**Governor’s Tourism Advisory Board Minutes**

September 9 and 10, 2015

Rapid City, South Dakota

**Wednesday, September 9**

**Holiday Inn Rushmore Plaza**

Board Present:

Stan Anderson

John Brockelsby

Ted Hustead

George Kessler

Julie Ranum

Frank Smith

Carmen Schramm

Ivan Sorbel

Kristi Wagner

Board Absent:

Jim Entenman

Jim Schade

Staff Present: Others:

Jim Hagen Michelle Thomson, Black Hills & Badlands Tourism

Wanda Goodman Mike Gussiaas, Black Hills & Badlands Tourism

Harla Jessop Gwyn Wathen, Black Hills & Badlands Tourism

Kirk Hulstein Jackie Kusser, Black Hills & Badlands Tourism

Thad Friedeman Rosie Smith, Glacial Lakes & Prairies Tourism

Maureen Droz Jacquie Fuks, Southeast SD Tourism

Natasha Bothun Julie Schmitz-Jensen, Rapid City CVB

Katlyn Richter Scott Lawrence, L&S

Ann DeVany Melody Morton, L&S

Nate Johnson Erin Weintzettle, L&S

Elijah Bonde Mike Pflaum, Badlands National Park

Arline Hammer Eric Leonard, Minuteman Missile NHS

Vidal Davila, Wind Cave National Park

Reed Robinson, NPS Midwest Office of Indian Affairs

Marvin Achtenberg, Jewel Cave National Monument

Charlie Desmond, NPS Centennial Coordinator

Diana Saathoff, Mount Rushmore Society

Debbie Kettel, Mount Rushmore Society

Lee Harstad, Deadwood Chamber & Visitors Bureau

President Julie Ranum called the meeting to order. She thanked Diana Saathoff with the Mount Rushmore National Memorial Society and Marty LaMontagne with Xanterra Parks & Recreation at Mount Rushmore National Memorial for the reception and dinner at Carvers Café.

**Welcome**

President Ranum introduced Julie Schmitz-Jensen, executive director of Rapid City CVB, who welcomed the group and reviewed the evening’s activities. Julie also thanked Tourism staff who attends travel shows to promote the state – staff is well-respected at shows and other meetings out-of-state. Rapid City CVB’s partnerships with Tourism have been great. She presented a video of Rapid City that they use online and at all travel shows – well done!

**Tourism Board Business Updates**

Ivan Sorbel, Pine Ridge Chamber of Commerce, Kyle, said the season started out slowly with a late snow storm and rain in May. Some areas were down 25% for a while. In August, they saw more motorcycles than ever before. The Chamber had a booth at Black Hills Harley-Davidson during the Rally. September 11 is the final outdoor powwow; all have been well attended.

Kristi Wagner, Rushmore Center for Civic Leadership, Whitewood, reported that she contacted a few smaller communities in the Black Hills. All of them reported that tax revenue was up for the summer. Her focus continues to be meeting with smaller communities about tourism.

Frank Smith, Bob’s Resort, Gettysburg, said fishing has been some of the best ever. The wet and cool year has extended the season into August. Both Kelly Hepler and Doug Hofer from the Department of Game, Fish & Parks (GF&P) say everything is in place for great fishing over the next few years. Small mouth fishing has been good and great for kids; three pounds and above are being caught; and he feels it is not promoted enough. Some people are coming to his business just to fish the small mouth. The state record for salmon was broken at 24 pounds/8 ounces, and this will probably be broken yet this fall. The outlook for pheasant hunting shows the count is up 34% with the biggest increase is the Missouri River corridor.

