



COUNTY OF
BATH
Make Your Dreams Come True

Tourism Development Plan | Building Our Tourism Economy

Developed with assistance by:



Officially Adopted on:
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Lodging		
	Jonah Windham	Vine Cottage Inn
	Pam Stidham	Hidden Valley B&B
	John Cowden	Fort Lewis Lodge
	Kate Loeffler	The Inn at Gristmill Square
	Eileen Judah	The Omni Homestead Resort
	Karen Williams	The Owners Club
	Amanda McGuire	Sycamore Bend
Outdoors		
	Pat Sheridan	US Forest Service
	Charlie Conner	Douthat State Park
	Marek Smith	The Nature Conservancy
Retail		
	Lori Skeens	Ashwood Station
Dining		
	Kyle Krieger	Les Cochons d'Or
	Kate Loeffler	The Waterwheel Restaurant
	Caryl Cowden	Fort Lewis Lodge
Business		
	Cynthia Rudnick	Natural Realty/Chamber of Commerce
Arts/Culture		
	Shawn Puller	Garth Newel Music Center
	Barbara Buhr	Warm Springs Gallery
Creative Team		
	David Mikula	Mikula Harris
	Susan Payne	Payne Design Group
Community		
	Beth Rogers	Farmers' Market
	Michael Wildasin	Community Volunteer

The overall planning process was facilitated and this plan was framed by the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) Partnership Marketing division, with the assistance and input of the County of Bath Office of Tourism and Economic Development and other participating stake holders.

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Background

The County of Bath Office of Tourism was established August 16, 2010. The department and its services are funded by a Transient Occupancy Tax also known as a Lodging Tax. The County assesses a 4% Transient Occupancy Tax. 2% is dedicated to the marketing and capital needs of the tourism initiative and 2% goes directly to the General Fund. The County also assesses a 4% meals tax. Those funds go directly to the General Fund and are not available to the Office of Tourism.



Prior to the establishment of the Office of Tourism, the County of Bath Chamber of Commerce managed the marketing of the County. It was with the full cooperation and support of the Chamber and its members that the Office of Tourism was established. The Chamber of Commerce and its members have been an integral part in the development and success of the initiative.

The primary goal of any tourism initiative is to increase the number of visitors to the area so that the tourism/business community can enjoy increased revenues through the expenditure of tourism dollars. This plan builds upon Bath County's first tourism plan, prepared by Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development (David Nutter) in 2010. The following goals were recommended as part of that plan:

- Enhance coordination and communication between various tourism stakeholders in the County
- Promote Bath County's many outdoor activities in a way that makes it easier for visitors to access and enjoy
- Promote existing events and festivals
- Promote the music and cultural heritage of Bath County
- Enhance tourist based industries in Bath County
- Enhance opportunities for motoring visitors

As a result of that plan, an Office of Tourism was established, and the office/staff worked and focused on the recommended goals and have completed the following specific initiatives and tasks during the first four years of operation:

- The development of a new tourism logo, marketing message and brand to represent the County of Bath
- Taking advantage of the already established: www.DiscoverBath.com, the Office of Tourism redesigned and updated the tourism website
- Developed new marketing materials, brochures, maps and signage
- Built brand awareness and promotion of the County of Bath and its' assets as a tourism destination through strategic placement of print advertising and television media

- Completed improvements and enhancements to gazebo containing visitor information in partnership with the US Forest Service and the Nature Conservancy
- Built awareness of tourism assets through strategic partnerships which allow us to maximize exposure of our message. Our ongoing tourism partnerships and initiatives:
 - Fish Virginia First (Outdoor)
 - The Virginia's Western Highlands Artisan Trail (Regional Artisan Crafts)
 - The Virginia's Western Highlands (Regional Tourism)
 - Scenic 39 (Regional and Interstate Tourism)
 - Fields of Gold (Agritourism)
 - Bike the Valley (Outdoor)
- Built awareness of tourism assets through community support and involvement; recognizing that the best agent of information is the community. Working with the community to develop events, programs and festivals that are important to and supported by the community:
 - Allegheny Mountain Radio Steering Committee (WCHG)
 - The County of Bath Arts Association
 - The County of Bath Historical Society
 - The County of Bath Parks and Recreation
 - The County of Bath Chamber of Commerce
 - Department of Conservation and Recreation (Douthat State Park)
 - Garth Newel Music Center
 - Ingalls Field and the Airport Authority
 - Mountain Valley Players
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - The Virginia Hot Springs Trust
 - Warm Springs Garden Club
 - United States Forest Service (Warm Springs Ranger District)
- Built upon established festivals and created new festivals to promote the County, encouraged community participation and promoted extended stay by tourists visiting the area to attend:
 - Allegheny Mountain Radio Bluegrass Jamboree
 - The Farmers' Market
 - The Virginia Blues and Jazz Festival and other Garth Newel Events
 - The County of Bath Chamber of Commerce Triathlon
 - Wings and Wheels
 - The Harvest Moon Festival
 - Hay Bale Decorating Contest
 - Photo Contest "Picture This!"
 - The Old Dairy Heritage Festival
 - Mountain Strings and Arts Festival
 - Warm Springs Mountain Challenge
 - Plein Air Festival
- Provided status and update information to the lodging and retail community weekly about activities of interest to lodging and retail or specific tourism events:
 - Weekly newsletter identifying retail and restaurant hours of operation, information about events and activities taking place during the weekend, announcement of new retail and restaurant operations, outlet for community groups like the library

and the historical society to inform guests of special programs, gallery openings, etc.

