

MINUTES

**State Parks, Recreation & Travel Commission
Paragould Community Center
Paragould, Arkansas
November 19, 2009**

Commission Present

Danny Ford, Chairman
Bill Barnes
Jim Gaston
Debbie Haak
Billy Lindsey
Mike Mills
Tom Schueck
Jim Shamburger
Cindy Smith

Commission Absent

Montine McNulty, Vice-Chairman
Steve Arrison
Jay Bunyard
Darin Gray
Bob Knight
Ness Sechrest

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
Stan Graves, Planning & Development Manager
Joe Jacobs, Marketing & Revenue Manager
Joan Ellison, Public Information Officer
Jon Brown, Region I Supervisor
Tony Perrin, Region II 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
Kimberly Williams, Travel Writer
Dottie Boyles, Administrative Specialist
Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist

CJRW

Wayne Woods
Shelby Woods
Karen Mullikin
Carrie Orahood
Chance Woods

Aristotle

Marla Norris
Jonathan Eudy
Dina Pruitt

Guests

Kathy Holt, Governor's Office
Linda Collins-Smith, Days Inn Suites Pochontas
Honorable Mike Gaskill, Mayor of Paragould
Kalene Griffith, President & CEO, Bentonville Convention Visitor's Bureau
Kelley Linck, Director, Ozark Mountain Region Tourism Association
Sue McGowan, Director of Economic Development Corporation, Paragould Chamber of Commerce
Paula Miles, Program Coordinator, Arkansas Delta Byways

Roll Call

Chairman Danny Ford called the meeting to order at 8:34 am on Thursday, November 19, 2009. Gloria Robins called the roll.

Approval of Agenda

Mike Mills moved to approve the Agenda. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Mike Mills moved to approve the Minutes from the October 2009 meeting. Debbie Haak seconded and the motion carried.

Welcome

Honorable Mike Gaskill welcomed the State Parks Recreation and Travel Commission to Paragould and expressed his appreciation to guests and the commission for coming to Paragould and the Paragould Community Center. Mayor Gaskill noted the Paragould Community Center opened in March 2005 and how it came into being. The citizens of Paragould voted in favor of a one-half penny temporary sales tax to fund the building of the community center and a one-half penny permanent sales tax to operate and maintain the center. The Paragould Community Center hosts 54,000 square feet, an indoor pool, a water park, 11 soccer fields and a men's softball field with the facility being greatly utilized by the community, resulting in a great success for the citizens and pride by the community.

Chairman Danny Ford thanked Mayor Gaskill and the city of Paragould for their hospitality. He also extended appreciation to Sue McGowan for her efforts in coordinating the meeting room and refreshments.

Delta Byways Update

Marcel Hanzlik gave an update on the Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association, noting the association received a \$ 622,000 grant to pave the road to the Chalk Bluff Civil War County Park. He reported the association received a \$ 1.7 million grant for a hiking/biking trail in Jonesboro. Hanzlik reported the association has received \$ 2.3 million in grant funding since August.

Financial Report

Cynthia Dunlap presented the financial report for the fiscal year-to-date period ended October 31, 2009. Parks Division expenditures totaled \$23,194,971; Tourism Division, \$4,698,090; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$169,608; Administration Division, \$1,084,392; and History Commission, \$613,768. Expenditures for the Department totaled \$29,760,829, which included construction and grants. Fiscal year-to-date operating revenue for the Parks Division totaled \$9,670,761, a decrease of 0.2% from last year's total.

Mike Mills moved to accept the Financial Report as presented. Debbie Haak seconded and the motion carried.

Commissioner Cindy Smith had recently visited a state park museum and made the suggestion of offering an advertised “free admission month” to museums during the slower revenue period, offering the opportunity to visit the museums free of charge, in hopes guests will return and bring others as well. There were positive comments from commissioners in favor of the idea. Greg Butts commented a similar “free Sunday” program had been tried previously, without success, but he will re-consider this suggestion of a specific “month of free admission” and provide revenue data at the January 2010 commission meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Italy Presentation

Executive Director Richard W. Davies reported on a recent trip to Italy in conjunction with the University of Arkansas School of Architecture. Richard W. Davies, Joe David Rice, Greg Butts, Jeff Shannon (Dean of Architecture) and Mark Boyer (Director of Landscape Architecture) met with the staff from the Monti Simbruni Regional Park outside Rome, and shared ideas on how to increase tourism to the park and nearby communities. Davies noted their park system is not as developed as our system, offering more primitive camping and essentially a day use park for guests. Very science and history oriented, the park has a major emphasis on preservation of the natural areas. The Italian park staff was interested in receiving advice on park operations and attracting more tourists to the area. Davies showed a presentation to include the park and surrounding areas visited by the group.

