PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA

Doug Arbogast
Rural Tourism Specialist
WVU Extension Service
WILD, WONDERFUL
WEST VIRGINIA

Dave Smaldone
U.S. Spending on Domestic Overnight and Day Trips

45. West Virginia - $2.9 billion, 28,503
37. Mississippi – $6.1 billion, 84,920
30. Kentucky - $8.1 billion, 87,313
18. Maryland – $15 billion, 119,857
14. Ohio – $17.1 billion, 173,437
9. Virginia – $21.7 billion, 215,150
8. Pennsylvania – $23.2 billion, 218,731
1. California – $110.8 billion, 875,841

Source: U.S. Travel Association Impact of Travel on State Economies, 2012
- visitors and locals share spaces
- visitor-community interaction is high
- brand and destination identity are developing

Increased visitor-resident interaction allows these destinations to attract visitors seeking authentic rural tourism experiences by showcasing and preserving rural life, art, culture, and natural beauty, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially and enriching tourism experiences for visitors. Butler (1980)
WHY COLLABORATE?

June 3, 2013 regional tourism leadership meeting New River Gorge

• More exposure to attractions
• Maximizing scarce resources in poorer counties
• Better management
• Increase awareness of resources
• Package regional assets
• Tourism product development
• County lines mean nothing to visitors
Tucker County is a county in the U.S. state of West Virginia. As of the 2010 census, the population was 7,141, making it West Virginia's second-least populous county. Its county seat is Parsons. Wikipedia

County seat: Parsons
Area: 421 mi²
Tucker County then......
Tucker County now....
“there’s a vibe here that people pick up on it’s that vibe that attracts the kind of people that come here it’s just a deep-rooted kind of energy the culture is just a deep-rooted rural culture it’s hard to describe”

Brad Moore – local resident
Study Area: Tucker County, WV; Corridor H completed to Davis, WV 2016
Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

TUCKER COUNTY CULTURAL DISTRICT AUTHORITY.

§1. Legislative Intent.

The Legislature finds and declares that:

(1) The many and varied outdoor recreational activities in Tucker County, West Virginia, have long been an important element in a mature tourism industry for this state.

(2) The two great state parks at Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley, the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the Blackwater Canyon, the Monongahela National Forest making up fifty percent of land in Tucker County, and the towns of Parsons, Thomas, Davis, Hambleton and Hendricks, are sources of pride to all West Virginians and mainstays of the important tourism industry in this state.

(3) Tucker County, West Virginia, is the home to a growing number of artists, artisans and patrons of the performing arts. The burgeoning cultural tourism opportunities offered by the performing arts compliment and enhance the outdoor recreational activities already existing in the area.

(4) There is strong community-based support in Tucker County to encourage, develop and enhance the various aspects of the cultural tourism component of the regional economy. Opportunities exist to create, expand and compliment areas of cultural, historical, archeological and industrial heritage and educational interest in Tucker County.

(5) The creation of additional employment and investment opportunities for the present and future residents of Tucker County is a desirable goal.

§4. General duties and powers.

(a) The Tucker County Cultural District Authority is authorized to:

(1) Plan and execute an ongoing and continuous program for the development and enhancement of artistic, cultural, historical and recreational attractions that will promote culture, education and tourism in Tucker County;
TUCKER COUNTY CULTURAL DISTRICT AUTHORITY

Nature

Heritage

Culture
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. Improving capabilities of leaders, organizations, and interested citizens to address challenges and opportunities will help communities be more prosperous through their own efforts.

The Benedum Foundation promotes the economic well-being and quality of life of West Virginia communities. Specific areas of interest include:

- Activities that engage diverse groups of citizens in the life of the community.
- Efforts that help communities organize, plan, and implement ambitious but achievable improvement strategies.
- Leadership development.
- Programs that improve the effectiveness and accountability of nonprofit and public organizations.

Successful communities don’t just happen—citizens need to learn how to conceive strategies, organize, develop goals, engage citizens, seek professional guidance, secure diverse resources, and execute short and long term projects.
The WVU Tourism Development Team received a grant from the Benedum Foundation to develop a common vision for cultural tourism, link tourism assets, develop a leadership network, and create a Performance Agenda for the Tucker County Cultural District Authority.