- Provided up to date information online regarding event activities through the use of:

The County of Bath Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram and a significant online presence on the following websites:

www.DiscoverBath.com

www.Virginia.org

www.Scenic39.com

www.vawesternhighlands.com

www.artisanscenterofvirginia.com

www.wingsandwheelsbathcountyva.com

- Maximized tourism dollars through successful application for grant support:

Awarded three VTC Marketing Leverage Grant Awards totaling (\$40,000)

Rural Area Schools Grant (\$38,000)

- Worked with professional tourism associations to determine best practices and promote the County through publications, newsletters and guidebooks from those agencies.
The County of Bath Office of Tourism works closely with:

Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance (MATPRA)

The Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC)

The Shenandoah Valley Travel Association (SVTA)

The South Eastern Tourism Society (STS)

The Virginia Hotel and Travel Association (VHTA)

Virginia's Western Highlands Travel Council (VWHTC)

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)

Shenandoah Valley Partnership (SVP)

Coinciding with the previously highlighted efforts are steadily increasing travel impact numbers. The following domestic travelers spending estimates for The County of Bath were conducted by the Research Department of the U.S. Travel Association (formerly known as TIA).

	2010	2011	2012	2013	Percent Change
Travel Economic Impacts					
Employment	1,588	1,614	1,613	1,673	3.7%
Expenditures	\$ 215,922,616	\$ 236,220,818	\$ 241,724,502	\$ 250,652,642	3.7%
Local Tax Receipts	\$ 2,751,267	\$ 2,869,495	\$ 2,901,317	\$ 3,052,302	5.2%
Payroll	\$ 27,155,043	\$ 28,035,089	\$ 28,518,841	\$ 30,279,836	6.2%
State Tax Receipts	\$ 6,789,337	\$ 7,090,568	\$ 7,212,072	\$ 7,487,439	3.8%

	2010	2011	2012	2013	Percent Change
Local Excise Tax Rates					
Admissions Excise Tax Rate	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	n/a
Food Service Excise Tax Rate	1 %	4 %	4 %	4 %	n/a
Lodging Excise Tax Rate	4 %	4 %	4 %	4 %	n/a
Local Excise Tax Collection					
Admissions Excise Tax Collected	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	n/a
Food Service Excise Tax Collected	\$ 0	\$ 195,557	\$ 804,380	\$ 879,825	9.4%
Lodging Excise Tax Collected	\$ 468,763	\$ 707,584	\$ 721,982	\$ 823,534	14.1%

Situational Analysis

As a key component of the planning process, the planning team conducted a situational analysis to help determine the goals and strategies of this plan. The analysis required the planning team to determine tourism assets, target customers, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Following is the result of the analysis:

Situational Analysis – Premier Tourism Assets and Lures

A thorough inventory of all tourism related assets in the County of Bath has been completed as part of the planning process and is included in the appendix of this document. However, following is a list of the premier tourism assets within the County of Bath, as identified by stakeholders. These are the premier assets that are assumed to be the primary visitor lures in the area, and those most likely to be featured as primary visitor draws, the key tourism marketing selling points, etc.

Mountains/Natural Resources - During input sessions, it became evident that most stakeholders believe that the mountains and natural assets in the area are the primary visitor draw overall. From outdoor experiences to scenic drives, to pertinent cultural experiences, mountains and natural assets are the apparent primary tourism asset for the County of Bath.

The rural and slower-paced visitor experience was also noted as part of the appeal of the area (not a single stoplight in the entire County) especially to urban and suburban area markets.

Additionally, the following specific assets and lures were determined:

Hot Springs

- The Omni Homestead Resort
- Garth Newel Music Center

Warm Springs

- The Jefferson Pools
- Antique and Art Galleries
- Historical Society and Genealogy Library

The County of Bath

- Outdoor Recreation – Golf, Skiing, Hiking, Shooting, Water Sports, Fishing, Hunting, Biking
- George Washington and Jefferson National Forest/Public Lands
- Lodging – Mountain Getaways, Cabins, Resorts, Vacation Rentals, Unique B&B's and Inns
- Dining
- Scenic Byways and Roads
- Spas & Wellness
- Lake Moomaw/Gathright Dam
- Douthat State Park
- Dominion Back Creek
- Hidden Valley Recreation Area
- Plein Air Festival
- Bath County Art Show
- Warm Springs Mountain Preserve
- Coursey Springs State Fish Hatchery



