



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service
Cane River Creole
National Historical Park
400 Rapides Drive
Natchitoches, Louisiana 71457



March 1, 2006

Memorandum

To: Files

From: Superintendent, Cane River Creole National Historical Park and Executive Director, Cane River National Heritage Area

Subject: Documentation of Public Involvement Processes for Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment, Shared Visitor Center

On March 3, 2003 a number of interested stakeholders met concerning the potential for the development of a shared visitor center. These stakeholders included the Mayor of Natchitoches and his staff; representatives from the Creole Heritage Center, Northwestern State University, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, the national park and national heritage area, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service; and the chief of staff for Congressman Jim McCrery R-4-LA.

On June 3, 2003 the same group of interested stakeholders and representatives of the Southeast Regional Office met to draw out the parameters for the Scope of Work for the Development Concept Plan and Environmental Assessment.

On January 21, 2004 Cane River Creole National Historical Park and Cane River National Heritage Area hosted a public meeting to gain input on the development of the shared visitor center for the national park and national heritage area. The meeting was held in the Arts Center on Second Street, Natchitoches from 1-4:30. A press release was sent to all of the television stations and newspapers in Natchitoches, Alexandria, and Shreveport. Radio stations in Natchitoches also received the press release and made the announcement as a public service. In addition the press release was faxed to the Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce, which sent it forward on its fax service to approximately 150 member organizations.

On April 20, 2004 the park and heritage area hosted a second meeting at the same location. A press release was sent to all of the television stations and newspapers in Natchitoches, Alexandria, and Shreveport. Radio stations in Natchitoches also received the press release and



made the announcement as a public service. In addition the press release was faxed to the Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce, which sent it forward on its fax service to approximately 150 member organizations. Also the park superintendent announced the meeting purpose, time and location at the monthly public meeting of the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission.

During the week of August 9, 2004 representatives of the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma including Tribal Chair Larue Parker, Tribal NAGPRA representative Bobby Gonzalez and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Robert Cast visited Cane River Creole National Historical Park. At that time the superintendent informally discussed the development of the potential shared visitor center with them. They had no comments at that time.

All of this public involvement is in addition to the public involvement process undertaken by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development for the site planning for its rest area along Interstate 49 at Exit 132 (Waterwell Road).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Gates". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Cane River Creole National Historical Park

400 Rapides Drive

Natchitoches, Louisiana 71457

IN REPLY REFER TO:

K18(CAR)

June 24, 2004

Briefing for Cane River National Heritage Area Commission Heritage Area Commission Meeting

Park Operations Update. The park has received a small operating increase - \$25,000 – this fiscal year. This is a permanent increase. As a result the park will be hiring one student park guide who will assist with tours and interpretation. This is in addition to the heritage ranger positions funded by the national heritage area commission. Heritage rangers report to the park's chief of interpretation, who assigns their tasks throughout the heritage area at the behest of the executive director and the park superintendent. They work special events, such as the Melrose Arts and Crafts Fair and the NSU Folklife Festival, and they assist with park operations.

The park is now using the new parking lot and entrance pavilion at Oakland Plantation. Work is continuing on the Doctor's House, the main house, and the wagon shed at Oakland, and the parking lot at Magnolia. The remainder of the utilities at Magnolia will be contracted this summer.

Visitor services will remain as follows:

- visitation allowed from 8-4:30 daily at Oakland;
- self-guided tours of Oakland available at all times;
- staff-led tour at 1 p.m. daily;
- visitation at Magnolia by appointment, based on staff availability.

Appropriations. Included in the President's budget and the Interior appropriations bill is \$1,068,000 for preservation and development work at Magnolia Plantation. Planning for this project is underway, and it will include work on the overseer's house/slave hospital, the blacksmith shop, and the cotton press.

The committee report reiterated serious concerns about partnership projects that have failed, and where the National Park Service has been forced to fund either facilities or maintenance costs that were supposed to be funded by partners. This has created undue expense on the agency. As a result of the committee's recommendations the park will seek to construct its curatorial storage facility in conjunction with the park/heritage area visitor center complex. The latter project is authorized by legislation, and it will continue as such.

Park and Heritage Area Visitor Center. The site selection study and environmental assessment for our visitor center is proceeding. The planning team from Parsons has conducted two public

meetings, which many of you attended. Out of 10 potential sites the team has winnowed the number down to four which will receive more in-depth analysis. The superintendent will present these four potential sites to Southeast Regional Director Patricia Hooks and other interested Southeast Region staff during the first week of August. This is done when projects reach this stage of development, and it is done prior to conducting the Choosing-by-Advantages workshop. The planning project remains on schedule.

Special Events. On June 11 the park hosted its first Arts in the Park program. The Hoodoo Papas provided the musical entertainment, and park visitors received paints, canvas and instruction from members of the Natchitoches Art Guild. Nearly 100 people attended the event. Arts in the Park will continue on July 9 and August 6.

Park Brochure. The park's first professionally designed brochure is about to be developed. A team from the NPS Harpers Ferry Center will be coming to the park during the week of June 28 to pull together background information and view our resources. This is another milestone in our development as a national park.

Youth Conservation Corps. The park hired 6 young workers for the summer's Youth Conservation Corps program. The students between the ages of 15 and 18 have been working on maintenance, archeological and curatorial projects. This summer's workers are: Shanina Adams, Jesseca Cedars, Christina Freeman, Spencer Morgan, Robert Liles, and Travis Thompson.

Alternative Transportation Study. A small team from the NPS Denver Service Center and the Federal Highway Administration will be in the park and heritage area next week on an alternative transportation study. The group will make recommendations for accessibility over the landscape at both Oakland and Magnolia, and they will look at the broader region and come up with recommendations on general transportation issues.

Preservation Award. The Louisiana Preservation Alliance (LPA) awarded its annual Preservationist of the Year Award to the Natchitoches preservation partnership, which includes the park and the heritage area. The LPA meeting in Natchitoches in early June included tours of Oakland and Magnolia. The park is honored to have received this award as part of the partnership.

Visiting Author. Author Laurie Boche, author of River of Destiny, a novel dealing with historic preservation and Jamestown history, is spending time in the Natchitoches area. She is working as a volunteer at the park. She is considering having the Cane River area as the locale for her next novel, so she is doing some exploratory research.



Cane River National Heritage Area

Executive Director's Notes

Nancy I. M. Morgan

March 27, 2003

Cane River National Heritage Area Commission

P.O. Box 1201

Natchitoches, LA 71458

Budget 2003

Congress passed the Fiscal Year 2003 Budget in February. Cane River National Heritage Area received an appropriation of \$995,000. This sum includes \$250,000 for operations, research, and outreach for the Louisiana Creole Heritage Center. Before the funds are released from Washington, there could be a .065% cut made across the board. If so, the appropriation for 2003 is \$988,532 for the heritage area. At this time, the Commission can finalize the budget, making adjustments to that which was passed at the beginning of the fiscal year. Meeting materials include a budget for \$995,000 and for \$988,532. The latter is most likely to be the final amount.

Reprogramming Funds from 2002

- Newell moved to terminate preservation grant award for Kim and Pat Johnson, as no cooperative agreement has been signed to date despite documented efforts by the heritage area. Durham seconded, motion passed. This leaves \$22,500 from 2001 and \$500 from 2002 that must be reprogrammed.
- Signage funds, planning funds, master interpretive plan funds from 2002 will carry over. \$4,194.30 from Admin. and Operations will be reprogrammed to Marketing (for brochures). For 2002, an additional \$10,379 must be reprogrammed.
- Morgan recommended that a total of \$33,379.01 from 2001 and 2002 be reprogrammed to "Other Grants and Projects."

Those projects include:

1. Development of Kate Chopin House exhibit in partnership with APHN (non-matching). Currently, the second contractor contacted has not developed a proposal for the project. The Executive Committee recommended that the APHN proceed to contract with the only bidder for a \$25,000 project.
2. Development of a HSR for the Texas and Pacific Railway Depot.
(Additional projects that should be considered with remaining FY01 and 02 funds, as well as current year funds)
3. Consider co-sponsoring a series of lectures at the Martin Luther King Community Center—suggested speakers, John Michael Vlatch (author, Behind the Big House) and Lorraine Johnson-Coleman. Contact Ed Ward to see if there are lecturers the Black Heritage Committee is interested in inviting.
4. Development of an HSR for Bermuda Bridge at Oakland Plantation. The Police Jury must be contacted and information concerning liability must be clarified before this is done.

Management Plan

The *Cane River National Heritage Area Management Plan* was approved by the Secretary of the Interior on February 13, 2003. At this time, the Denver Service Center of the National Park Service is printing 500 final copies of the plan. Copies will be mailed out within the next two months. Ann Van Huizen already has turned her efforts toward the development of an executive summary of the plan. The executive summary, an informational and marketing piece, will be a full-color, 15-page document that describes the region and summarizes key points of the plan. The Commission has signed a contract with Sonny Carter to provide the majority of the photographs that will be incorporated in the executive summary. Such photos will also be available for use in perpetuity in other brochures and on the web site, although Carter will retain ownership of the photos. As part of his regular duties at the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Carter also will help to select and prepare historic photos for the executive summary. Van Huizen has requested that Nancy Morgan travel to Denver in May to work with her and a designer to lay out the executive summary. At this time, there appears to be money remaining in the budget for printing both the management plan and the executive summary. Van Huizen advised that the Commission be prepared to supplement the Executive Summary printing if costs run higher than currently anticipated.

Although the management plan has made it through Washington, DC, commission appointments are still outstanding. The process of confirming commissioners has changed, and resumes for all commissioners are necessary. If anyone needs help preparing a resume, please call Connie Masters.

State Parks

Dwight Landreneau, of Louisiana Office of State Parks, visited Natchitoches on March 6, 2003, to meet with Nancy Morgan and Laura Gates. During his visit, he approved the concept of including a heritage area display in the new Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site Visitor Center. He also proposed that the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission sign a Cooperative Agreement with LA State Parks. An agreement is in development, and can be signed in conjunction with the groundbreaking for the visitor center, tentatively scheduled for April or May. Finally, Landreneau proposed that Gates and Morgan accompany Rick Seale (Fort St. Jean) and Katherine Lofton (Los Adaes/Fort Jesup) on a short tour of State Park facilities in the state in order to become more familiar with interpretation, management, and facilities associated with the Office of State Parks.

Signage

A steering committee made up of commissioners and other community representatives will meet on April 3, 2003, to begin the process of developing a Request for Proposals for a firm that will develop a design and maintenance plan for comprehensive signage in the heritage area. The Society for Environmental Graphic Design continues to help in this process. Likely, the steering committee will develop the RFP in a series of three meetings.

Nancy Morgan wrote to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development last year requesting guidance for the process of developing pull-offs in the heritage area. To date, no response has been received. Curtis Fletcher, DOTD, has stepped in to help shepherd the letter to the proper officials. At an unrelated meeting in Natchitoches in April, he will work with District 08 representatives to see if he can move this process forward.

HABS/GIS

Nancy Morgan met with Paul Dolinsky and the HABS staff while in Washington, DC in February. HABS/HAER/HALS is interested in doing a HALS documentation project at Caroline Dormon in conjunction with the heritage area, the Caroline Dormon Foundation, and the US Forest Service. Dolinsky is still working out details with the Forest Service, which he hopes will be a major funder for the project. Once their participation is established, the heritage area and the Caroline Dormon Foundation can work out the remainder of the budget.

The documentation project downriver this summer will focus on the landscape and GIS data collection. There will be a meeting on April 29, 2003, to fix the details of what type of data will be collected—anyone interested in the GIS project can attend, so please let Nancy Morgan know if you are interested. Four entities that will be encouraged to attend are the City of Natchitoches, Natchitoches Parish Planning and Zoning Commission, the Louisiana Division of Archaeology, and the Deep South Regional Humanities Center (DSRHC) at Tulane University. The Louisiana Creole Heritage Center has just begun working with the DSRHC to develop a GIS database focused on Creole culture. This work will be compatible with whatever is done for the heritage area.

As the commission has discussed previously, the GIS database for the heritage area will contribute to interpretation, will help to tie existing data together, and will be the first step in land conservation in the region. One component that is certain to be included in the database is historic maps from this region. Research will be needed to compile the maps that will be included in the database—this may be a HABS project. NCPTT generously has offered to house and maintain the database for the future, as it relates to that program's goal of preserving cultural landscapes. NSU's Social Sciences Department (especially geography and the Cultural Resource Office) will be involved in local data collection.

Joint Visitor Center

Funding is available in the FY03 budget to begin the process of selecting a site, conducting an Environmental Assessment, and establishing who will be represented at the site. Laura Gates has developed a draft of the scope of work for this planning process. The draft is currently under review by the planning division in the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service. One of the potential locations for the joint visitor center is the Waterwell Road interchange on I-49 (Exit 132), the proposed location of a LA DOTD Rest Area. The LA DOTD Rest Area is in the design phase, likely to last another 6-10 months.

