

**State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock, AR
September 14-15, 2011**

Commission Present

Bob Knight, Chair

Darin Gray, Vice-Chair

Steve Arrison

Bill Barnes

Jay Bunyard

LeRoy Dangeau

Danny Ford

Jim Gaston

John Gill

Debbie Haak

Barbara Harvel

Billy Lindsey

Montine McNulty

Mike Mills

Ness Sechrest

Jim Shamburger

Cindy Smith

Department Staff Present

Richard Davies, Executive Director

Greg Butts, Director, Arkansas State Parks

Joe David Rice, Tourism Director

Nancy Clark, Assistant Tourism Director

Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant

Jon Brown, Operations Manager

Stan Graves, Parks Planning & Development Manager

Joe Jacobs, Marketing & Revenue Manager

Joan Ellison, Public Information Officer

Tom Stolarz, Region I Supervisor

Tony Perrin, Region II Supervisor

Marcel Hanzlik, Region III Supervisor

Shea Lewis, Region IV Supervisor

Dena Woerner, Communications Manager

Renee Robinson, Group Travel Manager

Donna Perrin, Tourism Development Manager

Joanne Hinson, Research & Information Services Manager

Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist

Dottie Boyes, Administrative Specialist

Aristotle

Marla Norris

Jonathan Eudy

CJRW

Shelby Woods
Wayne Woods
Karen Mullikin
Joy Phillips
Jennifer Morgan
Brandi Childress
Amy Frazier

Chuck Robertson
Debbie Grace
Gary Jones
Lyuba Bogan
Ross Cranford
David Welch

Guests

Kathy Holt, Governor's Office
Gretchen Hall, Little Rock Convention of Visitor's Bureau
Marla Crider, Garvin Woodland Gardens

Roll Call

Vice-Chair Darin Gray called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm on Wednesday, September 14, 2011. Gloria Robins called the roll.

Approval of Agenda

Jay Bunyard moved to accept the Agenda as presented. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from Previous Minutes

Steve Arrison moved to accept the Minutes from the August 2011 meeting. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Cynthia Dunlap presented the year-to-date financial report for the period ended August 31, 2011. The expenditures were: Parks Division, \$12,531,853 including construction and grants; Tourism Division, \$2,263,166; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$48,449; Administration Division, \$638,290; and History Commission, \$333,516. Expenditures for the Department

totaled \$15,815,274, a decrease of 1.02% over the same period FY11. The year-to-date operating revenue Parks Division totaled 4,818,605, a decrease of 12% over the same period FY11; 1/8% Cent Tax \$4,683,199, a decrease of .45% over the same period FY11; and 2% Tax \$2,523,991, an increase of 5.9% over the same period FY11.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve the August Financial Report. Jay Bunyard second and the motion carried.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Recreation Strategic Plan

Richard Davies stated that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) has reported challenges in managing all of their facilities due to declining recreation program budgets and increased annual visitation. The Vicksburg district is anticipating a 15% cut and the Little Rock district is anticipating a 20% cut in operating costs. As a result, the Corps plans to implement a nationwide Recreation Strategic Plan. They will be looking to partner, close or mothball selected facilities, which is alarming as the Corps manages 70% of the state's public campsites. The Corps does not know details of how reorganization will occur as yet or how much recreation reductions will be included. Mr. Davies suggested that the Corps may offer selected facilities to cities or state agencies to manage. Sadly, once a facility is closed, it is not reopened unless a project is "mothballed temporarily" and reconsidered at a later time. Bill Barnes advised that the Corps is experimenting with different management styles and may offer selected facilities to be privatized. Billy Lindsey stated it is necessary for the Corps to remain in the recreation business to ensure a large group of citizens are not priced out of camping as a recreation choice. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding options and possible solutions.

Richard Davies suggested Joe David Rice request information from the Corps regarding operating costs for the selected facilities. Once that information is known, ADPT could discuss possible solutions or suggestions with the Corps. John Gill requested talking points on the economic impact of the Corps campgrounds and how much of Arkansas is impacted. Mr. Gill requested information by the Arkansas River Connection Flotilla event, scheduled for October 23, 2011.

Miscellaneous

Richard Davies advised that Senator Pryor is considering a bill to promote domestic and regional tourism comprised of a competitive grant program in the amount of \$10 million (50/50 basis matching) to promote tourism in non-traditional areas. Senator Pryor asked for feedback and comments from ADPT on the bill. Possible suggestions from ADPT were: 1) non-matching grants for areas that couldn't match; 2) areas recovering from natural disasters.

Montine McNulty advised ADPT should offer feedback as quickly as possible as it could be beneficial for the state. Richard Davies suggested once the proposed bill is finalized the SPRTC should offer a resolution of support.

Richard Davies reported that Greg Butts has been awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the National Association of State Park Director's (NASPD) during a conference held in South Dakota in September and congratulated him on the highest honor awarded by the NASPD.

PARKS DIVISION

Withrow Springs – Building Removal Request

Stan Graves requested removal of a substandard, deteriorated bathhouse built in the 1970s. This old campground area has received extensive damage from flooding and will be restored to open space after removal of the building.

