Atchafalaya Trace Commission/
Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

Minutes: November 5, 2014 Regular Meeting

A regular meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission (Commission), managing entity of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA), was held Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2014, at 10 a.m. at the Capitol Park Welcome Center in Baton Rouge.

Commissioners present:
Assumption Parish: Phillip Daigle, Sr. Concordia Parish: Glenn McGlothlin Iberville Parish: Gene Seneca
E. Baton Rouge Parish: Gerren Sias, Treasurer Lafayette Parish: Jennifer Guidry, Chair Iberia Parish: Chris Burton
Pointe Coupée Parish: J. A. Rummler, Vice-chair St. Mary Parish: Carrie Stansbury West Baton Rouge Parish: Julie Rose
Terrebonne Parish: Patrick Thomas Gordon, Secretary

Commissioners absent:
Ascension Parish: Charles Caillouet Avoyelles Parish: Wilbert Carmouche St. Martin Parish: Aaron Flegeance
St. Landry Parish: No commissioner

Others present:
Debra Credeur, Executive Director; Ashley Herrick, Assistant Director; Tracy Browning, Ascension Parish Tourism; and Gerard Overhultz, Laissez Faire Inc.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, Commission Chair Guidry called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m.

Agenda Approval
Phillip Daigle made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Gerren Sias seconded the motion and the agenda was accepted as presented.

Approval of July 23, 2014 Meeting Minutes
Patrick Thomas Gordon made a motion to approve the July 23, 2014 regular meeting minutes. Gerren Sias seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Education Committee
The curriculum has been distributed to all schools in the state through regular mail. It was also presented at the Catholic Educators Conference and the Social Studies Teachers’ Conference thanks to Richard Hartley. Work on the curriculum portal is also progressing and will culminate in a website that highlights ANHA area activities and gives added publicity thanks to the other curricula on the site.

Educational Speaker Series
Ashley Herrick attended the Solomon Northup symposium that Wilbert Carmouche organized Oct. 18 in Bunkie. It had 80 total attendees. Next is Julie Rose’s Meet John James Audubon showcasing Audubon prints and a historical re-enactor Nov. 14 and 15, and Jennifer Guidry’s Vernacular Inventions Backyard Immersion program in Lafayette.

Exhibit Panel
Debra showed off the new ANHA exhibit backdrop, which was debuted at the Lt. Governor’s Tourism Summit in August and received many positive comments. Ashley Herrick explained that the backdrop is fairly simple to put together in about 25 minutes. The podium is heavier and takes about 10 minutes to set up. ANHA will use the backdrop most often at events.
Natural & Outdoor Resources Committee
Debra reported that the proposal committee received seven proposals for the Water & Land Trail RFP. Debra is negotiating a contract with the highest scorer and expects all to go well. The project should take a year to complete once the contract receives state approval. Possibilities for public outreach during the project include public input via web submissions and before or during already scheduled Atchafalaya Trace Commission meetings. Patrick Thomas Gordon advised making this public comment time an item on the meeting agenda to keep it organized.

Debra showed a photo of the BTNEP calendar that ANHA is partnering with BTNEP to produce. She will bring the commissioners copies once it is printed.

Debra displayed photographs of several mural-size paintings produced by world-renowned environmental artist Marlene Yu for a series called “Purple Swamp.” The series was inspired by Marlene’s visit to the ANHA with LDNR. Debra attended the exhibit’s grand opening at the Louisiana State Exhibition Museum in Shreveport. Based in New York, Marlene is also opening a Rainforest Art Foundation and Marlene Yu Museum in Shreveport.

History & Culture Committee
Debra displayed a list of events that took place in the ANHA during Atchafalaya Month and showed photos of several events she and/or Ashley attended, including the Swamp Life Expo, Tour du Teche, the Solomon Northup Symposium and the Shake Your Trail Feather Festival. The ANHA sponsored several of these events by providing water bottles as giveaways. Julie Rose asked if the ATC should invite Elizabeth Brantley of the Iberville Museum to come to a meeting and talk about the Atchafalaya Room she is opening.

Parking lot and other renovations continue at the Atchafalaya Welcome Center, a new sign will also be installed that includes the ANHA logo. Debra reminded the commission that AWC has become the face of the Atchafalaya for many visitors and distributes more ANHA brochures than any other welcome center. The compressor has been fixed, and Gene Seneca and Charles Caillouet are still planning to visit and evaluate what other exhibit fixes the commission could sponsor.

Debra showed photos from the Atchafalaya Basin boat tour from Bayou Sorrel to Grand Lake Oct. 24 and recognized the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources for putting the trip together. Lt. Governor Jay Dardenne, his chief of staff and representatives from the LSU School of Renewable Resources and the U.S. Geological Survey also participated. Jennifer Guidry said it was very interesting to learn about the siltation and delta buildup issues in the area.

