

Minutes
State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
Little Rock, Arkansas
January 16-17, 2003

Commissioners Present

Billy Lindsey, Chairman	Bill Barnes	Polly Wood Crews
Debra Haak	Jim Gaston	Danny Ford (Thursday Only)
Loretta House	Mike Mills	Ness Sechrest
Wade Williams	Jane Christenson	Jim Shamburger
Montine McNulty		

Commissioners Absent

Ted Mullenix

Department Staff Present

Richard W. Davies, Executive Director
Larry Cargile, Central Administration Director
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director
Greg Butts, State Parks Director
Nancy Clark, Assistant Tourism Director
Chris Peek, Manager, Parks Administration
Mac Balkman, Manager, Parks Operations
Stan Graves, Manager, Parks Planning & Development
Lynn Warren, Landscape Architect
Jim Cannon, Region IV Supervisor
Jon Brown, Region I Supervisor
Chris Snodgrass, Superintendent, DeGray Lake Resort State Park
Randy Frazier, Superintendent, Pinnacle Mountain State Park
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant
Jennifer Carson, Administrative Assistant
Sandy Burch, Administrative Assistant

Agency Staff Present

Shelby Woods	Wayne Woods	Karen Mullikin
Pam Jones	Kay Medlin	Libby Doss

Aristotle

Marla Norris	Jonathan Eudy	Dina Pruitt
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Guests Present

Lt. Governor Winthrop P. Rockefeller
Senator Randy Lavery
Marynell Branch, Governor's Office
Brian Clark, Sells/Clark
Paul Vitale, Hot Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau
Steve Arrison, Hot Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau
Heather Watkins, Heathcott Associates
Tanya Palmer, Heathcott Associates
Dan O'Byrne, Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau

The following guests were present for the public meeting:

Roger Bishop	Jim Smedley	Michael Dumers, Dumas
Rex Thomson	Myranda Thomsen	Conner Thomsen
Brad Sims	Carmen Mosley-Sims	Luca Mosley-Sims
Norma Long, Geoark1	Clay Burne, Little Rock	J.T. Higgins, Bryant
Charles Button, Trailblazer	Kerrie Page	Richard Page, Rusty-Da-Dog
E. Grant	Mike Martin, Pottsville	Tony Morgen, Arkansas Bugman
Bert, Long Dogs	Steve Sparks, Little Rock	David Blassingame, Little Rock
John Svendsen	Martha Blassingame, Little Rock	

Call to Order

Chairman Billy Lindsey called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and Gloria Robins called the roll.

Approval of the Agenda

Ness Sechrest moved to approve the agenda. Mike Mills seconded and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Jane Christenson moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Wade Williams seconded and the motion carried.

Recognition of Guests

Chairman Lindsey recognized guests in attendance.

Financial Report

Larry Cargile presented a financial report for the fiscal year-to-date period ended December 31, 2002. The Parks Division expenditures, including construction/ grants, totaled

\$25,086,776, or 28% of annual budget. Tourism Division expenditures totaled \$3,954,673, or 32% of annual budget. Keep Arkansas Beautiful expenditures were \$231,733, or 28% of budget. Administration Division expenditures totaled \$1,115,512, or 49% of budget. History Commission expenditures were \$639,316, or 51% of budget. Total Department expenditures - \$31,028,010 or 29% of annual budget.

Parks Division operating revenue for the fiscal year-to-date period ended December 31, 2002, totaled \$7,203,175, an increase of 4% over the same period last year. Operating revenue for the month of December was \$419,565, a decrease of 5% from last December.

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

Special Order of Business

Chairman Billy Lindsey presented Debbie Haak with the 2002 Chairman Plaque for the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission. Chairman Lindsey said he had been a member of the Commission for fifteen years. The position of Chairman of the Commission is one of great responsibility. Many requests are made of the Chairman, many of which most people are not aware of, and it is difficult to meet all those requests. Mr. Lindsey said he did not recall any former Chairman who had done a finer job than Ms. Haak.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2003 Per Diem

Richard Davies said Act 1211 of 1995 requires the Commission to set its per diem for the year at the first meeting of the year. Currently the Commission is authorized a per diem up to \$75.00. The per diem now is \$65.00.

Danny Ford moved to set the per diem at \$65 per day, plus all expenses incurred on Wednesday for early arrival for the remainder of the calendar year 2003. Jane Christenson seconded and the motion carried.

2003 Commission Schedule

Richard Davies called the Commissioners' attention to a 2003 meeting schedule that had been provided. The schedule presented was:

January 16 th & 17 th	Little Rock
February 19 th & 20 th	Little Rock with the Legislative Dinner the evening of February 18 th
March	no meeting
April 17 th & 18 th	Eureka Springs
May 15 th & 16 th	Queen Wilhelmina State Park

June 19 th & 20 th	Lake Dardanelle State Park with the Staff Appreciation Dinner the evening of June 18 th
July 17 th & 18 th	Lake Village
August 21 st & 22 nd	Pocahontas
September 18 th & 19 th	Hot Springs
October 16 th & 17 th	Hope/Old Washington Historic State Park
November 20 th & 21 st	Blytheville

Mr. Davies said that the Arkansas State Highway Commission wants to meet with the SPRTC sometime during the year. Dan Flowers has been provided with the meeting schedule and will try to find a time when a joint meeting can be held.

Montine McNulty moved to approve the CY2003 meeting schedule as presented. Jane Christenson seconded and the motion carried.

Legislative Issues

Richard Davies referred the Commissioners to a packet of information entitled, *Explanation of Bill Reorganizing Executive Branch*. Mr. Davies said Governor Huckabee has decided that state government needs reorganizing. Currently there are 53 General Revenue Agencies. The Governor wants to reorganize state government into ten major departments. The 53 agencies have been restructured to be a part of the ten departments according to function. The head of each department will be called a “secretary.” Within the departments will be bureaus that will be headed up by directors, and “offices” will be a part of the bureaus and be headed up by deputy directors. The current Department of Parks & Tourism will be a part of the Department of the Interior. This new department will be made up of the following: Office of Administrative Support, Bureau of State Parks, Bureau of Tourism, the State Library, the Office of Archives, currently known as the History Commission, and the Bureau of Arkansas Heritage. Mr. Davies further explained the offices that will fall under the different bureaus, and the authority different commissions will have under the bill. He added that at this time, no one knows who the ten department secretaries will be. The assumption is, if the bill is passed, the Governor will make those appointments at that time. Mr. Davies said this is an opportunity for Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT) to give itself a hard look and become more efficient. Though there may not be much in immediate savings, in the long run there would be because the reorganization will save on growth and add to efficiency.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Davies said the dinner for the Legislators will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18th at Rick’s Armory. He asked that the Commissioners to try to attend. The theme will be the Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Celebration.

Jim Gaston expressed, on behalf of himself and his family, sincere thanks for everybody’s phone calls and cards following the death of his daughter-in-law, Lisa. Mr. Gaston

said he appreciated it, and that it means a lot to have so many friends. He said he is happy to report that Lisa's children are doing well.

Chairman Lindsey offered a formal welcome to new Commissioner Jim Shamburger.

PARKS DIVISION

Removal of Buildings from Inventory

Stan Graves detailed a list of structures that are deteriorated, or are scheduled for removal to allow for new construction. Mr. Graves asked approval to remove the buildings from inventory.

Jim Gaston moved to approve the removal of the following buildings from inventory: At Daisy State Park, building #13.16 a residence and pump houses #13.02, #13.05, #13.09, #13.11 and #13.14. At Lake Frierson State Park, a storage building #38.16. At Mt. Nebo State Park a fuel station building #06.36. At Petit Jean State Park, building #02.10 a concrete block bathhouse. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.

Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area – Proposed Acquisition of Sutton Property

Stan Graves said there are 3.04 acres available for acquisition that, if approved, would round out the park boundary at a bluff area overlooking the War Eagle River. Mr. Graves said he was asking approval to acquire the property because it is not a part of the original A-75 plan. The cost of the 3.04 acres is \$26,000. Funding for the acquisition is available because of a savings from other acquisitions; therefore, no additional funding would be needed.

Wade Williams moved to approve the acquisition of 3.04 acres, part of the Northwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter, Section 34, Township 19 North, Range 28 West, Benton County, from the Sutton Trust for a cost of \$26,000. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.

