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MARKETING PLAN 2012-2013

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Prepared by the
CURRITUCK COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF TRAVEL & TOURISM
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INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE

Dear Currituck Business Partners,

On behalf of the Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism, I am pleased to present the Department's 2012-2013 Marketing Plan. Please take the opportunity to read this report. It highlights the print, online and television marketing objectives and strategic plan to be followed during the upcoming fiscal year.

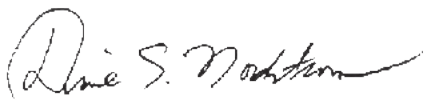
To help maximize the return on Currituck County's investment in tourism marketing, we are focusing our approach on how we work with our business partners. We are continuing to seek their input to ensure that tourism receives the profile and attention it deserves. After all, tourism is Currituck's largest industry and is vital to the county's economy.

The county, along with other North Carolina coastal destinations, reported a significant improvement in 2011 summer/fall visitation from the previous year. Sales tax is rebounding, and occupancy tax collections for the year were at an all-time high, reaching nearly \$10 million. Historically looking at occupancy tax, collections have doubled since the Tourism Department was formed in 2005.

Although tourism in Currituck County is strong, the marketplace is highly competitive. We must use an aggressive and proactive approach to marketing the Currituck Outer Banks to potential visitors. In addition, we all need to continually thank our visitors for choosing to vacation in Currituck. When vacationers feel appreciated they are much more likely to return to our area and tell others of the Southern Hospitality they received.

The Tourism Department staff looks forward to a strong 2012-2013 tourism season and continuing to work hard to promote Currituck as a premiere vacation destination.

Best wishes for a successful year!



Diane Nordstrom, Director
Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism



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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, events and tourism-related businesses located throughout the entire county, including the mainland, beaches and Knotts Island.
3. Utilize the County’s Welcome Center and Visitor’s Center as “sales centers” to promote overnight stays and visitor spending.
4. Enhance and aggressively market the tourism website using SEO, pay-per-clicks, directories, and other online marketing strategies.
5. Increase exposure of Currituck County through popular online social networks such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.
6. Continue to analyze the effectiveness of print and online ad campaigns.
7. Expand public relations 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. Promote Currituck County businesses through the MORE Card program, a discount card campaign designed to assist businesses in increasing sales revenues during the current recession. In addition, promote all county businesses through a Buy Local campaign.
10. Communicate effectively to residents, businesses, and elected leaders the importance of tourism to the local economy. In addition, encourage locals to thank visitors for choosing to vacation in Currituck County.

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

Visitor Information Requests

The top states currently requesting Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Guides are: North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York, Florida, Virginia, Ohio, New Jersey, Georgia, and Maryland.

Website Statistics

Statistics for the VisitCurrituck.com website continue to show an increased interest in Currituck as a vacation destination. This is a direct result of branding efforts over the last several years and will continue to be a goal of marketing programs. The main objective of online advertising campaigns for the 2012/2013 fiscal year will be to drive traffic to the website. Landing pages for ads will be optimized to offer the most relevant and up-to-date information when visitors are searching for a place to vacation.

Fiscal Year	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012*
Page Views	834,870	851,148	798,189*
Unique Visitors	235,634	243,628	248,374*
New Visitors	233,352	241,728	245,595*
Returning Visitors	40,381	33,020	46,494*

* Projected traffic numbers through June 30, 2012.

Page Views – This number indicates the total number of times pages have been viewed over the last year.

Unique Visitors – This number indicates the total number of different people who have visited the site over the last year. This information is gained based on unique IP addresses that are captured.