Carmen Schramm, Yankton Chamber of Commerce, reported that the World Archery Tournament brought 540 archers from 51 countries and 400 spectators. It was a 10-day tournament and some stayed longer. They are two years closer to becoming an Olympic Village. The Chamber plans to bid the 2018 (adult), 2019, and 2020 tournaments. Their Rock & Rumble event drew 200 bikers; the Chamber will change this to a 2-day event in 2016. Parks are 6% ahead with camping, etc. It is a busy time for GF&P conservation officers as they are seeing an infestation of zebra mussels. The Missouri River National Recreation River has launched a membership drive. Onward Yankton plans to choose the big idea award winner in two weeks; she hopes to make all six finalists’ ideas happen over the next few years.

Ted Hustead, Wall, said they were ready with helicopters, EMTs, etc. for the Rally-goers. It might turn out to be bigger than the 60th. They are seeing a lot of people from Pennsylvania. Business at the DQ was up 34% and Wall Drug is up 11%. One gas station pumped the most in one day than ever before on one day of the Rally. It has been a great summer. With the extra rain in May and June, they’ve experienced some of the most beautiful scenery ever.

John Brockelsby, Reptile Gardens, Rapid City, reported every month has been up. If you had a business in the Black Hills, it has been one of the best summers ever.

George Kessler, Big Shot Pheasant Fields, Mina, reported a fantastic year. Minnesota boaters have never been more prolific and they keep telling other fishermen. Attendance at the Brown County Fair was the most ever. In the State-of-the-State, let locals know how good the economy is – get them excited about local dollars.

Stan Anderson, Wall, said Wall’s sales tax revenues are the best ever.

Julie Ranum, Redlin Art Center, Watertown, reported that Watertown’s numbers are up; they saw a lot of bikers. They currently have 400 entries in the Antique Cars event; this committee is open to expanding the event to draw more people. Terry Redlin’s first original painting is coming home.

Jim Entenman, J&L Harley-Davidson, Sioux Falls, prepared a report as he was not able to attend. Hot Harley Nights had registrants from 13 states, three countries, and 84 South Dakota cities. Approximately $175,000 was raised for Make-A-Wish South Dakota; in-kind donations brought the total to $425,000. Visitors heading to Sturgis came from Australia, Belarus, China, Denmark, Germany, Italy, North Holland, Norway, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Sweden, Philippines, Samoan Islands, and Vanuatu.

**Regional Directors’ Business Reports**

Rosie Smith, Glacial Lakes & Prairies, Watertown, handed out a report that showed an increase in membership, travel show co-op query to members, regional marketing grant applications, annual meeting is October 23, travel writers, website visits, and summer and fall marketing.

Jacquie Fuks, Southeast SD, Yankton, handed out her report that included a list of cities that have new hotels, Lewis & Clark Recreation Area has outstanding numbers so far, they are anticipating a great hunting season, regional marketing grants are available, visitor requests are up 74% over 2014, and a chart on traffic by device with the desktop at 48%.

Michelle Thomson, Black Hills & Badlands, Rapid City, reviewed her handout showing that Mother Nature was on their side this summer as their “Black Hills tourism Index” report shows an overall increase of 8.48% in national park visits, hotel occupancy, taxable sales (from SD Retailers), and the Deadwood handle. Year-to-date website visits are up 21%.

Karen Kern, SD Missouri River, as reported by Frank Smith: Gettysburg Economic Development office and the Chamber are working with SD Missouri River to develop tourism plans; another meeting is planned for later this fall. Karen also prepared a handout – the Oahe Visitor Center visitation was up 15% at the end of June. The Corps of Engineers is doing maintenance and upkeep on the Center. Visitors sign up for the Power House dam tours at the Visitor Center. SD Missouri River facilitated at planning session with the Fort Pierre Tourism Bid Board.

**Secretary’s Report**

Thanks to all the South Dakota tourism partners – this has been one of our best summers ever and increased partner marketing has been key.

Secretary Hagen reviewed the revenue charts that show an overall increase in revenue from the Tourism Tax and Deadwood gaming of 10.7% over the same period in FY2015. Budget projection for FY2016 may change upward.

Handouts on pheasant numbers and Tourism’s Rooster Rush campaign are in the packets.

