



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

To: TDA Board

From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director

Date: November 15, 2021

Subject: Updates for TDA Board

#### **Executive Director Report – Nick Breedlove**

We've had a very favorable autumn season and the last two months have proven to be very good for visitation. During September we saw 61.7-percent occupancy in hotel stays and in October we preliminarily estimate around 76-percent occupancy.

September lodging sales totaled \$5.9 million, bringing in \$236,397.79 in occupancy tax. October lodging sales are still in collection, but I estimate it will exceed previous records.

Please see the chart below which highlights our success thus far this fiscal year.

Month	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
July	\$187,832.18	\$306,871.17
August	\$233,507.83	\$402,414.91
September	\$228,972.44	\$296,676.95
October	\$191,265.61	\$236,495.92
November	\$213,445.79	
December	\$145,657.78	
January	\$134,351.26	
February	\$89,094.11	
March	\$91,596.16	
April	\$130,350.75	
May	\$146,638.28	
June	\$200,754.27	
Totals	\$1,993,466.46	\$1,242,458.95

August collections for July stays is our largest single-month collection in our history.



Airbnb, VRBO, and other Vacation Rentals continue to show significant increases. They make up 54.4% of tax collected fiscal year-to-date. During the same period in 2019, they accounted for 38.24% of tax collected during the same period. This shifting trend will continue to be monitored to see if it is a long-term shift or related to COVID-19 consumer behavior.

In future demand, we're seeing vacation rental bookings increase a great deal for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's.

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## Airbnb Collections

In the first four months of collections of Airbnb remittances of this fiscal year, we're already on track to pass the entire FY 19-20 and FY 18-19 (pre-COVID)

Month	2015-2016(\$)	2016-2017(\$)	2017-2018(\$)	2018-2019(\$)	2019-20(\$)	2020-21(\$)	2021-22(\$)
JULY		\$2,160.41	\$6,729.85	\$10,428.29	\$17,020.83	\$36,487.44	\$38,540.71
AUGUST	\$563.20	\$2,942.32	\$5,465.06	\$9,872.16	\$18,227.95	\$34,189.14	\$37,896.36
SEPTEMBER	\$975.72	\$2,131.23	\$7,267.62	\$10,232.66	\$17,464.32	\$40,794.46	\$38,828.72
OCTOBER	\$725.48	\$2,038.25	\$5,917.66	\$10,075.28	\$18,018.26	\$41,291.67	\$46,898.15
NOVEMBER	\$650.72	\$1,558.41	\$5,555.14	\$9,852.99	\$15,952.43	\$33,318.61	
DECEMBER	\$564.38	\$1,427.94	\$3,159.61	\$8,704.84	\$11,260.09	\$21,467.41	
JANUARY	\$925.87	\$2,263.40	\$3,159.61	\$6,466.18	\$11,130.39	\$20,867.10	
FEBRUARY	\$864.11	\$2,307.83	\$2,322.26	\$10,112.79	\$16,625.19	\$33,554.90	
MARCH	\$2,097.76	\$3,894.45	\$5,795.18	\$10,565.92	\$13,937.47	\$33,780.04	
APRIL	\$1,663.83	\$3,923.39	\$6,665.78	\$14,780.34	\$436.04	\$43,358.76	
MAY	\$2,125.95	\$3,877.26	\$5,698.70	\$11,099.74	\$28.46	\$39,171.62	
JUNE	\$1,598.07	\$5,185.67	\$7,870.59	\$15,546.64	\$29,572.05	\$46,206.53	
	\$12,755.09	\$33,710.56	\$65,607.06	\$127,737.83	\$169,673.48	\$424,487.68	\$162,163.94

In four months of this new fiscal year, set to bypass all of 2019-20 in Airbnb accommodations

## State Tourism Numbers

We just received updated annual tourism impact and spending numbers from the State of North Carolina. They recently revised their methodology using enhanced data sets from Tourism Economics, led by over 200 economists, and have derived more accurate tourism spend data. The revised methodology *does* account for splitting the impact of the Casino between Jackson and Swain Counties.

