

STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

3400 N. 40th St., Springdale, AR 72762

9 a.m., June 17, 2021

APPROVED 7/15/2021

Commissioners Present

Kalene Griffith, Chair
Eric Jackson, Vice Chair
Austin Albers
Blair Allen
Ron Gossage
Bob Connell
John Gill
Mike Wilson
Jim Shamburger
Montine McNulty

Commissioners via Zoom

Jeff Baskin
Shash Goyal
Molly Jackson
Ness Sechrest

Commissioners Absent

Mike Gibson
Weston Lewey
Randy Wolfinbarger

Staff Present/via zoom

Stacy Hurst, ADPHT Secretary
Melissa Adams, Welcome Center Administrator
Jim Andrews, ADPHT General Counsel
Tammy Boyce, Welcome Center Operations Manager
LaJeana Carroll, State Parks Executive Assistant
Leah DiPietro, Tourism Communications Manager
Cynthia Dunlap, ADPHT Chief Financial Officer
Leslie Fiskien, ADPHT Chief of Legislative Affairs
Debra Fithen, Grants Manager, Division of Heritage
Joe Jacobs, Marketing and Revenue Manager
Jeff King, Parks Manager of Planning & Development
Jessica Ledbetter, Tourism Sales Manager
Shea Lewis, State Parks Deputy Director
Elaine Lienhart, ADPHT Executive Assistant
Leesha Miller, Welcome Center Manager (Harrison)
Travis Napper, Tourism Director
Caleb Osborne, ADPHT Chief of Staff
Kristine Puckett, Tourism Deputy Director
Monica Rued, State Parks Public Information Officer
Grady Spann, State Parks Director
Eric Walker, ADPHT Chief Information Officer
Calanda Young, Welcome Center Manager (West Memphis)

CJRW

Darin Gray
Jennifer Morgan
Shelby Fisher
Dalaney Thomas
Wade McCune

Miles-Partnership

Daniel Czerwinski
Susie Kardas

Call to Order

Kalene Griffith called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Elaine Lienhart called the roll. Griffith welcomed guests and thanked Bill Rogers with the Springdale Chamber of Commerce and the bus driver for the previous day's tour of Springdale. Griffith also thanked Home2 Suites for the accommodations.

Agenda

Kalene Griffith requested approval of the June agenda.

Mike Wilson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Bob Connell seconded, and the motion carried.

Minutes

Austin Albers moved to approve the May minutes of the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission as presented. Montine McNulty seconded, and the motion carried.

Financial Report

Chief Fiscal Officer Cynthia Dunlap presented the FY 2021 Year-to-Date Financial Report for the eleven (11) month period ending May 31, 2021.

FY 2021 Year-to-Date Revenues were:

- Parks Division Operating Revenue - \$24,110,674 an increase of 24.41%
- War Memorial Operating Revenue - \$700,455 a decrease of -44.57%
- 1/8% Tax Revenues - \$36,773,354 an increase of 13.62%
- 2% Gross Tax collections - \$14,016,651 a decrease of -12.68%

FY 2021 Year-to-Date Expenditures were:

- Department Total - \$93,160,611 a decrease of -8.83%
- Parks Division (including Construction and Grants) - \$69,257,391 a decrease of -14.62%
- Tourism Division - \$17,005,096 an increase of 9.97%
- Keep Arkansas Beautiful - \$582,384 an increase of 8.50%
- Administration Division - \$5,247,028 an increase of 72.16%**
- War Memorial - \$1,068,712 a decrease of -47.10%

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

** Beginning in FY 2021, the Central Administration Division includes ADPHT Shared Services which represents the appropriation for positions that are identified as providing services to all divisions of the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism. Appropriation and funding are allocated to Shared Services, as applicable, from other Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism divisions.

Austin Albers moved to approve the financials of the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission as presented. Jim Shamburger seconded, and the motion carried.

