BOTETOURT

COUNTY OF VIRGINIA

Start Exploring.

Strategic Plan
2011- 2015

Adopted January 25, 2011

Developed with assistance by the Virginia Tourism Corporation – Partnership Marketing Division

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Executive Summary

In 2008 (latest data from Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC)), visitors spent $44 million in Botetourt County, supporting 250 businesses, creating more than 400 direct jobs, and generating $3.1 million in state and local taxes. Tourism spending supports goods, services, facilities and transportation that benefits residents of Botetourt County and the surrounding region. Tourism promotion, and the quality of life improvements that tourism supports, also helps attract other types of business development to Botetourt.

Botetourt County has extraordinary assets, and great potential for growth in tourism and recreation. Botetourt County recognizes tourism as a key economic development component that enhances the quality of life for its citizens. Subsequent to the Board of Supervisors adoption of the Economic Development Study, this Tourism Strategic Plan was developed over a period of four months with input from tourism stakeholders and citizens. The purpose of this plan is to communicate the tourism mission, vision, goal and objectives of the Botetourt Tourism Office, as well as the carefully determined measures and targets for the next five year period. This strategic plan will guide the actions and activities of the Tourism office, county staff, and other stakeholders and partners in Botetourt County.

Vision and Mission

The Stakeholders and Partners Committee reviewed and revised the past Tourism Vision and Mission Statements in order to establish a clear strategic framework for significant future success.

Botetourt County Tourism Vision Statement:

Botetourt County envisions a community that collaborates to provide and promote a diverse mix of quality and sustainable tourism resulting in growth as a premier travel and leisure destination throughout Virginia and beyond.

Botetourt County Tourism Mission Statement:

The mission of the Botetourt County Tourism Office is to lead, develop, and promote a sustainable tourism program which attracts visitors to enjoy the diverse opportunities throughout the County while preserving, protecting and enhancing the quality of life of the community.

Stakeholders, Supporters, and Staff

In order to seek guidance and input from key stakeholders and partners to develop this plan, input meetings were held on August 3, 2010, September 1, 2010, and October 7, 2010 at the Greenfield Education Center in Daleville, VA. The following individuals dedicated their time to the process:

Representing	Member
Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce	Dan Naff
Botetourt County Historical Society	Weldon Martin
Town of Buchanan	Harry Gleason
Town of Troutville	Lee Minnix
Town of Troutville	Sybille Nelson
Town of Fincastle - Artist	Ed Bordett
County local restaurant	Diana Dixon
County wineries—Fincastle Winery	Georgia Sawyer
County Agriculture – Extension Office	Cassie Driskill
County outdoor attractions—Twin River Outfitter	John Mays
Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission	Eddie Wells

Staff Resources	
Tourism Office	Kevin Costello
Parks & Recreation Department	Pete Peters
Development Services Department	Tim Ward

Randall Rose, Partnership Alliance Marketing – Development Specialist, with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, assisted in the facilitation of planning sessions and the drafting of this plan.

Current Situation

The strategic planning process began with an assessment of the current situation. Beginning by asking the basic questions, "who are we?" and "where are we now?" In order to plan for the future, the existing foundation that will be built upon needs to be understood. Understanding the "Status Quo" is a precursor to implementing change. Planning participants framed the Goal, Objectives, Measures, and Targets of this plan by referencing the following situational analysis:

Overview/History

In 2003, Botetourt County created a new tourism program supported by an increase in the Transient Occupancy Tax. Tourism was incorporated as a new function and was subsequently included within the County's Parks and Recreation Department.

In 2006, the County's tourism program was restructured and expanded and development of a Tourism Strategic Plan was initiated. In March 2006, a steering team was formed to advise the County in the development of its first Tourism Strategic Plan. Representing a broad cross-section of tourism-related businesses, community groups and facilities in the County, the Team provided valuable information, advice and comment throughout the strategic planning process. The plan was presented to the Board of Supervisors in August 2006 and adopted.

In 2007, the Tourism Office introduced the new "Start Exploring" logo and brand for the county. In April of that same year the "Wine Trail of Botetourt County" was developed through a grant from the VTC and partnership between the county's three wineries. A brochure, website and advertising campaign ensued. At the end of 2007 the County's first website devoted to tourism promotion "Visit Botetourt" was launched.