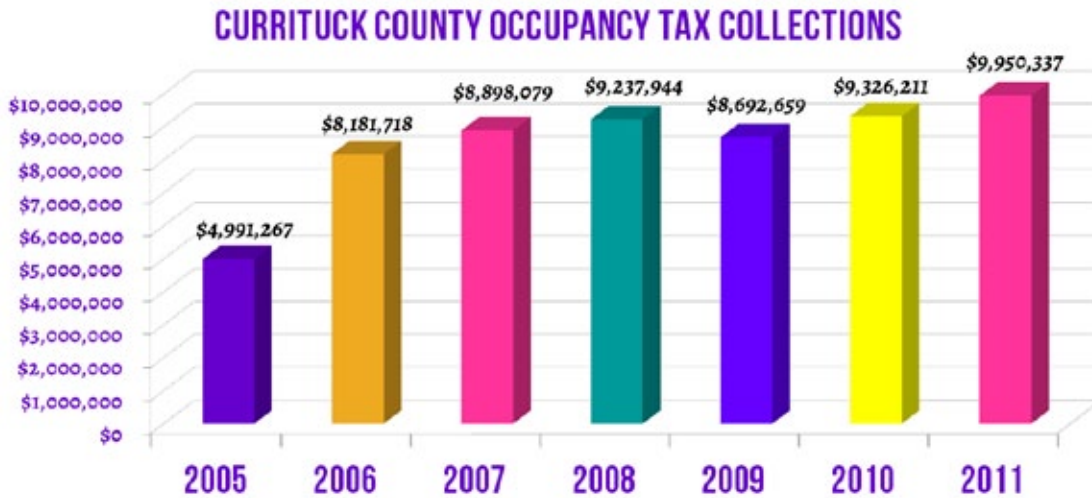
New Visitors – This number indicates the total number of first time visitors to the site. These visitors have never been to the site before.

Returning Visitors – This number indicates the total number of visitors that have returned to the site after visiting previously.

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

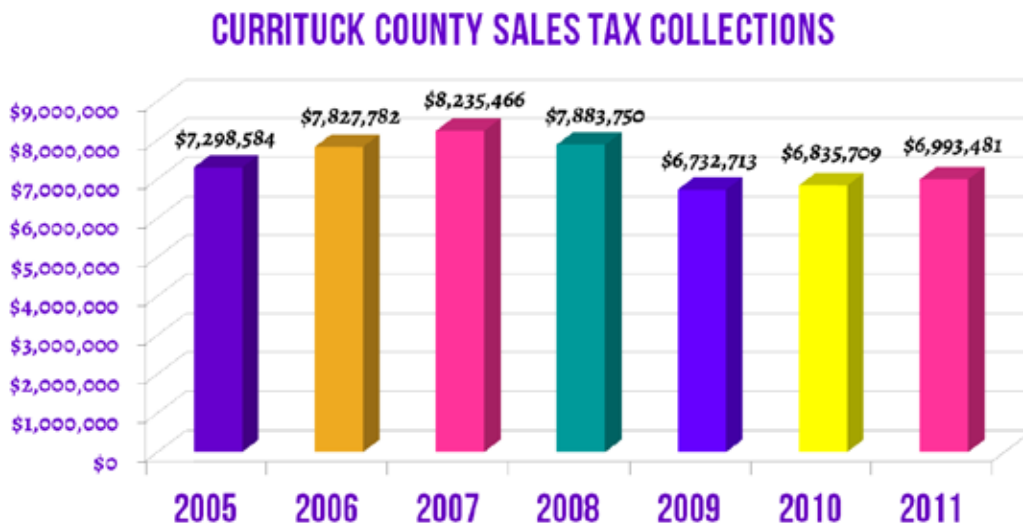
Occupancy Tax Collections

Occupancy tax collections were **up \$532,117** for July-February; that is **an increase of 6%** when comparing 2011 and 2012 budget years.



Sales Tax Collections

Sales tax collections were **up \$671,036** for July-February; that is **an increase of 12.7%** when comparing 2011 and 2012 budget years.



STRATEGIC PLAN

The following goals and objectives comprise the strategic plan set by the Tourism Department and Tourism Advisory Board:

1. Increase marketing and advertising to promote the Currituck Outer Banks as a premiere vacation destination. Strategies include:

- ★ **IDENTIFYING AND ENCOURAGING NEW AND EXISTING TOURISM ASSETS, INFRASTRUCTURES, AND THE TARGET MARKETS** that have the most potential to bring visitors 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 day's drive;
- ★ **UTILIZING THE RESEARCH FINDINGS OF RANDALL TRAVEL MARKETING, INC.**, as well as research conducted by tourism staff;
- ★ **EXPANDING THE E-MARKETING EFFORTS** – including the use of social networks and a mobile website – to increase the number of visitors and information requests on VisitCurrituck.com;
- ★ **ENHANCING VISITCURRITUCK.COM** to display additional tourism related activities and attractions and make online searches easier for visitors to the website;
- ★ **EXPANDING MARKETING EFFORTS TO UNIQUE GROUPS** such as: small conferences, weddings, reunions, and retreats;
- ★ Continuing to **MARKET THE COUNTY TO MEDIA OUTLETS** through public relations;
- ★ **PROMOTING CURRITUCK'S YEAR-ROUND TOURISM PRODUCT** in order to increase visitors and revenues in the shoulder season;



