



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

To: TDA Board

From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director
Caleb Sullivan, TDA Sales & Marketing Manager

Date: March 16, 2021

Subject: Updates for TDA Board

Executive Director Report – Nick Breedlove

According to the latest Longwoods International tracking study of American travelers, 84% have travel plans in the next six months, the highest level since the early days of the pandemic a year ago. This is the third consecutive wave showing over 80% for this key metric. And the percentage of travelers who say that the coronavirus will greatly impact their travel plans has dropped to a third, down from a pandemic peak of two-thirds last April and matching the March 2020 low.

Another recent study by American Express Travel cites that 87-percent of travelers are excited to dream about planning their next trip.

Grant

The TDA received over 9,000 KIND bars that were distributed to outdoor and community first organizations throughout Jackson County: Friends of Panthertown, Cullowhee River Cleanup, Forest Stewardship Program at WCU, Trout Unlimited for Cleanups, Cub Scout Troops, and the Center for Service Learning at WCU. In an effort to distribute them before their expiration date, they also went to the COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics, Highlands Cashiers Hospital for frontline healthcare workers and volunteers, the Village Green and Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and the Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau.

Grant Program

Since January, we've held two Grant Program restructure Committee meetings and have had a productive discussion at each meeting. The final recommendations of that Committee are before them as of 3/16, and they are reviewing them before making a recommendation to the Full BOD.

Sustainability Committee

The Sustainability Committee has made significant headway in determining the next steps for sustainable tourism in Jackson County. Still, it has been keenly focused on issues related to a letter from the Town of Webster and fly fishing. We have been coordinating with other towns, the NC DOT, Parks and Rec, and others and are making timely progress on issues expressed from the town to the Committee.

The Product and Experience Development Committee has held two meetings now and discusses how the TDA can be involved in capital projects and a method for prioritizing both short- and long-term projects. Projects should align with the JCTDA's strategic plan along with the County's Economic Development Strategy.

JCTDA Community and Visitor Engagement Committee

We could not hold the initial JCTDA Community and Visitor Engagement Committee due to the Chair having a conflict. However, we should hold this meeting on Friday, March 19 at 10 a.m.

Visitor Guide – The Visitor Guide was delivered to its vendor partner, Smoky Mountain News, on Tuesday, March 16, for layout. The printer will have the guide printed delivered within a month after we approve final proofs around April 1. 90,000 copies will be printed, with 30,000 distributed through Mountain Information Centers around WNC. Another quantity of 3,000 will go to the Asheville Regional Airport. There is a focus on sustainable tourism in the introduction and welcome page of the new guide, in line with our strategic plan and our Committee work.

Our Cashiers Attractions, Adventures, & Waterfalls map has been reprinted (30,000 copies) and delivered to the Cashiers Area Visitor Center.

The Jackson County Waterfall and Hiking Map has been sent to the printer (on 3/16) and updated with new outfitter information. Thirty thousand copies will be printed in time for spring visitors.

Budget – I received an early estimated budget amount from our Finance Officer, Darlene, last week of estimated room tax collections for FY 21-22 of \$1.375m. I am now working on programming a draft budget.

High Hampton's planned reopening is slated for April 22. We've been working with their PR team to complement their efforts in obtaining placements throughout the Southeast with short lead media.

Wedding Contest – We launched a nationwide contest for community heroes affected by COVID-19 to enter and win a \$40,000 wedding in Jackson County at Castle Ladyhawke. Vendors are donating all items. The couples will send us a video telling us how they served as community heroes during the pandemic. We launched the contest on Monday, March 15, and I forwarded the press release to the Board.

The release was sent by Pineapple to a tailored media list was also distributed via PR Newswire to over 20,000 news organizations.

We are grateful for terrific partnerships with Bear Lake Reserve and Castle Ladyhawke, which made this possible. We are capitalizing on this promotion through both advertising and PR channels.

