

Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism

2008-2009 Marketing Plan



CURRITUCK
NORTH CAROLINA



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Mission Statement

The mission of the Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism is to strengthen the local economy through the promotion of Currituck County as a vacation destination, therefore enhancing the quality of life for local citizens.

The department's goal is to assist tourism-related businesses with advertising and marketing promotion while providing visitors information on the numerous attractions, activities, events, accommodations, services, and historical sites located throughout Currituck County.

Purpose

The purpose of the Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism is to promote sustainable development of the visitor industry throughout Currituck County, including the mainland, beaches and Knotts Island. The Department encourages travel by the public to and through Currituck County and maintains a continuing interest in the well-being of visitors to the area.

Introduction

Tourism is the **leading economic generator** in Currituck County, bringing thousands of visitors to the area each year and resulting in millions of dollars pumped into the local economy. Without the revenues generated by tourism, the citizens of Currituck County would not enjoy the low property taxes and many other benefits that result from the tourism industry.

In July 2005, the Currituck County Board of Commissioners established the Travel & Tourism Department. During the three years since the Department was formed, there have been **tremendous gains in bringing vacationers to Currituck County**. This is evidenced through a substantial increase in occupancy tax collections, a percentage increase even greater than that of the neighboring county of Dare. For example, the amount of occupancy tax collected in April 2008 compared with April 2007 was 80.9% greater.

Tax relief, which is the sales tax revenues from state and local taxes divided by the number of household in Currituck County, was an average of \$1,503.91 for 2006. Comparatively, the State of North Carolina's average tax relief was \$413.03 for the same year. Being a coastal vacation destination that draws thousands of visitors each year, **Currituck citizens benefit greatly from the money spent by visitors** to the County.

In fact, Currituck County's **spending by overnight visitors increased by 9.9%** from 2005 to 2006. Comparatively, neighboring Dare County increased by 8.7%. The overall state average was an increase of 8.3% and the national average went up by 7.7%.

The challenge now is to **maintain the steady growth of the tourism industry** that is currently being experienced despite high fuel prices and a sluggish economy. Success can be sustained through a strategic marketing plan, adequate funding, and the continued hard work and dedication of a professional staff.



Objectives

The Travel & Tourism Department has identified the following ten main objectives:

1. Increase the number of visitors to Currituck County, thus increasing occupancy tax and sales tax revenues.
2. Continue to promote the attractions and tourism-related businesses located throughout the entire County including the mainland, beaches and Knotts Island.
3. Utilize the County's visitor information centers as "sales centers" to promote visitor spending.
4. Enhance and aggressively market the tourism website, visitcurrituck.com.
5. Maintain strategic alliances with tourism-related businesses, attractions and other groups in Currituck County.
6. Continue to analyze the effectiveness of print and electronic ad campaigns.
7. Expand efforts to obtain editorial through local, regional, state, national and international media.
8. Continue to work closely with, and utilize the knowledge of, the industry leaders appointed to the Tourism Advisory Board.
9. Utilize the objectives set forth in the Comprehensive Tourism Research and Strategic Plan recommended by Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. and adopted by the Tourism Advisory Board.
10. Communicate effectively to residents, businesses, and elected leaders the importance of tourism to the local economy.

Research and Analysis

The Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism produces a monthly report that includes important information necessary to analyze the Department's marketing efforts. Among the data collected and reported is: tax collections, lead requests, information center statistics, and other pertinent information.

The information collected is analyzed, and the appropriate changes and improvements are made for the purposes of marketing and promoting Currituck County. Below is a summary of the research and statistics the Department of Travel and Tourism and Tourism Advisory Board used to make decisions for the 2008-2009 marketing campaign.

2007-2008 Advertising Campaigns

Extensive research goes in to tracking leads. In doing so, the Department discovers not only where visitors are coming from, but also which advertising campaigns are the most effective.

Print Advertising – 5 Best Results (by lowest Cost Per Lead):

Publication	Cost Per Lead
Great Vacation Getaways	\$ 0.84
Bridal Guide	\$ 1.02
America's Best Vacations Insert	\$ 2.18
Carolina Living	\$ 2.22
Family Travel Insert	\$ 2.26
Heritage Magazine Insert	\$ 2.35

Industry standards recommend that the Cost Per Lead (CPL) for print marketing fall at five dollars (\$5) or below for non-niche marketing.

To determine the cost per lead (CPL), the Department took the total money spend divided by the total trackable leads. It is important to note that just because a lead cannot be tracked does not mean a lead was not gained.