**PROJECT GOALS**

The Tucker County Cultural District Authority was authorized by the West Virginia Legislature to plan and execute an ongoing and continuous program for the development and enhancement of artistic, cultural, historical and recreational attractions that will promote culture, education and tourism in Tucker.

**TRANS DISCIPLINARY PARTNERS**

- WVU Extension Service CRED
- WVU Landscape Architecture Faculty
- WVU Graphic Design Faculty
- Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Resources

**PARTICIPATORY PLANNING & SOCIAL DESIGN**

**Methodology**

- Identification and mapping of tourism assets
- Key informant interviews
- Resident attitudes survey
- Visitor preferences survey
- Landscape design/visualization of sites targeted for development
- Economic impact analysis (current and development options)
- Brochure and Interpretive Signage Design
- Identify and design cultural identity for communities and county
- Strategies for Zoning/Smart Growth/Design Guidelines
Survey distributed in fall 2016 to all residents of Tucker County with a valid mailing address = 3,621 addresses.

637 surveys were completed and returned for a 17.6% return rate.

Current assets in Tucker county

CULTURAL TOURISM
3.34

HERITAGE TOURISM
3.78/5

OUTDOOR TOURISM
4.47/5

Assets County Has

Utilization of Assets

Rated on scale of 1-5
1 = strongly disagree
5 = strongly agree
Visitor Survey: Select Comments

• Build it wisely and they will come.
• We come here to get away from the big chain stores and commercial impact that has been increasingly changing the landscape of our home turf.
• If this area would become overrun with tourists then it would lose its uniqueness and charm. I come here to get away from large food chains and urban climate.
• I know that tourism adds revenue for the towns but it will also destroy its charm and atmosphere. I would not come to this area in the future if that would happen.
• Zoning restrictions are crucial to limit unnecessary growth and sprawl.
Management & Development in Tucker County

Long-term planning & managed growth needed
- Residents: 4.38/5
- Visitors: 3.72/5

Uniqueness protected
- Residents: 4.53/5
- Visitors: 4.53/5

Manage growth
Maintain authenticity

What they need

Common vision between communities
- Residents: 2.87/5

Collective identity
- Visitors: 3.33/5

Rated on scale of 1-5
1 = strongly disagree
5 = strongly agree
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key themes revealed include:
- maintain authenticity and sense of place
- need a cultural identity
- establish a common vision
- connect resorts to communities
- connect communities
- coordination of assets and activities
- economic diversification
## Stakeholder Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination Management/Marketing</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>Recreation</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Entrepreneurship</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Heritage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convention and Visitors Bureau</td>
<td>Community Foundation</td>
<td>PRO OnTRAC</td>
<td>Heart of the Highlands</td>
<td>Development Authority</td>
<td>ArtSpring</td>
<td>Development Authority</td>
<td>Historic Landmark Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions and Visitors Bureau</td>
<td>Development Authority</td>
<td>Davis Renaissance</td>
<td>US Forest Service</td>
<td>National Youth</td>
<td>Science Foundation</td>
<td>Eastern Community College</td>
<td>Historical Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural District Authority</td>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>New Historic Thomas</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources</td>
<td>Canaan Valley Resort</td>
<td>Blackwater Falls State Park</td>
<td>Food &amp; Farm Initiative</td>
<td>Alpine Heritage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Commission</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>Hendricks-Hambleton</td>
<td>Blackwater Bike Park</td>
<td>New Historic Thomas</td>
<td>Blackwater Bike Assoc.</td>
<td>WVU Launch Lab</td>
<td>Preservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Commission</td>
<td>Building Commission</td>
<td>Canaan Valley</td>
<td>Friends of the Blackwater</td>
<td>Friends of the Blackwater</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Rec Boards</td>
<td>WVU Launch Lab</td>
<td>Blackwater</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Commission</td>
<td>Canaan Valley Zoning Board</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appalachian Forest Heritage Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“everything from outdoor recreation to the historical spectrums to the arts and crafts to the food, the farms, the coal mining so you know trying to embrace all of that and trying to capture it so that any visitor coming into this county understands the wealth of culture here, that’s a daunting task”
Project Goals

