



Atchafalaya Trace Commission/
Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

Minutes: January 13, 2021 Meeting

A meeting of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission (Commission), managing entity of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA), was held Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 10 a.m. As a result of the Governor's proclamation, the meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

Commissioners present:

Charles Caillouet, Ascension
Wilbert Carmouche, Chair, Avoyelles
Darrel Rivere, Assumption
Linda Gardner, Concordia
Chris Burton, Iberia
Clifford LeGrange, Iberville
Stephen Pellessier, Lafayette
J.A. Rummier, Pointe Coupée
Herman Fuselier, St. Landry
Carrie Stansbury, Treasurer, St. Mary
Angélique Bergeron, Secretary, West Baton Rouge

Commissioners absent:

Christine DeMyers, East Baton Rouge
Carol "Coach" Patin, St. Martin
Mart Black, Vice-Chair, Terrebonne

Others present:

Justin Lemoine, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area
Caroline Byrne, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area
Kristin Sanders, Office of Cultural Development
Carrie Broussard, Office of Cultural Development
Rebecca LaSell, Jean Lafitte National Park
Phillip LaFargue, LaFargue LLC

I. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Carmouche called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. and asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance. Caroline Byrne took roll, and Justin Lemoine identified Commission members not in attendance.

II. Agenda Approval

Chairman Carmouche called for a motion to approve the agenda for this meeting. **Darrel Rivere made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Charles Caillouet. With no oppositions and no rejections, motion carried unanimously (11-0) with Christine DeMyers, Coach Patin and Mart Black absent.**



III. **Minutes Approval**

Chairman Carmouche asked the Commission to review the minutes from the Nov. 4 meeting and called for a motion to approve the minutes or to approve the minutes with corrections.

Angélique Bergeron made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Seconded by Rivere. Motion carried unanimously (11-0) with DeMyers, Patin and Black absent.

IV. **2021 Commissioner Appointments**

Lemoine noted there were five commissioners up for reappointment in 2020. Stephen Pellessier from Lafayette joined the Commission.

Linda Gardner is the first commissioner up for reappointment in 2021. Gardner expressed her interest in reappointment. Lemoine is sending Gardner's reappointment letter today.

Bergeron's appointment expires March 18. Bergeron expressed interest in reappointment, and Lemoine will send her reappointment letter this month.

Final commissioner expiration is Herman Fuselier on Oct. 11. Fuselier expressed interested in reappointment to the Commission. Lemoine will send reappointment letter later in the year.

V. **Reauthorization 2021 Update**

Lemoine updated the Commission on reauthorization efforts. The ANHA's authorization expires on Oct. 12, 2021. Lt. Gov. Nungesser sent letters to Louisiana's congressional delegation informing them of ANHA's reauthorization efforts and to express his support of the program.

Thusfar, ANHA and OCD staff have met with Sen. Cassidy's, Rep. Johnson's and Rep. Graves' staffs. Rep. Graves was present at his meeting. ANHA has a commitment for a Senate bill from Sen. Cassidy and a House bill from Rep. Graves. Rep. Graves' chief of staff wrote ANHA's enabling legislation.

Lemoine is working on letters of support from various groups including regional arts councils, parish presidents, planning commissions, etc., and asked for the Commission's help in this endeavor. ANHA will send these letters to Louisiana's delegation in Washington, D.C.

ANHA staff is working on a one-sheeter detailing ANHA's mission and accomplishments to accompany reauthorization documents. Lemoine expressed his positive outlook on ANHA's reauthorization as the area is only pursuing straight reauthorization of the program with no changes to funding.

Lemoine asked for any questions. Gardner asked about the timeline for reauthorization, and Lemoine said he was unsure due to the current political climate. He noted that staffers are happy to discuss reauthorization, though, and have expressed their support in seeing the program continue.

Lemoine also noted ANHA is working with Cane River NHA on program language. ANHA staff will work with similar heritage areas on bill partnerships.



Lemoine will be reaching out the Commissioners for specific asks by the end of the week.

