

## MINUTES

**State Parks, Recreation & Travel Commission  
Holiday Inn  
Springdale, Arkansas  
July 23, 2009**

### **Commissioners Present**

Danny Ford, Chairman	Montine McNulty, Vice-Chairman
Bill Barnes	Bob Knight
Jay Bunyard	Billy Lindsey
Jim Gaston	Mike Mills
Darin Gray	Ness Sechrest
Debbie Haak	Jim Shamburger

### **Commissioners Absent**

Steve Arrison  
Tom Scheuck  
Cindy Smith

### **Department Staff Present**

Richard W. Davies, Executive Director  
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant  
Cynthia Dunlap, Director of Administration  
Greg Butts, Director, Arkansas State Parks  
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director  
Nancy Clark, Assistant Tourism Director  
Mac Balkman, Operations Manager  
Joe Jacobs, Marketing & Revenue Manager  
Jon Brown, Region I Supervisor  
Marcel Hanzlik, Region III Supervisor  
Dena Woerner, Tourism Communications Manager  
Renee Robison, Group Travel Manager  
Donna Perrin, Tourism Development Manager  
Joanne Hinson, Research & Information Services Manager  
Jill Rohrbach, Arkansas Travel Writer  
Dottie Boyles, Administrative Assistant  
Kris Richardson, Administrative Assistant

**CJRW**

Shelby Woods  
Wayne Woods  
Karen Mullikin  
Carrie Orahood  
Chuck Robertson  
Chance Woods  
Karen Martin  
Scott Caldwell, CJRW-NW

**Aristotle**

Marla Johnson Norris  
Jonathan Eudy  
Dina Pruitt

**Guests**

Kathy Holt, Governor's Office  
Jessee Cox, Superintendent, Prairie Gove Battlefield  
Virginia Germann, Crystal Bridges Museum  
Marilyn Heifner, Fayetteville A&P Commission  
Maryl Koeth, Van Buren A&P Commission  
Kelley Linck, Executive Director, Ozark Mountain Region  
Bob Purvis, Pine Bluff CVB  
Beth Stephens, Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce  
Scott Sudduth, Arkansas Hospitality Association  
Doug Thompson, Morning News, Fayetteville  
Dennis Tracy, Little Rock A&P  
Perry Webb, Director, Springdale Chamber of Commerce

**Roll Call**

Chairman Danny Ford called the meeting to order at 8:33 am on Thursday, July 23, 2009.  
Gloria Robins called the roll.

**Approval of Agenda**

**Mike Mills moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.**

**Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

**Bill Barnes moved to approve the Minutes from the June 2009 meeting. Mike Mills seconded and the motion carried.**

### **Recognition of Guests**

Chairman Danny Ford introduced Perry Webb of the Springdale Chamber of Commerce and thanked him for hosting the Arkansas Traveler's vs. the Arkansas Naturals baseball game for the Commission.

Perry Webb welcomed the Commission to Springdale. He thanked the Commission for their attendance in Springdale and was glad to host the group for the baseball game. Webb advised that Springdale is very proud of the Arvest Ballpark, noting it is a good tourist attraction with 13% out-of-state attendance and 33% out-of-county (Washington or Benton County) attendance. He stated the area's master plan calls for a new interchange on I-540 to improve access and help economic development in the area.

### **FINANCIAL REPORT**

Cynthia Dunlap presented the financial report for the fiscal year-to-date period ended June 30, 2009. Expenditures were: Parks Division, \$78,873,888; Tourism Division, \$15,682,652; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$615,994; Administration Division, \$2,952,950; and History Commission, \$1,657,919. Expenditures for the Department totaled \$99,783,403, which included construction and grants. Fiscal year-to-date operating revenue for the Parks Division totaled \$22,960,311, an increase of 1.4% over last year's total.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### **Paperless Meeting**

Montine McNulty reported the paperless committee meeting was productive, and felt that the Commission will embrace the idea of a paperless commission meeting. Ms. McNulty explained that the Commissioners would log on to [www.adptonline.com/commission](http://www.adptonline.com/commission) to receive electronic agenda and approval items to preview prior to the meeting in place of documents being mailed individually to Commissioners. Commissioners or staff could review all electronic files as needed and could print any documents required. All information would be archived on the Web site. Commissioners would receive a flash drive on the day of the meeting for an updated set of information with any last minute additions, making the process independent of wireless internet connection. Large presentations would be provided on a separate flash drive. Gloria Robins displayed the Web site, navigating through the July agenda to demonstrate the Web site and the process to the Commission. Ms. Robins noted audience and guests will have access to the Web site and can print any items required. The audience may follow the meeting via a presentation screen that will be available during meetings. Richard Davies estimated a savings of \$500-\$600 per meeting with paper, copy machinery, staff, and time, as well as a good environmental friendly effort.