Budget Cuts

Richard W. Davies informed commission members on the latest information on budget cuts for fiscal year 2010. Davies anticipated cuts estimating \$ 2 - \$ 3 million depending on the general and Conservation Tax revenues. Davies reported that staff is currently working on contingency plans for the upcoming year. Although the projections are not good, there are many states that are experiencing more severe budget cuts in operations and staffing.

Arkansas Heritage Trails Update

Richard W. Davies reported the Department of Arkansas Heritage has compiled a geographical information system (GIS) of the historical trails and matched them to state highways and county roads. ADPT has met with the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department and they are creating a signage plan for the trails. ADPT is working with CJRW to create a logo and a revised brochure while Aristotle is creating a website.

2010 Meeting Schedule

Richard W. Davies presented the proposed 2010 SPRTC schedule to Commission for approval:

Mike Mills moved to approve the 2010 meeting schedule for the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission:

January 21	Hot Springs
February 18	Mt. Magazine
April 15	McGehee
May 20	Star City
June 17	Blytheville
July 15	Jonesboro
August 19	DeGray Lake Resort State Park
	Staff Appreciation Dinner and Service Awards
September 22-23	Little Rock – AHA Show
October 21	Harrison
November 18	Bentonville

Debbie Haak seconded and the motion carried.

2008 Volunteer Report

Richard W. Davies discussed the 2008 Annual Report on Volunteers, Donations and Grants. Of 115 state agencies reported, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism placed first with a total of 66,889 volunteers. The volunteer reports are submitted each January to the Department of Human Services Division of Volunteerism. The numbers are used to compile a study of the economic impact of Arkansas volunteers.

Rails to Trails Update

Richard W. Davies reported a letter, written by Governor Beebe's attorney, has been sent to the federal government requesting a waiver be awarded so that the Economic Development groups be allowed to use the rail from the Delta Heritage Trail. The letter/request was signed by Governor Beebe, Richard W. Davies and Dan Flowers, Director of Arkansas Highway Transportation Department.

PARKS DIVISION

Crater of Diamonds – Proposed Policy Directive 2205 Revisions

Director Greg Butts noted it was time for the public meeting on the search area regulations revisions and reported his office had not received any comments or correspondence during the 30 day public comment period. At 2:30 pm Chairman Ford opened the floor for comments and/or discussion on the amended Park Directive 2205. There were not any public comments received during the public meeting. Butts noted the amendment offered fewer restrictions than previously allowed.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve the proposed amended Policy Directive 2205- Crater of Diamonds State Park as presented in the October meeting. Debbie Haak seconded and the motion carried.

ABA Winter TV and Radio Spots Advertisements

Joe Jacobs presented the Arkansas Broadcasters Association Winter 2009 – 2010 radio and TV spots to the commission for approval.

Joan Ellison distributed a DVD of the archival footage of the state parks from the 1960s used for the “Make New Memories” TV spot to commissioners.

Debbie Haak moved to approve the Winter 2009 – 2010 radio and TV spots:

TV Spots (30-second spots)

TV Cut # 1: “MountainStateParks.com” (new spot)

TV Cut # 2: “Make New Memories” (new spot)

Radio Spots (60-second spots)

Radio Cut # 1: “Arkansas State Parks Cabins” (new spot)

Radio Cut # 2: “Make New Memories” (new spot)

Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Cane Creek State Park – Request for a Use Permit (Garnett Fire Dept)

Stan Graves requested approval for a use permit for the Garnett Fire Department allowing them to construct and maintain a fire sub-station adjacent to the Arkansas Forestry Commission within the boundary of Cane Creek State Park. Staff suggested this would be a good partnership and recommended approval. Discussion ensued regarding the absence of restrooms in the facility, with the commission in favor of the facility pending accessibility to restrooms.

Mike Mills moved to approve the use permit at Cane Creek State Park by the Garnett Fire Department, contingent on including a functional waste water system and toilet in the proposed fire sub-station or an agreement to utilize the Arkansas Forestry Commission facility nearby, as follows:

A parcel of Land in the South Half of the Southwest Quarter (PT. S1/2 SW1/4) of Sections 24, T-9-S, R-7-W, Lincoln County, Arkansas and being more particularly described as follows: Commencing at a Found T-Post at the Northwest Corner (NW Cor.) of the Southwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (SW1/4 SW1/4) of said Section 24, and run thence S 62° 46'47" E for 1568.33 to a point at the Centerline intersection of Arkansas State Highway # 293 and "Gray Fox Road"; Thence run N 58°31'47" E along the Centerline for of "Grey Fox Road" for 296.82' to the Point of Beginning (P.O.B.): Thence run N 58°39'42" E along said Centerline for 323.83' to a point: Thence runs S 41°26'46" E for 272.45' to a point: Thence run S 59°53'00" to a point; Thence run N 39°15'35" W for 263.59' to the Point of Beginning (P.O.B.). Containing 2.00 Acres and is subject to and Including a 30' wide Roadway/Utility Easement, the Centerline being more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the Northwest Corner (NW Cor.) of the SW ¼ SW1/4 of Section 24, T-9-S, R-7-W, and run thence S 62°46'47" E for 1568.33' to a point at the Centerline Intersection of Arkansas State Highway # 293 and "Gray Fox Road" being the Point of Beginning (P.O.B.) of said 30' Wide Easement: Thence run along said Centerline of Easement (15'Each Side) N 58°31'47" E along the Centerline of "Gray Fox Road" for 296.82': Thence run N 58°39'42" E along Centerline of "Gray Fox Road" for 323.83' to the Point of Termination (P.O.T.) of said Easement, containing one acre, more or less, being Subject to All Other Easements, Public or Private which may exist thereto. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Hobbs State Park – Request for a Use Permit (Macauley & Hauser)

Stan Graves requested approval for a use permit for a driveway and utility easement adjacent to the park for new property owners Michael J. Macauley and Marianne Hauser to access their property. The commission had previously approved the same use permit for previous owners.

Cindy Smith moved to approve the use permit to Michael J. Macauley and Marianne Hauser to access their property as follows:

A Fifteen (15) foot strip of land, lying 7 feet 6 inches either side of the following described line: Beginning N 03 deg. 10' 20" East 730.00 feet and 15 feet West of the Southeast (SE) Corner of the NE ¼ of the NW ¼; thence South 03 deg. 10' 20" West 529.25 feet; thence South 24 deg. 54' 44" West 25.48 feet; thence South 52 deg. 57'31" West 26.39 feet; thence South 42 deg. 02'52" West 49.08 feet; thence South 09 deg. 33'31" West 318.95 feet; thence South 23 deg. 57'51" West 547.42 feet; thence South 30 deg. 28' 51" West 77.07 feet; thence South 36 deg. 45'19" West 201.39 feet to the centerline of Benton County Road No. 127, all in Section 20, Township 19 North, Range 27 West, in Benton County, Arkansas, containing .611 acre, more or less. Tom Schueck seconded and the motion carried.

Hobbs & Devil's Den State Park – Request Removal of Structures from Inventory

Stan Graves requested approval to remove substandard structures from inventory at Hobbs, Devil's Den, Crowley's Ridge, and Lake Catherine State Parks:

Tom Schueck moved to approve the removal of all structures as listed in agenda items # 15, # 16, and # 17 from inventory:

Hobbs

Barn	Building No. 03.15 / AASIS No. 120005516
Bassett House	Building No. 03.18 / AASIS No. 120005519
Beets House	Building No. 03.17 / AASIS No. 120005518
Nyborg Barn	Building No. 03.14 / AASIS No. 120005514

Devil's Den

Water Treatment Facility	Building No. 16.24 / AASIS No. 120005749
---------------------------------	---

**Well House
Red House**

**Building No. 16.65 / AASIS No. 5782
Building No. 16.57 / AAISS No. 120005775**

**Crowley's Ridge
Well House**

Building No. 12.19 / AASIS No. 120005727

**Lake Catherine
Bath Shed
Snack Shed**

**Building No. 23.59 / AASIS No. 120005868
Building No. 23.55 / AASIS No. 120005865**

Mike Mills seconded and the motion carried.

Miscellaneous

Greg Butts noted an interesting news article on a camping outing at Lake Ouachita State Park with a unique experience, making memories nonetheless. Butts relayed a positive email received from Ohio guests that played the Village Creek Golf Course commenting Arkansas State Parks are well run. Butts shared an appreciative letter received from Daisy State Park repeat guests in regards to a great facility for an annual camping reunion tradition.

Greg Butts provided a brief update on Village Creek Resort advising ADPT, Cross County Bank (CCB), and VCR, LLC had received a notice from Nabholz Construction Corporation demanding \$ 387,000 for the initial resort construction costs. A Materialman's and Mechanic's Lien was subsequently filed against all parties. CCB anticipates the VCR loan default/foreclosure process to be completed in December. Once this process is finalized, VCR's former leasehold interest may be sold to a new developer, to be approved by ADPT. In the interim, ASP has continued to work on the golf course, resulting in significant improvements to the course.

