

STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION
DeGray Lake Resort State Park,
Bismark, Arkansas
August 19-20, 2010

Commissioners Present

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

Commissioner Absent

Steve Arrison

Department Staff Present

Richard W. Davies, Executive Director
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant
Cynthia Dunlap, Director of Administration
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director
Nancy Clark, Assistant Tourism Director
Jon Brown, Operations Manager
Joe Jacobs, Marketing & Revenue Manager
Dena Woerner, Communications Manager
Renee Robison, Group Travel Manager
Donna Perrin, Tourism Development Manager
Joanne Hinson, Research & Information Services Manager
Dottie Boyles, Administrative Specialist
Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist
Tom Stolarz, Region I Supervisor
Tony Perrin, Region II Supervisor
Marcel Hanzlik, Region III Supervisor
Zoie Clift, Arkansas Travel Writer
Jim Henry, Administrative Specialist
Alicia Davis, Administrative Analyst

CJRW

Shelby Woods
Wayne Woods
Carrie Orahood
Brandi Childress

Aristotle

Marla Johnson Norris
Jonathan Eudy
Dina Pruitt

Guests

Kathy Holt, Governor's Office
Mike Wilson, Superintendent, DeGray Lake Resort State Park
Mark Campbell, Assistant Superintendent, DeGray Lake Resort State Park
Mark James, Lodge Manager, DeGray Resort State Park
Kathy Ritter, Director of Sales, DeGray Lake Resort State Park
Becky Bariola, Superintendent, Mount Magazine State Park
Mary Ann Parker, Park Interpreter, Parkin Archeological State Park
Jake Sandlin, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*
Jessica Sutton, Arkansas Legislative Council
Tommy Blackwell, State Director, Arkansas Good Sams

Roll Call

Chairman Montine McNulty called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m. on Thursday, August 19, 2010. Gloria Robins called the roll.

Approval of the Agenda

Danny Ford moved to accept the Agenda. Ness Sechrest seconded and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Mike Mills moved to accept the Minutes from the July 2010 meeting. Debbie Haak seconded and the motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Cynthia Dunlap presented the financial report for the period ended July 31, 2010. The expenditures were: Parks Division, \$6,910,555 including construction and grants; Tourism Division, \$527,581; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$19,883; Administration Division, \$352,287; and History Commission, \$123,322. Expenditures for the Department totaled \$7,933,628, a decrease of 1% over the same period FY10. The year-to-date operating revenue Parks Division totaled \$3,231,378, a increase of 2% over the same period FY10; 1/8% Cent Tax \$ 2,442,538, a increase of 8.97% over the same period FY10; and 2% Tax 1,081,131, a increase of 1.1% over the same period FY10.

**Debbie Haak moved to approve the financial report as presented.
Cindy Smith seconded and the motion carried.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Richard Davies reported on the pilot projects going on in east Arkansas. The southeast Arkansas inventory has been completed and a strategy meeting was held to determine the best direction to take in order to proceed with plans to develop the area.

The Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission met at Pea Ridge National Military Park and Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park, and toured both parks. The exhibits at Pea Ridge have been updated and were very impressive. Exhibits at Prairie Grove are scheduled for renovation this coming winter. The Commission will sanction events and activities throughout the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, 2011-2015.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has taken part of its funding to work on wildlife trails grants. The funding for these projects will be available later this fall. The amount earmarked for this project is one million dollars per year; there are no matching funds required.

TOURISM DIVISION

Industry Report

Joe David Rice reported on a state by state analysis of full time employees in state tourism offices. Due to the continuing problems with the economy, many state tourism agencies have been forced to reduce their full time employees or reduce operations. Arkansas is fortunate in that we have a dedicated funding program for our tourism needs.

Research and Information Services Section

The Research and Information Services Section processed 10,644 requests for travel information during July 2010, a decrease of 50 percent from July 2009. The 2009 monthly total for July included lead generation which was eliminated from the 2010 campaign. When lead generation is excluded from the comparison there is a decrease of 11.6% percent.

Arkansas Welcome Centers received 123,596 visitors during July 2010, flat compared to July 2009 with 123,649. Year to date visitation is 536,782, up 6.4 percent from 2009.

Joanne Hinson reported preparations were being made for the 2010 Fall Familiarization Tour. The tour will take place in Arkansas South and Arkansas's Great Southwest Regions September 13-17.

