A STORY WORTH TELLING

The Tennessee River Valley STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
The Tennessee River is one of the most ecologically important river systems in the country. Through the efforts of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the river system has also become an American treasure for recreation diversity and a place for exceptional economic development opportunities.

Early in 2016, civic leaders and tourism professionals in the mid-south recognized an opportunity to unify the Geotourism efforts of the 125 counties in seven states that embrace the Tennessee River waterway system. In February of that year, The Tennessee River Valley Stewardship Council was launched for that purpose.

Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents. Geotourism incorporates the concept of sustainable tourism—that destinations should remain unspoiled for future generations—while allowing for ways to protect a place’s character.
Since its founding in 2016, the Stewardship Council has been composed of a prominent list of tourism and travel professionals who are volunteering their efforts towards the visionary goal of economic development through Geotourism for the Tennessee River Valley.

**TRV Mapguide Executive Director (Volunteer)**
Julie Graham, Executive Director-Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council/Chair Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful, Norris, TN

**TRV Mapguide Portal Editor**
Angie Pierce, Vice President Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, Decatur, AL

**TRV Mapguide Social Media Manager**
Melea Hames, Social Media Manager, Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, Decatur, AL

**2020-2021 Officers of the TRV Stewardship Council**
Chairman: Tami Reist, Alabama
Vice-Chair: Jennifer Wheatley, Kentucky
Secretary: Karin Landers, Tennessee
Treasurer: Angie Pierce, Alabama
<table>
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<th>Volunteer Members:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ida Walker</td>
<td>Tourism &amp; Recreation Development Specialist, Friends of Southwest Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alicia Phelps</td>
<td>Executive Director, Northeast Tennessee Tourism Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linda Lewanski</td>
<td>Director, Middle East Tennessee-Cocke County Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adrian Lambert</td>
<td>Director, Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jode Mull</td>
<td>Director of Tourism Blue Ridge, Georgia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tami Reist</td>
<td>President &amp; CEO, Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theresa Cutshall</td>
<td>Tishomingo County Development Foundation, Mississippi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbie Girty</td>
<td>Rural Tourism Program Manager, Tennessee Dept. of Tourist Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karin Landers</td>
<td>Director, Visit Humphrey County TN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Wheatly</td>
<td>Director of Outreach &amp; Sustainability, Friends of Land Between the Lakes, KY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Oswald</td>
<td>Director of Marketing, Paducah Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan Jones</td>
<td>Jones Public Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Suzanne Fisher</td>
<td>Ex-Officio Senior Program Manager, River and Resource Stewardship at Tennessee Valley Authority</td>
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The Stewardship Council is dedicated to serving the same geographic and economically diverse watershed region of the southeast United States as the Tennessee Valley Authority. This area is made up of more than 41,000 square miles embracing the Tennessee River Valley in portions of seven states.

STATES WITH REGIONS SUPPORTED BY THE TRV STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

ALABAMA          GEORGIA          KENTUCKY          MISSISSIPPI
NORTH CAROLINA          TENNESSEE          VIRGINIA
The mission of the Stewardship Council is to expand the economic health and to stimulate economic development within the Tennessee River Valley region through sustainable tourism, i.e. Geotourism. This mission is achieved through a variety of targeted methods with the purpose of showcasing the region as the premier destination for heritage and/or recreational tourism in America.
Why Tourism? It’s a Proven Success

“A study of more than 200 cities over the past 23 years confirms that destinations with substantial and growing visitor economies tend to outperform their peers, making destination promotion a true engine of economic development.”

Oxford Economics
Destination Promotion: An Engine of Economic Development

How investments in the visitor economy drive broader economic growth

Attracting Strategic Events
By securing meetings and conventions, DMOs attract the very prospects that economic development agencies target. Not only do these events create valuable exposure among business decision makers, they create direct opportunities for economic development agencies to deepen connections with attendees.

“Economic clusters and conventions have become synergistic”
Tom Clark
Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation

Building Transport Networks
By developing the visitor economy, destination promotion supports transportation infrastructure, providing greater accessibility and supply logistics that are important in attracting investment in other sectors.

“Air service is profoundly important to corporate investment and location decisions... This is one of tourism’s most significant contributions since the levels of air service at New Orleans far exceed what local demand could support.”
Stephen Moret
Secretary
Louisiana Economic Development

Raising the Destination Profile
Destination promotion builds awareness, familiarity, and relationships in commercial, institutional and individual networks that are critical in attracting investment.

“We are learning a lot from Visit California by how they brand California and how to take their model and apply it to economic development.”
Brook Taylor
Deputy Director
Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz)

Raising the Quality of Life
Visitor spending helps support a broader and higher quality set of local amenities than an area could otherwise sustain. The cultural, entertainment, culinary, and retail attractions that visitors support make a place more attractive to investors.

