A regular meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission (Commission) was held Wednesday, September 28, 2011, at 10:00 AM at the Capital Park Welcome Center in Baton Rouge.

Commissioners present:
Assumption Parish: Phillip Daigle, Sr.
Ascension Parish: Ramon Gomez
Avoyelles Parish: Wilbert Carmouche
Concordia Parish: Tommy Polk
East Baton Rouge Parish: Gerren Sias
Iberia Parish: Chris Burton
Iberville Parish: Gene Seneca
Lafayette Parish: Jennifer Ritter, Secretary
Pointe Coupee Parish: J. A. Rummler, Vice-chair
St. Mary Parish: Carrie Stansbury, Chair
West Baton Rouge Parish: Julie Rose
Assistant Superintendent, Joe Llewellyn, Jean Lafitte National Historic Park, Ex Officio

Commissioners absent:
St. Landry Parish: Vacant seat
St. Martin Parish: Vacant seat
Terrebonne Parish: Patrick Thomas Gordon, Treasurer

Others present:
Debra Credeur, Executive Director, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area and Trace Commission
Willie Fontenot, Friends of Atchafalaya
Gerard Overhultz, Laissez Faire, Inc.
Lillie Thorpe, Office of State Parks, Lake Fausse Pointe State Park
Erin Sullivan, Office of State Parks, LA Outdoors Outreach Program
Julie Vezinot, LA Bicentennial Commission
Dona Richard, Director, St. Martin Parish Tourist Commission

Chair Carrie Stansbury called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM and requested attendee introductions. Julie Vezinot gave a brief report on the Louisiana Bicentennial Celebration during 2012. The commemorative year actually kicks off the last few months of 2011 at the Louisiana Book Festival, a Kickoff Gala at Kent House, the State Fair, Grand Réveil, a Mignon Faget Exhibit and Festivals Acadiens et Créoles. More information can be found at www.LouisianaBicentennial2012.com. Julie encouraged the parishes to host Bicentennial events and exhibits, even if small, in their areas. Such events will benefit from promotional opportunities through the LA Bicentennial Commission. Contact information for Julie Vezinot is jvezinot@crt.la.gov or 225-342-1294.

Agenda Approval
Gene Seneca moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Wilbert Carmouche seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of July 27, 2011 Meeting Minutes
Jennifer Ritter moved for approval of the July 27, 2011 regular meeting minutes. Gene Seneca seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
Friends/Foundation Organization
Committee members Gerren Sias and Jennifer Ritter and Debra Credeur met via conference call. A primary Commission need of such an organization was identified as fundraising. It is not uncommon for NHA Friends’ Groups to assume Managing Entity status when the Secretary of the Interior terminates assistance which, per the ANHA Federal law, is 15 years from enactment, or the year 2021. The State Legal counsel advised: 1) Organization should be autonomous; 2) There should be clear separation between the Commission and the organization; and 3) A cooperative endeavor agreement between the Commission and the organization should outline roles and responsibilities.

Discussion:
Ritter: As a side note to the fundraising issue, it would be a good idea to investigate the possibility of a dedicated tax for the heritage area such as the tax dedicated to the Bayou Vermilionville District.
Fontenot: The existing Friends of Atchafalaya is open to discussing what changes if any would be recommended to their organization in order to fulfill that role.
Rummler: The Louisiana Association of Non-profits might provide guidance toward the type of organization and other issues during this process.

Management Plan Public Comment Summary
The summary of the comments on the final draft of the Management Plan were distributed. The summary outlines the alternatives, with comments listed specific to the alternatives, all of which carried some sort of support. None of the alternatives had no support and most commenters favored the combined alternative that was selected. The summary and full comment report is at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=442&projectId=22438&documentID=28759.

Federal Funding Update
Credeur reviewed the funding authorization per legislation versus the NPS funding formula in effect based on area, population and other factors for the older NHA’s, while NHA’s without an Department of Interior approved Management Plan are receiving $150,000. There are 24 NHA’s currently receiving varying amounts from $300,000-$750,000. The fact that many NHA’s are not enjoying this level of funding, and with overall Congressional budget concerns, the National Park Service is conducting webinars for input from NHA Directors, working with an outside, independent economic consultant and will establish a task force to analyze and recommend an equitable funding formula.