Congressman Jim McCrery is interested in seeing the development of a federal compound at that site, including Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Cane River National Heritage Area, Kisatchie National Forest (US Forest Service) and Red River National Wildlife Refuge (US Fish and Wildlife Service). McCrery's staff set up a meeting in early March with representatives of all these entities, including William Schenk, Regional Director, Southeast Region, National Park Service. McCrery has called another meeting for April 7, 2003. *(held June 3, 2004)*

Save America's Treasures

The APHN is using its Cane River National Heritage Area grant from 2001 to develop Historic Structure Reports (HSRs) for African and Yucca houses at Melrose Plantation. The HSRs will guide the remainder of the restoration process. A structural



CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

MAY 15, 2003

Call To Order

Saidee W. Newell called the *Cane River National Heritage Area's* bi-monthly commission meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. The Lemee House, located at 310 Jefferson St., served as this meeting's location.

Attendance

Commission members present are as follows: Bobby DeBlieux, Rufus Davis, Sharon Gahagan, Saidee Newell as proxy for Betty Jones, Randy LaCaze, Nancy Morgan as proxy for Sharon Calcote and Laura Gates, Gloria Jones, Janet Colson as proxy for Terrell Delphin and Kass Byrd, and Saidee W. Newell. CRNHA staff present: Nancy I. M. Morgan and Katherine Johnson.

Guests

Scott Lumry, Ann Davis, Payne Williams

Approval of Minutes

Bobby DeBlieux made a **motion** to accept the March 27, 2003 minutes. Randy LaCaze seconded, and the motion passed.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

There have been no unusual expenditures or income at this time. Marijane Jeansonne, bookkeeper, and Morgan are in the process of revamping the profit & loss sheet to better reflect the increase in the number of heritage area projects. The Cooperative Agreement with the NPS for the heritage area appropriation is still being processed in Atlanta. The heritage area budget for 2003 is \$995,000, which includes \$250,000 for the Creole Heritage Center. The first request is for the reimbursement of 2003 funds will be made after June 30.

2003 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Sharon Gahagan presented the grant evaluation committee's 2003 funding recommendations to the commission. Discussions took place as to the validity of funding the preservation proposal on the Guy House submitted by the Joyous Coast Foundation. As a result of the discussions, a written request for further information will be sought from the SHPO regarding the Guy House eligibility for listing on the National Register. The heritage area will seek advance information on the guidelines of eligibility on historic homes that are moved from one place to another. The Guy House was moved from Mansfield to Natchitoches. At the end of discussions, Gloria Jones made a **motion** to accept the 2003 funding recommendations of the grant evaluation committee. Sharon Gahagan seconded, and the motion passed.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Cane River National Heritage Area Management Plan has been printed and is waiting for distribution. Morgan is preparing for the mail out now, and hopes to have the management plan distributed by the beginning of June. Morgan presented copies to the Commission and the rest will be mailed from Denver. 500 copies have been printed and over 300 will be mailed out. This leaves a balance of 200 for future distribution.

Work has begun on the Executive Summary of the plan. Morgan traveled to Denver to work with Ann Van Huizen and designers with the National Park Service. The Executive Summary will be about 15 pages in length, full-color, and will contain color photos (by Sonny Carter and a few other sources), HABS photos, and historic photos from the Cammie G. Henry Research Center at NSU. It is an informational piece aimed at the commission partners, funding sources, and anyone else who needs information about the heritage area. It is not intended to be a tourist piece. A few changes were made to the document mailed out to the commissioners in mid-April, but for the most part the text of the Executive Summary is what you received. The goal is to have the first draft of the Executive Summary done by the end of May, and to be able to take it to the printer by the end of the fiscal year. There is money left in the NPS account dedicated to the plan, and it is unclear at this time if the Commission will need to subsidize the printing. The Commission will be updated about the quantity and the cost of printing after the design phase is complete.

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

See attachment for details.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

No available update.

SIGNAGE

There was a promising first meeting in April. The library cancelled the second signage meeting at the last minute—Morgan is waiting to reschedule in mid-June to ensure that we can follow through on the project. She also met with DOTD regarding interstate signage. The Commission should be able to get temporary signs up on the interstate at Exits 119 (Derry) and 127 (Flora/Cypress)—one sign going north, one going south. The purpose of the signage committee is to write the Request for Proposal for the firm that will design an entire suite of signs for the region. Once the proposal is written, the Commission will review it before release.

HABS/GIS

There are two projects being conducted this summer. HABS-GIS is the larger project, begun last summer with a preliminary visit by NPS Cultural Resources/GIS unit. At a meeting with area partners on April 29, 2003, at NCPTT, discussion focused on what heritage area needs and community needs are. From the meeting summary...

"After general discussion there was consensus among the meeting participants that the CRNHA GIS project should initially focus on creating a planning tool, rather than an interpretive tool. Interpretive applications can develop from the larger planning tool with subsequent projects. The primary audience for the resulting GIS resource management application would be the Cane River National Heritage Area staff and their community partners. The overall goal of the GIS would be to provide an example of how to manage cultural resources on a large scale, such as a Heritage Area, and to improve communication and information flow among the Heritage Area partners."

The database will be housed at and maintained by NCPTT. From this system, we will be able to develop interpretive materials, as well. The project will be complete in May 2004. Because the

May 15, 2003

scope of work was increased for the project, the cost has gone up to \$15,950. Prior to this scope of work, the cost was in the range of \$10,000. Morgan recommends utilizing the \$2,000 balance for landscape conservation from the 2002 budget, and obligating \$10,000 from the 2003 budget. As this is a multi-year project, the \$2,950 balance could be allocated from the FY2004 budget.

As a component of and complement to this project, the heritage area will start a Historic Map project with Dr. Elaine Thompson, a historian at NSU. Kass Byrd, Elaine Thompson and Morgan have begun to discuss the project, and will be finalizing a scope of work and budget. The project will focus on collecting maps for the GIS project that will locate heritage area resources through time, and also generate an annotated inventory of all historic maps relating to the heritage area that can be located in private and public collections. No scope of work has been developed for the project at this time. The Executive Committee has discussed it, and recommends moving ahead. **Morgan sought conceptual approval for the project from the full Commission, with authority for the Executive Committee to approve a project up to \$13,000 in scope.** Part of that funding would go toward hiring a summer intern from NSU Scholars' College (Justin Shatwell). The rate for interns is \$7.00 an hour, no benefits. At 14 weeks, the cost of the intern is \$3,920. **As summer was approaching and CRNHA had to hire students before they were locked up in summer jobs, the Executive Committee approved the hiring of two students for two separate projects. A vote is needed to ratify this decision.** After a brief discussion Sharon Gahagan made a motion to approve the recommendation made by Morgan. Janet Colson seconded and the motion passed. Sharon Gahagan made a motion to give full Commission conceptual approval to the Historic Map project with the authority for the Executive Committee to approve a project up to \$13,000 in scope and to ratify the decision of the Executive Commission in hiring two students for two separate projects. Rufus Davis seconded and the motion passed.

HALS

The Historic American Landscape Survey will be documenting Briarwood, the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, this summer in a 12-week project. HABS/HALS is finalizing details. The heritage area has budgeted \$15,000 for this project. The Caroline Dormon Foundation will share expenses on this project. The project should begin in early June. The Chief of HABS, Paul Dolinsky and historian Gigi Price will accompany the project historian. When Dolinsky and Price are here, Morgan hope to meet with the US Forest Service to see if the Commission can involve them in the project. To date, Morgan has left this to the Washington office, but they have not been able to make any progress. Morgan hopes that at the local level we are all better partners!

JOINT VISITOR CENTER

There will be a meeting on June 3rd with area federal agencies concerning the possibility of constructing a federal compound in conjunction with the DOTD Rest Area site. The meeting, a follow-up to the March meeting, organized by McCrery's Chief of Staff, Bob Brooks will involve Regional Directors from NPS, Forest Service, and USFWS. Laura Gates and Morgan have been meeting monthly with the other federal managers in the area, and this topic is our hottest topic of discussion.

Laura Gates drafted a scope of work for the Site Survey and Selection Study, which she is circulating within NPS for comment at this time. Once a scope of work is approved, the study can move forward. CRNHA is aiming for a 6-month turnaround once the bid has been let—this would align well with the State's DOTD Rest area project.

ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY

The CRNHA was given a grant of \$5,000 from the Alliance of National Heritage Areas to begin an economic impact survey. With this funding, Morgan proposes to hire an NSU intern to help coordinate the project. The intern, Celeste Thacker, will work at the \$7.00 an hour rate for 14 weeks (again, \$3,920). The study will include visitor counts at various sites, and economic surveys that must be mailed back. Because CRNHA staff is over capacity at the Roque House, the Executive Committee recommended paying rent to Laura Gates for use of office space at NPS headquarters. The rent discussed with Gates is \$1000 for the term of the project. Morgan stated that the Executive Committee approved the hiring—that needs ratification, and a vote needs to be taken concerning space rental. After a brief discussion, Bobby DeBlieux made a **motion** to ratify the Executive Committee's decision to hire an intern for the Economic Impact Study and to house the intern at the NPS headquarters due to lack of space at the Roque House. A brief discussion ensued and the motion passed.

CREOLE CUISINE VIDEO PROJECT

The Creole Heritage Center is holding a conference in New Orleans in October of this year. The conference is a continuation and expansion of the successful family history conferences that the Creole Center has held in recent years. The conference is being organized in conjunction with the Deep South Regional Humanities Center at Tulane University as part of the Creole Studies Consortium that exists between NSU and Tulane. A way in which CRNHA could participate in this conference and further our mission is to work with the Creole Center on an ongoing Louisiana food documentation project currently focused in New Orleans to produce a professional video on Creole Cuisine. Morgan met with Kevin McCaffrey (a New Orleans writer involved in the Culinary Oral History Project at Newcomb College Center for Research on Women), Janet Colson, Tommy Whitehead, Laura Gates and Kass Byrd concerning development of a professional 20-25 minute video that would document and explain Creole Cuisine. A scope of work has been developed and submitted from McCaffrey and Ali Duffey (producer/director with 20 years experience, also involved with Culinary Oral History Project). The project will cost up to \$20,000—the Creole Heritage Center has offered \$5,000 toward this project. **Morgan sought conceptual approval for the project, with authority for the Executive Committee to approve the final scope of work.** Funding could come from a combination of Critical Needs and Professional Services—Executive Committee could work with this as well. Sharon Gahagan made a motion to grant the Executive Committee authority to approve the Creole Cuisine project. Gloria Jones seconded, and the motion passed.

EXHIBITS

Morgan met with Rick Seale and representatives of Communication Arts, Inc. out of Jackson, MS, on Saturday. Communication Arts is creating the exhibits for the new visitor center. They are in the process of developing a proposal for us to do a heritage area exhibit as well. The goal would be to be finished in conjunction with other exhibits, hopefully for a December opening. The State is delighted to have the heritage area represented, and Dwight Landreneau, Director of State Parks, looks forward to developing a broad cooperative agreement to cover this and other cooperation.

The Commission resubmitted a grant to do a LA Purchase Exhibit at the library from August-October 2003. CRNHA is partnering with Main Street and the Natchitoches Parish Library on this. CRNHA is waiting to hear from LEH—should hear by mid-June.

HABS photos have been selected for permanent exhibition on the walls of NCPTT—hoping to have them complete in time for the end-of-summer event, Preservation in Your Community. In conjunction with 20 photos for NCPTT, an additional 10 prints could be framed for Roque House, Oakland, and Derry Visitor Center, and also used for end-of-summer exhibit.

SCENIC BYWAYS

The commission is partnering with the Natchitoches Parish Tourist Commission to send Scott Lumry, tourist commissioner, to a Scenic Byways conference/workshop in New Mexico next week. Scott and Morgan drove downriver to discuss history, current projects, and byway potential. Cost should come in under \$700 for Commission. Upon his return, Scott will spearhead the designation process on behalf of tourist commission and heritage area commission.

ALLIANCE OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

(International Heritage Development Conference)

You all received information. Kass Byrd, Laura Gates, Saidee Newell, and Morgan are going to Pittsburgh for the conference. There will be a display, and the participants should get good ideas from presentations, tours, and workshops. Cost to us for four participants and display is \$1,500 plus travel.

MASTER INTERPRETIVE PLAN

The plan has been completed and will be printed in Natchitoches.

SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES

The APHN is using its Cane River National Heritage Area grant from 2001 to develop Historic Structure Reports (HSRs) for African and Yucca houses at Melrose Plantation. The HSRs will guide the remainder of the restoration process. A structural engineer with extensive historic preservation experience visited the site on April 1, 2003, with project architect Ean MacNaughton. They hope to complete the HSR by mid July. Only about \$15,000 remains in the Save America's Treasures grant, most of which will be used to finish the roof of African House.