December Ice Storms – Report on Damage

Mac Balkman said that on December 3rd through December 5th ice storms crossed the state, primarily in the northern part of the state. Eighteen counties were affected, and within those counties there are seven state parks that received some damage. The President declared the event a major disaster for the state, which triggered the release of federal funds to help recovery from the storm damage. This makes state parks eligible for FEMA funds to recover some of the loss. A request has been submitted to FEMA for assistance. The total amount of expense incurred was \$51,217. Bill Barnes asked if the assessment takes into account timber damage at market value. Mr. Balkman said there is very little marketable timber affected. The costs are

primarily labor for clean-up, equipment rental and related purchases. Greg Butts said a few of the parks were without electricity for seven days. Reimbursement will not include loss of revenue.

Geocaching and Campground Policies – Public Meeting

Greg Butts said the policies will be discussed separately as part of the public review and comment process.

Geocaching

Greg Butts explained that Geocaching is an activity that uses Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) units to locate a hidden “treasure” known as a cache. The coordinates of the location of the cache are posted on websites. It was discovered that the activity is already going on in state parks, and it had been reported by Park Superintendents to enhance visitation and be a revenue generator. A park directive was developed to permit the activity, while at the same time protect the mission of state parks. Part of the process of implementing a new park directive includes public comment. An advertisement was placed in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* notifying interested parties of the 30-day public comment period. Once the Commission approves the policy it will be sent to the Administrative Rules Committee of the Legislative Council. The Committee will not be meeting during the Legislative Session. Their first meeting most likely will take place in April; however, we can proceed with putting the directive in place.

Mr. Butts said, through the comment period, 24 comments were received by phone, mail, and email. Two principle areas concerned those who made comment. One is the time limit a cache could be in place in a state park, which the policy states is four months. A change Mr. Butts is proposing is to increase to six months the time a cache can be in place, with an option to renew the permit for an additional six months, if park staff determines no adverse environmental impacts have occurred. Mr. Butts said after a period of one year, the time limit can be revisited.

Wade Williams asked why the directive requires a transparent container. Why would it not be acceptable to have a container that is approved by park staff with a dated sticker placed on it? Mr. Butts said part of the job of park staff is to insure the safety of the public and our employees. Things have changed since the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. If ammo cans are used, someone could put something dangerous in the can. Mr. Butts said there are various plastic containers that are latchable and transparent. He suggested that a transparent container be tried until it is determined that it would not work as a cache container. Jim Gaston said, if he was intent on causing to harm to someone, the type of container that was used would not effect what harmful device might put in it – a bomb could be wrapped in aluminum foil or gift wrap. Mr. Williams said these are things that are hidden. In order to find them, someone has to go to the Internet, get the coordinates, and go out and search for them. Mr. Williams said he understood Mr. Butts’ concern, but if someone wanted to harm a person, it could be done with a plastic container. Mr. Butts said he would not require park staff to monitor caches by looking inside the containers. Jim Gaston said he does not feel a one-year permit will cause harm.

Loretta House asked if it is known what other public parks are doing about Geocaching. Greg Butts said the National Park Service does not allow it. Some state parks systems are allowing it and some are looking into permitting it.

Mike Mills said if the geocaching community is comfortable with using ammo boxes, why should we change it? Anything could be put in a clear plastic container that could explode. Chairman Lindsey asked if, when a cache is put out the first time, would park staff see it, and know where it would be located. Mr. Butts said, yes. Mr. Lindsey said he realizes that someone could change the contents of the cache. Jim Gaston said he had been using ammo boxes for years because they are cheap and they work. In his view, plastic would not work as a cache container. Mr. Gaston said he understood Mr. Butts' concerns. Mr. Butts said if we are trying to ensure the safety of both employees and park visitors, there is a reason to require a transparent container. He said he would not require park staff to open a closed ammo container when they don't know what it contains. Mr. Butts said park housekeeping staff empties waste containers and one would be surprised what is found in those waste containers. He said if we don't want to be in the monitoring business, that is fine, but he would not instruct park staff to open ammo cans. Wade Williams said, then we need to do away with our firing range because one unstable person could come in and start shooting park staff. We let visitors bring guns onto park property and we know they are bringing something dangerous. Mr. Williams said we cannot eliminate all risk. He said he questions the necessity of requiring park staff to inspect the contents of the containers. Mr. Williams said we would know where the cache is located, the person who placed it there, and we would know when it needs to be removed. Chairman Lindsey said he agreed in that he wouldn't instruct his staff to open a closed container once it had been opened and closed by other people.

Chairman Lindsey opened the meeting for public comments.

Rex Thomson from Jacksonville – Mr. Thomson said extending the permit time is great. Regarding plastic containers, Mr. Thomson said that water always gets in them and destroys the cache. He said recently he located 17 caches in one day. One half of the caches were in ammo cans. One was painted yellow and full of children's toys. Mr. Thomson said he and his family loves "caching", and his state parks. This year he plans on visiting every cache in Arkansas.

Carmon Mosley-Sims from Little Rock - Ms. Mosley-Sims said she and her family are new to geocaching and have only logged 16 sites. She said it is a great family activity and that they have rediscovered their backyard in Arkansas and enjoy coming into state parks. She appreciates the comments the Commissioners had made, and that they echo the comments she was going to make. Possibility the answer is to put more responsibility on the geocachers to maintain their sites and to report problems to park staff. We are the ideal visitor because we care about preserving natural resources, too. Ammo boxes are better. Chairman Lindsey asked how much her family visited state parks prior to becoming a geocacher. Ms. Mosley-Sims responded that before they became geocachers, they always wanted to go to state parks but didn't have a reason to visit them, so they didn't go much at all.

Charles Menton from Cassville, Mo. - Mr. Menton said he believes there can be both plastic and ammo cans used. He said he has used plastic. Mr. Menton said geocachers can also become park volunteers by logging bench marks in state parks.

Norma Long from Little Rock - Ms. Long said she has caches in two state parks. She said she has been in Arkansas for 56 years and did not know much about the state until she became a geocacher. Ms. Long said that during the summer of 2001 her family went to every state park, and everyone again in 2002. She said there have been international visitors to Arkansas because of geocaching. Ms. Long said a couple from Minnesota spent two weeks in Arkansas March 2002, camping in state parks and geocaching. In September they came back and spent another two weeks. She said that is a long time to spend in Arkansas when you don't have relatives here. Ms. Long said ammo cans are her choice. She said items in plastic containers get wet. She said she monitors her caches.

Mike Dumas from North Little Rock - Mr. Dumas said he had been to 98 cache sites, 60 in Arkansas. Regarding bombs in caches, he said he had been a combat engineer in the Army, and he could make a bomb out of anything in the meeting room. Ammo cans are a preference for most geocachers because they keep the log books dry.

Bert Drake from Little Rock - Mr. Drake said he has taught orienting with a compass to scouts for years. He said the boys were not very interested in it until they discovered geocaching. Mr. Drake said if he were going to plant a bomb in a box in a state park, he would not apply for a permit for it. He said he favors a one-year permit period. If a cache is removed after four months, people will continue to search for it.

John Svendsen from Little Rock - Mr. Svendsen said he and his family have been geocaching for about 1 ½ years. He said he has caches he maintains in Arkansas, other states and overseas. Mr. Svendsen said geocaching can be used to promote our state parks. He said he has lived in Arkansas for 20 years, and there were parks he never visited until he became a geocacher. He said he visited a cache in Oregon that required that a photo be taken with a sack of trash and a park ranger in order to claim the cache. Regarding the time limit on a cache, he has a cache in Arkansas where it has been 236 days since it was last found. Mr. Svendsen said it needs to be an easy process to renew a permit.

Tom Morgan from West Memphis - Mr. Morgan said the only problem he has ever had with a cache is when it was in a plastic container. He said he never had a cache in an ammo can disturbed by an animal. Mr. Morgan said he feels the time limit should be at least one year because sometimes it takes a long time to locate a cache.

Brad Sims from Little Rock - Mr. Sims said he has found 16 caches and he has yet to see any spur trails developing because people approach the cache from many different directions. Mr. Sims had his son Luca with him. He said geocaching is a great family activity. Mr. Sims said before they started geocaching they would never have gone to so many places in Arkansas.

Mr. Sims said he is a state employee with the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority. He said there has been a lot of talk about improving science and math education in Arkansas. Mr. Sims said geocaching is an excellent teaching tool for those subjects.