Internet Advertising – 5 Best Results:

Internet Sites
Website/E-Blast
theknot.com
VisitNC Banner Ads
Washington Post
VisitNC Event Listing
Coasthost.com



Top States Requesting Visitor Information

The top states currently requesting Currituck Outer Banks visitor guides are: North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York, Florida and New Jersey.

Dollar Against the Pound and Euro

As of June 5, 2008, one euro (€1.00) is equal to one dollar and fifty-six cents (\$1.56). One pound (£1.00) is equal to one dollar and ninety-six cents (\$1.96).

With the value of the US dollar continuing to sink to record lows, while the Euro and Pound rise, the Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism has decided to dedicate a larger portion of the marketing budget on promotion to international travelers.

The North Carolina Division of Tourism offers an international program which targets travel from Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany. The Division also has representatives that work directly with tour operators, travel agents and media professionals in those countries to encourage visitation to North Carolina.



Impact of High Gas Prices on the Tourism Industry

With the high price of fuel, one might expect a decline in out-of-state visitors to Currituck County; however, it appears that gas prices are not having a negative impact on getting visitors to vacation to Currituck County. Research indicates that although people will still continue to travel, they will perhaps spend less while on vacation.

In an effort to combat this trend, the Currituck County Tourism Department plans to market heavily to states within a day's driving distance. These states include: North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Maryland, Washington DC, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, Florida, and West Virginia.

Strategic Plan

In order to meet the goals and objectives set by the Tourism Department and Tourism Advisory Board, a strategic plan has been established. This plan includes:

1) **Continuing to improve marketing efforts.** A successfully developed strategic plan will define the direction necessary to effectively use marketing resources to increase the number of visitors. Increased visitor spending will strengthen the local economy and generate additional sales taxes and occupancy taxes. This will in turn create additional funds to provide better services for visitors and residents. This can be achieved by:

- identifying and encouraging new and existing tourism assets, infrastructures, and the target markets that have the most potential to bring visitors to Currituck County who will spend the largest amount of money, thus maximizing the economic impact of travelers to the County;
- continuing to track and evaluate current marketing and advertising efforts;
- focusing advertising of the County to locations that are within a shorter drive distance;
- determining which promotions are effective and eliminating those that are not effective;
- utilizing the research findings of Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. ;
- expanding the e-marketing efforts to increase the number of visitors and information requests on visitcurrituck.com;
- enhancing visitcurrituck.com to display additional tourism related activities and attractions;
- expanding marketing efforts to unique groups such as: small conferences, weddings, reunions, group tours, and retreats;
- continuing to market the County to media outlets through press releases, fact sheets, etc.
- promoting Currituck's year-round tourism product in order to increase visitors and revenues in the shoulder season;
- continuing the linking campaign to encourage tourism sites to link to visitcurrituck.com;
- improving the visitcurrituck.com's website ranking with Search Engine Optimization (SEO), social networking, etc.

2) **Continuing to promote the Department of Travel and Tourism as a business resource for the local tourism industry.** Strategies include:

- promoting businesses locally via publications and programs including: the Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Guide, the Currituck Outer Banks Newspaper, the Currituck County Trail Guide, Currituck Outer Banks Wedding & Event Planner, Visitor/Welcome Centers, outdoor information stands, local television spots, visitcurrituck.com website, visitnc.com website, and other outlets;
- offering co-op print advertising opportunities to subsidize the cost of advertising for local businesses;
- expanding the shoulder season by promoting destination weddings, special events, and discounted prices in the off season;
- holding an annual update meeting to inform the local tourism industry of what the Department has accomplished during the past year and what goals have been set for the new year. One of the prime objectives of this meeting is to obtain feedback, information and direction from Currituck's tourism-related businesses.

Advertising Plan



Advertising for the 2008-2009 budget year will include a combination of print, electronic media, billboards, radio, and television. The promotional focus will be broken down into the following categories: family vacations; shoulder season promotions; co-op offers; wedding, event and group travel; history and heritage; and local promotions.

Print Advertising

Family Vacations: Currituck County will continue to be advertised as a family vacation destination. This theme will illustrate families having fun on the beach, participating in recreational activities, touring attractions and enjoying the scenic, natural beauty of the entire County.

The following is the print advertising campaign for Family Vacations.

