

State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
Quindell Room, Red Apple Inn, 305 Club Rd., Heber Springs, 72543
Via Zoom or in-person for Commissioners & Key Staff
May 20, 2021, 9:00 a.m.
APPROVED JUNE 17, 2021

Commissioners Present

Kalene Griffith, Chair
Eric Jackson, Vice-Chair
Blair Allen
Austin Albers
Bob Connell
Mike Gibson
John Gill
Ron Gossage
Weston Lewey
Montine McNulty
Mike Wilson
Randy Wolfinbarger

Commissioners on Zoom

Jeff Baskin

Commissioners Absent

Jim Shamburger
Shash Goyal
Molly Houseworth-Jackson
Ness Sechrest

Department Staff Present

Stacy Hurst, Secretary-Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism
Jim Andrews, ADPHT General Counsel
Leslie Fiskens, ADPHT Chief of Policy and Legislative Affairs
Cynthia Dunlap, ADPHT Chief Fiscal Officer
Caleb Osborne, ADPHT Chief of Staff
Elaine Lienhart, ADPHT Executive Assistant
Travis Napper, Tourism Director
Kristine Puckett, Deputy Tourism Director
Tammy Boyce, Welcome Center Operations Manager, Tourism Division
Leah DiPietro, Communications Manager
Melissa Adams, Welcome Center Administrator
Grady Spann, Director, Arkansas State Parks
Shea Lewis, Deputy Director, Arkansas State Parks
Joe Jacobs, Marketing and Revenue Manager, Parks Division
Jeff King, Project Manager, Parks Division
LaJeana Carroll, Executive Assistant, Parks Division
Molly Elders, Superintendent, Delta Heritage Trail State Park

CJRW

Darin Gray
Jennifer Morgan
Chris Ho
Delaney Thomas

Miles Media

Susie Kardas

Guests

Jack Moyer, Crescent Hotel
Gina Rambj, Crescent Hotel and Spa
Tim Jacobsen, Fort Smith
Gary Jones, Jones Video
Luke Story, Arkansas Broadcasters Association
Sheri Storie, Explore Pine Bluff
Joy Barlogie, Arkansas Hospitality Association
Matt Bell, Harrison CVB and AACVB President
Kelli Nichols
Terry Horton

Chair Kalene Griffith called the meeting to order at 9:02 am. Elaine Lienhart called the roll.

Welcome

Kalene Griffith welcomed Commissioners and all participants to the Zoom/conference call to the State Parks Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) meeting at the Red Apple Inn. Thank you to Mayor Jimmy Walker and his wife Peggy and their team Chris, Benny, Stacey, and the City of Heber Springs for the city tour and dinner; Marsha and Mike Gibson for the social hour, and Nicole Nash and Jack Gay for their hospitality at Red Apple Inn.

Approval of Agenda

Austin Albers moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.

Approval of the April Minutes

Eric Jackson moved to approve the Minutes from the April 22, 2021, meeting. Randy Wolfenbarger seconded, and the motion carried.

Financial report

Chief Fiscal Officer Cynthia Dunlap presented the FY 2021 Year-to-Date Financial Report for the ten (10) month period ending April 30, 2021.

FY 2021 Year-to-Date Revenues were:

- Parks Division Operating Revenue - \$20,981,635 an increase of 15.98%
- War Memorial Operating Revenue - \$600,320 a decrease of -52.32%
- 1/8% Tax Revenues - \$32,996,007 an increase of 12.08%
- 2% Gross Tax collections - \$12,312,931 a decrease of -18.44%

FY 2021 Year-to-Date Expenditures were:

- Department Total - \$81,124,702 a decrease of -15.00%
- Parks Division (including Construction and Grants) - \$63,119,428 a decrease of -15.97%
- Tourism Division - \$11,749,318 a decrease of -21.96%
- Keep Arkansas Beautiful - \$491,965 an increase of 13.62%
- Administration Division - \$4,817,398 an increase of 68.97%**
- War Memorial - \$946,593 a decrease of -52.40%

*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 Financial Reports as presented. Mike Gibson seconded, and the motion carried.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Stacy Hurst reported the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC) funding meeting was held on May 12, 2021; Arkansas State Parks (ASP) is eligible to benefit from the real-estate trust fund. This year the ANCRC collected around \$33 million which is more than the \$30 million appropriation. Since those funds carry over it was decided not to request from the legislature an increase in appropriation during the legislative session. This year ASP received \$9,750,000 which is the most ever received by ASP.