As a result of the new methodology in calculating visitor spending, our numbers increased significantly. We have greater visitor spend than every other surrounding county in our area. In fact, we rank 15<sup>th</sup> in the state in 2020 for Visitor Spending.

Out of 17 WNC counties, we come in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, behind Buncombe County in Visitor Spending for 2020. Please see the chart and map below.

County	Visitor Spending, millions					Spending Rank in WNC for 2020	2016 to 2020 change
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Buncombe County	\$ 1,949.57	\$ 2,039.03	\$ 2,171.24	\$ 2,241.50	<b>\$ 1,459.33</b>	1	\$ (490.24)
Jackson County	\$ 251.99	\$ 268.60	\$ 280.94	\$ 295.00	<b>\$ 292.68</b>	2	\$ 40.69
Henderson County	\$ 295.50	\$ 312.79	\$ 332.17	\$ 349.01	<b>\$ 253.73</b>	3	\$ (41.77)
Macon County	\$ 198.47	\$ 207.01	\$ 217.31	\$ 231.04	<b>\$ 230.07</b>	4	\$ 31.60
Swain County	\$ 196.60	\$ 202.07	\$ 212.36	\$ 228.18	<b>\$ 226.30</b>	5	\$ 29.70
Haywood County	\$ 194.74	\$ 201.27	\$ 209.72	\$ 223.05	<b>\$ 217.13</b>	6	\$ 22.39
Rutherford County	\$ 167.34	\$ 174.03	\$ 183.45	\$ 196.56	<b>\$ 204.34</b>	7	\$ 37.00
Avery County	\$ 143.06	\$ 150.22	\$ 158.90	\$ 168.82	<b>\$ 164.02</b>	8	\$ 20.96
Transylvania County	\$ 110.80	\$ 117.86	\$ 125.04	\$ 136.18	<b>\$ 131.31</b>	9	\$ 20.51
Cherokee County	\$ 68.01	\$ 70.35	\$ 73.86	\$ 77.06	<b>\$ 71.16</b>	10	\$ 3.15
McDowell County	\$ 64.30	\$ 66.86	\$ 70.92	\$ 75.80	<b>\$ 70.51</b>	11	\$ 6.21
Yancey County	\$ 38.44	\$ 40.25	\$ 42.54	\$ 45.93	<b>\$ 53.47</b>	12	\$ 15.03
Madison County	\$ 41.40	\$ 43.03	\$ 45.70	\$ 48.60	<b>\$ 47.97</b>	13	\$ 6.57
Polk County	\$ 34.72	\$ 37.68	\$ 39.73	\$ 39.92	<b>\$ 43.61</b>	14	\$ 8.89
Graham County	\$ 35.96	\$ 38.10	\$ 39.46	\$ 41.83	<b>\$ 33.44</b>	15	\$ (2.52)
Mitchell County	\$ 27.85	\$ 29.09	\$ 29.64	\$ 30.02	<b>\$ 29.35</b>	16	\$ 1.50
Clay County	\$ 19.99	\$ 20.59	\$ 21.30	\$ 22.35	<b>\$ 25.51</b>	17	\$ 5.52

Source: Tourism Economics, 2021



2020 Visitor Spending, Source: Tourism Economics

The increases are a testament to our Board's work on the strategic plan, staff, partners, small businesses, and our community. Everyone should take great pride in us growing and diversifying our tourism economy. This is something to celebrate!

### Capital Projects

We are nearing the finish line on a process we've talked about since the inception of the JCTDA in 2013. Our Capital Projects Committee has been hard at work for over a year now on an application, guidelines, and evaluation for parties interested in submitting a Capital Project application for funding consideration.



We completed a draft of the application, shared it with our tourism consultant (Chris Cavanaugh) who offered great feedback and is currently working on implementing best practices into our draft.

