Atchafalaya Trace Commission
Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

Minutes: November 02, 2016 Regular Meeting

A regular meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission (Commission), managing entity of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA), was held Wednesday, November 02, at 10 a.m. at the Capitol Park Conference Center in Baton Rouge.

Commissioners present:
Ascension: Charles Caillouet
Concordia: Glenn McGlothlin
St. Mary: Carrie Stansbury, Vice-chair
Avoyelles: Wilbert Carmouche, Secretary
E. Baton Rouge: Gerren Sias
West Baton Rouge: Julie Rose
Lafayette: Jennifer Guidry, Chair
Iberia: Chris Burton
Terrebonne: Mart Black, treasurer

Commissioners absent:
St. Landry: Herman Fuselier
Pointe Coupée: J. A. Rummler
St. Martin: Aaron Flegeance
Assumption: Phillip Daigle, Sr

Others present:
Debra Credeur, Executive Director; Sara Krupa and April Newman, LDNR; Ray Berthelot, Office of State Parks; Superintendent Lance Hatten, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve; Doug Bourgeois, LA Byways Program/CRT; Tracy Browning, Ascension Parish Tourist Commission

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

AGENDA APPROVAL
Wilbert Carmouche motioned to accept the agenda. Mart Black seconded the motion and the agenda was unanimously accepted.

APPROVAL OF July 13 MINUTES
Carrie Stansbury made a motion to approve the July 13, 2016, regular meeting minutes. Wilbert Carmouche seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

1. The meeting dates for 2017 have been set for the SECOND WEDNESDAY except for January. Mark your calendars for January 18, March 8, May 10, July 12, September 13 and November 8.

2. If Commissioners have not turned in signed Conflict-of-Interest statement required by the National Park Service, please do so.

   Charles Caillouet mentioned, while unrelated, the Ethics Board mistakenly sent him a Past Due notice for filing disclosure reports but he straightened it out since Commission members are not required to file now.

3. Several Commissioners’ terms expire in March 2017. Please let Debra know by January if you are interested in serving another term.
4. ANHA budget projections remain unchanged until we actually get bids and firm pricing on Trail signage and kiosks.

5. Terrebonne Parish Council adopted a resolution declaring October as ANHA Month in Terrebonne Parish the same month the Governor declared Atchafalaya Month.

6. Atchafalaya Month and 10-year anniversary promotions were very successful. Our contest “Where Are We Now?” drew lots of engagement through social media and we received a lot of positive feedback on the rollout of our 5 artisan videos.

7. Training offered by Louisiana Byways Program December 7-8 in Houma is not limited to just Byways! The agenda features sessions on: Keep Louisiana Beautiful Grants; Trail Planning by RTCA staff; Development of Bayou Teche National Water Trail; Visitor Center Interpretation; Heritage Tourism and Byways Trail Development; and DOTD and FHWA Updates. Registration forms and the tentative agenda are on the back table.

8. Baton Rouge is planning a Bike Share program - the map of proposed locations was passed around.

9. Ben Pierce, Director of Louisiana Swamp Base, Inc., Boy Scouts of America asked to make a presentation at the January meeting. Gerren Sias suggested it would be nice if the Boy Scouts accompanied Ben at the January meeting.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY REPORTS
NATURAL & OUTDOOR RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Trail Project Update
Debra reported on the status of the Trail development. A second phase list has been started. The sites on Phase 2 list are sites that cannot accommodate a kiosk at the present time due to ongoing construction or other reasons. If the remaining few sites for Phase 1 are approved, there will be 54 initial sites on the Trail. After a little delay, we are receiving the kiosk narratives for review and will get them out to Commissioners and site managers as soon as possible. Next steps include sending out requests for bids for kiosk and sign fabrication and installation, including faded sign replacement, a project we’ve been working on for a while. Once the bid requests are out, we allow about 30 days and hopefully we won’t run into delays with the holidays. Target date for kiosk installation is early spring (Feb/Mar).

Atchafalaya Basin Update
Sara Krupa of DNR reminded the Commission that the draft of the DNR Atchafalaya Basin Program Annual Plan is online for review. The Grand Lake sedimentation project is still on schedule, occurring soon since some water flow issues have been resolved. (Sara pointed out The Nature Conservancy’s project is EAST Grand Lake, not the Grand Lake site, shown in the September 2016 picture Sara passed around where the Commission visited and DNR has a project).

Charles Caillouet said some of the public meetings were attended by some people not in favor of any Basin restoration efforts.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
The next event in our Speaker Series is Avoyelles Arts Council’s Cajun French Dance Workshop November 19. Debra mentioned she had met with the Teche Center for the Arts and expects them to request a speaker for a program.
Debra said she has had conversations with The Nature Conservancy to explore means by which ANHA could help them with their Atchafalaya River Basin Conservation Initiative, specifically the Learning Center.