Secretary Hurst stated ADPHT has been working with Colonel Robert Ator, who was appointed by Governor Hutchinson to coordinate Arkansas's Vaccine Distribution Program; Grady Spann will provide an update of the vaccine clinics that will be hosted in ASP.

Secretary Hurst remarked Governor Hutchinson created a steering committee to distribute the \$1.5 billion awarded to Arkansas by the American Rescue Act; this amount is in addition to the funds received by cities and counties. The state will have until 2024 to distribute the funds. Governor Hutchinson appointed Secretary Larry Walther to serve as Chair and Secretary Stacy Hurst to serve as Vice-Chair. Secretary Hurst will be working with stakeholders to relay ideas to the committee. In addition, Governor Hutchinson wants to increase connectivity across the state and connectivity is specifically written into the Federal Act. Discussion ensued.

Legislative Report

Leslie Fisker reported on the acts and joint resolutions that went through the legislative session and will send out a spreadsheet to the commissioners. Six pieces of legislation were passed that will affect tourism.

Montine McNulty was instrumental with Act 688, for the school start date beginning with the 2022-2023. The school year start date can only be 2 weeks prior to Labor Day; this is the third time this legislation has been attempted and it will have a huge impact on the tourism industry.

Act 158, alcoholic beverages to go will allow restaurants to deliver alcohol with your meal; this will not be available via Door Dash, Uber Eats, or any third-party delivery service.

Act 874, designated entertainment districts for dry counties; cities with private club licenses and entertainment districts will permit alcoholic beverages to be taken outside in those specific areas.

Act 705, allows restaurants to expand outdoor dining and allows restaurants that have private club licenses to serve alcoholic beverages outside their restaurants without prior approval; restaurants will have to notify the Alcoholic and Beverage Commission of their intent to serve outside dining patrons. This will also allow restaurants to delay the payment of restaurant sales taxes until the end of September 2021.

Act 797, digital products and motion picture productions sponsored by Senator Dismang, this act will expand the tax credit to give more benefits to recruit veterans and extends the sunset date for the original digital products and motion picture industry development act of 2009, from 2029 until 2032.

A resolution passed the House and the Senate to have a commitment to waterfowl and waterfowl habitat in Arkansas for recreation, with a commitment between the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism (ADPHT) and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) in promoting waterfowl in Arkansas. There was a companion bill that was presented to increase the hunting and fishing fees in Arkansas that did not pass and was sent to the interim committee. It has been twenty years since the fees were increased for hunting and fishing licenses in Arkansas. Discussion followed.

Attorney's Report

Jim Andrews reported two claims before the Arkansas Claims Commission both involving an injury obtained by a visitor to an ASP. One at Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park--a woman stepped in a hole and broke her ankle. ASP has made a motion of dismissal of this claim, and that motion was granted on May 6, 2021. A motion of dismissal has been made for a claim against Crater of Diamonds State Park for a similar situation--a woman walking stepped in a hole and broke her foot; still waiting on the order of dismissal for this claim.

Andrews reported ASP has a matter open in circuit court concerning Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park (TMASP). There is a residential neighborhood across the lake from the park and residents are unhappy with the lake levels and claim that TMASP has artificially manipulated the lake to a lower level, which is untrue. It is the opposite – the developer has raised the lake level by two feet by restricting water flow through a drainpipe to improve the watershed views for the neighborhood. The U.S. Government has been called in and ASP is seeking a jurisdictional determination to determine if the lake is a water of the United States. When the lake is determined to be that, then federal regulations will take over the lake level

determination. The Environmental Protection Agency has taken the lead and ASP is working with them. ASP hopes to have the jurisdictional statement in the next few weeks, and it looks positive at this time. Discussion ensued.

Andrews provided an update of the Cedar Glen Exchange between ASP and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The Exchange was approved by the SPRTC in the May 17, 2018, SPRTC meeting and had lapsed due to transformation and the COVID-19 pandemic. An updated agreement will be brought to the June 2021 SPRTC meeting for approval.

