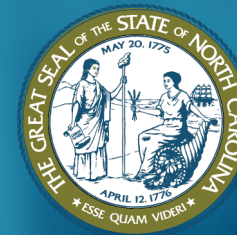


CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES (CORE)

North Carolina Department of Commerce
Main Street & Rural Planning Center



Funding for this program made possible by the US Economic Development Administration



NORTH CAROLINA
**DEPARTMENT of
COMMERCE**



JACKSON COUNTY, NC
COUNTY COMMISSIONER SUMMARY
APRIL 9, 2024

Photo: Jackson County Greenway Bridge



Appalachian
Regional
Commission



NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT of
COMMERCE

CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES (CORE)

Technical Assistance program to:

Assist communities across the State to leverage the out-of-doors for increased economic opportunity and benefit.

Asset-based Outdoor Recreation Economy Development Planning



Dedicated Work Group

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Jackson County Economic Development, CORE Coordinator

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Jackson County Planning Office

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Jackson County Parks Recreation – Outdoor Recreation

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Jackson County Economic Development

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Southwestern Community College

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Friends of Panthertown

Dennis Desmond

Pinnacle Park Foundation

Bernadette Peters

Town of Sylva Economic Development, Main Street

Becca Scott

Southwestern Commission

Millie Smith

Southwestern Commission

Andy Coburn

Western Carolina University

Asset-based/Community Econ Dev

Building an economy based on what is unique about Jackson County—activity is incremental over time, entrepreneurial - changes with circumstances and opportunities, is based on small businesses, local incomes and investments. Goal: unique, responsive and resilient economic base.

CORE: economy around all aspects of human-powered recreational activities undertaken in nature-based environments.

Main Street: preservation and redevelopment of historic assets as basis for economic growth

Other asset-economies – craft/arts/culture, health + wellness, education, local food...

US and NC Outdoor Rec Economy

2022 BEA Economic impacts

Outdoor Rec in US:

- \$1.1 Trillion impact - 2.2% of US GDP, 3.2% of US employees
- Sector GDP (4.8%) growing faster than overall economy (1.9%)
- Largest industries: Retail trade, Entertainment/Food & Hospitality, Manufacturing

Outdoor Rec in NC:

- \$14.6B, fully 2% of state GDP
- NC Outdoor Recreation (OR) employment increased 5.9% (2022 BEA)
= 2.9% of all employees in NC, 147,000 jobs.

Work Group Survey Priorities

most important benefit to be gained from OR assets

100% Increased revenue for existing businesses

Developing a skilled outdoor workforce

92% Attracting new outdoor business and industry

Improving quality of life for full/part-time residents

Planning Process – Assets, SWOT...

Opportunities:

- Engaged recreation user organizations, land managers
- Wide variety of challenging outdoor recreation activities available
- Existing plans and priorities—especially Greenway
- Many “gems” of exceptional experience known only to users
- Quality hospitality base – overnight, food, social scene
- Walkable, historic downtown + variety of experiences

Challenges:

- Increasing understanding/appreciation of resource base – avoid overuse
- Limited connection from downtown to recreation destinations
- Visitor base (families, seniors) seek less-strenuous recreation
- No “known” signature JC outdoor experience
- Coalescing the outdoor community to recruit new outdoor businesses

Stakeholder Interviews, Surveys, Contacts

many thanks to Jake Gottloeb, ED Intern

Nick Breedlove, Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Julie Spiro Donaldson, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce

Lisa Leatherman, Duke Energy

Troy Waskey, USFS Nantahala

Burt Kornegay, retired Slickrock Adventures

Travis Boswell, The Orchard

Jeremy Hyatt, EBCI, Fire Mountain

Jeremy Haas, WCU Climbing Club

Chris Green, Sapphire Valley Ski Resort

Mark Singleton, retired American Whitewater, WCU Parks and Recreation

Maurice Phipps, retired WCU Parks and Recreation

Stephanie Edwards, Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce

The Strategic Plan

Jackson County is our Western NC home basecamp and natural escape with a diverse outdoor recreation scene providing unique experiences everyone can call their own.

- ✓ Jackson County as Home Basecamp + Natural Escape
- ✓ Expand and Develop a Diverse Outdoor Recreation Scene
- ✓ Further develop Unique, Personal experiences for all
- ✓ Improve Information sharing, experience branding and targeted marketing

The Work Plan

Home Basecamp + Natural Escape

- Increase trail connectivity between towns and recreation assets
- Participate in Pinnacle Park planning
- Develop a Jackson County Stewardship Council
- Explore and encourage new recreation hospitality options

Expand + Develop a Diverse Outdoor Recreation Scene

- Pursue development of Whitewater Park at Dillsboro former dam site
- Expand trail experiences for longer stays, unique, notable experiences
- Convene and Nurture an Outdoor Social Network

The Work Plan

Further develop Unique, Personal Experiences for all

- **Establish Youth Outdoor Council**
- **Develop riverfront family outdoor activity centers and events**
- **Develop new, small group experiences** – educational, recreational, income opportunities