**Mike Mills moved to approve the paperless commission meeting for the State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission. Debbie Haak seconded and the motion passed.**

Richard Davies advised the cost to purchase computers will be divided equally between Arkansas State Parks and Arkansas Tourism.

### **Weber Mountain Tour**

Richard Davies reported he had received an inquiry regarding Weber Mountain located east of Springdale becoming a state park. Mr. Davies replied that Arkansas State Parks (ASP) is not currently seeking additional parks but concentrating on completing necessary work on current parks. In 1998, the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission placed a moratorium adding state parks, until the backlog of repairs, renovations and improvements to the existing and previously authorized state parks were completed. However, Representative John Woods and the local supporters had invited the Commission and staff to tour Weber Mountain, with lunch provided. He accepted the invitation with the idea that staff can provide guidance and grant information to assist in their efforts to create a local or regional park.

### **PARKS DIVISION**

#### **Delta Heritage Trail – Electrical Use Permit**

Greg Butts requested approval to grant a Use Permit Agreement to Robert McGehee of Delta Land & Farm Management Co. that will allow them to cross under the Delta Heritage Trail with the stipulation that the power line be placed underground in accordance with Arkansas State Parks policy.

**Billy Lindsey moved to approve the request for a Use Permit at the Delta Heritage Trail, described as follows: A 10 foot easement crossing the Delta Heritage Trail at or near mile post number 385 plus 1,684 feet, being 2 miles north of Watson – Section 13, Township 9 South, Range 2 West, Desha County, Arkansas. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion passed.**

#### **Lake Dardanelle – ATU Boat Dock Donation Agreement**

Greg Butts requested approval for Arkansas Tech University (ATU) to donate a double stall dock for ATU and state park management use at Lake Dardanelle State Park. This proposal will be beneficial to ATU students, as well as ASP. Currently there are not facilities for the park

rescue boat and park interpretive tour barge. ASP has plans to add an additional stall to the dock. ASP would be responsible for any capital improvements. Constructed of steel, the dock is approximately 20 years old, in good condition, with encapsulated flotation.

**Billy Lindsey moved to approve the donation of a double stall dock from Arkansas Tech University. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion passed.**

### **Proposed CY 2010 Fees & Rates**

Greg Butts reported that the Administrative Rules Process for the annual fees and rates review and approval has arrived. Commissioners received information (memo highlighting changes, PD 2000 with markup by location, attachments, and schedule) for review. Commission will discuss and vote their preliminary approval at the August meeting. Public meeting and final approval is scheduled for the September meeting. The rules have been modified requiring the public meeting take place 30 days before the Administrative Rules Legislative Committee meeting. Due to this change, Butts advised he may advance the process by one month next year. Billy Lindsey questioned if there were any significant changes to the CY 2010 fees and rates? Butts replied primarily there are inflationary adjustments and no large increases.

### **Lake Chicot – Lodge/Environmental Education Feasibility Study**

Greg Butts gave a brief history advising citizens and community leaders of Lake Village expressed a need for a state park lodge in 1989. The Commission authorized the staff to study this project and it was determined in 1990 that a 44% occupancy rate would be the required break-even point with cabin visitation. A proposed Lodge/Environmental Education Facility was included in a long term plan as a promise to voters in 1996 in conjunction with the passage of the 1/8 Cent Conservation Tax.

As it had been 17 years since the original feasibility study, it was time to have an independent feasibility study to address market supply, demand, etc. At the October 2008 public meeting, introducing the new study, Greg Butts noted the area was as unproven market, therefore requiring an updated feasibility study. Unlike Queen Wilhelmina, Mount Magazine, and DeGray Lake Resort State Park lodges, Lake Chicot's market area is untested for a full service lodge. ASP engaged Capital Hotel Management-Government Services (CHM-GS) to undertake a market assessment for a proposed Education Center and Lodge to be located at Lake Chicot State Park:

- \* 40-60 Room lodging facility and components (banquet/meeting facilities; fitness center, and dining room)
- \* An Environmental Education Facility

Since the October 2008 meeting in Lake Village, CHM-GS completed their final assessment and findings, including a review of Lake Chicot State Park and market analysis of supply and demand for the proposed facilities and were presented to the community July 20<sup>th</sup>. CHM-GS's assessment resulted in 33% annual occupancy of a 60 room lodge in addition to the existing 14 cabins. Richard Davies attended the meeting and reported that there were approximately 50 local residents in attendance to learn the results of the study. Even with the report of a challenging project, the local citizens and officials expressed a strong need for a "promised" lodge and event facility. Representative Robert Moore is a strong supporter for this project, a Tourism advocate for Southeast Arkansas, and plans to lend his support to see this project complete. Mr. Davies advised the community that further analysis is necessary to calculate the various levels of occupancy to make the project break even, what level of subsidy would be necessary, and plans to have a report with additional information by January 2010.