KATE CHOPIN PROJECT

A bid was accepted for the Kate Chopin exhibit at the Kate Chopin House (APHN) so this \$25,000 project is currently in design phase with Exhibits, Etc., the only exhibit company in Louisiana.

TEXAS & PACIFIC RAILWAY DEPOT

The depot project is about 80 percent complete at this time. Cleaning of the masonry has been completed and the repair and replace process will begin Monday, May 19, 2003. The project is funded through a matching grant for the Main Street Façade Program.

OTHER BUSINESS

Bimonthly work sessions— Because of the Alliance of NHAs meeting and the early regular meeting in May, a work session was not scheduled for April. Morgan will schedule one for June— the topic could be a draft of Executive Summary. Notification will be sent a week in advance by mail.

LEGISLATION

Reauthorization-The Cane River National Heritage Area Commission is scheduled to sunset in 2005. Now is the time to seek reauthorization, either by Congress or by the Secretary of the Interior. Three other NHAs will be seeking Congressional reauthorization this year. In addition, Commissioners need to be appointed/reappointed. That process is moving slowly since resumes are still missing.

There is currently a Senate hearing in Washington concerning general legislation for NHAs; Laura Gates was invited to participate.

There could be 11 new NHAs, including Atchafalaya, by the end of the year.

TRAVEL

Morgan was invited to participate in the State of LA tour to host travel writers on NOLA/Mississippi trip in April. She also gave a paper with Laura Gates at George Wright Society (non-profit affiliate of NPS) in San Diego. The paper will be published in the *George Wright Forum* this summer.

Morgan attended the Alliance of National Heritage Areas meeting in Nashville, TN.

Finally she traveled to Denver to meet with NPS representatives regarding the Executive Summary of the *Cane River National Heritage Area Management Plan*.

ADJOURNMENT

Sharon Gahagan moved that the meeting be adjourned. Saidee Newell seconded and the meeting adjourned.

New Faces

Land Ownership	PARK	HERITAGE AREA
	All federal ownership: • Oakland Plantation - 44.16 acres • Magnolia Plantation - 18.75 acres Authorized to acquire NTE 10 acres of land to construct visitor center. Authorized to acquire 144 additional acres at Oakland, willing seller.	Prohibited by federal law. "Virtual boundary" of National Heritage Area includes 116,000 acres and runs from 1-49 to the Red River, from the south end of Natchitoches to the Rapides Parish line. Also included are Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District, 3 state parks and the national park. Lands within heritage area owned by individuals, corporations, state and federal government. Heritage area does not "own" anything.
Purposes/Mission	Preserves the resources and landscapes of the Cane River area and enhances the understanding of its people and their traditions through interpretation, education, research and technical assistance.	Complements and assists the park in its mission, ensures a culturally sensitive approach, and uses partnerships to improve quality of life for current residents through promotion of heritage.
Grants Program	None.	Approximately \$125,000 given out each spring through competitive grants program funding research, development and historic preservation projects in the heritage area.
Technical Assistance	Park staff including historical architect and preservation crew available for technical and hands-on assistance for heritage area preservation projects within funding and staffing limitations. 400 Rapides Drive, Natchitoches (318) 352-0383 Headquarters (318) 356-8441 Tour info	Heritage area staff available for assistance with grants projects including information on compliance with historic preservation and environmental laws.
Headquarters Location	452 Rue Jefferson, Natchitoches (318) 356-3555	
Phone		
Number of Employees	17	6
Management	National Park Superintendent Laura Gates and Staff.	19-member commission appointed by the Secretary of the Interior and representing variety of local interests. Managed on a daily basis by Executive Director Nancy Morgan and staff.
Funding during 2004 fiscal year	\$696,700	\$800,000 of which \$200,000 is directed to the Creole Heritage Center at Northwestern State University

Planning

- This year planning is underway for the visitor center that will serve both the park and Cane River National Heritage Area. Two public meetings have been held so far to gather information about potential locations and to gain an understanding of what the public believes the building should contain. The Site Selection Study/Environmental Assessment will be completed within six months, at which time the planners will develop general designs for the chosen site. Watch the Natchitoches Times for information on upcoming public meetings. Join us in the process of selecting the best site for this visitor center.
- Also in development this year is a contract to develop graphic identity, wayfinding and interpretive signage for the heritage area. The firm of Lees-Dawson is developing a suite of interpretive signs that may be used at sites throughout the heritage area, a new logo for the heritage area, and vehicular directional signs.

Nick Laracuente (top center)
Larry Lindsey (top-right)
Doyle Bailey (top - left)
Frank Pennymann (left)
Leslie Vercher (right)
Peggy Scherbaum (left)
Ron Wolpert (bottom-right)
Alicia Fernbaugh (bottom-left)

Sign-In Sheet

Visitor Center Development Concept Plan

Meeting: Stakeholder Kickoff

Date: January 21, 2004

National Park Service

Laura Gates
Park Superintendent

Cane River National Heritage Area Commission

Nancy I.M. Morgan, PHD
Executive Director

Parsons Team Members

Noel Fehr
Andrew Franke
Diane Rhodes

Name	Mailing Address	Phone
LAURA GATES	Cane River Creole NHP 400 Rapides Dr Natchitoches 71457	352-0383
Dusty Fagua	Cane River Creole NHP Cane River NHA	352-0383
Robert B. DeBlair	424 Jefferson St	
Louis F. Hyams Jr	1421 Washington	352-2785
Martha Walker	460 Stephens Ave.	356-9130
aida Janel	324 Med Lane	357-0969
Barbara Bailey	433 Robert La Caze Rd Natchitoches, La	
Doyle Bailey	71456 (316)	352-5409
SAIDEE NEWELL	900 Nettle	357-0447
Katherine Johnson	649 Abbie Drive	357-8786
Andy Ferrell	NCPTI	356-7444
WILL JAMES	CRNHA 522 Front St Natchitoches	71457
Reck SEALE	For St JEAN STS 130 MOORE	357-3101
Janet Colson	MSU Creole (LA)	357-6685
Karen Kilpatrick	615 South Drive	352-5324
Tim BOND	P.O. Box 2128	352-2568
Carolyn Harrington	600 Second St.	357-2270
Amancha Chennault	243 New 49th (Catherine) 71416	349-223
Patricia Antley	189 Antley Rd. Natch.	352-3081

**Cane River Creole National Historical Park
and
Cane River National Heritage Area
Joint Visitor Center Workshop
Site Selection Process
Wednesday, January 21, 2004
Natchitoches Arts Center
1:00 p.m.**

This meeting was opened by Laura Gates, Superintendent of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, to begin the site selection process for the joint visitor center.

Laura Gates ~ Superintendent, Cane River Creole National Historical Park; State Coordinator of all the National Parks in Louisiana; Cane River National Heritage Area Commission

The purpose of the meeting is to gather ideas from the public, who may be directly involved in the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, or not, in the planning process of the new park visitor center.

Those involved in this process are Saidee Newell, Co-chair, Cane River National Heritage Area Commission; Bobby DeBlieux, Co-chair, Cane River National Heritage Area Commission; Nancy Morgan, Executive Director, Cane River National Heritage Area Commission; Noel Fehr, Principal Landscape Architect, Parsons; Andrew Franke, Senior Landscape Architect, Parsons; and Diane Rhodes, Cultural Resource Specialist/Archeologist, Parsons.

Agenda:

1. Introductions
2. Legislation
 - National Park
 - National Heritage Area
3. General Management Plan/Heritage Area Management Plan Summary
4. Process
 - Design Concept Plan
 - Environmental Assessment
5. Program
 - What is a "program"?
 - Preliminary Needs Review
 - Additional Input

Information from the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Draft General Management Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, Louisiana, concerning the joint visitor center and headquarters, was given to the participating audience. (See Attachment 1.)

Nancy I. M. Morgan, Ph.D. ~ Executive Director, Cane River National Heritage Area Commission

Similar to the sheet that Laura passed out in the Cane River National Heritage Area's management plan, there was also a section that dealt directly with the visitor facilities, a joint regional visitor center, and this sheet is a little bit different. It has a lot of the same information, but, because our plan was completed two years later, there are some things that are a little bit more specific about it. (See Attachment 2.)

I won't hit the highlights that Laura hit already, but there is a section on it that says "Visitors will have access to basic services and a variety of interpretive opportunities through audiovisual programs, interpretive exhibits, and demonstrations. A visit to a facility like this will likely take 15 to 60 minutes." Getting visitors in, letting them see what the broad area is like, and, then, getting them out again are important aspects of the visitor center. It's not our intention to keep them all day. It's our intention to send them out into the heritage area, to the national park and to your sites. As with all other aspects of the national heritage area, the partnership concept is key in developing the joint visitor center.

It also has a small list of bulleted points of the types of things that, in the planning process, people thought were important. These are the types of things we'll be talking about over the series of public meetings that we'll have. Some of the points are listed below.

Laura Gates - Park:

- Serve as the focus of interpretive and educational programs on the history of the Cane River Area.
- Not to exceed 10 acres of land.
- Preserve resources and cultural landscapes
- Partnerships
- GMP (General Management Plan) 2001

The whole point of why we're here is to have a vision of what our visitor center should look like, what it should be, what it should do. I'll turn it over to Noel Fehr, from Parsons, to explain planning.

Noel Fehr ~ Principal Landscape Architect/Urban Designer, Parsons

It's fun getting to a project site that's so exciting and so interesting as this one. And we're very pleased to be here. I'm going to talk for a few minutes just about the process that we're going to be going through over the next year and try to summarize elements of the process. Diane's going to go through and talk about some of the environmental requirements that we'll have to go through, to inform you as to what we're going to be doing over the next year or so. And, as Laura said, we're just getting involved in the project.

Question: Excuse me for interrupting you. I may be the only one here that doesn't know this. Would you be insulted or flattered if I ask you what Parsons is?

Response: Parsons is a company of planners, landscape architects, engineers, and we have a contract with the National Park Service. We work on different projects for them.

We're here to get input. We want to go over the process in getting that input, as well as have the time where we specifically ask related questions. But, as we're going through this, if you have questions, please raise your hand. I would much rather handle them as we're going along. This is not a formal presentation. Feel free to interrupt as we go through this.

I have put together a few things on this flip chart, as I'm going over the process. This is a follow-up to the GMP (General Management Plan). This is a development concept plan (DCP) and, also, an environmental assessment (EA). The development concept plan addresses a specific improvement or development or activity that was identified in the general management plan and starts the planning process, defining where it might happen, what it might include, and the different questions that we're asking here.

We're going to go through a two-phase process.

Phase 1 – Site Screening

- Refine building program
- Screen sites
- Recommend preferred

Phase 2 – Schematic Design Package

- Set building program
- Schematic site design
- Schematic cost estimate

The first stage is going to be, primarily, a site screening process, because we need to determine where the visitor center is going to go. To develop the best location, we also need to determine what goes into the visitor center. In order to decide what fits best on this site, we need to know what we're trying to fit on that site. We need to construct it as specifically as we can, looking at what partners may be involved, and, also, understanding that there could be alternative facility programs based on who some of the different partners are that might be involved in the project. That's really the first phase – going through and developing the programs and making a screening of potential sites to get them down to a reasonable number. This first phase is going to run through, roughly, August through September of this year, and, then, at that point and time, we will move right into Phase 2. Phase 2 is getting into the development of the schematic design concepts for the facility itself. We will come up with a site plan, detail development costs, and be ready to hand the overall package to an architecture and engineering firm to final design the construction packages. Twelve to fifteen months is the target for completion of phases 1 and 2.

We're also doing an environmental assessment plan, simultaneously, with development of the plan, which is the most desirable. This is preferable to getting an environmental assessment done after a project has already been planned and designed, in order to avoid any delays in construction. At this time, we're trying to work with NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) to get the most out of the environmental analysis and do what has to be done.

The process starts off with the site orientation kickoff. These are the different elements that are included in our scope. We have a public participation plan that we will go through several times over the next year to get your input in the decision making process. We're in the process now of data collection and analysis. We will be identifying alternative sites, as we're looking at the environmental impact of these different sites. We will prioritize the alternatives and go through a selection process.

Process:

1. Site orientation – kickoff
2. Public participation program
3. Data collection and analysis
4. Identify alternatives
5. Identify environmental impacts
6. Cost estimates
7. Prioritize alternatives and select preferred
8. Produce DCP (Developmental Concept Plan)/EA (Environmental Assessment)
9. Supplemental technical and graphic design assistance

That selection process will be based on what Parsons calls "Choosing by Advantages." In the process or element of the project, we're looking at alternative sites, and we have added additional elements that will be considered. In this phase we're going through a very specific evaluation matrix.