STRATEGIC PLAN

✦ **IMPROVING THE VISITCURRITUCK.COM'S WEBSITE RANKING** with Search Engine Optimization (SEO), pay-per-clicks, and other strategies;



✦ **EXPANDING EFFORTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL EVENTS** that bring visitors to the county; and

✦ **UTILIZING VIDEO** to promote Currituck through a comprehensive television and online video campaign.

2. Continue to promote the Department of Travel and Tourism as a 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 Shopping & Dining Guide, Currituck Outer Banks Wedding Planner, the MORE Card discount card program, brochure co-op program, visitor/welcome centers, brochure distribution racks, television advertising spots, VisitCurrituck.com website, visitnc.com website, Buy Local Currituck campaign, and other outlets/programs;



✦ **OFFERING CO-OP 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; and

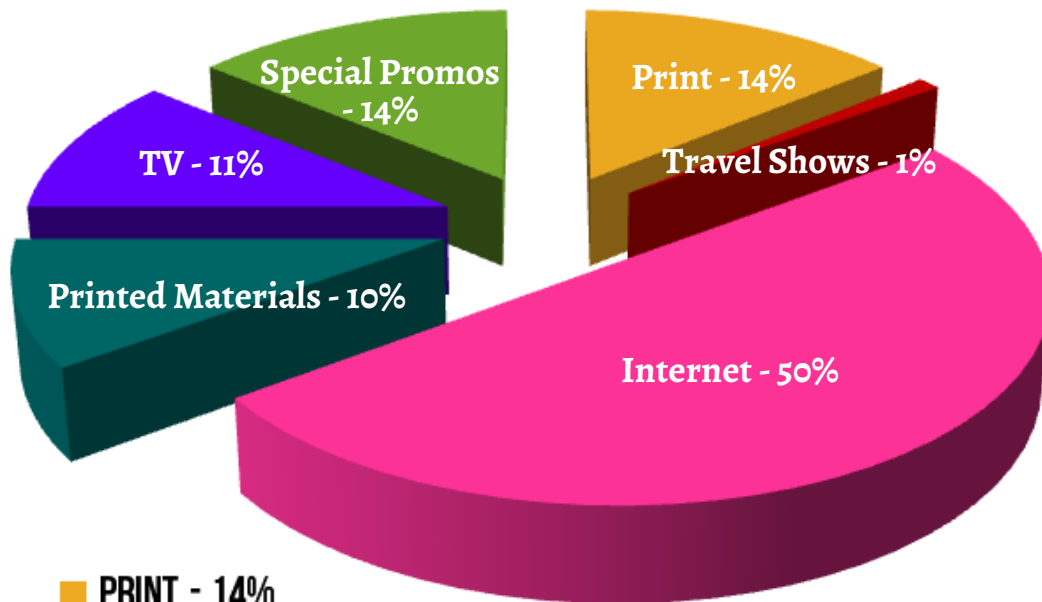
✦ **HOLDING AN ANNUAL UPDATE MEETING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES.**

ADVERTISING PLAN

2012-2013 Budget

Over \$2.3 million dollars has been allocated for promotional advertising efforts for the upcoming fiscal year, July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013. The chart below shows a breakdown of how these funds will be spent.

2012-2013 BUDGET



- PRINT - 14%
- TRAVEL SHOWS - 1%
- INTERNET - 50%
- PRINTED MATERIALS - 10%
- TV - 11%
- SPECIAL PROMOTIONS - 14%

ADVERTISING PLAN

Overview

Advertising for the 2012-2013 budget year will include a combination of print advertising, Internet marketing, trade show and travel expos, television advertising, publications (such as the Visitor's Guide and Shopping & Dining Guide), and other special programs (promotional products, billboards, press tours, etc.). The main purpose of these advertisements are to drive traffic to the website and encourage prospective visitors to vacation at the Currituck Outer Banks.

