Atchafalaya Trace Commission/
Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

Minutes: November 8, 2017 Regular Meeting

A regular meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission (Commission), managing entity of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA), was held Wednesday, November 8, at 10 a.m. at the Capitol Park Conference Center in Baton Rouge.

Commissioners present:
- Ascension: Charles Caillouet
- Assumption: Phillip Daigle, Sr.
- Avoyelles: Wilbert Carmouche, Secretary
- E. Baton Rouge: Michael Proctor
- Iberia: Chris Burton
- Lafayette: Jennifer Ritter-Guidry, Vice-Chair
- Pointe Coupée: J. A. Rummel
- St. Landry: Caitlin Bussey
- St. Mary: Carrie Stansbury, Chair
- Terrebonne: Mart Black, Treasurer
- West Baton Rouge: Angélique Bergeron

Commissioners absent:
- Concordia: Glenn McGlothin
- Iberville: Clifford LeGrange
- St. Martin: Aaron Flegeance

Others present:
Steven Fullen, Executive Director; Justin Owens, Assistant Director; April Newman, LDNR/Atchafalaya Basin Program; Don Haydel, LDNR/Atchafalaya Basin Program; Charles Reulet, LDNR; Amy Tilley, La. State Parks.

Commission Chair Carrie Stansbury called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. with the pledge of allegiance.

AGENDA APPROVAL
Jennifer Ritter-Guidry motioned to accept the agenda. J.A. Rummel seconded the motion and the agenda was unanimously accepted.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 13, 2017 MEETING MINUTES
Wilbert Carmouche motioned that the Commissioner Announcements section of the minutes be amended to include the following passage:

Wilbert Carmouche announced that Avoyelles Arts Council extends an invitation to Art in the Rafters, their annual membership drive and art show, on the first Thursday of October.

Mart Black made a motion to approve the September 13, 2017 amended regular meeting minutes. Wilbert Carmouche seconded the motion and the amended minutes were unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATIVE & BUDGET
The first 2018 Commission meeting is January 3, 2018.

Staff Changes
Steven notified the Commission that, effective Oct. 30, 2017, Justin Owens had been hired to fill the Assistant Director position.

Congressional Funding Resolution
Steven advised that, because Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has ordered that all funding requests under the Continuing Resolution receive continued additional review, the fiscal year 2018 NHA funding-delivery Resolution has been delayed.

Steven explained HR 1002, which would permanently establish NHAs as a program of the Federal government, has only 57 of the 80 co-sponsors necessary to bypass committee rules in place for moving legislation forward. As the only current Louisiana co-sponsor is Rep. Cedric Richmond of the 2nd District, Steven reminded the Commissioners that every Legislative District in Louisiana includes at least a small portion of the Atchafalaya NHA and encouraged them to ask their Representatives to sign on as co-sponsors of HR 1002. Carrie Stansbury
and Jennifer Ritter-Guidry both recommended assistance be sought from an advocacy group and advised that they would forward applicable information to Steven.

**Alliance of National Heritage Areas Membership**

Steven advised that he believes the costs associated with the Atchafalaya NHA’s membership (such as dues and travel expenses) no longer provide an acceptable return on the Commission’s investment. He recommended transferring membership to the Louisiana Travel Promotion Association, citing its strength as an advocacy group for Louisiana. Jennifer Ritter-Guidry expressed her reluctance about withdrawing from the Alliance, stating that she believes the LTPA’s mission is too narrow for the needs of the NHA.

**Water Heritage Trail: Phase II**

Steven requested that each Commissioner begin taking considerations relative to the breadth, depth and reach of Phase II. It was also recommended that the Commission consider the cost of Phase II, along with any negative impacts on Phase I or possible political issues that may arise in connection with kiosk placement.

Steven advised that all Phase II kiosk site proposals must be accompanied by sufficient evidence substantiating that site’s inclusion, such as its historical or cultural significance.

In response to Charles Caillouet and Chris Burton both expressing concern over the flexibility of the existing kiosk bases, Steven explained that the flexibility is intentional and will increase the kiosks ability to withstand wind or other applied forces. Steven also advised that the rust covering the Core-10 steel is intentional, serving to lower maintenance costs in addition to causing the kiosks to better blend in with natural surroundings. Caitlin Bussey recommended publishing an educational Facebook post explaining the rust/patina on the kiosks. Steven asked the Commissioners to forward him any kiosk-related complaints they receive and to notify him of any faded or damaged NHA signs in their Parishes in need of replacing.

**PARTNERSHIPS**

- We are working with LASOAR (Louisiana Association of Sports, Outdoor Adventure, and Recreation) on cross-promotion of events which coincide with our mission (paddling, biking, fishing; etc.).

**OUTREACH & EDUCATION**

- The Water Heritage Trail was officially opened on Oct. 30, 2017, commemorated that day by three separate ribbon-cutting ceremonies hosted by Lt. Governor Nungesser.
- Promotional materials were handed out at the West Baton Rouge Sugar Fest on Oct. 1, 2017.
- Steven advised that an order will be made to replenish promotional materials and asked the Commission to forward him any new ideas for promotional materials.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA:** The ANHA Facebook account has 2840 likes (+39 from September) and the page ranks 14th in likes out of 42 NHAs. This increase is purely organic (no ads used). Popular recent posts: Martin Accordion workshop and showroom (reach of 2.1K); Adam Ponthieu Grocery Store/Museum (reach of 2.1K); and the Fete-Dieu du Teche boat procession (reach of 5.4K). The Instagram account (“atchafalaya_nha”) currently has 743 followers (+24). The ANHA Twitter account (“AtchafalayaNHA”) has 451 followers (+23).
- Steven attended the Alliance of National Heritage Areas annual meeting held at the Great Basin NHA in Nevada on Oct. 9 – 13, 2017.
- Steven informed the Commission about the “As the Mist Rises” event, to take place Nov. 11 – 16, 2017. The event is a bayou tour and photography workshop hosted by C.C. Lockwood and other well-known local photographers.
- Steven advised the Commission of “Gator by the Bay”, an annual two-day celebration of Louisiana music, food and culture held in San Diego. The event draws in excess of 30,000 attendees in
addition many representative of the southern California tourism industry. It was recommended that two artisans from the NHA be sent to participate in next year’s event, to be held on May 10 – 13, 2018.