Compile an inventory and map of tourism assets for the region including: lodging, attractions, cultural and heritage resources (national, state, and local significance), natural resources, restaurants, entertainment, activities etc.
DISCOVERING TUCKER CULTURE
AND THEN DESIGNING A BRAND FOR IT............
Pride in hard work spans generations, be it making art, running the Worden Hotel, starting up a new restaurant. Effort and preparation are just as difficult and just as rewarding as surviving the winter at high altitude far from a rescue. Tucker culture is not risk averse.
Multi-faceted
Connected
Community-minded
Sharing
Mining/lumber/RR heritage
Independent
Mountain culture
Farming
Nature
Outdoor recreation
Fishing
Skiing
Hiking
Biking
Stargazing
Creative/Making
Entrepreneurial
Microbreweries
Good food/company
Arts and Music
Historic Architecture
Contain growth
Project Goals

Community Workshops Summer 2016-
Parsons, Canaan Valley, Davis, and Thomas

Participatory Mapping to determine gaps or ‘needs’ and
Priorities to enhance Recreational and Heritage Tourism

Develop and disseminate management alternatives for identified
cultural tourism assets
PRIORITIZE PROJECTS

• Wayfinding
• Blackwater Canyon Trail
• Beginner MTB trail development
• Trail connection between Thomas and Davis
• Opera House
• Shoulder season events
• Restaurants at capacity on weekends
• Snow
Tucker County Cultural District Authority
Performance Agenda 2017
### Destination Management Framework

**County Commission**
- Planning Commission
- CDA
- CVB

**Planning Commission**
- Planning/Compliance
  - Zoning ordinances
  - Design Guidelines
  - Dark Sky Ordinance

**CDA**
- Destination Management
  - Connect
    - Connect communities and cultural initiatives
  - Protect
    - Preserve Cultural Resources
    - General Use Management
  - Monitor
    - Data collection
    - Environmental, social, and economic indicators for success
  - Enhance
    - Cottrill’s Opera House
    - Cultural Identity
    - Signage
    - Development grants
  - Promote
    - Cultural website
    - Cultural asset map
    - Cultural brochures
    - Cultural tours/itineraries
    - Cultural events calendar

**CVB**
- Destination Marketing
  - Visitor’s center
  - Print media
  - Earned media
  - Social media
  - Digital marketing
  - Direct mail
  - Radio
  - Consumer travel shows.
3 Steps to Community Change

1. Organize
2. Vision and Plan
3. Implement

Cultural Coordinator

- Coordinate & Connect Assets
- Coordinate & Connect Communities
- Coordinate & Connect Organizations
- Secure Partners
- Identify Funding
- Write Grants
- Monitor, Evaluate, Update
uncontrolled development typically takes place when local involvement and control of development rapidly declines.

locally provided facilities often disappear being superseded by larger, more elaborate facilities provided by external organizations.

changes in the physical appearance of the area is noticeable and natural and genuine cultural attractions are typically superseded by imported ‘artificial’ facilities.

Butler (1980)
Recreation Economy Resource Guide

For USDA Forest Service, Rural Development and National Institute for Food and Agriculture Field Staff
Aligning Resources to Support the Recreation Industry

USDA
West Virginia University
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development
Forest Service
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
**Regional foresters**
- Lead the land management programs in 9 regions
- Reports directly to the Chief
- Coordinates activities among forests within the region
- Coordinated regional land use planning

**Forest Supervisors**
- Coordinates activities among districts,
- Allocates budget
- Provides technical support to districts
- Report to regional foresters.

**District Rangers**
- Manages district level activities
- Reports to the Forest Supervisor
- Directs on-the-ground activities
  - Campgrounds,
  - Watershed restoration
  - Trail maintenance
  - Vegetation and wildlife

*Ranger Districts often have the closest connection to local communities and on-the-ground activities.*
**MISSION:** It is Rural Development’s mission to increase economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for rural Americans.
Monongahela National Forest North Zone Recreation Vision Statement. May 2017