Secretary Report

Secretary Stacy Hurst noted that the Department is very busy trying to work through the American Rescue Plan. The Department of Finance and Administration is going to hire a consultant to see what the state can do to manage the \$1.5 billion it has to distribute for infrastructure projects like water and sewer. The process will be thought out, and more proposals are being received from various entities. It will take a thoughtful approach to distribute the money. The Governor is also focused on broadband in the state, how to best use resources, and to do it as quickly as possible.

Leslie Fisker presented the legislative report that highlights 52 Acts from the legislative session. The first tab reviews Acts that target Arkansas Parks, Heritage and Tourism. A bill was proposed to change the name of Toltec Mounds State Park. An employee with the Saracen Casino, who is a member of the Quapaw tribe, is requesting the change. Secretary Hurst has not agreed to the request, but a meeting is being scheduled to discuss it.

Jim Andrews reported on the lawsuit involving Toltec Mounds State Park. There is a new counsel working for the Department in the Attorney General's office named Billy Byrd who is taking the place of Jerry Garner, who accepted a position in the private industry. Mr. Andrews is working to get a deposition so the case can be wrapped up. He is awaiting a written determination that Mound Lake is a body of water protected by the Clean Water Act. Another case involving the Crater of Diamonds State Park is looking to be dismissed. The Commission entered into and approved a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Forest Service to enter negotiations regarding a lease of Camp Ouachita and Lake Sylvia. The negotiations are ongoing, and Andrews anticipates having an agreement in place later in the month for the Commission's approval.

Eric Walker gave an update on the connectivity efforts for high-speed internet to the state parks and welcome centers. Walker discussed the process of getting quotes and waiting on bids for the scope of work it will take to get installation at all the locations. The approval process from the Governor takes about two weeks. Then it will go out for bid which will take around 30 days. Walker updated the Commission on several locations that are currently in the process of having fiber installed. Discussion ensued.

Tourism Division

Travis Napper gave an update on the office and staffing. The Division hired two administrative assistants. Napper stated the Marketing and Research manager position was advertised and a new hire should be announced soon. Planning for the 2022 Governor's Conference on Tourism to be held in Fayetteville, is underway. The American Rescue Plan and Economic Development Act are funding options that are being discussed.

Napper reported that Welcome Centers have approved eight new publications for distribution. Teresa Bailey-Jones was hired as the front desk administrative assistant for central office. The section is in the process of advertising and interviewing for the Van Buren/Fort Smith Welcome Center manager position and the Helena-West Helena assistant manager position.

Sales staff is back on the road attending several in-person conventions, tradeshow, and sales missions along with continuing virtual events. Those meetings include the Travel South International Road Trip, Sports BIZ Xchange II, American Bus Association virtual meetings, and

Global Travel and Tourism Check-in: Nordic Region. Shelby Morris is attending the Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College.

Communications hosted a Geiger Media Tour June 3-17. The section worked with Miles Partnership to update photos on our Google listings. Work continues on updating the Civil Rights content for Arkansas.com and Travel South. The travel writers are updating content and listings for the 2022 Travel Guide. A National Geographic reporter rode her bike across the state beginning in Memphis and ending in Hot Springs.

Research and Development is vetting three companies for new data visualizations and geo-location data possibilities. This will provide a better understanding of who's coming, where they are going once in state, and what they are doing while in Arkansas. Regional Tourist Associations are wrapping up their end-of-the-year paperwork for reimbursement. Napper and Leigha Jones attended region meetings. Eksplor Gaming has eight games that are live on Arkansas.com and have been working with the Regional Tourist Associations for content.

Two percent collections had an incredible month in March, with the fifth-best collections ever and the best March ever. Discussion ensued.

Occupancy rates have moved up from Q1 averages between hotels and peer-to-peer. The average daily rate is slowly moving up. Literature and visitation are going well. Welcome Centers continue to see visitation above the 2019 levels. Napper gave a visualization of the link between welcome center visitation and lodging occupancy rates. Discussion ensued.