The Start Exploring brochure was published in early 2008 and distributed throughout the state and region. The Office of Tourism again received grant funding ($25,000) from the VTC to publish the Start Exploring brochure, build the Visit Botetourt website and conduct a marketing campaign. In July of 2008, another grant was received to develop the "Downtowns of Botetourt" campaign designed to promote the historic and unique small towns of the county.

In 2009, planning began to develop an outdoor recreation based tourism product that became the "Upper James River Water Trail." The Upper James River Water Trail is a water based trail system that provides opportunities for recreation, conservation, tourism and education while preserving the natural, historic and cultural resources along the Upper James River in Botetourt County. A grant ($25,000) was received in the

fall of 2009 and early in 2010 the Upper James River Water Trail website was launched along with the publishing of a brochure and an advertising campaign.

Through the economic downturn that the nation and the state have experienced in the past several years, the county has taken a very pro-active response by planning for the future. In 2008 the county partnered with the Botetourt County Historical Society to have an Architectural Survey of Botetourt County done by Hill Studios. In 2010 the firm of Moran, Stahl & Boyer conducted an Economic Development Study and during that same time the Botetourt County Comprehensive Plan was drafted by a steering committee working with Renaissance Planning Group. These three documents have complimented the direction and work completed by the Office of Tourism in the short time that the department has been promoting the county.

In 2010 the Office of Tourism was awarded the Shining Example Award for Tourism for Tomorrow from the Southeast Tourism Society for its work on developing a sustainable tourism program. It is clear that the county understands that tourism represents a significant economic and community development opportunity for Botetourt County.

Economic Impact of Tourism

Tourism is important business in Botetourt County. In 2008 (latest figures from Virginia Tourism Corporation) visitors to Botetourt County generated:

1. $44 million in visitor spending
2. 413 jobs with a combined payroll of over $7 million
3. $1.9 million in state tax receipts
4. $1.2 in local tax receipts.

The Stakeholders and Partners Committee identified the flowing points as part of a SWOT Analysis facilitated by Randall Rose of the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

Strengths and Strongest Assets

- Natural beauty / eco-tourism, outdoor recreation
- Small town appeal
- Botetourt Sports complex
- Tourism products – Wine Trail, Water Trail , Downtowns
- New retail development
- Active conservation
- Transportation networks I-81, 460, 220, BRP and Route 11
- Working farms
- Land trusts
- Greenfield trail system
- Tourism promotional pieces – Botetourt Living
- Part of several regional tourism initiatives – Wilderness Road, Fish Virginia First, Hunter's Raid, Crossroads to Settlement, Fincastle Turnpike
- Actively involved in local, regional, state, and national tourism efforts – RVCVB, SVTA, VTC, STS.
- Vast opportunities for outdoor recreation on the Upper James River, along the Blue Ridge Parkway, in the George Washington & Jefferson National Forests.
- Unspoiled natural beauty, mountains, streams
- History and heritage
- Collaborative relationships between public and private stakeholders, including individual businesses

Weaknesses and Challenges

- Lack of defined historical package
- Lack of full-service hotel
- Lack of signage to destinations
- No visitor services
- Regional tourism promotion and exposure
- Lack of cultural venues, lack of arts
- Exit 150
- Lack of conference space
- Lack of retail
- No visitor center
- Lack of an "anchor" attraction or resort destination
- Limited variety of restaurants, especially mid-range (entrees of $12-$18) and high-end dining establishments
- Few off-road bike trails with level terrain suitable for use by families / children
- Many historic sites are not well-marketed to outsiders – need for interpretation

- Limited organizational capacity for special events
- Could use better signage along the AT to direct thru-hikers to services and facilities