Draft – Evaluation Matrix:

Natural Resources Protection/Enhancement

Cultural Resources Protection/Enhancement

Visitor Experience & Enjoyment

Landform

Surrounding Context

Interpretive Potential

Soundscape (Noise)

Visitor & Staff Safety

Development Cost & Efficient Park Operations

Acquisition

Implementation

Utilities

Park Operation Efficiency

Heritage Area Operation Efficiency

Transportation

- Regional/Interstate Road Access
- Planned Road Improvements
- Traffic Considerations
- Visibility/Legibility

Buildable Areas

- Facility Area Requirements
- Site Configuration
- Setbacks and Easements
- Topography
- Visibility
- Developable Area

Environmental Conditions

- Hazardous Wastes
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Cultural Resources
- Cultural Landscapes
- Night-Sky (Light Pollution)
- Air Quality

Utilities

- Water
- Sanitary Sewer
- Electrical
- Natural Gas
- Telephone

Local Community Issues

- Existing Zoning
- Adjacent Land Use
- Development Restrictions
- Community Master Plan Compatibility
- Community Economic Considerations
- Potential Availability for Purchase
- CRNHA/CARI Master Plan Compatibility

These are all of the things we will be reviewing. From there, a recommendation will go to the regional office of the National Park Service in Atlanta, Georgia. They will then confirm it or approve it and, then, we will go back and do Phase 2 and we'll go through the same type of things, in which we will be looking at one specific site. After we've honed it down to one site, we'll produce the DCP/EA. Then, we will be able to put in the request for construction funds.

We are in Phase 1 and refining the building program. Andy's going to talk about the building program, in particular. By that, we mean what facilities, what elements, what

types of exhibit space, what types of offices, what types of spaces are going to be included. We're looking at Phase 1 to screen the sites to determine the character of the features at those potential locations. We will also be coming up with the recommended or preferred site for the facility. The next phase gets into looking at a specific site, including the building concept, building a schematic design, and producing a specific cost estimate. At that point in time, the park service will be able to take the information, put it into a package, get the funding that's needed, and, then, we'll be able to go into the plan/design/construction aspects of construction.

Diane Lee Rhodes ~ Cultural Resource Specialist/Archeologist, Parsons

My job, today, is to talk about NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Working together with NEPA is a way of insuring that informed choices are made. This includes defining the purpose, need, problems, and opportunities involved in the process. Our objectives are to answer two important questions: "What do you need?" and "Where do you want to go?"

Examining the alternatives is at the heart of the NEPA process. It is preferable to have completed the necessary studies in advance to avoid the "No Action" alternative from NEPA. Alternatives provide options. They require both a creative approach and a reasonable one. We need to look for alternatives that help each generation fulfill its responsibilities to the environment. So, it is our job to provide options, to look at a creative approach and to be reasonable with the approach, so that we preserve the natural and cultural environment for future generations. Once you lose a building, for example, it can never be reconstructed in the same way.

Ethnographic concerns are an important part of this process. Once a culture is inexplicably changed, we can never go back and pick up those things that were an important part of that culture to a community.

We look at issues, also, those things that are concerns to people, that we need to identify. Those help set up various alternatives. Noel gave a handout of the different things to be considered. (See "Draft – Evaluation Matrix.")

Other things we must address, as well, are: socioeconomics, water quality, the environment, and native and endangered species.

All of these concerns require the input of local citizens, such as your selves, who know the land. We also hope to acquire as much information as possible, on the area, from the people in or around the area, and a complete description of the areas affected.

L. Andrew Franke, ASLA, RLA ~ Senior Landscape Architect/Urban Designer, Parsons

The next part of our presentation is to request some input from you about some of the things Diane was talking about. We would like to go through a "visioning" exercise to get your input.

I am going to talk about the program, and I want to clarify what we mean by “program,” because program means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. As planners, the word “program” means “a list of requirements for a building and a site.” So, when we say “program,” think of a list of things that are going to be included in this project. Previously, the National Park Service came up with what they call their initial list of program needs. This is the list of items that the National Park Service asked for when they started thinking about this project.

Program

1. A “program” is a list of requirements for building and site.
2. Preliminary Needs Review
 - Reflective of Cane River region
 - Parking for cars, RVs, and buses
 - Information desk
 - Exhibit space
 - Outdoor gathering space
 - 50 person indoor auditorium
 - Office space
 - Park staff and heritage area site
 - Break room
 - Storage space
 - Adequate wiring, phone, and electrical
 - Security system

Heritage Area

- Complement the historical park
- Provide for a culturally sensitive approach
- Heritage and identity
- Preservation and enhancement of the cultural landscape and traditions
- Provide a framework
- Partnerships
- HAMP 2002 (see list in that document)

We put two questions on the board for you to think about now. The first is: “What should the visitor center be and what should it include?” The second is: “Where should the visitor center be?”

When we say “where,” we don’t necessarily mean where on the map. We would also like to know what you think the character of the land should be like. What things around the site are important?

(Note paper was given to meeting participants.)

We will take a break and meet back together at 3:15 p.m., unless you need more time. Please write one thing per note and attach it to the board under the appropriate question.

A discussion of the ideas will follow the break. We would rather have too many ideas than too few.

(Break.)

Question 1: "What should the visitor center be and what should it include?"

Responses:

1. Exhibit space for park.
2. Information station.
3. Brochure stands.
4. Desk for staff.
5. No more than 80-100 person auditorium seating.
6. Friends' groups and associations space.
7. Hands-on classroom/activity room.
8. Resource center: archeology, heritage area information.
9. Heritage area sites for promotion.
10. U.S. Fish & Wildlife and U.S. Forest Service area.
11. Joint information desk for federal agencies.
12. Gift shop/concessions.
13. Exhibits of cultures in the area.
14. Office space.
15. Exhibit space for heritage area and partners.
16. NSU (Northwestern State University)/Creole Center (to include geneology information, etc.)
17. Office space for partners (decision to be made as to who the partners will be).
18. Meeting room.
19. Interactive space: craftspeople, historical/technological information (films, etc.).
20. General concept areas for education.
21. Heritage area information.
22. Joint information desk for federal agencies.
23. Information on which sites in the Cane River area meet the interpretive themes of the heritage area.
24. Exhibit space for U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, etc.
25. Area cultures exhibits.
26. Exhibit space for U.S. Forest Service.
27. Office space for park area and interested parties and partners.
28. Store/gift shop.
29. Demonstration area.
30. Exhibits from other local museums (traveling, on loan, etc.).
31. Meeting space for local groups.
32. Concessions for regional food/restaurant.
33. Historical information about the area and conservation efforts within the area.
34. Plants/shrubs indigenous to the area.
35. Air Conditioning/Heating.

36. Audio/Visual capacity in the auditorium.
37. Resource listing: sites, activities, people, groups.
38. Introduction to culture, scenery, history, and sites of interest of the Natchitoches area.
39. Incorporate green/sustainable design and materials.
40. Architectural design native to Natchitoches.
41. Educational, informative film/exhibit interactive.
42. Picnic tables.
43. Pet rest area.
44. Bottled or filtered water.
45. Reading room.
46. Information portal (includes Kisatchie, state museum, and other areas where visitors can go from the center).
47. Park library.
48. Bookstore.
49. Interpretive center for the area, including area of maps, brochures, and other information.
50. Exhibit space/community center/all-purpose facility with state-of-the-art interactive displays.
51. Rest rooms.
52. Great utilities: telephones, computers, etc.
53. Native tribes exhibit.
54. Quiet outdoor space.
55. General introduction film.
56. Informal auditorium with movable seats.
57. Outdoor amphitheater.
58. Parking.
59. Staging area for tours.
60. Archive for park and heritage area.
61. Library/resource center (controlled).
62. Space for future functionality.
63. Full-time security presence.
64. Classrooms.
65. Multi-purpose space (crafts, school field trips, live demonstrations).
66. Conference space.
67. Historic architecture (should resemble buildings in historic area).
68. Walking trail with native plants area.
69. Interpretive timeline leading to the building (on rail, pavement, walls, etc.).
70. Contemporary design with historic features.
71. Space for RVs, buses, etc.
72. Creole architecture.
73. Informational and directive to all historic sites.

Question 2: Where should the visitor center be?

Responses:

1. Join the new DOTD (Department of Transportation D ?) building at I-49 and Highway 6 interchange.
2. Kisatchie hills.
3. Site that allows signage.
4. Site with logical entrance and access to park area/gateway.
5. Highway 6 between Exit 138 and Highway 1 bypass.
6. Inside heritage area large enough for living history show, etc.
7. Where night sky is protected from lighting.
8. Site with landscaping and space for lots of parking.
9. Exit 138.
10. On or with view of Cane River.
11. Site with water feature.
12. Wooded area.
13. Visible from I-49.
14. Non-flooding area.
15. Area with native plants and landscaping.
16. Space with adequate parking.
17. Within view of rural crops.
18. Inside heritage area or near Cane River.
19. At the Derry exit.
20. Rural setting.
21. Creole cottage near I-49 & Highway 6.
22. Red River area near Grand Ecore.
23. Water Well Road area.
24. Site with easy access to all sites in the heritage area.
25. Site with easy access to I-49.
26. On or near I-49.

Comments followed (largely inaudible).

Points, suggestions, and comments discussed:

- NEPA elicits help from groups on endangered historic features.
- It is important to strike a balance between the urban features of the heritage area and the rural features.
- In looking at all of the different resources that are in the heritage area, how would people find the sequence of the sites and orient themselves to them, and what types of relationships are there between those sites? How do you see that sequence working in coordinating how the visitors get out to the sites?
- Visitors should be in the Cane River area or bordering the area rather than being in the vicinity of I-49 hotels/motels.
- Whether or not visitors should have a triangular loop or circular loop along which to travel, such as a scenic byway, like Longleaf Trail.
- Regarding the signage project: How are people going to circulate through the area, how can the area be visually and interpretively united, and how can people flow from one area to the next. At present, some people come into Natchitoches,

use Natchitoches as their staging ground, go down river and come back. Some people start in the south, go up the river road, and end up in Natchitoches. One of the things that has not happened as much, to date, is to start in the middle of the river and go down and back up. There is no entirely logical route that all people take. There need to be three primary circulation routes. The signage project should address these routes.

- Currently, DOTD will not allow additional signs at I-49 and Highway 6. Many of the green signs along the highway now will be replaced with brown signs. The DOTD will allow only a limited number of green signs. This could affect the site of the visitor center.
- Many area roads are in substandard condition for traffic.
- In locating the visitor center, it should be taken into account where most visitors come from (north, south, Texas, etc.). It would be helpful to find a way to collect the data.
- Five hundred acres are owned by the City of Natchitoches, some of which may be donated for the visitor center. Donated land would be beneficial, since other funding could delay the project.
- The new LADOTD rest area will be on Water Well Road.

Conclusion

The next meeting will be in April and will include a summary of this meeting with a program list of suggestions from the notes discussed at this meeting.

The June meeting will include the recommended site information, plus a diagram of the building area, including parking, entry, outdoor gathering space, exhibit space, auditorium, and other building design features.

Joint Visitor Center and Headquarters. The park would work in partnership with the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission and others to develop a joint regional visitor center and park/ heritage area headquarters in the Natchitoches/Cane River area outside the downtown historic district. The center would serve as a regional facility that would provide visitors, at a minimum, an orientation to the Cane River National Heritage Area, the Natchitoches National Historic District, and Cane River Creole National Historical Park. (Potential participating groups: National Park Service, Cane River National Heritage Area, Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, the Tourist Commission, Kisatchie National Forest, the Louisiana State Museum, and state historic sites.) The headquarters would provide offices for most of the park and heritage area staff. Some office space would remain at each national park unit to accommodate staff who are required to be onsite.

The joint visitor center would be an important facility not only for orienting the public to the area's resources, but also in providing a variety of interpretive and educational opportunities. Through a diversity of media and personal services, visitors would gain a greater appreciation for and understanding about the park's history and relationship to the broader Cane River heritage area themes and topics. And in partnership with local organizations and institutions, additional programs, seminars, and events could be developed in the community

offering the public further opportunities to learn about and discuss topics on local culture and heritage.

- **Note.** Alternatives B and C of the *Draft Cane River National Heritage Area Management Plan* recommend the development of a shuttle operation that would operate out of this joint visitor facility and provide service to the heritage area, which includes the park, and the historic district. The shuttle operation was not included as part of the proposed action (alternative 1) in this document because of the overall costs involved. However, the shuttle concept is included under alternative 4 of this plan. Please refer to alternative 4 or the heritage area plan to examine the potential costs and impacts related to a shuttle system.

Should the partnership be unsuccessful in developing this joint visitor center, a visitor center and park headquarters would be located on a site near the national park units (to be determined) that would be part of the legislatively authorized 10 acres. Depending on the availability of suitable structures, some new construction might be necessary.

Cane River National Heritage Area

Visitor Facilities

Cane River Creole National Historical Park will proceed in obtaining funding for and developing a joint regional visitor center and headquarters in the Natchitoches / Cane River region, outside the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District. The Cane River National Heritage Area Commission will participate in its planning, development and funding and will have a presence in that facility. Consistent with the partnership approach, the facility may also be shared by other entities that have a role in providing visitor services and/or have public stewardship responsibilities for natural and cultural resources of the Cane River region. Such entities may include the U.S. Forest Service (Kisatchie National Forest), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Red River National Wildlife Refuge), the state of Louisiana (state historic sites, state museum), the chamber of commerce, and the tourist commission.