The Capital Projects committee meets this Thursday, Nov. 18 to review those recommendations, then the application will go to the full board in December for its review and feedback. The application will then be reviewed by our legal counsel and finance department before adoption. While the work has taken a while, we have been thorough, thoughtful, and are having the process independently reviewed by industry experts. We look forward to announcing this funding program in 2022.

### **Ale Trail pass**

After almost a year in planning, we are pleased to announce that our Ale Trail Pass is live today (Nov. 15). The pass takes our amazing, independent breweries and turns them into an experience and a true 'trail' to enjoy.

We started with the five breweries in Sylva/Dillsboro and can expand in the future to Cashiers if there is interest. Those who sign up for the free pass just need to visit four out of five of the breweries in Sylva/Dillsboro within a year, and they'll receive a free pint glass with our Ale Trail logo on it along with a free tumbler/cooler sticker.

The 'pass' will help spread visitors throughout our breweries instead of concentrating them in one brewery and help assist with keeping the brew scene thriving in Jackson County.

Below is a press release about the Ale Trail pass that LHG sent out to 710 media outlets this morning.

#### **Mobile Ale Trail Pass Launches Today in Jackson County, NC**

*Tourism Development Authority's new program celebrates local breweries along destination's Ale Trail*

**JACKSON COUNTY, N.C. (November 15, 2021)** – The [Jackson County Tourism Development Authority](#) (JCTDA) announces the launch of its [Ale Trail Pass](#) today, a new ongoing program that rewards craft beer fans for visiting the local breweries along the county's famed Ale Trail.

Created in partnership with travel technology platform [Bandwango](#), the free Ale Trail Pass showcases the best of Jackson County's booming brewery scene in an easy, mobile-friendly fashion. Users can sign up online at [www.discoverjacksonnc.com/passes/](http://www.discoverjacksonnc.com/passes/) to receive a mobile passport via text or email (no app downloading required) which they can then use to "check-in" along the trail by asking a bartender for a unique pin code at each brewery.

Once locking in at least four brewery stops, participants can stop by the Jackson County Chamber and Visitors Center (773 W Main St, Sylva, NC 28779) any weekday between the hours of 8am-5pm to redeem their passes for a limited-edition Jackson County pint glass and Ale Trail branded stickers to take home.

“We’re confident this Ale Trail Pass will quickly become a popular way for visitors and locals to engage with our breweries and further enhance the town’s appeal for craft beverage fans all over,” says Sylva Main Street Sylva Association Director Bernadette Peters. “After all, who doesn’t love a souvenir pint glass?”

Out of those participating, the following four breweries are conveniently located along Downtown Sylva’s walkable strip where The Ale Trail’s main hub is, while the fifth pass participant, [Innovation Station](#), is in the town of Dillsboro just next door:

- [Innovation Brewing](#)
- [Lazy Hiker Brewing Company Taproom](#)
- [Balsam Falls Brewing Co.](#)
- [Nantahala Brewing Co. \(Sylva Outpost\)](#)

“Sylva’s vibe is unique and eclectic, and so are each of the breweries that call this town home,” says JCTDA Director Nick Breedlove. “After enjoying some brews, we hope visitors take advantage of all that this area has to offer from shopping and dining downtown to exploring outside with a hike, bike ride, fly fishing excursion and so much more.”

Please see [here](#) for corresponding imagery, courtesy of Jackson County TDA.

#### **About Jackson County**

Made up of the distinctive towns of Cashiers, Cherokee, Dillsboro, and Sylva, Jackson County is known for shopping, dining, culture, and charming locales. Ideally situated in Western North Carolina’s Blue Ridge Mountains, the destination is a short drive from national treasures like the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Blue Ridge Parkway. Jackson County is the North Carolina Trout Capital® and home to the nation’s first and only fly-fishing trail as well as majestic mountains and miles of scenic hiking trails and waterfalls.

