Atchafalaya Trace Commission/
Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

Minutes: March 1, 2011 Regular Meeting

A regular meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission was held Tuesday, March 1, 2011, at 1:00 PM in the Capital Park Welcome Center in Baton Rouge.

Commissioners present:
Ascension Parish: Ramon Gomez
Assumption Parish: Phillip Daigle, Sr.
Concordia Parish: Tommy Polk
East Baton Rouge Parish: Charles Fryling
Iberville Parish: Gene Seneca, Vice-Chair
Lafayette Parish: Jennifer Ritter, Secretary
Pointe Coupee Parish: J. A. Rummler
St. Martin Parish: Brenda Comeaux-Trahan
West Baton Rouge Parish: Julie Rose
Assistant Superintendent, Joe Llewellyn, Jean Lafitte National Historic Park, Ex Officio

Commissioners absent:
Avoyelles Parish: Wilbert Carmouche
Iberia Parish: Chris Burton
St. Landry Parish: Kristen Kordecki, Chair
St. Mary Parish: Carrie Stansbury, Treasurer
Terrebonne Parish: Patrick Thomas Gordon

Others present:
Debra Credeur, Executive Director, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area and Trace Commission
Doug Bourgeois, Louisiana Byways
Charles Caillouet, Friends of Atchafalaya
Jim Delahoussaye, Friends of Atchafalaya
Gerard Overhultz, Laissez Faire, Inc.
Steven Windham, Office of Lt. Governor Dardenne
David L. Dahlquist, Principal, David L. Dahlquist Associates, LLC

Director Debra Credeur made announcements and signage consultant, David Dahlquist showed sign illustrations until the arrival of a couple of members constituted a quorum. A quorum was present at 1:20 PM and Vice-chair Gene Seneca called the meeting to order.

Agenda Approval
Jennifer Ritter moved to adopt the agenda. Charles Fryling seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of January 11, 2011 Meeting Minutes
Ramon Gomez moved to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2011 regular meeting. Phillip Daigle seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Tax Credit Program
Debra Credeur reported the Atchafalaya Development Zone Tax Credit Program is scheduled to sunset December 31, 2011. The program is designed to encourage economic development in the heritage area by helping small heritage-based businesses.

**Charles Fryling moved to request an extension of the sunset date for five years. Brenda Comeaux-Trahan seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

The legislation will be reviewed for additional future changes. Jennifer Ritter offered to provide a press release about the program in order to increase promotion of the program.

**Management Plan**
Debra referred to an enclosure in the Commissioners’ packets: a table illustrating the Management Plan Actions. The table represents the heritage area projects, initiatives and direction, addressing actions that will accomplish the Goals and Objectives in the Management Plan.

The National Park Service requested that each parish’s resources (historic sites, natural areas, etc.) be rated by the Parish Tourism offices for integrity of structure, accessibility and visitor value. These tables have been sent to the parish CVB offices for completion.

**Signage Plan**
David Dahlquist presented the highway oriented signage plan covering design, sign locations, budgets and priorities. The complete plan covers highway sign types 1 (freeway/divided highway), 2 (conventional highway entry) and 3 (parish-to-parish border), as well as a small medallion for future use. The National Park Service Southeast Regional Office has approved the use of the NPS arrowhead logo on the signs.

The entire plan calls for 265 signs for all 14 parishes at an estimated cost of $179,308. The initial phase allows for signs in all the parishes, installing all the Types 2 and 3 signs. The $84,893 allocated by the Commission at the January meeting will cover this Phase 1. The larger freeway signs are scheduled for later fabrication and installation, as funds allow.

Parish budgets and parish maps of sign locations were distributed to each parish. The consultant and the Director have had several meetings with DOTD to make sure the design and specifications are in compliance with the DOTD Manual of Uniform Traffic Devices. Mr. Dahlquist said it is important to maintain flexibility about exact locations because of factors that might influence a location, such as underground utilities. Production and installation plans are being finalized.
There was a discussion in which wording such as “Welcome to...” or “You are in...” was discussed. Maintenance issues were discussed (DOTD would maintain signs on DOTD right-of-way).