This center will provide a regional information facility that will orient visitors to the region and provide an overview of the area's heritage, its resources, the ongoing efforts to protect and preserve those resources, places to visit, and upcoming events and activities. Visitors will have access to basic services and a variety of interpretive opportunities through audiovisual programs, interpretive exhibits, and demonstrations. A visit to a facility like this will likely take 15 to 60 minutes. Planning for this center and its services will remain flexible to accommodate potential partnerships. The

facility's program will likely require the following spaces and services:

- an area for orienting visitors to the Cane River region
- an area equipped for interpretive demonstrations
- an assembly and staging area for tours
- a place for viewing audiovisual materials
- housing and security for temporary exhibits
- facilities to provide for visitor needs, such as restrooms, telephones, water fountains, and first aid
- office space for heritage area and park staff and possibly others

Visitor orientation services will also be needed at other locations in the region due to the size of the heritage area and the different points at which visitors will enter the area. These outlying orientation services will help ensure that most visitors will have some access to heritage area information. This orientation can be accomplished through the use of existing visitor service facilities in the region and through the development of new facilities. As partnerships evolve, a variety of opportunities to accomplish this secondary level of orientation services will be identified.

**Cane River National Heritage Area
Joint Visitor Center Workshop
Site Selection Process
Tuesday, April 20, 2004
Natchitoches Arts Center
3:00 p.m.**

This is the Joint Visitor Center Workshop, Tuesday, April 20, 2004, at the Arts Center located on Second Street, Natchitoches Louisiana. We are continuing the planning process for the joint visitor center for the Cane River Creole National Historical Park and Cane River National Heritage Area. These are the minutes of the meeting.

Laura Gates ~ Superintendent, Cane River Creole National Historical Park; State Coordinator of all the National Parks in Louisiana; Cane River National Heritage Area Commission, presented opening remarks and introductions for the meeting.

Nancy Morgan, Executive Director of the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission as well as number of commissioners from Cane River National Heritage Area in the audience. Also, we have our planning team from Parsons, St. Louis, Missouri, which included Noel Fehr, Andrew Franke, and Diane Rhodes. The Heritage Area has paid for the development of this plan out of it's funding. The lead planner is Noel Fehr, working with him is Andrew Franke and Diane Rhodes and they are our planning team along with the most critical participants and they are US. We are the ones, we are the voices of this, so please keep that in mind. This is considered a federal action and as such it is the law that we consider a series of alternatives. We must do that, we are legally responsible for do that. We look at the different potential actions where the visitor center might go, what other things might affect us locating the visitor center in that area. I will get into that in a little bit. All of those actions are required under the National Environmental Policy Act whenever there is a federal action. This is what we do. Noel Fair will fairly quickly give us a summary of what we have accomplished to date because this is the second in a whole series of meetings that will be involved in this process. He will present the information of where we are in the process and also where we go for here. If you look at the agenda, it is fairly simple. The Welcome, the Purpose of the meeting and then Noel will explain what we are looking at in very general terms for the location and the site selection and also start getting into the program of the building. In other words, the things that should be included in the building, the functions that should be included in the building. So that too, will be discussed in a very general manner. He will talk about the potential sites for the location of this facility. The facility is authorized under the law that created both the park and the Heritage Area. The law was passed by Congress in 1994. We are implementing a portion of that. There are two handouts that are at the back as you signed in. One of these sheets is double sided. This is an excerpt from the National Parks General Management Plan that governs what the park will implement funding available, over approximately the next fifteen years. Also included is an excerpt from the Cane River National Heritage Area. Both of these deal with the development of this joint visitor center and they have both been through the

public comment process, through the entire legal process. They come from approved plans. The planning was done over a period of several years. It was underway when I came here in September of 1998. The Heritage Area Management Plan was the last one complete. The completion date on that was February 2003. We have done these steps and this is the next step toward the process of the planning process to get our visitor center done. Recap of what it is the park does. This is all taken out of the law and what we do. Congress says that the Park Services, as the focus of interpretive and educational programs on the history of Cane River Area. It says that we can acquire, not to exceed ten acres of land to construct the visitor center upon. It says that we preserve the resources and cultural landscapes and assist in the preservation of those along Cane River. The law stresses partnerships and again our general management plan was completed in 2001. The Heritage was established to complement the Historical Park but also, and this to me is very critical, to provide for a cultural sensitive approach in all the direction of the things that are listed on the previous page. (Flip Chart) That is why the Heritage Area Commission is made up of nineteen members, representing a variety of local interest. The Heritage Area concentrates on focusing on local heritage and local identity. They assist too, in the preservation and enhancement of cultural landscapes and the cultural traditions of this area. It provides a frame work under which the National Park Service and the Heritage Area can achieve the goals specified in the legislation. It, too, stresses partnerships and Heritage Area Management Plan. The Heritage Area Plan that also went through the legal process was completed in 2002. I might note that on Friday the Heritage Area Management Plan has won an award from the American Planning Association. It won the Federal Partnership Award and we are receiving it in Washington, D.C. at a luncheon on Friday. We are quite proud of that. The professional planners all over the state really approve the plan.

Any questions so far? OK so remember this is part of a process. It involves lots of public involvement. It is all the National Environmental Policy Act. We are required by law to go through this process. At this point, I will turn it over to Noel Fair, the lead on our planning team.

Thank you, I am very pleased to be back again. This is a very pleasant, exciting project. We have been getting into it since the last meeting. We gathered data on that trip. We have continued to learn more as we go through it and in talking with a lot of different people and researching available information. At the last meeting, I just like to talk about the overall process. We are going to be working on this project in two broad phases. The first phase is the site screening phase and that is where we are at right now. We are hoping to finish that up by the late June or early July time frame, where we get it narrowed down to be looking at one site. At the same time we are going in and looking at the sites. We are also trying to refine the program for the facility and by program I am talking about the physical program of what the visitor center will include on the site as well as the building itself. That is where we are at this time. As soon as we get that done, we will be back in late June or early July and will be going through at that time a "SVA" process. Choosing by advantages, which is a process that the National Parks Services goes through and at that time the decision will be made. Once that is done, then it goes to the Regional Director in Atlanta for the final confirmation. From there, we will go into

Phase Two. In Phase Two we will be looking at doing designs, preliminary concept designs for the site as well as the building, visitor center building itself. That will be starting hopefully sometime by August. The whole project we are looking at wrapping and having the concept plans done as well as the environmental assessment to that by the November or early December time frame, such that we could have the public meetings associated with that in January and then after that then we would be ready to roll and looking for the funding that you were talking about. Looking at the process, last time we completed the different tasks that we had. This is the same sheet (Flip chart) that we had up at that time. We have completed the site orientation, we have been working and continue to work on the public participation program. Data collection, we have done and this is where we are at today as far as the identifying of the alternatives. We have a map up here where we have identified ten alternatives. There could be more and if you have other suggestions, we are still open to receive those. The goal of this trip and what we need to do before we leave this week is to narrow it down to have in the range of probably three sites. It could be four, it could be two but a certain number of sites that we will go through and do a more detailed analysis on so that when we come back to do the CVA Process, we will have all the information together on those three sites. Of the process, we are half way through, but on the time line we are not half way through the overall process yet. That is where we are at in the process. We are now going to go through some discussions on the program building and site program or some potential sites. If there are any questions on this or if you have any questions, please interrupt us or raise your hand as we go through it. We really don't mind being interrupted as we go through this. I think that a dialogue works better than just a presentation.

Could you explain what the blue is on the map on the right hand side, please? Yes, the blue is the flood plan and Annie is going to go through the sites in a more detailed method. But this is Interstate 49 and one of the requirements or the things that was identified in our scope was to look at potential sites along four interchanges. Basically from Highway 6 down to the interchange. In the 100 year flood plane, as you can see, it covers a big part of the site and there are issues associated with that in the process. Before Anne gets up, Diane if you would like to just briefly just mention the EA Process and what you have done and the flood plane is just one of the issue that you look at in completing the EA.

Just very briefly, to give some idea, basically The National Environmental Policy Act passed in 1966. It's goal was to achieve productive harmony between human beings and the physical environment for future generations. That is quite a goal, isn't it? We look at the major federal acts that were established in the past for the environment. People alter and grow and as well as all of the natural resources. All the way from air, water, flood plane and so on. Now, a key feature of this early participation in the planning process, in other words, all the public input and that sort of thing such be completed in time to be a useful part of the decision making. In other words, you don't say we are going to put it here, Oh yea! We will fix the environmental stuff! That is not the way it should work. Part of the planning is the involvement, public involvement through the various meetings that we have had. The other thing is too, that there is public involvement that goes on all the time. We know one of you picks up the phone and calls one of the other folks at the

Parks or Heritage Area. "I have concerns about this or what about?" All of those things are feedback into this process. It needs to be an interdisciplinary approach also. You want to have all kinds of people, not just planners. That is why part of our data gathering, when we go out and talk to people from the forest service, we talk to planners and other people in the community who have very valid concerns and inputs into. So we use that to enter this disciplinary approach, it helps to define the features of the amount of issues, the data gathering needs, alternatives throughout the process. This collection process is set within the framework. Like you and I, the parks system has to obey the law.

As we get into this, let me emphasis again, that we are really looking for your input, particularly as we talk about some of the different elements in the facility, particularly and mostly at this meeting, the input into the site selection. We are really looking for your suggestions, ideas, and thoughts on that. We can talk about some of the fun stuff and I know that everybody is interested in this funny map with all the blue stuff but before we get to that I would like to talk a little bit about some of this other fun stuff, which is the building here. What we have tried to do from our first meeting, some of you might have been here, is we sat up here and asked a lot of people what they thought should be in the visitor center and people came up with posted notes and put them up and what we tried to do was to instill all those posted notes down into what we call this list of program elements. Program elements are just functional things that go inside the visitor center. That is what we have listed here. I'll read them quickly just so you hear them and get an idea of what is going to be in this building or what our initial thoughts are for it. And when I say "our", I mean everybody in the entire planning team, including the public. A lobby and entry is the first thing, an information/welcome desk, interpretation space. This is kind of split between an auditorium and exhibit space. Office space for the National Parks Service, the Heritage Area and right now we have also included some space for the NSU Creole Center. Storage space associated with all the office functions, An Eastern, regional book store and storage space. Restrooms for the public and staff. Demonstration kitchen. This is kind of a cool thing where we can actually demonstrate the Creole cooking. Mechanical space for the function of the building. Circulation space so that people can walk around. Equipment storage. There is a staff break room so the staff can take breaks. And an all purpose, kind of a meeting room in this part. What we did after we made plan, we also looked at the site. On the site, there will need to be a road to drive into the facility, parking for visitor whether they come by car or bus. There is also parking for staff. There will be an arrival plaza where people will be dropped off and then addition to that there will be an outdoor assembly space or class room for outdoor activities. A walkway trail and all the utilities that are needed to keep lights and air cool inside. After we listed all of these things we began as architects always do, we started drawing and made some diagrams and what this first diagram shows is kind of our idea of how this building might initially layout. And you will notice there is also a picture down here of Beaufort, thinking this is what the character of this building might be and what of the things that you see on this picture is the front porch and that is one of the key elements of the building. We want it to kind look that it fits into the region and there is a front porch. First there will be some steps in and an entry space that leads to a lobby. Right off that entry there is an all-purpose room or small meeting room. The idea

of this, is that it can be used by the public in general and closed off from the rest of the building at night so this entire building doesn't need to be kept open at that public meeting. Off that lobby there are public restroom, the demonstration kitchen and kind of terminating the view is an information desk. One of the things that you will notice about the lobby is that it looks pretty big in relation to the rest of the building, the reason it's big is because one of the things that we initially envisioning in that lobby is that there might be a site model of the Cane River Region. We visitor come they can look at a model and orient themselves to the river and the land form and where the different plantations are. One of the things that we are doing besides making a list and drawing a diagram, is for each one of these functions, we are listing a lot of detail things like that there might be a model in the library or the finishes in the building and the functions and what things need to be next to each other and all of that comes together in this diagram with the ultimate goal that as this thing moves from planning to construction, it could be handed to an architect to actually build and get implemented. Back to the plan, the info desk which is this red square also serves the bookstore and this area. Off the lobby is an auditorium and exhibit space. In this section of the building is where most of the office functions are located and I won't go into those in detail but we have office space as we have listed here for the National Parks Service and The Heritage Area as well. In the core of the building, there some mechanical spaces. So that is kind of roughly our first initial thought and the functions in the building and kind of how they lay out. We needed to do the building first so that we can then put the building on the site and again, we do not have a site picked yet but we will get into that. We wanted to address the building first. The next two diagrams that you see in this area are just two diagrams of ideas for a prototypical site. They are not any specific site located anywhere, they are just our ideas of an optimal site or ideas of how this might lay out. The two concepts are that you would have a major entry treatment as you enter the site and the treatment would probably be gates or things that are typical that you would see on some of the plantations in the area. An entry road that enters the site and travels through the site. In this particular concept, it travels through an open field, maybe with agricultural crops, maybe cotton so that maybe people can get an idea of what cotton looks when it grows in a field. I have never seen it, being a Yankee, and I would love to see it. From that in this concept, you arrive at an arrival plaza and terminate in the visitor center building itself. Again, it might look something like this. This concepts offers parking that is split on either side, not necessarily parking for buses on one side but just splitting a large parking lot into two smaller lots so there is not a sea of asphalt. Some of the other site elements that are associated with that are a trail that works through the site as well and then an outdoor class room. The idea of the outdoor classroom kind of ties some of the function of the building with the outdoor parts of the site. Being that if you come in the lobby, have to use the restroom, you go to the auditorium kind of get oriented to the region, go through some exhibits, maybe go on the porch, wait for some other people and then go out to the outdoor classroom. So that is kind of the logic behind the building and the site and how they tie together. This site diagram, number two, is a little bit different in that you do have the same entry treatment but you come along a road again through some open field, you arrive at an arrival plaza and the visitor center isn't really terminated by view. You kind of go through the plaza and you can park and then you walk to the visitor center and so you really don't just walk through the plaza to the visitor center, you walk

around it. It is almost like you are continually discovering things on the site as you arrive. Again the trail head, you would walk through and circulate through the trail and then the outdoor classroom as well. So that is rough function, so of the list of elements that we thought about in the building and we are going to continue to refine that based on input that we hear from the planning team or if anybody has any comments, like you forget this or that. One of the other items we talked about the demonstration kitchen, but functionally we related it up here so that it was close to the bookstore so if you wanted to sell anything that was kind of related to the kitchen you could do it in that area and have to move through the building to do it. That is in a nut shell our initial present.

