

**State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission  
Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock, AR  
September 17-18, 2014**

**Commissioners Present**

LeRoy Dangeau, Chair- Wednesday Only	Shash Goyal
Mike Mills, Vice Chair	Barbara Harvel
Steve Arrison	Weston Lewey
Bill Barnes	Montine McNulty
Jay Bunyard	Bob Knight
Jim Dailey	Ness Sechrest
Danny Ford	Jim Shamburger
Jim Gaston	Cindy Smith
John Gill	

**Commissioners Absent**

Billy Lindsey  
Mike Wilson

**Department Staff Present**

Richard Davies, Executive Director  
Cynthia Dunlap, Central Administration Director  
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  
Joan Ellison, Public Information Officer  
Jennifer Neubauer, Research Project Analyst  
Kristine Puckett, Tourism Development Manager  
Eric Holbrooks, Administrative Specialist, Tourism Division  
Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist, Parks Division  
Tom Stolarz, Region 1 Supervisor  
Marcel Hanzlik, Region 3 Supervisor  
Shea Lewis, Region 4 Supervisor  
Grady Spann, Region 5 Supervisor  
Kelly Farrell, Program Services Administrator  
Robin Gabe, Education Program Specialist  
Theresa Helliwell, Agency Controller

Linda Eisenhart, Administrative Analyst  
Jessica Ledbetter, Tourism Consultant  
Kerry Kraus, Travel Information Writer

**Aristotle**

Marla Johnson  
Hallie Shoffner

Laura Kirk  
Whitney Bailey

**CJRW**

Shelby Woods  
Brian Clark  
Amy Turpen  
Bill Fitzgerald  
Rob Anderson

Wayne Woods  
Joy Phillips  
Debbie Grace  
Brandi Childress  
Elizabeth Michael

**Governor's Office**

Clark Hall

**Guests**

Matt Bell, Harrison CVB  
John Faulkner, Lawrence Group  
Enrique Fuentevilla, Jr, Viva Arkansas  
Miguel Fuentevilla, Cincomedia  
Kaylene Griffith, Bentonville CVB  
Gretchen Hall, Little Rock CVB  
Asa Hutchinson, Republican gubernatorial nominee  
Bill Ott, Eureka Springs Crescent & Basin Hotel  
Wayne Thompson, Ferguson's Country Store  
Karen Trevino, North Little Rock CVB

**Roll Call**

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

### **Recognition of Guests / Welcome**

Chair Dangeau welcomed Republican gubernatorial nominee Asa Hutchinson to extend greetings to the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC). Asa Hutchinson expressed his appreciation to the commissioners for volunteering their time and leadership to the state. He stated that Tourism is the second largest industry in the state and recognizes the critical link with Tourism to the state's economy. In addition, he stated that state parks are a key part of Arkansas's Tourism and an incredible asset to the state. Hutchinson stated he would help promote Arkansas State Parks (ASP) and Tourism to grow the economy of Arkansas. He advised he is grateful for the 1/8 cent Conservation Tax and recognizes the importance of continuing the dedicated fund source for the purposes it was designed. Hutchinson again thanked the commissioners for their time and service.

### **Approval of Agenda**

**Jim Dailey moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.**

### **Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

**Jim Shamburger moved to approve the Minutes from the August meeting. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.**

### **Financial Report – TBA**

Cynthia Dunlap presented the year-to-date financial report for the period ended August 31, 2014. The expenditures were: Parks Division, \$12,147,960; including construction and grants; Tourism Division, \$1,693,100; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$33,992; Administration Division, \$521,539; and History Commission, \$322,596. Expenditures for the Department totaled \$14,719,187 a decrease of 17.2% over the same period FY14. The year-to-date operating revenue Parks Division totaled \$6,142,955 an increase of 10.2% over the same period FY14; 1/8% Cent Tax \$4,963,484 a decrease of 2.29% over the same period FY14; and 2% Tax \$2,835,254 an increase of 8.4% over the same period FY14.

