



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

To: Full TDA Board

From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Director 

Date: March 16, 2018

Subject: Updates for TDA Board Meeting

Visitor Guide

Our 2018-19 Visitor Guide is sent to the press and should arrive in approximately two weeks. Everyone is enthusiastic about this year's guide and it features stunning photography and a more cohesive offering of activities for visitors to enjoy. Every year my goal is to produce the guide earlier, so that it can get into visitor's hands during the travel planning cycle. For comparison, two years ago, the guide was delivered at the beginning of June.

With funds we receive from advertising proceeds, we are able to print an additional 30,000 guides this year and utilize a new service (Mountain Information Services) that will distribute guides to over 180 locations throughout Western North Carolina and the Asheville region. They restock guides at least once a week on our behalf and handle all distribution. This service will complement our distribution efforts by the Visitor Centers locally.

Earlier this year we funded several information boxes to be placed throughout the Cashiers area; those arrived and are in the process of being deployed. With us expanding information kiosks throughout the Cashiers and Sylva area with our materials, we are meeting visitors where they are with materials. Bear in mind this may impact our visitor counts at Chambers, but the end goal is still the same – getting materials into Visitors hands and driving that great visitor experience through expanded knowledge of the County and its offerings.

Map Project – Cashiers

The map committee for Cashiers (Ann Self, Stephanie Edwards, Kathy Korb and myself) have delivered feedback to our mapmaker for the Cashiers Area Attractions and Waterfall map. We hope to have the next proof and a more final version in the coming weeks; both Edwards and I worked on creating specific directions to attractions from the Cashiers area, which should serve visitors to the plateau well. We are very pleased with what we've seen so far and if the Sylva map is any indication this will be a great addition to our print collateral.

2018-19 Budget

I met with the Executive Committee on March 14 and we reviewed budget projections for this coming fiscal year and we will present the Budget Proposal in detail to the board in the May meeting and pass the budget in June.

Workforce meeting

On March 1, the JCTDA held a Workforce Development meeting with the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce at High Hampton Resort. Several sectors were represented at the meeting and we had good dialogue about the challenges we face in the region. There were several good takeaways from the session and it was a good opportunity to share resources and keep a conversation going about moving the needle on recruitment, retention, workforce housing and more. The Crossroads Chronicle published a story about the meeting. [Link](#)

Grant Workshops

I held two grant workshops on Feb. 16 and 23 in Sylva and Cashiers to review changes to our grant program and assist any applicants with the application process. I e-mailed all prior grant applicants about the sessions in advance and also detailed changes to the grant program approved in January. Additionally, I've answered multiple calls and emails from individuals and groups about their grant applications.

VisitNC365

On March 4-6, I attended the VisitNC 365 conference in Winston Salem along with our advertising agency VP John Kautz and Media Planner Katie Prechter. The session was great for networking and allowed us to commit to several key co-op advertising programs. We will receive final confirmation of programs we participated in soon and will share with the marketing committee during the preview of our draft media plan the week of April 30. While at the conference, I participated in the PR Roundtable with six media outlets pitching Jackson County.

Trademark

In July 2017, Julie Spiro and I worked together to compile information for trademarking the WNC Fly Fishing Trail. The JCTDA funded this effort. Today, we received confirmation of the trademark from the US Patent and Trademark Office. The trademark is good through 2024, at which point it requires renewal. The trademark protects the equity in the brand that Julie worked so hard to develop and gives it further recognition and protection on a federal level.

NC Outdoor Recreation Office

My office coordinated NC Department of Commerce Outdoor Industry Recruitment Director David Knight to visit Sylva. During the visit, Knight met with the MountainWest partnership and explained his new office's role and took Q&A from economic development directors and area stakeholders.

Most Visited Parks

New numbers are in and Jackson County is located minutes away from two of the most visited National Park sites in the US. We are leveraging editorial copy in our Visitor Guide positioning us as the place to stay when visiting.

The 3 most-visited park systems are:

- Blue Ridge Parkway (16 million visits)
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area (14.9 million)
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park (11.3 million)

Other projects:

- Worked with WLOS to produce two *Three Billboards*-related coverage pieces prior to the Oscars. [Link](#)
- Coordinated media opportunity linking Cashiers Oscars attendee with local news media. [Link](#)
- Interviewed with David Menconi from Raleigh News and Observer on a [story](#) that ran front page about *Three Billboards*.
- Submitted the TDA's Board member recommendation to County Commissioners, which was approved. I held two meetings including an orientation session with incoming Board Member Tom Garcia.