Opportunities for Growth

- Assets with potential for development (historic, outdoors, Daleville Town Center, sports marketing, arts and cultural)
- Ag heritage tourism, branding local foods, ability to buy local products
- Small conferences and meetings
- North County recreational trails
- Fairgrounds and or Equine Center
- Creative uses of historic property, Develop Greenfield historic site(s)
- Expand tourism department, Visitor Center/Visitor Services
- Establishment of the Upper James River Water Trail and related business and marketing opportunities. Water Trail to expand to multi-jurisdictional project.
- Interest in heritage travel, genealogy, and locally-grown products (including wines)
- Leverage regional partnerships. New Roanoke Valley outdoor recreation website (www.roanokeoutdoors.com) and opportunity for joint marketing of regional outdoor activities
- Expanded use of the Botetourt County Sports Complex for tournaments and special events. Sports Camps, youth development
- Annual events (e.g., a bike race) to increase exposure and awareness of the County's assets
- Demand for experiential vacation packages and weekend trips for various demographic/lifestyle groups featuring historic, cultural, environmental, or adventure activities: e.g., young adults seeking outdoor adventures; empty-nesters looking for cultural get-aways
- Development of "farm stays," dude ranches, and/or resorts with activities for travelers

Threats to Achieving Potential

- Loss of historic sites
- Suburban sprawl
- Zoning restrictions
- "Friendly" competition for visitors
- Increasing threats to agricultural and scenic resources
- The impression created by Exit 150 as the gateway to Botetourt County from the south
- Competition from areas with a higher concentration of attractions and amenities.

Target Markets

Potential target markets identified in the 2006 Tourism Strategic Plan were reviewed and revised as follows:

Outdoor Recreation

- Cyclists (76 route, other trails)
- Water Sports Enthusiasts
- Hikers

Cultural/ Historic

- Wilderness Road
- Genealogy/ research groups (Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky)

Geographic:

- Virginia
- North Carolina
- Tennessee
- West Virginia (excluding outdoor recreation markets, since they have similar opportunities)
- Maryland
- Florida
- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Washington D.C.
- International
- I-81 corridor travelers
- Botetourt County residents, Roanoke Region (day trip)

Demographic:

- Age 45 plus couples / seniors (wineries, small towns, history, etc.)
- Generation X (outdoor recreation)
- $60,000 plus annual income
- College educated

Travel Profile:

- 2-3 nights length of trip
- Repeat visitors to region

Analysis of Marketing and Promotion

The following marketing observations and recommendations were determined by participants during the planning process:

- Complete a localized Botetourt County visitor profile study for future reference
- Consider targeting history buff niche market
- Explore use of the "Botetourt" name. Consider personification of Lord Botetourt in a marketing and advertising campaign (e.g. Lord Botetourt tasting wine with tourists, Lord Botetourt kayaking, etc.)
- Consider "Virginia Frontier" story in marketing/branding
- Emphasize "Small Town America" in marketing
- Need concerted efforts to ensure that marketing materials and resources are located in all area restaurants, hotels, etc.
- Consider a more comprehensive brochure (with more detailed information) as opposed to multiple pieces
- Consider internal pro-tourism PR campaign targeted to local citizens and elected officials that highlights the benefits of tourism for citizens
- Need concerted effort to ensure that all tourism business and organization websites in the county are hyperlinked to county tourism websites and vice-versa
- Consider including relocation information within appropriate marketing materials, as well as a "welcome wagon" visit to new residents
- Consider development of a restaurant guide
- Evaluate signage issues and billboard presence
- Develop a program to provide tourism businesses with a feasible opportunity to advertise and market on a limited budget (e.g. coop program, matching grant program)
- Further evaluate group/sports marketing opportunity potential
- Consider enhancing promotion of various trails in the county

Analysis of Tourism Infrastructure

The following tourism infrastructure observations and recommendations were determined by participants during the planning process:

- Consider the development and operation of an official visitors center, operated by county staff, with volunteer assistance
- Consider an initiative or plan to preserve targeted open space and green infrastructure
- Need plan to encourage preservation of historic districts and buildings throughout the county
- Consider development of a Virginia State Park
- Continue to enhance the James River experience for visitors/residents
- Consider the completion of an assessment/gap analysis of area lodging, camping, RV parks, restaurants, shopping, etc. to determine areas of focus (taking into account the impact of franchised/corporate ownership versus locally-owned)
- Evaluate existing equine trails and sites and develop and enhance to attract equestrian enthusiasts
- Consider development of an area history trail/promotion

Analysis of Tourism Policy

The following tourism policy observations and recommendations were determined by participants during the planning process:

- Need to increase the capacity of Botetourt County's tourism office/division (including staffing)
    - Anticipated increase in special events, leads, demand, etc.
    - Consider person to handle day-to-day tasks such as leads, inquiries, clerical, etc.
    - Staffing will be needed for discussed visitors center
    - Tourism coordinator should focus on plan implementation and other important tasks, projects, and initiatives
- Increase annual tourism budget to provide matching grants for Botetourt County tourism businesses, increase marketing efforts, and increase determined staffing
- Consider the formation of a community arts/culture organization or initiative to cultivate that sector and enhance both visitor experience and quality of life
- Consider policy strategy to encourage preservation of historic buildings such as tax incentives
- Consider implementation of tourism zones within the county and towns to encourage growth in strategically identified areas

Strategic Path Forward

The following goal, objectives, targets, and measures for the future were determined by careful review of the previous situational analysis:

Goal

The goal of the Botetourt County Tourism Office is

to manage a tourism program that stimulates economic growth while preserving, protecting, and enhancing residents' quality of life.

Objectives

During the next five years, we intend to work toward our goal through the following objectives

1 *Build upon successful tourism marketing strategies by enhancing and measuring future efforts to further increase success*

2 *Further evaluate tourism infrastructure needs and strive to address all needs in a feasible and prioritized order*

3 *Increase the capacity (staffing, funding, etc.) of tourism office*

4 *Enhance services and opportunities to the tourism businesses/industry to encourage their success*

Targets and Measures

1 Build upon successful tourism marketing strategies by enhancing and measuring future efforts to further increase success

Measure 1A: Complete a localized visitor profile study
Target 1A: By Fall 2011 (budget year FY2012)

Measure 1B: Initialize use of a "Lord Botetourt" figure for future marketing
Target 1B: Develop in 2011, Implement in 2012

Measure 1C: Develop an agricultural tourism product
Target 1C: Fall 2012

Measure 1D: Develop, promote, and market special events that fit within the marketing brand for Botetourt County
Target 1D: Incrementally, over five year period

2 Further evaluate tourism infrastructure needs and strive to address all needs in a feasible and prioritized order

Measure 2A: Develop and operate an official and certified visitor center located near a gateway to Botetourt County
Target 2A: 2013

Measure 2B: Develop the preservation heritage area in Greenfield
Target 2B: Complete by 2015

Measure 2C: Further enhance the James River experience for visitors and residents (e.g. interpret canal structures, Canal Park in Buchanan)
Target 2C: All determined enhancements completed by 2015

Measure 2D: Identify and develop additional historical interpretation (e.g. Lewis and Clark, Bluegrass Festival)
Target 2D: Interpretation plan implemented and in place by 2015

3 Increase the capacity (staffing, funding, etc.) of tourism office

Measure 3A: Increase staff by two personnel (clerical/visitors center operation, and special events coordinator)
Target 3A: By 2013

Measure 3B: Earmark portion of meals and lodging tax collected for tourism office to assist in the implementation of this strategic plan
Target 3B: By 2012

4 Enhance services and opportunities to the tourism businesses/industry to encourage their success

Measure 4A: Implement tourism zone(s) to encourage tourism business development
Target 4A: By 2012

Measure 4B: Encourage development of a county fair site
Target 4B: Site secured and open by 2015

Measure 4C: Develop public music venues
Target 4C: 2013

Measure 4D: Increase the number of marketing/development campaigns using currently successful models (i.e. Upper James River Trail, Wine Trail, Downtowns)
Targets: 4D1 Recreational Trails - 2015
4D2 Agri-tourism - 2012
4D3 Birding Trail – 2012
4D4 History Trails – 2013

Measure 4E: Develop a concerted local effort to assist and foster new tourism related businesses and entrepreneurs to include localized marketing, financing, planning, and other assistance
Target 4E: 2012

Monitoring Progress

Citizens and representatives from both the private and public sector of Botetourt County must take a leadership role in overseeing implementation of this plan. However, the Botetourt County Tourism Office is ultimately responsible for implementation. The targets and measures of this plan were determined after careful consideration during the planning process and will serve as reference when gauging plan implementation performance. Tourism office staff should develop an annual work plan and determine initiatives and tasks that will ensure that all targets and measures are reached. To encourage progress toward the established targets, this plan should be reviewed by the appropriate stakeholders and county leadership on a consistent basis. Upon each review, any adjustments that need to be made to this plan should be considered. Once a majority of the targets have been met or five years has passed, a new/updated plan should be developed.