Jennifer Guidry reported she is working with an ULL architecture class that has a semester-long project regarding planning in the Atchafalaya NHA. Several sites and/or areas have been used as models with recommended improvements including an interpretive center, a research lab, a gallery and trailheads. Debra pointed out this same approach with the LSU School of Landscape Architecture that resulted in our Water Heritage Trail.

HISTORY AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
Atchafalaya Welcome Center
Debra thanked Charles for all his help with the Atchafalaya Welcome Center exhibits. The project has taken longer than expected but is nearing completion. We are at the point of installing the content on the monitors and hiring a team to install the hardware. Some content was combined, allowing for vertical and horizontal orientation, and we expect to have completed the project soon. Jennifer Guidry suggested we look at adding newer books to the collection of existing books in the exhibit since new materials have been published since the original selection.

SUSTAINABILITY
Debra reported on a topic related to sustainability that was covered at the NPS/NHA October meeting: NHA Evaluation and Reauthorization. NHAs have been successful in receiving reauthorization prior to their sunset dates, which allows them to continue receiving assistance and funding from NPS. The process involves 2 steps:

1. Evaluation
NPS contracts with outside consultants to perform evaluations of NHAs. The evaluations are costly and must be included and approved in the Congressional budget. NPS is facing an unprecedented number of NHAs coming up for reauthorization (26), and they are trying to work out the funding for the evaluations and the schedule. ANHA is due to sunset in 2021, so NPS is projecting our evaluation will occur in 2019. From documents provided by other NHAs that have undergone evaluations, the evaluation process includes visits by the evaluating team who analyzes documents, programs and more, including but not limited to the following: Fulfillment of Management Plan goals and objectives; impact of activities and investment (interviews with partners); management capability; recordkeeping including financial statements; short and long term outcomes; planning for sustainability; residents’ and visitors’ awareness of NHA’s; and oversight process (interviews with Commissioners).

Julie Rose suggested we might benefit from analyzing our Management Plan and doing a self-evaluation in the near future to make sure we are on-track.

2. Reauthorization
The evaluation results and reauthorization recommendation are then sent to NPS and the appropriate Congressional committees. Companion (House and Senate) legislation is introduced. It is helpful if state officials and partners submit letters of support.

Julie Rose asked about fundraising with organizations such as Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Community Foundation of Acadiana. Jennifer Guidry reminded that usually fees are involved. Jennifer said, in summary, our sustainability efforts should be directed toward forming a Friends organization and making sure our evaluation is favorable and that she would schedule a Committee meeting call soon.

OUTREACH
• EVENTS ATTENDED AND/OR HOSTED: Conference for Louisiana French – Natchitoches – Sept. 23-24 (also Cmr. Wilbert Carmouche was in attendance); Keep Louisiana Beautiful – Baton Rouge – Sept. 28-29; Swamp Life Expo – Grosse Tete – Oct. 1; Tour du Teche Oct. 8, both in St. Martinville and New Iberia; Carrie Stansbury at the American Society for Landscape Architects on a sold-out Atchafalaya paddling trip Oct. 21.
• SOCIAL MEDIA: The ANHA Facebook account has 2,323 (jumped 40 in one month) likes—up from 2,283 in Sept. 2016—and the page ranks 19th in likes out of 42 NHAs. This increase is purely organic (no ads used). Popular recent posts: Artisan video (reach of 838); Atchafalaya Month announcement (reach of 1.6K); and THE top was a photo by Ashley Herrick of the Henderson Swamp in fog (reach of 2K). The Instagram account, atchafalaya_nha, currently has 403 followers (jumped 40 in one month), and the ANHA Twitter account, AtchafalayaNHA, has 318 followers (jumped 22 in one month).

OTHER BUSINESS
Commissioner Announcements
Commissioners announced upcoming events and projects in their parishes. Reports also included
• Julie Rose: Clifford LeGrange’s presentation Aug. 24 at WBR Museum about Bayou Pigeon was successful, attended by 80 people; the July 30 French Immersion Excursion at WBR Museum was a success as well, and motivated them to continue with the same format.
• Carrie Stansbury: Reported on Secretary Jewell’s visit to St. Mary Parish and the Chitimacha children that were invited to the White House. Also, Carrie requested suggestions for Eagle Expo speakers.
• Charles Caillouet: Ascension Parish slowly making it through the flood recovery process; events are beginning to return.
• Supt. Lance Hatten: Reported on NPS Centennial events including Every Kid in a Park and other activities.
• Jennifer Guidry: Bayou Bridge Restoration
• Wilbert Carmouche: Nov. 19 is an ANHA sponsored educational program by the Avoyelles Arts Council.
• Mart Black: We might look into putting an exhibit in parish libraries.

There being no further announcements or business, Carrie Stansbury made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mart Black seconded the motion and, passing unanimously, the meeting was adjourned.