STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION
Virtual
April 17, 2025, 8:30 AM

Commissioners Present
Blair Allen, Chair
Austin Albers, Vice-Chair
Mitchell Allen
Rebecca Baker (Lady Angler Lentz)
Bob Connell
Clint Gaston
Kalene Griffith
Eric Jackson
Molly Houseworth (Samuel D's IPad)
Marshall Ney
Jim Shamburger
Gary Vernon

Commissioners Absent
Shash Goyal
Randy Wolfinbarger
Jordan Wright

Staff Present
Shea Lewis, Secretary, ADPHT
Suzanne Grobmyer, Chief of Staff, ADPHT
Kori Bull, Project Coordinator, Tourism
Jami Fisher, Chief Financial Officer, ADPHT
Katherine Andrews, Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation
Becky Flynn, Deputy Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation
Clay Stone, General Counsel, ADPHT
Dalaney Thomas, Tourism Director, Arkansas Tourism
Katie Fite, Chief of Communications, ADPHT
Leah DiPietro, Deputy Chief of Communications, ADPHT
April Kiser, Deputy Chief of Communications
Jeff King, Deputy Director, Arkansas State Parks
Mike Wilson, Assistant Director, Arkansas State Parks
Jeannine Bruner, Revenue & Sales Manager, Arkansas State Parks
Chris Myers, Planning and Development Manager, Arkansas State Parks
Darin Mitchell, Information & Innovation, Arkansas State Parks
Sharon Allen, Administrative Assistant, Arkansas State Parks
Jordan Thomas, Special Project Officer, Arkansas State Parks

CJRW
Darin Gray
Jill Joslin
Jessica Frahm
Katherine Vasilos
Lauren Euseppi
Shawna Blair
Wade McCune

Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Blair Allen called the meeting to order at 8:35 am. Sharon Allen called the roll.
Suzanne Grobmyer explained that Kori Bull will be taking over communications for SPRTC since Elaine Lienhart is gone and Kalene Griffith requested to have the link for the BOX added to the calendar invitation going forward so Commissioners won't have to look for it in a separate email.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Allen asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Bob Connell made the motion to approve the agenda, and the motion carried.

Approval of February 2025 Minutes

Chairman Blair Allen asked for a motion to approve the February 2025 minutes.

Kalene Griffith made the motion to approve the minutes, and the motion carried.

Secretary's Report

Shea Lewis, ADPHT Secretary, thanked everyone for their flexibility and willingness to switch to a virtual format due to unprecedented challenges this month. Lewis spoke briefly about the legislative session and the new bills, including the new State Government Employee Pay Plan to meet market rates, that was passed in the Arkansas Legislature, which will benefit ADPHT's attraction of talent. Secretary Lewis presented an update regarding called out Arkansas 250 Commission, the Governor's Arts Awards ceremony, SPRTC new commissioner orientation, and multiple events across all divisions of ADPHT. Secretary Lewis introduced a new partnership with Arkansas Game and Fish's Education Division, the Department of Education, and the Department of Higher Education for the creation of an educational outdoor recreation curriculum for implementation in Arkansas schools. He also spoke to the ongoing impacts due to Arkansas State Parks due to multiple weather events in March and early April. Finally, Lewis reported on a recent trip to "U.S. Travel's: Destination Capitol Hill" in Washington D.C. with Commissioner Griffith, during which they met with Senator Cotton, Senator Boozeman, and Representatives Womack, and Westerman as well as staff members of Representatives Crawford and Hill to discuss the exciting updates happening with Arkansas tourism industry and the opportunities for growth.

FINANCIAL REPORT – March 31, 2025

Chief Fiscal Officer, Jami Fisher, presented the FY 2025 Year-to-Date Financial Report for the one (9) month period ending March 31, 2025.

FY 2025 Year-to-Date Revenues were:

- Parks Division Operating Revenue - $24,011,105 a decrease of 2.49%
- War Memorial Operating Revenue - $1,141,477 a decrease of 12.93%
- 1/8 Cent Conservation Tax Revenue - $36,032,318 an increase of 1.39%
- 2% Gross Tax Collections - $19,167,702 an increase of .42%

FY 2025 Year-to-Date Expenditures were:

- Parks Division (including Construction and Grants) - $104,414,592 an increase of 31.16%
- Tourism Division - $14,033,020 an decrease of 3.14%
- War Memorial - $1,368,120 a decrease of 5.50%
- Department Total - $119,815,732 an increase of 25.40%

Please Note: percentages (%) are in comparison to the same period in the prior fiscal year.

Clint Gaston made the motion to approve the financials, and the motion carried.