1. Providing a Gateway for Escape, Exploration, and Adventure in Diverse Landscapes
2. Building Sustainable Recreation Opportunities through Community Engagement
3. Learning from the Past to Make Collaborative Decisions and Ensure a Healthier Ecosystem
4. Fostering a Recreation Economy with Direct and Indirect Benefits for the Local Community
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doug Arbogast</td>
<td>Rural Tourism Specialist WVU Extension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Butler</td>
<td>Landscape Architecture WVU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clyde Thompson</td>
<td>Forest Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.J. Cober</td>
<td>Forest Rec. Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy Waskey</td>
<td>District Ranger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon Morgan</td>
<td>Deputy District Ranger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rob Stull</td>
<td>Blackwater Bikes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gray Buckles</td>
<td>Wilderness/Trails Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emily Wilson-Hauger</td>
<td>New Historic Thomas, Woodlands,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica Waldo</td>
<td>Exec. Director Tucker County CVB/Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Baker</td>
<td>Supt. Blackwater Falls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina Metzer</td>
<td>Executive Director EWCTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan Serr</td>
<td>Regional Tourism Outreach Coordinator EWCTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason Gray</td>
<td>Conservation Outreach Coordinator EWCTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Lehmann</td>
<td>Heart of the Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane Hinkle</td>
<td>TC Commissioner, TC community Foundation, Tucker Co. Cultural District Authority</td>
</tr>
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### MNF SOUTH ZONE REC ECONOMIES PARTNERSHIPS

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Organization/Position</th>
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<td>Landscape Architecture WVU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cynthia Sandeno</td>
<td>District Ranger – Marlinton/WS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clyde Thompson</td>
<td>Forest Supervisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt Edwards</td>
<td>South Zone Rec Program Manager, Monongahela National Forest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seth Halman</td>
<td>Recreation, Monongahela National Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank DeBerry</td>
<td>Snowshoe Mountain Resort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cara Rose</td>
<td>Pocahontas County CVB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug Wood</td>
<td>Allegheny Trail/WV Scenic Trails Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Breezley</td>
<td>Trail Coordinator for Section 3 of the Allegheny Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthanna Breezley</td>
<td>WV HIVE; WVSTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gil Willis</td>
<td>Elk River Inn and Touring Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Holstine</td>
<td>Business Manager at Greenbank Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Felton</td>
<td>Mayor of Marlinton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry White</td>
<td>Mountain RC&amp;D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
International Mountain Bicycling Association

- 35,000 IMBA Members
- 50 US States
- 30 Countries
- 170+ Chapters
- 400+ Clubs and Patrols
- 250 Bicycle Retailers (IBD)
- 200 Corporate Supporters
- 15 Regional Directors & Associate Regional Directors
IMBA AFFILIATED CHAPTERS AND SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

IMBA's hundreds of chapters and clubs form a grassroots network of riders around the world. These organizations build and maintain trails, organize social events, clinics and rides. They also work with local government representatives, land agencies and businesses to improve and protect riding areas.

A local group can affiliate with IMBA as a stand alone club or as an IMBA chapter. Chapters have taken the next step in aligning with IMBA and unifying a world wide mountain biking movement. These organizations are more closely connected to IMBA and have an increased level of support for sustaining the local group's infrastructure including joint membership, e.g., the chapter's members are also automatically members of IMBA.

Find a local chapter or club near you...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter/Club</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State / Province</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Club</td>
<td></td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter/Group</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>City, State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pocahontas Trails</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/pcwvtrails">https://www.facebook.com/pcwvtrails</a></td>
<td>SLATYFORK, WV US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The National Bicycling Economy

- Contributes $133 billion to the national economy
- Generates $17.7 billion in annual federal and state tax revenues
- Supports nearly 1.1 million jobs across the U.S.
- Provides sustainable growth in rural communities
  - $6.2 billion in bicycling gear sales and services
  - $46.9 billion in bicycling trip-related expenditures

Arcadia Dunes, MI

(OIA, 2012)
Community Transformation

Well designed trails can transform “community” from an abstract idea into a real place.
Economic Revitalization

Trails boost local economies by creating a resource that is attractive for new residents, tourists and businesses.
What Do Mountain Bikers Look For?

1. Variety and Difficulty of terrain: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced
2. Number of trail miles and accessibility
3. Scenery and natural landscape
4. Amenities – Brew pubs, coffee shops, local shops
5. Reputation – Community support
As the summer season approaches, mountain bikers are increasingly making travel plans. We look at where mountain bikers are going and what they'll do once they get there.

### By the Numbers

On average, mountain bikers take 2 mountain bike vacations each year. In addition, they also bring their bikes on 2 additional trips each year where riding is not the primary objective.