CJRW

Jennifer Morgan presented the strategic marketing plan for the fiscal year 2022. The goals for 2022 are to generate travel, enhance the image of the state, grow the 2% tax collection, and increase traffic to Arkansas.com.

Wade McCune said the key initiatives are to balance indoor and outdoor activities while integrating more arts and dining culture. The focus will continue to be enhancing brand creative using results from SMARI. There will be a focus on high-impact destinations that capture arresting views and engaging activities. It will feature more urban attractions and showcase itinerary ideas. McCune stated there is a need to use longer videos to feature stories that can't be told in 30 seconds.

Group Sales has a separate media plan that include target audiences in publications such as Meeting Planners, SportsEvents, Civil Rights Trail Groups, and SportsTravel.

Inclusion marketing will focus on special influencers to represent different cultures. International efforts will build on trade/tour operator relationships through Brand USA marketing and global distribution of travel content through Travel South USA.

Public relations tactics include regional and national media outreach which will include a satellite media tour broadcast on radio and television across the nation. Other tactics include paid news content, influencers, local TV partnerships, and promoting the Arkansas Arts Trail.

The Arkansas Golf Trail includes social media management, email marketing, Google paid search, and paid media with regional partners. The trail will promote the 13 properties that are part of the Golf Association.

There are plans to have Staci Wilt return, to ride and feature the upper and lower delta in the new Motorcycling Guide. Twenty-four pages will be added to the Cycling Guide this year. New content will showcase gravel grinder trails and influencer Brian Kennedy will have “bike-packing 101” with Jessica Alexander. The Arkansas Adventure Guide has replaced the Water and Woods publication for outdoor enthusiasts.

The relocation campaign’s primary strategy will be digital marketing and will continue to highlight Arkansas’s low cost of living and career opportunities. Arkansas Economic Development Commission’s partnership is helping to attract former Arkansans as well as new residents and changing existing perceptions about Arkansas as a place to live and work; tactics include long video testimonials. The relocation campaign includes strategic placement with AARP and Ideal Living publications. Research studies through SMARI, U.S. Travel Association, DK Shifflet, Zartico, Madden Voyage, and Symphony are under consideration.

Shelby Fisher reviewed the social media content plan. The content that will be promoted is awareness of different destinations and events. Formats will include looking at video and photography, Discover Arkansas article shares, YouTube video shares, engagement contests, and live streams. Discussion ensued.

The Arkansas Ambassador program saw 1.6 million impressions on Ambassador content shared to Arkansas’s Instagram account. It accounted for 96 of 244 total Instagram posts and 90K of the 193K total engagements. There are 62 ambassadors. There were 1,554 total nominations in 2021. Susie Kardas reported that Arkansas.com is going to keep working to increase partner referrals through a/b testing. There will also be a use of visuals to increase partner referrals and enhanced mapping with CrowdRiff, a tool used for user-generated content. There is a plan to grow and engage the email audience with ongoing site audits and maintenance.

John Gill moved to approve the strategic marketing plan for fiscal year 2022. Montine McNulty seconded, and the motion carried.

State Parks Division

Parks Committee Report

Commissioner Eric Jackson reported the Parks Committee met on June 16, 2021. Arkansas State Parks (ASP) is working with the USDA, U.S. Forest Service, and Ouachita National Forest for a historical lease for the operation, protection, preservation, maintenance, and development of the Camp Ouachita historic cabins and Lake Silvia Recreational Area campsites, day-use area and swimming beach that will be managed by Pinnacle Mountain State Park.

Commissioner Jackson reported War Memorial Stadium visitation in May was 70,000 for nine graduations held over six days. Several of the schools requested to use the stadium again next year for graduation.

Commissioner Jackson stated negative developments included the Mount Magazine State Park pool dehumidifying system has failed and is affecting the building; Crater of Diamonds State Park had to close the pool for repairs; and Lake Chicot was closed due to flooding.

Commissioner Jackson reported the park revenues were up and expenses were down 20% in the top 11 parks, and dynamic pricing will be implemented in July 2021.