Many advertisers now offer a combination of print, online and mobile options for promotional campaigns. By combining ads into one contract for certain campaigns, the Department is taking advantage of discounted rates and added value to help promote Currituck County.

The main purpose of these advertisements are to drive traffic to the website and encourage prospective visitors to vacation at the Currituck Outer Banks.

Print Media

The print advertising budget encompasses advertisements in magazines and newspapers. Via the print campaign for Currituck County, millions of potential vacationers are reached each year.

Print ads will feature a strong "call to action" to request a free Visitor's Guide and visit the county's website for additional information. The design and layout of both print and online ads will feature similar elements to create brand consistency across all platforms.



Ads will be targeted to the Mid Atlantic regions with a strong focus on regional feeder markets (i.e. – Richmond, DC/ Baltimore, Philadelphia, etc.). Print ads will run in publications geared towards females, who tend to be the vacation planners in most families. The Department will also run print ads in some niche publications that focus on golf, weddings, nature and heritage travel.

ADVERTISING PLAN

Internet

Online advertising efforts will be geared towards reaching people in the Mid-Atlantic region, specifically feeder markets that have shown a strong history of travel to the Outer Banks. Regional news websites and family oriented websites will be used to bring to mind the short driving distance to the Outer Banks and family atmosphere of our area. Media include: WRAL (Raleigh), Coastal Living, Wavy.com (Hampton Roads), Budget Travel and VisitNC.com.

A larger portion of the internet advertising budget will be invested in pay-per-click, display ads and text ad campaigns through the Google Search Network. The Department will utilize several of Google's new programs including remarketing, which allows relevant display ads to be shown to people based on their search history. We will also utilize paid search options on Bing and Yahoo! networks.

A larger portion of the internet advertising budget will be invested in pay-per-click, display ads and text ad campaigns through the Google Search Network.

Video ads will continue to be used as part of the digital campaign. Proven success with YouTube sponsored videos, overlay ads and companion ads shows the trend in how consumers are spending their time online. The Department will try to capitalize by including a video element in all campaigns for the coming year.

Mobile ads will also be used to drive people to the VisitCurrituck.com mobile website. Mobile ads through the Google Mobile Ad Network, AdMob and components with other internet sites will be part of the mobile advertising strategy. The VisitCurrituck.com mobile site will be optimized to encourage users to request a free Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Guide.



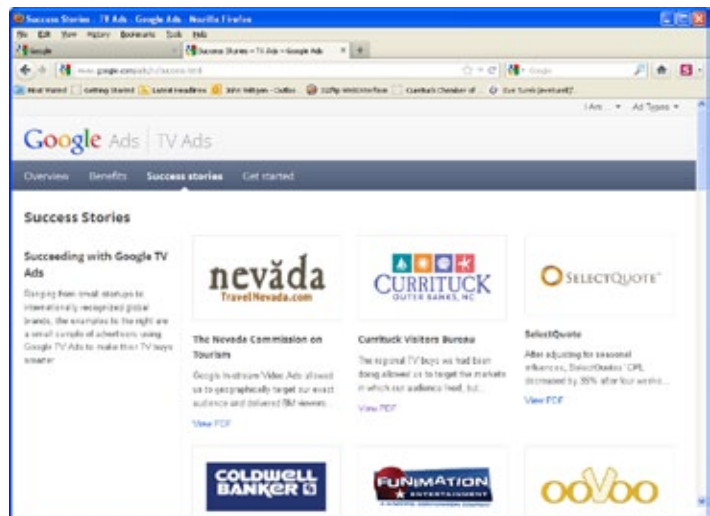
ADVERTISING PLAN

Television

Television commercials produced by the Tourism Department air in target market states such as Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and New York. These commercials entice potential visitors to choose Currituck for their next vacation.

Eye Candy Digital Video in Moyock handles the Department's primary video production, as well as its media buys. Other television advertising includes the airing of commercials on local cable networks such as Charter Communications.

Faced with the challenge of reaching new visitor markets outside of Currituck's traditional East Coast audience, the Tourism Department and its web agency, Ciniva, tried the relatively new Google TV Ads platform as an affordable method of creating awareness for the destination on a national scale. The marketing strategy paid off, getting Currituck better than expected exposure to potential vacationers.