Secretary Hagen plans to hold regional marketing meetings in each region the end of October to set up 2016 marketing. He wants to build on these meetings at the Tourism Conference.

There are no legislative issues at this time.

He has heard great comments from visitors about the Rally; economic impact numbers are still coming in. The packet includes a handout with observations ranging from T-shirt slogans about super powers and wildlife to well-behaved bikers.

Tourism will again be hosting domestic and international journalists prior to and during the 50th Anniversary of the Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup.

He has been working with Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade personnel on the 2015 Parade.

The packet includes a press release and photo of the South Dakota float in the Rose Parade. There are several PR opportunities offered by the Parade committee, including an opportunity with the Presidential Mascots. Tourism will continue to develop their plans.

The January Tourism Board meeting will include election of officers and the Tourism Conference briefing and Board duties during the Conference.

**Brand USA**

Deputy Secretary Wanda Goodman reviewed the history and current campaigns with Brand USA. From the first promotions in 2010, the organization has grown from 50 partners to 500. There will be four versions of the 2016 Inspiration Guide, depending upon which country where it will be distributed: United Kingdom, Germany, and China. A Brand USA film crew was in the Black Hills area in this summer.

**National Park Units**

Mike Pflaum, Superintendent of Badlands National Park, said he is pleased to be back in South Dakota. He briefed the group on the Environmental Assessment to consider expanding bison in the North Unit – Sage Creek Basin in the Badlands. The Assessment is kicking off, but it will be one year before discussion begins; and it does not mean expansion into the South Unit.

They have a Paleontology program and a lab. Badlands has formed a partnership with the University of Texas; students are architects of cultural lands and they will be in the Cedar Pass area. They will make recommendations on ways to blend history and culture.

The Badlands staff plans to focus on relationships with Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Their Night Sky program is very popular – two nights ago they had thunderstorms, stars, and northern lights! Their concessionaire, Forever Resorts, has built new cabins.

Badlands will continue developing activities, etc., for the celebration of all parks – even city parks in 2016. The final NPS Centennial celebration is August 25, 2016.

Reed Robinson, Manager of the NPS Midwest Region Office of Indian Affairs, is in a newly-created office. His NPS background includes the Deputy Superintendent at Badlands National Park. Reed’s goal is to bring the 50+ tribes in the Midwest region together for conversations about preservation efforts – the twist is that the lands are basically theirs – and working with the tribes to figure out positive ways the NPS interacts with tribes. On one side, we can’t be stuck in the past, but the past has to be honored. He is in the position to break down barriers, understand culture, and step past traditional comfort levels in talking/having conversations with each other. And basic to the discussions are providing safe roads. The White River Visitor Center is in very poor condition. Reed is an enrolled member of the Rosebud. He basically needs to create the position and strategies to accomplish his goals. He will also be able to set his priorities.

Eric Leonard, Superintendent of Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, has been in his position for seven months. He stepped into a NPS unit with a new Visitor Center. He and his team have created temporary photographic exhibits of the sites; permanent exhibits are being developed. The Minuteman will begin starting a reservations system and a fee. They are looking at visitation of more than 100,000 a year even though they are limited by the small number of people they can accommodate on each tour. A grand opening is planned in 2016 when the permanent exhibits are in place.

Charlie Desmond, Mount Rushmore Centennial Coordinator, is reporting for Superintendent Cheryl Schreier and the Centennial. He said the Memorial has passed the three million annual visitation mark. The Youth Exploration Center was completed in June. They had two to three teepees at Heritage Village near the Information Center this summer.

The kick-off of the NPS Centennial was April 2, 2015, in New York City’s Times Square. The anniversary will be celebrated on August 25, 2016. He mentioned the “Share Your Story” on the “Find Your Park” website. On September 1, they had the official kick-off that focused on 4th graders by offering free park passes to 4th graders and their families. He hopes this continues for 10 – 12 years. He also reminded everyone of the Senior Pass.