Commissioner Jackson stated Shea Lewis reported the staffing pressures are easing up and positions are being filled.

Commissioner Jackson reported Jeff King presented project updates for recently finished projects and updated Amendment 75 Capital Improvement Projects. The Pinnacle Mountain State Park Visitor Center project design has started and will provide an update at the next Parks Committee Meeting.

Commissioner Jackson reported Shea Lewis provided an update for program services which has returned to a full program schedule, following guidelines. Spring Interpreter training was held virtually for three days and one day in-person.

Commissioner Jackson remarked that Shane Broadway has set a goal for the Salt Bowl to break the record for the largest attendance for a High School Football game in history; the current record is 51,000.

Commissioner Jackson stated the public safety report showed 12 rescues, partially due to increased visitation by new users. Visitors get lost, hurt, and need assistance from park staff. Commissioner Jackson announced Friday, June 18, 2021, is the Arkansas State Parks/Girl Scouts night at the Arkansas Travelers Baseball game at Dickey-Stephens Ballpark.

Parks Director

National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) Annual Information Exchange (AIX) 2018-2019

Grady Spann reported on the NASPD Annual Information Exchange Report. This report summarizes how ASP ranks nationally when compared to other state parks systems in various categories for the Fiscal Year 2018-2019. ASP lodging does well mostly because ASP operates its lodging facilities, unlike most park systems. The report does not always measure equally as park systems are operated differently. Discussion ensued.

Pinnacle Mountain State Park - Lake Sylvia Lease

Tabled

Pinnacle Mountain State Park - Cedar Glen Exchange

Grady Spann welcomed Jeffrey Fore, Director of Arkansas Conservation Programs at The Nature Conservancy.

Spann reported the Commission approved an exchange agreement between The Nature Conservancy and Arkansas State Parks on May 17, 2018; the agreement has expired. ASP is seeking approval for a revised agreement.

John Gill made a motion to approve the revised current agreement for the transfer of the fee title subject to a life estate in the property described in the exchange agreement. The Nature Conservancy will assist and provide funding for management of the property and the conservation easement transferred to Arkansas State Parks; In addition, The Nature Conservancy acquired the Everett Property for additional 30 acres for Pinnacle Mountain State Park as follows:

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF EVERETT 30-ACRE PARCEL

A part of the se1/4 sw1/4, section 4, t-2-n, r-14-w, Pulaski County, Arkansas being more particularly described as follows:

beginning at a found 1/2" rebar for the sw corner of said se1/4 sw1/4; thence along the west line of said se1/4 sw1/4 n01°31'14"e a distance of 994.77' to a set 1/2" rebar w/ cap (1363); thence leaving said west line s89°16'47"e a distance of 1320.41' to a set 1/2" rebar w/ cap (1363) being on the east line of said se1/4 sw1/4; thence along said east line s01°18'13"w a distance of 983.63' to a found 1/2" rebar w/ cap (1363) being on the south line of said se1/4 sw1/4; thence along said south line n89°45'35"w a distance of 1324.34' to the point of beginning, containing 30.03 acres more or less.

The conservation easement is valued approximately three times more than the fee title ownership, and the management of the fee title is difficult and suggest public ownership which is limited on the life estate; the Commission determines it is in the best interest of the Commission to transfer the fee title of the Cedar Glen property to The Nature Conservancy in return for the Conservation Easement without a life estate to the Arkansas State Parks.

The Nature Conservancy will grant the Net Proceeds, in the amount of \$670,916.50, to State Parks at Closing,

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF CEDAR GLEN PROPERTY IN TOWNSHIP 2 NORTH, RANGE 14 WEST, PULASKI COUNTY, ARKANSAS:

The Northwest Quarter (NW¼), the Northwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (NW¼ SW¼), and all of the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (NE¼ SW¼) except the South 100 feet thereof, all in Section 9, together with an easement of sufficient width for easy ingress and egress following generally along the half section line of said Section 9, beginning at the West end of present road and continuing West to the above described property, containing in the aggregate 237 acres, more or less; and

The Southwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (SW¼ SW¼) of Section 4 and a 50-foot sector of land in the Northeast Corner of the Southeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter (SE¼ SE¼) of Section 5, being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at a found axle at the Northeast corner of said SE¼ of the SE¼ of Section 5; thence South along the

East line of said SE¼ of the SE¼ 50 feet to a point; thence along an arc concave to the Northeast, having a radius of 50 feet and the radius point being the axle at the Northeast corner of said SE¼ of the SE¼, Section 5, to a point on the North line of said SE¼ of the SE¼, Section 5; thence East along the North line of said SE¼ of the SE¼ of Section 5, 50 feet to the point of beginning, containing in the aggregate 40.9161 acres, more or less.

Now, therefore, the Commission supports the transfer of the property pursuant to the terms of exchange agreement present to the Commission.

Austin Albers seconded, and the motion carried.

Jeffery Fore thanked ASP for their collaboration and the SPRTC for approving the exchange agreement with The Nature Conservancy. Fore stated they are excited about all the work going on in the Pinnacle Mountain area and the partnership with ASP.

Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park Clothesline Fair Agreement

Grady Spann reported that Lions Club Clothesline Fair has been a long-standing tradition at Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park. They are requesting a renewal agreement for five years. Spann noted the agreement has been reviewed by legal counsel.

Austin Albers moved to renew the operating agreement with the Lions Club Clothesline Fair and Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism for a period of five years. Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.

Mount Nebo State Park - Rural Fire Update

Grady Spann reported that before 1981 Mount Nebo State Park and the private residents on the mountain top were dependent upon the surrounding city and rural fire department for its fire protection. Dardanelle Fire Department is seven miles away; Chickalah Rural Fire Department is approximately 7.8 miles away. A forest fire in 1980 prompted both park leadership and the private property owners to seek solutions for their own fire protection. As a result, the non-profit 'Mt. Nebo Rural Fire Department' was formed in December of 1980 and a formal cooperative agreement between the volunteer fire department and State Parks was drafted and signed in March of 1981. The agreement was re-drafted and signed in 1986 and since there have been six (6) Amendments to the agreement to extend the term of the original agreement. The current and 6th extension expires June 30, 2021.

As of June 4, 2021, Mt. Nebo Rural Fire Department is not in good standing as a Nonprofit Corporation with the Arkansas Secretary of State's office. Arkansas State Parks will need future approval of a new agreement once Mt. Nebo Rural Fire Department is current with the Secretary of State's office.

Mississippi River State Park – U.S. Forest Service Agreement Update

Grady Spann reported the current U.S. Forest Service operating agreement for Mississippi River State Park expired on June 2, 2021. Arkansas State Parks is working with the U.S. Forest Service to draft an updated agreement. Discussion ensued.

Arkansas State Parks Rates and Fees

Grady Spann presented the proposed ASP Rates and Fees with the newly approved dynamic pricing procedure. This procedure will set the baseline for all park property and equipment pricing and will replace Park Directive 2000 Fees and Rates. ASP has not requested any increases in pricing because dynamic pricing will allow the parks to increase up to 20% or decrease up to 50% based on seasonal, weekly, and daily occupancy or use level changes.

Bob Connell moved to approve the proposed Arkansas State Parks Rates and Fees as presented. Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.

Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area - Pavilion/Wayside Memorial

