A regular meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission (Commission), managing entity of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA), was held Wednesday, Sept. 2, at 10 a.m. at the Capitol Park Conference Center in Baton Rouge.

Commissioners present:
- Ascension: Charles Caillouet
- E. Baton Rouge: Gerren Sias, Treasurer
- West Baton Rouge: Julie Rose
- Assumption: Phillip Daigle, Sr
- Iberia: Chris Burton
- Terrebonne: Patrick T. Gordon, Secretary
- Avoyelles: Wilbert Carmouche
- Lafayette: Jennifer Guidry, Chair

Commissioners absent:
- Concordia: Glenn McGlothin
- St. Martin: Aaron Fleegance
- Iberville: Clifford LeGrange
- Pointe Coupée: J. A. Rummler, Vice-chair
- St. Landry: Herman Fuselier

Others present:
- Debra Credeur, Executive Director; Ashley Herrick, Assistant Director; Mark Ford, NPS; Willie Fontenot, Friends of Atchafalaya; Dwight Landreneau, Office of State Parks; Alex Strader, JCLA; Elizabeth Brantley, Iberville Museum; Sara Krupa, LDNR; Jessica Dixon, Office of State Parks; Gerard Overhultz, Laissez Faire Inc.

Commission Chair Jennifer Guidry called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

AGENDA APPROVAL
Phillip Daigle made a motion to adopt the meeting agenda as presented. Patrick T. Gordon seconded the motion and the agenda was accepted.

APPROVAL OF JULY 8 MINUTES
Patrick T. Gordon made a motion to approve the July 8, 2015, regular meeting minutes. Wilbert Carmouche seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS
Debra announced the 2016 nominations for officers: Jennifer Guidry for Chair; Patrick T. Gordon for Vice-Chair; Wilbert Carmouche for Secretary; and Gerren Sias for Treasurer. She noted that additional nominations could be made at the commission meeting, and that this slate meets requirements that an officer may stay in the same office for no more than three years. Since there were no new nominations, Julie Rose motioned to accept the slate as presented. Chris Burton seconded the motion and the slate was unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
Debra reminded commissioners that the next meeting will be Nov. 4 and suggested 2016 dates of 1/6, 3/2, 5/4, 7/13, 9/14 and 11/2 at Capitol Park Conference Center, following a “first-Wednesday” pattern except for the July and September meetings because of holidays being in those first weeks. Because of the garage being leased, parking is in the riverside lot with handicap accessibility needs accommodated in the circle drive in front of the building.

Debra reported that the color on some of the highway signs installed at the end of 2011 is fading, particularly on the smaller ones and those facing west. In initial discussions with DOTD, Debra learned progress has been made in the sign paint having a longer life, possibly 10 years. There was a discussion with several points made: a downtown Houma mural that has a clear coating on it has lasted about 15 years; the color red fading soonest; and making no changes to our logo. Since we don’t have an exact count yet of the number of signs to be replaced, for
estimating purposes, the approximately 60 signs that face west were used as a basis, resulting in approximately $13,000, which is below the threshold required for a request for bids. It was suggested that adding an ultraviolet stabilizer in the paints might increase the paint life. Jennifer said that she has completed half of her signage inventory for her parish and encouraged the commissioners to take notice of the signs in their area.

Debra explained that Atchafalaya.org is undergoing several updates including general updates, adding the Atchafalaya Water Heritage Trail and switching to a responsive design for optimal viewing on a variety of screen sizes. The new site will also have a Grants and Resources page.

October is Atchafalaya Month. The ANHA is coordinating a proclamation from the Governor’s office, sponsoring/promoting various events going on throughout the region and organizing three more French immersion excursions that connect several of ANHA themes.

Events & Outreach: The ANHA attended a DOTD long-range bike planning meeting, met with The Nature Conservancy and has been in contact with a media photographer David Farmarie about photographing in several parishes. Debra and Ashley also attended the 2015 Lt. Governor’s Tourism Summit. This was the first year in many that CRT agencies have not set up booths in the hallway during the event and Debra received feedback that many people missed that opportunity to reach us and this practice should be continued, with a suggestion of possibly an ANHA breakout session. Discussions are also underway with Cane River National Heritage Area (CRNHA) about ANHA, CRNHA and NPS having a group presence during the travel fair breakfast to raise awareness in the state about NHA’s. Debra also attended the Louisiana NPS Partners quarterly meeting this week. Upcoming events include several marker dedications on Louisiana’s Bartram trail. Bartram was America’s first naturalist, and his book, Travels is still in print.