**Ness Sechrest moved to approve the Financial Report as presented. Bob Knight seconded and the motion carried.**

Jim Shamburger questioned the significant decrease in collections in Washington County. Richard Davies noted staff will check with the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) and will advise the SPRTC of DFA's findings.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **US Marshals Museum Groundbreaking Celebration**

Richard Davies reported commissioners are invited to attend the groundbreaking ceremony of the U.S. Marshals Museum that is scheduled for 11:00 am, September 24 in Fort Smith. Parking passes are available to commissioners interested in attending. Davies noted that the US mint is printing a special set of fund raising coins in commemoration of the project.

### **Legislative Audit Report**

Richard Davies reported that the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT) received a clean audit report, which is a testament to the staff in the field and central office.

### **Governor's Transition Report**

Richard Davies reported that the governor's office has requested ADPT provide a transition report for the new governor providing ADPT history, budget, organization information and updates on any issues and upcoming legislation and/or rule changes. ADPT staff is currently preparing information as requested. Davies advised there will be a transition team in place to meet with agencies and assist with the transition of the new administration in January 2015.

### **Miscellaneous**

#### **Hardwood Firewood and Ash Tree Related Material Quarantine**

Richard Davies reported that the Arkansas State Plant Board (ASPB) has implemented an emergency hardwood firewood and ash tree related material quarantine in 25 counties in Arkansas to slow the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) that has killed millions of ash trees across the US. Davies advised that the EAB is a small beetle that originated in Asia and spread to other parts of ash tree species ranges in the US. Greg Butts reported that 14 state parks are located in the quarantine area. Butts advised he has provided a letter to ASP staffs and campers providing details of the quarantine. Butts stated that the quarantine suggests that hardwood firewood and ash tree related items may be moved within the quarantined areas but not removed from the quarantined counties. ASP has requested that campers purchase wood locally or if brought from home, burn all wood so that it cannot be removed out of the quarantined counties. The ASPB is producing flyers with quarantine information that will be distributed in addition to the letter from ASP requesting cooperation from visitors and campers. Butts noted this is a good interpretive opportunity for park staff to share with park visitors, schools and communities.

## **PARKS DIVISION**

### **Hampson Update – Lease Purchase Contract with Lawrence Group**

Following approval of the relocation of the Hampson Archeological Museum to a new building to be located to Wilson, AR, Greg Butts presented a final draft of the lease/purchase agreement with ADPT and Wilson City LLC for review. He confirmed a few key points of the agreement with the SPRTC to ensure that all was in order. Butts advised three steps remain to finalize the process: obtain approval from Arkansas Building Authority, complete land surveys and fair market value appraisals for the land exchange, and approve the lease/purchase agreement. Butts suggested it would be beneficial to complete the land exchange now and hold the deeds in escrow, rather than in five years in the event of market value changes in the future. John Faulkner noted that Wilson City LLC has been selected as the new name of the lessor as a result of a new organization of properties in Wilson, AR. In response to Jim Shamburger's question of has there been any estimation of the two properties to see how close in value they may be, Greg Butts replied not as yet.

**John Gill moved to authorize the Executive Director and Director of State Parks to negotiate any modifications for legal and practical reasons for the final details of the proposed lease/purchase agreement with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and Wilson City LLC, obtain final approval from the Arkansas Building Authority and confirm fair market value for Arkansas State Parks and Wilson City LLC properties. Weston Lewey seconded and the motion carried.**

**John Gill moved to authorize the Executive Director and Director of State Parks to negotiate and execute necessary documents to exchange existing museum properties with Wilson City LLC according to the proposed acquisition as outlined, based on fair market value. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.**

### **FY 16-17 General Improvement Fund Request**

Randy Roberson presented the General Improvement Fund request for the next biennium. Roberson reported that the list is the same from two years ago minus two projects. All projects are necessary and will be submitted to the legislature to request funding.

Steve Arrison moved to approve the FY 16-17 General Improvement Fund request as presented. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.

### **Structure Removals**

Randy Roberson requested removal of the following structures:

DeGray – The 1993 model, 1456 square foot, double wide mobile home originally purchased as uniformed staff housing, is deteriorated and has been replaced by standard employee residence and no longer necessary.

Lake Dardanelle - The 352 square foot, 1968 bathhouse on the Yell County side of park is schedule to be replaced in FY 15 as this structure does not meet ADA guidelines.

Mount Magazine- The former US Forest Service pit toilet in the Benefield Picnic area is schedule to be replaced in FY 15. Deteriorated, the toilet components are obsolete and the facility does not meet ADA guidelines.