Mark Martin from Pottsville - Mr. Martin said he has had people from the Czech Republic visit his cache. He said he agrees with the man who said people approach a cache from many different directions; therefore, they don't really create spur trails. Mr. Martin is in favor of allowing ammo cans, and extending the permit time.

Eric Brown from Malvern - Mr. Brown suggested using multi-stage caches.

Wade Williams moved to approve the Geocaching Park Directive #3220 as presented, with the following changes: Remove the word "transparent" in Section II A. Add that the container must be approved by the Park Superintendent/ Museum Director, or designated uniformed staff, and that a sticker or decal be attached that indicates the permit dates, and identifies it as an approved cache. Change the length of the permit from six months to one year, and that the original permit may be extended an additional one year. Add section I H to state that the Park Superintendent/Museum Director, or designated uniformed staff, may remove a cache if it is determined that it is causing adverse environmental damage. Ness Sechrest seconded and the motion carried.

Jim Gaston said that, perhaps, geocachers could help us find historical sites in the state. Mr. Gaston said it would also be interesting if, after one year, geocachers would share with the Commissioners information about who had visited their caches, and where they are from. This would help us better understand their hobby.

Chairman Lindsey expressed his appreciation to the people who had taken time to come to the meeting and comment on geocaching.

Campground Policies

Greg Butts said that at the September 2002 meeting, the Commissioners had voted to make several changes in campground policies. This was based on what private operators and other agencies were doing and what was in the best interest of campers and the general public. A summary was prepared that noted what regulations were unchanged, and some that would be changed. The public comments received to date indicate opposition to 90% of the campsites being reservable. Four of the people who offered comment were opposed to the noon check-out time. Park Superintendents have said that how far people live from the campground depends on when they check-out. People who have families have said they would like to stay later than noon, especially on Sundays, and the 3:00 p.m. check-out is better for them. In checking with some parks staff, they indicated that 70% of their campers check-out by noon.

Chairman Lindsey invited public comment on the campground policy.

Roger Bishop from Sherwood - Mr. Bishop said he had been camping in a recreational vehicle for eleven years, and about one half of the time he spends camping in Arkansas State Parks. He said ASP has a policy that says a camper needs to stop at the visitor center and register before going to the site. He said he has talked with both Mr. Butts and Mr. Davies about this. Mr. Bishop said he does not understand the reason for this. He said he has camped in six surrounding states, plus Alabama and Kentucky, and not one of them require a camper to go to the visitor center before occupying a site. Mr. Bishop said there is not room at our visitor centers to park an RV while registering. He said at Petit Jean State Park, if there are a lot of vehicles in the parking area, a camper with a large RV has to park on the highway while registering. Regarding the requirement of having reservations, all sites in state parks are not uniform. Mr. Bishop said he thinks even 50% reservable sites is too high. He said if someone can make a reservation for a certain weekend, they won't come in early in order to get the site they want, the way they are doing now.

Jim Smedley from Arkadelphia - Mr. Smedley is opposed to 90% reservable sites. He said he likes to stay at a campground for a two-week vacation. With such a high percentage of sites being reservable, the weekends will be reserved, and the only nights that will be available will be Sunday through Thursday. Mr. Smedley said the reason more campers are not at the meeting is because the public notice was not seen by most campers. A better job needs to be done on public notice, when a rule like this is going to change. Mr. Smedley said a reservation system with such a high percentage favors out-of-state campers, not tax paying Arkansans. He is opposed to the noon check-out time and wants it to stay at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Smedley is also in favor of giving camping discounts only to citizens of states who give Arkansans a discount.

Mr. & Mrs. Blassingame from Little Rock - Mrs. Blassingame said they are not in favor of campsites being 90% reservable. She said they like to camp at Lake Catherine State Park. They have seen the reservable sites sitting empty through the week and the campers who reserved them usually don't arrive until 8:00 p.m. or 9:00 p.m. Friday night. Mrs. Blassingame said the high number of reservable sites will cause the park to be vacant Monday through Thursday. A lot of people use that park that are from Texas and Louisiana. If they reserve all those spots for just the weekend, we've lost our opportunity. We pay our taxes here in Arkansas and we are paying for this. She said they do not like the noon check-out because they like to go to church and then come back to their campsite for lunch before leaving. She said they live only a one-hour drive from Lake Catherine State Park.

Chris Snodgrass said he needs to stress the number of people who change their plans in a campground. This policy works very well for a lodge room. When people are paying \$85 to \$100 a night and are going to be staying three or four nights, they make their plans and stay with them. Campers go camping on the spur of the moment and decide to stay longer on the spur of the moment. The cost is \$15 to \$17 per night. Richard Davies asked Mr. Snodgrass what he thought should be the percentage of reservable sites. Mr. Snodgrass responded that currently his campground is at 30%. What he thinks he should do is go immediately to 50%. If that works and he is not getting complaints, the next year see what 75% would do. Mr. Snodgrass said it

will be different at DeGray Lake Resort State Park than at Crowley's Ridge State Park or Lake Catherine State Park. Mr. Snodgrass said we need to find the right balance for each park. He said with the sites being 90% reservable he will lose his two-week campers because just the weekends will be reserved. Chairman Lindsey said a lot of times a camper will call and make a reservation for the weekend, just on the happenstance that they are able to go camping. Because the fee is just \$15 to \$18 versus \$85 to \$100, they are willing to lose the money. The site sits empty for two nights when it might have been full for ten days. Jim Gaston said if reservations work in resorts, why won't it work with our campgrounds. Mr. Gaston said people change their plans at \$100 also. Jim Gaston asked Jim Smedley if it is a problem for him to register at the visitor center before occupying a site. Mr. Smedley said people learn how to beat that rule. Bill Barnes asked if it is horrible inconvenience to ask you to register before you set up on a campsite. Mr. Smedley said it is because of the size of the parking lots and it does not take very many 30' to 38' rigs with tow vehicles to fill it up. Mr. Smedley said in a lot of other states' parks, a ranger comes around and collects after you set up on your site. It works for them and it cuts out a lot of traffic at the visitor center. Jim Gaston asked what his choice is – to camp at a Corps of Engineers site or a state park site. Mr. Smedley said, to be honest, people go to state parks because they have water and electricity – they would go to Corps sites if they had water and electricity. He said with a high reservation percentage he thinks a lot of people will move to Corps parks. Mr. Smedley said he has been told by some Corps people that they are having problems with their high percentage rate, and are going to start reducing the number. Richard Davies said the requirement of registering before occupying a site came about because, literally, there were fist fights over campsites. He said it was a regular occurrence to separate campers who were fighting in the campground over sites. Mr. Davies said the thinking was who needs to win the argument, the person who registers or the person who is in the campsite. Our decision was to go with registration. Chris Snodgrass said registering first solves another problem. Example – a lot of guests camp in an RV that also serves as transportation. When they leave to go to the store, etc., they pull out of the site. Without pre-registration, that camper could return to find someone else on his site. Jon Brown said even with all the signs instructing campers to register first, people still go in and occupy a site before they register. Mr. Brown said campers also don't like to have a site assigned to them. Bill Barnes asked Mr. Brown his preference. Mr. Brown said his preference is occupy the site first because at Lake Dardanelle State Parks there are so many different size sites. He said he likes a camper to find the site they want. It is less confusing and the camper is happier. Chris Snodgrass said he allows campers to do that, but the camper is told not to occupy the site they select until they register for it. The camper is also told that the person who registers first for a site is the one who gets it. Debbie Haak asked if they can drop their trailer first. Superintendent Snodgrass said campers are asked not to do that. Mr. Smedley said the RVr today, with the lengths and multiple slide-outs, does not have a lot of choices on where the rig will fit.

Chairman Lindsey welcomed and introduced co-chairman of the tourism subcommittee, Senator Randy Laverty, who had just joined the meeting. Senator Laverty said it has been good for him to hear the discussion that was going on during the Commission meeting. The Senator complimented Montine McNulty and the Arkansas Hospitality Association for honoring

outgoing Legislators. He said he realizes the dimension of the state's tourism economy the Commission works with, and he thinks it is undervalued and underappreciated. Senator Laverty said he hopes he will be able to help in some way.

