

NAI Region 6 Conference Board Meeting Minutes

3:00 p.m. February 23, 2020

In attendance: Jay Schneider, Mystina Swaim, Don Simons, Lauren Marshall, Michelle Soenksen, Kayla Gomance, Robin Gabe, Lyndzee Rhine, Amy Stephens (workshop committee), Chris Pistole, Ken Forman, Hollie Berdeja, Rachel Roth, Kyle Thorenson (workshop committee), Donna Horton, Rusty Scarborough, Amber Myers, Jerrel Geisler

Workshop update: Amy Stephens welcomed us to the conference and to Bartlesville. Eight are originally on the conference committee, but others have helped. The goal of this conference was to keep the costs minimal. The committee's goal was to keep costs around \$200. Conference costs are going to be close, but they think they will come out in the green. She also gave us a report on what to expect during the conference.

Donna also gave a conference report. There is a film crew in Bartlesville getting ready to film "Killers of the Flower Moon," a movie based on the book of the same name. So besides us, every hotel room in Bartlesville and surrounding area is booked. There are a lot of visitors in town because of the movie filming. Leonardo Dicaprio has not been spotted in town yet but keep a watch out for him this week!

The workshop committee was still looking for a few more volunteers to help during the conference. Session room monitors and hospitality room monitors are especially needed. Interested volunteers need to sign up at registration.

Chris asks what the conference committee's breakeven point on the number conference registrants. Donna says their breakeven number was 125 and there currently was only 114 registered so they are still crunching numbers. Amy reports that they saved money in some other areas, such as food costs. Some of the food didn't cost as much as they thought. Even with these money saving areas, the money will be close.

Jay put it to the conference committee that there were 3 conference participants that have asked for a refund due to various reasons. One had an illness and one had a family medical emergency. Knowing that the committee has not met their breakeven point, Jay asked what the committee thought about refunding the participants that have asked for it. Two of the refund requests came a couple days ago and one came in today. Amy asks to see where they are moneywise at the end of the conference before officially deciding on whether to offer the refunds. Jay says that we can table the refund discussion until we do have a better grasp on the conference money, so we won't lose or gain anything by making that decision today. We can do an electronic vote later. Chris says that our overall Region 6 budget is ok so even if we issue the refunds and the workshop is in the red because of it, then it won't be such a big deal. Jay says that we average about \$1,000 profit every year just from conference registration. We have

cushion in this year's reserve account to cover any losses from these refunds. We will have more discussion about the refunds after the conference to see where we stand.

Introductions: Since we have a few new members on the board, we introduced ourselves and our position on the board.

Review the Minutes: The board reviewed the minutes from the last meeting. Ken moved to accept the minutes. Donna seconded. Motioned carried.

Director's Report – Jay Schneider

- Advisory Council
 - Jay, being our regional director, serves on the NAI Advisory Council.
 - All regional directors and section leaders meet monthly as the Advisory Council. At the last national conference in Denver, it was decided to have a forum for the Advisory council to have discussions and in-house training. Once Jay receives the forum schedule, he will be passing it on to our regional board members so they can be up-to-date with council on goings and participate if desired.
 - The council visits the various regions during their conferences. They recently visited Regions 8 and 9 and there were 45 regional members attending the conference. Some regions are struggling to plan things and be organized, so we are very fortunate to be a strong region.
 - Jay serves as chair on the Advisory Council and sits on the national board so our region is well represented nationally.
 - Scholarship Task Force
 - OU Manual Update
 - Monthly Calls
- National Board Update
 - The national board meets monthly.
 - Our region contributed to the National Office's "Journey Home Campaign" to pay off their building mortgage. The mortgage has been paid off.
 - We rent the bottom half of the building out to the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory which is an income for us.
 - Strategic Plan
 - Members are invited to participate in the strategic planning. Interested members can sign up for Webinars. These webinars are pretty intense with a lot of information. The national board will be meeting in Region 4 and bringing in Evie Kirkwood to facilitate some strategic planning for the board.
 - Region 6 members can see board meeting schedules, etc.
 - 18 members from the board attended the national conference.