- Gathright Wildlife Management Area
- Ingalls Field Airport

Situational Analysis – Accommodations Asset List

Millboro

Unique Bed and Breakfast Accommodations

Fort Lewis Lodge

Condos, Cottages, Motel and Vacation Rentals

Big Bend Farm

Coffee Pot Lodge

Hemlock Guest House

Cabins and Campgrounds

Aunt Lotti's Cabin

Douthat State Park Cabins and Lodges

Sycamore Bend Cabin and River Retreat

Tuck-Away Cabins

Wilderness Ranch

Warm Springs

Unique Bed and Breakfast Accommodations

Anderson Cottage B&B

Hidden Valley B&B

Hidden Valley Summer Kitchen

Meadow Lane Lodge

The Inn at Gristmill Square

Turtlebrook Farm

Warm Springs Inn

Condos, Cottages, Motel and Vacation Rentals

Alvey Cottage

Bath Villas at the Meadows

Big Lick Retreat

Cabin by the Creek

Clarkson and Wallace Vacation Rentals

Garden Cottage and The Loft

Hemlock Cottage

Meadow Villa at Warm Springs

Roseloe Motel

The Tannery

The Villas at the Meadows

Hot Springs

Resort Properties

The Omni Homestead Resort

Unique Bed and Breakfast Accommodations

King's Victorian Inn

Vine Cottage Inn

Condos, Cottages, Motel and Vacation Rentals

Creek Side Apartment
 Hemlock Guest House
 Hillcrest Motel
 King's Boxwood Cottage
 King's Canary Cottage
 Main Street Apartment
 Natural Retreats
 Owners Club at the Homestead
 Winding Ridge

Situational Analysis – Potential Niche Markets

Along with the thorough inventory of all tourism related assets, stakeholders were asked to determine a list of the potential niche or trendy assets within the County of Bath. Such assets were discussed and determined as opportunities to develop and or market to increase potential visitor interest, extend stays of visitors, reach new markets, etc. Determined were the following concepts and ideas:

- Garth Newel Music Center (Chamber Music and other Varieties of Music)
- The Jefferson Pools
- Scottish tradition of the County of Bath
- Determination, development and promotion of historic structures
- Self- guided historical tours
- Golf Courses – home of golf in America
- Cooking/Wine Events
- Agritourism
 - Alpaca Farm (farm trail)
 - Farmers Market
- Camping
- Wildflowers
- Birding
- Curvy roads for motorcyclists and sports cars
- Geocaching
- Road Cycling/Mountain Biking
- Hunting
- Fish Hatchery
- 160 miles of Public Hiking Trails
- Equestrian Trails
- Fly fishing, Trout Fishing
- Dark skies – Astronomy
- Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing
- Fine arts and photography
- Weddings
- Corporate retreats
- Family reunions
- Health and Wellness
- Antiquing



Situational Analysis - Target Market/Marketing Focus

The following list of target customers were identified by the planning team as individuals or groups that are targeted to have an interest in visiting the County of Bath based on review of the assets/tourism sites within the County:

- Agritourism Visitors
- Artists
- Aviation
- Baby Boomers
- Biking (Mountain and Road)
- Bird Watchers
- City Dwellers
- Cyclists
- Equestrian
- Event Attendees
- Fishermen
- Foodies/Culinary/Organic
- Gen X
- Genealogists
- Geologists
- Golfers
- Hikers
- History Buffs
- Horticulturalists
- Hunters
- International Travelers
- Millennials
- Motorcycle and Car Enthusiasts
- Music Lovers
- Real Estate Prospects
- Scenic Drivers/Leaf Peepers
- Shoppers for Antiques
- Skiers
- Star Gazers
- Thru-Travelers (authentic-experience seekers)
- Water sports (boating, kayak, canoe, water skiing)
- Wellness Seekers
- Wilderness Experiences
- Writers

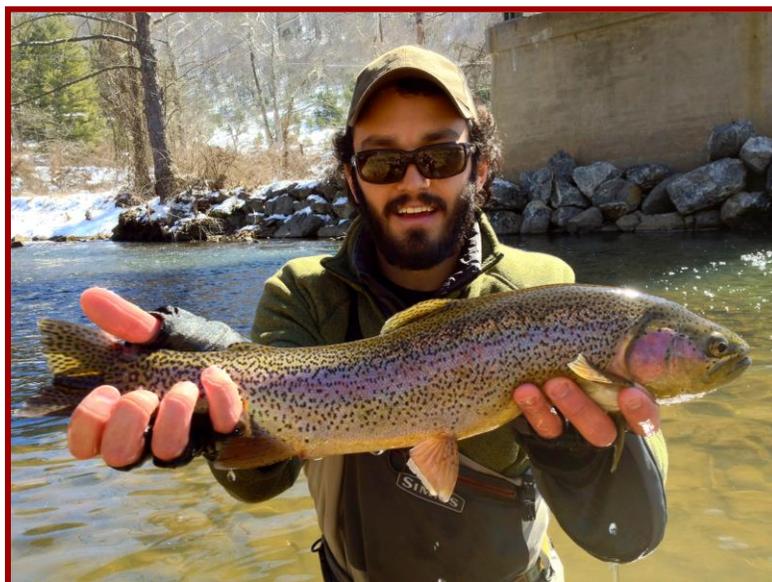


At the time of the development of this plan, Bath County was researching visitor profile and target market data through the services of Mikula-Harris, Inc. A visitor conversion study, with direct input and responses from visitors and potential visitors to Bath County was analyzed to determine the following:

Key target markets are “drive distance” communities within a 5-6 hour drive. Bath County's target audience is looking for short trips, 2-3 days on the weekend. This audience is a repeat audience and can be incentivized to return several times throughout the year. Since Bath County has been marketed as a four season destination, the opportunities to market a variety of experiences within the County that encourage return visitation, exist.

Current target marketing includes key markets of Charlottesville, Richmond, Roanoke, Washington D.C., and the secondary markets of Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Raleigh and the state of Ohio. These markets are supported by research from VTC visitor profile data of the traveling public and the recently conducted conversion study. The following information was collected in the recent conversion study by the County of Bath Tourism Office and Mikula Harris:

- The largest number of respondents (37%) said a weekend getaway was their reason for visiting Bath County. A smaller, but still significant number (17%) said a weeklong vacation was the reason for their most recent visit.
- When asked "How likely are you to return to Bath County?" On a 1 to 10 scale, with 10 being very likely, 70% of those surveyed answered 9 or 10. The overall weighted average was 8.33
- When we asked "How likely are you to recommend Bath County to family and friends as a place to visit?" the overall weighted average was 8.28.
- ZIP Codes of survey respondents were on a map during the process. The DC, Baltimore is undeniably the strongest feeder market, followed by elsewhere in Virginia including Richmond, Hampton Roads and the Shenandoah Valley. There were also numerous respondents from the Carolinas and Georgia. This supports the conclusion about the 5-6 hour drive radius, but it also encourages us to perhaps cast wider net. Here is a link to the map: <http://www.easymapmaker.com/map/edc17a5c3abe106091f66c4f74f6ae41>
- Respondents were not asked about income or education, but did ask about age. 18% of respondents were 65+; 27% were 55-65; 22% were 46-55; another 22% were 36-45. That's fairly evenly split between all of this age brackets. It drops off to 11% between the ages of 26-35, which is less but still significant.
- When asked what the primary purpose of their visit was, the #1 reason as mentioned earlier was weekend getaway, but #2 was to attend a festival or special event. This speaks highly of the caliber of festivals and events taking place in the county.
- Based on data analyzed, Bath County's target guest is median income \$75,000+, college educated, couples with or without children. Advertising is skewed to female audiences because research confirms that women are predominately in charge of planning, and deciding on vacation activities and destinations.



Situational Analysis - SWOT

The discussion and identification of SWOT - S (Strengths) W (Weaknesses) O (Opportunities) and T (Threats) was used as a key method in developing this plan for the County of Bath. Strengths and Weaknesses are mainly internal factors, while Opportunities and Threats are primarily external factors. Most goals and strategies spawned from SWOT discussion and consideration.

Strengths

- Current Tourism Leadership
- Board of Supervisors Support
- Authentic Product
- Natural Resources
- Strong Partnerships with Both Private Industry and Regional Groups
- Marketing/Brand Direction
- Clean start for Marketing/Branding
- Community's Hospitality
- Perception of Importance of Tourism
- Economic Development Plan
- Music/Arts
- Mountain Scenery
- Culinary Offerings
- Diversity/Social Economic



Weaknesses

- No Formal Visitor Center
- No Park/Community Center
- Lack of Affordable Housing as it relates to the workforce
- Limited Workforce Industry Training
- Youth Drain from County
- Limited Retail Experiences
- Visitor Way Finding
- No Sidewalks for Pedestrians
- Technology Weak in Many Areas
- Lack of Common Services
- Limited Number of Volunteers and Resources
- Poorly Located Chamber of Commerce
- Dependent on The Omni Homestead Resort
- Lack of Tourism Industry Involvement in Government Meetings
- Seen as a Weekend Destination
- Frequent Speed Changes Throughout the County
- Lack of Community Awareness

