Atchafalaya Trace Commission/
Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

Minutes: May 23, 2012 Regular Meeting

A regular meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission (Commission) was held Wednesday, May 23, 2012 at 10:00 AM at the Capitol Park Welcome Center in Baton Rouge.

Commissioners present:
Ascension Parish: Charles Caillouet
Assumption Parish: Phillip Daigle, Sr.
Concordia Parish: Tommy Polk
East Baton Rouge Parish: Gerren Sias
Iberville Parish: Gene Seneca
Pointe Coupee Parish: J. A. Rummler, Vice-chair
St. Landry Parish: Pam Cannatella
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
Lafayette Parish: Jennifer Ritter Guidry, Secretary
St. Mary Parish: Carrie Stansbury, Chair
St. Martin Parish: Vacant seat
Terrebonne Parish: Patrick Thomas Gordon, Treasurer

Others present:
Debra Credeur, Executive Director, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area and Trace Commission
Erin Sullivan, LA State Parks Naturalist
Gerard Overhultz, Laissez Faire, Inc.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, Vice-chair J.A. Rummler called the meeting to order.

Agenda Approval
Julie Rose moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Gerren Sias seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of March 28, 2012 Meeting Minutes
Gene Seneca moved to approve the March 28, 2012 regular meeting minutes. Gerren Sias seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Website Updates
Debra Credeur presented updates to www.atchafalaya.org. Changes and additions include:
Home Page: Facebook button
Culture & History: Sections on themes, itineraries and the NPS Passport program;
Natural Resources: Sections on rivers, flood control, the Basin and cypress;
Outdoor Recreation with paddling, birding and other outdoor interest sections;
Education & Tools has an added “Curriculum” section;
Additional content suggestions were: Adding music to the site; a free application available soon that serves as a social media broadcast.

Projects Update
Debra Credeur covered the following items in a project update:
2. Staff/Volunteer Hours Sheet is our documentation for the match to Federal funds.
3. The NPS Passport Program is in effect at 3 Jean Lafitte NHP Cultural Centers and we are in the process of adding the 3 State Welcome Centers located in the NHA.
4. Signage on the Interstate should be completed and installed by July '12.
5. The curriculum is being edited and will be posted on the website soon.
6. Plans for distribution of the French translation of the video to schools and international markets are underway. The video is on the website next to the English version on the Home page.
7. LA Bicentennial Cypress Tree project with Harvey Stern/LA Purchase Cypress Legacy – 6 trees recognized as standing in 1812, soon to be on LA Bicentennial web site with a link to Atchafalaya.org. There will be a recognition ceremony for the tree at Jean Lafitte NHP Barataria Preserve Unit on June 19, 10:30 AM.
8. Civil War: An initial strategy meeting will take place next week with Vicksburg and Natchez National Park superintendents to explore collaboration on 2013 Civil War Sesquicentennial projects. The promotion format is likely to be one or several of events, sites, a “trail,” a website, an exhibit etc. Discussion: J.A. Rummler suggested his list of events be sent to Commissioners to which they could add items to create a more comprehensive listing. These efforts could build some momentum for a coordinated numbered list or trail of sites, and/or research of Civil War activity in the Atchafalaya NHA that could result in development of additional commemorative sites such as the New Hampshire soldier cemetery at Butte La Rose.
9. Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge issued a comprehensive conservation plan. I’ve been in touch with the project leader and refuge manager about exploring ways we can work together on visitor service initiatives.
10. The American Birding Association (ABA) estimates $13,000 or less to create a LA Birding Guide pdf file for our website. The project has the backing and expertise of the Audubon Society, the LSU Museum of Natural History and the ABA, and has valuable input from the birding community. Contents include birding seasons, birding organizations, Louisiana specialties, internet resources, regional locations; wildlife checklists and more. The regional sections are state-wide and the ANHA is some part of most of the sections. Discussion: J.A. Rummler suggested that the areas pertinent to the ANHA parishes be indicated in some format. The Commission discussed the need for this information, the partnerships that would result and the recognition it would bring to the ANHA to provide this. At this time, no hard copies will be printed.

Julie Rose moved that we proceed with the birding guide as an addition to our website. Pam Cannatella seconded the motion and it passed.
11. There has been some very preliminary research on a long-term project that would include all parishes participating; experiential, historic, outdoor, geomorphologic and boat tours; trailhead and exhibit space: a type of Heritage Area “signature” experience. This type of experience or offering would address multiple goals of the NHA and would address a need that is not being met. The history of the Atchafalaya River is so entwined with the MS River, there are many possibilities in developing such a tour or other product. Development in stages would allow the parishes time to build capacity in order to take advantage of the bigger opportunities later. Resources to investigate are Camp Atchafalaya planning, WBR CVB and Port Allen Visitors Center.

Pam Cannatella moved that we continue researching and planning this project. Gerren Sias seconded the motion and it passed.

12. There is an LSU Ag Center workshop in Vidalia June 6 on Outdoor Enterprise Business & Legal issues.

Other Business
Guest Gerard Overhultz presented a letter to the Commission in which he encouraged the Commission to consider each parish planting a cypress tree as a way to recognize this important resource in our State.

Commission Announcements
Events that were announced were Ferriday Soul Survivors Festival, Bayou Country Superfest (Baton Rouge), Jambalaya Festival (Gonzales), Sportsman’s Festival (Krotz Springs), Lebeau Zydeco Festival, St. Landry “Green” Artist Exhibit Series, Old River Blessing of Boats, and Brian Costello’s presentation on the Flood of 1912. Other news items included the passing of Swamp People’s Mitchell Guist; Gene Seneca’s work with Channel 9; WBR Museum’s naming to the African American Heritage Trail; and WBR being recognized as the Kite Capitol.

Gene Seneca moved to adjourn the meeting. Tommy Polk seconded the motion and, passing unanimously, the meeting was adjourned.