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## CALLING ALL CRAFT (BEER) LOVERS

Get rewarded for hopping along our famed Ale Trail with the Jackson County Ale Trail Pass!

Sign up for your pass, visit 4 of the participating breweries, and check-in while you're there to receive a limited edition Jackson County pint glass.



## HOW IT WORKS



Scan the QR code to receive a text message with instructions for redeeming your passport.



After you sign up, your passport link will be delivered to your phone via text or email and is ready to use immediately! There's no app to download and you have the option to save it to your phone's home screen.



When visiting a participating brewery, ask for the PIN code from the bartender to check in.

*Must visit 4 of the 5 participating breweries to receive a gift. The gift is a Jackson County pint glass that can be picked up at the Visitor's Center Monday-Friday, 8a-5p. While supplies last. No weekend pickup and no shipping. No cash value.*



**Better sign up before your beer gets warm! Simply scan the QR code on the opposite side or visit**  
**[DiscoverJacksonNC.com/passes](https://DiscoverJacksonNC.com/passes)**





*Stickers for Ale Trail Promo*



## Grant Application for BRNHA

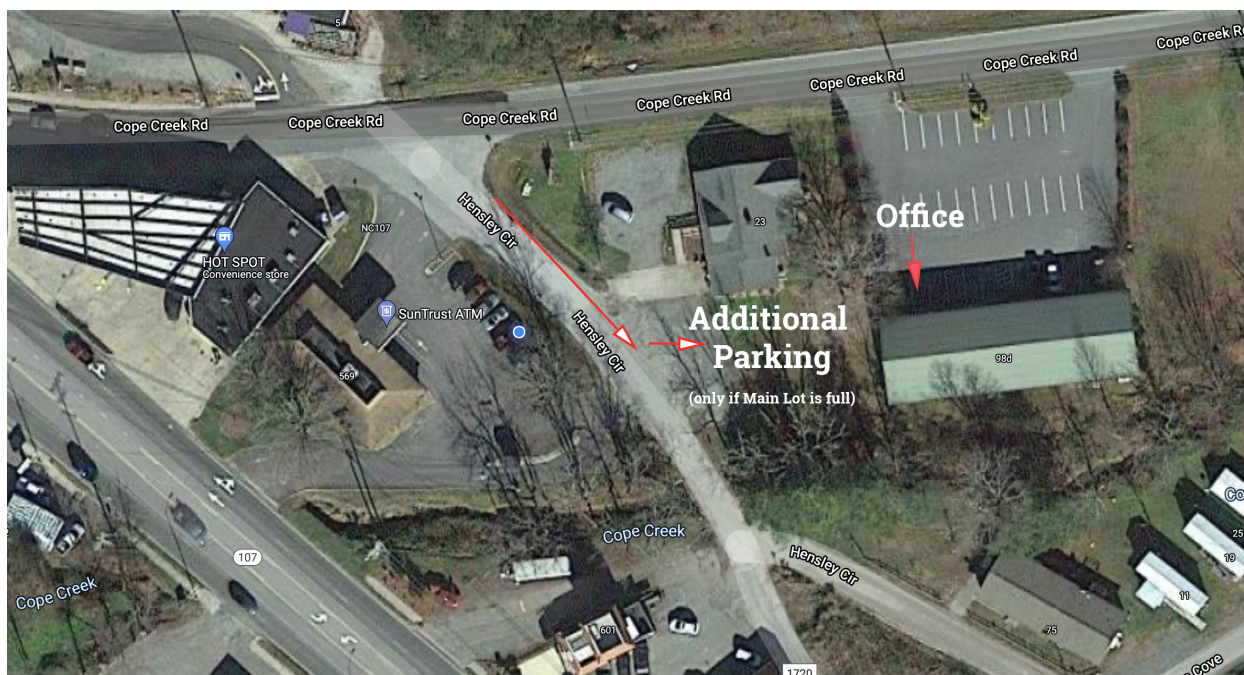
We received a grant request in the amount of \$3,800 from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area that is linked with the agenda. The Executive Committee is in favor of granting this request, so it will go to the full board at Wednesday's meeting. Please review all documentation for their request prior to our meeting.