Bill Barnes, referring back to the check-out time, asked about a posted noon check-out but with the ability to stay until 3:00 p.m. Debbie Haak said weekend campers want to stay later on Sundays. Jim Shamburger asked if it is an issue everyday or just on Sunday. Chairman Lindsey said if 75% are leaving by noon anyway, why is it an issue. Greg Butts said during the discussion with the Commission, starting with the Parks Committee meeting at Ponca, the point was people who travel and arrive are wanting to get on the site at the time they register. Example: a camper with a big rig registers at 8:00 a.m. for a site that is occupied by a camper who will be leaving that day. With a big rig and a tow car, he doesn't have anyplace to go. Mr. Lindsey asked why that is a problem if 75% of the campers are leaving before noon anyway. Mr. Butts said the argument was if 75% are leaving early, why not change the time. Richard Davies said Mr. Butts was just repeating what the Commissioners had voted on previously. Debbie Haak said there are two groups of people, those coming and those going. Mrs. Haak said if 75% of the sites are going to be empty anyway, why change it. Jim Shamburger said the only day it is a big issue is on Sunday or a Monday holiday. Greg Butts said in the private sector the check-out time is 11:00 a.m. but their business is more transient. The issue is for the families who only have to make a two-hour trip back home, they are having to leave early. Mr. Butts said it is not an issue for the people who are traveling a long distance. In revisiting this, it might be something to leave alone. Mr. Butts said there has been excellent discussion today and we also have to look at some of the other public campgrounds and what they are doing. The Corps of Engineers represents 70% of the public camping in Arkansas. Their check-out time is 3:00 p.m. If we change to noon, there could be some impact. Mr. Butts, based on public comments and what other public agencies permit, suggested leaving it at 3:00 p.m. and revisit the subject next year. Regarding the reservation percentage, the Corps of Engineers has said they would like to get to 60% but petitions have been received in opposition. Mr. Butts suggested moving up to 60% reservable sites and re-evaluate it later.

Danny Ford moved to approve the campground policies as presented with the following changes: Change the percentage of reservable sites to 60% and keep the check-out time at 3:00 p.m. Jane Christenson seconded and the motion carried.

Wade Williams asked if it is subject to the individual park superintendent's determination that a lower percentage would work better in his or her park. Greg Butts said having different percentages would cause conflict with the public. It would be best to have a uniform percentage for all parks. Mr. Butts said he is, however, always flexible with groups, such as Good Sam Clubs who want to reserve more sites mid-week or off-season. Polly Woods Crews asked if it might be better to increase the percentage gradually. Mr. Butts said he believes 60% is reasonable. Bill Barnes said he is a little uncomfortable with the 3:00 p.m. check-out because he has a vision of 17 RVs waiting to get on sites that are parked everywhere. He believes there is

some merit to a noon check-out with it clearly stated that a camper can extend it to 3:00 p.m. by request. Debbie Haak said, as a camper, it is very nice to be able to stay until 3:00 p.m. Mr. Barnes said a noon check-out with the ability to extend until 3:00 p.m. will encourage people to leave early.

Pinnacle Mountain State Park Feasibility Report on Environmental Education Center

Greg Butts said the 1/8¢ ten-year plan proposed an expansion of the visitor center that was built in 1977 when the park opened, along with developing an education center at the Arkansas Arboretum located in the park. It became obvious that we needed to revisit both of these projects. One reason is that the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission (AG&FC) has made plans to construct four nature centers, one each in Ft. Smith, Pine Bluff, Jonesboro and North Little Rock. In January 2001, Superintendent Randy Frazier gave a presentation on his thoughts and ideas concerning a full service nature center, and why Pinnacle was an outstanding location. We made a proposal to AG&FC in January 2001 about partnering with Pinnacle on a nature center but they are building their own nature center in North Little Rock. We also talked with Ken Smith with the Audubon Society about partnering with Pinnacle on a project. The Audubon Society has elected to partner with the City of Little Rock, and concentrate on metro area children and environmental education. Also, the Four-H Center in Ferndale has expanded residential environmental education programs with funds contributed by the Don Reynolds Foundation. Mr. Butts said it was decided that it made sense, before we moved forward on any projects, to conduct a feasibility study. Economics Research Associates (ERA) was hired to conduct the study. Mr. Dick Starr was introduced to give a report on the study and make recommendations on the project.

Dick Starr said this study had been one of the most complicated projects he had worked on. Mr. Starr said the park is beautiful, but has a difficult lay-out with the facilities separated – it is very difficult to move around to the different areas. The market is changing and a lot of nature facilities are being built. The Arboretum idea at the park is excellent because all the different natural divisions in Arkansas are represented in one place to be experienced. Because of its central location in the state, it is in an excellent place to tell this story. Today the park is a successful picnic and day-use recreation area. It makes sense to have the Arboretum providing environmental education at this location. With four major environmental facilities planned or existing in the central Arkansas area, it could be a major draw and complement area attractions.

The number one constraint to the park is that it has traditionally served school bus trips. This is changing. School test scores are the number one issue now, and these scores focus on math and literacy, not music, arts, dance or environmental education. In Arkansas, the bus trips are concentrated in a one-week period after exams have been completed. This is a smaller market and three new competitors are entering it. The other environmental education oriented projects have plenty of funding behind them and their programs are still evolving. Mr. Starr said it would be best if all four projects were coordinated in their programs, marketing and operations. That may evolve. Mr. Starr said the most important issue is the funds available to complete a project like this. To have an attraction at the level the public expects will take many millions of dollars, and changes in the programs offered. The facility will have to be state-of-

the-art. It should offer opportunities not only for children and their parents, but also for tourists. A challenge is not to duplicate what the AG&FC, Four-H, or the Audubon Society is doing, but to complement them.

Mr. Starr said expanding the resource options is the biggest problem. There needs to be a sales program in order to secure funding through grants, sponsors and partnerships. Mr. Starr suggested developing programs with teachers and universities which could be a long-term asset for the park. Funding sources must be found.

Richard Davies said, to summarize what Mr. Starr reported, to build a quality facility will cost \$10 million. We do not have \$10 million; therefore, we need to find other fund sources. Mr. Davies asked if Mr. Starr thought the park could get a grant for the project. Mr. Starr said if we could demonstrate that we had something special, a long tradition, a perfect location and something that would not duplicate something else in Little Rock, we might. And, if possible, it would be best to work with the sponsor on the project. Richard Davies said, such as the Reynolds Center for Environmental Education, etc. Polly Woods Crews said Reynolds only gives big money to brick and mortar projects like this. Richard Davies said they have not had any success in getting the other players to cooperate – they want to “do their own thing” and don’t want to partner at the park location on facility development. Mr. Davies asked Mr. Starr what would make that change. Mr. Starr said it is very difficult because they are operating with different funding sources. Operate from the top down, go to whoever is in charge and tell them this has to change. He said they are just in their development stage and want to capture their own market. After they have been in business for four or five years you could say to them, “why don’t you focus on this, we’ll focus on that.” Richard Davies, speaking of the Four-H Center, said they have nice facilities but not very much land. Mr. Starr said he took some park information to them and he could see there was some positive thinking and future opportunities. Polly Wood Crews asked Mr. Starr if what he was saying is, what we have naturally at the park is the hook that could be used to complement others’ projects. Mr. Starr said, yes, and if we had a building with some activities that they did not have, then it could tie over. Ms. Crews repeated Mr. Starr’s remark that we could not build a second-class project at the park and have any success. Mr. Starr said the Arboretum at the park is beautiful and very interesting. But, in order to meet the public’s expectations, there needs to be all the interactive and visual components present. He said it is very difficult to do it in the old fashioned way.

Mike Mills said he thinks the report is very adequate, but, there is a state park there and asked if it was broken. Greg Butts said it was not broken. Mr. Butts said they went to AG&FC and the Audubon Society and asked them to partner. They didn’t want to. The concern is, with the 1/8¢ Conservation Tax and the promise made to build an Arboretum/Education Center. Mr. Butts said he is concerned that if they moved forward with the Arboretum/Education Center, they would be duplicating what everybody else was already doing. Can we find a niche that will complement but not duplicate before we would spend serious money? Richard Davies said we were going to have to expand the visitor center because the 1977 facility is too small to accommodate staff and meetings. Before AG&FC or the Audubon Society started their projects we approached them and asked if they would like to partner with us. They said no, they wanted their own facilities. Mr. Davies said the key issue is do we build a nice visitor center that might

accommodate visitors' needs for the next four or five years, or do we try to make it something bigger, if a foundation is willing to help us do it. Stan Graves said the spending plan was \$1 million '99-'01 and \$800,000 in '01-'03. That was for the arboretum center and expansion of the visitor center. We wanted to do what we promised taxpayers, and then move forward. Then all the other projects began starting up around Little Rock. Mike Mills said we made a lot of promises with the passage of Amendment 75. If three more centers are coming into Little Rock, maybe we need to re-evaluate whether or not we should pursue this project. Mr. Mills asked if we were going to pursue \$15 million for grants, or upgrade the park with the funds we have. Maybe we don't have to have foundation money, maybe we just need to have enough patience to let this fall into progression, and let everybody else do their own projects. When we know what they are doing, then we can plan a complimentary arboretum and have the funding source of our own to do it. Mr. Starr said two years from now the decisions may be a lot easier because the other entities may have facilities in place.