Charlie talked about Custer’s city board; one of their programs chooses people who’ve been accomplished; and they assign 4th and 5th graders to interview these people. They write a song about the accomplishments/people and have an annual concert in May. This year, Custer’s students included the five national parks and 4th, 5th, and 12th graders will conduct the interviews for 2016.

October 31, 2016, is the 75th anniversary of Mount Rushmore. They have been working to get celebrities to Mount Rushmore. He feels the Amphitheater is underused, so he is trying to get people and groups to schedule throughout the day/special evenings. He plans to coordinate efforts between the NPS units in the state for the Centennial.

Marvin Achtenberg, Acting Chief of Interpretation at Jewel Cave National Monument, said they may change closing days to Mondays and Tuesdays. Projects include a new parking lot and bringing back the reservations system, but they will still have walk-in tickets available. Plans include adding onto the visitor center and more book store space to be completed by February. They hope to have a superintendent appointed soon.

Vidal Davila, Superintendent of Wind Cave National Park, reported that they have 100,000 cave visitors a year and 500,000 in a different category. The cave is 54 degrees year-round and the cave is famous for the boxwork formations with 90% of the world’s known boxwork. There are 30 cave tours daily. Cave explorers have surveyed 144 miles of passages and it is known as the 6th longest cave in the world. The park has 30 miles of hiking trails above ground.

Explorations of a new cave by the University of Tennessee have revealed camel teeth and several small bones – all ice age mammals in a cave that is 150 feet long and only two feet high, so far. The newest land purchase (Casey Ranch) usage is open for public comment.

Visitation in June was up 11.5%, up 2.6% in July, and 2.8% in August – rain is good for business. The “Friends of Wind Cave” group has purchased an acrylic buffalo which has been used in parades and promotions to 4th grade groups. They organize a solar challenge for cars, and they are working on a video contest for the “Find Your Park” campaign. More information is on Facebook.

**Marketing**

2015 shoulder campaign includes TV spot for Great 8; magazine and newspaper ads; strip ads in newspapers in Colorado, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Wisconsin; and hunting campaign with a Benny Spies sponsorship, Pheasants Forever, Pheasant Fest – Dog-of-the-Day and partner booths, Rooster Rush, and late season pheasant hunting print ads with snow. Spearfish, Watertown, Rapid City (own ad agency), Custer State Park, and Deadwood also have campaigns.

For 2016, audiences are bucket listers, young families, and active couples. Tourism is still working on media and creative. The theme will continue with “This is my Great Place.” The campaign will include a state-of-mind as well as physical place for “My Great Place.” A new Inspiration Guide may include culinary highlights. Secretary Hagen hopes to work with each region to possibly develop their own Great 8 and he may take it to the city level.

Digital highlights still include emails to targeted audiences and acts as a lead generation from various campaigns.

**Social Media**

Katlyn Richter briefed the group on social media highlights: Tourism will continue to use the mascots as they help with great postings on social media.

The summer Great 8 contest/promotion lasted for eight weeks and generated 10,200 entries via Facebook; eight winners were chosen. The purpose was to drive engagement rather than “likes.” New social plans include more giveaways. Another contest may be postings for “Wildlife Wednesday.” Tourism had vinyl stickers made for the Great 8 campaign. We hope to have stickers available for each Great 8 next year at the Information Centers.

Team hosted an Influencer Fam for five social media writers; they posted stories and Tourism gained access to their photos.

Tourism participated in Travel Massive (group of writers) and Travel Media Showcase, which was like travel writer speed dating.

Meeting was adjourned for a tour of Reptile Gardens.