### **Delta Heritage Trail – Rail Disposition Update**

Richard Davies provided an update from a June meeting with area officials and legislators concerning their proposal for the governor to request a Federal Highway Administration (FHA) waiver to utilize the surplus rail for Southeast Arkansas projects. Under review by Governor Beebe for the FHA's consideration, would be the distribution of rail to Yellow Bend Port, Southeast Arkansas Regional Intermodal Facilities Authority, and improvements to the Union Pacific Railroad Line. Any track and related materials left over would be sold as scrap resulting in revenues for trail improvements. The rail is high grade quality. The Governor was clear that a waiver is required from the FHA in order for the agreement to take place.

### **CIP Quarterly Report**

Greg Butts reported that \$ 18.7 million in projects were completed and closed out the last FY quarter with an estimated \$ 101 million in projects across the state park system have been completed from Amendment 75, Arkansas's 1/8 Cent Conservation Tax.

### **Miscellaneous**

Greg Butts reported on a great article on keeping it local with a fun and restful 'staycation' at Portfest. And Pinnacle Mountain State Park made the list of "10 Great Places to Pitch In at a State Park" according to USA Today.

**Tourism Division**

Joe David Rice asked the Commission to approve a resolution requesting that Senator Blanche Lincoln, Senator Mark Pryor and Congressman Mike Ross support, through authorization and funding, a Reconnaissance Study, initiated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, of the Ouachita River and tributaries in Arkansas and Louisiana. Mr. Rice explained the study would serve as a vehicle to bring federal, state, and local agencies together to study and determine the best utilization of water resources in this region. The Vicksburg District, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, located in Vicksburg, Mississippi, has responsibility for the development of water and land resources in the Ouachita River Basin and has expressed a capability to initiate such a study. The \$200,000 Reconnaissance Study would be the first step in the process of conducting a much more detailed study assuming there is federal interest in pursuing the matter further. The resolution also asks county and municipal governments and industries within the Ouachita River basin to support the authorization and funding of this project.

**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation & Travel Commission believes that a Reconnaissance Study of the Ouachita River and its tributaries in Arkansas and Louisiana would serve as a vehicle to bring Federal, State, and Local agencies together to study and determine the best utilization of water resources in this region of Louisiana and Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, the Vicksburg District, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, located in Vicksburg, Mississippi, has responsibility for the development of water and land resources in the Ouachita River Basin and has expressed a capability to initiate such a study; and

WHEREAS, a \$200,000 Reconnaissance Study would be the first step in the process of conducting a much more detailed study assuming there is Federal interest in pursuing the matter further;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation & Travel Commission requests that Senator Blanche Lincoln, Senator Mark Pryor and Congressman Mike Ross support, through authorization and funding, a Reconnaissance Study, initiated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, of the Ouachita River and Tributaries in Arkansas and Louisiana; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation & Travel Commission asks county and municipal governments and industries within the Ouachita River Basin to also support the authorization and funding of this project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Ouachita River Valley Association; the Congressional Delegation listed above; and county and municipal government bodies and industries within the Ouachita River Basin.

This Resolution was adopted by the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation & Travel Commission on the 23rd day of July, 2009, in Springdale, Arkansas.

STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

s/s \_\_\_\_\_  
Danny Ford, Chairman

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND TOURISM

s/s \_\_\_\_\_  
Richard W. Davies, Executive Director

**Bill Barnes moved to accept the resolution to conduct a Reconnaissance Study of the Ouachita River and its tributaries in Arkansas and Louisiana. Debbie Haak seconded and the motion carried.**

**Tourism Development Section**

Donna Perrin reported descriptive letters and applications for the Arkansas Tourism Attraction Feasibility Study Matching Grant Program were sent to all Arkansas county judges, city mayors, and chambers of commerce. The information is also posted at [www.ADPTFOI.com](http://www.ADPTFOI.com). There have been several inquiries so far, including Blytheville, Eureka Springs, Fairfield Bay, Helena-West Helena, Russellville, Tontitown, and the Arkansas River Connection counties. The first grant application deadline of the year is July 31, 2009. If the entire grant balance of \$22,588 is not dispersed in July, the last two deadlines for Fiscal Year 2010 are Sept. 25 and Nov. 30.

**Research and Information Services Section**

Research and Information Services Manager, Joanne Hinson, reported the section processed 29,523 requests for information during June 2009. The year-to-date total is 263,597, down 7.3 percent compared to the same period in 2008. There were 544 requests for



retirement/relocation information in June, down 25.8 percent from June 2008. January-June requests are 5,456, down 11.4 percent. Arkansas State Welcome Center visitation was 108,049 in June, up 13.8 percent from June 2008. January-June visitation is 380,941, up 8.3 percent.

Ms. Hinson announced the grand opening of the new Arkansas Welcome Center in Blytheville will be August 7.