The case study on Currituck's Google TV campaign can be found online at <http://www.google.com/ads/tv/success.html>

The Google TV Ads initiative not only attracted new visitors, but also improved the quality of these visits, with the average visitor from these TV ads spending three times the amount of time on the site and converting at almost double the rate of other advertising formats, including regional network TV buys.

As Currituck continued to see extremely positive results from the Google TV Ads campaign, the Google TV Ads team took notice and decided to recognize Currituck's experience in an official case study, highlighting the county's innovative usage of the Google TV Ads platform. "It is great to share with the industry how Currituck and Ciniva are leading the way in effective and accountable media," shares Kallista Stephenson, Account Strategist with Google.

ADVERTISING PLAN

Publications

The following printed publications will be published or re-issued during the 2011-2012 fiscal year:

★ Visitor's Guide

This comprehensive publication lists attractions, activities, accommodations, services, maps, and other valuable visitor information.*



★ Shopping & Dining Guide

Includes a comprehensive list of Currituck's shopping and dining businesses.*

★ Wedding Planner

This award-winning guide details all the resources needed to plan a wedding in Currituck County.*

★ Annual Report

This report details the progress achieved by the Tourism Department and contains data and analysis on occupancy and sales tax collections, marketing strategies, expenditures and statistical research.*

★ Monthly Report

Offers specific marketing data on advertisements placed by the County. Readers can see exactly which marketing resources are utilized and how many leads are generated. The report also features information on brochure distribution, occupancy and sales tax collections.*

* Indicates that the publication is available on the Department of Travel & Tourism Website, VisitCurrituck.com

Co-ops

Co-op advertising opportunities will be expanded during the 2012/2013 fiscal year to include online ads. The Department is also offering co-ops in several print publications including the NC Travel Guide, Coastal Living magazine, Resort Maps and the Duck Corolla Guide.

TOURISM BOARDS

Tourism Development Authority

John Rorer, Chairman
Marion Gilbert, Vice-Chairman
Paul O'Neal
Vance Aydlett
J. Owen Etheridge
Butch Petrey
Paul Martin

Ex-officio Member:

Diane Nordstrom, Travel & Tourism Director

Tourism Advisory Board

Don Cheek, Chairman
Paul Robinson, Vice-Chairman
Lori London
Petrina Ramey
Leslie Daughtry
Ted Jagucki

Ex-officio Members:

Paul O'Neal, Board of Commissioners
Dan Scanlon, County Manager
Diane Nordstrom, Travel & Tourism Director

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APPENDIX

Print & Internet Spend Detail

Publication(s)	Media	Segment	Market	Issue	Size	Ad Rate*
Budget Travel - Fall 2012 Flight	Internet	Display, Video, Mobile	Gateway Ad	8/22/12 -9/12/12	640x480	\$15,000.00
Budget Travel - Spring 2013 Flight	Internet	Display, Video, Mobile	Gateway Ad	2/22/13-3/15/13	640x480	\$15,000.00
Compass Media	Internet	Companion/ Editorial	Outer Banks, NC	July '12 - June '13	N/A	\$9,000.00
CottageCountry.com	Internet	Display Ad	Site Wide ROS	Apr. '12 - Apr. '13	728x90	\$7,000.00
VisitNC.com	Internet	All Segments	ROS	July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013	Multiple	\$57,645.00
WAVY.com	Internet	Display, Video, Mobile	Site Wide ROS	July '12 - June '13	300x250	\$33,600.00
WAVY.com	Internet	Co-op	Site Wide ROS	July '12 - June '13	300x600	\$16,800.00
Weather Underground	Internet	Display Ad	Mid-Atlantic	July '12 - June '13	728x90	\$30,000.00
WJLA.com	Internet	All Segments	Mid-Atlantic	July '12 - June '13	Multiple	\$10,000.00
WRAL.com	Internet	All Segments	Raleigh, NC Metro	July '12 - June '13	Multiple	\$24,650.00
AAA World	Print	Family Vacations	VA, DC, MD	Mar/Apr 2013	1/3 Page	\$3,670.00
AAA World, Travel Planner Section	Print	Family Vacations	Mid-Atlantic	Jul/Aug, 2012	1/6 Page	\$4,305.00
AARP	Print	Shoulder Season	Mid-Atlantic	Sept/Oct, 2012	1/6 Page	\$5,490.00
AARP	Print	Family Vacations	Mid-Atlantic	Mar/Apr, 2013	1/6 Page	\$5,490.00
Better Homes & Gardens	Print	Shoulder Season	Northeast US	September, 2012	Directory Listing	\$4,725.00
Boomer Magazine	Print	Family Vacations	Mid-Atlantic	Summer & Fall	Listing	\$199.00
Budget Travel	Print	Family Vacations	STS Special Section	May-June, 2013	1/2 Page	\$8,862.00
Budget Travel	Print	Family Vacations	Carolinas Special Section	March-April, 2013	1/3 Page	\$4,668.00
Coastal Living	Print	Co-op	EOM - ROB	Feb. 2013	Full Page	\$21,966.00
Compass Media	Print	Family Vacations	Mid-Atlantic	Annual 2013	1/3 Page V	\$13,260.00
Country Living	Print	Shoulder Season	Northeast US	September, 2012	Full Page	\$16,748.00
Cultural Traveler	Print	Heritage - Educational	National	Annual Issue, 2012	Full Page	\$4,290.00
Discover America/ US Travel Guide	Print	Heritage - Educational	International	Annual Issue, 2013	1/4 Page	\$12,127.00