“Traveler attractions are the same reason that CEOs choose a place.”
Jeff Malehorn
President & CEO, World Business Chicago

Oxford Economics
53% Increase in nominations in past three years.
2,452 Total nominations with more than 9,500 images.
35 Custom trip plans on site.
50 Featured blogs/stories.

Website Stats
(July 2019-Aug. 2020:
5,055 Users.
# of New visitors: 331,046 (55% increase)
# of Organic visits: 84.9% (70.51% increase)
# States, DC, PR visits: 52
# of Direct visits: 33,758 (18% increase)

Supporting E-newsletter:
E-newsletter sent every month.
E-newsletter has 3,200 active subscribers. Average open rate is 17% which is 1% higher than the industry average.
In April 2020, TRVSC announced the migration to a new platform for its newly revamped website.

New features include "Book Now", "Reserve Now" and "Visit Now" buttons, simpler mapping tools, a more user-friendly nomination process, capability to change featured attractions and events on the home page, and blog capability.

The TRV Stewardship Council manages a second website focused on conservation and partnerships: www.trvstewardshipcouncil.org
Facebook growth
July 2019 – 13,833 users
July 2020 – 15,241 users

Instagram growth
July 2019 – 5,425 users
July 2020 – 10,411 users

Pinterest growth
July 2019 – 422 users
July 2020 – 1,000 users

DIGITAL ADVERTISING
Revamped to promote social distancing outdoor travel activities.
Targeting: Nashville, Atlanta, Birmingham, St Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Ohio, and Indiana.
The Tennessee River Valley Stewardship Council
MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS: PRINT

DIRECT MAIL POSTCARD

INFORMATIONAL CARD
FOR TOURIST DESTINATIONS

RACK BROCHURE

GEOTOURISTS patronize locally owned businesses and guides. They buy from local craftspeople and eat at restaurants serving regional cuisine. They seek out traditional music and dance. As a result, the money they spend helps local people earn a living and preserve the place’s authenticity.

National Geographic

Play like a local. Adventure is all around in the Tennessee River Valley. raft, zip-line, boulder, bike, jet ski, ATV, paddle, sail.

TENNESSEE RIVER VALLEY MAPGUIDE
www.tennesseerivervalleygeotourism.com #TRVrivervalley

TENNESSEE RIVER VALLEY

There is an Adventure to be Discovered

Roots of American Music
Authentic Experiences
Appalachian Culture
Vibrant River Communities

GEOtourists

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC COLLABORATION HAS IT BENEFITS:
• Free to participate in FAM tours
• Free to participate in consumer shows
• Free to participate in blog stories

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
MapGuide Destination

Joppa Mountain Pottery Gallery

"Lots of response to ours already...thank you!"
- Ann Crosby
Joppa Mountain Pottery

TennesseeRiverValleyGeotourism.org
DOWNLOAD OUR MOBILE APP
Visit and tell us your story!

@TRVgeotourism

ON THE GO

Geotourism (n.) tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.
The Tennessee River Valley Stewardship Council

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS: PRINT

COLLATERAL PIECES

- Tear-off Map
- Trifold Brochure
- Tour Itineraries Booklet
- Business Cards
The Tennessee River Valley Stewardship Council
MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS: PRESS

PRWeb- Reaching Influencers

Topics included:
• RVing and Exploring Wide Open Spaces
• The Dream of Catching a Triple-Digit Fish
• Tis the Season for Holiday Shopping
• African-American Heroes in the TRV

Date:
✓ Average Potential audience - 30 Million
✓ Average pick-up by media sources - 100
✓ Average views and hits: 3000
✓ Average reach - US, Canada, International (Germany, UK, India,)
✓ Influencers following us - 365
✓ Atlanta, National Geographic, World Wildlife Federation, NEEF, National River Travel, local media, South Arts, Conservation Fund.
✓ Explore Tennessee River Valley has an influence rating of 63 (out of 100). This is up from 61 in 2019.
✓ Value of campaigns: 49K reach, 847.1K impressions, a .57% engagement rate, and an EMV of $11K. (The EMV is what this content would have been worth had it been paid advertising.)
In This Edition

Dear Angie,

Water sustains and connects all of us in so many ways.

When the first settlers came to the Tennessee Valley, they came for the land. Relentless planting of the fertile bottomlands for farming, lumber to build and heat homes, wildlife to fill their winter larders, and water, the most necessary of elements for human survival.