STATE PARKS DIVISION

Director's Report/Parks Committee Report

Jeff King, Deputy Director of Arkansas State Parks, spoke briefly about the impact of weather events on the lower occupancy numbers and bookings in March. He gave a brief update on damage caused by the weather events and the ongoing cleanup efforts at multiple parks including Jacksonport State Park, White Oak Lake State Park, Devil's Den State Park, Mount Nebo State Park, Lake Catherine State Park, DeGray Lake Resort State Park, and Moro Bay State Park. King applauded parks staff for their response both within the parks and the surrounding communities after each weather event. He also praised ARDOT and their quick response to help repair a damaged roadway that cut off access to both Lake Catherine State Park and the Diamondhead community.

King reported on the results of Arkansas State Parks' winter and spring break promotion strategies. He touched on the Top Chef Competition and the Food Service Workshop that took place in early March and thanked Commissioner Connell for being a judge at the competition. He talked about the Trackchair program expansion to Pinnacle Mountain State Park, the Daisy State Park new Visitor Center grand opening, and the designation of three parks as Arkansas Archeological Landmarks (Plum Bayou Mounds State Park, Parkin Archeological Museum State Park, and Davidsonville Historic State Park).

Finally, King shared a proposal Arkansas State Parks received to update its public rules regarding hang gliding and paragliding and recommended adjusting insurance to align Arkansas State Parks' requirements with other venues across the country. No action was taken.

Certificates of Appreciation

Crowley's Ridge State Park -J.W. Black Lumber Company Land Donation *

Jeff King requested approval for a certificate of appreciation for the J.W. Black Lumber Company for their exceptional generosity and unwavering support in donating 60.19 acres to Crowley's Ridge State Park.

Jim Shamburger made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

DeGray Lake Resort State Park – Certificate of Appreciation – Michael Sindelar *

Jeff King requested approval for a certificate of appreciation for 17 years of outstanding service and hospitality at DeGray Lake Resort State Park as Lodge Manager for Michael Sindelar.

Eric Jackson made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

DeGray Lake Resort State Park – Certificate of Appreciation – Reba Sorrells *
Jeff King requested approval for a Certificate of Appreciation for 20 years of service with Arkansas State Parks at DeGray Lake Resort State Park for Reba Sorrells.

Eric Jackson made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

Permits, Resolutions, Leases, Agreements and Land Transactions
Select State Parks – Resolutions supporting Recreational Trails Program/Transportation Alternatives Program Grant Applications *
Deputy Director King requested approval for a resolution supporting Arkansas State Parks' applications for FY25 TAP & RTP grant funding.

Jim Shamburger made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area – Sale of Land to the Arkansas State Highway Commission *
King requested approval for the sale of land to ARDOT needed for temporary construction easements during the construction/replacement of two existing bridges at Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area.

Bob Connell made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

Devil's Den State Park – Property Removal Request *
Deputy Director King requested approval for the removal of a structure from the parks building inventory. The structure has already been dismantled and moved to the maintenance facility due to safety concerns.

Jim Shamburger made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

Queen Wilhelmina State Park – Property Removal Request *
Deputy Director King requested approval for the removal of a structure from the park's building inventory to make room for an update to the parks wastewater treatment plant.

Jim Shamburger made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

Planning & Development
Systemwide – Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Quarterly Report
Chris Myers, Manager Planning & Development, explained that this item is informational and shared a current number and cost breakdowns of projects Arkansas State Parks has under contract, under DBA review, and in pre-design.

OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Director's Quarterly Report
Katherine Andrews, Director Office of Outdoor Recreation, shared a quarterly update including the 2025-2030 SCORP, data highlights, a successful report on Outdoor Recreation Grant Awards, and the office's recent codification of the Office of Outdoor Recreation into the Division of Arkansas Tourism.

TOURISM DIVISION

Director Dalaney Thomas gave updates on economic impact, events and activations, and the divisions' public relations strategies and partnerships for the remainder of the fiscal year. Economic climate uncertainties have led to a decrease in travel demand nationally. The division saw significant growth year over year in hotel revenue generated from ads. She included a review of GovCon x AOES with metrics from attendee surveys, along with a review of the division's participation in Sea Otter Classic. Public relations efforts include press trips, a GoPro brand partnership, and 10 influencer trips between April and the end of June. Reports on all are expected to follow in the coming months.

Certificate of Appreciation – Norma Lowery *
Director Thomas requested approval for a Certificate of Appreciation for 25 years of dedicated service for Norma Lowrey at the Arkansas Welcome Center at Lake Village.

Kalene Griffith made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

MISCELLANEOUS/CLOSING
There were no public comments.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Allen at 10:52 a.m.

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I acknowledge these minutes are approved:

x

Blair Allen
Chair