Parks Connectivity Report

Caleb Osborne reported ASP is getting close to providing connectivity at TMRSP and Devil's Den State Park, expanding broadband to other parts of the park and Wi-Fi access for the cabins. Currently they only have Wi-Fi in the visitor center.

Osborne stated Secretary Hurst has tasked the IT team to find options to improve services for ASP guests and to boost cellular signal in the park; this is a safety consideration for staff and guests. ASP is working with a potential vendor to utilize alternative offerings to provide cellular service. Another option ASP is exploring is Star Link/Space X that may have a satellite option available for cellular service later this year. Discussion followed.

State Parks Division

Parks Director

Grady Spann reported War Memorial Stadium (WMS) will be hosting the National Junior College Athletic Association Football Championship game on June 5, 2021. This game will be nationally televised on CBS Sports and WMS will be branded on the field.

Spann stated ADPHT is working with Colonel Robert Ator for ASP to host ten vaccination clinics in ten state parks. ASP has selected the parks with the highest visitation. Crater of Diamonds State Park's vaccination clinic will offer free field entry if vaccinated that day. Discussion followed.

Spann remarked he and Secretary Hurst spoke at the Committee of One Hundred annual meeting at the Ozark Folk Center State Park (OFC) regarding the strategy to manage OFC to meet the demands of visitation.

FY22 Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC) funding award update

Grady Spann reported following leadership's review and input, projects were selected for the Arkansas State Park's award of requested funding from the ANCRC FY22 grant cycle. ASP's award of \$9,750,000 is exceptional and allows for the needed investment in 17 state parks for improvement projects across the state. The three projects that had to be cut to fit the awarded amount will be funded through other sources.

Historic Washington State Park – Lease renewal for Bladesmith School with U of A Hope/Texarkana

Grady Spann reported since 2019, the University of Arkansas Community College Hope-Texarkana has leased approximately 1,932 square feet of workshop space, 504 square foot of classroom space, and the Stephens House consisting of 1,260 square feet at Historic Washington State Park all on the fractional Block 30 Original Town of Washington, Arkansas, to operate the James Black Bladesmith School.

Chris Thomason, Chancellor of the University of Arkansas Community College Hope-Texarkana, has indicated that the college would like to extend the lease term agreement for two years from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2023, at no cost to the U of A Community College Hope-Texarkana. Per the terms of the lease, the lessee is responsible for utility costs including water, sewer, electric, and propane gas at Historic Washington State Park and continue offering classes on bladesmithing.

John Gill moved to approve the renewed lease agreement at Historic Washington State Park to University of Arkansas Community College Hope-Texarkana for a period of two years as follows: approximately 1,932 square feet of workshop space, 504 square foot of classroom space, and the Stephens House consisting of 1,260 square feet at Historic Washington State Park all on the fractional Block 30 Original Town of Washington, Arkansas. Randy Wolfinbarger seconded, and the motion carried.

Pinnacle Mountain State Park – Lake Sylvia – MOU

Grady Spann requested approval to initiate a Memorandum of Understanding for a twenty-year historic lease with the USDA, U.S. Forest Service, Ouachita National Forest for the operation, protection, preservation, maintenance, and development of the Camp Ouachita historic cabins and Lake Sylvia Recreational Area campsites, day-use area and swimming beach. The leased area will be managed by Pinnacle Mountain State Park, located 25 miles from the Lake Sylvia area. Discussion followed.

Austin Albers moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between USDA, U.S. Forest Service, Ouachita National Forest and Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism for a historic property lease Camp Ouachita and the Lake Sylvia Recreation Area and adjacent National Forest System Trails as follows: Sections 28, 32, 33, Township 3 North, Range 17 West, 5th Principal Meridian, Perry County, Arkansas. John Gill seconded, and the motion carried.

SPRTC Certificate of Appreciation

Grady Spann requested the approval for a Certificate of Appreciation for Shirley Blackwell for her forty-four years of service to Arkansas State Parks.

Eric Jackson moved to approve a certificate of appreciation for Shirley Blackwell for her 44 years of service to Arkansas State Parks. Ron Gossage seconded, and the motion carried.