Publication(s)	Circulation	Rate	CPC	CPL	Market	Issue	Ad Size	RSC	Web Link
AAA World (state co-op)	2,283,000	\$3,400.00	\$0.01	\$5.72	Mid-Atlantic	Jul/Aug 2009	1/8 Page	Y	Y
AARP	1,082,500	\$4,884.00	\$0.01	\$3.95	NY, NJ, PA	Sep/Oct 2008	1/6 Page	Y	Y
AARP	1,082,500	\$9,768.00	\$0.01	\$3.95	NY, NJ, PA	Mar/Apr 2009	1/3 Page	Y	Y
Carolina Living	85,000	\$4,700.00	\$0.06	\$2.22	NC, SC	Mar-09	1/2 Page	Y	N
Carolina Living	85,000	\$4,700.00	\$0.05	\$2.22	NC, SC	Sep-08	1/2 Page	Y	N
Coastal Living	450,000	\$13,322.00	\$0.03	\$5.41	East of the Mississippi	Jul/Aug 2008	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Conde Nast Traveler	296,000	\$12,608.00	\$0.04	No Data Yet	Southeast	Feb-09	1/3 Page	Y	Y
Country Living (Coast Host co-op)	343,000	\$5,185.00	\$0.02	\$9.44	DE, MD, OH, NC, SC, PA, VA, DC	Feb-09	1/3 Page	Y	Y
Family Fun AAA Home & Away Woman's Day	1,000,000	\$10,179.00	\$0.01	\$2.26	NJ, PA, DE, MD, DC, VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, OH	Apr, Jul, May	1/6 Page	Y	Y
Good Housekeeping	1,110,000	\$28,045.00	\$0.01	No Data Yet	Northeast	May 2009	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Better Homes & Gardens Ladies Home Journal Family Circle	70,000	\$19,995.00	\$0.29	\$3.26	NY, NC, OH, PA, SC, VA, DC	Feb-09	1/2 Page	Y	Y

Publication(s)	Circulation	Rate	CPC	CPL	Market	Issue	Ad Size	RSC	Web Link
Newspaper Insert (Explore the Southeast)	1,200,000	\$4,161.00	\$0.01	\$4.60	East of the Mississippi	Spring 2009	Travel Listing	Y	Y
Newspaper Insert (Vacation Getaways)	2,200,000	\$3,725.00	\$0.01	\$0.84	Northeast	Spring 2009	1/8 Page	Y	Y
Newspaper Insert (America's Best Values)	661,434	\$4,500.00	\$0.01	\$2.18	Northeast	Spring 2009	1/4 Page	Y	Y
My Time	28,000	\$995.00	\$0.13	No Data Yet	Hampton Roads, VA	Aug-08	1/4 Page	N	Y
My Time	28,000	\$995.00	\$0.13	No Data Yet	Hampton Roads, VA	Sep-08	1/4 Page	N	Y
My Time	28,000	\$995.00	\$0.13	No Data Yet	Hampton Roads, VA	Nov/Dec 2008	1/4 Page	N	Y
My Time	28,000	\$995.00	\$0.13	No Data Yet	Hampton Roads, VA	Mar-09	1/4 Page	N	Y
My Time	28,000	\$995.00	\$0.13	No Data Yet	Hampton Roads, VA	Apr-09	1/4 Page	N	Y
My Time	28,000	\$995.00	\$0.13	No Data Yet	Hampton Roads, VA	Jun/Jul 2009	1/4 Page	N	Y
National Geographic Traveler	405,000	\$13,800.00	\$0.03	\$18.64	East of Mississippi	Jul/Aug 2008	1/3 Page	Y	Y
National Geographic Traveler	405,000	\$13,800.00	\$0.03	\$18.64	East of Mississippi	Mar-09	1/3 Page	Y	Y
New York Times, (state co-op)	1,500,000	\$3,375.00	\$0.01	\$12.55	NY	Sep-08	1/9 Page	Y	N
Oprah (state co-op)	610,000	\$1,800.00	\$0.01	\$2.24	East of Mississippi	Apr-09	1/8 Page	Y	Y
Readers Digest (STS co-op)	1,224,800	\$12,039.00	\$0.01	No Data Yet	Northeast/Mid-Atlantic	Apr-09	1/3 Page	Y	Y
Redbook	491,000	\$5,875.00	\$0.01	No Data Yet	Northeast	Apr-09	1/8 Page	Y	Y
Southern Living	365,000	\$9,350.00	\$0.03	\$2.22	Mid-Atlantic	Jul-08	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Travel + Leisure	590,000	\$20,880.00	\$0.04	\$6.52	Southeast	Apr-08	1/2 page	Y	Y
Travel Guide to North Carolina, Official 2008	700,000	\$26,205.00	\$0.04	No Trackable Leads	National	2009 Edition	Full Page	N	Y
USA Travel Guide	1,250,000	\$14,375.00	\$0.01	No Trackable Leads	W. Europe, Canada, Japan, Mexico, USA	2009 Edition	1/4 Page	N	Y
USA Weekend	5,000,000	\$6,400.00	\$0.01	\$5.85	Mid-Atlantic	Aug 24 2008	Format Ad	Y	Y
USA Weekend	5,000,000	\$6,720.00	\$0.01	\$5.85	Mid-Atlantic	Mar 09 2009	Format Ad	Y	Y
Washington Post Magazine, The	600,000	\$5,650.00	\$0.01	\$11.95	DC	Mar-09	1/3 Page	Y	N
Women's Day	1,065,000	\$24,370.00	\$0.02	No Data Yet	East of Mississippi	May 2009	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Golf Magazine	372,000	\$10,900.00	\$0.03	No Data Yet	Northeast	Aug-08	1/2 Page	Y	Y