Mike Mills moved to approve removal of a bathhouse (Structure No. 58.06/AASIS No. 120006549) at Withrow Springs State Park. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Commission Certificates of Appreciation

Greg Butts requested a Commission Certificate of Appreciation for employee Gale Law, Manager of Administration for ASP, for outstanding service for 11 years with ADPT upon his retirement. Butts also requested a Commission Certificate of Appreciation for employee Kaye Miller, Restaurant Manager at Historic Washington and the Ozark Folk Center State Parks, for exceptional service for 21 years with ASP upon her retirement.

Debbie Haak moved to approve Commission Certificate of Appreciation for employees for outstanding service: Gale Law with 11 years of service and Kaye Miller with 21 years of service with Arkansas State Parks upon their retirement. Jim Gaston seconded and the motion carried.

Village Creek Golf Course Update

Jon Brown provided an update on The Ridges at Village Creek, the 27 hole golf course at Village Creek State Park that closed temporarily June 2010 for renovations, repairs and grow-in. The reopening was scheduled for October 1 but the course requires more time to grown-in. The West nine is doing well but the East nine requires additional time. Brown reported the temporary club house is 95% completed and major maintenance projects will be completed over winter. Stan Graves advised the design for the permanent club house and cart storage facility is

expected by early October with the temporary club house in use for approximately one year. The temporary club house will then be relocated in the park and utilized as staff housing once the club house is completed. Brown reported the course is much improved and the revised reopening in Spring 2012. John Gill noted he was pleased with the report and status of the golf course.

Miscellaneous

Greg Butts reported that the Corps Dike Entrance Road leading to DeGray Lake Resort State Park has been repaved after many requests.

Greg Butts advised that 14 Texas State Park employees lost their homes to wild fires over the Labor Day weekend. ASP, along with other state park systems, is collecting money to donate to the affected staff of Texas State Parks.

Greg Butts invited Commissioners to attend the Annual Superintendent Conference that will be held September 27-29, 2011 at DeGray Lake Resort State Park.

TOURISM DIVISION

Joe David Rice announced that Assistant Tourism Director Nancy Clark will retire on November 30, 2011, after serving over 35 years with the Department. Marla Crider has been selected as the new assistant tourism director and will assume the position on December 1.

Research and Information Services Section

The Research and Information Services Section processed 8,833 requests for travel information during August 2011, a decrease of 23.0% from August 2010. Year-to-date inquiries for 2011 are 103,514, a decrease of 3.7% over 2010. The section received 284 requests for retirement and relocation information in August, down 62.1% from August 2010. Year-to-date requests are 5,743, down 18.4% over 2010.

Arkansas Welcome Centers received 77,931 visitors during August 2011, down 9.1% compared to August 2010. January – August visitation is 574,542, down 7.7% over 2010.

Joanne Hinson reported the 2011 Arkansas Welcome Centers Fall Fam Tour will be taking place in the Arkansas Delta Byways and Arkansas' Land of Legends Regions, September 26-30, 2011.

Tourism Development Section

Donna Perrin reported the *2011-2012 Fall/Winter Calendar of Events* has been delivered, is being distributed to Welcome Centers, and included in vacation kits.

Events for the *2012 Spring/Summer 2012 Calendar of Events* (March 1 through Labor Day weekend 2012) have been posted online. To view and proof posted events, go to www.arkansas.com/events. The deadline for submissions was August 29. Content is currently being edited and will be sent to tourism artist Max Gilbert by the end of September.

The entire FY12 Tourism Attraction Feasibility Study grant balance of \$22,588 has been earmarked toward ventures in three Arkansas communities: Batesville accepted \$10,400 toward conducting a study for the Natural Attraction–Polk Bayou project. Osceola accepted \$5,188 toward conducting a study for a Mississippi River Floating Pier. West Memphis accepted \$7,000 toward conducting a study for the KWEM Radio project.

The 38th Annual Governor’s Conference on Tourism will be held March 4-6, 2012 in West Memphis. Henry Awards nomination forms are in the process of being mailed. The online version of the form is available at www.arkindustryinsider.com/tourism-development/henry-awards.aspx. The deadline for all submissions is October 28, 2011.

Commissioner Jim Gaston reported the Bull Shoals-Lakeview Rotary Club held its 16th Annual Hillbilly Chili Cook-off on Saturday, September 10, at the Bull Shoals-White River State Park in Lakeview. International Chili Society cooks competed for cash prizes, trophies, and the chance to be crowned the Arkansas State Champion. Local organizations cooked up pots of chili to taste and raise money for their favorite community project. Over 2,500 people attended the event.

Communications

Dena Woerner reported the Communications Section is currently making plans for the second annual *Arkansas: The State of Fishing*, a familiarization tour set for November 13–21, 2011 on Lake Ouachita. The event will include travel writers, photographers, trade publications and fishing companies.