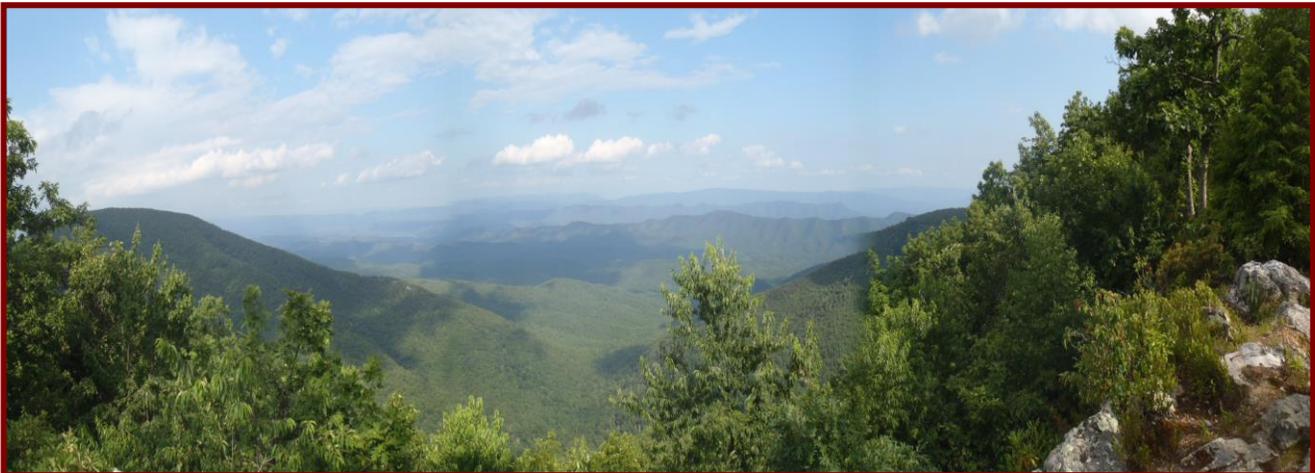
Opportunities

- Opportunity to Promote Fall and Spring Colors
- Opportunity to Promote Elevation Temperatures
- Development of Affordable Lodging
- Continue to Promote Spas/Wellness
- Capitalize on existing events, partnerships
- Potential Partnership with School System
- Promote "Staycations"

- Evaluate Film Opportunities for County
- Location is Attractive to Urban, City Dwellers
- Potential Partnership with Outside Investors
- Continued Trail Development
- Potential Future Community Building
- Continued Utilization of Virginia Tourism Corporation Services
- Expansion of Current Partnerships
- Creation of Economic Development Office
- Opportunity to Promote Lifestyle Choice

Threats

- Lack of Communication Infrastructure
- Potential Loss of Government Support
- Inadequate Workforce
- Community Resistance to Change
- Potential Changes to The Omni Homestead Resort
- Loss of The Jefferson Pools
- Lack of Downtown Experiences
- Limited Parking for Visitors
- Potential Problems with Virginia's Logos and Acquiring Signage
- Frequent Speed Changes Throughout County
- Exodus of Youth Population
- Lack of Educational Opportunities for Youth



Mission, Vision, and Values

During the process of developing this plan, the planning team gave careful consideration, and conducted in-depth discussion, regarding the tourism mission and vision for the future of the County of Bath. During that discussion, reoccurring and validated thoughts, phrases, and words were combined into the following profound statements:

Mission Statement

The Tourism **Mission Statement** of the County of Bath is:

To develop and promote our natural, cultural, and historical assets, to grow and diversify our economy while enhancing our community's quality of life.

Vision Statement

The Tourism **Vision Statement** of the County of Bath is:

To be Virginia's premier mountain destination.



Goals

Product | Pillars | Partnerships | Promotions | Policies

The goals of this plan are framed to coincide with the objectives of DRIVE Tourism: Virginia's State Tourism Development Plan, available for viewing at www.vatc.org/stp. Many of the established goals for the County of Bath are in accordance or are validated by the DRIVE Tourism's Products, Pillars, Partnerships, Promotions, and Policies objectives, as noted in the following.

Strategies, Targets, and Measure

Each goal includes specific strategies, targets, and measures. Utilizing the marked measures and targets will result in significant progress and potential achievement of each identified strategy.

DRIVE Tourism (Virginia's State Tourism Development Plan)

In 2013, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP ("PwC") was engaged by the Virginia Tourism Corporation ("VTC") to develop a statewide tourism plan that will guide the development of Virginia's tourism industry and serve as a blueprint for communities to develop products that will provide a competitive edge while also preserving the authenticity of its regions and the Commonwealth. That plan enables communities to build upon Virginia's diverse tourism assets and success as a destination while preparing it to compete in the global economy. Ultimately, the plan was designed to increase economic development through tourism.



That plan also identifies a vision for the Commonwealth's tourism industry and establishes a set of desired outcomes, objectives, and strategies for both the public and private sectors to achieve this vision. This direction for tourism identifies the key lures or areas of focus for tourism products on statewide and regional bases to increase competitiveness. It also sets a framework for the tourism infrastructure, partnerships, promotions, and policies needed to support tourism growth.