Yes, Randy. In thinking about, a ten acre site, the field area could not be more than two and half to three acres of the site. So as I think about driving through the field, that is a five acre in front of my house, we are talking about an area that if you were going to have cotton as a demonstration plot, it would be a hundred by two hundred. So I am missing how that helps you or fits in unless you have a 30, 40 or 50 area site. Something that creates the impression of a field. I am not worried about the site where the builds are but the idea of getting that concept doesn't fit with your acreage at all in my mind.

That is a good observation, I guess so people think that a field is big, but it could be a small patch as well. I think that the idea is that there is some kind of open space that is not completely wooded that isn't just grass. It could be planted in a meadow. It doesn't have to look like acres and acres of agricultural fields. It is just an area where some of these plants could be planted so people could experience them. Again, it is just kind of alluding to what people experience when they drive through the region and they see larger fields. You are right it certainly doesn't fit. We don't propose eight acre fields on a ten acre site. It might not be a valid idea. When we get to a site, it might be completely wooded and the open field concept would have to drop away, but right now it is one of the ideas we are looking at.

The most of the Creole/French Creole houses, the fairway is in the middle of the facade, and here you have an off set which gives you sort of not the traditional. Thank you that is a great comment, we will be sure to incorporate that.

Ten acres that we are working with and when you are picking your sites was the location the set on those standards? Because, it is true that we have the benefit around here of having many acres surrounding our sites, but many National Park sites then become encroached on and you lose what you started out with. I was just wondering whether this had any thing to do with the function? The surrounding neighborhood, agricultural. Are you sure that the zoning around it won't have apartments right up against our cotton field. At this point that is one of the considerations that we are looking at. It is one of the local community issues that we are going to be looking at. We do have some buffer on the diagram, even on our site.

I am a volunteer at Oakland, for some time I have thought that if you are going to interpret a plantation here, you need to have something going on that is descriptive of what went on over a 150 years. I bought a mule and at the present time we are cultivating

about an acre of land at Oakland. We have now potatoes coming up, about ten rows. About eight rows of corn, and we plan to plant cotton and I have some indigo seeds. That was one of there first cash crops. You can demonstrate that on a very small area, particularly if you cultivate it with a mule.

I like the idea of being able to use the all purpose rooms separate from the rest of the building. I would recommend that you also make the restrooms accessible and the rest of the building could be locked off.

Looking at the house in the raised style, you are taking into account handicap accessibility. Yes, there is a ramp on this side right here. We have a few too many steps, the ramp might have to get big but that is taken into account.

The size of the lobby and the restrooms, are you expecting a bus load of people at one time? Yes. It is lobby is sized for 50 or a load of 50 and kind of moving them through and again that model.

What are your designs for use for the multipurpose room? Small meetings like this, happening, really not too much audio-visual stuff in there. Just kind of your basic space with chairs. The room is approximately 15 by 20, something like that. These are kind of stretched a little. It is not real big rooms.

What is the square footage of the whole building? The building is about 8,700 square feet.

Is there a break down of what makes up the 8,700, allocating room size? Yes, we have a whole list. I wouldn't mind seeing that. It would help envision what all we've got. We will give that to Laura and she can forward that to everybody that is interested. I think that we should emphasize that at the last meeting, we took a lot of comments and this is the first time that we have been able to get it down on paper like this and so it is a work in process. We are probably not meeting that until we get down to another few steps in the process. We know that the first time we do it, were several steps away from being right. Please take that into account. We already know that we have some adjustment in office space to make.

You get comments and feedback as you listen to the group that this room is too small from historical views, we need more space in this room. Early on you get that feedback.

Besides Randy, anyone else who would like a copy of that, please contact my office at 352-0383 and we will send it out.

Any other comments?

On site two diagram, the parking is further away from the building? Yes. Our population is aging. We may need to park closer to the building. Yes, we might have to actually put those two together again. The idea here is just that you come into the parking and then move towards it, it just a little bit different, but that is a good point.

That is one of the things that we bring out in the evaluation of the various alternatives. On the one hand you're looking at getting visitors out of their car, having a leisurely stroll through a very pleasant environment to get to the visitor center but you balance that then and then you evaluate that with the aging population. The closer they can get between the car and the visitor center. There are trade offs in either case. And so that is part of the environmental evaluation that we do several different sites or designs.

Where will the signage be? We haven't designated where that will occur at this point. And the reason we haven't, it doesn't really do us any good at this point until we get the site and see how it will work. But it certainly is one of the elements that we are considering.

The other consideration is until you have a site selected, the design is going to have to fit that. You may want to buffer it with trees on another; the whole thing would need to be shifted around to fit the site.

I would recommend that in regards to the office space, that is going to be put together in this particular building, that if possible, try to make it a flexible as far as you know, is there a way to come up with. We all know that over a period of time, our needs change as far as we would all love to have double the space in our office than what we have. Over time those things change, sometimes technology allows us to use less space and other times more space than what we had anticipated. If it is flexible so that if things change, which they are going to do over a period of time, instead of us having to pay contractors to come in and tear out walls and move things around, if it is easier to put in a system that will allow us to change accordingly.

When you talk about the flexibility, are you thinking along the lines of more cubicles for certain space or could you elaborate on what examples?

A lot of that will be dependent upon what the individuals that are using the office space. My opinion is that in my experience, I have had to have privacy involved with what I was doing so I had to have solid walls but there was technology available that made solid walls that were easily moved so we were able to accommodate accordingly. If that is not a necessity, if it's better for the working environment, and the team concept that will be working here to use a three quarter wall cubicle that is dependent upon the people working there.

What are the thoughts as far as the building and the character inside the building as far as features that would be important to you? Operable windows, tall ceilings, fans?

One of the things that had come up in the first planning meeting that I don't see on the program elements here is some sort of space for resource center. Library space or technology space, basically. I just want to put that back into the mix. I think it would be important if the Creole Center joins in. I think that it is also important for us to have a library.

So that would be a library for storage and books?

A library for shared information. We get so many visitors, contractors, scholars who come in and want immediate access to certain reports that the Parks and Heritage Area have had completed. We need to have a place where these are readily available and that we can share, so we are not thinking of a large space, but just a space large enough to contain this subject matter, information that is localized and also a small library with work tables for people and copy machines. Pay copy machines. Where people can come and get research done if they want to and I believe that the Creole Center also has an interest in this. The Parks and Heritage area can provide basic information on the grants program, on Secretary of the Interior's standard for preservation, just very basic materials that are needed in any heritage community.

Would one option of that maybe to use the all purpose room for that, as some modifications could be made? That way we are not just building space. I don't know if researchers are beating your doors down but maybe some of that could be shared.

They are beating down the doors at The Creole center. Currently there isn't anywhere they can go and do that.

Should that be in the more controlled environment, in the back half of the building where the offices are? Are is that something that is out in more of the exhibit area as a token for everyone to just come and go?

Yes, the Creole Center genealogy data base access should be where the public can get to it.

As far as design things probably be in, I would recommend having fans, having windows that do open.

I think if we are going to have this character of building, I think that high ceiling would go along well with that, as long as you plan well for insulation. I think flexibility suggestions are excellent. I would really discourage the use of open office type environment. I think that Laura would be well served to have an enclosed office, if possible so that she can have privacy in her offices and more productive work environment. I think that is her call.

Also with your plan operations, consider that we may have servers and data bases on site that have very specific temperature needs. We talked about ceiling fans and open windows, those things typical don't go very well with servers.

Some of the roof space may alter that too. As although we show them as a rectangle here, we are not tied to any footprints of any major design, this could be spread out into two wings or different type of setting.

Has general storage space been evaluated?

We have got some options. I guess we are looking for input if we have enough? I am not sure.

Is there a place for concessions or refreshments; is there some place for this?

No, just the demonstration kitchens, there is really no place. Maybe vending machines in the lobby. Do you think that would be adequate?

I think that for people that are out there for any period time, they will need this.

Unless it is adjacent to some other business.

IS that something that should be inside or something that if we had a porch, maybe something wrapped around that you could maintain a soda out side? That might be a function that could be shared by the demonstration kitchen. I hear a lot of things, it's just like anytime, we if get to bumping up against the window for square footage dollars.

Any place that we can double up and maybe some of that can occur in the demonstration kitchen. Could we have picnic tables? Yes, that is a good point. Even the porch could be large enough to have some tables there. Depending upon which site you end up with, you may not have trees large enough to provide shade.

Returning to the comment about the need for additional or larger storage space, I guess we would be looking for as much input and the specifics to that, if you could get that to Laura or us directly.

Will the character that you want to put into the building, will the upper floor be available for storage?

It could be but, accessibility that would be an issue. The storage that you are talking about is?

General storage, any office you run out of space eventually and just stow things away.

I think when we started out you said a 10 by 10. What size space, your gut feel, what is your first impression?

I wouldn't know how to quantify it but it would be an even bigger space, I would think. If that top area could be utilized.

Let me just clarify storage. In general what we have got in the building right now. We have one ten by ten room that we are titling equipment storage. We have another five by ten room that we call mechanical storage so that is mechanical to the function of the building, filters and whatnot. We also have storage related to the bookstore. So there is another pretty big space. We also have storage related to the office, another ten by ten for office storage. We have it kind of broken down related to the function.

With your mechanical storage, you could put that in the attic, very accessible, just a staircase in the office complex, in the back that is more secure and then you could free you more floor plan space for the actual area that is going to be used.

That is not ADA accessible. The other thing is that may be a sink for the janitor and stuff like that.

There are a number of people here specifically interested in site, so could we move to discuss the site issue and then come back to program issues.