Jennifer Ritter-Guidry motioned to allocate the requested $3,000 to be used to send two artisans from the NHA to participate in the “Gator by the Bay” event in San Diego. Mart Black seconded the motion and the allocation was unanimously approved.

- The Commission was encouraged to notify Steven and/or Justin about which upcoming events in their Parishes they believe to be most deserving of promotion via social media, or attendance for the purposes of handing out promotional materials. Steven stressed that such events should align with the mission of the NHA.

SUSTAINABILITY:
Steven recommended inviting August Carlino, the President and CEO of the Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation, to make a presentation at the January 2018 Commission on the subject of on NHA sustainability. Mr. Carlino is an expert in sustainability, having raised over $400 Million for public and private sector heritage areas in addition to overseeing more than 300 heritage development projects.

COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS
Commissioners announced upcoming events and projects in their parishes:
- J.A. Rummle mentioned the cancellation of the scheduled False River drawdown cancelled due to rainfall in excess of 10” in October. He also shared photographs of some Native American artifacts he found at an archaeological site near one of the Water Heritage Trail kiosks.

- Charles Caillouet mentioned that the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has provided some supplemental funds to the Department of Natural Resources’ Atchafalaya Basin Program, but future such funding is uncertain. He congratulated Don Haydel on his upcoming retirement and thanked him for his contributions in securing additional Program funding from the Legislature, which has allowed some projects to move forward. The Gonzales Recreation Commission, which has partnered with the National Park Service on recreation trails planning in Ascension Parish was scheduled to hold a meeting the evening of Nov. 8, 2017 to gather input from the public relative to potential locations of proposed trails. Chares mentioned he and Steven would attend that meeting for the purposes of encouraging the incorporation of connections to the Water Heritage Trail into plans for biking and hiking trails in Gonzales.

- Chris Burton mentioned the success of this year’s annual World Championship Gumbo Cookoff.

- Angelique Bergeron mentioned the success of this year’s annual Sugar Fest which drew a record 4,000 attendees. A WWI exhibit will soon open at the West Baton Rouge Parish museum and will feature exhibits on loan from National Archives along with weekly discussions on American involvement in WWI. A new C.C. Lockwood exhibit will open in December at the Manship Theater in December. The West Baton Rouge Museum’s Christmas program will take place next month in the new Juke Joint building located on the museum grounds.

- Phillip Daigle mentioned the ongoing issues in Assumption Parish relative to the large Bayou Corne sinkhole. He also mentioned a virgin cypress tree has been discovered 25 feet underground. The tree is scheduled to be unearthed and studied.

- Mart Black mentioned that the Terrebonne Parish Veterans Day event, which traditionally takes place at the Southdown Museum on the Saturday of Veterans Day weekend, has been moved to the Regional Veterans Museum on Sunday Nov. 12, 2017 due to the Bayou Beer Festival taking place at Southdown on Saturday.
• Wilbert Carmouche mentioned that this year’s Step-N-Strut event appears to have been a success the financial impact reports will confirm that success. A Papa Noel Christmas story time, presented in the Tunica language, will take place Dec. 9, 2017 at the Tunica-Biloxi site. He also mentioned the strong interest in Louisiana he recently observed at a trade show in Montreal, Canada and recommended providing information on the Water Heritage Trail to Doug Bourgeois, Executive Director of the Louisiana Scenic Byways Program. A National Historical Marker for the Avoyelles Parish portion of the Solomon Northrop Trail has been applied for, hopefully to be unveiled on Jan. 4, 2018 in conjunction with a tour of the Trail.

• Jennifer Ritter-Guidry mentioned that the recent final ribbon-cutting at the new Chitimacha kayak dock marked the completion of the recreational trails grant program. The Chitimacha tribe is waiting on Federal funds for an additional boat launch-site. She has been appointed to the LTPA Board for one-year as the Board representative for Federal lands. The many October festivals in Lafayette Parish were successful. Representatives of Lafayette Travel have accompanied Lt. Governor Nungesser to New York to promote Louisiana tourism.

• Carrie Stansbury mentioned the success of the Water Heritage Trail launch event in Morgan City. Her office still has not been able to move back into its office building. The Eagle Expo is coming up next February.

• Caitlin Bussey mentioned the many October festivals in St. Landry Parish were successful. The Fall Ramble in Washington was extremely successful, doubling the previous best numbers for the event. Many of the artisans in the town of Sunset will begin offering craft workshops outside of their place of business. The annual Port Barre Cracklin’ Festival will take place Nov. 9 – 12, 2017. The Building Our Region tour, a full-day traveling conference highlighting St. Landry Parish’s role in shaping the regional economy, will take place Nov. 9, 2017.

• Michael Proctor mentioned that he will reach out to his contacts at BREC and the tourism industry and forward information on upcoming events to Steven and Justin for promotion via social media, or attendance for the purposes of handing out promotional materials.

ADJOURNMENT
There being no further announcements or business, Phillip Daigle made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jennifer Ritter-Guidry seconded the motion and, passing unanimously, the meeting was adjourned.