Sustainability
Debra reported on a common sustainability model followed by national heritage areas which is one in which a nonprofit takes over management of the ANHA when the sunset occurs. This could be eight years in the future for ANHA. Some NHA’s have delayed sunset, and/or continued to receive financial assistance with reauthorization through Congressional action. Expecting the foundation of a nonprofit for this purpose to be laid in the next few years, it is probable that the Commission and nonprofit would co-exist until the commission sunsets. Julie Rose asked what the scope would be for a nonprofit that serves as our fundraising arm. Debra said the nonprofit could begin by selling items like license plates, t-shirts and other items, and eventually a corporate sponsor could be secured. Another advantage to partnering with a nonprofit is nonprofits often are eligible to apply for some grants not available to a state agency. Legal advice has indicated 1) that it would be in the best interests that a member of the nonprofit would not also serve on the commission, though he/she could be a past commissioner; and 2) the purchase of the items for resale should be done by the nonprofit if the nonprofit will be retaining the proceeds.

Director’s Report
1. Administrative
2015 Meeting Dates: Jan. 7, March 4, May 6, July 8, Sept. 2, Nov. 4
On the Volunteer Hours Sheet, include meetings, committee work, planning, events hosted and any ANHA-related projects from 10/1/2013 through 9/30/2014.
St. Landry Parish still has a commissioner vacancy. Iberia Parish has reappointed Chris Burton.

2. Other Promotions and Outreach
- Ashley Herrick has continued daily updates of the ANHA Facebook account. The page has grown from 476 likes on July 13 to 804 likes as of Nov. 5. Ashley will maintain regular postings related to the area and the activities it supports. She encouraged commissioners to visit the page to view photos from events that have taken place during Atchafalaya Month. Ashley is also updating the ANHA Instagram account, atchafalaya_nha. The ANHA has 50 followers on Instagram.
- Ashley attended Poverty Point’s UNESCO World Heritage Site inscription ceremony Saturday, Oct. 11. Several National Park Service employees were present, including NPS Director Jonathon Jarvis. The ANHA is connected to Poverty Point via 23 local archeological sites where cooking balls like the ones used by the Poverty Point inhabitants were found. According to the state archeologist, the people of Poverty Point likely traveled through the ANHA on their way to the Gulf Coast. J. A. Rummel suggested the ANHA put together a guidebook of mounds like the one done by CRT a few years ago. Carrie Stansbury pointed out the Chitimacha and other groups are very protective of archeological sites in the interests of minimizing damage to the resource.
- Debra showed images from the unveiling of the BREC Zoo’s new Atchafalaya exhibit which includes an airboat and an ANHA sign.
- ANHA and the Office of the Lt. Governor participated in BTNEP’s Toast to the Coast campaign on social media to raise awareness of coastal issues.
- Ashley wrote a blog about fall events in the ANHA for LouisianaTravel.com’s Only Louisiana blog. This gave the ANHA a good amount of free publicity and promoted Atchafalaya Days.

3. Grant Program Research
- Debra is analyzing how other NHAs structure their grant programs. One thing Debra noticed when reviewing information collected was that other heritage areas funded on the same level as the ANHA ($300,000) are relatively generous with their grant programs (ex. Champlain, Niagara Falls and Sangre Cristo give between $50,000 and $100,000 per year to grantees in their communities.), and an increase in funding did not significantly increase funding amounts. Of all the grant programs, $2,000 to $10,000 is the most normal range distributed per grantee, and 26 NHAs did not have grant information on their websites. Grant programs give NHAs good publicity and help to fund projects in the community that accomplish management plan goals.

Carrie Stansbury asked about Harold Schoeffler’s plan to develop a bike trail along the levee in the Atchafalaya Basin. Debra mentioned she spoke with Mr. Schoeffler when the bike trail was in the planning stages. She informed that our ANHA Trail would tie in with the bike trail at some point, exact point as yet undetermined. Debra reported also speaking with Don Haydel with the LDNR Atchafalaya Basin Program about a possible DNR geocaching trail with which the ANHA Trail would connect with at some point.

Commissioner Announcements
Commissioner announcements included updates about the Rougaroo Festival in Houma rated one of the top 10 costume festivals in the country, the Bayou Beer Fest and Terrebonne Christmas festivities; 2015 Bayou Country Superfest lineup; new Cajun Coast Tour Guide app and interpretive for the new Cajun Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau welcome center; The Bird Man will perform “Birds of Prey” show with more than 20 birds during next year’s Eagle Expo; the West Baton Rouge Museum’s Wild Land exhibit Nov. 8 – Jan. 7 and Meet John James Audubon educational speaker series program Nov. 14 and 15; Christmas Parade in Pierre Part; the Harvest Festival in New Roads and draw down of False River continues; bilingual sign projects in Acadiana; a new film by Charles Richard called “In the Mind of the Maker” about brain science behind boat making; the Backyard Immersion Program Nov. 14 and 21 in Lafayette; a sign made by Gerard Overhultz for Cajun Coast CVB; and Oil Spill Science Outreach through the Sea Grant Programs of the Gulf of Mexico.

There being no further announcements or business, Patrick Thomas Gordon made a motion to adjourn the meeting. J.A. Rummler seconded the motion and, passing unanimously, the meeting was adjourned.