- National Conference
 - Pre-workshops at National Conference
 - Regions and sectionals get first opportunities to send in pre-workshop proposals before it is advertised to the “public” membership.
 - Pre-workshop proposal deadlines are coming up quick so visit the national website for more information.
 - Pre-workshop profits are split. You have the option of donating the pre-workshop proceeds to your section or region.
 - The entire resort hosting the St. Augustine National conference is reserved for NAI. The chef and staff are pretty much at our disposal for the week.
 - Region 6 Booth
 - Thank you all who worked the booth at the 2019 national conference in Denver.
 - Thank you to those that led the regional meeting at the conference in Jay’s absence.
 - The region booth was successful and we made revenue selling stickers and other items.
 - Table Top Display Signs for booth
 - Do we want to continue to use the sign for our booth at nationals or use something different, perhaps a table cloth or pop-up display? The current booth display sign is at least 30 lbs. and can be a burden to transport to the national conference. Look at our current one during our conference this week and make a decision to keep it or get something different. This discussion is tabled to new business.
- Scholarship Task Force
 - According to the IRS our scholarships has to be for current members. We cannot recruit new members by way of offering scholarships.
 - Jay is working with NAI board members all over the country to try to fix the scholarship violation. If you have ideas or want to be part of the discussion, you don’t have to be a board/advisory council member. These discussions are open to any NAI member.
 - Since we cannot offer scholarships to recruit new members, how do we now recruit new members?
 - There is a possibility of offering a one year free membership. An example would be meeting someone at national conference and inviting them to join our region with the promise of a free membership for a year.
 - Every director has the ability each year to give two free memberships. Jay usually reserves those memberships for recruiting during our regional conferences. There were no

Oklahoma requests this year so we actually have 2 extra. Technically we can give 4 memberships during our Louisiana conference next year.

- How do we raise money to participate and try to recruit at an outside interpretive program, such as college parks or interpretation classes? How do we do this legally through IRS standards?
- Region 6 is under the umbrella of the NAI national office and they have to follow Colorado corporation laws. This sometimes causes issues because we live in different states, but we want to be proactive for great audits and not raise any red flags.
- Another option that other regions are doing is offering a less expensive membership the first year, say \$15, then charging full membership in the second year renewal. This allows new members to test out their new membership without being out-of-pocket too much and let them decide if they want to keep it.
- Fundraising Idea
 - The sticker fundraiser has been a great success.
 - Challenge coins
 - Logo memento or award for new members or board members or special recognition.
 - They have been seen in the geocaching community and in some parks or facilities.
 - We can do a Region 6 coin as a fundraiser.
 - We can sell them at our region booth at national conference.
 - Do we want to sell them as a challenge coin or memento? It depends on how we decide to market them. Challenge coins are different than souvenir coins.
 - Food for thought. We can discuss this more in new business.

Deputy Director's Report – Neil Garrison

- Chris Pistole gave a report in Neil's absence. Neil could not attend the board meeting due to his workshop committee duties.
- (In Neil's report) Thanks to previous Deputy Director, Chris Pistole
 - Neil thanks Chris Pistole for his work in keeping him abreast of activities taking place with the planning committees for the 2021 regional workshop and the 2022 workshop.
 - Chris is to be commended for his work in putting together a workshop planning document for use in committee work in the future.
- 2021 Region 6 Workshop in Louisiana

- Stacy Gray may be addressing the Board with an update on her committee's plans for the 2021 workshop in Louisiana. Stacy is an employee of Caddo County Parks.
- Rusty gave a report that the workshop has moved from Monroe to Shreveport due to transportation costs. The transportation and convention center in Shreveport were charging outrageous prices.
- 2022 Region 6 Workshop in Missouri
 - The 2022 workshop in Missouri is still a little bit undecided on which city will play host to the event.
 - It will possibly be held in Columbia, MO.
 - The dates are February 13-17, 2020 so it is earlier than usual.
 - Large special events in the region are going on during that time so Michelle will look into seeing if the dates are firm.
- 2023 National Conference will be in Little Rock, Arkansas
 - If interested in participating in the committee let Jay know. Jay Schneider will be the workshop chair.
 - 2023 Region 6 Conference will also be held in Arkansas so we need to look at combining the conferences or make a decision on how we are going to handle that.

Secretary's Report – Mystina Swaim

- Honored to be serving another term as your Secretary
- Reminder: Board meeting minutes can be found on the Region 6 Website under the "Board" tab.

Treasurer's Report – Kayla Gomance

Kayla purchased our own credit card reader for Region 6. We can use it for the auction now!

- Balance
 - Fourth Quarter: \$35,559.06 was the balance as of December 31, 2019.
 - Update on outcome of Wichita, Kansas 2019 Conference: \$2,652.93 profit and \$3,357.22 made in revenue from auction/ribbon sales/sticker sales!
 - Revenue from auction/ribbon sales/sticker sales: **\$3,357.22**
(goes into fundraising/scholarship revenue, not workshop revenue)
 - Workshop Revenue: 23, 594.20
 - Workshop Expenses: 20, 941.27
 - 2,652.93**
- Bartlesville, OK Workshop Current Status
 - 114 people registered and around \$23,638 made so far.
- Scholarship Disbursements

- \$2,274 .00 for two student scholarships with one at \$1,152 and one at \$1,122 (includes registration, travel reimbursement, scholarship, and book). The difference in costs depends on the type of registration: professional or student.
- \$1,480 for eight financial aid recipients' registrations for 2020 Region 6 Conference (all at \$185 registration cost)
- \$420 for registration cost and \$500 travel stipend awarded to one member for 2019 National Conference
- Denver Booth
 - \$87.50 paid out to have a booth (shared with Region 7) at the National Conference. We made \$114 off of sticker sales. Rachel Roth reported that we ran completely out of the scat stickers or we could have sold more! Jay can advise on amount made from NAI Swag we may have sold at the booth. We didn't have any swag at the national booth.