## Lodging Specials

We will be issuing a request for lodging specials for our secret season soon. We promote these across social media, our website, and VisitNC for those accommodations who respond. Last year we had three specials and drove **a few thousand clicks** to the accommodations' website. If any Board Members' lodging establishments have specials from January – March, please get those to me as soon as possible so we can begin promoting them. Our secret season campaigns have increased occupancy in January and February from a low of 26.6 percent in January 2016 to 40.2 percent in 2019; in February from a low of 33.6 percent in 2015 to 53 percent in 2019. We are meeting this week with Rawle Murdy and others to discuss how to strengthen our Secret Season promotion this coming season. Please *help us help you* sell unsold rooms by providing offerings we can promote!

## New Office

We have completed our move into the new office space. As a reminder our meeting Wednesday, Nov. 17 will be a hybrid meeting – both online and in person. For in person, we prefer mask usage for added safety. If you have difficulty finding parking in front of our office, there is a new gravel lot for our use adjacent to our property provided for overflow parking. Below is a map. Our address is 98D Cope Creek Road in Sylva.



As a reminder, we have new telephone numbers for the office and no longer utilize our cell phones or text messaging.

Our numbers are as follows:

Nick: 828-339-1160

Caleb: 828-339-1161

Fax: 828-339-1164

### **Part time employee**

In December, we will present a job description and proposed duties for a part time employee to the full board now that we have ample office space to bring on additional help. The funds for this position are already budgeted, we just need to formalize everything and begin to advertise the position. January is a good time for us to proceed with this work as we can onboard them while things are slightly less busy before we begin visitor guide production and marketing and communication planning.

### **Connectivity Issues**

During the week of Nov. 1 – 5 I spearheaded an effort to resolve some issues with connectivity within our community with the Verizon Network. After reaching out to several community partners in Economic Development, the Chambers and Visitor Centers, and Mountain West/Region A, we identified we were affected county wide by an unknown issue. In working with Verizon's Legislative Liaison in Raleigh and Sen. Kevin Corbin's office, we were able to receive the following updates including some fixes:

#### **General**

- Given the general rural nature of the county, there are coverage and capacity issues in the county. Some sites are very congested which is causing connectivity issues. The good news is we do have active and funded projects to alleviate some of these challenges, though in some cases funding isn't secured just yet. These are mostly pipeline projects for 2023 activation. Details are below.

#### **Specific:**

##### **• 911**

- Confirmed through network tools that 911 calls are in the entire county are going through successfully.
- Confirmed through field testing in three areas (Sylva/Cullowhee/Cashiers) calls are going through and being routed to the correct PSAP and location shared by dispatch was accurate.
- For the period 10/29 to 11/4:
  - Voice and Data Access Failure Rate < 0.5%
  - ~500 successful voice calls with 10 drops only
  - ~10 mbps **average** download speeds; however, during peak hours there is much congestion which can greatly reduce performance).

## **Area Specific**

- Sylva
  - Serving site covers a busy area composed of Walmart, Lowes, Ingles market, Southwestern community college, Smoky mount high school and multiple small businesses.
  - There was a problem with one radio on a tower that caused the number of dropped calls to increase. This was resolved 10/29.
  - Sudden increase in traffic as of 10/18 causing further capacity constraints.
  - VZ has plans to build two sites in 2023 (one, east of Sylva; the other in Dillsboro). These are subject to change based on funding.
- Cullowhee
  - Serving site covers the WCU and capacity issues have been present since the site was relocated off-campus. We've had several meetings with WCU administration and they're aware of our capacity relief plan.
  - Antenna Modification for increased capacity planned to be completed in mid-2022.
  - New site planned on campus for 2023 (much of timing depends on state permitting).
- Cashiers
  - Site covers a hilly area making coverage spotty.
  - Site had a partial outage on 10/13 causing congestion for that day.
  - New site planned for 2023 for west of Glenville and north of Cashiers another site planned for east of Erastus and north of Glenville. These are subject to change based on funding.