FINANCIAL REPORT
Debra reported that the ANHA’s financial report looks similar to the one of the previous meeting. Allowing for the sign replacement estimate of $13,000, a federal funds balance of $34,000 is expected of the current fiscal year funding. The same level of federal funding for FY 2016 is expected but if Congress maintains an extended continuing resolution again, confirmation of this funding could come several months after the fiscal year begins in October.

Following up on a discussion from a previous meeting, Debra asked the commission if they wanted to fund the 2016 BTNEP birding calendar which theme is John James Audubon. Several Commissioners had received positive feedback on the calendar, noting the ANHA logo was displayed on it. Patrick motioned to fund the BTNEP calendar for no more than $5,000. No one seconded the motion. Julie asked what the balance is in the Educational Speaker series fund. Debra said we have $23,000 that has not been encumbered. Charles motioned to support the BTNEP calendar at the level which would qualify the ANHA logo to be included. Patrick seconded the motion. Amending this motion, Patrick motioned to support the BTNEP calendar at a minimum of $3,000 and a maximum of $5,000. Charles seconded the motion. In the past, BTNEP has produced a fishing calendar as well, showing many species, moon phases and more.

GRANT PROGRAM
The ANHA grant program guidelines are still under development. Suggestions from other NHA’s, the commissioners and the state legal department are being incorporated. Some changes since our last discussion include 2 grant cycles per year; establishing an application review process; and absorbing the Speaker series fund into the Educational grant category (it would be redundant to maintain both programs). Commissioners may want to consider serving on the application review committee. Whether the committee composition is commissioners only or non-commissioners, the same ethical considerations would apply since the committee would be acting on behalf of the state.
COMMITTEE ACTIVITY REPORTS
NATURAL & OUTDOOR RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Trail Project Update
Debra said that the consultants are accepting site submissions for the Atchafalaya Water Heritage Trail via WaterHeritageTrail.org. Any sites within the ANHA that are related to water history are eligible for consideration. The original list of sites gathered from commissioners has been submitted. The deadline for submissions is Sept. 15 and Debra has received quite a few calls and questions from community members. She explained that the type of sites they are looking for are not plantations, Civil War forts or brick and mortar structures but sites connected to a body of water, or bodies of water themselves. (Ex. Where the Mississippi River used to run, not the historic home sitting there). The research team will verify information submitted. Clarification is needed for sites that have been submitted (Ex. Where along the Mississippi River should a site be located? We don’t need exact GPS coordinates, but as much description as possible is helpful and the consultants will contact those who submit if they need more information). Debra said she would send each commissioner sites in their parish that need clarification. Jennifer asked if refugee camps from the Flood of 1927 would be eligible. Charles offered even if you have a question about it, submit it because it will go through the criteria the consultants have established. He said that at the Friends of Atchafalaya meeting they discussed routes in the Basin that were interrupted by building levees. Debra reminded the commission that this trail will have a high visitor component to it and will promote sites through these unique qualities (Ex. Some sites will only be accessible by boat and some will readily have outdoor recreation opportunities, but the ANHA may have to work with others to develop recreational infrastructure in their parishes). Users will be able to build itineraries by sorting the sites by where there are paddling opportunities, or where there are hiking trails.

Atchafalaya Basin Update
Charles Caillouet said that, while things usually move slowly in the Basin, this year the water set records for being high so late in the year but then fell quickly in August, triggering fish kills in some areas. He also showed commissioners a plot of hydrographs. The DNR Atchafalaya Basin Program is continuing discussions with the Corps of Engineers on the Grand Lake crevasse at the Atchafalaya River and hopes to start closing the break and dredging the deposits from the Lake. The state will dredge Little Bayou Pigeon as part of the project after the Corps seals the leak. The ABP and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority are discussing the feasibility of creating sediment traps at strategic connections from the River to the swamps in order to reduce sediment transport into the swamps and place the material where CPRA can move it to the coast for land-building projects.

Sara Krupa, an employee of the APB, added that sometime after 2010 a breach occurred in an Atchafalaya River Channel training levee in Iberia Parish. Since that time there has been an influx of sediment-laden water into Grand Lake which is building a peninsula near 29°59'41.43”N 91°26'40.55”W. As this peninsula grows, it threatens to cut the lake in half and also threatens aquatic habitat. Grand Lake is important to the Atchafalaya Basin system because it one of the only deep water refuges remaining for fish. In 2014 the Technical Advisory Group for the ABP identified this project as the number one priority in the FY 2016 Annual Plan process because of the importance of preserving the remaining open water habitat. To date the ABP has not acted to remove the peninsula because the channel training levee has not yet been repaired. The ABP has been in discussions with the Corps of Engineers to facilitate the repair of the channel training breach; however, repairs are not estimated to occur for another 9 to 12 months. The ABP views the completion of this project as a priority to the program and would appreciate your support saving this vital habitat.