Jim Gaston asked, once the project is completed, what would be the annual operating cost. Mr. Starr said it could be operated with the current staff but his report does not include a detailed operating cost. Mr. Gaston said his major concern is down the road with what AG&FC is building. He said he has learned that maintenance and annual operation is very expensive. Mr. Gaston asked if this is one of those things that we really need to do, or is it something we'd really like to do. He said it might be a good idea to let the other projects move along for three or four years and maybe one of them would then like to work with us.

Randy Frazier, Superintendent at Pinnacle Mountain State Park, strongly suggested that no-one think of a structure with the word "arboretum" incorporated in the name for it. Most people in Arkansas are not familiar with the word, nor can they pronounce it. A better name would be the *Natural Resource Education Center*. Mr. Gaston said if the word "arboretum" is never used, no-one will ever learn about it. Superintendent Frazier said the center would be located right next to the existing arboretum. Another point is the word "environmental." Superintendent Frazier said the word "environmental" sometimes has a negative connotation. A certain element has turned away from the term environmental. Using the words "natural resource education" is better. Regarding the visitor center, he said he prefers the words, "welcome center" because people need to be welcomed into our parks. He agreed with Mr. Gaston's concern about annual operating costs. Superintendent Frazier said we have the legacy money and, thanks to the efforts by Commissioners, the system has gone a long way in fixing the sewers, roads and roofs, and that needed to be done. On the subject of partnerships, Superintendent Frazier said there are at least two universities that are interested in a partnership. He asked if we are willing to say that this is the hub where natural resource education in the state is being carried out.

Richard Davies asked what the issue was today that the Commissioners needed to consider. Are we talking about whether we make changes at the park, or permit staff to seek partnerships to fund the project? Greg Butts said that is part of the question. Mr. Butts said we also need to determine what, exactly, the project will encompass and represent. Mr. Davies said he does not believe the Commissioners are going to decide that today. Mr. Butts said if we are

going to duplicate what everyone else is doing, we have not been mindful of our responsibilities of service to the taxpayers. Jim Gaston said, wouldn't we be better off to say, here is what we would like to do. And, then sit back and watch what the others do with their projects, and then proceed with our project. Mr. Gaston said if we do anything now, it would probably be a repeat of what is already being done. Once the other centers are completed and have operated for twelve months, there will be a change of direction. Richard Davies said there is one danger – if there is a foundation, such as Reynolds or Stephens, and we wait, someone else might visit with them first. Mr. Gaston said we could get them committed now. He said money cannot be wasted in education. His concern still is the maintenance of the facility in the future.

Montine McNulty asked if there had been any serious inquiries with foundations. Greg Butts said there had not been from his office. Superintendent Frazier said he had spoken with some development people at UALR. They told him it is the “brick & mortar” people who can do this, and want to see their name on a building, and they have all pointed to Reynolds. Montine McNulty said there are a couple of big foundations in Arkansas right now that are looking for some projects like this.

Stan Graves said that until a clear concept of the project is arrived at, a rendering or brochure cannot be developed to use as a sales piece when meeting with a foundation. Mr. Graves said they are having trouble figuring out exactly what the facility will be. Lynn Warren, referring to operation costs, said the plan for the building is to use “green” architecture which generally requires lower operation costs. Ms. Warren added that one of the reasons for conducting the feasibility study is because of the nature centers that are planned for Little Rock. Interest in nature centers is becoming more of a trend with the next generation. Ms. Warren said that at one of the planning meetings, Dick Starr had suggested that the Governor be approached with a plan to assist in forming a partnership for the project. Dick Starr said all four groups need to get together. Right now they are all still in the development stage and talking about competing with each other. Maybe the Governor could request a conference of the four groups to discuss the opportunity to sell Little Rock as an environmental educational natural area center for the state or even beyond the state.

Jim Gaston said he does not see the other groups deciding what their course is. Maybe it would be better if we said what we are going to do in the future, and ask what are the other groups would do to complement this plan. He suggested if we do that it could force the other groups to commit to whatever their plans are now and perhaps decide to look at the option to partner with us. Mr. Gaston said he thinks what should be done is to seek sponsorship. He reiterated his deep concern about annual operating costs.

Richard Davies said he agrees with Mr. Gaston's suggestion of deciding what the park and the area needs for that kind of a resource, and then see if there is someone who is willing to assist with funding. At that time, meet with the other groups and say we are willing to work with them and lay out our plan, asking them to partner with us. Dick Starr said, with the two universities that Superintendent Frazier mentioned, we could meet with someone like the Reynolds Foundation, and maybe it would well be received.

Chairman Lindsey said the next step would be to meet with the other parties and determine our priorities and the needs in central Arkansas, and determine partnership opportunities. Then go to a foundation and tell them that we have an opportunity to create a destination market in central Arkansas by putting together our resources with these other groups. Richard Davies said his suggestion would be to decide what we are going to do at the park and tell the other groups our plan. Polly Wood Crews said what Mr. Davies was saying is that we take the lead.

Wade Williams moved to direct staff to develop what they believe are the needs at Pinnacle Mountain State Park for natural resource education. After developing that plan, attempt one additional time to work with the groups it feels would be necessary as partners for the project. Once that meeting takes place, refine the park's project plans and begin the process of seeking funding partners to complete the plan. Jim Gaston seconded and the motion carried.

Special Guest

Chairman Lindsey welcomed Lt. Governor Winthrop P. Rockefeller who had joined the meeting. Governor Rockefeller said he was pleased to have the opportunity to stop by and see what the Commissioners were doing to promote Arkansas. He expressed his deep appreciation of what the Commissioners and Department staff do.

At Montine McNulty's request, Greg Butts gave a brief overview of what the Commission had been discussing when the Governor joined the meeting. (Pinnacle Mountain State Park) Governor Rockefeller said there is an out-of-state group that has been discussing building an energy center on the bank of the Arkansas River in North Little Rock. He said this may be another group to tie into the total equation. The Governor said we need to know our niche. He said it is a good point about getting with the other groups and coming in with the lead idea about what we want to do.

Governor Rockefeller said that in July 2003, Arkansas will be hosting the summer meeting of the National Lt. Governors' Association. He asked for any assistance the Commission could give him in showcasing Arkansas in the best possible light and all the wonderful things we have in our state.

Mt. Magazine State Park – Update on Lodge/Cabin Project

Greg Butts said that on November 27, 2002, the Department had a meeting with the Joint Budget Committee on Parks and Tourism. Many of the questions from the Committee focused on the lodge at the park. Representative Herschel Cleveland had several questions about the project status. Due to the Nora Harris lawsuit, there were still several unanswered questions and the lawsuit's impact on selling bonds for the lodge project. Mr. Butts said he and Mr. Davies had met with Arkansas Development Finance Authority (ADFA), and interviewed three law firms for an opinion on proceeding with issuing bonds for the Mt. Magazine lodge and cabin

project. It was the opinion of the bond counsels that we could proceed with issuing bonds for the project. ADFA had selected the Rose Law Firm for bond counsel. Mr. Butts called the Commissioners' attention to a schedule for the project development.

Mike Mills said, in the private sector, it would be really important to bring the project on-line by late May or early June. Referring to the schedule for the project, Mr. Mills pointed out that the project acceptance date is June 22, 2005. He said June is the single, peak month for the year. Mr. Mills said it would be very important, especially for the first year, to open the facility to the public mid-May.

Greg Butts said he will keep the Commission updated on the progress of the project. Richard Davies said bond underwriters have been advertised for and one will be selected. Mr. Davies said the Department does not have bonding authority but ADFA does. Stan Graves said he had spoken with Kenneth Sims, Sims Grisham Blair Architects. Mr. Sims said they were doing everything they could to meet the schedule.