*(\*Some of the future buildouts are unannounced to the public and may change\*)*

## **Other Director Updates**

### **Summer Video Production**

We wrapped our summer video production with 13 new scenic locations that we didn't have video assets for. The video capture went terrific and included: Greenland Creek Falls/Schoolhouse Falls/Little Green Mountain, Pinnacle Park, Judaculla Rock, Tuckasegee River/Greenway, Waterrock Knob, Lonesome Valley, Dillsboro River Company, Balsam Lake, Cashiers Sliding Rock, & Whitewater Falls. We're getting B-Roll from High Hampton to incorporate Luxury R&R. Right now we're working on cutting the video into clips, voice overs and scripts to debut next spring to encourage summer travel. Next year will be very competitive if the pandemic comes to and end as every destination will be vying for the same traveler.

## Networking

I recently gave presentations to three WCU Hospitality & Tourism classes during Nov. 11 & 15. Fellow Board Member Scott Greene also spoke to the classes as well. I serve on the Board of Advisors for the H&T program and we're pleased to announce that the college will soon have a BSBA in H&T. Students can receive two degrees in four years – one in H&T and one in marketing and receive two diplomas.



- Director Breedlove met with investors interested in potential mixed-use construction in the opportunity zone in Jackson County.
- Met with Southern Jackson TDA Board Members for a luncheon introduction to the new Village Green Director, Ashlie Mitchell Lanning.
- Prepared materials for travel writers and met Sucheta Rawal for lunch with Caleb Sullivan.
- Working with Zartico on a visualization of traffic and visitor movement in October.
- Facilitated the Sustainability + Stewardship Committee
- Worked with Rawle Murdy to prepare a deployment of a survey to study the Nashville market and opportunities there; they consistently visit our website and are interested; however, we're not seeing it translate into actual visits.
- Met with the new owner of the Chalet Inn
- Met with Cherokee's DMO/TDA and held multiple discussions with them and the Blue Ridge Parkway concerning litter along Soco Gap.
- Participated in CREATE Bridges Steering Committee
- Attended STS Connections in Spartanburg, S.C.
- Worked with LHG and NAACP to help promote the Harriet Tubman unveiling

## Social Media & Blog Status Report – Caleb Sullivan

### Organic Cross Channel Report October 1-31 vs. September 1-30

- Total Audience Growth increased by 1.1% MOM (253,371)
  - Total Instagram Followers (25,356)
  - Total Facebook Page Likes (225,871) – Organic Increase of (2,452)
- Total Impressions **Increased by 280.2% MOM. (22,873,073) \*Highest to Date**
- Total Engagement **increased by 459.1% MOM (1,475,802) \*Highest to Date**
- Facebook Post Link Clicks increased by 0.6% (46,293)



*\*Exponential Results were due to a 'Viral' video. See Below.*

## Facebook Ad Performance

- Total Impressions 2,877,149
- Total Reach 1,180,936
- Result Per Campaign
  - Visitor Guide Leads: 710/ \$.67 CPR
  - Newsletter Leads: 857/ \$.55 CPR
  - Page Like Campaign: 601/ \$.30 CPR
  - Web Traffic Campaign: 3,953/ \$.09CPR
  - Micro Campaigns: 15,261 \$.20 CPR
  - Blog Post Campaigns: 6,228/ \$.06

## Pinterest

- Total Impressions for September totaled 30,980. (16% Decrease MOM)
- Total Engagements for September totaled 924. (13% Decrease MOM)

