STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 8:30 AM

STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

Batesville, Arkansas

May 15, 2025, 8:30 AM

Commissioners Present
Blair Allen, Chair
Austin Albers, Vice-Chair
Mitchell Allen
Rebecca Baker
Bob Connell
Clint Gaston
Kalene Griffith
Eric Jackson
Molly Houseworth
Marshall Ney
Gary Vernon
Randy Wolfinbarger

Commissioners Absent
Jim Shamburger
Shash Goyal
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
Dalaney Thomas, Tourism Director, Arkansas Tourism
Susie Cowan, Industry Relations Manager, Tourism
Jeff King, Deputy Director, Arkansas State Parks
Mike Wilson, Assistant Director, Arkansas State Parks

***Denotes approval items**

Chris Myers, Planning and Development Manager, Arkansas State Parks
Zack McGill, Planning and Development Chief Planner, Arkansas State Parks

CJRW
Katherine Vasilos
Wade McCune

Guests
Chris Hill, Chamber of Commerce
Julie Hinkle, A&P Commission
Landon Downing, Jamestown Crag Foundation
Crystal Johnson, Chamber of Commerce
Bobby Finster, Rural Innovation Group
Monica Griffin, Poke Bayou
Tyler Griffin, Poke Bayou
Crystal Crow, Ozark Gateway
Cathey Drew, Ozark Gateway

Welcome and Call to Order
Chair Blair Allen called the meeting to order at 8:03 am. Kori Bull called roll. Chairman Allen introduced the guests and thanked them for their hospitality and for attending today's meeting.

Approval of Agenda
Chairman Allen asked for a motion to approve the agenda.
Austin Albers made the motion to approve the agenda, and the motion carried.

Approval of April 2025 Minutes
Chairman Blair Allen asked for a motion to approve the April 2025 minutes.

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

Secretary's Report
Shea Lewis, ADPHT Secretary, provided updates from the past month, including:

- The Office of Outdoor Recreation's Great Strides Grant Program distributed $491,000 across 7 projects across the state for trail development.
- The fifth tourism roundtable was held the day prior in Batesville.
- Tourism and the Office of Outdoor Recreation are continuing to partner with the Department of Commerce to bring business opportunities to the state through events like Shot Show.

***Denotes approval items**

- ADPHT has partnered with the Department of Education, Higher Ed, and Arkansas Game and Fish to develop curriculum related to outdoor recreation for schools.
- The Arkansas250 Commission continues to meet to formulate a plan for celebrations around the state.
- A reminder to "save the date" for June 6 for the Mena Trails Project signing event.

Landon Downing with the Jamestown Crag Foundation gave a brief presentation on the success of Jamestown Crag and the growth of the area's climbing community.

Financial Report

Chief Fiscal Officer Jami Fisher presented the FY 2025 Year-to-Date Financial Report for the one (8) month period ending April 30, 2025.

Chief Fiscal Officer Jami Fisher presented the FY 2025 Year-to-Date Financial Report for the one (10) month period ending April 30, 2025.

FY 2025 Year-to-Date Revenues were:

- Parks Division Operating Revenue - $26,557,415 a decrease of 5.85%
- War Memorial Operating Revenue - $1,256,690 a decrease of 12.75%
- 1/8 Cent Conservation Tax Revenue - $40,212,766 an increase of 1.50%
- 2% Gross Tax Collections - $21,513,078 an increase of .59%

FY 2025 Year-to-Date Expenditures were:

- Parks Division (including Construction and Grants) - $114,689,725 an increase of 29.58%
- Tourism Division - $17,103,866 a decrease of 11.30%
- War Memorial - $1,406,803 a decrease of 7.61%
- Department Total - $133,200,394 an increase of 21.85%

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

Austin Albers made the motion to approve the financials, and the motion carried.

TOURISM DIVISION

Tourism Director's Update

Dalaney Thomas, Director of Arkansas Tourism, shared updates from April regarding the Small Festival and Events Grant, IPW, Outside Festival, and the Arkansas Travel Guide Preview.

Katherine Vasilos with CJRW gave a marketing update on a partnership with GoPro, the 2024 media report, and a current creative update.

***Denotes approval items**

STATE PARKS DIVISION

Parks Committee Report

Jeff King, Deputy Director of Arkansas State Parks, shared updates from yesterday's Parks Committee.

- The Historic Washington State Park Master Plan was reviewed and the committee made a motion to accept as presented. There will be a 30-day period, approximately for review of this item and the final plan will be considered at the June SPRTC meeting.
- The commission reviewed the Mena Trails Project document and discussed the status of the project overall and the expected impact. The committee recommended full support of the draft permit agreement that will be presented as Agenda Item 12.A. for the Mena Trails Project.
- Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area and Jacksonport are doing temporary firewood permits through December 31, 2025, to help with cleanup of downed trees from recent tornadoes. The committee approved the permitting of temporary firewood collection for both parks.
- The committee recommended recognition of the work of Congressman French Hill on the expansion of the Flatside Wilderness Area at Pinnacle Mountain State Park.

Kalene Griffith made the motion to approve Parks Committee motions, and the motion carried.

Director's Report

Jeff King, Deputy Director Arkansas State Parks, shared updates on year-over-year operating revenues and occupancy for April (2024 v. 2025) and significant events impacting the trends this year. Additionally, King updated the commission on recent volunteer projects at parks, upcoming events, year-end reporting, and a recent 3.81 carat diamond find at Crater of Diamonds State Park.

Permits, Resolutions, Leases, Agreements, and Land Transactions

Queen Wilhelmina State Park -Special Use Permit – Ouachita National Forest *

Jeff King requested approval for the draft Special Use Permit with Ouachita National Forest which will be signed on June 6 in Mena. The document is back at the Forest Service for another review with their attorneys but, no major changes are expected.

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

Devil's Den State Park – Ozark Electric Easement *

Jeff King requested approval for an electrical easement for Ozark Electric at Devil's Den State Park.

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

***Denotes approval items**

Historic Washington State Park – Lease Amendment with the U of A Community College at Hope-Texarkana -Bladesmith School *
Jeff King requested approval for a new 2-year lease with the University of Arkansas Community College at Hope-Texarkana for the Bladesmith School.

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

Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park – Women's Auxiliary Concession Agreement *
Jeff King requested approval for renewal of a concession lease agreement at Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park with the Women's Auxiliary.

Randy Wolfinbarger made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

<u>Planning & Development</u>
Lake Ouachita State Park – ARDOT Agreement Resolution – Mill Creek Bridge *
King asked for approval for a resolution for a partnership grant with ARDOT to replace the Mill Creek Bridge at Lake Ouachita State Park. An agenda correction was requested to clarify the agenda item number.

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

<u>Certificate of Appreciation</u>
Bull Shoals-White River State Park–Certificate of Appreciation–Terre Worley-Junck *
Jeff King asked for approval for a certificate of appreciation for Terre Worley-Junck who is retiring after 28 years with Arkansas State Parks.

Molly Houseworth made a motion to approve, and the motion carried.

MISCELLANEOUS/CLOSING
There were no public comments.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Allen at 10:41 a.m.

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***Denotes approval items**