Project Update
The Director reported on the following projects:

1. Experience Atchafalaya Days (EAD) kicks off with the Swamp Life Expo @ Iberville Parish, followed by canoeing events, presentations and art and photography exhibits in the following weeks. The Governor proclaimed October as Atchafalaya Month. A schedule of events was distributed. Discussion: Julie Rose pointed out that the 10/2 SugarFest at West Baton Rouge (WBR) Museum is not in the EAD events listing and it is a similar event. She reported there was confusion because of changes with EAD this year and her request to have the SugarFest included as an EAD event was not handled appropriately. A discussion ensued about setting criteria for what constitutes an EAD event. Carrie Stansbury asked for volunteers to serve on an Experience Atchafalaya Days Committee that will examine these issues. Volunteering were
Carrie Stansbury, Julie Rose, J. A. Rummler and Ramon Gomez. The Committee will meet via conference call to be scheduled in the near future.

2. The **Management Plan** has been sent to Washington for Secretary of Interior approval which will take approximately 3 months.

3. NPS Denver Center provided the framework of a **map/brochure** 18” x 17 ½” of which we should have a draft in a couple of weeks.

4. The Federal fiscal year ends 9/30/11. Funds were obligated for: Finishing Management Plan and map layout and printing; fabrication of all Type 1, 2 & 3 signs; installation of all Type 2 & 3 and 1 Type 1 signs; an ad in *Country Roads* for EAD; and DVD reproduction for educational and promotional purposes.

5. **Signage Plan Phase 1**: Bids were requested for installation of Types 2 & 3 through State Office of Purchasing; bid was awarded to North Sixty Management Company. DOTD Sign shop has completed the signs which will be picked up by contractor for installation in the next couple weeks. Contract states Type 2 & 3 sign installation will be complete 90 days from October 11, 2011. **Phase 2**: Sign Shop is making the Type 1 signs which will be complete within the month. Request for bids for the installation of the 8 Type 1’s will be broadcasted for bids in the next couple of weeks.

6. **Education Projects** underway include:
   - DVD copies to be distributed at a Baton Rouge Social Studies Teachers’ Conference October 6. Julie Rose offered to continue distribution of the DVD through the WBR Museum outreach efforts to multiple parishes, and to help with an accompanying activity.
   - CODOFIL is assisting with the creation of a French version of the DVD to place with French teachers around the State.
   - DVD copies will be given to each Commissioner for showing to groups and to Richard Hartley and Memory Seymour to use in their work with Educators.
   - The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area will have a page in the LA Bicentennial Teachers’ Desk Reference Directory.

7. The National Association of Recreational Resource Planners Annual Conference (**NARRP**) will be in Baton Rouge, LA April 16-19, 2012. Credeur is participating in planning with the Steering Committee on field trips and other conference needs.

8. **Statewide Paddling** initiatives underway include NE Louisiana/LSU Ag Walton Grant which covers Bayous Bartholomew & Macon & Tensas River. This group also is hosting a Paddling & Canoeing Workshop in Monroe, LA to which all Commissioners are invited at no charge.

   Jennifer Ritter will speak on the Bayou Teche Paddling Trail with Steve Windham of the Lt. Governor’s office covering the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area and product development.

**Education Committee** (Julie Rose, Jennifer Ritter, Chris Burton)

Julie Rose reported on the Committee’s conference call earlier in the month. They discussed educational programming including research, using grade level expectations to identify teacher objectives that relate to the mission of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, online applications and working with educators.

**FY 2012 Projects**
With the Federal funding uncertain, and the likelihood of a federal continuing resolution, it is difficult to plan for the new fiscal year. The projects that are underway should be completed. Carrie Stansbury pointed out establishing criteria and other guidelines for EAD is important. Discussion turned to kiosks since interpretive kiosks have been discussed in the past. J. A. Rummler mentioned we should interface GIS with such a project, and even now, look into this for use in an electronic map on the website.

**Other Business and Commissioner Announcements**
The Commissioners announced events scheduled in their parishes in the upcoming 2 months, and several meetings attendees announced events as well. J.A. Rummler informed about Ann McKutchen’s newly-released book which includes a CD and covers soundscapes in the Atchafalaya, *River Music*. Jennifer Ritter announced Dr. Michael Martin is the new Director at the Center for Cultural and Eco Tourism.

Tommy Polk moved to adjourn the meeting. Julie Rose seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.