Chairman Danny Ford suggested a film be created with the old archival footage of state parks, incorporated with current images of state parks, as a presentation and/or marketing tool. Ford suggested this would be a great tool to be shown to local civic groups, schools, etc. Joan Ellison replied she will work with Jones Productions to determine costs.

TOURISM DIVISION

Marketing Outlook Forum

Tourism Director Joe David Rice gave Commissioners an overview of the U.S. Travel Association's Marketing Outlook Forum, held in Little Rock on October 26-28. The conference featured economic trends and forecasts specifically relating to the travel industry. Approximately

400 people attended the event. Mr. Rice reported he received positive feedback both during and after the conference. Mr. Rice also thanked Commissioner Tom Schueck for his role in getting Dallas Cowboys' owner Jerry Jones to speak at the conference.

Research and Information Services Section

The Research and Information Services Section processed 52,594 requests for information during October 2009. The year-to-date total is 417,174, down 11.1 percent compared to the same period in 2008. Arkansas State Welcome Center visitation was 79,976 in October, up 3.4 percent from October 2008. Year-to-date visitation is 750,422, up 11.3 percent from 2008.

Research and Information Services Manager Joanne Hinson reported on the progress of the Lake Village Welcome Center. Several photographs were presented showing the construction of the fishing pier and picnic area.

Tourism Development Section

Tourism Development Manager Donna Perrin attended the AARP Life@50+ Convention and Trade Show in Las Vegas on October 21-24. Between 25,000-30,000 attendees registered for the event as well as 362 vendors. The purpose of the event was to promote retirement and relocation destinations.

Ms. Perrin reported on the Tennessee Sustainable Tourism Workshop meeting hosted by the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. Each workshop targeted the hospitality and tourism industry, providing sustainable tourism resources, case studies, and access to leading experts in the field.

Group Travel Section

Group Travel Manager Renee Robison reported that the October tracking report indicated 60 inquiries for 2009, compared to 43 for October 2008. Year-to-date inquiry totals are 924 for 2009, up from 783 in 2008. Motorcycle market inquiry totals are 276 year-to-date. Tradeshow inquiries number 319, compared to 120 for the same period in 2008.

Communications Section

Communications Manager Dena Woerner updated the Commissioners on the latest social marketing efforts. Ms. Woerner reported that Whrrl.com has featured two Arkansas Tourism stories on the Whrrl homepage.

Ms. Woerner gave a presentation on the launch of QR codes. The *Chicago Tribune* featured the Holiday Trail of Lights in an article on holiday light displays throughout the U.S. She also gave an overview of the upcoming iPhone application for Arkansas Tourism.

Internet-Related Items

Marla Johnson Norris of Aristotle informed the Commission that Arkansas.com received 550,925 visits in October with 5,518,440 visits, year-to-date. Ms. Norris also discussed the iPhone application for the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. The application is expected to be available to iPhone users in April 2010.

Jonathan Eudy updated Commissioners on several additions to Arkansas.com, including the travel writers blog area and specific content added for search engines. Mr. Eudy reported that five pages of QR bar codes were added to ArkIndustryInsider.com, including links to Arkansas's regional tourism associations.

Advertising/Marketing

Karen Mullikin reported on the 2009 Cooperative Advertising program. Commissioners were given an overview of two recently completed publicity projects, See Arkansas First and Welcome to Arkansas. Both programs were well received throughout the state.

Wayne Woods reported the Commission approved recommendations for the 2010 Spring/Summer Newspaper Insert. The insert would appear in every daily and weekly newspaper in the state of Arkansas, *Arkansas Business*, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* (in Pulaski County), *Northwest Business Journal* and in 19 out-of-state markets with a total circulation of 6,058,323 including online impressions of 2,396,072 and print circulation of 3,662,251.

Media costs are \$327,305. This is a 50/50 co-op project with the Arkansas hospitality industry. In other words, the industry would need to participate at the \$327,305 level as well. Mr. Woods said he was not sure this amount of money could be raised during these tough economic times.

Most have indicated they are still planning to advertise, but several have said they will participate at a reduced level from 2009. Therefore, it's possible we might have to reduce our total circulation. One option is to purchase markets by ZIP codes in certain cities. In this way media and print costs can be reduced and still target the most important customer, should there be a shortfall.

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

Danny Ford presented the Nominating Committee's report to the Commissioners. Montine McNulty was nominated for chair and Bob Knight for vice-chair of the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for 2010.

Billy Lindsey moved to approve the Nominating Committee's nomination of Montine McNulty as Chairman and Bob Knight as Vice Chairman for 2010. Debbie Haak seconded and the motion carried.

With no further business, the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 19, 2009.