- **62%** of mountain bikers travel to ride because they want to ride new trails.
- **22%** travel to see new places while
- **6%** do so to experience new styles of riding.

The top months for mountain bike travel are May, June, and September.

**Typical trip length** (nights):

- 1 night: 20%
- 2 nights: 30%
- 3 nights: 20%
- 4 nights: 10%
- 5 nights: 10%
- 6 nights: 5%
- 7+ nights: 5%

More than half of MTB trips last 2 days or less.

**$382.25** average trip spend

- **55.5 mi** average distance ridden per trip
- **4:45** time spent riding each day during trip
### WHAT WE DO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayaking</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Climbing</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

when we’re too tired to mountain bike anymore
Adapting To The New Economy: The Impacts of Mountain Bike Tourism in Oakridge, Oregon

Nicholas S. Metzer
University of Oregon
Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management

June 2014

Oakridge-Westfir Community Trails Plan

The Oakridge-Westfir Community Trails Committee and the Oakridge-Westfir Area Chamber of Commerce with assistance from the National Park Service Sierra Trail and Conservation Assistance Program.
White Paper 2:15

Economic Potential of South Knoxville’s Urban Wilderness

Charles Sims, PhD
Faculty Fellow, Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy
Assistant Professor, Department of Economics

Becky Davis
Graduate Research Assistant, Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy
Department of Economics

Bongyun KIm
Graduate Research Assistant, Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy
Department of Economics

June 2015

Assessment of the effects of Mountain Biking
Marquette Michigan’s Ecotourism

Scott Jordan, Ph.D.
Northern Michigan University
IMBA Ride Centers

• IMBA Ride Centers are extensive trail networks, masterfully designed for mountain bikers of every skill level. The centers provide the full range of mountain biking experiences today’s riders crave, from long singletrack journeys to family-friendly loops, and areas with expertly designed technical challenges—including sustainable downhill and freeriding options—to test accomplished riders.

• Ride Center host communities become communities with a sustainable trails-based economy, healthy residents, and a high quality of living.

• East Coast
  – Harrisonburg, VA
  – Reading, PA
  – Richmond, VA
  – Brown County, IN
  – Savannah River Area, GA/SC
  – Coldwater Mountain, AL
RIDE CENTERS

Graded against set criteria

Application criteria serves as blueprint for improving a trail system and host community(s)

100 points total

- Trail Experience = 62
- Services = 19
- Community Involvement = 8
- Tourism and Marketing = 6
- Above and Beyond = 5

• Bronze = 55 – 75 points
• Silver = 76 – 89 points
• Gold = 90 – 100 points
OAKRIDGE (OR) GOLD-LEVEL

Oakridge was designated a silver-level Ride Center in 2011. It was upgraded to gold status in 2015.

This small town styles itself as the mountain bike capital of the Northwest. The local IMBA chapter, the Greater Oakridge Area Trail Stewards—alongside other stakeholders such as the U.S. Forest Service and local bike-centered businesses—constantly works to improve the mountain bike trail options. Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to sample the 30-mile Middle Fork trail, the 20-mile circuit of Waldo Lake and dozens of other high-quality options. But be sure to also leave time to sample the in-town eateries and bars that cater to the knobby-tire set.

Oakridge styles itself the mountain bike capital of the (U.S.) Northwest, and though that’s a bold claim, it has the trails and the rider experience to back it up. Early in the 20th century, locals with beards and suspenders started building an amazing network of hundreds of miles of skinny, bike-loving singletrack that winds its way through lush, green forests. As the area has transitioned away from timber harvesting, sharing these trails with wide-eyed, two-wheeled visitors has become a matter of civic pride.

Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to sample all of Oakridge’s best including Dead Mountain Trail, an exhilarating blend of purpose-built flow trail and old-school, switchbacking singletrack that will drop you from one of the area’s most spectacular viewpoints to a trailhead that’s just a few pedal strokes from the rejuvenated old town. Add to your list the Middle Fork trail that snakes along side the river for a full 30 miles, the classic descents of the Alpine Trail and Larson Rock, the burly and beautiful Hackletooth loop and the more sedate pleasures of Salmon Creek and the North Fork trails.