Now to the big blue map, Noel has given us a rough orientation but this map is trying to show. When we came down and drove around the area, got oriented and tried to identify as many potential sites here as we could. What this map shows are these sites located in the region and also overlays the blue area which is the hundred year flood plane. Typically, stay out of the hundred year flood plane. That is not to say that you can't build it in the hundred year flood plane, people do it all the time. It just means there is additional expense, there is additional time and the funding may be slower. So it is not always, I don't want to say it rules them all out but there are a lot of issues. Quickly, this is 49, this is the Cane River, Red River Lake and River, Sibley Lake, and Natchitoches is right here. What we tried to do is identify all these sites and I will run through them real quick. There are essentially four interchanges along 49 that we looked at potentially locating this facility. The interchange at 138, which is Highway 6; Interchange at Waterwell Road at 478 interchange; Interchange 127 at Cypress and the Derry interchange which is 119. Starting at the top, working down, at 6 we looked at one road and what these circle indicate are just general areas. They are not specific to any parcel, roughly just the general areas and we decided to make to help us remember them and give them a descriptive name rather than just say one through ten. The first site at 6 was what we called Oak Grove Road. It is west of Oak Grove Road on the ridge top. Next is south of 6 on LimeKline Road; the third is across from the school at the Bypass One site; the fourth was the hatchery site. Next is the Waterwell Road site and the first site is the partnership site, we call the partnership. It is a site that the LA DOTD is developing right now as a rest stop and the City is interested in developing that as well so it is a partnership. The second site along Waterwell Road is one at the intersection of Highway One. The thinking there is that you are in kind of the feeling of the Cane River valley. Moving on down the line, at Cypress we looked at two sites; one west of the railroad track and one east of the railroad track. Two sites at Derry; one that unfortunately mislabeled and we will correct that on the map. The one that is incorrect is the one that is labeled as the Sheriff's Substation site. The second one is the farmstead site. There is a farmstead there. That might be a potential site there too. Quickly, out of ten sites only three of them aren't in blue. SO that is what we are initially looking at. So that is kind of pushing us towards the three, obviously that are not in the flood plane, but that is why we are here. We are here kind of rechecking that and revalidating that. This third illustration is just the matrix and what this to trying to represent is we presented this in our first meeting and this kind of the methodology that we are going to use to evaluate these sites and we show the idea behind this is that we are going to assign scores, a numerical scores if it is a preferred option. If it is acceptable, it's two and if it has potential for significant restrictions, it's a one. Right now this little black boxes are unacceptable alternatives. It could be done, but there are some real questions. Right now, just as an example, we show flood planes for sites that we know about right now. Just to read these topics off, and I do apologize that you do not have all of this information at your fingertips. The categories that we will be looking at for each of these sites or at least the three sites that we are going to try to narrow down before we leave are: natural resources, protection enhancement, cultural resources, protection enhancement, we are going to look at the visitor experience and enjoyment. Obviously, safety for staff and visitors is going to be something that we look at. We are not going to have people turn blindly onto busy roads

and put themselves at risk and things like that. Efficient park operations are certainly going to play into the equation as well. Transportation, access on transportation routes, visibility, planned road improvements are certain play into the evaluation of some of these sites. Buildable areas, that will play into how much parking, how pick the parking lots will be, how flat the land, how much vegetation we need to take. Set back, easements, things like that. Environmental considerations, we have heard some of those, besides the flood planes, which we all now know about. Wet lands, hazardous wastes, endangered species, and kind of the typical stud we deal with: Cultural resources and landscapes. Some unusual ones, that a lot of people may have not heard about, certainly apply is night sky, light pollution is becoming a real issue, unfortunately, I think that Missouri, where we are from, when you drive in some rural parts, the sky lights up because there are so many billboards. Unfortunately we can't control them there as much as we can here in Louisiana. Air quality is obviously an issue. Utilities at the site we serve, is that going to be a real impact to actually have to run utilities to these sites. In some cases, maybe someone else is running utilities there or almost there for us, like in the partnership site. So that will kind of tip the scale a little bit maybe to that site, maybe not. Local community issues related to zoning adjacent lands use was an issue we talked about. That will again figure into the equation. Community economic considerations, potential availability of purchase, that is a key one. Some sites, there might not be a willing selling and that is not going to invoke emanate domain so we can have a visitor center. It has to be a willing seller; otherwise, it is not going to happen and in some of these we talked about costs but there are cost implication from acquisition, utilities, park operations. If we locate our facility here, people are constantly going here. We have a real parks operations issue that we need to evaluate, maybe that becomes a significant factor. It is not as easy unfortunately as if it's in the blue area its out, if it's not its good. We still have quiet a bit work to do but you can see we are weeding out, moving to the top, continuing to gather input and that is where we are at.

Any input on sites, we are all ears.

As was mentioned earlier, was site context in the surrounding areas, I know that is actually listed on your visitor experience and enjoyment where we have got surrounding context. That is one of the very specific elements that I agree with you that is important to consider. Unless you own it, you can't control it.

The Waterwell and I-49 sites and 478 sites, that one concerns with the environmental commissions and the local community, the city is in the process of evaluating the land for the corridor, in fact we have finished up. *Juanita Fowlers conversation was not audible. Too much back ground noise.*

This could be very useful information in the park's services review of the alternative sites. I think the more they learn about that, the better informed, the better the decision. What is your time frame on that? In the next six months. We want to have a presentation hopefully that we can move forward with a public hearing.

Juanita please make sure that the park and the Heritage are involved. They would really love to be involved in that whole process. Keep us informed of any meetings and

anything else that we can do to share information. I think that it is critical that we all work towards the same goal.

Laura would it be helpful, if in the chain of communication, that Juanita goes to you and then it comes to us and that way you have the loop, if you are in the loop, we are always in the loop.

We definitely will. Once we start communicating with the public, everyone will be made well aware.

You had a question – I noticed that most of your possible sites are on I-49. Do you have any data on what percentage of the traffic might be impulse visitors? My impression that those people on I-49 are going like a bat out of hell. I don't think that too many of them will say "Oh there's a visitor center, I am going to stop there" on an impulse. I would think that most of the people that coming on a vacation that know they want to come here, so that would lend itself to the visitor center being closer to where they are going to be.

Does the tourist commission have any numbers on that? As far as the numbers on I-49, no. LaMar, the billboard people track this. The latest figures that they gave me are probably five years outdated.

You are right about the people zooming by, if people aren't interested in stopping at a visitor center, because they know what that concept is, this is where signage and pulling people into a historical area. We have National Historical Park on there and Cane River, typically that will slow people down, peak there interest more than and I think that will make a difference on the people. And you would be surprised how many impulse people we have coming down I-49 who might just stop at the historic district or the bed and breakfast. I think once they get the correct signage up there that says National Park, Heritage Area that we are going to have more, that is going to stop people.

If it gets off the beaten path, you are not going to get the impulse stops, period. It kinds of relates back to the purposes of the visitor center. I think that one of them is to give an overview of the area and to create some interest in the area of the people that are on that corridor. Probably one of the other reasons that more of these are located above here now is when we started this, I think that in our direction that they were generally looking at these four interchanges and options close to those. In the general management plan for the both the Park and the Heritage Area, there is wording that the intent is to not disturb or to put something right close to the resources. I think that was a specific direction that had been given in the management plan. That is one of the reasons we haven't looked at the other sites right along the river.

The feeling on that is that there is enough development going on along Cane River without the National Parks Service contributing to additional development when we have other places that we can develop.

Your comment is good and well taken and I think it has a lot to do with the context of what the quality and the experience of the facility that the individual has in going to it. I think that is very important, because if it is just a rest stop along the highway.

There is not going to be anymore signage put up in the area of Highway 6, so there is not going to be a nice sign saying Historical Area. It is already at capacity for signs that they allow, coming north or south. There are a lot of sign there.

They allow two entities to be signed and they are Northwestern and Toledo Bend. That is one going each direction and so they will not consider changing that. That is why the National Landmark District is not signed on the Interstate.

Is Highway 6 already congested enough?

I think we would like to hear you if you.

I do, for something like this.

I think I would hate to see it off Highway 6 at the interchange.

How many tourists come to Natchitoches ever year?

I have gathered everything that I can possible gather, there is, I know how comes into my office, we have guesstimates about who comes to Melrose, Oakland and the various things, we guess that during the month of December, a half a million people come through this community, but there is no way of pin pointing exactly those numbers. Over the course of the year, we know how many people visit various attractions.

What I am getting at is that it is a big number. I am wondering how you plan to bring some of these folks, a half a million people coming in one month, how do you bring those down into the Heritage Area? Maybe attracting folks coming off the Interstate, that is a small portion compared to the half a million. And so I am wondering how we would plan and take into account these folks that are already coming here and how you might send them down the river?

I think that the ultimate tie into the not only the personnel but the signage program that the Heritage is putting together, the site will bring people into the area that we want them to be. That is the whole purpose once you get all of these elements together, it's going to work and pull people into the Historic District and the Heritage Area.

That is a very good point. The center itself will pull people who are planning a vacation and they want to go and do research and they want to visit the visitors center. If we are looking for impulse people or people going down the I-49 corridor, there has got to be something that is going to pull them. Everyone that I have ever talked to that is traveling back and forth, the Highway 6, I-49 corridor is extremely unfriendly. People don't like to get off. It doesn't allow them to do what they have to do i.e. have a potty break and get some food and get back on I-49. Most of the people that I have talked to, they want something that is further down 49. IF they are going to New Orleans or Baton Rouge, they generally want to a food establishment. We might want to look at if there might be some commercial development that is going to occur along 49, in proximity to some of those places and see if we can't get a good spot somewhere there.

Your anecdotal evidence is that Highway 6 is too congested and people typically use that and you would also think that there would be a good relationship to having some of the commercial establishments close to the visitor center.

That what gets people off at Highway 6.

Do those people travel by car a lot of places? Stopping at visitor centers or welcome centers? Having them next to retail establishment or fast food places, we normally don't stop there. Most states where you travel, if they have visitor centers, there by themselves. People pull off, stop and find out what they want to do, use the restroom and any food available there, whether it is vending machines or whatever, then they get back on and go. I like having the food there, but if you start building up a lot around it, you're losing some of those people who are going to stop.

The best thing to do is to be at a site where the tour can initiate that contact with the driver with signage so that they will know this is where things are coming up and so they will be interested in pulling off because people who are interested in historic sites and districts, and plantations and stuff, they know what they are looking for. They are interested in those things and if they had that signage before they got to that, it would allow, there wouldn't be a problem, because you already interested them. They know where to pull off.

If they get off at say the Partnership site, they may be other signage alluding to retail establishments a little further down the way or you will be able to find out about retail establishments at the visitor center.

I don't even know where that intersection is and so I am going down the highway and I need gas or if I had a choice in getting gas or going to the historic site, I would probably have to go to the other exit.

Waterwell Road to Highway 6 is four to five miles. So, if I am a traveler, tourist, I don't want to go to a visitor center that is surrounded by McDonald's but if I have to fill the gas tank, I can go there from that and but I think it is important. I wouldn't put it on Highway 6, it's unfriendly. It is not the area that we want for our Heritage Area but they do have gas stations and some development around the Waterwell Road area. I would hate to see us put the visitor center and then have McDonald's and Burger King surrounding us.

If the City is successful, which we expect to be, in creating a master plan for 478 corridor, we are going to distinguish what kinds of uses we would want to develop in that area. Define other more appropriate areas for the commercial uses. That would be our controlling point. We would have some height restrictions, light restrictions, buffer zones and everything that would go into developing a master plan for the area.

How many of us have been fooled when we are driving up the interstate, we think what we see is the moon and it is the Burger King sign. Another thing to keep in mind is the

darkest place in Louisiana is the Kisatchie District and I think it is incumbent for all of us to work with lighting that is appropriate that only points down, that points to what we need and to keep this area dark. We have a number of visitors that come here specifically for that reason. We have astronomers from the entire southeast who come here to watch things like meteor showers. That is something that we need to capitalize upon and also as we build, build upon that concept.

Does the corridor study go all the way down to Highway 1?

We are looking at proposing a plan for the entire corridor. Certainly we will take into consideration the entire stretch.

As you are coming down the hill and into the flood plane, the character along there with the open fields sure is nice to communicate the cultural heritage of the area. I would have to see that build up.

That is what we want to get ahead of.

Other comments? What do you think about, most of the sites that are in blue are flat sites, that are more traditionally, at least in my brief exposure over the years to Cane River exhibit that where the other sites are up in the hills and more of the wood lands. Thoughts on that? Any comments?

Coming down out of the hills as I do every day, it is kind of neat to enter a new space. If you have visitor center that is coming and is going to be seen in this space that you come down and you come down into the river flood plane. It is kind of a neat experience; entering from I-49 going into a new place.

So it's OK. I think that driving along Waterwell Road; you can really get that feeling too.

What concept is the visitor center, a raised Creole cottage design?

Yes, but design is not so important now. You can't have a raised Creole parking lot now. As far as the flood plane management goes, at the Cypress area there are additional concerns with flood lands that would be a problem as far as zoning. Highway 120 there is a flood way gap that is a pretty good margin. That is where if you look over towards the west on 120 about five times a year, they will have signs up for the road being closed; under water.

Any thoughts on how the sites selection works with the function for the different people that are here, that either from the Parks Service or the Heritage Area, the Creole Center of how the sites would affect the functioning of your operations?

I think if you put in the Derry area, people would stop there first and stay in Natchitoches overnight.

From an administrative stand point which is, it would be very difficult to run the office as a whole out of Derry when all of you are located in town.

I could from the Parks area, but we do so much work with the Heritage Area and with the university and with other groups in town it is handy for us to be closer to town but it is

not critical because I have a unit to the south with Magnolia Plantation and a unit right in the middle which is Oakland.

From the Creole Center point of view, we have people down in Derry right now and it does not work well because they are so far away from the office. Telephone and computer access are not functional. I think if it were closer to Natchitoches, it would be better for all.

The Waterwell Road site, I use the analogy, you can either watch the weather channel or you can go look out the window. Waterwell Road you have easy access pretty much all directions for the actual heritage we're trying to interpret in the center. You are not too far from Natchitoches, you easy access directly to the plantations and to the downtown Natchitoches.