Annual Report on Volunteers

Chris Peek said the information provided on volunteers, donations and grants is for CY2001, and is compiled each year by the Department of Human Services Division of Volunteerism. In 2001, 87 state agencies, boards and commissions reported utilizing volunteers. Mr. Peek said he is proud to report that the Department of Parks and Tourism was number one with 27,020 volunteers having been utilized. Within our Department, 10,451 were in the parks Division, 16,545 were with Keep Arkansas Beautiful, and 24 were from the Executive Director's Office. An interesting point is if Keep Arkansas Beautiful and the Parks Division had been counted separately, they would have ranked number two and four against all other state agencies. Mr. Peek said he will have CY2002 numbers for our Department compiled by early February. He will provide the Commission with those figures as soon as they are available.

Polly Wood Crews asked if we counted the Commissioners' hours. Ms. Crews said she recalls the many times Debbie Haak went to DeGray Lake Resort and other parks for various events. Mr. Peek said, normally, 16 hours per month is reported. Ms. Crews said there are extra hours Commission members serve and she thinks that would increase our overall volunteer hours served for the Department. Gloria Robins asked the Commissioners to log their hours and report them to her so she could count those hours.

CIP Quarterly Report

Stan Graves provided information on the Capital Improvements Progress Report for the months of October, November and December, 2002. Total funded projects underway amount to \$92,130,386. \$2.5 million is projects closed during the quarter. Mr. Graves provided the Commissioners a break-out, by park and project. \$61.1 million in construction projects are either completed or are underway. He pointed out that the figures do not include any design costs.

Miscellaneous

Greg Butts reported on the January 8th media event announcing the new park name: Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area. Mr. Butts thanked Wade Williams for attending.

Greg Butts reported that Earl Hooker, who was the State Director for the Arkansas Good Sams, passed away in November 2002. Mr. Butts said Mr. Hooker had been very supportive of state parks and will be missed.

Greg Butts reported that James Archer passed away on January 8th. Mr. Archer died of a heart attack while at Crater of Diamonds State Park. Mr. Butts said Mr. Archer was a wonderful person and never met a stranger. Debbie Haak said she had given thought to having a memorial of some kind at the park. Greg Butts described how, when Mr. Archer was sifting the dirt for diamonds he would say, "Be there, rock." Bill Barnes asked if we could do something incorporating his favorite tool and that statement. Mr. Butts suggested that staff propose an appropriate memorial design the Commission could approve. Richard Davies said maybe the photograph on the cover of *National Geographic* of Mr. Archer that could be used which is the one with the long-handled shovel and his hat on backwards. Ms. Haak asked that park staff develop a proposal for a memorial for Mr. Archer, and bring it to the commission for approval.

TOURISM DIVISION

Chairman Billy Lindsey appointed Commissioner Debbie Haak Chairman to the Natural & Cultural Resources Committee (NCRC). Chairman Lindsey appointed Commissioners Mike Mills Chairman of the advertising committee and Montine McNulty, Jane Christenson, Ted Mullenix, Jim Gaston and Polly Wood Crews as members of the committee. Chairman Lindsey appointed Wade Williams Chairman of the Parks committee and Debbie Haak, Ness Sechrest, Danny Ford, Jim Shamburger, and Loretta House as committee members. He appointed Debbie Haak, Montine McNulty, and Wade Williams to the Governor's Conference committee for the 2004 conference. He asked that Joe David Rice and Nancy Clark also serve on the committee and asked Ms. Clark to include some members of the tourism industry private sector as well as a person affiliated with a Chamber of Commerce.

2003 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism Update

Nancy Clark stated that the 29th Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism will be held at the new Fort Smith Convention Center, March 16-18, 2003. She noted that some of the suggestions from the Governor's Conference coordinating committee would be implemented. Table topics will be part of the program this year. Topics that will be covered at the conference include everything from technology tips to small operators networking, hot deals, how to work with travel writers, and familiarization tours. Ms. Clark noted that the ribbon cutting would be held earlier than at past conferences; 8:30 a.m. Monday morning. Following the ribbon cutting will be a program about networking to help attendees obtain the most they can out of the conference. Ms. Clark also stated that conference speakers include the CEO of Travelocity.com,

the former Vice President of the Harley Davidson Company, Clyde Fessler, Dr. John Hunt and Dr. Kristen Hunt who will give an affirmative assessment of tourism in Arkansas, as well as the President of the National Tour Association (NTA). She assured Commissioners that they would receive information packets at the end of January.

TIC Program Update

Joe David Rice stated that the contract for the Texarkana Tourist Information Center (TIC) building has been let, but the contractor doing the dirt work is slow. The pad for the building should be ready by March of this year and the TIC should open by May 2004. He requested that one of the Commission meetings be held in Texarkana about that time, if possible.

Mr. Rice stated that the Highway Department negotiated with Mr. Sewell for his property at the corner of U.S. 82 and Arkansas 7/167. The land has been purchased and the deed recorded.

The Van Buren and Corning Center contracts will be let April 2, 2003. He noted that he would participate in an inspection next week to locate the site for the building at Van Buren.

“Picture Yourself in Arkansas” Photo Contest Update

Jay Harrod informed Commissioners about the “Picture Yourself in Arkansas” photo contest. Rules and entry forms can be obtained through the Internet, but photos can be submitted as a photo, slide, print, or on a disk in a jpg format. Entries can be submitted in 6 different categories – Arkansas wildlife, wildflowers, water in Arkansas, cities and towns, festivals and events, and Natural State landscapes. A winner and a runner-up will be chosen every other month to correspond with the new issue of Arkansastravel.com. One overall winner, picked from the six finalists, will receive a \$500 gift certificate from Camera Mart of Little Rock and a four day, three night vacation in Eureka Springs that includes meals, lodging, a spa package, tickets to the Great Passion Play, tickets to Eureka Springs Gardens, and tickets for the city trolley. The overall runner-up will receive two nights free lodging for two at an Arkansas State Park of his or her choice and either two nights free camping or a one-day free party barge rental at an Arkansas State Park of his or her choice. Certificates for these prizes will be honored for one year from the issue date, and reservations are required. The winner of each category will receive a \$30 State Park gift certificate and a \$75 Camera Mart gift certificate. Runners-up will receive a \$10 State Park gift certificate and a \$25 Camera Mart gift certificate. Mr. Harrod noted that a news release has been sent out. The information was also included on an e-newsletter and 15,000 brochures will be printed and placed in TICs and State Parks. Five hundred four-color posters will also be printed and Camera Mart will include information about the contest in each envelope of processed film from the Little Rock store and each of the 4 sister stores.

“Hot Deals & Vacation Packages” Update

Jay Harrod explained that a new feature has been added to www.arkansas.com that allows private businesses, cities and regional tourism associations to promote – without a fee – “Hot Deals” and “Vacation Packages.” The section enables lodging establishment owners to

respond quickly to unexpected vacancies, such as those caused by cancellations, or to boost business during slow times of the year. It provides properties with many recreational opportunities or businesses working in partnerships a chance to advertise packages at a web site that, in 2002, received on average 157,992 visits per month.

Individual businesses are responsible for developing the special deals or packages and posting them to the Department's web site through an easy-to-use, password protected administrative site. Every deal or package must include lodging at an establishment listed in the Department's "Attractions, Lodging and Dining" database. Those persons entering the deal or package are also responsible for deciding how fulfillment will be handled. He also noted that the "Book-It" button could be incorporated into the deal of package. Chairman Lindsey stated that it is an easy to use program and that he has booked 10 parties for the "Hot Deal" and six people for packages. He further stated that he has received more requests for information on the package deals and that it is the best response that he has ever gotten regarding packages. Bill Barnes agreed that this was the best response he had received regarding a package, ever.

The only promotion to-date is the placement of the icon on the home page and to contact some businesses in order to have some deals and packages on the site. A news release will be sent, in January, to more than 750 media outlets to help promote the new web site section. Mr. Harrod stated that 37 businesses are set up to place deals and packages on the web site and 31 have already done so.

Tourism staff, Aristotle, the Arkansas Hospitality Association, and Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods plan to make presentations concerning ways in which the tourism industry can benefit from the new feature at the Governor's Conference on Tourism, scheduled for March 16-18, 2003 in Fort Smith.