Using this plan as guidance, Botetourt County is expected to continue making significant progress toward the development and promotion of tourism in a strategic and planned way. It is extremely important that the plan be referenced consistently as any new tourism related project/initiative discussions occur and as all applicable decisions are made. While new ideas and recommendations should be considered in the future, officials should reference this plan and determine if implementing any new ideas and recommendations is feasible and in accordance with this plan.

Summary

Becoming a successful tourism destination involves a sustained and consistent effort over time. The competition for tourists is great and the timeline of building demand is gradual and long. Effective tourism marketing strategies require sustained investments of financial and human resources. Botetourt County and area businesses and citizens recognize the significance of tourism. The commitment and progress made to date serves as demonstration of that recognition. This second tourism strategic plan for Botetourt County is intended to build upon those past successes, but also provide guidance as tourism grows as a key economic development and quality of life efforts.

Appendix

Definitions:

Goal: Broad statement of measurable outcomes to be achieved on behalf of customers

Initiatives/Tasks: Specific programs, strategies, and activities that will help you meet your performance targets

Measure: Meaningful indicator that assess progress towards accomplishment of the goal and objectives

Mission Statement: Statement of purpose; fundamental reason for the tourism effort existence

Objective: Statements of what you must do well or barriers that you must overcome to achieve a specific goal

Opportunities: Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that may have a favorable 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 Market: Any person, group, or organization that is believed to have an interest in utilizing 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 event 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

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

Asset Inventory

During the strategic planning exercises, a majority of participants relayed the mountains, the James River, and outdoor recreation as key tourism assets and marketing selling points. Small towns, wineries, rural appeal was also discussed.

Following is a more extensive list of determined premier tourism assets:

Food/Dining and Specialty Retail

Wineries	3 wineries along the Botetourt Wine Trail; Blue Ridge, Bedford, and Shenandoah Valley Wine Trails nearby
Farm Stands	At Ikenberry Orchards, Troutville Town Park and Buchanan; Saturday farmers market in season
Bakery/Coffee Shops	3 in Daleville, with unique sweets at Blue Collar Joe's
Ice Cream Parlors	Sweet Tooth, Blue Collar Joe's, Dip & Twist, Snow Shack
Fast Food	Wide selection of places for pizza, subs, and burgers
Family Restaurants	Casual/sit-down restaurants & diners.
Mid-Range	3 Lil' Pigs, CL Asia, White Oak Tea Tavern ($12 - $18 entree)
High End	Pomegranate, Rhein River Inn and Restaurant
Antique Stores	A few in Buchanan, Troutville
Specialty Stores	Somewhat limited: a bookstore in Buchanan, outdoor outfitters in Daleville, gift shops in Troutville

Lodging

Campgrounds	(Tent) Rustic tent sites in the National Forest; Breeden's Bottom, North Creek, Middle Creek, others in Natural Bridge
Campgrounds (RV)	Middle Creek, North Creek; others in Natural Bridge
B&Bs	8 small B&Bs with a total of 20 rooms
Economy Hotels	All but one located near the I-81 Exit 150 interchange; some older properties used by truckers
Mid-Range Hotels	Clustered near the I-81 Exit 150 interchange; limited accommodations north as far as Staunton
High End Hotels (>$150)	None
Resorts/Lodges	None

Events and Festivals

Spring	Arbor Day Celebration (Buchanan)
Spring	Civil War History Weekend (Buchanan)
Spring	Yard Sale and Flea Market (Troutville)
Spring	Sounds of the Mountain (Camp Bethel) – music and storytelling festival
Spring	Historic District Walking Tour (Buchanan)
Spring - Fall	Second Fridays Cruise-Ins (Buchanan)
Spring - Summer	Various events at the wineries – wine and chocolate, tastings, music
Summer	Fishing Carnival
Summer	4th of July Carnival & Parade (Buchanan)
Summer	Farm Tour
Spring-Fall	Sporting Events at Sports Complex
Fall	Mountain Magic Bluegrass, Antiques and Crafts Festival (Buchanan)
Fall	Party in the Park (Troutville)
Winter	Holiday Home Tour (Fincastle, Buchanan, and Troutville)
Winter	New Year's Eve Celebration (Buchanan and Fincastle)