Shoulder Season Promotions

Increasing awareness of what Currituck County has to offer in the off-season is a priority of the Department. Packages, vacation giveaways, events, romantic getaways, and holiday travel will be promoted in ads running from the fall into early spring.

Below is the print advertising campaign for the Shoulder Season.

Publication(s)	Circulation	Rate	CPC	CPL	Market	Issue	Ad Size	RSC	Web Link
Budget Travel	350,780	\$9,970.00	\$0.03	\$9.46	East of the Mississippi	Oct-08	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Coastal Living	450,000	\$13,322.00	0.03	\$5.41	East of the Mississippi	Oct-08	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Conde Nast Traveler	296,000	\$6,530.00	\$0.02	No Data Yet	Southeast	Sep. 2008	1/6 Page	Y	Y
Country Living	465,000	\$7,753.00	\$0.02	\$9.44	Southeast	Sep-08	1/3 Page	Y	Y
Newspaper Insert (Vacation Getaways)	1,650,000	\$2,975.00	\$0.01	\$0.84	Northeast	Fall 2008	1/8 Page	Y	Y
Newspaper Insert (America's Best Values)	661,434	\$4,500.00	\$0.01	\$2.18	Northeast	Fall 2008	1/4 Page	Y	Y
Readers Digest	1,224,800	\$12,039.00	\$0.01	No Data Yet	Northeast Mid-Atlantic	Sep-08	1/3 Page	Y	Y
Southern Living	365,000	\$9,350.00	\$0.03	\$2.22	Mid-Atlantic	Sep-08	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Washington Post Magazine, The	600,000	\$5,650.00	\$0.01	\$11.95	DC	Sep-08	1/3 Page	Y	N
Women's Day	1,517,000	\$11,456.00	\$0.01	No Data Yet	East of Mississippi	Oct-08	1/6 Page	Y	Y

Currituck Co-op Offers

Cooperative advertising, or co-op advertising, is just one of the ways the Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism tries to assist its local businesses with obtaining reasonably priced advertising. By purchasing and subsidizing a full page ad and then reselling smaller portions of the ad to local businesses, advertising becomes more affordable for all participants involved. Ads that are 1/6 page in size will be offered to local businesses interested in taking advantage of this advertising opportunity.

Below is the 2008-09 print advertising campaign for Co-op Offers.

Publication(s)	Circulation	Rate	CPC	CPL	Market	Issue	Ad Size	RSC	Web Link
Budget Travel	392,700	\$6,985.00	\$0.05	\$4.17	East of the Mississippi	Mar-09	Full Page	Y	Y
Oprah	610,000	\$14,770.00	\$0.06	\$1.05	East of Mississippi	Feb-09	Full Page	Y	Y
Southern Living	365,000	\$4,550.00	\$0.05	\$1.36	Mid-Atlantic	Mar-09	Full Page	Y	Y

Wedding, Event and Group Travel

The Currituck Outer Banks Wedding and Event Planner was created to encourage potential visitors to have a destination wedding, family reunion or corporate retreat on the Currituck Outer Banks. This guide will be promoted heavily in bridal magazines and to meeting and event planners.

Below is the print 2008-09 advertising campaign for Wedding, Event and Group Travel.