The link to more information about the contest is: <https://castleladyhawke.com/giveaway/>

February Financials are strong - February Room Occupancy Tax collections totaled \$89,089.11; The YTD collection total is \$1,235,484 - 117.71% of budget. The cash balance at February 28, 2021 is \$937,952.53 and investments total \$400,000.

I have requested Finance Officer Fox to calculate estimated reserves above both: 1) our state mandates [eight percent] and 2) our fund balance policy (three months of operating costs) so that we know what amount might be available for appropriation for next FY budget as we have some new programs and considerations to fund. Ms. Fox should have this data closer to the time we review a draft budget as we see future months’ collections. Below is a recap of financials YTD vs. last fiscal year. Keep in mind July is backed out of collections and placed in the prior fiscal year, given taxes remitted in July are for June rentals.

Month	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
JULY	\$122,421.68	\$187,832.18
AUGUST	\$166,057.35	\$233,601.43
SEPTEMBER	\$133,172.02	\$228,972.44
OCTOBER	\$130,912.47	\$191,265.62
NOVEMBER	\$129,268.34	\$213,445.79
DECEMBER	\$93,829.84	\$145,657.78
JANUARY	\$79,652.13	\$134,351.26
FEBRUARY	\$55,878.75	\$89,094.11
MARCH	\$55,161.52	
APRIL	\$34,404.69	
MAY	\$15,854.63	
JUNE	\$76,044.67	
	\$1,092,658.09	\$1,424,220.61

COVID-19 Vaccinations

As soon as Jackson County launched frontline and essential worker registration, I made our partners, restaurants, and other frontline businesses aware of the registration opportunity, as did the Chambers and we had a terrific response to filling those appointments. We are thankful to all those who work towards getting our community vaccinated.

Networking:

- Podcast Interview with Marilyn Ball on *Speaking of Travel* about Sustainable Tourism
- Participated in two meetings with the WNC Outdoor Brand Committee to discuss WNC's new Outdoor Branding.
- Follow-up Call with WNC Outdoor Brand Ad Agency on Digital Asset Management system to employ for end users.
- Presentation to Cub scouts on Tourism
- Obtained "High Impact Leadership" certificate from Western Carolina University
- Obtained "Effective Managerial and Supervisory Communication" certificate from WCU
- Attended Blue Ridge Parkway Association Winter Information & Education Meeting
- Attended 2x JCTDA Grant Program Restructure Committee, 2x JCTDA Sustainability and Stewardship Committee, JCTDA Product and Experience Development Committee, JCTDA Community and Visitor Engagement Committee; provided follow-up research, notes, and recaps for committees.
- Attended Harris Regional Business Roundtable
- Served on Destinations International Small Destination Task Force Kick-Off Meeting
- Attended Small Destination Organizations planning call for content for FY 21
- Attended NC Rural Center Economic Development Institute Meeting
- Presented to Meredith Corporation/VisitNC for FY 22 NC Official Travel Guide
- Delivered two tourism presentations to WCU PR Campaigns Class for Dr. Betty Farmer
- Discussed Virtual Tourism Week with Haywood and Transylvania Counties for May
- Presented to all Small Business Centers in the state on "Tourism Trends and Tips for 2021 and Beyond" and held follow-up call with questions from SBC's and their members.

Social Media & Blog Status Report – Caleb Sullivan



Cross Channel Report February 1-28, 2021 vs. January 1 – 31, 2021

- Total Audience Growth increased by .2 % MOM (741) (232,125 total)
 - Total Instagram Followers (22,654)
 - Total Facebook Page Likes (209,471) – Organic Increase of 956
- Total Impressions decreased by 32.2% MOM. (2,198,935)
- Total Engagement decreased by 43.9% MOM (120,456)
- Facebook Post Link Clicks decreased by 11.6% (9,837)

Google Post/Event Platform

- Total Impressions for February totaled 60,458
- Total Engagements for February totaled 3,502



Pinterest

- Total Impressions for February totaled 43,520. (16% Increase MOM)
- Total Engagements for February totaled 913.