SPRTC Certificate of Appreciation

Spann requested the approval for a Certificate of Appreciation for Bobbie Sutterfield for her twenty-seven years of service to Arkansas State Parks.

Montine McNulty moved to approve a certificate of appreciation for Bobbie Sutterfield for her 27 years of service to Arkansas State Parks. Austin Albers seconded, and the motion carried.

SPRTC Certificate of Appreciation

Spann requested the approval for a Certificate of Appreciation for Angie Wasson for her over thirty-one years of service to Arkansas State Parks and Craig Wasson for his over thirty-one.

Blair Allen moved to approve a certificate of appreciation for Angie Wasson for her over 31 years of service and Craig Wasson for his over 31 years of service to Arkansas State Parks. Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.

Resolutions for Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant applications

Jeff King presented a Recreational Trails Program Resolution and the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) to the SPRTC seeking the support of ADPHT working in cooperation with the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) for federal funds to build trail options. He stated ASP would like to apply for the Federal-Aid Recreational Trails Fund to develop or improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park – Development of 6 miles of trail from Snow Lake to Mozart (\$1,750,000-\$2,250,000); Mammoth Spring State Park – Paving of the Spring Lake Trail to provide ADA access to park facilities (\$425,000); Delta Heritage Trail State Park – Construction of Speed Humps along 6.7 miles of the Delta Heritage Trail to Improve Safety (\$375,000); Delta Heritage Trail State Park – Resurfacing of approximately 3.2 miles of the Delta Heritage Trail to include bridge repairs and erosion control (\$235,000); Pinnacle Mountain State Park – Development of a shared-use path connecting the proposed new Visitor Center to the Day-use area (\$350,000). The above projects are listed in order of priority. The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is now a set aside of TAP funding with its own guidance and criteria. RTP projects are also selected through a competitive process with those applications being reviewed by the Arkansas Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee. Applicants may apply to both the TAP and RTP in the same application cycle; however, if chosen for funding the project may only receive funding from either the TAP or the RTP, not both. Both TAP and RTP are reimbursement-type grant programs with an 80 percent federal share and a 20 percent match required from the eligible sponsor.

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 projects. To meet the application deadlines, ASP requests approval of the resolutions from the SPRTC at the May 2021 meeting.

John Gill moved to approve Recreational Trails Program 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 seeking federal grants to develop or improve Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Snow Lake to Mozart, the Mammoth Spring State Park, Spring Lake Trail Improvements, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Development of Speed Humps from Bunge Access to Arkansas City, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Resurfacing of 3.2 miles of trail from Lexa to Lick Creek, and the Pinnacle Mountain State Park New Visitor Center Shared-use Path Development; Mike Gibson 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 Federal-Aid Recreational Trails Funds are available at eighty percent (80%) federal participation and twenty percent (20%) local match to develop or improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Snow Lake to Mozart, the Mammoth Spring State Park, Spring Lake Trail Improvements, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Development of Speed Humps from Bunge Access to Arkansas City, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Resurfacing of 3.2 miles of trail from Lexa to Lick Creek, and the Pinnacle Mountain State Park New Visitor Center Shared-use Path Development; and

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

WHEREAS, these projects, using federal funding, will be open and available for use by the general public and maintained by the applicant for the life of the project.

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

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

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 construction of the above stated projects.

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 Arkansas Department of Transportation to initiate action to implement these projects.

THIS RESOLUTION adopted by the State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission on this 20th day of May 2021.

ARKANSAS STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

/s/Kalene Griffith, Chair

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE, AND TOURISM

/s/Stacy Hurst, Cabinet Secretary

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 Federal–Aid Transportation Alternatives Program Funds are available at eighty percent (80%) federal participation and twenty percent (20%) local match to develop or improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Snow Lake to Mozart, the Mammoth Spring State Park, Spring Lake Trail Improvements, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Development of Speed Humps from Bunge Access to Arkansas City, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Resurfacing of 3.2 miles of trail from Lexa to Lick Creek, and the Pinnacle Mountain State Park New Visitor Center Shared-use Path Development; and

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

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ARKANSAS STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

/s/Kalene Griffith, Chair

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE, AND TOURISM

/s/Stacy Hurst, Cabinet Secretary

Lake Chicot State Park – Property Removal Requests

Jeff King requests permission to remove two structures from the park’s building inventory. The Well House (Building No. 61.49/AASIS No. 120006610) is an 80 square foot brick building with a shingle roof on a concrete slab originally constructed in 1970 to house the well pump for the superintendent’s residence. The property was acquired by acquisition from the Rogers in 2000. The residence has been on city water for over twenty years and does not need well water. The pump is currently broken and unusable. The building can serve no other purpose to the park. Rogers Storage Building #2 (Building No. 61.50/AASIS No. 120006611) is a 240 square foot wooden shed with vinyl siding sitting on the cement driveway of the superintendent’s residence.