Jump on a shuttle, book a tour, or pedal your way to the top with the help of the comprehensive maps and copious advice to be found at the bike store and multiple other bike friendly local businesses.
POCA/SNOWSHOE RIDE CENTER PLANNING TEAM

Anthony Duncan, IMBA Regional Director
Eric Lindberg, Pocahontas Trails
Doug Arbogast, WVU Extension, Tourism Specialist
Cindy Sandeno, Forest Service District Ranger
Kristen Beverage, USFS Resource Administrator
Jack Tibble, Forest Service District Ranger
Richard Raione, Forest Service District Ranger
Ken Gaitor, Snowshoe Mountain Operations
Mark Whitehead, Green Bank Observatory
Morgan Keck, USFS
Matt Edwards, Forest Service, Recreation Manager
Cara Rose, Pocahontas County CVB
Joshua Feather, Watoga State Park
Joanna Yates, Pocahontas Trails/ Snowshoe Operations
POCA TRAILS RIDE CENTER ASSESSMENT USING ARC GIS MAPPING

ArcGIS MNF Area Bike Trails Map Sept 2017 Update

Legend

Bike Trails
- Existing
- Proposed
- Under contract
- Other
- Unknown

Hiking/Other Trails

Cross Country Ski Trails

Snowshoe Mountain Bike Trails
- Black
- Blue
- Blue to Black
- Double Black
- Green
POCA/SNOWSHOE RIDE CENTER GOALS

• Online and print map of trails, other recreation resources, and amenities
• Develop regional MTB trails plan to better categorize and promote existing trails and identify gaps (wayfinding, beginner trails, amenities)
• Submit self evaluation in July 2018 followed by professional assessment and review and Ride Center designation
• Fayetteville, Davis IMBA chapter partnership for regional ride center?
THE NEW RIVER GORGE REGION

#GOTOWV

While the rugged grandeur of the New River Gorge has already done much to create world famous recreational opportunities such as rock climbing, whitewater sports, cycling, hiking, off-road motorsports, hunting, fishing and historical tourism; many of these opportunities exist in isolation from one another and from the communities they serve.

The New River Gorge Trail Alliance is working to link the recreational opportunities, people and businesses together through one regional trails system. These community connections will support building a healthier community and more robust economy.
New River Gorge Trail Alliance

- The NRGTA is a non-profit consortium of individuals, government representatives, and organizations focused on connecting and maintaining trails around the New River Gorge.
- The NRGTA received a $140K Planning Grant and a $1.4M Implementation Grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission’s POWER Grant program to connect >300 miles of trails.
- The Mount Hope Rail Trail is being planned to tie into the NRGTA’s network of hiking/biking trails.
NEW RIVER GORGE TRAIL ALLIANCE
The City of Mount Hope also plans to work toward opening up a connector trail to Glen Jean, WV.

The Mount Hope Rail Trail will serve as an off-the-road connector between the city of Mount Hope and the Garden Ground Stacked Loop Trail System.
Economic Benefits of Mount Hope Rail Trail

- Attracting More Residents
  - Increased recreational opportunity
  - Improved Quality of Life for residents
  - Additional businesses may arise as a result of other growth
  - Affordable housing opportunities for people working in Beckley, WV area

- Healthier Workforce
  - Employers can create incentives for physical employee's activity
    - Businesses may receive discounts on insurance
  - Less sick days taken

- Increased Tourism
  - Draw people from the new Southern WV Visitor's center
  - Draw hikers and cyclists visiting the New River Gorge
NEXT STEPS

• Continue to engage leaders, residents, visitors
• Continue to build local capacity
• Establish indicators of success and begin to measure
• Continue to identify and link assets (regional trails)
• Continue to identify and prioritize gaps
• Regional branding
• Funding – USDA RD, Foundation, Federal, State, ARC
• Continue to identify best practice examples and opportunities for strategic partnerships
About Us

Our Partners
Who's behind this effort?
This unprecedented effort to build Southwest Virginia's creative economy is the work of the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission, appointed by the General Assembly in 2008.

Partners include:
- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
- Virginia Tourism Corporation
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Resources

Funding partners include:
- Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission
- Appalachian Regional Commission
Building a Nature & Heritage Tourism Destination
THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

• How can leveraging Appalachia’s tourism and outdoor recreation attractions increase economic development and business growth while continuing to preserve the landscapes and assets that make Appalachia unique.
THANK YOU

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