It seems to me that the visitors currently visit plantations is a 100 percent of visitors start at Natchitoches and then come down Highway 119 and end up at Derry. So it seems to be a southward travel movement. So if the visitor center is in Natchitoches, at the partnership site the visitor would have to go back over to Highway 199 to get back. We are hoping that they will stop at the site before they come in to town to get their information. A lot of people who have planned a trip here would do that but isn't that the whole purpose, Nancy of all this signage that we are doing, that it will alleviate a lot of these questions about how people go? I think that's what the signage program is all about.

Being from a visitor, imagining coming here with me and my wife, you really have two choices, you can spend the day in Natchitoches and do a lot or you can spend the day down here. There is not enough time in the day to do both. This kind of set you up.

OK, I want lunch and gas and the historic sites, I would have to make a call there to go one way or the other.

I think in one day that you can go up here and then come down as long as you don't goof off here! HA! HA!

Once the Heritage Area is open and the Parks Service can size it up, we can talk some of the other plantations into opening up a little bit earlier. The Kate Chopin House, people come into town at 10:00 am they can go down river, visit a couple, come to town and eat lunch and do what they want to do the rest of the day or maybe go back.

I don't think that Derry is the best place in the world. The Kate Chopin House, I've probably get more people just driving through, see Kate Chopin and immediately decide to see the house. I think it should be.

Are there any sites, any other locations that we think we are missing?

One of the things that I would like to mention, that one of the next phases of this is to work an intense, about a day and a half workshop, possibly two full day workshop in this

next process which is choosing by advantages. It is a method to help you make a decision and it includes drafting up factors, weighing those factors, putting it all through a matrix and then seeing how it all comes out in the end. We are looking for people who want to set aside that time. It will be during the work week, to work specifically on this process. We would like stakeholders from the business community. We would like stakeholders from tourism, we'd like stakeholders from the Heritage Area commission, but you must commit to at the very least a day and a half. We might be able to make it a day if people catch on really quickly. We are looking for people to go through this process with us. It's not painful, but time consuming. It is a lot of fun actually.

You are talking about the next meeting, we are actually going to look at these sites and do the little grid over here. I think there are some that can be eliminated right now. Why should we have to go through all?

We probably will. We are trying to get it down to three sites.

It will not be for all the dots on this map, but it is for probably three potential locations. There are some dots we have to go through.

Can we just skip that process and have a show of hands today and go ahead and step to the next process? (Laughter)

Are we ready to look at three sites?

We are interested in you comments on three. That is what we are here for today, for suggestions on what three we would be looking at.

I think the partnership site, the top of the list. I think that I have ruled out 6 as being a good site. I would say that the Highway 1, Waterwell Road site is a possibility, although it is in the flood plane. Those two are what I would consider to be on the top of my list at this time.

How long of a line between the one there at I-49 and
What is that?

Commercial construction in that area already?

It is being developed.

It is pretty much outside the city limits. The majority of that, the corridor itself, is what we are trying to develop.

Do we have to come up with three sites? I mean if the flood plane is out, that leaves you with three. And if Highway 6 is out, that leaves with one.

Waterwell Road, where would the center be? Highway 49?

It is just a little bit in from 49. I think they are talking about some of the possible land, that I recall used to be part of the school property. We don't have a specific ten acres picked. We are trying to get it down to some areas.

I have been down Waterwell Road several times, and that is not my idea of approaching a national park.

The state is going to come in and complete the road.

The state is going to do that? That would make a lot of difference.

Congressman McCrery is in the process of getting the finalization on the funding.

I don't trust the state.

I can appreciate everyone wanting to expedite the process but I want to advocate for the CVA process., particularly because you don't want to chose one site and then start evaluating it and you find that Oh my goodness, we have missed this one thing. It throws you all the way back to the beginning of the process. So I would advocate picking through the three sites. Pick two that are non-flood plane, one that you really like that is in the flood plane. It is not a very painful process, but it is a necessary process.

Would you like to join us in that process? We would love to have you.

Those three sites would have signage. Not at the intersection. Not on I-49. The Highway Department says we can't do it.

What you are thinking is two that are not in the flood plane, I only see one.

478

But to me what this means that you can't have a site, signage at I49.

I would like to ask, can you put signage, Nancy, you know like say a mile away.

No.

Each exit can have a certain amount of signs, south and north of it.

That's not to say we couldn't rent a billboard to approach Highway 6.

We have Lamar advertising pretty much with a monopoly.

At Waterwell, we can't add anymore signs, except like a billboard.

Billboards you could probably have, but the thing is would we really be looking for a DOTD entrance, federal entrance, this is not an advertisement. This is how we are getting to this site. I just don't think that takes the place of an official sign that says "You are entering"

I think that you should select the location on what is the best location on what is best for the park, but it is hard to imagine that a National Park Visitor Center would be located say on a states signage rule. I have seen a lot go on, but I have never heard of the National Park Service Visitor Center being located because of the state highway rules.

Those are not federal signage rules. If you had to go meet with the governor, I would say to go. I can't believe that.

The National Parks and National Heritage Area and the Heritage Area is a much larger deal than the National Park is. We are the anchor to the Heritage Area. But at the same time the Heritage Area is huge.

Since I think we need to throw something undesirable back into the mix, one thing about Derry it is on that path. Visitors are making a one way route, I mean there are a lot of things against Derry, but it is a convenient way that will take them both past the historic sites and to Natchitoches. And it won't lead them out of the way.

Except coming from the north, they have already missed Natchitoches. To look at this from all kinds of different angles, why not look at one to the south, one kind of in the

middle somewhere and one to the north. How about Highway 6, Waterwell Road and Derry as the possibilities.

Which Highway 6?

At I-49.

It could be put at LimeKline Road and not right in the middle of the restaurants and all of that stuff right at the interchange.

Or we could look at four sites? The one at Highway 6 might be enough, but then again it might not. This is the public comment period.

Highway 6 right at the Interstate is so batched up that I wouldn't think we would want an inviting visitor area there. LimeKline Road you can get off of it and its up and you can kind of look at more scenic.

That is a great point and we have thought about that. One of the other things when we went up there today actually, reconfirmed our notions. The funny thing is that when you are up there on that site, you don't see, all you really see are a few signs, travel lodge, but you don't see the gas pumps and the McDonald's play land. It's low. You don't see the interstate because you are high and the interstate is really low. Once you get off that road, it's not that bad of a site. It has some old trees. It does have some potential. It has some character.

I-49 and 478 interchange has with the plan with the DOTD has for the rest center; they are going to come in and do a lot of the work so you can access. As far as creating an atmosphere of euphony on the interstate and looking for something more especially scenic rather than just concrete. A lot of that will be done for us.

But if we need three sites, LimeKline Road could be number 3.

Sure.

But you were saying that the Highway 6 interchange, the one that is not really on the interchange, the one that you were describing,

Sounds ghastly when you talk about it but when you go up an experience it, it's not that bad.

I guess the one thing about that site, is that you know there is only one side of your property that you have new development coming. DOTD owns significant land from 6 over to that site. The highway is there, the roads on to the east is there and only to the north would there be more development. LimeKline, I am not sure what the development around there will be. You will be developed on four sides on that site in the long term.

Also, if I understand if it is not in the city limits, your controls over that are even less. The parish controls that. The parish does have comprehensive zoning but certainly not on the scale of the city.

The city planning commission needs to be involved and share what the city has done so far with the plans for 478. We have some concepts and ideas that are already in the making.

So, Derry, Waterwell Road, and two at Highway 6.

As part of the choosing by advantages, I suggest that we go out and just walk over the sites to get a better feel for what we are actually looking for.

That might be part of the two day workshop.

I bet that it could get done in a day. I think there are some very big issues I think that you could do one quarter of the day as a walk of the site and three quarters of the day to make some decisions.

This is kind of simple but would the sign be a typical green and white sign or would it be a brown like a commemorative site sign?

The entrance to the visitor center will be brown.

Everyone will stop. It will be used about as much as our one public restroom. It is not always pleasant. So something like this would be one step up anyway.

I think that there is a rest stop in Western Colorado, they have combined the two. There is some kind of a historic site. They have a rest stop and right below that they have a small ruins site. They put up their own signs but it is the same color and shape as the highway signs directing you to the museum and air force academy.

Any other thoughts, inputs?

Have there been any consideration of the sites inside Natchitoches city limits?

One of the reasons that was eliminated is because that is considered one of the resources that we don't want to impact from a historical stand point.

But five hundred thousand people come in December, so how many do you expect to go to the Heritage center? It might be minimal.

But most of the people are coming on the interstate anyway.

Eliminators was the downtown historic district, because it is a national historic landmark district. We were concerned that buses and additional traffic would contribute to an already difficult situation where traffic is already complicated. That is why in the initial planning for the Park and Heritage Area was eliminated. We took care of that real early.

That doesn't mean the rest of Natchitoches was ruled out.

I think that we will draw on those visitors that remember the center itself will get marketed by the other events that happen within Natchitoches proper. And vice versa, the center is the gateway.

When people come in on Waterwell Road, then they have a choice, they get directed into Natchitoches, how would they approach Natchitoches? On the Strip?

On Highway One. A north turn or a south turn once you get to Highway One. The major has taken step in renaming that entry to South Drive versus Highway One South.

Would that also enhance Rapides Drive?

Yes. It is in the plan.

The state is going to make Waterwell Road, a verbal description of it, it that it will be three lanes in places, two in others. But they had talked about planting along it and controlled signage. I think that would be an important consideration to the site context to the National Park and what that character would be.

Presuming that is true, the rezoning of Highway 6 didn't work. Development proceeded planning for the interstate.

Waterwell Road will be annexed into the City limits.

I think in order to get from there to 119. I just see that the pattern would be a little, take you up this way. It depends on the time of day. When you get off at Natchez, you are at Cherokee, Beau Fort, and Oakland.

Just like many other choices that are made in National Parks, people come in a go "I've got half an hour, show me what I need to see". Or we have all day and I want to tour. So there are some decisions made right there about what people are going to do and where they are going to go.

I just think that now visitors come, they want that natural flow. What order should they do things in? And I anticipate not just where the sites are but the flow of where they will be directed.

When visitors come in and see this map, they don't know what is going on.

Signage will tell them.

I just want to make sure that our visitor center goes in a place that keeps things simple for them.

You would go off from I-49, straight, when you got to the end you would either turn right which will you into the plantation area or turn left into Natchitoches. It's simple.

Once you got to Natchitoches, then you drive around and hope you don't take the wrong road that leads you on the wrong side of Cane River.

That's what the visitor center does; they have a map with a complete plan. That's what they do.

OK, that's good. As a new person to adjust here, there is a lot time spent on Jefferson Street.

I agree that the signage is a good thing but I also think that we need to be careful about where we are routing people that the route works.

We need a couple of more bridges over Cane River, but that is not going to happen either, right?

Any other comments, thoughts, input?

We sure have appreciated everyone taking your time and providing us your input. Laura, would you like to wrap up.

Thank you all very much for coming out. We really appreciate it and for those interested in participating in the choosing by advantages session, please contact me. Most of you know my phone number, if you don't it is 352-0383. Congratulations again to the Heritage Area Management Plan. We are all so proud! I know that our director worked so hard on that. We all did but she really put her heart into it as did our lead planner in Denver. Thanks you guys and we will see you again shortly. I will keep you posted on our next meeting to discuss this and we'll all keep going through this process. Thank you. Kurt.

I just wanted to thank the team for a very professional presentation today.

Design begins on interstate rest area, park

*Water Well Road
upgrade will result*

A rest area at the intersection of Interstate 49 and Waterwell Road moved one step closer to reality last week. The Department of Transportation and Development gave authority for their design team to start the final design. Natchitoches Mayor Wayne McCullen reported. Once the design is complete, it will go to the state for final approval.

McCullen hopes the process will result in construction later this year.

The \$6 million project is just the beginning. The city is working with other entities such as the Cane River Creole National Historic Park, the Cane River Heritage Area and the Louisiana Creole Heritage Center at Northwestern State University for an interpretive area at the site, McCullen said. The national park service is already evaluating the interpretive area.

There is also a chance of bringing other federal agencies into the mix such as the

Forestry Service in one complex, McCullen added.

The land for the site has not been purchased, but McCullen said there are several options in place, including an option to buy land from the Natchitoches Parish School Board. The land would probably be purchased by the city, McCullen explained, with reimbursement from the state at a later date.

Future plans for the rest area include damming a creek to make a pond and RV parking areas.

Plans are also in the works to upgrade Water Well Road, McCullen said. Congressman Jim McCrory has put the project in the appropriations bill which would improve the dirt road to a two-lane improved highway with shoulders. Original plans were for a four-lane, but the parks service liked the look of the area and felt the two-lane road would be a nice approach to their site, McCullen explained.

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Welcome center meeting set

Development of a visitor center for the Cane River Creole National Historical Park and Cane River National Heritage Area will be the focus of a meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 21 from 1-3 p.m. at the Natchitoches Area Center on Second Street.

The public can meet with the planning team to express their views on such topics as where the center should be located and what it should look like.