Group Travel Section

The Monthly Tracking Report indicated there were 144 inquires for August 2011 compared to 37 for August 2010. Year to date inquiries are 856 for 2011 compared to 715 for 2010.

Renee Robison stated that Liz Bittner, Executive Director of Travel South USA, recently announced the 2013 Travel South Showcase will be held in Little Rock.

Ms. Robison announced the advisory board of bank club directors of Heritage Clubs International planned a site visit to Rogers, Arkansas, August 19-21, in order to finalize the PEER Group 2012 Conference scheduled for March 21-25, 2012. Area convention and visitors bureaus from Rogers, Springdale, Fayetteville and Eureka Springs, will conduct a familiarization tour of the area.

The Group Travel Section and its partners of the Arkansas Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus renewed the “ink pen” sponsorship with Group Travel Leaders of America (GLAMER). For a \$2,500 sponsorship, of which Group Travel contributes, all the partners supply forty-plus conferences held around the country with thousands of ink pens with various logos of attractions, lodging and restaurants to promote Arkansas.

Internet-Related Items

There were 409,599 visitor sessions during the month of August 2011, flat compared to August 2010. The Arkansas.com website placed number three among all 50 state tourism sites and number one amid the contiguous state sites.

The *Hot Deals and Packages* iPhone application had 3,649 downloads from March 1, 2010 through September 4, 2011, with 767 visits in August. During August 2011, there were 50,926 visits from mobile devices to *Arkansas.com*, by way of 12 operating systems.

Advertising/Marketing

Spring/Summer 2012 Advertising and Marketing Recommendations

Joe David Rice welcomed members and guests to the presentation of the Spring/Summer 2012 Advertising and Marketing Proposal. Mr. Rice and Wayne Woods, President and Director of Travel and Tourism Division with Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods, reported on trends in the tourism industry.

The over-arching theme of the 2012 campaign is “*The Art of....*,” leveraging the attention generated by the new Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and spreading the excitement across Arkansas. Large “hero” photos are combined with several secondary photos to convey “lots of things to see and do,” while covering multiple areas of the state. Color-coded pins are

used to highlight photo locations on a miniature map of Arkansas. QR codes will once again be used in magazine and print ads. Most are now linked to the 60-second TV ad to give a concise video tour of the state.

The campaign consists of: two 30-second, four 15-second and one 60-second TV ads, as well as a two-and-a-half-minute spot for the Branson Visitor Channel; three 30-second radio spots; six general consumer magazine ads with a statewide focus; six magazine ads with a focus on each geographic destination area; four niche magazine ads targeting the Outdoor, Biking, Fishing and Hispanic markets; three group travel ads; three newcomer/retirement and relocation ads; and multiple online banner and video ads. All ads include a call to action to further engage in consumers and persuade them to order a Vacation Planning Kit or visit Arkansas.com for more information.

The Art of Engagement, Marketing Arkansas to Today's Traveler.

Spring/Summer 2012 Budget Summary

Research		\$ 63,347.00	
Media		\$4,845,533.00	
Newspaper	\$ 271,894.00		
Radio	\$ 275,000.00		
Television	\$1,987,379.00		
Magazine	\$1,195,972.00		
Out-of-Home	\$ 166,548.00		
Online	\$ 924,240.00		
Group Travel Marketing		\$ 121,491.00	
Creative/Production		\$ 404,763.00	
Publicity and Communications		\$ 87,818.00	
Partners in Tourism		\$ 126,289.00	
See Arkansas First		\$ 19,440.00	
Fishing & Outdoor Guide and Campaign		\$ 100,000.00	
The Natural State Golf Trail		\$ 33,035.00	
Vacation Planning Kit Production		\$ 10,000.00	
Photography		\$ 15,000.00	
Contingency		\$ 22,500.00	
Earned Discounts		\$ -92,007.00	
TOTAL			\$5,757,209.00
<u>Newcomers Campaign</u>			<u>\$ 129,400.00</u>
TOTAL Including Newcomers			\$5,886,609.00

Mike Mills moved to accept the Spring/Summer 2012 Advertising and Marketing Recommendations for \$5,886,609.00. Debbie Haak seconded and motion carried.

Miscellaneous

Joe David Rice announced that Dale Christy has retired after serving several years as Executive Director of the Northwest Arkansas Tourist Association. Mr. Rice requested the Commission approve a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Christy for his many years of service to the tourism industry.

Mike Mills moved to approve a Certificate of Appreciation to Executive Director Dale Christy for his long term and valued advocacy in the tourism industry in The Natural State and leadership of the Northwest Arkansas Tourism Association. Darin Gray seconded and the motion carried.

Commissioner John Gill announced that Executive Director Richard Davies was honored by Hostelling Arkansas, Inc. at a benefit for the Firehouse Hostel and Museum for his work in the tourism industry. The event was held at the Governor's Mansion on Thursday, September 8.

Debbie Haak moved to adjourn. Mike Mills seconded and the motion carried.

Without any further business the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission adjourned at 10:35 a.m. on September 15, 2011, at the State House Convention Center in Little Rock, Arkansas.