

State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, 1 Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR
June 3, 2019

Commissioners Present

Jim Shamburger, Chair
Kalene Griffith, Vice Chair –via phone
Austin Albers – via phone
Bill Barnes
Mike Gibson
John Gill

Ron Gossage – via phone
Eric Jackson
Bob Knight – via phone
Weston Lewey
Montine McNulty
Mike Wilson

Absent

Jeff Baskin
Shash Goyal
Ness Sechrest

Cindy Smith
Randy Wolfinbarger

Department Staff Present

Jim Dailey, Tourism Director – via phone
Kristine Puckett, Deputy Tourism Director –
via phone
Shea Lewis, Deputy Director, State Parks
Joy Barlogie, Research & Dev Manager
Kris Richardson, ADPT Executive Assistant
Randy Roberson, Planning & Dev Manager

Joe Jacobs, Marketing and Revenue Manager
Kelly Farrell, Program Services Manager
Jeff King, Project Manager/Gov Liaison
LaJeana Carroll, Executive Assistant, Parks
Darin Mitchell, GIS Analyst
Monika Rued, Public Info Officer

CJRW

Darin Gray
Jennifer Morgan
Dalaney Thomas

Chris Ho
Mark Raines
Brian Kratkiewicz

Miles Media

Susie Kardas

Guests

Steve Arrison, Visit Hot Springs

Bre Conyers, KTHV-11

Gretchen Hall, Little Rock CVB

Stacy Hurst, Director, Arkansas Department of Heritage

Megan Perkins, Governor's Office Liaison – via phone

Luke Story, Arkansas Broadcasters Association

Call to Order

Chair Jim Shamburger called the special meeting to order at 1:30 pm on Monday, June 3, 2019.

Kris Richardson called roll. Jim Shamburger welcomed newly appointed Secretary Stacy Hurst to the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission meeting.

Approval of Agenda

Jim Shamburger requested approval of the agenda.

Weston Lewey moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.

Arkansas Flood Update - Tourism Division

Joy Barlogie reported that Welcome Centers are high and dry with exception of Fort Smith. The Fort Smith Welcome Center has been closed since May 26 due to flooding conditions. The remainder of the centers are operating business as usual and dispersing information as needed.

Jennifer Morgan advised that Tourism's flood messaging had begun May 28 to share Tourism information and flood update message via several platforms. Various communications had been put out via social media, industry partners and Arkansas.com updating flooding information around the state. Morgan advised items completed or in process:

Completed Action Items

- Removed all mentions of Arkansas River and affected areas
- Revised June Arkansas.com focus from lakes and water activities to general activity
- General tourism flood awareness message out on social media
- Flooding message pinned to top of social media feed
- Flooding message live on Arkansas.com
- Communicated approved messaging to all Welcome Centers
- FleishmanHillard contacted to provide national PR support
- Phone call conducted with Fox News
- Flooding info live on ArkansasStateParks.com

In-Progress Actions

- Media release prepared for distribution
- Media release to be distributed to industry partners
- Development of Tourism social media ad campaign devoted to flood awareness messaging through June
- Google Search campaign to serves ads to out-of-state users searching Arkansas flooding
- State Parks social ad buy campaign through end of June
- State Parks radio spot development and distributed through ABA partnership

Considering all the national publicity that Arkansas is receiving, Commissioners agreed that it is critical to react quickly to overwhelming negative national publicity.

Morgan presented a draft news release. Commissioners agreed it is important to get out the message that Arkansas Tourism remains open for business despite flooding in isolated areas. The news release should be positive and inviting with less emphasis on the flood, noting flooding is problematic in isolated areas. While remaining compassionate for flooding issues, the rest of the state is open for business. In the interest of the state's economy, the industry must act quickly to counteract the negative publicity and continue to promote tourism and welcome tourism dollars, which benefit Arkansas and better assist flood victims. Discussion ensued.

John Gill moved that the draft news release be amended based on meeting discussion and sent out by end of business day with a more positive and inviting message. Bill Barnes seconded, and the motion carried.

There was discussion regarding a Tourism action plan for the next few weeks to counteract the negative publicity and monitor success of such efforts. It was questioned how to collect information and feedback from the front lines to gauge if the revised "Open for Business" message is being received and identify any additional issues from the field. A weekly conference call with key industry partners was suggested to gather information and feedback from across the state, identify issues, successes and items that need promotional assistance for specific communities and/or areas. Joy Barlogie agreed to coordinate weekly industry partner calls, beginning following Tuesday.

Arkansas Flood Update – Parks Division

Shea Lewis reported that the Parks Director's Office started hearing from parks just over one week ago regarding potential flooding. In response, Darin Mitchel updated the Arkansas State Parks (ASP) GIS map with an overlay of the interactive US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) Little

Rock District Flood Inundation Map of the flooded areas and potential flooding concerns. This interactive map gave the park staff real-time information of the potential flooding.

The following parks and facilities have reported:

Lake Dardanelle State Park reported boat ramp closures, dangerous river conditions due to high river flow and debris. The swimming beach is also closed. The water level was close to the Visitor Center, but the Heating Ventilation Air Condition (HVAC) systems was not affected.

Pinnacle Mountain State Park (PMSP) reported that the west summit trail head in the day use area was closed due to high water levels from the Big and Little Maumelle Rivers. The high-water levels threatened one of the Park Ranger houses; park staff used sandbags to protect the house from rising waters.

Petit Jean State Park reported the park was not directly affected by the flooding, however most of the roads leading to park were closed due to flooding. Only highway 154 was still open for traffic. The park reported on June 3, 2019, Highway 9 had reopened for traffic.

Kelly Farrell reported the Exhibit Shop printing press has been installed and staff has been learning how to use the press and had produced a booklet for Director Spann.

Farrell reported the Exhibit Shop building and Warehouse were closed on May 31, 2019, by the property management company as a precaution. Exhibit Shop and Warehouse staff have been temporarily relocated to Central Office until further notice and some staff have been scheduled to work on projects in the parks.

Chad Fougrouse reported on Emergency Support Function stating a few ASP Rangers were assigned to assist with security for the Barling Road Closure in the Fort Smith area.

Lewis stated Lake Fort Smith State Park was listed as Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) temporary housing for people displaced by the Arkansas River flooding.

Joe Jacobs stated that the Marketing and Revenue Section have been responding to questions on social media. Special notices are posted on each of the park webpages affected by closures. Social media posts are not used unless the whole park is closed like PMSP.

Jacobs noted on Friday, May 31, 2019, ASP posted in the morning a notice announcing state parks were open and not affected by the Arkansas River Valley Flooding and for visitors to check with "iDriveArkansas" for current road information. Individual special notices were listed on the park's webpages regarding facility closures.

Lewis stated Petit Jean State Park contacted guests with reservations advising information regarding road closures and safe roads to travel. Some deposits were refunded upon visitor requests.

Monika Rued presented a positive video she had created to share on social media highlighting most of the parks have been unaffected by the flooding and are open for business as usual. Discussion ensued.

Jim Shamburger remarked he appreciated everyone attending to the special meeting on short notice.

Adjournment

The State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission adjourned at 2:39 pm on June 3, 2019, at Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, 1 Capitol Mall, Little Rock.