Woolly Hollow - The 64 square foot frame, tin and plywood building used as storage, is deteriorated and no longer necessary.

**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**
  - **Double Wide Mobile Home (Building No. 14.39/AASIS No. 120005697)**
- **Lake Dardanelle State Park**
  - **Bathhouse (Building No. 25.03/AASIS No. 120005892)**
- **Mount Magazine State Park**
  - **Pit toilet (Building No. 35.12/AASIS No. 120006046)**
- **Woolly Hollow State Park**
  - **Storage facility (Building No. 59.18/AASIS 120006574)**

**Steve Arrison seconded and the motion carried.**

### **Capital Improvements Projects and Process**

In response to Steve Arrison's concern regarding the sustainability of the 1/8 cent Conservation Tax fund, Greg Butts provided an overview of the funding sources for ASP. He stated revenue comes from three sources: General Revenue which is somewhat flat and is used to pay regular salary positions; Cash Fund which goes back into operating the park system; and the 1/8 cent Conservation Tax. Staff reviews the funding sources biennially to determine what is required to operate ASP to include capital equipment purchases and funding major maintenance projects. Any funds left over are allocated to Planning & Development for construction projects.

Steve Arrison expressed concern that if ASP continues to fund large capital projects there will not be enough to sustain the maintenance and operation of the ever growing park system as time goes on. Discussion ensued regarding the sustainability of the park system and the status of the 1/8 cent Conservation Tax and long term plan. Butts advised that the Amendment 75/10 Year Legacy Plan is posted on the ADPT Freedom of Information website and updated quarterly to track completion of projects. At this time \$152.7 million in projects have been completed or underway with \$201 million remaining. Completion of the proposed list has been delayed due to inflation, unforeseen events (such as relocation of Lake Fort Smith State Park) and various projects approved by the SPRTC along the way. It is a work in progress, with some projects more pressing than others.

In order to get a better overview of priority projects throughout the park system, Greg Butts recommended that staff evaluate the entire park system to deem what are the most pressing projects systems wide. In turn, staff would prioritize the projects on the 1/8 cent Conservation Tax master plan to help guide the SPRTC and the next park administration to determine where the funding should be spent. Commissioners agreed this to be a good idea. Butts suggested he could have a prioritized list ready for SPRTC's review by early 2015.

### **Miscellaneous**

Greg Butts advised that the annual Superintendent's Conference will be held at Mount Magazine State Park September 23-25, 2014, and commissioners are invited to attend all or part of the conference. Park awards will be presented during the conference. Contact Kris Richardson if you would like to attend.

Greg Butts advised a State Parks committee will be held after the SPRTC meeting in October to discuss Pet Policy and staff residences research. John Gill, Chair of State Parks committee, agreed to schedule of meeting to discuss both topics.

## **TOURISM**

### **Directors Office**

Joe David Rice introduced Enrique and Miguel Fuentesvilla with Cinco Media to the Commission. Cinco Media is a Latino Little Rock based company which connects products and services to the state's growing Latino market.

Marla Crider expressed a need to revise the Governor's Conference program after 40 years. Crider suggested combining the Sunday night opening reception with the auction to make it into one event, have the Henry Awards Banquet on Monday evening and conclude on Tuesday with a lunch and a speaker. Crider asked the Commission to legitimize these suggestions for the 2016 and 2017 conferences.

**Gaston moved to change the Governor's Conference on Tourism to a two-day event beginning in 2016. Mike Mills seconded and the motion carried.**

### **Research and Information Services**

Joe David Rice informed the Commission that Joanne Hinson's position has been split into two positions. He announced that Jennifer Neubauer has been promoted to a Research Coordinator and a Welcome Center Administrator position will be created.

Joe David Rice announced that the Red River Welcome Center will most likely be rebuilt in its current location, and that he and AHTD personnel have been looking at potential sites to rebuild the Harrison Welcome Center. Rice stated that the location of the Harrison Welcome Center should be picked out by the October 2014 SPRTC meeting.