### **Communications Section**

Dena Woerner, Communications Manager, reported that her section is still gaining fans, friends, and followers on Facebook and Twitter, and spreading information about tourism in Arkansas through these social marketing and networking tools.

Ms. Woerner attended the Outdoor Writers' Association of American Conference in Michigan last month. She reported that she spent one-on-one time with several editors, and pitched story ideas. Woerner and other staff members were invited last month to experience a Girls' Getaway in the Ozark Mountain Region. Articles and photographs on niche subjects such as women fishing, and getaways for women in general will be produced from the experience.

Ms. Woerner also showed a portion of the NPI: Japanese Public Broadcasting Network's documentary titled "Filling the Stomach of the World." The 90-minute documentary on rice farming, agriculture, and rice production in the United States with a side focus on agritourism shows portions of Arkansas rice farming.

### **Group Travel Section**

Renee Robison, Group Travel Manager, reported inquiries for June 2009 were 87 compared to 54 this time last year. Year-to-date inquiries are at 706 for 2009 versus 541 for 2008. Of those inquiries, 199 are motorcycle related. Ms. Robison said motorcycle travel in Arkansas is extremely popular and her section will look further into marketing to that group. There were 11,735 downloads from [www.Arkansas.com](http://www.Arkansas.com) for the "Let's Ride 2008" PDF in June, according to Aristotle, the state's Internet service provider.

### **Aristotle:**

Jonathan Eudy of Aristotle reported on June 2009 benchmarks for the state tourism Web site, [www.Arkansas.com](http://www.Arkansas.com). The top 10 requested pages on the Web site were the Home Page, Places To Stay/Cabins, Attractions – Pike County, Maps, Things To Do, Free Vacation Kit, Hot Deals & Packages, Lakes & Rivers, Arkansas Kids, and Places To Stay.

The top 10 referring Web sites to [www.Arkansas.com](http://www.Arkansas.com) were Google, Yahoo!, Bing (MSN, Live Search), [www.craterofdiamondsstatepark.com](http://www.craterofdiamondsstatepark.com), AOL, [www.arkansasstateparks.com](http://www.arkansasstateparks.com), Ask, My Web Search, [www.petitjeanstatepark.com](http://www.petitjeanstatepark.com), and Windows Live.

Key performance indicators were that visitor sessions increased 19.5 percent comparing June 2008 to June 2009. Unique visitors increased 16.6 percent comparing June 2008 to June 2009.

A new Racing and Gaming page went live this week with information on Oaklawn Park, Southland Greyhound Park and the new scholarship lottery. The new group travel site will go live soon and will include an electronic newsletter feature.

Other new pages that are now live on the Web include: Girls' Getaways, Fishing Arkansas, Family Weekend Getaways, and the Historical Arkansas Anniversaries. The anniversaries page will include Civil War Sesquicentennial information. Upcoming production for August 2009 will involve: cross-linking program, embedding You Tube videos, Extreme Adventure Sports page, photos of Famous Arkansans, and a Haunted Arkansas page.

## **CJRW**

Welcome to Arkansas Program Coordinator, Scott Sudduth with the Arkansas Hospitality Association, Inc. reported that 170 participation forms for the Welcome to Arkansas program were sent out at the first of year. Currently, over 32 cities, seven counties, and all of the regions are involved in the program. The program assists training of front line employees, such as restaurant wait staff, hotel desk staff, and gas station attendants, about what the city, region and state has to offer in the way of tourism. Familiarizing front line employees as well as business leaders, and community and civic leaders gives them the knowledge to better assist travelers to the state.

Karen Mullikin reported the state is partnering with KATV Channel 7, in Little Rock, on a program called "Welcome to Arkansas." The KATV weather cast is given from various locations throughout the state. In addition to the weather, the meteorologist provides information on history and/or things to do in that specific city or place. Some of the locations that have already been featured this year include Crater of Diamonds State Park, Bathhouse Row in Hot Springs, Mount Magazine State Park, Cane Creek State Park, Greers Ferry Lake, and Lake Dardanelle. The new Lake Village Welcome Center and Lakeport Plantation will be featured in September.

*Bicycling in Arkansas* is the latest brochure produced by ADPT and CJRW highlighting bicycle trails throughout Arkansas. One side of the brochure contains information regarding

cycling on the road. Flip the brochure over and the other side details off-road cycling. A downloadable version is available on [www.Arkansas.com](http://www.Arkansas.com).

A report summarizing Geiger & Associates' public relations and media marketing activities was distributed to the Commission. Cumulative media value totals over \$425,000.00. This amount represents what Parks & Tourism would have paid had it purchased this same amount of editorial coverage in the form of paid advertising.

The State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission adjourned at 3:15 p.m. on July 23 at the Holiday Inn in Springdale, Arkansas.