

SCOTT COUNTY TOURISM PLAN

Acknowledgments

This tourism strategic plan is the outcome of comprehensive discussion by various representatives, business owners, organization leaders and other Scott County stakeholders, all with an interest in the development and promotion of tourism as a significant economic development effort for Scott County. Gratitude is expressed to all individuals that participated in the planning process:

Jill Alley – Eastman Credit Union
Charlie Green – Scott County Regional Horse Association
Rufus Hood – Scott County Administrator
Chris Starnes – Lenowisco Planning District Commission
Jay Dixon – Southwest Virginia Community Foundation
Bob Barker – Scott County Economic Development Authority
Lisa McCarty – Scott County Virginia Star
Danny Parks – Scott County Board of Supervisors
Rex McCarty – The Homeplace
Pat Osborne – Scott County Lavender
Jan Jenkins - Estillville Bed and Breakfast
Steve Brooks – Clinch Coalition
Bob Etherton – Scott County Tourism Committee
Glen Broadwater- Kilgore Fort House
Rick Miller – Appalachian Power Company
B.V. Madhavani – Travel Inn
Becky Bryant – Town of Nickelsville
Penny Horton – Scott County EDA/ Chamber of Commerce
Martha Newbourne – Farmer
Sally Kelly – Scott County Tourism Committee
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Ray Kilgore – the Perfect Pair Antique Mall
Faye Metzl
Helen Smith – The Ivy Cottage
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Background – Past Tourism Efforts

Scott County is recognized as one of the most progressive localities within Southwest Virginia in regards to tourism development and promotion.

- _ Development and distribution of a tourism brochure and calendar of events
- _ Extensive participation in the Jamestown Community Program
- _ Consistent advertising and promotion through regional tourism efforts such as the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority and the Blue Ridge Travel Association

- _ Supported growth and development of Natural Tunnel State Park
- _ Supported the building of the Block House with a new Interpretive Center
- _ Supported the building of new cabins at Natural Tunnel State Park
- _ Completion of several projects through the leadership of the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association
- _ Receipt of funding for the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Interpretive Center
- _ Creation of Fincastle Turnpike Heritage Driving Loop
- _ Completion of expansion to the Carter Family Fold and funding for a museum
- _ Designated loops of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail
- _ Support and growth of the Scott County Horse Park and horse trails
- _ Completion of the Wayside Overlook on US 23
- _ Designated on the Wilderness Road: Virginia's Heritage Migration Route
- _ Participated in promotions of Scott County with the National VACO event.
- _ Participated and supported the Crooked Road Music Trail

Following is the total visitor expenditure amounts spent by tourist visiting Scott County over past five years:

FY 2003 - \$11,163,763

FY 2004 - 11,961,369

FY 2005 - 12,848,027

FY 2006 - 13,598,707

Background – Development of this Plan

In the past, the tourism efforts of Scott County have been guided mainly by a strong partnership with the EDA, Chamber of Commerce and Scott County Tourism Committee. While those efforts have been extremely productive, the increase of tourism activities within the county, the region and in Virginia overall, encouraged the Tourism Committee to consider a new organized and planned effort for tourism development and promotion. The Tourism Committee agreed to take the steps to work on a County wide tourism strategic plan. Various representatives of the tourism sector were invited to take part in a series of strategic planning sessions held on September 13, 20 and 27 at the Community Services building in Gate City.

FUTURE GROWTH FOR SCOTT COUNTY

The Tourism Committee recognizes that our main audience is the tourism businesses in Scott County that depend on tourism visitation to generate revenue and jobs. The Tourism Committee and planning participants recognize the numerous initiatives and momentum already in progress in Scott County. The future of this growth will multiply with the building of new attractions including the Daniel Boone Interpretive Center, the Gate City Performing Arts Center, the future development of the Carter Family Fold Museum, the additions to the Scott County Regional Horse Park, initiatives at Natural Tunnel State Park, continued driving trail projects such as: Crooked Road, Artisan Trails, Wilderness Road and Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail. The product development momentum and continued expansion of tourism justifies the creation of a tourism

director's position in Scott County to support the Tourism Committee, work to assist existing businesses and implement a tourism program to increase visitation, increase local revenue, and provide assistance to tourism related businesses.