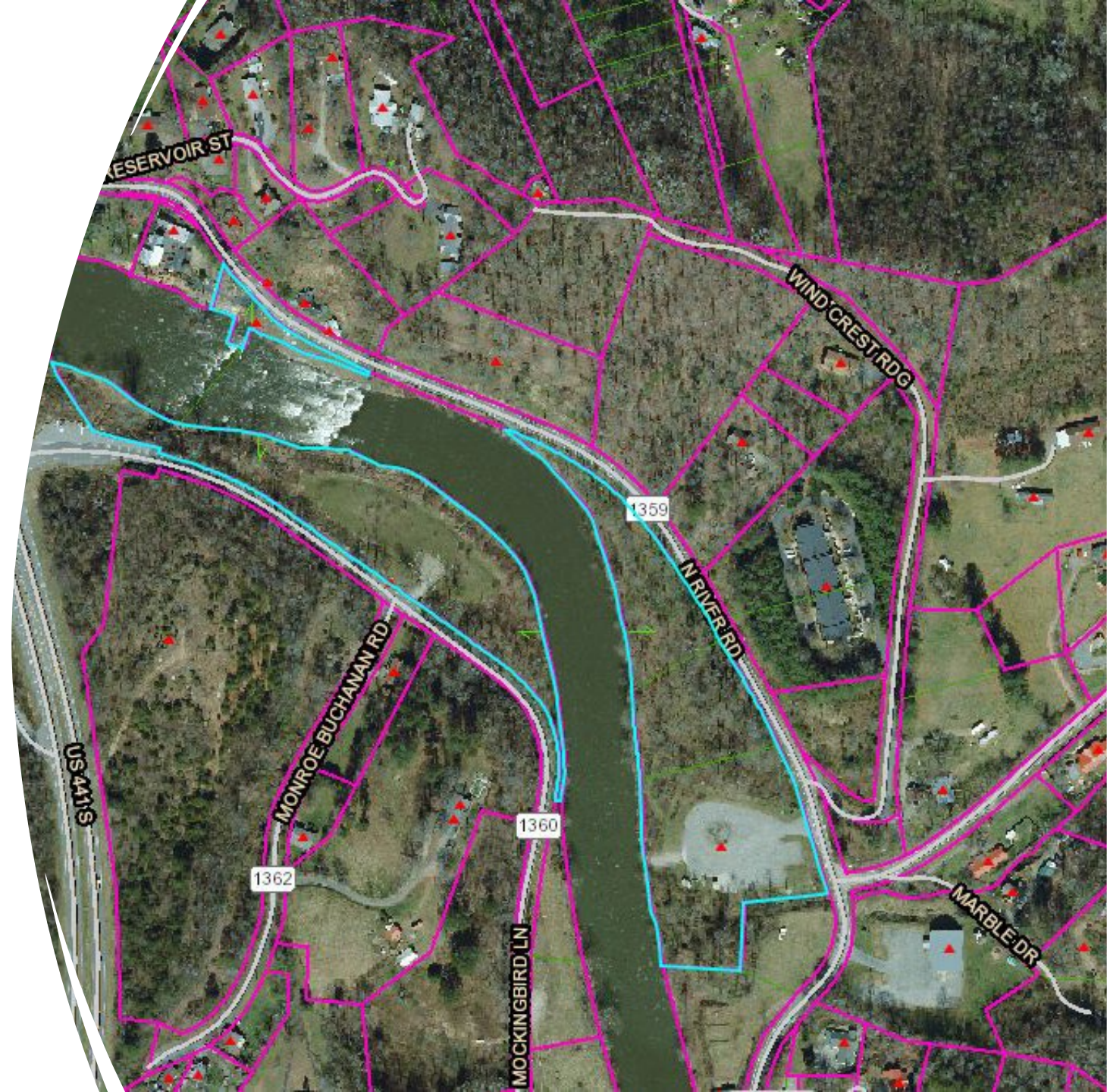
Information sharing, experience branding, targeted marketing

- **Develop Jackson Co outdoor brand with targeted marketing** – based on “Play On NC” brand
- **Develop and install outdoor recreation information kiosks**
- **Design and implement directional signage program**
- **Develop a social media monitoring program**

Three Sites on the Tuckasegee

Dillsboro River Park – 446 N
River Road

- Endorsed whitewater park – class II – III rapids, very visible from highway, amphitheater on slope?
- Revisit Heritage Park plan for trails and family activities
- Utilities do not serve south side



Three Sites on the Tuckasegee

Drexel @ Whittier Industrial site –
271 Clearwood Drive

- Floodway/plain determination holding site hostage – berm
 - Exploring funding opportunities for hydraulic study
- Best stretch of Tuck for safe, family contact + learning water sports
- Group very excited about creating a (temporary) family river day & events destination with clean-up for safety only – recreation through the open building until rehab



Three Sites on the Tuckasegee

Cullowhee River Property – 74 Wayehutta Road

- Existing plan by CURVE + dam notch funding + greenway
- Opportunity to create WCU riverfront 'downtown' recreation area
- DOT roundabout land + island
- Base Camp Cullowhee for equipment
- Greenway heading north + comm gardens expansion





Work continues -> Implementation

- **Three sites information and interest**
- **Sylva CORE plan folded into this Work Group**
- **Building Outdoor Communities process**
- **Stewardship Council held its inaugural meeting on April 3rd.**
- **Progress on Greenway connections**



Next Steps

- 1. Receive Commissioner's Comments/Feedback on the Draft Plan**
- 2. Adopt the CORE plan and extend directives to empower the Work Group to implement**
- 3. Assign and direct leadership**
 1. Put someone in charge to coordinate work across organizations/departments
 2. Establish a reporting timeline to monitor progress
- 4. Assemble partners by Work Plan Actions/Tasks**
 1. Facilities, sites, greenway development
 2. Outdoor Stewardship Council
 3. Youth Outdoor Council
 4. Small business development – expanded guided offerings, social networks
 5. Developing a unique Outdoor Recreation brand for the County, Info system

Next Steps

Technical Assistance available:

- University students/faculty – market analysis, feasibility study, conceptual design, market impacts, resource audits, website/media evaluation, operations studies...

Continued support from NC Commerce/Rural Development staff

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