Tourism Development Section

Donna Perrin reported the Tourism Development section is currently collecting and posting events for the 2011 Spring/Summer calendar (March 1, 2011 through Labor Day weekend). Events that have already been posted can be viewed and proofed at www.arkansas.com/calendar. The deadline for submissions is August 27.

Applications for the Tourism Attraction Feasibility Study Grant were sent to Arkansas county judges, city mayors, and chambers of commerce the first week of July. There were no applications received on or before the first deadline, July 30. The next deadline will be Friday, September 24.

Communications Section

Dena Woerner reported the section is currently in the process of updating the *Adventure Guide* and *Tour Guide* for 2011.

The *greentravelarkansas.com* Web site launched in July. The Web site features green lodging, dining, and attractions including a list of LEED certified buildings.

Group Travel Section

The Monthly Tracking Report indicated there were 26 inquires for July 2010 compared to 55 inquires for July 2009. Year- to-date inquires were 678 for 2010 compared to 761 for 2009. The majority of inquires came from the Web site for the motorcycle market.

Renee Robison stated the e-mail blasts for motorcycle niche marketing *Cool Your Pipes* launched on July 21, 2010. The e-newsletter was sent out to 4,235 people who requested to receive it.

The Motorcycle Cannonball Run features pre-1920 motorcycles. Participants will begin their 3,272-mile journey from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on September 10, 2010 and end in Santa Monica, California on September 26. The group is scheduled to ride through Arkansas September 16-18. Meal functions are planned in Stuttgart, Danville, and Fort Smith, with a day of rest in Hot Springs.

Arkansas tourism leaders are competing in the American Bus Association (ABA) Challenge to send Flat Pete a/k/a Pete Pantuso, the President and CEO of this organization, to visit members of the ABA around the country. The Group Travel staff has been encouraging the Arkansas tourism industry to take advantage of this opportunity to showcase their product to other ABA members. Photos of Flat Pete are posted on the ABA Facebook page. Ms. Robinson showed several photos of Flat Pete visiting Hot Springs, Eureka Springs, the Buffalo River Zipline, DeGray Lake Resort State Park, Jacksonville Air Force Base, and Stuttgart.

Internet-Related Items

Online Trends and Statistics

There were 467,289 visitor sessions during the month of July, an increase of 8 percent over June 2009, and 114,884 links to industry partners. The Web site placed number four among all 50 state tourism sites and number one amid the contiguous state sites. The *Hot Deals and Packages* iPhone application had 1,427 downloads from March 1 through August 1, with 640 upgrades during the week May 31–August 1.

The *Heritage Trail* Web site launched. The site features interactive maps and information about land and water routes along the *Arkansas Trail of Tears*, the *Butterfield Overland Trail* mail route pre-dating the Pony Express, the *Southwest Trail in Arkansas*, and *Arkansas Civil War* actions.

Marla Johnson Norris gave a presentation on the new trend, Web 3.0 – the Semantic Web. Ms. Norris explained it is a group of methods and technologies to allow machines to understand the meaning - or "semantics" - of information on the Web. The availability of machine-readable metadata would enable automated agents and other software to access the Web more intelligently. The agents would be able to perform tasks automatically and locate related information on behalf of the user.

Advertising/Marketing

2010-2011 Fall/Winter Television Schedules

Brandi Childress presented the Fall/Winter 2010/2011 television and cable campaign. The seven-market buy targets an audience of adults ages 25-54/64. Emphasis was placed on news dayparts, while other dayparts such as early morning and late fringe were also included. Schedules are flighted to air September 13-October 10.

Cable schedules were added to supplement the broadcast investment in Dallas-Fort Worth and Memphis, as well as in-state markets. The cable television schedule is recommended to run concurrently with the spot television campaign, September 13-October 10. A budget of \$360,074 was approved for the Fall/Winter 2010-2011 schedule.

Miscellaneous

Bill Barnes reported Bird Island was designated as an Important Bird Area by Audubon Arkansas. Bird Island is in the middle of Lake Ouachita that has become the roosting place for 10,000 to 40,000 Purple Martins. For about two months during summer, the birds roost on the island each night, then leave in the morning spreading out in different directions to feed.

Montine McNulty extended an invitation for everyone to attend the Arkansas Hospitality Association's 2010 Convention and Trade Show being held September 22-23 at the Arkansas Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock. The theme for this year's trade show is "Arkansas: A Hidden Treasure."