VI. **Strategic Plan Process**

ANHA has engaged a strategic planning consultant, Phillip LaFargue of LaFargue, LLC. ANHA has a contract signed internally as well as with LaFargue. ANHA aims to have the contract signed within the next month.

Lemoine introduced LaFargue to the Commission. LaFargue gave a brief background of his life in Lake Charles, schooling at LSU, and professional experience working in systems design and marketing with Emergent Method and as a freelance consultant.

LaFargue briefly detailed the three phases of his strategic planning process. The discovery phase will entail researching the history of the organization, reading through legislation, conducting interviews and surveys, etc. The second stage is collaboration of strategy, where LaFargue will share information from the discovery phase and work with ATC and ANHA staff in developing concepts for future initiatives. The final stage is the development of the plan. Lemoine will send proposal with the full scope of the project to Commissioners.

The entire process will likely take about four months and will take place virtually for the time being. ANHA hopes to start virtual and then transition to in-person meetings.

VII. **Executive Director Update**

Lemoine noted the strategic planning process is a major priority for ANHA in the first half of 2021. The strategic plan will help determine future initiatives and priorities.

Going forward, ANHA will focus heavily on French language and French language preservation. Lemoine informed the group ANHA plans to develop a relationship with Sangre de Cristo NHA to combine efforts in advocating for language. The area is home to a unique dialect of the Spanish language, similar to Louisiana French in the ANHA.

ANHA met with four French-language consultants to assist in ANHA's translation efforts. To keep investment local, ANHA decided to engage Télé-Louisiane, a local French-language translation company out of New Orleans and Lafayette. Bergeron is planning French-Creole videos with the company and expressed her support in the hire. The group will also work with the archaeology department so there are no duplication of efforts.

Going forward, all communication from ANHA will be in both English and French. The ANHA website and Water Heritage Trail website will also be in both French and English.

ANHA is working on reformatting the website to make it more user-friendly.

ANHA staff and ATC need a full inventory of road signs, specifically which ones need replacing. ATC will help identify maintenance needs. This project is forthcoming in the spring.



ANHA must submit a report to the National Park Service detailing all 2020 projects. The report is underway and is due by the end of January.

ANHA staff is involved with several organizations including the Association of National Heritage Areas, Southeast Tourism, Inlands of the Coast and LaNERR. Staff will pursue committee involvement with the Association of National Heritage Areas after reauthorization. Lemoine will also present on a panel for the Society for Applied Anthropology. The panel will discuss cultural resilience in coastal communities.

Lemoine spoke to GOCA last week on the Governor's Atchafalaya Task Force. The members have not yet been seated, but should be chosen by the end of this month. The first meeting will be held at the end of February. ANHA will be involved with the Task Force in any way possible to preserve area interests.

Caillouet expressed the importance in everyone on the Task Force having a voice, and Lemoine noted his agreement. Lemoine plans to discuss this matter further with GOCA.

J.A. Rummler ask if Lemoine reached out the Louisiana Geological Survey. Lemoine asked Rummler to make an introduction for him.

Lemoine will email ATC a copy of the Director's Update.

VIII. 2020 National Park Service Reporting

ANHA staff is working with OCD to complete. Lemoine will email ATC updates.

IX. 2020 Fall Grant Cycle Proposed Awards

Byrne reviewed the Fall 2020 Grants Program awardees. ANHA will fully or partially fund thirteen projects across seven parishes.

Caillouet commented that the term "microfilm" is confusing regarding the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper grant. Byrne noted.

Caillouet moved to accept a group vote to approve grants. Bergeron seconded.

Chairman Carmouche ask for motion to approve all grants. Motion carried unanimously (11-0) with DeMyers, Patin and Black absent.

X. Other Business

a. Comment from Public Attendees (if any)

No members of public present virtually. No other business noted.

XI. Commissioner Announcements

Caillouet noted Ascension Parish is quiet. A sportsmans show is currently scheduled for March 21. The Jambalaya Festival is still scheduled for May. There are lots of outdoor activities to do in Ascension.



Caillouet also noted that the water came down lower in the Basin than it has in previous years, meeting Clifford LeGrange's predictions. This will hopefully mean a better crawfish season.