Grady Spann reported the Hobbs Education Pavilion and adjacent site improvements will serve as an outdoor gathering and staging area for large groups that currently cannot utilize the existing visitor center meeting rooms due to size and space limitations. Programming for the pavilion will include outdoor classes, evening programs, event rental space, picnicking, educational activity area, and staging area for interpretive hikes. In its function as a staging area, school children or other groups will unload next to the Pavilion, gather in the Pavilion, and receive instruction prior to hiking the barrier-free trail and entering the Visitor Center. The Pavilion will accommodate 60 to 100 people depending on seating arrangements. The Education Pavilion project was made possible by a \$200,000 donation from the Friends of Hobbs group that advocated for an outdoor covered educational space at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area. Friends of Hobbs is a non-profit corporation formed in 2003 with the goal of supporting Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area and its mission. This donation was authorized through the Memorandum of Agreement executed in 2018. We would like to recognize this collaboration by placing a panel outside the pavilion recognizing the Friends of Hobbs and the contributions of two of its members toward making the Hobbs Education Pavilion a reality. Proposed wording: *“The Hobbs Education Pavilion was a cooperative effort between Arkansas State Parks and the park’s volunteer support group, Friends of Hobbs. The pavilion memorializes and fulfills the vision established by the longtime and devoted Friends of Hobbs board members Kathy Mayhue and Sukey Dake.”*

Arkansas State Parks is seeking permission from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission to accept this donation and install the memorial panel outside the pavilion. Discussion ensued.

John Gill moved to approve the memorial panel as follows: Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area Memorial Panel; panel to read, *“The Hobbs Education Pavilion was a cooperative effort between Arkansas State Parks and the park’s volunteer support group, Friends of Hobbs. The pavilion memorializes and fulfills the vision established by the longtime and devoted Friends of Hobbs board members Kathy Mayhue and Sukey Dake.”* Montine McNulty seconded, and the motion carried.

Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park - Grant Resolution

Grady Spann presented the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS ABPP) Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants (BLAG) Resolution authorized by 54 U.S.C. §308103 and 54 U.S.C. §200305, are available to help states and local communities acquire and preserve threatened battlefield land through dollar-for-dollar non-Federal fund matching. Federal-Aid Funds are available for these acquisitions on a reimbursable basis, requiring the property to be acquired and proof of payment made prior to actual monetary reimbursement.

Arkansas State Parks is required to submit resolutions from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) expressing their support for the projects and providing assurance that funding will be available to support the acquisition and preservation of threatened battlefield land.

John Gill moved to approve National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS ABPP) Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants (BLAG) Resolution, to express full support from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to submit a grant application to acquire and preserve threatened battlefield land at Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park. Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission and the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division (Grantee) understand that the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS ABPP) Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants (BLAG), authorized by 54 U.S.C. §308103 and 54 U.S.C. §200305, are available to help states and local communities acquire and preserve threatened battlefield land through dollar-for-dollar non-Federal fund matching; and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, understands that Federal-Aid Funds are available for these acquisitions on a reimbursable basis, requiring the property to be acquired and proof of payment made prior to actual monetary reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, funding for the BLAG program is made available from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and is awarded competitively.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, that:

Section I: The Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission pledges its full support and hereby authorizes the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, to cooperate with the National Park Service on an application for up to \$200,000 in federal funding through the American Battlefield Protection Program – Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant for property acquisition at Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park.

Section II: The Secretary of the Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, or their designees, are hereby authorized and directed to execute all appropriate agreements and contracts necessary to expedite the application for federal funding of the above stated project.

Section III: The Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, pledges its full support and hereby authorizes the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, to cooperate with the National Park Service to initiate action to implement this grant project.

THIS RESOLUTION was adopted by the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission on this 17th day of June 2021.

ARKANSAS STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

/s/Kalene Griffith, Chair

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

/s/Stacy Hurst, Secretary

Delta Heritage Trail State Park – Raise Grant Resolution

Grady Spann presented the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260, December 27, 2020) appropriated \$1 billion to be awarded by the Department of Transportation (DOT) for National Infrastructure Investments, and these investments are now known as **Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)** Grants for capital investments in surface transportation that will have a significant local or regional impact, and are eligible for State, Local, Tribal, and U.S. territories’ governments, including transit agencies, port authorities, metropolitan planning organizations, and other political subdivisions of State or Local governments.