Julie Rose moved to accept the Signage Plan. J. A. Rummler seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Executive Committee Report
Gene Seneca and Jennifer Ritter reported that the Executive Committee met with Lt. Governor Jay Dardenne and Chief of Staff Cathy Berry last month. The Management Plan, projects in the Plan, and the Atchafalaya Trace Commission’s organizational structure were discussed. The Lt. Governor expressed support for the heritage area program.

Director’s Report
Debra Credeur reported on the following items:
Rollup Atchafalaya National Heritage Area banner
- Printed for the 2011 Louisiana Tourism Summit
- Can be used for events and other promotions

Volunteer Hours Documentation
- Today, complete with time spent on ANHA activities, calls, meetings, drive-time to meetings, etc. since October 1, 2010. Sign and turn into me.
- Sheets will be available every meeting.
- Next meeting, complete with time spent on ANHA activities, calls, meetings, drive-time to meetings, etc. March 2, 2011 – that day. Sign and turn into me.

2011 Meeting Dates
- May 19 (special presentation), July 12, September 13, November 1
- Complete preferred-meeting-date poll in Commissioner packets

Dr. Don Frazier Lecture – May 19
- The event will be promoted as an NPS Civil War Sesquicentennial event.
- We plan to announce through a press release.
- We will collect items such as CD’s and books about the Atchafalaya to provide a speaker-appreciation gift.

Management Plan Review and Approval Routing:
- State of LA Governor & Lt. Governor April 11, 2011
- Make available to the Public June 14
- Send to Secretary of Interior August 24
- SOI Approval (90 days, based on recent advice) November 29

LA Bicentennial Commission
- 2012 is a year-long celebration of Louisiana’s 200th anniversary.

Atchafalaya NHA Curriculum:
- Will have a format similar to that of the LA Bicentennial Curriculum: history timeline, on interactive web site with lesson plans and social media component
- Be linked into LA Bicentennial web site for additional promotion.

Maps
- A small batch was printed for the 2011 Louisiana Tourism Summit.
- A one-piece map that covers the entire NHA (instead of the 4 sections we are using now), similar to the NPS Natchez Trace map, with web application, would be more visitor-friendly. Debra will get an estimate on creating and printing.

Other Announcements:
Jennifer Ritter informed the Commission on the status of the Bayou Teche Paddling Trail efforts with Rivers & Trails Conservation Assistance. There have been 4 public meetings and there soon will be a newsletter mailed to interested parties as the second planning phase is entered. Many groups are involved in the planning process. A plan for the Bayou Teche trail is scheduled to be unveiled October 2011.

Tommy Polk reported on the LSU Ag Center’s paddle trail planning, efforts supported by a grant from the Walton Family Foundation, an organization from which the Atchafalaya Trace Commission might benefit, as do several organizations such as the Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation and the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper. There was a recent meeting in Winnsboro at which 4 of our Commissioners were present. There is mutual interest not only in supporting development, outfitters, etc., but the N. LA paddling trails will come down to the rivers in Concordia Parish so there is potential to work together.

Charles Fryling suggested groups like Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation and the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper might present their organizations’ mission and work at future meetings of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission.

Gene Seneca announced he is working with Lifetime Network on a television series called “To Live and Buy,” that will showcase the materials of unique artisans.

J. A. Rummler pointed out that since Dr. Frazier is presenting at our next meeting, it would be nice for Commissioners to come to the meeting prepared enough to vote on items should that be necessary.

Charles Caillouet, representing Friends of Atchafalaya (FOA), said FOA will meet at the National Audubon Society conference room at 6100 Perkins Road in Baton Rouge on March 22, 2011 at 6:30 PM. The FOA group is varying their meeting locations, and hope to meet with the many partners working in the Basin.

Jennifer Ritter moved to adjourn the meeting. Brenda Comeaux-Trahan seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.