Mike Mills reported the Buffalo River Canopy Zip Line Tour was doing great. The zip line is running four days a week and takes about 2 to 3 hours to complete.

Nancy Clark presented a video clip from the Lifetime Television show "The Balancing Act", featuring Beth Wiedower, Field Director for the National Trust Historic Preservation. The segment aired August 13. Ms. Wiedower discussed the many aspects of the Arkansas Delta, from two scenic byways linking 15 counties together to archeological sites, museums and galleries, recreational opportunities, local festivals, and music. "The Balancing Act" airs at 7:00 am (ET/PT) from Pompano Beach, Florida.

PARKS DIVISION

Proposed CY 2011 Fees & Rates – Public Hearing and Final Approval (2:00 pm)

Chairman Montine McNulty called the Public Hearing to order at 2:00 pm regarding the 2011 proposed fees and rates for Arkansas State Parks. Greg Butts, Director of Arkansas State Parks, inquired if the Commission would like to have a discussion before hearing the public comments, advising this was the final meeting for a decision for all the 2011 fees and rates. Ness Sechrest asked if there were any recommendations from staff on revisions. Mr. Butts noted PD 2000 – Revision 2 included the Governor's recommendation and included rates for new services and facilities brought online i.e. canoes at Toltec, kayaks at Petit Jean, cabins at Lake Catherine and rates for Loco Ropes course at the Ozark Folk Center, noting these are not rate increases but rates for new services.

Billy Lindsey moved to rescind the July motion for the 10% increase to fees for camping, lodging, and cabins for Arkansas State Parks in 2011. Billy Lindsey commented he agrees with the Governor's reasoning, however noted that revenues being what they are, there will be shortfall to be made up. Ness Sechrest seconded the motion. Tom Schueck respectfully requested to rescind the motion as he had made the original motion in July and Billy Lindsey withdrew his motion.

Tom Schueck respectfully requested to rescind the approved motion to increase fees 10% for camping, lodging and cabins for Arkansas State Parks in 2011. Ness Sechrest seconded and the motion was rescinded.

Chairman McNulty directed Commissioners to the written public comments received by ADPT via mail and email for review. Chairman McNulty opened the floor for comments from the public on proposed fees and rates.

Tom Blackwell, State Director of Arkansas Good Sams, commented that the Good Sams group does not want to see any increase and that they worked hard to get the 1/8¢ Conservation Tax passed. Arkansas has some of the best parks in the country. If there is a definite need for an increase people need to know in advance and be sold on the idea. Danny Ford stated the Commission's July proposal was due to revenue reductions in state park's funding sources, noting he was against the rate increase and several Commissioners were hesitant with the rate increase, but the Commission has to make business decisions but now is not the time to raise rates. Mr. Blackwell advised he understands rates must be increased at times but people were

shocked by the 10% increase and knew nothing about it before hand. He stated that we have great parks but if we increase the rates and run people away we will kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Mr. Blackwell reiterated that rate increases should be communicated in advance, advising people why the increases are necessary.

Tom Schueck advised the Commission approved the 10% increase based on the fact we are going to face \$1.5 million to \$2 million shortfall in income. In order to maintain parks we are accustomed to, we have to make up the shortfall. He said there are two ways to do this – raise rates or cut services and employees. We chose to increase rates. Even though the increase was to maintain the park system we can be proud of, others felt differently and that the increase was too high with the current economy. The Commission being team players have paid attention to the call and have rescinded the rate increase motion. Tom Schueck said he hoped the public can understand the reasoning behind it. If we have less to operate with, something has to give.