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

As a key component of the planning process, the participants discussed their vision of the county in 5 years. The mission and vision statements were developed for the purpose of moving forward during the next 5 years to increase the number tourism visitation, their length of stay and their amount of spending in Scott County.

MISSION: The mission of the Tourism Program in Scott County is to capitalize on and preserve our natural, historical, cultural and recreational resources in a way that will increase tourism revenue.

VISION: To become a premier tourism destination by increasing revenues, encouraging local involvement and investment, and continually improving our product to entice tourist to our community.

Goal 1: Recognizing the increased momentum of tourism growth in Scott County, develop a strong Tourism Program with clear objectives and a well defined role for the Tourism Committee to increase the economic impact of tourism in Scott County.

Objectives 1: Create and hire a tourism director's position to assist with the work load to implement the tourism program and assist the tourism committee.

1. *Action Item: BOS will request the Tourism Committee to create a job description and develop a work plan for a tourism director to support the work of the Tourism Program. Upon completion, the Tourism Committee will conduct a search and hire a tourism director.*

Time Line: November 2007 – May 2008

2. *Action Item: BOS will create a line item in the budget for the tourism program to include the operation of a tourism staff position, dollars for cooperative partnerships with regional and state tourism initiatives, (Crooked Road, Wilderness Road, Artisan Trails, Daniel Boone) and dollars for marketing and promoting the county.*

Time Line: January – March 2008

Objective 2: Hold an Annual Tourism Summit with the members of the Board of Supervisors to develop short and long term planning and budget for the tourism program in conjunction with the Tourism Committee, EDA and Chamber.

Action Item:

1. The Tourism Committee will develop a program for the summit, to build a long range plan that will increase tax revenue, private investors and promotion to increase the economic benefits from tourist expenditures.

Time Line: September of 2008

Goal 2. Implement an Educational/Communication Program for all stakeholders in the tourism industry.

Objective 1: To increase the capability to properly host visitors to the community, the Tourism Program will provide customer training, local information tours, and hospitality training in order to provide better services and information to tourists.

Action Items:

1. The Tourism Committee will utilize the Virginia Tourism Corporation and local colleges/universities to offer customer service training to all tourism related businesses in the county.

Time Line – March-April of 2008

2. The Tourism Committee will provide a local FAM tour for the front line employees of the tourism industry to create more local knowledge of the attractions and develop better skills of directing tourist to county attractions and facilities.

Time Line – March – April of 2008

Objective 2: Educate the community about the value of tourism in order to increase community receptivity and involvement.

Action Items:

1. Blitz the area with presentations on the economic impact and benefits of the tourism industry. (Civic Clubs, High Schools, Businesses)

2. Create a tourism presentation that can be used by the tourism Committee and volunteers that showcases the economic benefits of tourism

3. Create a survey sheet for community input to gather more information from community stakeholders

Time Line – May- December of 2008

Objective 3:

Provide professional tourism related seminars to broaden the base of tourism providers, private investors or expansion of existing business owners.

Action Items:

1. *Work with Virginia Tourism Corporation, local colleges and universities to develop workshops that would assist business owners and investors.*
2. *Utilize Extension workshops on how to start tourism related businesses.*
3. *Host and participate in the Entrepreneur Express workshops*

Time Line - Fall of 2008

Goal 3: Develop a marketing plan with the necessary marketing tools to promote the tourism assets of the county.

Objective 1: Provide Visitor Services that will enhance the visitor's experience to the county, entice them to visit more attractions and encourage them to overnight and eat meals in the county.

