



Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor
Shea Lewis
Secretary

Office of Outdoor Recreation

Minutes of Office of Outdoor Recreation Advisory Board Meeting, 10:30 AM, December 13, 2023:

Director Katherine Andrews started the recorder at 10:34 AM,

Board Member Bill Barnes asked a question about funding sources or anticipated funding sources for the Maumelle Pinnacles Master Plan trail system. Director Andrews replied that once the needed amenities and connections along the trail are identified there could be funds available depending on what the project is. Trail connections could use DOT Trail funds, the RTP and TP grants, Paddling or launch ramp related, the marine fuel tax program through Game and Fish, various federal grants or private funds.

Secretary Shea Lewis added that funding may depend on who the landowners are, City, County, private, NHC. Discussion ensued.

Director Andrews mentioned the phenomenal response to the inaugural Arkansas Outdoor Economy Summit, Dec. 4-5, 2023. This was the first time this type of gathering could bring together industry, state government and nonprofit groups and combined conservation with recreation. Proposed changes for the future, possibly combining with the Governor's Conference on Tourism, trade shows. Discussion ensued.

Director Andrews recapped her recent trip to testify in front of the Natural Resources Committee for Congressman Westerman's legislation and good press coverage of Arkansas and the things we're doing.

For the Pinnacle Mountain State Park Visitor Center opening, **Director Andrews** mentioned that the Office of Outdoor Recreation helped recruit Loblolly Creamery, the first vendor to take advantage of the incentives set forth under the Natural State Initiative's Opportunity Zones, to set up an outpost at the Park.

Board Member Susan Peacock asked if there had been an increase in usage of the trail in the short amount of time Loblolly has been onsite. **Secretary Lewis** responded that although this time of year has the least visitation at the parks, the resale business from the gift shop has been better than ever before, and he has noticed more mountain bikers starting their excursion at the visitor center. Discussion ensued.

Director Andrews

- discussed the Bureau of Economic Analysis releasing their 2022 report which showed Arkansas GDP has grown by 9.3%. Multiple outlets are talking about climbing and Arkansas.
- was elected to be the Chair of the Confluence of States in 2024, the bipartisan organization of Outdoor Recreation peers across the US. 19 states are currently members but growing.
- hosted a site visit for the First Gentleman and leadership at Remington, our largest outdoor recreation company in Arkansas by employment.
- participated in the Cycle of Influence Summit

- made a presentation to the joint Arkansas Economic Development Commission/State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission.
- Attended People for Bikes Shift conference.
- Did the Great Arkansas Duck Hunt.
- And the Las Vegas SHOT Show and hosted a reception to showcase Arkansas.

Director Andrews opened discussion on the handout of OOR Year 2 accomplishments.

Board Member George Dunklin asked if we are now the one-stop shop for all things outdoor recreation as one of our Year 2 goals and how to measure that. Discussion ensued regarding potential industry outreach or tradeshows, Ducks Unlimited, Wild Turkey Federation.

Director Andrews noted Year 2 goals that will be continued into Year 3 include listening sessions across the state, develop the master plan for the Maumelle Pinnacles Master Plan, create a venture fund in partnership with the University of Arkansas, build a Delta Heritage Trail community network, promotion and awareness of the statewide economic impact study, public health and wellness study, continue quarterly newsletter, and website development. Discussion ensued.

Board Member Bill Barnes asked about the plans for an updated website. Discussion ensued.

Director Andrews stated that the primary goals for Year 3 are connection, collaboration, promotion and awareness in order to facilitate development of the master plan.

Under connection and collaboration:

- We have planned for six regional listening sessions across the state to find out what business owners need and letting them know what we have and can help them with
- we are creating a scorecard in partnership with the University of Arkansas to help communities understand what their assets are and then we help them gain access to grants or other funding
- we are working on company recruitment strategies with Arkansas Economic Development Commission
- build the Delta Heritage Trail network and programming
- develop the venture fund in partnership with U of A.
- We are creating an informal partnership with ARDOT and AGFC to address river access across the state.
- GORP (Greenhouse Outdoor Recreation Program) is the business incubator program with U of A. Discussion ensued.

Under promotion and awareness:

- Finish statewide economic impact study
- Promote opportunity zones and work with state parks to continue facilitating concessionaire agreements like the Loblolly outpost at Pinnacle
- A more dynamic website
- Seek additional opportunities to promote Arkansas and our companies at conferences, trade shows, etc.

Other topics mentioned for the future included the new Foundant program for Outdoor Recreation Grants Program, assist in the creation of an outdoor legislative caucus and do an outdoor industry day at the capitol, develop a statewide outdoor gear library to merge industry and conservation groups. Discussion ensued.

Director Andrews adjourned the meeting at 11:43 AM.