstanding Special Event	“25 <sup>th</sup> Annual Mountain Bike Championship Race” ~ Devil’s Den State Park
Resource Management	Hobbs State Park – Conservation Area
Volunteer Program	Hobbs State Park – Conservation Area

Butts advised that Park of the Year awards will be presented to each park individually and commissioners are invited to attend. Dates will be forwarded to commissioners for those wishing to attend. This is a great opportunity to express our appreciation to park staff for their hard work and outstanding achievements. Jim Shamburger noted that we have the best employees at Arkansas State Parks. They have a true passion for what they do and ASP is very fortunate to have such great employees.

### **CIP Quarterly Report**

Randy Roberson reported that ASP has \$51.6 million in capital improvements or major renovations underway or completed. He reported that \$4.3 million in Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council grants have been completed.

Roberson advised that ASP has recently opened bids for the levee top roadway project from Arkansas City to Bunge Corporation at Delta Heritage Trail State Park and that project should be underway soon.

### **Miscellaneous**

Randy Roberson provided a brief update on the lodge renovation at Queen Wilhelmina State Park advising that Nabholz is a quality contractor and work is progressing. Consultants are currently working on a redesign of the kitchen, making it more efficient for the operation of the restaurant. Greg Butts advised that the mold testing passed and the mold issue appears to have been resolved. He suggested the time of re-open is estimated late spring 2015.

### **SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

#### **Nominating Committee Recommendations for 2015 Chair and Vice Chair**

On behalf of the nominating committee, Shash Goyal recommended Mike Mills (Vice Chair) nominated for Chair and Barbara Harvel nominated for Vice Chair of the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for 2015.

**John Gill moved to accept recommendations of Mike Mills nominated as Chair and Barbara Havel nominated as Vice Chair for the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for 2015. Mike Wilson seconded and the motion carried.**

Chair Dangeau advised the vote will be completed at the November 2014 meeting.

**Adjournment**

The SPRTC meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm on Thursday, October 16, 2014 at Days Inn, in Pocahontas, AR.