Today, these same abundances draw people to the Tennessee Valley. The rich recreational assets are destination experiences for outdoor enthusiasts. By the numbers, the region boasts seventeen National Park Service units, forty-six lakes, and seventy-plus rivers, all providing a bounty of outdoor, cultural, and heritage activities to experience.

This month’s edition is dedicated to the paddlers we met at Canoeopia and our readers who understand the importance of water to our good health. We are sharing some of the best paddling trails to explore, checking in on the progress of the Cumberland Trail, talking southern biscuits and grits, and getting to our roots by honoring strong women who have made their impact on the region through their music.

In the Tennessee Valley, there is a bounty of riches to explore!

14 Water Trails you want to Paddle in 2021
by Mark Engler

The Tennessee River Valley’s sprawling system of rivers is not by one, but by numerous great rivers that gather in the rugged highlands of the Appalachian Mountains and Cumberland Plateau. Waterways throughout the region offer ample opportunities for smooth, clear water and smooth-current paddlers to enjoy some of the best...
#RecreateResponsibly https://www.recreateresponsibly.org

In 2020, COVID changed the landscape of tourism.
  Focused on drivable vacations
  Social distancing
  Recovery opportunities for metro regions (headlines of stories)

Conservation- Launched a secondary site trvstewardshipcouncil.org (we have stories and headlines)
  Sustainable Travel- COVID Impact and outdoor visitation
  Water and land stewardship

Connecting with motivated travelers-https://tennesseerivervalleygeotourism.org/explore-more
  FAMS and story blogs
  Virtual Travel Shows
Joppa Mountain Pottery

TOURISM BOOSTS SMALL BUSINESSES
Rutledge, Tennessee- Family-owned business- 2 employees

Known for stoneware and raku pottery, Joppa Mountain Pottery's award-winning work has been featured several times on HGTV and PBS. It has a growing reputation with collectors and galleries worldwide.

Challenges-
• Geographic location is off a rural road and no easy access from a major road.
• Grainger County, TN has a budget of less than $1000 to market tourism.
• No website. Broken link on the state website. No paid tourism staff to correct.
• Small business with no funds to market via print or digital. Marketing is word of mouth, Facebook, ETSY.

TRV Geotourism Benefits-
• The owners can manage their nominations and refresh with information, events, and pictures as needed. A narrative can be built. This also brings the nomination to the top of the site.
• Provides geographic relationships. What’s nearby to do, see, grab a meal, or a place to stay.
• Provides direct contact information for visitors to take action.
• Power of SEO and SEM with a larger brand. Increased visibility and higher page 1 listings.
• Ability to promote events on a larger platform to a broader market.
• Most visits are organic. Visits to a specific page are motivated leads for that attraction.
• Partners can use the “Nat Geo Destination” badges on their websites.
ONCE WAS THE LARGEST COAL PRODUCING COUNTY IN TENNESSEE

TRANSITIONING COUNTY: COAL TO TOURISM

Norris Lake, Campbell County, Tennessee

- Designated an ARC Distressed Area with average per capita income of $13,301 and 22.8% living below poverty line.
- Tourism boom centered around Norris Lake created by TVA dam helping area expand economic base.
- Natural assets: Norris Lake, 4 state parks, 2 wildlife management areas, 11 marinas, an annual private investment of $3.5 million, and more than $57 million in sales for the Royal Blue Trails Complex.
REDEVELOPMENT OF ABANDONED INGALLS HARBOR SHIPYARD INTO

INGALLS HARBOR AND EVENT CENTER
Wheeler Lake, Decatur, Alabama

- Features 10-boat wide launch ramp. Has hosted major fishing tournaments from BASS, FLW, Crappie USA.
- Features a 27,000-square foot multi-purpose pavilion that more than doubled the city’s capacity for hosting large gatherings.
- Spurred development of a new hotel on the riverfront, and event, restaurant, and retail business development in downtown Decatur.
CITY HARBOR DINING & ENTERTAINMENT
Lake Guntersville, Guntersville, Alabama

- 55,000 Square feet of restaurants, entertainment venues, and available business space.
- Dallas-Fort Worth Developer Patrick Lawler said he believes the City Harbor development will generate more revenue to the area.
- Local City Council expands project to include short-term rental condos.
The Tennessee River Valley Stewardship Council
A STORY WORTH TELLING

7 STATES • 1 RIVER

EXPLORE MORE
AMERICA’S TENNESSEE RIVER VALLEY
WWW.TENNESSEERIVERVALLEYGEO TOURISM.ORG

To join the TRVSC, please contact Julie Graham at 865-585-0811 or tennesseerivervalleymapguide@gmail.com.

✔ Nominate a Place to the MapGuide
Help tell the story of what is special about this place. Nominations open now!
Nominate at: www.tennesseerivervalleygeotourism.org