This plan for Bath County utilizes many of the recommendations within the DRIVE Tourism plan and supports many of the identified strategies. Specific examples of how the two plans intersect and validate efforts at the local, regional, and statewide levels are noted in the *Strategy Validation* sections in each goal area below. The entire DRIVE Tourism plan and regional section in which Bath County is included can be viewed at www.vatc.org/stp. The DRIVE Tourism plan is an ongoing resource for tourism office staff, County leadership, and stakeholders as they move forward with tourism development.

Goal One – Improve Tourism Product Offerings

Situational Analysis - General Observations:

- County needs a visitor center and community center to provide a place for visitors to go and get information along with being a gathering place for the community
- A strategy needs to be developed for developing and maintaining trail systems throughout the County
- Support additional Downtown development to provide community and visitors with additional restaurants and a unique retail shopping experience
- Lake Moomaw and Douthat State Park are major assets in the area
- Support any potential business/entrepreneur development of a winery or craft brewery in the County

Two-Year / Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

- Expand current events and festivals such as “Wings and Wheels”
 - Target/Measure –Research of potential concepts, dates, etc. and consideration of expanding current events
 - Responsible parties – Office of Tourism

Five-Year / Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

- Support any long-term downtown development planning focused on expansion and enhancement of current downtown experiences within the County
- Shape marketing and development efforts to help make The County of Bath known for its music and arts experiences
- Partner with the US Forest Service to develop the Great Eastern Trail
- Develop and plan a new signature festival such as an “Experience Bath” event



Strategy Validation

Many of the previous strategies and initiatives are validated and coincide with the DRIVE Tourism plan (Virginia's State Tourism Development Plan) including but not limited to the following DRIVE Tourism plan strategies:

- Foster a sense of community through development of the arts
- Encourage the development of enterprises that enhance and balance the village center's current offerings and increase vibrancy
- Build reputation as a destination for dining and continue to develop unique restaurant experiences
- Develop and enhance concentrated arts experiences
- Enhance and develop events which promote the key visitor themes

Goal Two – Build up Tourism Infrastructure Pillars

Situational Analysis - General Observations:

- No formal place for visitors to go and get information about the County
- Limited way finding signage
- Limited modes of transportation for visitors – shuttle services
- A workforce education program needs to be developed for local schools, community colleges, etc.
- Modes of transportation (taxis, pedestrian friendly) need to be evaluated for visitors to get around the County
- Public areas for river access need to be identified
- Stewards for outdoor recreation opportunities
- Support economic development office efforts to evaluate the need for additional retail and common services for community and visitors– dry cleaners, car wash, etc.



Two-Year / Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

- Develop a hospitality training program to improve customer service throughout the County
 - Target/Measure – Formation of courses by January 2016
 - Responsible parties – Office of Tourism

- Support efforts to improve telecommunications for community, visitors and increase development
 - Target/Measure - Increased access to broadband and acquire additional cell phone service throughout the County with set goals by January 2017
 - Responsible parties – Economic Development Building, Planning and Zoning Department, Local Officials, MGW, BARC, TDS, NTELOS
- Construct visitor's center facility and tourist experience with consistent hours to meet state certified center guidelines. Consider incorporating with a community center
 - Target/Measure – Develop overall plan and prioritize plan strategies/tasks by December 2015
 - Responsible parties: Local officials, Office of Tourism,
 - Target/Measure – Groundbreaking by March of 2017
 - Responsible parties: local officials, Office of Tourism



Five-Year / Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

- Develop a larger signage plan to improve visitor way finding
- New visitor center open with state certification
- Work with private sector to develop a shuttle system for visitors

Strategy Validation

Many of the previous strategies and initiatives are validated and coincide with the DRIVE Tourism plan (Virginia's State Tourism Development Plan) including but not limited to the following DRIVE Tourism plan strategies:

- Initiate concerted strategy to improve road transportation for tourism
- Ensure signage and visitor information is visible and available through multiple points
- Reinforce community sense of place
- Enhance training and education of tourism workforce

- Continue to engage in or obtain research on visitors
- Enhance promotion of Virginia to potential tourism investors, businesses, and developers to generate economic development

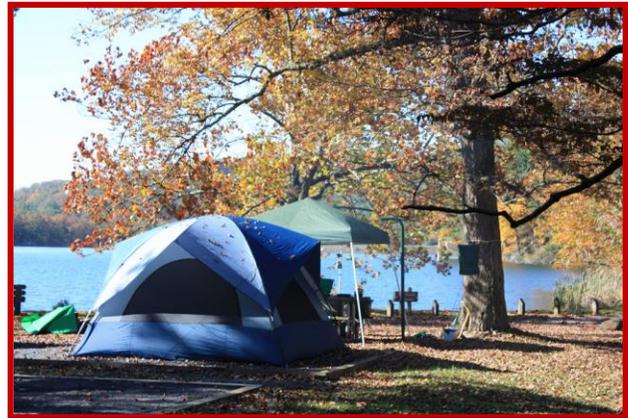
Goal Three – Enhance Tourism Partnerships

Situational Analysis - General Observations:

- Opportunities to expand/strengthen partnerships
- Need more stakeholder gatherings to improve private industry partnerships
- Continue to work with local officials on importance of the tourism industry
- Need to utilize assistance and programs through state agencies
- Explore opportunities to expand arts and music partnerships

Two-Year / Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

- Improve working relationships with private industry partners to increase tourism visitation
 - Target/Measure – Collaborate with local partners on upcoming projects and events to increase tourism.
 - Responsible parties – the County of Bath Office of Tourism, Natural Retreats, The Nature Conservancy, The Omni Homestead Resort, Garth Newel Music Center, Local Citizens
- As an active participant in the Fields of Gold agritourism initiative continue to develop partnership with local farmers to encourage farm tours and agriculture education
- Continue to work with regional and statewide partnerships including Virginia Mountains region, Virginia’s Western Highlands, Route 39, Fish Virginia First, Artisan Trails, neighboring counties and other regional DMOs.
 - Target/Measure – Develop priority list of collaboration opportunities/meetings and follow-through schedule including but not limited to a focus on byway, trails, etc. development and marketing. Ensure that The County of Bath is represented at various partner meetings, within applicable marketing/development efforts, etc.
 - Responsible parties – The County of Bath Office of Tourism



Five-Year / Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

- Enhance relationship with US Forest service to assist with trails, maintenance, enhance public areas and visitor way finding
- Create partnerships with local schools and community colleges for tourism education and workforce development, including focus of tourism entrepreneurship as a career choice

Strategy Validation

Many of the previous strategies and initiatives are validated and coincide with the DRIVE Tourism plan (Virginia's State Tourism Development Plan) including but not limited to the following DRIVE Tourism plan strategies.

- Increase communication, planning, and coordination among government entities
- Develop and enhance communication and partnering among Virginia tourism industry stakeholders

Goal Four – Maximize Tourism Promotions

Situational Analysis - General Observations:

- Need tourism stakeholder gatherings focused on marketing/promotions
- Enhance current consumer website and provide a consistent message to community and visitors
- Explore merchandising opportunities
- Create a strong social media campaign with applicable hashtag (i.e. #discoverbath, #visitbath)
- Research current target market and form a plan to better reach them
- Continue promoting the County as an arts and music destination

Two-Year / Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

- Enhance tourism partnerships focused on marketing/promotions
 - Target/Measure – Work with partnerships to help further tourism marketing for the County, including consideration of opportunities by partners to buy-in or leverage their marketing through cooperative campaigns, social media planning, etc.
 - Responsible parties – local partners, Office of Tourism
- Develop a local advocacy campaign to educate the community on the positive impact of tourism to the community
 - Target/Measure – Create program by July 2015, implementation by January 2016
 - Responsible parties – local schools, community colleges, the County of Bath Office of Tourism
 - Target/Measure – Promote tourism economic impact numbers by creating talking points to share with tourism partners by August of 2015
 - Responsible parties – The County of Bath Office of Tourism
 - Target/Measure – Make announcements for important local government meetings that need tourism representatives present to convey the importance of tourism to the community with implementation by January of 2016
 - Responsible parties: The Chamber of Commerce and the County of Bath Office of Tourism



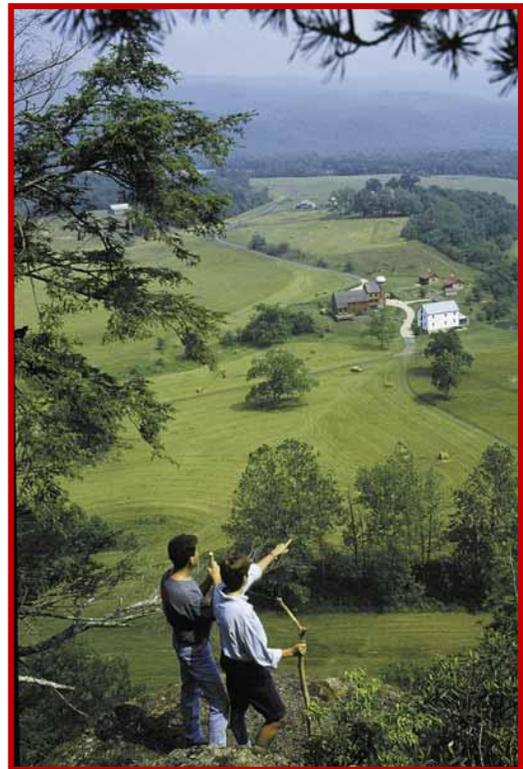
- Target/Measure – Continue to communicate via local media with press releases on important news and milestones for tourism
 - Responsible parties: local media outlets, the County of Bath Tourism
- Develop a “the County of Bath Restaurant Week” campaign to increase local interest and attract visitors to local restaurants
 - Target/Measure – Develop “The County of Bath Restaurant Week” campaign and work with local restaurants to schedule and market by March 2016
 - Responsible parties: The County of Bath Office of Tourism, local restaurants
- Work with the US Forest Service and concessionaire American Land & Leisure to enhance visitor awareness for Lake Moomaw
 - Target/Measure – Develop a marketing strategy to increase visitation to Lake Moomaw
 - Responsible parties: The County of Bath Office of Tourism, US Forest Service, American Land & Leisure