Action Items:

1. *Create more outlets for tourism information distribution in the county.*
2. *Create tourism visitor's guide/maps/brochures highlighting the attractions, restaurants, accommodations, driving trails, etc.*
3. *Create packages and suggested getaways for history, outdoor, cultural themes.*
4. *Develop a plan to update and modernize the web site. Link to the tourism industry to increase point of sale. Include the calendar of events.*

Time Line – January – December 2008

Objective 2: Create a marketing committee, within the Tourism Committee, that will develop and implement an advertising campaign that would draw international, national and regional visitors

Action Items:

1. *Partner with regional, state and national campaigns to utilize co-op opportunities to launch an ad campaign promoting Scott County tourism assets. (printed materials)*
2. *Implement Signage/billboard program to increase visitation.*
3. *Develop creative brochures and maps, and a comprehensive distribution plan.*

Time Line - January – May 2008

Objective 3: Develop and maintain a tourism web site that would increase tourism visitation, provide tourism related information and links to tourism businesses.

Action Items:

1. *Seek funding for web site manager to maintain and grow a tourism web site.*
2. *Web Site linked with international web sites*

Time Line - January – December 2008

Objective 4: Establish a comprehensive network of information outlets

Action Items:

1. *Provide 24 hour unmanned kiosk*
2. *Provide a manned visitor center with funding from the BOS*
3. *Provide tourism information at establishments in the county*

Time Line - January – May 2008

Goal 4. Create services and plans that would enable Product Development of existing and new tourism businesses

Objective 1: Support tourism initiatives and projects that will enhance and increase the number of the tourism businesses and opportunities for visitors to Scott County.

Action Items:

1. *Continue to provide infrastructure that will enable growth. (Water, sewer, roads, broadband...)*
2. *Provide budget, infrastructure and staff support for tourism initiatives: Crooked Road, Daniel Boone Interpretive Center, Carter Family Fold, Natural Tunnel Blockhouse Interpretive Center, Gate City Arts Center, Horse Park, festivals and events*
3. *Support and encourage entrepreneurs to invest in tourism businesses by dedicating areas as Tourism Enterprise Zone to assist private investment.*

Time Line – 5 years

Objective 2: Increase the amount of outdoor recreational opportunities by improving the infrastructure throughout the county.

Action Items:

1. *Develop a plan to work on more public river access for fishing and boating experiences.*
2. *Develop biking/hiking/horseback riding trails and better trail heads to increase users to these facilities.*
3. *Work to provide county wide directional signs to “hot spots” to enable the tourists to find trail heads and river access points.*

Time Line – 5 years

Objective 3: Create zoning/land use planning for future tourism development

Action Items:

- 1. Develop a trail and trail head plan to increase outdoor recreational access to rivers, greenways, rails to trails and other trail use.*
- 2. Create the capacity of local officials to enable a one stop shop for tourism businesses to receive information for business development, assistance with business plans, and information on local ordinances.*

Time Line – 5 years

SITUATION ANALYSIS

As a key component of the planning process, the planning team conducted a Situational Analysis to help determine the current situation of the tourism industry in Scott County. The Analysis required the planning team to determine tourism assets, target customers, target location of those customers and a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.) Following is the result of the analysis:

TARGET AUDIENCE

The participant of the strategic planning session listed the following target audience:

Youth Groups

Historian/Educators

Race Fans

Outdoor Recreation:

Hikers, hunters, fishermen, horseback riders, mountain bikers, bird watchers, hang gliders, Harley Hog Riders, and Golf

RV Campers

Railroad Fans

Senior Tours

Music Lovers

Crafters

Fall Foliage – nature lovers, Scenic driver

“City Slickers” Vacationers

Group meetings/retreats/corporations

Agri-tourism - cattle, horse, sheep

Antiquing

Health Care

Weddings

Garden Clubs

Reunions/Relatives

TARGET LOCATION

The participants agreed that a 4 hour footprint is a driving target market for Scott County Geographic Area of Current Visitors