- Made updates to JCTDA food & drink, lodging and attractions; also updated all VisitNC listings. Obtained new photos for GSMR and added attraction for train; also added three new Cherokee attractions.
- Met with Stephanie Edwards to discuss advertising collateral to decorate the Cashiers Visitor Center; also worked with Edwards to on new Visitor Center ground signage.
- Working with Pineapple PR and hotel partner on media visit with Bob Epstein (*New Pioneer Magazine*, circ. 280k, in Tallahassee, Fla.) who will travel to Jackson County April 16-20 on an individual media visit; also working on details of a social media influencer visit by Barefoot Theory.
- Held conference call with Andrew Harlfinger of Blue Green Resorts about filling board seat vacancy. I will recommend his appointment to the JCTDA board at our March 15 meeting for their consideration.
- Shared information about the Tourism Research Assistance Center April 11 workshop in Haywood County with both Chambers and local media. The workshop is a one-stop-shop for any tourism-related businesses looking for information on strategic planning, assisting with identifying funding sources, and liaising with other local, state and federal agencies.
- Met with the Marketing Committee who approved new promo items for this fiscal year – 5,000 Ale Trail Coasters for NC Beer Month, mirroring what we did last year; 250 drawstring shoulder packs for targeted giveaways.
- In the process of implementing the Marketing Committee's recommendation about including webcam footage of towns on the TDA site. Working with existing feeds and will consult with agency on most appropriate placement on our website.
- Compiled lodging packages and events for NC Beer Month and updated State Tourism Office, the JCTDA Website and VisitNC with partner specials. The Jackson County lodging special submitted by Mountain Brook Cottages was featured in the VisitNC Beer Month newsletter.
- Created and posted an [Occupancy Tax FAQ](#) on the JCTDA website containing answers to many questions both I and Finance get on a regular basis.
- Created an 'Are you paying Occupancy Tax' insert for the Property Tax Bills going out in August. We will also include the link to the new Occupancy Tax FAQ on our website.
- Following the Executive Committee consensus March 14, I requested Finance obtain a quote for auditing our county's Vacation Rentals for next budget year's consideration. We have not audited vacation rentals in five years and with 179% growth YOY (in Airbnb alone), it may be time to conduct this audit.
- Reviewed a requested change to a 2017 Special Projects Application for the Great Balsam Adventure Race and shared with Executive Committee; followed up with lawyer and applicant regarding the proposed change. We will allow the applicant to redesignate funds intended for canoe rental to advertising use, with stipulations and conditions.
- Updated and distributed Chamber Contracts to Chamber Directors for their board's review and signature for FY 18-19.
- Worked with a graphic designer on vinyl sidewalk decals to advertise our Jackson County Chamber and Visitor Center to drive foot traffic. Awaiting approval from Town of Sylva before we manufacture and install. These are done at a minimal cost and are durable to foot traffic.

- Obtained a Memorandum of Understanding from Western Carolina University to utilize their historical photo archives for our online uses including Social Media.
- Working on a campaign for National Tourism Week which is May 10, and the theme is 'Then and Now'; this will be a local PR and social-media led project highlighting past and present tourism in Jackson County.
- Attended planning meetings for Greening Up the Mountains; working now to secure photography coverage.
- Attended Main Street Sylva Association Meeting and presented members with copies of our new Town of Sylva map and in follow up delivered Ale Trail coasters for Sylva's third annual brew hop.
- Attended Future of the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests expert panel at Jackson County Public Library.
- Photographed the Appalachian Women's Museum (Dillsboro) for use in editorial pitches for their 'Airing of the Quilts' events this summer which represents the official opening of the museum.
- Secured a secondary minute taker for our JCTDA meetings for May and November when our new clerk to the board will be unavailable.
- Spoke with a Highlands Chamber consultant who is working on their website redesign. I provided insight about processes involved with a website redesign, given we went through the process a little over two years ago.
- Calls and networking with Graham County's new TDA Director Daniel Allison; provided recommendations on their website RFP process.
- Met with ARC Community Development Planner for Western Region Ann Bass to discuss tourism in Jackson County.
- Obtained quotes and budget information on printing additional visitor guides and secured a contract with Mountain Information Systems for distribution; coordinating with printer for direct ship to MIS when ready. Prepared budget transfers to account for increased expenditure and reviewed with both Marketing and Executive Committees.
- Updated trailhead directions to Panthertown Valley on JCTDA website to be consistent with all other materials and vetted directions through Friends of Panthertown; updated all waterfall and trail descriptions. Provided directions to Cashiers Area Chamber as well.
- Working with RM on menu re-organization for attractions as we add additional content to the site and need increased categories/buckets to place content into.
- Toured Cashiers' Whiteside Brewing; also toured other area business expansions/relocations: Lulus on Main and Baxley's Chocolates.
- Received 30,000 Sylva maps; 30,000 Hiking/Waterfall maps and stored in TDA office. Delivered initial stock to Jackson County Chamber and Cashiers Area Chamber. Will resupply as requested.
- Provided Jackson County Chamber of Commerce JCTDA Videos for their SmartTV; provided WNC Fly Fishing Trail map vector art for a t-shirt design.

- Spoke with Jackson County Farmers Market Director about agri-tourism opportunities, provided contacts related to sustainable food co-op ventures.
- Contacted local Farm about Farm to Fork Cycling Event pitched by SportsNC.
- Obtained print and digital copies of Cary Magazine highlighting Jackson County FAM trip, mailed a thank you note with a magazine to partners included in the piece.
- Met with RomanticAsheville's Mark File to talk about upcoming FY advertising plans.
- Provided Greening Up the Mountains information about media buys for their FY 18-19 grant; provided photos to the Laurel of Asheville for a feature story on GUTM.
- Worked with Pineapple on a rebuild of our pitch sheet for media.

Worked with RM engagement:

- Approvals for SambaTV assets, NC Beer Month e-Banners, MyWedding e-mail newsblast
- Approvals for Social Media content proofs
- Reviewed bumper sticker designs for promotional items in FY 18-19
- Worked on Crowdriff UGC gallery updates for site

Pineapple PR engagement:

- Provided feedback for blog posts on Easter / Spring break pitch
- Worked with Pineapple on New Three Billboards copy for web, visitor guide and in-town tour sheet reflecting recent awards ceremonies.
- Received, reviewed and implemented restaurant and attraction listing updates for VisitNC
- Updated Ale Trail information to include upcoming brewery openings (Whiteside, Nantahala); shared with Chamber.

On a final note, I would encourage board members check out this [great article](#) about High Hampton Resort's Revamp with an interview featuring our new board member and HHR Resort General Manager Tom Garcia.