Five-Year / Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

- Work with surrounding communities, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia’s Western Highlands, Fields of Gold, Route 39, etc. to host travel writer and familiarization tours
- Partner with US Forest Service to develop a detailed trail guide for the County
- Collaborate with Virginia Film Office to have major motion picture, television show, etc. considered to be filmed in the County. Leverage exposure through marketing campaign afterwards to attract visitors to filmed sites

Strategy Validation

Many of the previous strategies and initiatives are validated and coincide with the DRIVE Tourism plan (Virginia’s State Tourism Development Plan) including but not limited to the following DRIVE Tourism plan strategies:



- Communicate and inform local and state government officials on tourism benefits and initiatives
- Communicate and inform tourism industry stakeholders, including partners, the business economy, and residents on tourism initiatives and benefits
- Continue to identify and evaluate key geographic and thematic target markets for promotions

Goal Five – Improve Tourism Programs and Policies

Situational Analysis - General Observations:

- Develop tourism zones throughout the County
 - A tourism zone allows for businesses to take advantage of state and local tax credits and deductions not available to businesses elsewhere.



Two-Year / Short Term Strategies, Targets and Measures

- Develop a signage policy to help better visitor way finding
 - Target/Measure – Research current signage policy statewide and for the County of Bath
 - Responsible parties: Office of Tourism
- Support the growth and development of tourism related business/products
 - Target/Measure - Determine geographic target areas for specific tourism business opportunities and support growth/development in those areas
 - Target/Measure – Consider development of tourism zones and other programs in target areas to support entrepreneurship and business development. Zones created by March 2016 if feasible and supported locally
 - Responsible parties: Board of Supervisors, Office of Tourism, Economic Development Authority, Office of Economic Development

Five-Year / Long Term Strategies & Initiatives

- Evaluate and enhance other policies and laws that impact tourism and business development
- Create new signage to improve visitor way finding

Strategy Validation

Many of the previous strategies and initiatives are validated and coincide with the DRIVE Tourism plan (Virginia's State Tourism Development Plan) including but not limited to the following DRIVE Tourism plan strategies:

- Continue to evaluate policies which encourage an attractive tourism business environment
- Explore establishment of assistance program for tourism businesses
- Enforce policy for use of tourism tax revenues collected by localities
- Tourism education and training programs are continued and enhanced

Conclusion

Tourism is growing in recognition as an important aspect of economic development in the County of Bath by area leaders, its Office of Tourism, and its attraction owners/operators. The County's assets provide the basis for tourism as a successful, but carefully planned economic development effort. Implementation of this plan is expected to result in various benefits to its citizens, including increased job and business opportunities, while maintaining quality of life for those citizens.

By the work of the County of Bath Office of Tourism, the representatives of the County of Bath and area citizens, the County can build upon its evident assets and past tourism efforts, to implement this updated tourism development plan, resulting in increased economic activity, improved citizen quality of life, and other benefits. The County of Bath Office of Tourism oversees the implementation of this plan. However, assistance by the County staff and other interested stakeholders (i.e. tourism business operators, civic groups, area leaders) will prove beneficial as assurance that the plan is utilized to its fullest potential.



Appendix

Applicable Documents

Previous Tourism Plan:

The County of Bath's first and most recent tourism plan which contains additional relevant data and information can be found at:

<http://www.bathcountyva.org/assets/BathCountyTourismPlan.pdf>

The County of Bath Comprehensive Plan, Adopted in 2015:

http://www.bathcountyva.org/assets/Bath_County_Comp_Plan_2014-2019_ADOPTED_1.pdf

DRIVE Tourism (Virginia's State Tourism Development Plan):

www.vatc.org/stp

Terms & Definitions

Goals: Broad statements of measurable outcomes to be achieved on behalf of customers

Measures: Meaningful indicators that assess progress towards accomplishment of goals and objectives

Mission Statement: Statement of purpose; fundamental reason for an organization's/tourism effort existence

Opportunities: Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that may have a favorably effect on it

Strengths: Resources or capabilities that can be used to accomplish your mission.

Target: The numerical value of the performance measure you hope to achieve

Target Customers/Tourists: Any person, group or organization receiving that will utilize your tourism related product(s) and/or service(s)

Threats: Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that can negatively affect it

Tourism Assets: Any tourism related product, attraction, site, or promotional effort that is of interest to target customers/tourists

Vision Statement: A word picture of the future that the organization/tourism effort intends ultimately to become or to influence

Way finding: Signs, maps, and other graphic or audible methods used to convey location and directions to travelers

Weaknesses: Deficiencies in resources or capabilities that hinder your ability to be successful