Jim Shamburger asked if a city could have a package link for a certain event. He questioned whether Little Rock could have a special package link for the NCAA Women's Regional Basketball Tournament, for example. Jay Harrod answered that the city could approach the properties and set up a deal, but that it would not be a problem to have some kind of category.

"Online Media Room" Update

Jay Harrod stated that an online media room would be accessible in a couple of weeks. Stories could be searched for by keywords. He stated that all archived stories would be accessible as well as high resolution photographs. He further stated that he would be able to track which publications and how many times they have accessed that portion of the web site. Mr. Harrod stated that he will present an update as soon as the online media room is live.

Hot Springfest Proposal

Joe David Rice reminded Commissioners that although community cooperative partnership money is supposed to be “seed money,” a preliminary exception had been made for Hot Springs since the city had sent a letter of intention before the criteria was formulated.

Paul Vitale presented a proposal for a cooperative partnership for the second annual Hot Springfest, April 4-12, 2003 in Hot Springs. The Hot Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau, Garvan Woodland Gardens, and the Oaklawn Jockey Club have agreed to help fund the event. Media promotion will include a two-week television flight of thirty-second spots running the weeks of March 17th and March 24th in Shreveport/Texarkana and Tyler/Longview. Three-week radio flights will run sixty-second spots the weeks of March 24th and 31st and April 7th in Little Rock, Shreveport, Texarkana, and Tyler/Longview. Promotional materials include 15,000 four-color brochures, two-color posters prominently displayed in the Hot Springs area, and four-color tent cards displayed in area hotels, motels, and restaurants. Scheduled events at this time include week-long activities at Garvan Woodland Gardens, The Racing Festival of the South with “His and Her Harley” giveaways at Oaklawn, and a concert on April 10th featuring The Charlie Daniel’s Band. Mr. Vitale respectfully requested the Commission to allocate \$25,000 for the cooperative partnership.

Mr. Davies stated that the only complaint received last year about the festival was due to competition between the festival and local businesses. He inquired as to how the problem would be addressed. Mr. Vitale deferred to Steve Arrison who replied that the main concert would take place on Thursday rather than Saturday. Mr. Davies stated his appreciation for the effort. Bill Barnes noted that he thought the festival was a success last year. Although his business is twenty-five miles out, it still felt the impact even though the weather wasn’t cooperative for part of the festival. Mr. Barnes stated that he feels it is a worthwhile investment.

Mike Mills moved to approve the allocation of \$25,000 from the contingency fund for the Hot Springfest cooperative partnership. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Section Reports

Research & Information Services

November 2002 requests for information totaled 10,920, a decrease of 33.9% from November 2001. The year-to-date inquiry total is down 17.0% from the previous year. Tourist Information Center (TIC) visitation totaled 57,591 during November and 42,419 in December 2002, down 6.8% and 3.0%, respectively, from the previous year. Requests for retirement/relocation information totaled 1,190 for November and 977 for December.

The sport show season is currently underway. Shows in McAllen, Kansas City, Chicago, Tulsa, and Dallas will take place in January. Staff members spent the month of December preparing for the shows.

Both the Internet and conventional 2002 Spring Conversion studies have been completed and analyzed. The annual Survey of State Travel Offices was also completed. Charles McLemore has negotiated with the Travel Industry of America to get a new County Travel Economic Impact Model for Arkansas to use as a benchmark for future estimates tourism's impact on the Arkansas economy.

The TIC rebuilding program is progressing. The Texarkana TIC bid opening was held on December 4, 2002. Work has already begun on laying the site. Research on computer kiosks for the new TICs was also conducted.

Communications

Section members posted the November issue of Arkansastravel.com and completed text review and correction on Arkansas.com. Approximately 600 photos were uploaded for the new online media room and newspaper editors, publishers, and writers in smaller border towns were contacted in to help promote that portion of the site. A photography contest was also launched. The "Hot Deals & Vacation Packages" feature of the web site was introduced. Several businesses were contacted and listings were added to the new section. E-newsletters were compiled and releases were filed. Work on the 2003 Media Kit also continued.

Group Travel

The Group Travel section responded to 81 inquiries during November and 64 inquiries in December 2002. The staff has fulfilled 2,046 requests year-to-date.

The section has also added a new feature to its website, arkansasgrouptravel.com. A link to "Sample Itineraries" has been placed in the Group Travel Operators & Leaders section. Five sample itineraries are currently available. A new itinerary will be added each month and will be geographic and thematic. The section also has a new quarterly e-newsletter, the first edition will be sent out this month.

Jane Ellen Frazier attended the National Tour Association Annual Convention & Marketplace in Los Angeles, California as well as the National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners Annual Fall Convention in San Diego, California. Beth Wiedower attended the Dallas Meetings Quest in November.

Tourism Development

All regions have submitted mid-year reports. All regions, except for Arkansas River Valley Tri-Peaks met the monthly deadline requirement.

Finalists for the Henry Awards have been notified, a news release has been written, and work on the program has begun. Video interviews are being scheduled and photos are being gathered for the ceremony.

Marketing/Advertising Items

Online Advertising Items

Karen Mullikin updated Commissioners on the online marketing campaign, which kicks off in March. Production on the ads, approved in October, is complete. About \$100,000 will be spent, per site, on advertising for the following sites; America Online, Travelocity, and local newspaper web sites. About two million additional impressions have been added without any additional expense due to renegotiation. Editorial content will also be placed on Travelocity.com. The monitoring process has also been finalized. AOL and Travelocity.com both use software that allows the advertiser to monitor banner usage every day. She noted that the Commission and Department staff would receive regular reports. Ms. Mullikin stated that the vacations are being developed, through Little Rock and Eureka Springs, to test how many people would click and register to win a free vacation. She mentioned that Brian Kratkiewicz would be available next month to go into the more technical aspects of the campaign.

Wal-Mart Fishing Trail Update

Karen Mullikin updated Commissioners on the fishing trail that started nearly a year ago. Ms. Mullikin stated that negotiations have transpired with Wal-Mart. The guide will be sold in Wal-Mart stores in Arkansas as well as towns bordering on Arkansas; 124 stores in-state and 78 on the border fringe. She explained that Wal-Mart has been very helpful by providing a list of suppliers and contacting them in order to sponsor ads or provide product. Thirty bodies of water around Arkansas will be on the trail, which will be contained in the guide. Fishermen will win a prize package for fishing 5 spots, a bigger prize for 10 spots, and so on. A sweepstakes prize will also be promoted, which includes a boat and trailer. It begins in March and runs through October. Initially, 25,000 will be printed and more will be printed dependant on demand. The price has not yet been decided.

Wayne Woods stated that the new guide will be similar in scope and composition to the old fishing guide, except the focus will be on the 30 bodies of water. The bodies of water were chosen by Richard Davies, Joe David Rice, Shelby Woods, Wayne Woods, CJRW staff, Mike Gibson, and Game & Fish. Lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds, some large and some small, are all included in the bodies of water. Ads have been sold to Wal-Mart vendors and 12-15 pages have been sold to the hospitality industry.

Jane Christenson asked who would pay to have the guide printed. Wayne Woods replied that the resale of the guides would pay for the printing minus the advertising. The advertising is paying for the production and so forth. The guide will be sold in the sporting goods section and will be placed in its own rack. The guide's goals are to promote travel, sell fishing licenses, to sell Wal-Mart vendor products and to get people to fish. Polly Wood Crews asked if it would be promoted on their television ads. Ms. Mullikin replied that the campaign would not be included in their national ads, but would be included in everything they do in Arkansas. Richard Davies noted that the pull-out card in the guide would have to be validated at the closest Wal-Mart store to the fishing location in order to be eligible for the prizes.

Trail of Holiday Lights Publicity Update

Libby Doss updated Commissioners on the Trail of Holiday Lights campaign response. She stated that Little Rock Monthly, a new, top-quality magazine, ran an article in its first edition, which was in December. The Little Rock Chamber of Commerce as well as the Hot Springs Visitors Bureau also ran the television commercial. It was also covered in *Arkansas Business* and the *Dallas Morning News*. Over 11,000 hits were received on the web site in November and December. Ms. Doss played clips from Channel 7 news and Channel 4 news. She stated that all the comments had been positive, especially the comments from Clarksville because they noted that all of the Arkansas River Valley worked together to promote the lights.