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George Kessler Jim Schade

Julie Ranum

Frank Smith

Carmen Schramm

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Kristi Wagner

Staff Present: Others:

Jim Hagen Michelle Thomson, Black Hills & Badlands Tourism

Wanda Goodman Rosie Smith, Glacial Lakes & Prairies Tourism

Harla Jessop Julie Schmitz-Jensen, Rapid City CVB

Kirk Hulstein Charlie Desmond, Mount Rushmore Centennial

Thad Friedeman Scott Lawrence, L&S

Maureen Droz Erin Weintzettle, L&S

Natasha Bothun Diana Saathoff, Mount Rushmore Society

Katlyn Richter Debbie Kettel, Mount Rushmore Society

Ann DeVany Gary Smith-Keller, Mount Rushmore Society

Nate Johnson Ruth Samuelson, Society Board

Elijah Bonde Michelle Lintz, Society Board

Arline Hammer Judy Allen, Society Board

President Julie Ranum called the meeting to order.

**Research and Web Development**

Kirk Hulstein reviewed new research plans to track number of visitors better; using DK Shifflet data. Who are they? – Intercept Study will be done by SMARI – Strategic Marketing and Research Insights via interviews with 500 actual visitors to South Dakota.

The Visitor Profile Study will tabulate overnight stays, day trips, origin of travelers, frequency and how recent, planning process, trends, and motivators.

The Vacation Guide Survey will have 8-10 questions and will be conducted via email. It may include e-guide questions as well. Kirk will forward to regional directors for comment.

Kirk will attend CenStates TTRA in mid-September. He is taking over the Vice President of the research organization and the 2016 meeting will be in Rapid City.

Ann DeVany reviewed the home page of TravelSouthDakota.com that has the following headings: Great 8, Along For the Ride, Get a Vacation Guide, Find Things to Do, Road Journalists, #HiFromSD, and Mobile Apps. Tourism is working with MMGY on content. We will continue to push for business listings and events – regions and CVBs for getting information to their members.

**Information Centers**

Nate Johnson reviewed events/activities at the Centers over the summer. Staff wore pins, handed out stickers, and put up window clings for the #HiFromSD campaign. For the Great 8, travel counselors wore special T-shirts and handed out two stickers developed for the campaign (Jewel Cave and Missouri River). For 2016, they will hand out stickers for the other Great 8 destinations and it may lead to visitors stopping at all the Centers. For Rooster Rush, staff will wear T-shirts and put up window clings and posters.

Counselors used iPads for payments of CDs, DVD of “Over South Dakota,” and T-shirt sales (two designs). There are no cash transactions, just credit cards. Sales at Information Centers are limited to promotional items.

**Governor’s Conference on Tourism**

Natasha Bothun reviewed status of plans for the 2016 Conference. There will be a Tuesday evening reception. The Wednesday reception is being sponsored by the Mount Rushmore National Memorial Society. The registration flyer will be mailed in October. The Conference website will be online soon. We have more national vendors interested in a booth.

Annual nomination forms for three annual awards are in the packets and Secretary Hagen asked the Board members to considering nominating someone/organization for each.

**Mount Rushmore National Memorial Society**

John Brockelsby briefed the group on a few plans they have for promoting travel during the 2016 travel season to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Mount Rushmore and the 100th Anniversary of the National Park Service. They want to get national travel writers to South Dakota – what is the hook besides the 75th? What could a fam tour include – one possibility is interviewing a relative of Gutzon Borglum, several events are planned throughout the year. Could the 75th be part of the message during the Rose Parade? They would like the four regions to help plan events in their areas – the 75th logo from the Society will be made available. John is working with Congressional representatives on an invitation to President Obama.

**Executive Session**

President Ranum thanked everyone for attending the Board meeting. She called the meeting into Executive Session to brainstorm with the Society and a few of their board members on getting more attention for the 75th and ideas to help visitors plan their trips – around an event or some other enticements while in the state. Board, staff, Charlie Desmond, and Mount Rushmore Society staff and board stayed for the meeting.

Brainstorming ideas could be divided into attracting travel writers, media/promotions, trip planning, and activities/events specific to Mount Rushmore once visitors get here. The Society already has an event schedule that includes Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, Rose Parade, Evenings with one of the Presidents, The Journey Exhibit in July 2016, Find Your Park Festival, Black Hills Symphony, and NPS Summer events.

Meeting was adjourned.