Awards Chair's Report – Lauren Marshall

- 21 nominations over 8 categories.
 - This is the biggest bunch of nominations to date, that I've seen. I would still like to get more variety as far as applications go.
- Lauren would like to make the award nomination process smoother and is trying to figure out how to make nominating peers, especially if you don't work with them, easier.
 - Developing a new form so members can fill out a nomination about themselves to see if they qualify for a certain award.
 - This past year people were nominating others they didn't work with but knew them through conferences. They knew that person's passions and felt they were deserving of an award. These nominations weren't as strong, not that the nominee wasn't deserving, but because the one nominating didn't know that much about their work.
 - Lauren wants to be able to have nominee documentation in case someone wants to nominate them for an award, but need supplemental information.
 - Jay suggests speaking with John Miller for his ideas.

Election Chair's Report – Robin Gabe

- Fall of 2019, we had one person run for Deputy Director and one person run for Secretary.
 - Congratulations to Neil Garrison who is now serving as Region 6 Deputy Director and to Mystina Swaim who is now serving her second term as Secretary. They will serve a 3-year term through the year 2022 and we'll hold elections for their offices again fall of 2022.

- We will not have elections in the fall of 2020.
- Summary of current elected officers and terms:
 - Director Jay Schneider was elected to his second term in the fall of 2018 and serves from 2019 – 2021.
 - Treasurer Kayla Gomance was elected to her first term in the fall of 2018 and serves from 2019 – 2021.
 - Deputy Director Neil Garrison was elected to his first term in the fall of 2019 and serves from 2020 – 2022.
 - Secretary Mystina Swaim was elected to her second term in the fall of 2019 and serves from 2020 – 2022.
- Individuals interested in any elected office should contact the existing officers or Robin for more information on the positions’ job descriptions.
- Some region members did not receive the ballots to vote in the elections this last go-around. Please check your membership status and email on the member dashboard to verify your correct contact information or contact Jamie King at the national office.

Membership Chair’s Report – Hollie Sanders

- Total Membership on the NAI Region 6 dashboard reports 1,017. The dashboard always differs from the spreadsheet total. Not sure why. The spreadsheet shows 1,071 members.

Year	Total membership
2020	1,017
2019	972
2018	939

- Current Membership in Region 6 states are below. Remember this is apples and oranges; every state has different circumstances (including size, finances, number of active interpreters in the field, etc) that account for membership numbers.
 - AR 115
 - KS 79
 - LA 43
 - MO 174
 - OK 49
 - TX 328
 - The rest of the membership are from other states and some countries
 Most states saw an increase in membership from 2019
- Membership Type: according to the excel spreadsheet directory for region 6
 - Life members – 49 (some data not correct)
 - Professional membership – 730 (increase)
 - Retired members -31 (increase)
 - Students – 111 (decrease)

- Volunteers – 68 (large increase)
- Seasonal – 51 (large increase)
- Institutional – 16 (decrease)
- Commercial – 14 (decrease)
- Honorary – 1
- Regional Conference Region 6 attendees: 112 registered as of reporting
- Discussion: Do all board members know how to use the dashboard reports? Not many on the board know how to use the dashboard reports very well.
 - The dashboard will show which members are close to expiring so the state coordinators can send them a reminder to renew.
- Membership is one of the biggest revenues for our region.

Newsletter Editors' Report – Jerrel Geisler and Ken Foreman

- Jerrel has changed the editing style over the last few issues.
- Jerrel needs photos from our sites in our region to add as background photos to the newsletter.
 - If you have photos you'd like to share, please send them to Jerrel.
- The editors are not concerned with large content for each newsletter because it is digital and it does not pose a concern.
 - Ken encourages Board members to read each issue and send a response to an article they read in the newsletter.
- Visions continues to be written/edited/distributed more or less on its intended quarterly schedule.
 - Jerrel went over the deadline dates.
 - Publication deadlines are: December 1, March 20, June 20, and September 1.
 - The editors have had discussions about changing the deadline dates to allow a more evenly spaced amount of days in between the deadlines. This may help the state coordinators to submit their reports on a more efficient timeline as well.
 - There is a good amount of time in the process the editors undergo after the deadline. Ken receives the content from the state coordinators and member authors and then makes any necessary edits before sending it to Jerrel so he can include the articles in the overall newsletter format. This is a longer process so they are trying to come up with a more efficient timeline between article deadlines to compensate.
- The submitted articles have been interesting, and wide-ranging. The editors hope everyone (especially board members) reads each issue.