Rivere shared Assumption Parish government and the Pierre Part-Belle River Advocacy Group are working on a master drainage plan for the parish.

Like Caillouet, Rivere noted the water is the lowest it has been for the last few years, hopefully indicating a fruitful crawfish season.

Rivere noted Assumption is looking for funding for Phase II of the master plan. He noted COVID-19 kept recreation activities low, and that he is hoping to see resolutions in the near future.

Carmouche also shared Avoyelles Parish has been quiet due to COVID-19. Spring festivals are taking a wary approach, and the parish is capitalizing on outdoor activities by promoting walking trails and lakes.

Additionally, Avoyelles is trying to help artisans in the area through Trails to Treasures. This program includes four locations that participate in the Passport Program. If participants visit all four sites, they will be entered into a drawing to win a gift certificate to one of the four participating sites.

Gardner and the Delta Music Museum welcomed legendary bluesman Bobby Rush to film a segment at the museum. The segment will be aired virtually during the Grammy nominations on social media. Gardner asked Rush to be part of the Delta Music Museum's next Hall of Fame induction.

Gardner further noted COVID-19's negative impact on live music and museum attendance.

Burton had no announcements for Iberia Parish to make at this time.

LeGrange had no events on which to share updates. LeGrange has been tracking the water situation in the Basin for the last four to five weeks. He noted it has been fairly dry in Belle River and that the water is slowly coming back up. He expressed hopefulness in a fruitful crawfish season. Pellessier commented he noticed the water rising as well.

Pellessier shared Lafayette canceled all Mardi Gras balls, parades, etc. Economically, Amazon is moving a fulfillment facility into the old Evangeline Downs site.

Rummler had no events to report in Pointe Coupée. He noted the watershed project undertaken by Upper Delta Soil and Water Conservation District (through USDA funding) is close to completion.

Fuselier noted it is quiet in St. Landry. Mardi Gras activities in the parish have been canceled, however, Eunice will still have their run in the countryside. There will be no live music.



Fuselier is meeting with The TECHE Project to see how to market outdoor paddle activities. St. Landry plans to market outdoor activities. Pellessier noted his desire to help with creating outdoor events throughout the ANHA. Lemoine voiced support in sharing outdoor activities. ANHA is tracking outdoor events as much as possible.

Carrie Stansbury canceled Eagle Expo. Cajun Coast CVB is instead planning a birding event for October, The Big Sit Challenge, where participants will bird for 24 hours. Details are forthcoming.

Stansbury is working on a socially-distanced Mardi Gras scavenger hunt. Details are forthcoming.

Cajun Coast CVB has been working with St. Mary communities more. Stansbury helped host several bike tours and is working on outdoor events.

Stansbury also expressed her support in having St. Mary Parish as the location for the LaNER facility because of the access to public land and the delta. Lemoine and Stansbury will set a meeting to discuss at a later date.

Bergeron shared the West Baton Rouge Museum is showcasing two new exhibits, one on Mardi Gras and Queen Zulu and another on the architecture of Louisiana. The museum will be open on MLK Day as a site of remembrance.

Jan. 22-23, the museum will host a presentation on birth and wellness, past and present. This presentation is part of the Cultural Districts program.

The museum will release interviews and activities for kids on Mardi Gras.

The museum's monthly Café Francais and Old Time Jam are continuing. There will also be a special YouTube series on West Baton Rouge's contributions to rural music.

Rebecca LaSell shared a grants program Jean Lafitte has worked with in the past, Lower Mississippi Delta Program, is changing. It will now be operated jointly with a non-profit partner. All grants for this program will need to be submitted into GRANTS.gov. Grants are typically about \$25,000 and used for preservation, stabilization or museum exhibits. She encouraged ATC to register in GRANTS.gov in order to receive information and updates this summer.

Mary Ann Mills is the contact for the Southeast region for the next 120 days.

XII. **Adjourn**

With no further business, Chairman Carmouche asked for a motion to adjourn. **Stansbury so moved. Bergeron seconded. With no objections, motion carried unanimously (11-0).** Carmouche thanked everyone for attending and is excited about hopefully meeting in person soon.