Chairman McNulty stated she appreciates the Good Sams group for their support and volunteer work in ASP. Chairman McNulty asked if there were any other comments to be made by the public. There were no other public comments made. Jim Gaston commented people don't always know what goes on. He said his view is today the Commission has done the right thing. Sometimes you can be right and be wrong. It was right to raise rates 10% but the public viewed it as wrong. Jim Gaston noted we will probably have to raise rates in the near future to maintain the great Arkansas State Parks product. Jim Gaston noted to Mr. Blackwell that a rate increase will happen in future and asked his help in selling it to the Good Sams. Bill Barnes noted he has been delighted to see the progress made in state parks since the passage of the 1/8¢ Conservation Tax and does not want to lose the quality of our facilities as more new projects are built. He respects the Governor's wishes but can't bear to watch park facilities start to decline or a dramatic cut in personnel or a dramatic cut in capital improvements. The proposed rate increase was never intended to hurt anyone or cause a public outcry. Bill Barnes noted he hopes the public understands it was not a matter of greed or indifference; the commission is trying to maintain what we have accomplished. Mr. Barnes noted he was glad to have the chance to explain the actions to Mr. Blackwell in hopes that he can help explain the issue to the Good Sams membership. Chairman McNulty noted as the SPRTC moves around the state, we can explain the situation to the citizens. Billy Lindsey echoed Bill Barnes point, noting he does not want to return to the days of duct tape and bailing wire. Reading the public comments, Billy Lindsey took exception to comments referring to the decrease in visitation was the reason for the proposed rate increase. He said attendance was never the issue. This is not a visitation issue but a revenue issue – lost revenue and how to make it up. Mr. Lindsey said the motion of a 10% increase was made with the best interest of the citizens of Arkansas and rescinding the motion was made for the same reason.

Jim Gaston moved to approve fees and rates as outlined in Policy Directive 2000 – Revision 2 for Arkansas State Parks for 2011. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Greg Butts reported the last point for consideration was a request from Thomas Percy requesting lower group facility rates for a retired military group. According to Mr. Percy's letter, he felt the cost was too expensive and asked for group facility rates to be provided complimentary or at a discounted rate for camping groups. When asked for staff recommendation, Mr. Butts replied he is appreciative of all the military does for us, but with the current economic climate he does not recommend a change in policy at this time.

Jim Gaston moved that Arkansas State Parks will not offer complimentary or discounted rates for group facilities to camping groups. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Debbie Haak closed the discussion, noting the majority of the public comments were very complimentary of the state parks but that the timing was not right in the current economy to raise rates. Rates will have to be raised, but the timing was wrong and a more gradual increase is needed.

Fall TV & Radio Spots

Joe Jacobs, Manager of Marketing & Revenue, requested approval for previously used ads to be utilized for the fall TV and radio spots:

TV Spots (30-second spots)

TV Cut #1: *"Arkansas State Parks Accommodations"*

TV Cut #2: *"Make Memories at the Ozark Folk Center State Park"*

Radio Spots (60-second spots)

Radio Cut #1: *"Fall is The Time for Scenic Drives to Arkansas State Parks"*

Radio Cut #2: *"Arkansas State Parks Make Learning Fun"*

Bob Knight moved to approve the previously used ads for the fall TV and radio spots. Jay Bunyard seconded and the motion carried.

Mt. Magazine – Grant Request from Corley Mountain Rural Fire Dept.

Greg Butts reported prior to the May 2006 opening of Mt. Magazine Lodge, the Corley Mountain Volunteer Fire Department (CMVFD) requested ASP provide a \$6,000 grant (10%) to match a FEMA grant for the purchase of a pumper truck. The truck would serve the park and CMVFD's fire district. The FEMA grant was not approved and a new truck was not purchased. Subsequently, ASP entered into cooperative agreement with CMVFD, a fire station was built at the park, and a used pumper truck was purchased by the CMVFD for \$15,000 situated at Corley. The purchase was made possible by a loan from the Arkansas Forestry Commission. The CMVFD is still requesting \$6,000 to assist with the purchase cost. Upon request of the department's position, Greg Butts advised the division has never provided funding to volunteer fire departments for fire truck purchases. However, based on the partnership agreement at the park with the CMFVD and the Division's current financial situation, Mr. Butts recommended a onetime contribution of \$1,500.

Tom Schueck moved to make a onetime contribution of \$1,500 to the Corley Mountain Volunteer Fire Department to assist with the cost of the purchase of a used fire truck. Bob Knight seconded and the motion carried.

Land Acquisitions

A. Davidsonville

Greg Butts requested preliminary approval of one of three parts of the land acquisition process involving the Legislative Council, the Governor, and DF&A. After a 60 day review period, final approval by the SPRTC will occur at the October meeting. The Sloan Property is comprised of approximately 180 acres along the Black River, lying east of, and adjacent to the park's boundary. This property contains the remainder of the original 1800's town site of Davidsonville. An appraisal has not been completed at this time. It is estimated at \$1,900 per acre.