- The editors welcome additional contributions and appreciate those that have already contributed. They are especially happy with the continued support from the various state coordinators. It's not an easy task to rustle up updates every few months.
- Distribution has not been any problem. Even though our gmail account limits the number of emails sent at one time, there are easy work-arounds.
- The editors encourage all Region 6 members to sign into their national NAI account and ensure the national office has your correct email address; that is the only way they have to contact you.
- Keep up the good work.

Scholarship and Professional Development Chair's Report – Lyndzee Rhine

- Lyndzee is the new chair. She is receiving guidance from previous chairperson, Rebecca Sellers.
- Two recipients of the Connie Elpers-Leger Scholarship:
 - **Danielle Bradley** \$1,152
 - Austin State University
 - Scholarship amount: \$1,152
 - Workshop registration Fee =\$185
 - Travel Reimbursement = \$250
 - Tuition = \$700
 - Tilden Book = \$17
 - **Dairan Elam-Pyles**
 - Missouri State University
 - Scholarship amount: \$1,122
 - Workshop registration Fee =\$155
 - Travel Reimbursement = \$250
 - Tuition = \$700
 - Tilden Book = \$17
- Total scholarship amount: \$2,274

Website Report – Rachel Roth

- Email

- MailChimp for regular communications: We have 1,275 contacts, 1,251 of them are subscribers.
- 51% of people rarely engage (open, click) but the rest do sometimes or frequently (50/50).
- Facebook
 - Page Likes = 528
 - Group Members = 295
 - Rachel is hoping more followers and more engagement.
 - Ken asks if there is more Facebook engagement in groups (NAI Region 6 Group page) than individual Facebook pages.
 - Based on algorithms, it depends on how engaged people are on individual pages. Currently, our Region 6 group page is very active.
- Website
 - People are able to sign up for emails on the website
 - The newsletter page is broken, but all the links work.
- Bit.ly For Workshop
 - 196 People used our workshop link to look at session materials last year
 - One is set up for Bartlesville, too: <https://bit.ly/region62020>

Arkansas State Report – Don Simons

- Governor Asa Hutchinson and the Walton Family Foundation announced a historic park development effort in the Arkansas Delta.
 - A **\$20 million** matching grant from the Walton Family Foundation will complete the 84.5-mile biking and pedestrian trail from Lexa to Arkansas City.
 - “This is great news for cyclists and hikers, who have waited more than 20 years for the completion of this rails-to-trails project. The matching grant we announced today, combined with Arkansas Parks and Tourism funds, means that the wait is almost over,” Gov. Asa Hutchinson said. “The \$7 million in tourism that the 85-mile trail will attract, along with the 600 jobs it will create, will infuse renewed energy into southeast Arkansas along the trail. Hikers and bikers will see bottomland hardwood forests and views from the levee that we don’t see from our cars. This is a great project for Arkansas.”

Kansas State Report – Amber Myers

- Amber Myers has taken on the role of Kansas representative for the Region 6 Board.
 - Look for her emails requesting news and happenings from your areas in Kansas.
 - Please email her at myersa78@gmail.com at any time you have something to share with Region 6.
 - The news we share in Region 6 can help spread the word about our sites, our staff and volunteers, and our programs!
- **Fort Scott National Historic Site** has a lot of events planned for this Spring.

- In February, they will host a discussion on the African American Experience entitled "*The First Kansas Colored*".
- March will feature women's history programs each Saturday as part of Women's History Month. These will include clothing workshops where participants get hands-on experience building historically correct clothing such as bonnets and petticoats.
- The 38th Annual Civil War Encampment is April 18 and 19. A specialized training in artillery and small arms will be announced at a later date.
- Amy Nickel, Graduate Research Assistant in Park Management & Conservation at Kansas State University went to a private tallgrass prairie in Riley County in mid-February to view prairie chickens at dawn.
 - She says, "No chickens yet... oh yeah...and it's really cold!" Hang in there, Amy! Amy will be leading Greater Prairie Chicken Booming experiences as an educator with the **Flint Hills Discovery Center** starting in March. If you haven't experienced prairie chickens dancing, you're missing out!
- Delia Lister, Director of **Pittsburg State University's Nature Reach** says the program received a \$10,000 grant from Evergy to, in part, fund a pilot Kindergarten Summer Day Camp.
 - In addition, the PSU Natural History Reserve (where the PSU Nature Reach Avian Ambassadors reside) will see a major upgrade.
 - Thanks to some federal funds earmarked for road safety, the Reserve, which is un-reclaimed mined land, will ultimately end up with a new loop trail, wetland with a boardwalk, a strip of native prairie plantings, and new fencing/gates.
 - We hope this will open up some new opportunities for further improving the 78 acre piece of land which, in many places, is near impenetrable thanks to the wonderfully invasive bush honeysuckle! Anyone want to join in the fun of removing it?
- The **Great Plains Nature Center** is celebrating their 20th anniversary.
 - On Feb. 29, 2-5 p.m., we'll have a celebration event with animal ambassadors, tours, refreshments, and founding Director, Bob Gress will give the keynote.
 - There are also some exciting staff changes at the nature center. Former GPNC Naturalist, Todd Volkmann has taken a position with the City of Wichita as the caretaker for the Kansas Wildlife Exhibit. We are looking forward to seeing new interpretive programs and interactions with the many visitors to the exhibit. Emily Davis was hired as the new GPNC Naturalist.
- **Milford Nature Center** has welcomed back Naturalist Amber Myers! Amber jumped right in with Kansas Day celebrations across the northern Flint Hills. In her first two weeks, she reached over 1200 Kansas students with Kansas Day symbols programs.
- Pat Silovsky is now the Director of the **NAI Nature Center Directors and Administrators** section.
 - The NCD Section is offering two \$800 scholarships for the Interp Roadshow in St. Augustine, Florida this November. Applications must be received by April 30. NCD Section members are invited to apply for a \$125 scholarship to cover costs