Jennifer for a brief written summary the commissioners could bring to their legislators since about two feet of sediment has accumulated in a year.

Charles said that the Mississippi River Commission came down the river during its recent Low Water Tour, but the planned hearing in Morgan City had to be moved to Baton Rouge because of the high water on the waterfront. ABP Director Don Haydel noted our concerns about the Old River Control Structure Sedimentation Study that
came out last month. The Corps of Engineers report suggested that it might be possible to operate the system so that more sediment could be diverted through the floodway and away from the Mississippi to reduce dredging requirements. Other discussions focused on dredging operations below Morgan City and New Orleans and the sedimentation aggravated by the late high water. Charles noted New Orleans District Commander Colonel Hansen referred to The Nature Conservancy land purchase as a positive development in his summary speech.

Debra pointed out the Louisiana Wildlife Federation fishing booklets on the tables and advised commissioners to contact her if they need any for upcoming events. She also showed *Roadside Geology of Louisiana*, a book recommended by J.A. Rummler as a good resource for the trail project. The book is a good reference and is written from the perspective of a road trip.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**
**Speaker Series**
Debra reminded the commission that the Educational Speaker Series was funded again at the last meeting. There has been one application thus far for a symposium, which has been funded at the $2,000 level, so $23,000 remains in the fund. She added that, once the ANHA grant program is in place these requests can go through that process.

**HISTORY & CULTURE COMMITTEE**
**AWC Exhibits**
Charles Caillouet reported that he is working on identifying repairs and modifications to the Atchafalaya Welcome Center and will report on it at a future meeting.

**OUTREACH**
- **EVENTS:** Ashley showed pictures from the Big River Regional, a 13-mile paddle race on the Mississippi River. The ANHA sponsored this event with bottles and decals for racers. Ashley also mentioned that the ANHA will host three more French Immersion Excursions paddling on Lake Martin in conjunction with Atchafalaya Month with participants from Grand Réveil Acadien and Baton Rouge Magnet High as well as the general public. If regular trips are established, the possibility exists of adding it to Louisiana Resource Center for Educators’ list for field trip options.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA:** The ANHA Facebook account has 1,594 likes—up from 1392 in July 2015—and the page ranks 17th in likes out of 42 NHAs. This increase is purely organic (no ads used). Popular recent posts: Day-trips from NOLA; Grand Réveil Acadien; French Immersion Excursion; Acadian Flag meaning; Dale Sanders becoming oldest man to solo paddle the entire Mississippi River at 80 years old — this is now our most-viewed ANHA Facebook post with 36,676 views. Debra added our meeting with Dale was thanks to John Ruskey who owns a paddling company and encourages people to take the Atchafalaya River to the Gulf instead of traveling down the heavily-industrial end of the Mississippi River. The Instagram account, atchafalaya_nha, currently has 145 followers, and the ANHA Twitter account, AtchafalayaNHA, has 113 followers.

**Commissioner Announcements**
Commissioner announcements included: Pierre Part Fireman’s Food Fest Oct. 18; Best of the Bayou Festival Sept. 26-27 in Houma and the Rougarou Festival Oct. 24-25; Baker Labor Day parade, Baker Buffalo Festival Sept. 24-26, Live After Five in Baton Rouge Sept. 4 and free entry on the first Sunday of each month to downtown BR museums; Classic Arms Gun & Knife Show Sept. 5-6 in Gonzales; Reptile Show Sept. 12-13; Art Gumbo Market at Houmas House Sept. 19; Hot Air Balloon Festival Sept. 25-26; Breville Swamp Life Expo the Oct. 3 in Grosse Tete; Addis centennial Sept. 11-12; Oldies but Goodies Festival Sept. 12; Sugar Fest Oct. 4 at West Baton Rouge Museum; New Iberia Sugar Cane Festival Sept. 23-28; Gumbo Cook-off Oct. 10 in New Iberia; Tour du Teche Oct. 2-4; Festivals Acadiens et Créoles Oct. 7-11; Bayou Vermilion District Festival and Boat Parade Oct. 18; BlackPot Festival Oct. 30-31 at Vermilionville; Center for Louisiana Studies panel on gun violence issues; Miss-Lou Rural Tourism project to open the program to a wider audience throughout Louisiana and Mississippi.

There being no further announcements or business, Phillip Daigle made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Patrick T. Gordon seconded the motion and, passing unanimously, the meeting was adjourned.