States: TN, KY, NC, WVA, VA, NY, TX, OH

Routes: I-26, I-81, I-75, US 23, US 58
Global: Europe, Canada, Asia, Ireland, Scotland, Mexico
Cities: Tri-Cities, Knoxville, Asheville, Atlanta, Orlando, DC Area

PRODUCTS:

The participants identified the following products that currently exist in Scott County:

- Music
- Food/Farm Products
- Antiques
- Rich History
- Arts/Crafts
- Recreation
- “Folk Products”
- Brochures for tourist
- Caterers
- Horse Park

Listed below are the products identified as “NEEDS” in Scott County.

- Lodging
- Gift Shops
- Museums
- Sit down restaurants
- Sporting good supplies
- Guides for outdoor recreation
- Local souvenirs for purchase
- Maps of the county
- Book Store with local books of interest
- Music Venues/Stages
- Developed Trail Heads
- Agriculture Expo Center
- More Stables/Barns along horse trails

SERVICES:

The participants identified the following services that currently exist in Scott County:

- Beautiful scenery, mountains, rivers, etc.
- Strong Chamber of Commerce with Web Site
- Information kiosks
- Wayside overlooks
- Natural Tunnel State Park Interpretive Staff
- Partnership with Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority
- Motivated Citizens and Leaders
- Penny Horton (She gets a star!)

The participant identified the following services that are “NEEDED” in Scott County:

- Hospitality Training for tourism industry
- Maps of the county routes and attractions, available everywhere

Tourism office operating daily with staff, located centrally
Tourism Director
Mixed Beverage availability
Lodging and Restaurants
Well marked sites
Need volunteers involved in the “tourism story”
Better roads (Rt. 65 – Clinch River Hwy)
Adequate water and sewer for tourism development (cabins, lodges, hotels etc.)
County wide Anti Litter Program

SWOT

The discussion and identification of SWOT - S (Strengths) W (Weaknesses) O (Opportunities) and T (Threats) was used as a key method in developing a tourism plan for Scott County. Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors, while Opportunities and Threats are external factors.

Strengths: (Internal)

Natural resources
Very rich culture and heritage
Fantastic scenery
Core volunteers
Motivated leadership
Friendliness of people
Political support
Regional growth
New faces
Prior planning
County school system
Chamber of Commerce
Solid Waste Collection
Newspaper
New Businesses
Tri-City MSA
Internet Access
Water and Sewer
Geography
Proximity to TN and NC
Sense of Community

Weaknesses (Internal)

Mixed beverages
Advertising
Resistance to change – narrow vision
Funding
Lack of plan

- Poor communication with tourism, county, chamber
- No big store
- Territorial divisions
- Lack of zoning
- No follow up on past strategic plans
- Public transportation
- Lack of Trained Customer Service
- Poor hospitality attitude
- Road and infrastructure
- Public facilities
- Lack of local interest/involvement
- Labor force

Opportunities (External)

- River opportunities (TVA/DCR)
- Grant sources
- Regional partnerships
- National Area Designation – Federal \$
- Interstate System for US 23
- Kingsport Chamber and Economic Development
- State/Fed Prisons
- Mount Rogers Recreation Area (?)
- Holston Medical Center
- Coordinate festivals with TN and NC
- Marketing opportunities
- Support cooperation with local businesses
- Colleges and universities
- Communication infrastructure
- Coal Industry
- Increased Internet access

Threats (External)

- Neighboring areas have better restaurants, marketing, retail, accommodations, etc...
- Established tourism attractions in other areas
- Few incentives for investment in tourism businesses
- View that tourism is not an industry
 - Environmental radicals
- Weather uncertainty
- Poor directional signs in other states
- Condition of roads leading into Scott County from bordering localities
- Gas prices
- Image
- Topography