Publication(s)	Circulation	Rate	CPC	CPL	Market	Issue	Ad Size	RSC	Web Link
Bridal Guide	195,495	\$5,232.00	\$0.03	\$1.02	National	Nov/ Dec 2008	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Bridal Guide	195,495	\$5,232.00	\$0.03	\$1.02	National	Mar/ Apr 2009	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Destination Weddings & Honeymoons	100,000	\$5,729.00	\$0.06	\$24.90	National Distribution	Winter 2008	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Knot, The	55,000	\$3,683.00	\$0.13	\$0.36	NC	Dec-08	Full Page	Y	Y
Knot, The	55,000	\$3,683.00	\$0.13	\$0.36	NC	Jun-09	Full Page	Y	Y
Martha Stewart Living (state co-op)	773,317	\$2,000.00	\$0.01	No Data Yet	Eastern Region	May 2009	1/8 Page	Y	Y
Martha Stewart Weddings (state co-op)	119,898	\$2,000.00	\$0.02	No Data Yet	Eastern, CA, TX	Feb-09	1/4 Page	Y	Y
Modern Bride	347,083	\$8,790.00	0.03	\$7.59	National Distribution	Aug/ Sep 2008	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Modern Bride	347,083	\$8,790.00	\$0.03	\$7.59	National Distribution	Dec/ Jan 2009	1/2 Page	Y	Y
Weddings Unveiled	80,000	\$1,400.00	\$0.02	No Trackable Leads	National	Spring 2009	1/2 Page	N	N
Carolina Field Trips	62,000	\$1,900.00	\$0.03	No Trackable Leads	NC, SC	Fall 2008	1/2 Page	N	Y
Carolina Heritage	110,000	\$2,895.00	\$0.03	No Trackable Leads	NC, SC	2009 Edition	Full Page	Y	Y
SEEN	100,000	\$1,100.00	\$0.01	No Trackable Leads	Southeast	Fall 2008	1/4 Page	N	N

History and Heritage Tourism

Heritage Tourism is motivated by a desire to experience the history and culture of an area. The Tourism Department employees work with staffs of the Whalehead Club, Currituck Beach Lighthouse, Outer Banks Wildlife Education Center, Corolla Wild Horse Fund, Historic Jarvisburg Colored School, Historic Corolla Village, and others to develop and support sustainable efforts that preserve and promote the County's natural and historic resources.

Below is the print 2008-09 advertising campaign for Historical & Heritage Tourism.

Publication(s)	Circulation	Rate	CPC	CPL	Market	Issue	Ad Size	RSC	Web Link
Audubon Magazine	400,000	\$16,080.00	\$0.04	No Data Yet	National	Jul-08	1/3 Page	Y	Y
Civil War Traveler (state co-op)	60,000	\$ 500.00	\$0.01	No Data Yet	National	May 2009	1/9 Page	Y	N
America History Smithsonian Civil War Times Preservation	600,000	\$15,385.00	\$0.03	\$2.35	Southeast, Midwest, Mid-Atlantic	Mar/ Apr, May	1/3 Page	Y	Y

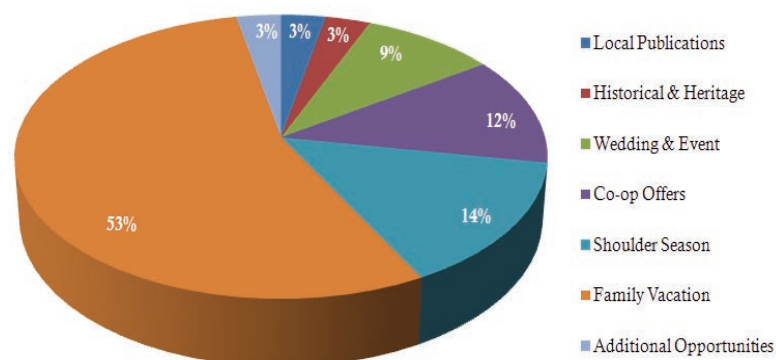
Local Promotions

Several ads promoting day trips and Currituck County information centers (Visitor Center / Welcome Center) will be placed in local and regional publications in an effort to increase foot traffic to the centers.

Below is the print 2008-09 advertising campaign for Local Promotions.