for the Certified Interpretive Manager Certification. This course would need to be completed by October, 2020.

- The **University of Missouri at Saint Louis** is looking for sites to host interns for 2-3 week micro-internships. Please contact Theresa Coble at UMSL for more information.
- The **Flint Hills Discovery Center** added an outdoor classroom through a grant from the Caroline Peine Foundation.
 - The classroom features a native limestone seating area built in the traditional dry-stack method by Koch Construction Specialties.
 - Starting this Spring, the classroom will be used for new programs at the Discovery Center including programs for Special Populations, seniors and parents of young children.
- The **Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home** in Abilene opened 25,000 square feet of new museum exhibit space with the most recent innovations in technological components and interactives.
- **Special Feature: *Exploring Kansas History by Barrett Young***
 - I am a recent graduate (December 2019) from Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas majoring in Communication with an emphasis in broadcasting and a minor in history. My real passion is sharing my love of history with the public through historic interpretation using a variety of communication methods. Last summer and fall I began research and filming in order to produce six “mini-documentary” videos about historical places in Kansas for a broadcasting class I was taking the fall semester of 2019. The series I created was called “*Exploring Kansas History...On The Road With Barrett Young.*” The six sites I visited were Fort Hays SHS, Fort Larned NHS, the Santa Fe Trail Center in Larned, the John Brown Museum SHS in Osawatomie, Mine Creek Battlefield SHS near Pleasanton, and Fort Scott NHS. I conducted the interviews myself then filmed and edited all the videos. I did have some post production help during the fall semester in order to put the finishing touches on them. Overall, I learned a lot researching these sites and then visiting them in order to do the filming and interviewing. Experiencing these sites in this fashion made me get a different viewpoint than what a person would normally get by just seeing the sites as a visitor. In this day and age, many people check-out historical sites on-line before they visit sites or some people are unable to travel therefore visiting sites on-line makes it possible for them to learn and experience sites from their own home. If you need any more information please feel free to contact me.
 - Barrett’s series, “Exploring Kansas History” can be found on Youtube [Exploring Kansas History: On the Road with Barrett Young](#) .

Louisiana State Report – Rusty Scarborough

- Here in Louisiana we are having another VERY wet spring. Fortunately, the weather has remained cooler so we are not fighting with mosquitos as yet.

- Stacy Gray and the Workshop Committee are diligently working on putting together another awesome Workshop in 2021 in Louisiana.
 - It will be in Shreveport and the week of February 21-24, 2021.
 - Check out our Louisiana Conference logo attached.
- Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park just held their annual Owl Night on February 15th and it was a very successful event with more than 2000 people attending.
- Caddo Parish Parks & Recreation has a new leader.
 - Patrick Wesley (no relation to the previous Director) came on board in late October and has hit the ground running.
 - He has put us on a mission of having all of our parks Nationally Certified.
 - This process has definitely increased our work load but Patrick has been very supportive and complimentary of the Nature Park and our staff.



Missouri State Report – Michelle Soenksen

- **Leah Eden** reports that the building renovation/upgrade for the Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery in Branson will start this autumn.
 - During the renovation, the Hatchery will be closed to public visitation because there will be no parking and restroom facilities available to hatchery visitors.
 - The picnic area and fishing access will remain open to the public. They are looking forward to finally getting a larger facility to accommodate the thousands of visitors that visit every summer.
- The **Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI)** will host the 2020 conference at **the Lodge at Port Arrowhead at the Lake of the Ozarks** on September 21-23.
 - The theme is “Look beneath the surface”.
 - In addition to great concurrent sessions and field trips, there will be awards and scholarship presentations.
 - For more details see the AMI website at mointerp.net.
- Dawn Fredrickson announces that **Alison Dubbert** has accepted the statewide **Interpretive Resource Coordinator** Position in the Grants, Recreation and Interpretation Program (GRIP).