INVENTORY OF TOURISM ASSETS

Attractions:

Clinch River
Horse Trails
Horse Park
High Knob
Carter Family Fold
Historical Sites
Natural Tunnel State Park
Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail
Homeplace Museum
Pickin Parlor
Scott County Lavender Farm
Jefferson National Forest: Stony Creek, Devil's Bathtub
Scott County Golf Course
Holston River
Kane Gap
Moccasin Gap
Clinchfield Overlook
Block house
Wayside Overlook
Churches
Bark Camp Lake
Colonial Downs
Fincastle Driving Loop
Birding Wildlife Trails
Coal Heritage Trail
Bush Mill
Kilgore Fort

Restaurants

Mustard Seed
El Portillo
Hob-Nob
Res Stone
Teddy's
Campus
Gage's
Pizza Hut
Pal's
Hardee's
Burger King
Gausthaus Edelweiss
Burgers R Us
Handy Kitchen
Food City Deli

Dawg House
Long John Silver's
McGee's
Broadwater Drug
Quik Stop
Wendy's
McDonald's
Subway
Shell Station Hiltons
Scotty's Restaurant
Scott County Lavender Restaurant
Purple Cow
Colonial Downs
Front Porch Deli

Accommodations

Travel Inn
Cove Ridge at Natural Tunnel State Park
Campground at Natural Tunnel State Park
Cabins at Natural Tunnel (Future)
Appalachian Mountain Cabins
Clinch River Campground
Rikemo Lodge
Ft. Blackmore Methodist Camp
Estillville Bed and Breakfast
Flatwoods Bed and Breakfast
R B Camp sites
Boone's Pointe Cabins
Bark Camp Lake
Jefferson National Forest Primitive Camping
High Knob Lake

Events and Festivals

Carter Music Festival
Clinch Mountain Music Festival
Doc Smitty Festival
Duffield Days
Nickelsville Days
Dungannon 4th of July
Kids Fishing Day
Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Siege
Native American Day
Harvest Festival
Christmas Tide

McConnell Hooley
Pickin' in the Park
Candlelight
Share the Blessings
Bush Mill
Horse Show
Lavender Festival
Clinch River Days
Christmas Parades
Memorial Day
Tour du Possum Creek
Canoe the Clinch
Sheep Sale
Civil War Reenactment
Outfitters Events

Future Possibilities and Wish List

Kilgore Fort House
Daniel Boone Interpretive Visitor Center
Wagon Rides through Kane Gap
Bed and Breakfasts
Winery
Agri-tourism of farms
Fort Blackmore
Clinchport
Clinch River Access Points
Restaurants
ATV Trails
Cabins/Lodges
Historic Downtown Designation for Gate City
Agri-Tourism
National Area Designation
Campgrounds
Hunting and Fishing Lodges
Guided Tours
River Adventures
Bike/Hike Trail
Movie Theater
Horseback Riding
Caving

CONCLUSION

The Scott County Board of Supervisors, Tourism Committee, EDA and Chamber of Commerce recognize the significance of tourism, its economic impact, and related contributions to the quality of life for Scott County residents. The steps that have been taken by officials in the year's prior to the completion of this tourism strategic plan serve as evidence of that recognition.

This plan will be implemented by the staff of Scott County, the EDA, the Tourism Committee and the Chamber. However, future input from the tourism industry, organizations, civic groups, and other community members will continue to be accepted and considered.

To encourage progress toward the marked timelines, this plan should be reviewed by the Scott County Tourism Committee monthly. Upon each review, any adjustments that need to be made to this plan can be discussed. Once a majority of the targets have been met, a new or updated plan will be developed.

Using this plan as guidance, Scott County is expected to make significant progress toward the development and promotion of tourism. It is imperative that the plan be referenced consistently as tourism related discussion occur and as decisions are made. This plan will also serve as a reference document for tourism entrepreneurs and businesses that are considering locating within Scott County.