Publication(s)	Circulation	Rate	CPC	CPL	Market	Issue	Ad Size	RSC	Web Link
Currituck County Chamber Guide	20,000	\$1,200.00	\$0.06	\$24	Currituck County	2009 Edition	1/2 Page	N	Y
North Beach Sun	45,000	\$885.00	\$0.02	No Trackable Leads	Currituck & Dare County	Spring 2009	1/2 Page	N	N
North Beach Sun	60,000	\$885.00	\$0.02	No Trackable Leads	Currituck & Dare County	Fall 2009	1/2 Page	N	N
Outer Banks Visitors Guide	425,000	\$6,171.00	\$0.01	No Trackable Leads	Outer Banks	2009 Edition	1/2 Page	N	N
Resort Maps	300,000	\$2,365.00	\$0.01	No Trackable Leads	Outer Banks	2009 Edition	3 Spot	N	N
Sunny Day Guide	400,000	\$6,000.00	\$0.02	No Trackable Leads	Outer Banks	2009 Edition	Full Page	N	N

Print Budget



Definitions:

CPC: Cost Per Circulation – This data determined by dividing the total cost of the ad by the total circulation.

CPL: Cost Per Lead – This data determined by dividing the total cost of ads placed and dividing by the amount of trackable leads acquired.

RSC: Reader Service Card – a card inserted in a magazine where a reader can request information on a specific destination.

E-Marketing

The following is a brief description of travelers who use the internet. This research data is considered when the Tourism Department makes decisions regarding e-marketing.

- 82% of U.S. adults who use the internet are travelers. That translates into a market of 98.3 million travelers (sometimes called 'on-line travelers').
- Frequent travelers, those who take more than 5 trips a year, use the internet more often than those who travel less frequently.
- 65% of on-line travelers consult the internet to get travel and destination information.
- Websites used for travel planning include:
 - 70% use on-line travel agency sites such as Microsoft, Expedia, Travelocity and Priceline;
 - 60% use company-owned websites such as those for hotels and airlines;
 - 59% use search engines; and
 - 50% use destination websites.
- Profile of website users:
 - 51% women; 49% men.
 - 47% are baby-boomers between 35 and 54 years of age.
 - 38% are college graduates.

Source: Travelers' Use of the Internet 2004 Edition, Tourism Industry Association of America

Internet Advertising

Banner and Advertorial Advertising	\$100,000
Pay-Per-Click Advertising	\$50,000
Search Engine Optimization	\$50,000
E-Blast & Social Networking	\$90,000

“In just a brief one-twentieth of a second – less than half the time it takes to blink – people make aesthetic judgments that influence the rest of their experience with an Internet site.” This quote comes from an article published recently on MSNBC.com. The above statement highlights just how important it is to have a well developed website designed to promote tourism-related businesses, attractions and activities. Given the importance of a website to today’s travelers, the goal of the Currituck County Tourism Department is to consistently update, enhance and create meaningful information to travelers on the visitcurrituck.com website, which will help attract new visitors as well as create a relationship with return visitors.

VisitCurrituck.com Statistics

- Visitors to the website increased 28% over 2007.
- The top five referring websites are:
 - www.google.com
 - www.visitnc.com
 - www.ncdot.org.
 - www.weddingsonthebeach.org
- The top five webpage hits by states are:
 - Virginia
 - North Carolina
 - Georgia
 - Florida
 - Pennsylvania



Travel Websites

In the coming year, expanding internet marketing will be essential to driving additional traffic to the visitcurrituck.com website, which in turn will increase leads. Several strategies are being planned to accomplish this goal. One strategy is to create a virtual visitor's guide to post on visitcurrituck.com and other tourism websites. This will not only readily provide potential visitors with information about Currituck County attractions and businesses, it is expected to also save on the postage costs of mailing guides as visitors can view the guide online.

Another e-marketing strategy is to expand web marketing efforts to target areas that are within a gas tank away from Currituck County. With the high price of fuel, families are expected to be seeking vacation destinations that are closer to home.

The 2008 spring vacation give-away that was organized by the Tourism Department and supported by several local businesses was a success, driving increased interest in Currituck County. Plans are to organize additional give-aways in an effort to further expand internet marketing and obtain more leads.

The Department will tie in internet marketing to print, television and radio ads. E-blasts & e-newsletters: The e-blast/e-newsletter program initiated in 2007 will be expanded this year. The e-mails and newsletters distributed will market to potential visitors to Currituck County and provide them with information specific to local attractions, events, activities, etc. This electronic advertising will also target vacationers' specific interests and keep them up to date on special offers, discounts, promotions, and other vacation information.

