

STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
CAPITOL ANNEX BUILDING
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

May 6, 2011

Chairman Gerald Guidroz called the meeting of the State Parks and Recreation Commission to order at 10:10 a.m. on Friday, May 6, 2011 at Bogue Chitto State Park in Franklinton, Louisiana.

The following members were present for roll call:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Gerald Guidroz, Chairman	Melvin Landry	Scott Longman
Clifton Murphy	Yvonne Calvin	Kathryn Bedenbaugh

MEMBERS ABSENT:

David Camardelle	Nanette White	Willie Young, Sr.
Theresa Gray-Jacobs	Martin Guillory	Patrick Wesley
Gerard Moreau, Jr.	Joey Odom	Terrance Ginn
Eustis Guillemet	Keith Ouchley	Jean O'Roark

STAFF PRESENT:

Stuart Johnson	Kelvie Bush	Carlette Davis
Cleve Hardman		

Following the order of the agenda (Exhibit A), the roll was called. A copy of the minutes for the meeting held September 17, 2010 (Exhibit B) was included in commission member packets. Minutes were read by those present, there were corrections made to the minutes. Although a motion was made to accept the amended minutes, a quorum was not available to officially vote on the noted changes.

Stuart Johnson, Assistant Secretary discussed the following:

The current budget status this fiscal year is somewhat desolate as State Parks has received considerable cuts again this year. The most significant is the loss of fifty positions. As a result State Parks has had to put five of the historic sites in caretaker status. This means that the sites are closed; however there is one person left at the site to help customers who may call and want to visit the site by appointment. Most often the requests are from school groups who want to visit so we are looking at perhaps asking the managers to do

some specific programs at the site maybe once month, so that we do have a viable operation still operating. The state historic sites that are on caretaker status are: Fort Pike, Fort Jesup, Centenary, Plaquemine Lock, and Marksville. These sites were chosen based on visitation reports and regional factors. State parks embarked on another avenue to keep the sites open through private partnerships and donations. This endeavor was successful in two cases. The first success was at Fort Jesup. State parks entered into an agreement with the Sabine River Authority; whereby they gave enough money to keep the site open five days a week. State parks also received monetary donations from the Sabine Parish Tourist Commission. In addition to monetary donations, the Town of Many has been giving OSP in-kind support with grass cutting and other maintenance and lawn care projects. The second success was Plaquemine Lock. Again, state parks entered into an agreement with the City of Plaquemine and Iberville Parish. The parish is supplying an employee to be on-site five days a week. They are also taking care of the grounds there at the Lock.

Because of the lack of the fifty positions OSP has taken other measures to keep all parks open and operating seven days a week. The entrance stations will be open fewer hours. If our budget remains as it is in the next fiscal year we will look at changing it to even less hours. As well, the reservation prices have increased. In comparing our rates to other state parks in our region, Louisiana rates were much underpriced; as a result of the price increase Louisiana is now about mid-range as compared to other parks in the region. Also, state parks closed the reservation center and outsourced to Reserve America; one of the largest firms in the country that provides this service. Our consumers are now responsible for paying an additional \$6 service fee that Reserve America charges for making reservations through their company. While we have not received very many complaints about the price increases, we have received a fair number of complaints about the service fee. Another area that state parks have received complaints about is the denial of acceptance of the golden age/golden access passes from other states who do not reciprocate our discounts in their state.

The executive budget that has been submitted to the legislature for next year's budget shows we will be losing an additional seventeen positions. The 729 fund where all money generated in revenue is statutorily dedicated to be used by the park system for repair and upgrade of facilities. With that fund we have been able to maintain our parks at a level well above other park systems in the country. That fund started to be eroded three years ago when about five hundred thousand dollars was taken from that fund and moved into the general fund, the following year almost four million was taken out, and this current fiscal year about one million was taken from the fund. Typically we spend about seven million a year on repair and maintenance. That number would be increased to about nine million with the increase in fees. However, in the executive budget submitted about seven point six million is being taken from that fund leaving parks with about one point four million, which is woefully inadequate. Parks is still in conversation with the Division of Administration, as well as the legislature to see about restoring the budget.

The Community Foundation is in the process of setting up a foundation for state parks. State parks has applied for the 501C3 status. After this is completed, state parks can

become more aggressive in looking for other partnerships and a board can be established. That repository has to be in place before parks starts collection money. Last session there was legislation passed that allows state parks to accept donations. These donations should be kept in our budget and not be subject to be reverted back to the general fund.

Winter Quarters in Tensas Parish was hit by a tornado three weeks ago and sustained major damage. It actually raised the roof from the structure. An architect and engineer from Facility Planning will be going to the site to assess the damages. With the amount of damage done to the site it is assumed the cost of repairs will be over one million dollars. Risk Management has the site insured for about six hundred sixty thousand dollars, which will not be enough for the repairs. The site is closed for the time being but it is protected and stable.

Grand Isle beach was reopened two weeks ago (Exhibit C). Customer can now go in to surf and fish. Unfortunately, because of safety issues beach camping is still not allowed at this time; as well, the bathhouse is still not in working condition. OSP anticipates both issues will be resolved within the next three weeks to a month.

SPARC members were given a visitation report that shows park visitation through April 2011(Exhibit D). Parks has increased visitation by more than 150,000 from last year. According to the report the increase was more for day use than overnight usage, which is attributed to the increase in reservation fees.

Cleve Hardman, Director of Outdoor Recreation discussed the following:

SPARC members were given a brief description of the Land and Water Conservation Fund applicants that were received by the April 1, 2011 deadline along with a ranking of projects in accordance with the Open Project Selection Process (Exhibit E). The available funding levels were discussed and members determined that six projects should be forwarded to the National Park Service for review and approval. Those projects approved were: Franklinton Acquisition and Development, Dr. William T. Polk city Park, Stephenville Improvements, Zemurray Pond Restoration, Punk Smith Park Renovation, and Glaser's Park.

The Recreational Trails Program received forty four applications by the May 1, 2011 deadline. Those projects are being evaluated. The Recreational Trails Program's future remains unclear as it is subject to Congressional approval and requires reauthorization. The most recent actions have been continuing resolutions allowing the program to continue on a limited basis.


It was determined that SPARC members are not actually required to vote on the Land and Water Conservation Fund applicants. Members' input is for public information only; therefore, if a quorum is not reached, the department can still move forward on programs. However, it is preferable to still have members' input even though a vote is not required.

New Business

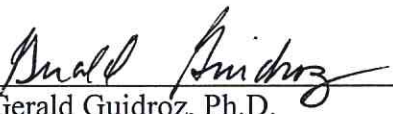
No new business was discussed.

Next meeting date will be determined at a later date as there was not enough members present to determine a date and time convenient to all members.

Meeting was adjourned. Lunch was served.



Stuart Johnson, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary



Gerald Guidroz, Ph.D.
Chairman