## Updates


- I posted a video of an elk drinking water from the Oconaluftee River. This post went viral on Facebook with over **18 million in reach, 1.2 million engagements and over 9 million views** (see below). **This is the most engaging piece of content in JCTDA Social Media History.**
- October 13-14, I attended virtual Outdoor Economy Conference Workshops. The in-person event is rescheduled for April 2022.
- October 19-20, I represented the JCTDA at the VisitNC Media Mission in Raleigh, NC. I met with several well-qualified travel writers and pitched our county. We were received well and worked with LHG for follow-up.
- Working with LHG to conduct virtual 'Media Missions' with qualified writers. Attended my first on October 28.
- I'm continuing Sales efforts and follow up from attended trade shows. I will be representing the JCTDA at the Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC) in Raleigh, December 9.

*See next page*

## Top Performing Posts for October

**PLAY ON NC** **North Carolina Mountain Towns of Cashier...**  
Thu 10/21/2021 8:33 am PDT


You never know what you'll see along the Oconaluftee River Trail. 🦌 Find it here: <https://jax.onl/Oco-river-trail> 📄  
@jeaniebeach



<b>Total Engagements</b>	<b>1,264,513</b>
Reactions	153,931
Comments	3,035
Shares	11,874
Post Link Clicks	3,368
Other Post Clicks	1,092,305

**PLAY ON NC** **North Carolina Mountain Towns of Cashier...**  
Sat 10/9/2021 7:06 am PDT


Fall in the Smokies 🍂 📄 @adamgravett



<b>Total Engagements</b>	<b>31,768</b>
Reactions	22,430
Comments	1,539
Shares	2,536
Post Link Clicks	—
Other Post Clicks	5,263

**PLAY ON NC** **North Carolina Mountain Towns of Cashier...**  
Tue 10/12/2021 6:49 am PDT


Layers of Autumn 🍂 🍂 🍂 📄 @dawnfirephotography



<b>Total Engagements</b>	<b>11,583</b>
Reactions	7,707
Comments	642
Shares	1,053
Post Link Clicks	—
Other Post Clicks	2,181

**PLAY ON NC** **discoverjacksonnc**  
Fri 10/22/2021 4:55 am PDT

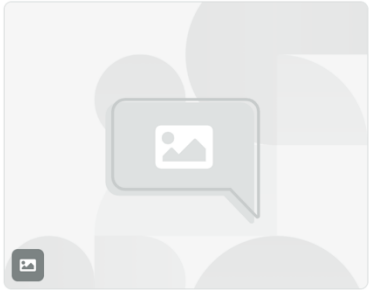
Elk can frequently be spotted along the Oconaluftee River Trail! 🦌 Find it on our website. Link in Bio. 📄  
@jeaniebeach



<b>Total Engagements</b>	<b>2,691</b>
Likes	2,555
Comments	32
Saves	104

**D** **discoverjacksonnc**  
Wed 10/6/2021 5:35 pm PDT


During the fall elk can be seen in Cherokee at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. Learn more on our website. Link in Bio. 🦌 📄 @j\_kreiss



<b>Total Engagements</b>	<b>2,425</b>
Likes	2,332
Comments	14
Saves	79

**PLAY ON NC** **discoverjacksonnc**  
Mon 10/4/2021 3:46 pm PDT

It's October which means fall colors are here! 🍂 Check out our color forecast and best times to visit in our 'Fall Adventure Itinerary' Link in Bio. 📄 @wncphototours



<b>Total Engagements</b>	<b>1,901</b>
Likes	1,823
Comments	12
Saves	66

## **Blogs**

Authored two blogs in October:

[Five Waterfalls to Explore This Fall in the NC Mountains](#) – 10/15/2021

[Your Mountain Home for the Holidays](#) – 10/29/2021

## **E-News**

Authored e-Newsletter for October. Deployed on 10/13/2021

[The Leaves are Falling, The Mountains are Calling](#)