Four Cities/Memphis Campaign Update

Pam Jones, newly with CJRW and Dan O'Byrne, with the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau, presented an update on the four cities cooperative partnership. Little Rock, North Little Rock, Hot Springs, and Pine Bluff, in cooperation with the Department, have come together to produce a campaign entitled "Celebrate Arkansas!" The media campaign will kick off January 27th and run through February, Black History Month. It is targeted towards African Americans in the Memphis metropolitan area. Ms. Jones noted that it is not a "Black History Month" campaign, but an ongoing "fun" campaign that will last all year. A four-color brochure, television and radio will be utilized media. Ms. Jones stated that Memphis has a large African American market with disposable income that can easily access Arkansas. Sets of 16-ounce iced tea glasses with the four-city logo will be given away to generate interest. Ms. Jones also played the radio spot that will be featured. A dedicated toll free number will be used, which will be staffed by employees of the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau. They will also fulfill requests for information and help with the website. Vacation packages will also be given away by each city and can be registered for on the website.

Publicity Programs Update

Libby Doss stated that the "Travel & Win" contest would kick off March 1st and run through August 31st. Although a car had not been secured as a Grand Prize, negotiations are underway with a boat manufacturer to obtain a party barge. Bill Barnes asked if WaCo Manufacturing in North Little Rock, a family-owned business at least thirty years old, had been contacted. Libby Doss replied that it had not been contacted. He suggested doing so for next year's campaign. Libby Doss stated that the Arkansas Arts Center, the Little Rock Zoo, and the Little Rock River Market have been added to the thirty must-see destinations.

Ms. Doss noted that the Secretary of State's office in conjunction with the Department and the agency staff have been working to promote the Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial in its year long celebration. A program has been formulated entitled the "Louisiana Purchase Passport." She stated that it is similar to the Travel & Win game and that tourists would take passports around the State, get them stamped at each destination and use them as keepsakes. Ms. Doss stated that it's about a \$40,000 project.

An event will take place in the spring to highlight Arkansas's national scenic byways, Crowley's Ridge and the Great River Road. It will be a motorcycle ride beginning in Piggott and ending in Lake Village - May 30th at noon to June 1st. A stop will be made in Jonesboro and the first night spent in West Memphis with entertainment, then Helena, Arkansas Post, and the second night will be spent in Lake Village. Ms. Doss also noted that the Delta Byways Tourism Association has been very helpful and supportive of the project as well as the communities involved.

Bill Barnes asked how participants would know the route. Ms. Doss responded that flyers will be produced and that they are working with motorcycle organizations to get the word out. She also noted that the Easter Seals group has shared its motorcycle mailing list.

Libby Doss stated that the preliminary planning stages have begun for the Dallas Media Event. The proposed dates are April 23-25, 2003. The entourage will travel by bus on Wednesday to Dallas, make some selected media calls on Thursday, a possible meeting with Jerry Jones and an Arkansas-themed reception for Dallas media representatives that evening. She stated that some Arkansas media representatives may go on the trip.

Ms. Doss distributed copies of an article that was published in *Rock and Ice* magazine. *Destination Outdoors* and *Elk Country Journal* will also air shows covering Arkansas. She noted these were products of the Outdoor Writers program from May 2001.

Karen Mullikin informed Commissioners that work has progressed on further placement of "*Song of Arkansas*." She reported that AETN will be airing it again on February 5th at 6:30 p.m.

Aristotle Report

Jennifer Peper announced that the Arkansas.com website had won the International Association Business Communicators Award, a standard of excellence in that category. The website continues to see fantastic growth. She went through some statistics on the page views. She noted that the pages view for 2002 had increased significantly from 2001. Jim Gaston asked how many pages were offered in 2002 versus 2001. Ms. Peper replied that the databases and the content have grown, but she would have to look at the information to be able to supply an answer. Ms. Peper also discussed the most popular pages on the website and also noted that the zip code function on the website is very popular and is gathering good information for the future. Money generated from the "Book-It" button on the website was also discussed. Ms. Peper also presented statistics on the family of web sites and the trends. She stated that a more detailed analysis would be presented next month.

Jonathan Eudy discussed the new projects that have gone live as well as one currently in progress. He stated that new seasonal photos and been added and the postcards have been updated. The e-mail a friend has also been added. Friend names are not added to the database, but they are offered an opportunity to subscribe to the newsletter once it is received. It is an attempt to increase the e-mail database. Mr. Eudy also discussed the cookie-based exit survey.

The goal is to capture information from people who do not request any information in order to survey them. Mr. Davies stated that Charles McLemore, Director of Research & Information Services, has been working on this project. Mr. Eudy noted that most states are trying to figure out how to obtain this information and Arkansas is the first state to attempt this. Work on the Fall Conversion study will start shortly.

Mr. Eudy stated that the Attraction Lodging and Dining (ALD) have been integrated so that all the information pulls from just one database. Commissioners asked why this was done. Mr. Davies stated this will help the staff update information in just one entry, instead of multiple entries on different web pages. Mr. Eudy noted there would be less chance for error and no double entries.

Sample group travel itineraries are also posted on the web site. Five itineraries are currently listed and plans are to add a new sample itinerary each month based on geography and theme. Up to three photos can be posted per sample.

Updates have also been added to the Calendar of Events. An event can be listed on the calendar on Arkansas.com, the calendar on Arkansastravel.com or both.

The latest commercial has been digitized and will be added to the website within next month. The Four-Cities program website has been completed and will go live on January 27th. The retirement/relocation updates have also been completed. Polly Wood Crews asked what item on the website has received the most response. Mr. Eudy replied that the Arkansas Vacation Package has received the most response of any one item. He stated that traditionally vacation kits normally receive the most interest.

Dina Crane discussed the projects in progress with ArkansasStateParks.com. Images on the website have been updated. She stated that a new site will go up for Queen Wilhelmina State Park in February. The special events portion of the Ozark Folk Center website has been updated and the Ozark Folk School is being promoted more prominently. Jim Shamburger asked if the same Calendar of Event information is shared between Arkansas.com and ArkansasStateParks.com. Ms. Crane stated that the larger events are on both websites. Mini websites will also be created for the Crater of Diamonds State Park and Old Washington State Park. Ms. Crane also noted that future plans include revamping the State Parks website this year and to launch it sometime in March.

Loretta House inquired as to whether or not a potential tourist could request regional information from the regional tourism association websites. Marla Norris stated that not all of the associations have web sites and the ones that do, some of them are not kept up-to-date and still other sites have PDFs that can be downloaded. Mr. Rice stated that it would be followed up. Bill Barnes asked if the regional sites were maintained by the states. Mr. Davies replied that they are maintained by the regions. Mr. Barnes inquired if was optional for the regions to have a website. Mr. Davies stated that it was up to the Commission as far as a regional rule. Mr. Barnes stated

that it might need to be addressed. Wade Williams stated that, in reference to the regional association fulfillment, Sundays and Holidays should be counted in with the total number of days between the time requested and received. Mr. Rice stated that the change would be made.

Miscellaneous

Joe David Rice thanked Montine McNulty and the Arkansas Hospitality Association (AHA) for hosting the Commission the last two days and for hosting a meeting about a possible Arkansas Golf Trail. He outlined a proposal based on the Louisiana Golf Trail. A progress report will be presented shortly. Commissioners discussed different aspects of having a golf trail in the state.

Montine McNulty noted that the Arkansas Hospitality Association had submitted a grant application to the Arkansas Workforce Training Program and had been awarded the maximum amount, \$175,000. The application was submitted in five areas, three of which were a direct result of the D.K. Shifflet report presented last year. The three areas include Customer Service Hospitality Training, Front Desk Training, and Guest Room Attendant Training. It's an 18 month project. The amount goes towards the training and materials. The AHA contracts for the training. She noted that they have a strong relationship with 2 year colleges around the state. Ms. McNulty hopes that the regional associations will also be involved in the Hospitality University program.

Debbie Haak inquired about the status of a Washington, D.C. trip. Richard Davies asked if Commissioners wanted to pay for the trip themselves and what size of group should go. Commissioners agreed they would pay for the trip individually. He also asked what date they preferred to go and suggested early June. Commissioners discussed different arrangements for the trip. Richard Davies stated that a proposal for the trip would be presented to Commissioners at the February meeting.

The State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission adjourned at 9:30 a.m. on January 17, 2003.