The structure does not have a foundation. One end is completely open with one door on the west side of the structure. The structure was acquired as part of the Rogers acquisition in 2000. The buildings have outlived their usefulness and repairs exceed the value of the building.

Weston Lewey moved to approve based on the information presented; the Commission finds the following structures at Lake Chicot State Park Well House (Building No. 61.49/AASIS No. 120006610) and Rogers Storage Building #2 (Building No. 61.50/AASIS No. 120006611) obsolete notwithstanding their insured value and approves the removal from Arkansas State Park inventory. Montine McNulty seconded, and the motion carried.

FY22 Marketing Plan

Jennifer Morgan presented the ASP Fiscal Year 2022 marketing budget. The communications division and the marketing team collaborated to shift the bulk of the budget to general state parks, Monument Trails, and increasing meeting and group promotions. The overall media plan breakdown will be digital 50%, print 29%, television 14%, paid search 6% and outdoor 1%. The media goals are to increase visitation and overnight stays, raise awareness of Arkansas State Parks and generate travel to Arkansas. Discussion ensued.

**ARKANSAS STATE PARKS
FY22 TOTAL MARKETING BUDGET**

Arkansas State Parks	
Media	\$ 524,781.00
Arkansas Travelers Package	\$ 24,260.00
Monument Trails	
Media	\$ 102,964.00
Arkansas State Park Lodges Group Sales	\$ 52,483.00
Media	
Arkansas Press Association (Production & Commission)	\$ 12,000.00
Special Events and Promotions	
Paid Search and Social	\$ 44,000.00
Print/Online Banner Production	\$ 38,000.00
Video/Television/Radio Production	\$ 150,000.00
2022 State Parks Guidebook (350,000)	\$ 208,245.00
Passport/Field Guide (100,000)	\$ 32,000.00
Collateral Distribution	\$ 10,000.00
Website	\$ 282,240.00
Contingency	\$ 19,027.00
Total Budget	\$ 1,500,000.00

Tourism Division

Advertising Committee Update

Austin Albers gave a synopsis of what was discussed at the prior day's committee meeting on how CJRW conducts research to create the recommendations for the marketing plan. The 2021 media recommendations were discussed for fall and winter as well as campaign reviews.

Tourism Director

Director Travis Napper gave an update on the office and staffing. All staff is back in the office full-time. Four vacant positions are being advertised: two administrative assistant positions in the director's office, the marketing and research manager position, and a front desk administrative assistant. Arkansas Tourism participated in U.S. Travel's National Travel and Tourism Week in different ways around the state and specifically in Little Rock and Rogers where Little Rock held a job fair and Rogers hosted a panel discussion about what COVID-19 recovery is looking like. Napper reviewed the funding that the Department is considering with the American Rescue Plan Act and resubmitting an economic development act grant application. The directives for the economic development grant have not been given yet, but \$715 million has been set aside for tourism-related projects. The Arkansas Outdoor Adventure Guide has been released and has been distributed to the Welcome Centers.

Welcome Centers saw increased traffic for National Travel and Tourism Week events. The unmanned welcome center in downtown Little Rock reopened its doors. Napper gave an update on the new hires for West Memphis, Texarkana, and Blytheville and reported that the centers are operating under new hours of 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Sales has taken on the retirement and relocation marketing and advertising efforts that were being handled under Research and Development. Napper reported that the Sales Section has participated in several different shows, conventions, and sales missions including the Travel Alliance Partners TAP Dance, Brand USA focus on UK and Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, and National Tour Association Contact, which was the Section's first in-person event since the pandemic started.