(continued on following page)

APPENDIX

Publication(s)	Media	Segment	Market	Issue	Size	Ad Rate*
Duck Corolla Guide	Print	Co-op	Local	Annual Issue, 2013	Double Page	\$4,270.00
Escape to the Southeast	Print	Shoulder Season	Southeast	Annual Issue, 2012	Full Page	\$3,840.00
Explore the Southeast	Print	Family Vacations	E.O.M.	Spring, 2013	1/8 Page	\$6,240.00
Good Housekeeping	Print	Shoulder Season	Northeast US	September, 2012	Full Page	\$17,585.00
GuestQuest	Print	Family Vacations	VA/DC+Ontario	May-Oct, 2012	9 col"	\$1,627.00
Knot, The	Print	Weddings	NC	Fall, 2012	Full Page	\$5,378.00
Knot, The	Print	Weddings	NC	Spring, 2013	Full Page	\$5,139.00
NC Travel Guide	Print	Co-op	NC	Annual, 2012	Full Page	\$29,805.00
North Beach Sun	Print	Family Vacations	Local	Spring, 2012	Same	\$863.00
North Beach Sun	Print	Family Vacations	Local	Summer, 2013	Same	\$863.00
O, The Oprah Magazine	Print	Shoulder Season	EOM	Oct, 2012 and May, 2013	Directory Listing	\$7,350.00
Our State	Print	All Segments	North Carolina	Sept/Oct '12 - Mar/Apr/May '13	1/2 Page Vertical	\$15,080.00
Our State (CoastHost co-op)	Print	Shoulder Season	NC	Sep, 2012	1/3 page-box	\$1,692.00
Our State (CoastHost co-op)	Print	Shoulder Season	NC	Oct, 2012	1/3 page-box	\$1,692.00
Our State (CoastHost co-op)	Print	Family Vacations	NC	Mar, 2013	1/3 page-box	\$1,692.00
Our State (CoastHost co-op)	Print	Family Vacations	NC	Apr, 2013	1/3 page-box	\$1,692.00
Our State (CoastHost co-op)	Print	Family Vacations	NC	May, 2013	1/3 page-box	\$1,692.00
Outer Banks Sentinel	Print	Family Vacations	Local, DC	Annual	Full Page	\$1,680.00
Outer Banks Visitors Guide	Print	Family Vacations	Local	Annual Issue, 2013	Full Page	\$10,078.00
Resort Maps	Print	Co-op	Local	Annual Issue, 2013	4 spaces	\$3,276.00
Southern Living	Print	Shoulder Season	Mid-Atlantic	Sept., 2012	1/2 Page Vertical	\$10,821.00
Southern Living	Print	Family Vacations	Northeast US	May, 2013	Directory Listing	\$4,725.00
VOW Bride	Print	Weddings	Hampton Roads	July, 2012	1/4 Page	\$1,040.00
VOW Bride	Print	Weddings	Hampton Roads	Jan, 2013	1/4 Page	\$1,040.00
Women's Day	Print	Shoulder Season	Northeast US	September, 2012	Full Page	\$16,748.00
Remnant Opportunities	Print	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	\$77,611.00

* Ad Rate is the approximate price.