Danny Ford moved for a preliminary approval to proceed with the priority land acquisition at Davidsonville Historic State Park. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

B. Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources

A 2,193 square foot, 3 bedrooms, 2 bath residence in the nearby town of Smackover is proposed for the Park Superintendent's residence. It is located approximately two miles from the museum. It is located in an area of similar, well-maintained homes. Its close proximity to the

museum would ensure a quick response by the superintendent to protect park resources. The appraised value is \$165,000. The owners have agreed to sell the property for \$155,000. It meets ASP standards for employee housing and is a savings over purchasing land and building a new structure.

Billy Lindsey moved for a preliminary approval to proceed with the priority land acquisition at Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Approval for a Resolution

Stan Graves requested approval of a resolution for Federal-Aid Transportation Enhancement Program Funds available at 80% federal participation and 20% local match to develop, improve, and acquire six miles of trail improvements at Delta Heritage Trail (Lakeview to Elaine) and the proposed Sloan property land acquisition at Davidsonville Historic State Park.

Mike Mills moved to approve a resolution authorizing staff to seek Federal-Aid Transportation Enhancement Grant funds for Delta Heritage Trail for trail improvements (\$500,000) and Davidsonville Historic State Parks land acquisition (\$288,000). Debbie Haak seconded and the motion carried.

Proposed Policy Directives

Greg Butts presented two proposed policy directives on historic weapons regulations and procedures for preliminary approval. Policy directives are comprised of regulations and procedures while conducting re-enactments to ensure the safety of volunteers and internal staff utilizing historic weapons. ASP has been the site of many historic re-enactments some up to 1,000 participants. Some groups are very professional and need little direction while others are more informal and need specific guidelines to ensure the safety of volunteers and staff. The proposed rules are:

- A. PD 3230 – Historic Weapons Rules and Regulations for State Parks Personnel and Volunteers Conducting Re-enactments or Living History in Arkansas State Parks.
- B. PD 3240 – Historic Weapons Safety Rules for History Participants.

Butts asked the Commission to review the proposed policy directives for the September SPRTC meeting and public hearing, for final approval.

Ozark Folk Center - Easement Request by Loco Ropes

Stan Graves requested approval for an easement between Entergy and the City of Mountain View. The easement will be used for the purpose of supplying electrical power to the Loco Ropes operation.

Danny Ford moved to approve an easement between Entergy and the City of Mountain View for the purpose of supplying electrical power to the Loco Ropes operation. Billy Lindsey seconded and the motion carried.

Stan Graves presented the Commission with a Certificate of Appreciation from Loco Ropes received at the ground breaking ceremony. The certificate states "In appreciation of their leadership, vision and partnership that makes the construction of Loco Ropes at the Ozark Folk Center State Park possible." Chairman McNulty suggested the plaque be hung in the ADPT offices. Bill Barnes suggested a thank you letter be sent to Loco Ropes from the Commission in appreciation, to which Richard Davies replied he would do.

Miscellaneous

Stan Graves referred to the DeGray fact sheet reporting \$16 million has been spent on projects at DeGray Lake Resort State Park to date since FY 97.

Graves reported four new cabins at Lake Ouachita were opened two weeks ago and are in high demand.

Joe Jacobs advised there were several wonderful guest comments regarding Mt. Nebo, Lake Ouachita, and Queen Wilhelmina State Parks worth noting, posted on the SPRTC site.

On behalf of the SPRTC, Chairman McNulty again congratulated Stan Graves, Manager of Planning and Development, on 40 years of dedicated service with ASP, commenting the Commission is proud of him.

Gloria Robins thanked the SPRTC for hosting the Staff Appreciation Dinner at DeGray Lake Resort State Park.

Jim Shamburger commented on the great job on the new campgrounds at Bull Shoals and renovated campgrounds at Woolly Hollow. He has visited both and they look great.

Jim Gaston advised the water feature at the Bull Shoals Visitor Information Center needs attention. Jim Gaston is interested in removing the water feature, requesting costs for removing the display. Stan Graves reported from previous meetings a preliminary estimate of \$150,000-

\$180,000 was quoted to convert it to a landscape feature. Richard Davies asked what the problem was. Stan Graves replied the original construction of the water feature and other elements have failed. When asked opinion of removing water feature, Tracy King, superintendent, replied he would not be opposed. Jim Gaston requested options and costs to remove the water feature at the SPRTC September meeting, which Graves replied he will provide information.

With no further business the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission adjourned at 8:52 a.m. on August 20, 2010 at DeGray Lake Resort State Park.