- Alison has worked for DNR for over 17 years, starting as an Architectural Historian at the State Historic Preservation Office in 2002 and then moved to the Resource Management and Interpretation Program in 2007.
- She managed the Civil War and Lewis and Clark Marker programs and worked with park and site staff to plan and create exhibits.
- Alison has presented on a wide variety of topics, including geocaching, Civil War history, exhibit development, and architectural history.
- Dawn Fredrickson announces **Mike Sutherland** was officially named **Missouri State Parks Director** this February.
 - Before taking over as acting director in November 2019, Mike served as the deputy division director since June 2017.
 - An avid mountain biker, hiker and kayaker, Mike also admits to being a history buff with a strong interest in telling others about Missouri's fascinating cultural history.
 - He is always looking for ways to practice his interpretive skills, and recently conducted a tour at Missouri's state capitol.
 - Mike is strongly committed to the idea that everyone can and should be an interpreter, and has advocated for all field staff to receive CIG training. We're excited for Mike in his new role!
- **Missouri State Parks** is looking to fill seasonal interpreter positions at several sites throughout the state. Some of these sites provide housing. Please check out the www.mostateparks.com website for more information.
- The **DNR Spring Interpreters Training School** will be held May 17-20 at Knob Noster State Park.
 - This training provides the opportunity to learn the basics of developing interpretive programs and earn the Certified Interpretive Guide certificate if you choose. Contact Alison Dubbert at Alison.dubbert@dnr.mo.gov to learn more.
- **Alison Dubbert** reports 4 new Certified Interpretive Trainer's with Missouri State Parks - Carrie Hammond from the Missouri State Museum, Kaylee Holt from Van Meter, Kelly Koch from Roaring River, and Melissa Blank from Felix Valle
- There are several exciting statewide initiatives for **MO State Parks**.
 - They will be partnering with the MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to create curriculum related to park interpretative topics and create additional interpretive resource trunks.
 - Also working on a multistate (hopefully) commemoration for the 125th anniversary of when the army had a troop of Buffalo Soldiers ride bicycles from Ft. Missoula, Montana to St. Louis, Missouri in 2022. The commemoration will include bike rides, traveling exhibits, on site events and more.
- **Missouri State Parks** will be celebrating the bicentennial in 2021 with partnerships and planning related activities, including a passport program, exhibits, and themed events.

- In fact, there will be some confusion in 2020 for anyone who pays close attention to the MO State Seal on the Missouri state flag. While Missouri was 'officially' accepted as a US state in 1821, the Roman Numerals on our flag and seal boldly read **1820**. This is because thanks to the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Missouri was granted statehood on March 6, 1820 but not allowed to become a US State until August 10, 1821 in order to balance the number of free vs. slave states. So Missouri is one of the few states that will be celebrating TWO Bicentennials in two separated years.

Oklahoma State Report – Donna Horton

- All hands are on deck to welcome Region 6 members to Bartlesville for the Regional Workshop Feb. 23-26. We hope the conference is a valuable experience for the 112 participants.
- Oxley Nature Center in Tulsa now has just about everything repaired that was damaged in the floods from last spring and summer.
 - Veteran volunteer naturalists will be happy to return to the Teaching Shelter, the convenient and well-established base of operations for the spring and fall environmental education programs.
- Oxley Nature Center will host a Certified Interpretive Host (CIH) workshop on April 17th & 18th, a Friday and a Saturday.
 - There is also still space in their spring Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) workshop, scheduled for April 27th-30th, Monday-Thursday.
 - More information and enrollment may be found at https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/Certification/Certification_Calendar/nai/certification/Certification_Calendar.aspx?hkey=35609fbd-8ab3-43c9-9749-93e136a6bc33 .
- Color Oklahoma, the state organization dedicated to roadside wildlife plantings, is teaming up with Oklahoma State Parks to establish wildflower plantings at ten state parks. Emphasis is on providing resources for local pollinators.
- The Oklahoma Native Plant Society held a successful winter event on February 1st.
 - The annual Indoor-Outing took place at the Tulsa Garden Center.
 - This year's theme highlighted great off-the-beaten-path locations to find interesting and beautiful native plants: Lucky Springs near the Arkansas border, The J.T. Nickel Family Nature and Wildlife Preserve in the Cookson Hills, the Gathering Place in Tulsa, and Redbud Valley Nature Preserve in Rogers County.
- The Oklahoma Native Plant Society has two more annual events planned.
 - Wonders of Wildflowers will take place May 15th-17th at the University of Central Oklahoma Selman Living Lab in Woodward County.
 - In addition to botany hikes during the day, there will be astronomy on Friday night under the very dark skies of western Oklahoma, and a not-to-be-missed trip to observe the evening flight of a colony of Mexican free-tailed bats on Saturday at dusk.

