

Realizing the Potential of the Tennessee River: Building a Sustainable Recreation Economy in Northwest Alabama

Appalachian Teaching Project, University of North Alabama

Undergraduate and graduate students from UNA's public history, geography, sports & recreation management and economics programs worked in four teams to envision economic development opportunities connected to regional recreation initiatives for the communities of Courtland, Alabama (Lawrence County) and Mooresville, Alabama (Limestone County). Students competed in an Idea Audition where they pitched their ideas. Group 2 "won" the competition. Project partners included the City of Courtland, the City of Mooresville, the Tennessee RiverLine, the Singing River Trail, UNA's Office of Regional Engagement and the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area. The class worked with faculty from UNA's departments of history, geography, finance/economics/data analytics, management/marketing, UNA's Agile Strategy Lab, and the Institute for Innovation and Economic Development.

Group 2: Terrence Johnson, Clayton Davis, Adrian Flores

Limestone Bay Ecotours
Mooresville, Limestone County

Initiative:

Limestone Bay Ecotours seeks to engage Mooresville residents and tourists seeking to immerse themselves in recreational opportunities along the Tennessee River. Program organizers will lead tours through Limestone Bay and the adjacent Tennessee River tributaries to share the Tennessee River's history, focusing on three sub-themes – indigenous heritage, agricultural and industrial development along the river, and ecological diversity.



Ecotourism has the potential to impact small communities and protected areas such as Mooresville and Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, due to the desire of ecotourists to engage in the culture and nature of the areas they visit. Limestone Bay Ecotours will directly contribute to the recreation economy in Limestone County area and may serve as a vision for developing a Tennessee River Ecotrail.



University of
NORTH ALABAMA

Group 1: Isaac Bowling, Roberto Komba, Dixie Norwood

Big Nance Grill and Outdoors
Courtland, Alabama Lawrence County

Initiative: To develop a restaurant/outfitter near Big Nance Creek located near a kayak launch point, which will serve as a hub for outdoor recreation.



The restaurant helps to create new economic opportunities in Courtland and will serve as a connection point with the Tennessee RiverLine project. The restaurant/outfitter will offer rental equipment and take an active role in keeping the waterways of the community clean of trash and debris. The restaurant will create a gathering place for the community and visitors traveling through the community on the Singing River Trail.

Group 3: Hunter Carlton, Jesse Pendley, Lindsey Pike

Courtland Goods and Adventures
Courtland, Lawrence County

Initiative: This mercantile store café will serve recreation users and the Courtland community, helping to generate new economic growth in downtown Courtland.



Our mercantile store will bring new revenue and attraction to Courtland as the ultimate stop along the Singing River Trail between Decatur and the Shoals, providing food service, outdoor recreation equipment, repair services, and a place for local business owners to sell goods. This project can further the goals of the Singing River Trail and the Tennessee River Line by bringing revenue to a small town and spreading the goal of adventuring for the residents of North Alabama. The mercantile store will benefit residents by creating new jobs and increasing tax revenue. It will also serve as a visible focal point for encouraging civic pride in Courtland.

Group 4: Cooper Johnson, Daniel Rhodes, Cris Watson

Mooresville Festival and Boat Access
Mooresville, Limestone County

Initiative: To establish an annual community festival with music, arts & crafts, and water-specific outdoor experiences. The festival will fund the construction of a kayak/canoe access point on Limestone Creek and provide funds for maintenance and additional site development (e.g. bathrooms) in the future.



The project would establish a small boat access point to allow easy access to Piney Creek, as well as the larger Limestone Bay and Tennessee River. Concurrently, the project will organize a unique event with a variety of experiences for locals and non-locals to celebrate the eclectic town of Mooresville, as well as the Bay. By catalyzing tourism in the area, the town will become a recognizable outdoors gateway for the region, providing an economic boost to the town as well as making it a destination for people outside Limestone County.