Updates

- Completed my Facebook Social Media Marketing Certificate. I completed this 20-week program in about 13 weeks. I am now a Facebook Certified Digital Marketing Associate.
- Applied for Destinations International's 30 Under 30 program.
- Enrolled in Digital Marketing and Public Relations Certificate from Western Carolina University.
- Was nominated for the Southwestern Community College "Distinguished Alumni Award."
- Represented JCTDA at the Southeastern Tourism Society's Domestic Discovery. This was a virtual tradeshow for group tour buyers. Our destination gained much interest from buyers and I have been working with several on developing custom group tour itineraries for late summer/early fall.
- Working with Castle Ladyhawke, Bear Lake Reserve, and Promotion Activators to create Social Media strategy for "Castle Dream Wedding Contest." This contest is for community heroes that had to shelve their wedding plans due to COVID-19.
- [Jackson County Fun Facts](#) page went live. Optimized for organic search, this page should drive more Google traffic to our website.
- Resumed boosting Instagram Posts once again.



Top Performing Posts for February

  **discoverjacksonnc**
Tue 2/9/2021 10:11 am PST


Water turns into an icy display at Mingus Mill. ❄️🌲 Located at the entrance to the Great Smokies, make sure to check it out!





Total Engagements	1,347
Likes	1,276
Comments	21
Saves	50

  **discoverjacksonnc**
Thu 2/25/2021 6:28 pm PST


The beautiful glow of warmer days ahead! 🧡💙 Who's ready for long sunny days? 🌞
📍 @andrewtburns





Total Engagements	964
Likes	928
Comments	10
Saves	26

  **discoverjacksonnc**
Sat 2/13/2021 9:17 am PST

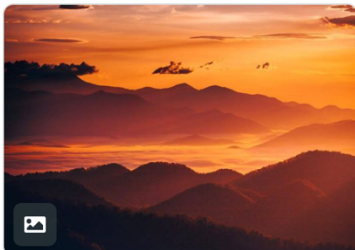
There's just something about those layers of Blue. 🧡💙 Double tap if you agree. . 📍
@cottenpatchphoto





Total Engagements	938
Likes	899
Comments	9
Saves	30

  **North Carolina Mountain To...**
Sat 2/6/2021 6:21 am PST

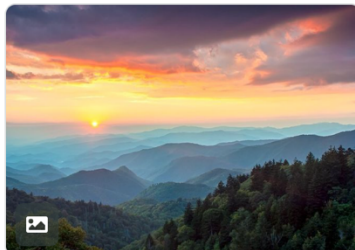
Blue Ridge sunsets 🧡💙📍
@mpthecomebackid





Total Engagements	14,284
Reactions	10,682
Comments	571
Shares	1,181
Post Link Clicks	-
Other Post Clicks	1,850

  **North Carolina Mountain To...**
Thu 2/25/2021 7:35 am PST

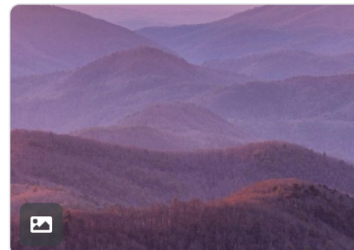
The beautiful glow of warmer days ahead! 🧡💙 Who's ready for long sunny days? 🌞
📍 @solitarytravelerphoto



Total Engagements	13,630
Reactions	9,579
Comments	648
Shares	908
Post Link Clicks	-
Other Post Clicks	2,495

  **North Carolina Mountain To...**
Tue 2/9/2021 5:28 am PST

Golden hues and layers of purple 🧡💙💜
📍 @tanner_goodman



Total Engagements	9,040
Reactions	6,851
Comments	366
Shares	642
Post Link Clicks	-
Other Post Clicks	1,181

Blogs

Authored two blogs in February:

[6 Top Reasons Couples Love Jackson County](#) – Updated 2/1/2021

[12 Unique Airbnb's, VRBO's, and Cabins in the NC Mountains](#) – 2/5/2021

E-News

Authored e-Newsletter for February. Deployed on 2/9/2020:

[Your Romantic Escape Awaits in the NC Mountains](#) 