Micro-sites

Micro-sites are used to generate new traffic to a website for the purpose of increasing web traffic. These sites are geared to specific market niches and advertised to that market. Currently there are three micro-sites being developed under the visitcurrituck.com umbrella. They are: weddings, wild horses and camping.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is the process of updating the material (text) on a website to improve its volume and quality of traffic from search engines. In order for visitcurrituck.com to be competitive on the internet, it is vital to have a well observed and continually adjusted SEO program. This time-consuming procedure is contracted out to the web-development/e-marketing firm Ciniva. This firm works with County staff to frequently update the visitcurrituck.com website in an effort to keep it competitive.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC)

Pay-Per-Click is described as internet advertising when the purchaser is only charged for a user clicking on an ad and being directed to a specific website. PPC is similar to an auction where the highest bidder for a keyword combination receives priority listing by the search engine. An effective PPC campaign is essential to a successful website. The Tourism Department is involved in an aggressive PPC campaign through Ciniva and will expand this type of e-marketing effort to other search engines. Successful key words used in the 2007-2008 PPC campaign included: Outer Banks, Currituck County, lighthouses, fishing, weddings, Currituck Outer Banks, Corolla, beaches, and wild-horses. This program will expand during the 2008-09 fiscal year.

Social Networking

Online social networking describes websites that function like online communities of internet users. Many of the visitors to social networks share common interests such as hobbies, age or politics. During the 2008-2009 fiscal year, promotion of Currituck County on social networks will be expanded if the staff and/or outside contracted sources can be secured. These sites will include: myspace.com, tripadvisor.com, YouTube.com and facebook.com. These sites were specifically recommended by Randall Travel Marketing, Inc.

Other Internet Promotions

Introduced to the Currituck County internet marketing mix in 2007-2008 was the use of e-zine, or on-line electronic magazines. E-zine readers are loyal and generally stay subscribed. E-zines have higher response rates than e-mail campaigns with higher click through rates. Articles submitted to E-zine create credibility with target markets by establishing the writer as an expert.

Another e-marketing campaign that will be explored is international e-marketing. This will include marketing to potential visitors in Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom. E-blasts, advertorials, banner ads and other campaigns will be used.

The Tourism Department will also continue to establish links from other tourist-related websites in an effort to expand SEO and direct interested tourists to the visitcurrituck.com website. In the last two years, the Department has successfully secured having the site linked to several other websites.

Television

Commercials that promote Currituck County's unique activities and attractions were produced and will continue to air on Charter Media (channel 12), WSKY-4 (channel 4), and local government access channels. The total amount budgeted for 2008-09 is \$65,000.

Production was completed in the spring of 2007 on a VacationChannels commercial that features Currituck County. VacationChannels a station that airs on televisions in hotel rooms throughout Hampton Roads, Virginia. The amount budgeted for 2008-09 for this program is \$18,000.

The Department of Travel and Tourism plans to participate in a Getaway Forecast promotion that will air on the Weather Channel during the months of July, August and September, 2008. A Currituck County promotion will appear 46 times per day to the Raleigh-Durham, Charlotte, Washington DC, Richmond-Petersburg markets. The promotion will cost \$16,980.

A Mid-Atlantic television campaign will be filmed in the fall of 2008 and launched during 2009. Market areas to be targeted include: North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Maryland, Washington DC, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, Florida and West Virginia. A total of \$100,000 has been budgeted for this program. Many of the commercials produced will also air on the television stations' websites, giving additional exposure to Currituck County.

The County's Video Production Specialist will continue to create short vignettes on local attractions and activities. Planned video subjects include: the Corolla Wild Horses, local farm markets and vineyards, beach safety, Currituck Beach Lighthouse, and Currituck Heritage Park. They will be shown on visitcurrituck.com, at the County's Visitor Center and Welcome Center, and on Currituck County's government access channels.





Public Relations

Press Tours

The Tourism Department will again this fiscal year organize press tours that will expose media to the County's attractions and unique experiences. The writers will immerse themselves into Currituck experiences which will include vineyard tours, visits to see the Grave Digger monster truck, seeing the Corolla Wild Horses, climbing the Currituck Beach Lighthouse, shopping at farm markets, touring the Whalehead Club, and more. The media will then write editorial for their publications, giving readers (perspective visitors) insight into what Currituck has to offer.

Familiarization Tours

Travel professionals will be invited to learn more about Currituck County and its many activities and attractions. These tours are targeted for travel agents, State Welcome Center staff, and other travel professionals in the tourism industry who may benefit from a brief trip to the area.