- Toward the end of May, registration will open for the public viewings of the Selman bat cave evening flights. The limited viewings take place in July. Demand far outstrips the available spaces, so you must get your application in early. More information may be found at <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlife/wildlife-diversity/selman-bat-watch>.
 - Looking ahead into the fall, September 25th-27th the group will meet at Robbers Cave State Park for the Annual Meeting. More information can be found on the ONPS's website (www.oknativeplants.org) or very active FB group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/259814325499/>).
- May 2, 2020 will mark the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the sport of geocaching.
 - Look for a number of Community Celebration events and special caches!
 - Adventure Lab caches, the latest kind of geocache, requires a smart phone instead of a GPS receiver, and might turn out to be a splendid new form of interpreting your resource.
 - One of Oklahoma's first Adventure Lab caches takes adventurers along Route 66 in the Tulsa area.
 - Another one is being planned at the Gathering Place, also in Tulsa. You can find out more about Adventure Lab caches at <https://www.geocaching.com/blog/2018/12/geocaching-adventure-lab-app-faq/>.

Texas State Report – Erin Holley

- **Tara Humphreys** reports that on February 17-20, approximately 75 Texas State Park interpreters attended the annual interpreters' conference.
 - The theme was "A Warm Welcome for All" and some of the sessions included unveiling of a TX Parks and Wildlife Department Community Engagement Toolkit, ADA Best Practices Panel with members from the ADA community, creating a legacy that is welcoming for all, sustainability learning trunk, Managing Up and Influencing Others, and many concurrent sessions and programmatic skills-based learning.
- **Lisa Cole** reports her position is opening up soon at LLELA. After 14 years, she is moving to the Austin area and have to surrender her position. She loves this place, and if the commute wasn't so long she'd stay forever.
 - They are implementing a new Interpretive Plan right now, as well as beginning planning for a nature center, so this is an exciting time to join Team LLELA.
 - If you're interested, be watching the City of Lewisville jobs site at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/lewisville>.
 - Lisa's last day at LLELA will be May 31, but the position should post sometime in February.
- **Susan Scott** reports Rick Harwell and Susan Scott will offer a Certified Interpretive Guide workshop at Texas A&M, May 4-7, 2020.

- Participants are invited to join an optional birding outing led by David Scott on May 3. Sign up on the NAI website!
- **Stephanie Harbert** reports in January we completed our AZA inspection and are looking forward to continuing our accreditation.
 - We recently unveiled an additional 4,000 sq. ft. outdoor exhibit for our four Bengal tigers.
 - Our very popular Home School Day event is coming up on February 25th. Families can take advantage of a blocked-out day (no schools!) with discounted admission and extra activities like scavenger hunts, animal encounters, exhibit chats, and fish feedings. The educational programs are sold out!
 - We are in the final stages of becoming a sensory-inclusive destination (hopefully the 1st aquarium in Texas!) through KultureCity.
- **Jason Ginder** reports in January, 2020, Big Thicket National Preserve launched a new and exciting way for youth to explore the park.
 - All Southeast Texas youth organizations, clubs and groups are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to build teamwork skills, explore the natural environment around them and give back to the preserve.
 - Through group kayaking programs youth organizations will be invited to explore the Neches River, Village Creek and Pine Island Bayou. During each group kayak experience participants will learn basic water safety skills, explore the ecosystem they are kayaking through and perform a small amount of service work in the park. This program invites youth and young adults to explore the Big Thicket.
 - Local community organizations such as schools, church youth groups, after-school programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/YWCA, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, 4H groups, youth sports leagues and other recreational, academic and social clubs are encouraged to participate in this paddling program as a group.
 - All equipment and basic introductory paddle training is provided as part of this free program.
 - We strive to promote awareness, access, resource stewardship ethics and participatory citizenship values by introducing youth from surrounding communities to the value and importance of federally protected lands through engaging kayaking adventures in the preserve.
 - To sign your group up for this program please call our youth paddle team at 409-951-6826 or email us at bith_paddleprogram@nps.gov for more information.
 - Big Thicket National Preserve is located in Southeast Texas, near the city of Beaumont and 75 miles northeast of Houston.
 - The preserve consists of nine land units and six water corridors encompassing more than 113,000 acres. The Big Thicket, often referred to as a “biological crossroads,” is a transition zone between four distinct vegetation types – the moist eastern hardwood forest, the southwestern desert, the southeastern swamp, and the central prairies. Species from all of these different plant types come together in the thicket, exhibiting a variety of vegetation and wildlife that has received global interest.