Arkansas State Parks is required to submit resolutions from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) expressing their support and hereby authorizes the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, to cooperate with the Department of Transportation on an application for \$20,428,208 in federal funding through the **Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)** grant program for the development of the Delta Heritage Trail.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve Department of Transportation (DOT) for National Infrastructure Investments, Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants Resolution, to express full support from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to submit a grant application for development of the Delta Heritage Trail. Ron Gossage seconded, and the motion carried.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission and the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division (Grantee) understands that the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260, December 27, 2020) appropriated \$1 billion to be awarded by the Department of Transportation (DOT) for National Infrastructure Investments, and these investments are now known as Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants; and,

WHEREAS, the Grantee understands that RAISE Grants are for capital investments in surface transportation that will have a significant local or regional impact and are eligible for State, Local, Tribal, and U.S. territories' governments, including transit agencies, port authorities, metropolitan planning organizations, and other political subdivisions of State or Local governments; and,

WHEREAS, the Grantee understands that the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 specifies that RAISE grants may not be less than \$5 million, except for projects located in rural areas, and that grants may not be greater than \$25 million, with the Federal share of project costs for which an expenditure is made under the RAISE grant program not exceeding eighty percent (80%) percent for a project located in an urban area; however, the Secretary of Transportation may increase the Federal share of costs above 80% for projects located in rural areas and for planning projects located in areas of persistent poverty; and,

WHEREAS, the Grantee understands that pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, no more than ten percent (10%) of the funds made available for RAISE grants (or \$100 million) may be awarded to projects in a single State; and,

WHEREAS, the Grantee understands that RAISE grant funds are available for obligation only through September 30, 2024, and any costs incurred prior to DOT's obligation of funds for a project are ineligible for reimbursement, and all FY 2021 RAISE funds must be expended by September 30, 2029.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, that:

Section I: The Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, pledges its full support and hereby authorizes the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, to cooperate with the Department of Transportation on an application for \$20,428,208 in federal funding through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program for the development of the Delta Heritage Trail.

Section II: The Secretary of the Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, or their designees, are hereby authorized and directed to execute all appropriate agreements and contracts necessary to expedite the application for federal funding of the above stated project.

Section III: The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, will participate in accordance with its designated responsibility, including maintenance of this project.

THIS RESOLUTION was adopted by the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission on this 17th day of June 2021.

ARKANSAS STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

/s/ Kalene Griffith, Chair

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

/s/Stacy Hurst, Cabinet Secretary

CJRW / Miles

Danny Czerwinski reported the Arkansas State Parks' April 2021 to May 2021 conversion breakdown month-to-month comparison had a 29.5% increase in website traffic; a 23.8% increase in booking site clicks; and 3,319 guides ordered, a 36.4% decrease. 9,700 guides were viewed online, a 12.4% increase, and Arkansas.com referrals, a 25% increase.

May 2020 to May 2021 yearly comparison shows a .2% increase in website traffic and a 15.6% decrease in booking site clicks. In May 2020, 3,319 guides were ordered and in May 2021, 9,700 guides viewed online. In May of 2021, a 1.3% increase, and a 33% increase in the Arkansas.com referrals.

The total traffic and conversion rate show a consistent rate with a typical late spring lull as we head into summer; it is tough to compare 2021 to 2020 because of the huge influx of website visitors as COVID restrictions started lifting in May of 2020.

The views on the ASP's accommodation pages showed a 92.2% increase in the first five months of 2021 compared to the first five months of 2019. The event page views show a 49.3% decrease in the first five months of 2021 compared to the first five months of 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions lifted.

The Digital Discovery webpage had 44,639-page views from May 2020 through May 2021 with an average stay time of 4 minutes and 34 seconds; this is still well above the national average. The combined Event and Digital Discovery graphic illustrates the Digital Discovery content has mitigated some of the lost traffic on the event calendar due to COVID-19. With the digital discovery content and events starting to ramp back up in parks we will be well above the past years. The website traffic from organic search ASP is behind May 2020. One of the biggest drops was the COVID-19 webpage with 10,000 views in 2021 compared to 100,000 views in 2020.

Austin Albers moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:18 p.m. Montine McNulty seconded, and the motion carried.

###