Business Development

Local Familiarization Tours

Familiarization tours will be offered for reservation agents, local information center staff, and other local tourism businesses that would benefit from learning more about the area. This will be especially beneficial to frontline staff members, who are the main contacts with visitors during the booking, checking-in, and recommendation process. Often times this staff is from outside of the area or is not familiar with Currituck County.

Business Listing Updates

The Tourism Department staff communicates local events and information about tourism-related businesses on well developed, informative websites and/or printed materials.

The following sources will continue to be updated and maintained:

www.ComeToOurBeach.com
www.VisitNC.com
www.Weekendsetc.com
www.onlineeventscenter.com
AAA Go Magazine
Sunny Day Guide
East Carolina Radio Group
www.visitncne.com (Northeast Commission's website)
www.festivalnews.info
www.PhyllisAndCompany.com

Business Resources

The Business Resources program was created to be a source of information for local tourism businesses. Within the site, businesses can access:

- announcements from the Department, Tourism Advisory Board, and Tourism Development Authority;
- guidelines for the website, visitor's guide, and the County's information centers;
- cooperative marketing opportunities;
- research and statistics on travel and tourism in Currituck County; and
- the Department's marketing plan and other documents.

Support of Funds Program

The purpose of the Support of Funds Program is to assist Currituck County community groups, non-profit organizations, and tourism-related businesses in promoting and marketing tourism and culturally-related events and activities. The program provides funds for advertising and promoting events, festivals, and other special promotions. Marketing activities under this program include paid media advertising, promotional materials, shoulder season promotions, and events that draw visitors and tourists from outside Currituck County.

Primary consideration is given to projects that enhance the long-term growth of the tourism industry and have the greatest potential for positive economic impact on the local economy. Applicants may apply for a maximum of \$5,000 per fiscal year. The goal of the Support of Funds Program is to provide groups, organizations and businesses with seed money to establish the marketing of their event(s).



Publications

The following printed publications will be published or re-issued during the 2008-2009 fiscal year:

Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Guide

The Tourism Department's award-winning, comprehensive publication that lists attractions, events, activities, accommodations, dining, services, maps, and other valuable visitor information.

Currituck Outer Banks Newspaper

Featuring stories on various attractions, activities, businesses and events.

Wedding & Event Planner

The award-winning guide that details all the resources needed to plan a wedding, reunion, retreat, conference, and/or other type of event in Currituck County.

Currituck County Map

A map that highlights the local attractions, beach access points, major roads, etc. The map will be used by Visitor Relations Associates at the Currituck information centers.

Annual Report

The annual report details the progress achieved by the County's Travel and Tourism Department and contains data and analysis on occupancy tax and sales tax collections, marketing strategies, expenditures and statistical research.

Monthly Report

The Tourism Department's Monthly Report offers specific marketing data on advertisements placed by the County. Readers can see exactly which internet and print resources are utilized by the Department in promoting tourism and how many leads are generated by the ads. The report also features information on brochure distribution, occupancy tax and sales tax collections, etc.

The data in the Monthly Report covers the previous 13-month period. This is done to provide comparison data and information on current marketing trends.



Tourism Boards

Tourism Development Authority

Barry Nelms,
Chairman

Gene Gregory,
Vice-Chairman

Ernie Bowden

J. Owen Etheridge

Janet Taylor

Tourism Advisory Board

John Wright, Chairman
Sanctuary Vineyards

Krista Boughey, Vice-Chairman
Seaside Vacations/Coldwell Banker
Seaside Realty

Don Cheek
Corolla Light Resort

Janice Farr
Sun Realty

Don Austin
Knotts Island Peach Festival

Vivian Simpson
Historic Jarvisburg Colored School

Cindy Seymour
Beach Bums

Ex-Officio Members

Barry Nelms,
Board of Commissioners

Dan Scanlon,
County Manager

Diane Sawyer,
Travel & Tourism Director

Veronica Brown,
Marketing Coordinator

Tourism Department

Department Locations

Currituck County Welcome Center
106 Caratoke Highway
Moyock, NC 27958
Phone: 252.435.2947

Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Center
500 Hunt Club Drive
Corolla, NC 27927
Toll-Free: 877.287.7488
Phone: 252.453.9612

Mainland Offices
145 Courthouse Road
PO Box 39
Currituck, NC 27929
Phone: 252.232.2708

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ComeToOurBeach.com