Jennifer Neubauer presented the Research and Information Services report, stating that the section processed 9,242 requests for travel information during August 2014, an increase of 55.9% from August 2013. The calendar year 2014 inquiry total is 125,763, up 28.8% from 2013. The Section received 474 requests for retirement and relocation information in August 2014, up 74.3% from August 2013. Arkansas Welcome Centers received 84,321 visitors during August 2014, up 4.1% over last August. Welcome Center calendar year visitation is 564,573, down 2.6% from calendar year 2013.



### **Communications**

Marla Crider reminded the Commission that Kat Robinson had resigned as Communications Manager. Crider stated that the department received 130 applications, 40 of which met the minimum qualifications for the position. Crider announced that she and Joe David Rice will interview approximately 12 people and that they are looking for someone with strong management skills versus a writer.

Crider announced that Tim Schultz, Multi-media Specialist, has taken a position with the Arkansas History Commission, and that the Multi-media Specialist position has been posted.

Crider informed the Commission that the Adventure Guide is produced in-house and had to wait on funds to begin production. The guide should be available soon with 350,000 copies being printed.

Barrett Baber, Song of Arkansas contest winner, wrote a new song entitled "Razorback Gameday," which was played for the Commission.

### **Tourism Development**

Kristine Puckett introduced Jessica Ledbetter to the Commission. Ledbetter holds Puckett's previous job as Tourism Development Consultant.

Puckett stated that no applications have been turned in for the feasibility study grant that is due September 26.

Jessica Ledbetter distributed Henry Award nomination forms to the Commission.

The Fall/Winter 2014-2015 Calendar of Events was shown to the Commission.

### **Group Travel**

Marla Crider shared that the Group Travel Section processed 1902 leads for August 2014 YTD, over 802 leads for August 2013 YTD.

Crider shared that a Brazilian AgriTourism tour group was in the Delta Region September 2-4. The group learned how crops are grown in the Arkansas Delta.

Crider shared that *Leisure Group Travel* has named the Clinton Presidential Center as one of America's must-see museums.

### **Internet-Related Items**

Marla Johnson informed the Commission that there were 537,689 visitor sessions to Arkansas.com, a 5% increase over August 2013. August 2014 mobile traffic was at 55% with 293,045 mobile/tablet visitors, a 34% increase over August 2013. There were 1,310 vacation kit requests, 71 e-newsletter sign-ups and 49,892 sales leads to partner sites. There were 116,069 clicks to industry partners, down 10% compared to August 2013. Arkansas.com was listed at number 6 out of the 50 state tourism websites, down from number 5 the previous month.

Johnson shared some of the updates that have already been made to Arkansas.com, such as the homepage, fishing page, visitor survey page, kids fun map, relocation, and new videos. The transition website was launched on August 20.

### **2015 Spring/Summer Marketing Plan (Questions and Comments)**

Jay Bunyard would like to see mentioned that Arkansas has the best State Park system in the nation.

Steve Arrison would like to see the picture of the Hemmingway house changed for the meetings advertisement. Arrison questioned the Native American guide and asked who this is marketing to. Joe David Rice stated that the guide will be marketed to those interested in Native American history in Arkansas; Rice stated that there are several State Parks and Department of Arkansas Heritage museums that feature Native American history. Once Hampson museum is rebuilt in Wilson, the guide will showcase the museums extensive collection as well.

Shash Goyal would like to see Black History Month (February) marketed. Joy Phillips stated that CJRW will work with the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame to market it.

Cindy Smith would like to see better promotion of the Arkansas River. Joe David Rice stated that the river is hard to get to, other than the Little Rock portion. Rice stated that several agencies and organizations are working with the Corps of Engineers to make it more accessible along with transit docks.

John Gill questioned the Aristotle budget. Marla Johnson informed John Gill that Aristotle's budget is presented two months later. Marla Crider stated that the Commission will vote on Aristotle's budget separately. Joe David Rice stated that in a year or two the presentation process will be more streamlined.

John Gill stated that he would like to have the folder much more in advance to look it over before the presentation. Mike Mills stated that the presentation changes right up into the end and it would be hard to put together any sooner. Joy Phillips stated that it was on 'the box,' and that CJRW is trying to research and plan much sooner.

**Ness Sechrest moved to approve the 2015 Spring/Summer Marketing Plan totaling \$6,750,792 as presented to the Commission. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.**

The SPRTC meeting adjourned at 10:50 am on Thursday, September 18, 2014 at the Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau in Little Rock, Arkansas.