- For general information about Big Thicket National Preserve, visit www.nps.gov/bith or call the preserve visitor center at 409-951-6700. Visit us on Facebook www.facebook.com/BigThicketNPS, Twitter www.twitter.com/BigThicketNPS, and Instagram www.instagram.com/BigThicketNPS.
- **Martha (Mickey) Smith** reports they have a full list of programs for Spring Break in March.
- **Amy Robinson** reports they hosted certification training in Oct 2019 to certify 19 people and again in January 2020 to certify 16 more. No additional training has been added for the upcoming quarter at this time.
- **Anna Turkett** reports the International Crane Foundation will be participating in the Matagorda Bay Birdfest in Palacios, Texas from March 27th through 29th.
 - Dr. Liz Smith will be a guest speaker and Anna Turkett will be participating in the Parade of Birds on Saturday, March 28th.
 - Anna Turkett of the International Crane Foundation will be speaking at the Bexar County Audubon Society meeting on February 26th at Eco Centro in San Antonio, Texas.
- **Liz VanOrstrand** reports ABNC has contracted with Kaser Design to help create a complete Interpretative Plan for our site. Our workshop for the plan will be on March 3 and 4, 2020.
- **Louisa Torrance** reports the Texas State Park Ambassador Program connects conservation-minded young adults with recreational and volunteer opportunities in order to foster the next generation of State Park stewards.
 - Ambassadors commit to volunteering 40 hours over 6 months at a partnered park and in the surrounding community to complete hands on service, community outreach, and social media projects.
 - Ambassadors also attend a five-day leadership training to become certified in Leave No Trace and Growing Up WILD while connecting with park staff, learning about conservation within TPWD, and preparing for their service.
 - This is also a great opportunity for students interested in working in the field of conservation education – 13 former Ambassadors have been hired into the agency – or simply looking for a way to build their outreach, public speaking, and leadership skills.
 - The next application for 2020 Central and West Texas Ambassadors opens March 2 and can be found at: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeMEBApupUyfTcSbSjtbc0nuF3EEbc5JwgFiVzVVGsh4OF4eg/closedform>
- **Lari Jo Edwards** reports that aside from all of our field trips, public outreach, nature story time, home school days, sketch & journaling classes, two of our staff will attend the NAI Region 6 Conference, and our Director will present.
- Lari Jo Edwards also reports they are holding CIG training March 17 - 20, 2020, and again in August of 2020. Our staff is scheduled to attend BEETLES training at the end of March.

We are looking forward to teacher workshops and implementing better conservation structures and practices at our facility this summer.

New Business

- Process for selecting new chairpersons – Kayla and Mystina
 - Kayla and Mystina were discussing the process of the board selecting new chairpersons to serve on the board in a non-elective capacity. Should there be an official process for selecting these new board members when a position opens up?
 - Jay mentioned in the OU manual it states that any new non-elective board member can be selected by the director. This mostly benefits smaller regional groups that have limited interested members to serve on their board. Jay tries to be transparent and asks for an executive committee vote on interested members that he suggests.
 - Besides the director bringing forward an interested member for the board to vote on, is there something else we want to add, such as an application or other such step?
 - Rachel suggests putting a call out to the membership when positions open up or about to open so everyone has the opportunity to “apply” or express their interest in serving in that capacity. Jay says we have done this somewhat, but we can absolutely improve on getting the word out about vacant board positions and finding out who all among the membership is interested.
 - Holly says she is always willing to find out members’ talents and skills to choose who would best fit the position. Sometimes the members just want to be asked. We’d hate for them to miss the opportunity just because they didn’t know about the vacant position. We could have an application process or it could be a joint effort to recognize interested members.
 - Chris asks if we know the processes that other regions use and Jay responds that there too many different ways. Upon research there could be a good system that another region uses that we might want to emulate.
 - Holly asks if there is a certain amount of years the board members are expected to serve. Each case is different.
 - Donna asks that once a year all chairpersons are asked by the board if they want to continue serving.
 - Jay also suggests that the new non-elective chairperson should be brought onto the board a year before they are expected to start serving so they can apprentice under their predecessor before officially beginning their duties.
 - Holly asks about board position job descriptions posted on the website. Rachel says we do not currently have anything on the website to post the openings or job descriptions or a way to contact members that could be interested.

- Workshop Refunds – tabled.
- Booth display
 - Add our Region 6 banner.
 - Rachel and Jay will work on a proposal and will bring it back to the board via email.
- Regional Conference planning
 - Chris has been working on the regional conference planning guide for our region. It was originally done in 2005 and it has not since been updated. Things have greatly changed in how we plan a regional workshop.
 - The document is now on the Google Drive. Chris welcomes feedback.
 - Official change in regional title to align with national: It is no longer known or used as regional “workshop.” It is to henceforth be known and used as regional “conference.”

Adjourn: the meeting was adjourned at 5pm.