The Tourism Communications Section has shifted into a new shared services model. The section's employees are now under the leadership of Melissa Whitfield but still housed under Tourism. The Geiger Media Tour is scheduled for June 13-17. The tentative itinerary is being discussed with industry partners. A new tourism podcast has been launched with two episodes that have seen around 120 plays. Featured topics so far have been music and the 2024 eclipse. There are continuing efforts to get the 2024 eclipse on the radar of all state partners and trying to prepare the communities for what to expect. Kim Williams has been tapped to lead those efforts. Arkansas Tourism and CJRW were awarded a Telly Award for the 2020 Road Trip Campaign.

Research & Development reviewed submissions for festival advertising grants with 13 applications received and 10 awarded at \$17,700. Regional Tourism Associations are preparing their final reporting to receive their reimbursement for the year. ArkTank winner Eksplor Gaming has been working with the Regional Tourism Associations to develop the games. There are also discussions on seeing if the Travel Guide can be added as a component to the app in 2022 and what kind of partnership can develop.

Napper reported on the 2% tax collections, comparing the average of 2021 to 2016-2020. Current occupancy is doing well against 2020. Smith Travel Research for occupancy rates in April were at 58%. That is over 4% from 2019. The current average daily rate for May 2021 is at 78.9% which is down from 2019. Discussion ensued.

Literature is trending ahead of the average, both digital and hardcopy. Visitation is still down across the board. Summer 2021 is forecast to be good due to vaccination rates and travel confidence. A direct correlation has been found between vaccinations and travel. Expedia Media Group found that 57% of travelers are more comfortable traveling after being vaccinated. U.S. Travel recovery data reported 87% now have travel plans within the next six months. The risks of travel are still perceived to be high. Travelers are looking for trusted accommodations. The rate of travelers looking to make travel plans in the next six months is up to 89%. About 66% have a trip scheduled within the next 5 months. The number of group bookings is relatively low from 2019. The group travel outlook picks up in the fall, but summer continues to lag and even though individuals are booking for leisure less than a month out, it still has not filled in the holes left by group travelers. Peer-to-peer rentals are already on the rise with bookings. Hot Springs had a record month for April even without Group Travel. A poll by the "Let's Go There" Campaign reports that 2/3 of Americans have a summer trip already planned or booked. 53% will take their first trip since March 2020.

CJRW

Susie Kardas reported on the website analytics. Total users month over month saw a 37% increase. Partner referrals were down 8%. Guides ordered decreased 5% while guides viewed online saw an 18% increase. Year-over-year total users saw a 197% increase. Partner referrals were up 160%. Guides ordered was up 224%, while guides viewed online saw a 669% increase. Newsletter total subscribers are increasing and click to open rate is phenomenal. Total traffic and conversion saw a large increase in April, but partner referral conversion rates dropped. Organic search in January through April saw a 25-30% increase each month. Page views on restaurant pages has rebounded quickly and every month sees an increase while accommodations continue to be down and have not rebounded from where we were 2019-2020. Top cities are going to have different search pages so people will be able to find them more easily. Overall, organic traffic is doing well at 42% more traffic for 2021.

Chris Ho reported on the search engine marketing performance for April. Google's performance saw 20,191 clicks. There were 6,901 conversions, with a 34.3% conversion rate and the spend was \$22,768. Bing had 17,350 clicks, 9,580 conversions with a 55.2% conversion rate at a \$24,000 spend. Bing and Google together saw a 90.4% increase in clicks, while conversions saw a 195% increase and a conversion rate of 51.9%. The spend was up 34.8%. Facebook and Instagram had 2.2 ads served at a cost of \$6.72 per 1,000.

The Ambassador Campaign launched and has over 1,700 submissions. The backcountry aviation tour is doing great and receiving positive feedback. It has more entries than any of the prior road trip giveaways.

Dalaney Thomas updated the commission on the aviation giveaway that launched May 1. There is a separate digital campaign that targets small aviator pilots. Almost seven thousand people have entered. Partners with the program are outdoor companies.

Old Business/New Business

Secretary Hurst said she hopes we're on the other side of the pandemic. The Department is in a good place.

Austin Albers moved to adjourn the meeting. Ron Gossage seconded, and the motion carried.

Meeting adjourned.

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