

Currituck County Travel & Tourism Department
2009-2010 Annual Report



CURRITUCK
OUTER BANKS, NC



Currituck County Travel & Tourism Department 2009-2010 Annual Report

Tourism remains Currituck County's most vital industry, GENERATING OVER \$106,150,000 IN TRAVEL EXPENDITURES last year. During July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010, over \$8.6 million in occupancy tax was collected from vacationers staying in Currituck County, and over \$6.3 million was collected in local sales tax in 2009. As a result, the county is fiscally sound. Citizens enjoy low taxes and quality county services.

The 2009-2010 fiscal year experienced a decrease in both sales and occupancy tax. With the current economic crisis, fewer people chose to vacation in 2009, and many of those who did travel spent less money while on vacation. The future, however, does look bright. Already the 2010 summer months of July and August saw an INCREASE IN VISITORS to the county.

We hope you find this report informative. It highlights the ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM IN CURRITUCK COUNTY and outlines the Tourism Department's marketing initiatives for the current operational year. This report also features print and online marketing advertising, public relations programs, data on tax collections, and the established goals and objectives of the Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism.

The Tourism Department is DEDICATED TO PROMOTING CURRITUCK COUNTY as a premiere vacation destination. With the support of the Tourism Development Authority (Board of Commissioners) and the Tourism Advisory Board, the department will remain focused on embracing the tourism industry and ensuring vacationers continue to choose the Currituck Outer Banks as their vacation destination.

Diane S. Nordstrom, Director
Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism

Tourism Economic Impact

TAX RELIEF

The average tax relief benefit per household in 2009 was \$1,483.63*. This means that due to the tourism industry, each household in Currituck County **SAVED \$1,483.63 IN TAXES FOR 2009**. (Tax relief is the sales tax revenue from state and local taxes divided by the number of households).

**Sources: number of households: US Sensus Bureau; state and local taxes: North Carolina Department of Commerce.*



Currituck County **RANKED 32ND IN TRAVEL IMPACT** among North Carolina’s 100 counties for 2009.

CURRITUCK COUNTY TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

Tax Data	2009	2008	2007
Domestic Travel Expenditures	\$106,150,000	\$112,660,000	\$120,010,000
Travel Related Payroll	\$21,010,000	\$22,390,000	\$23,530,000
Number of Travel Related Jobs	1,350	1,400	1,520
State & Local Taxes Paid by Travelers	\$10,240,000	\$10,430,000	\$11,000,000

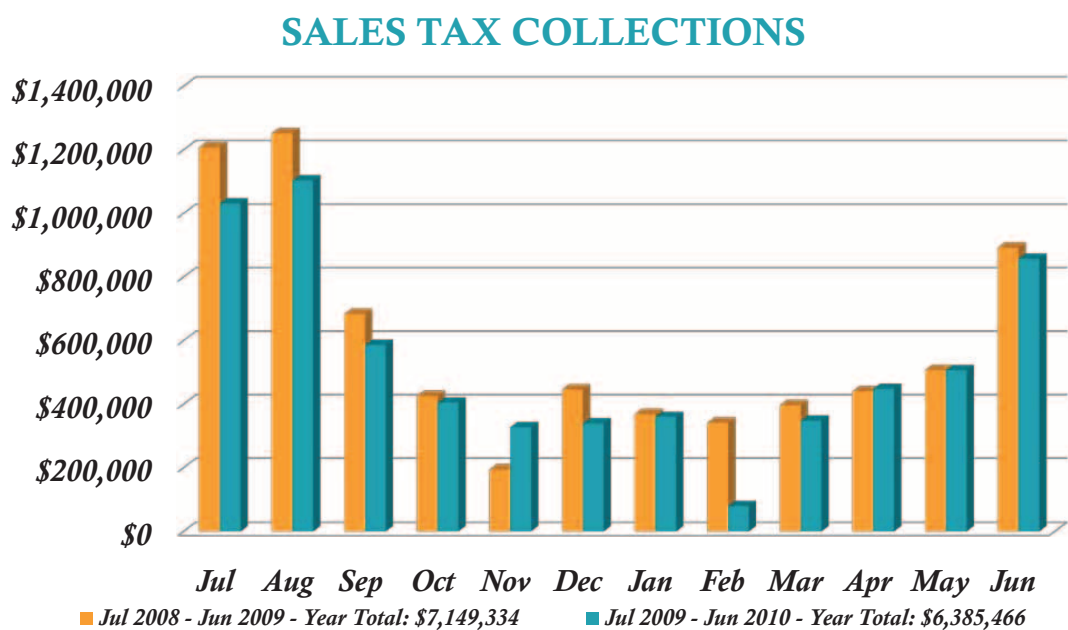
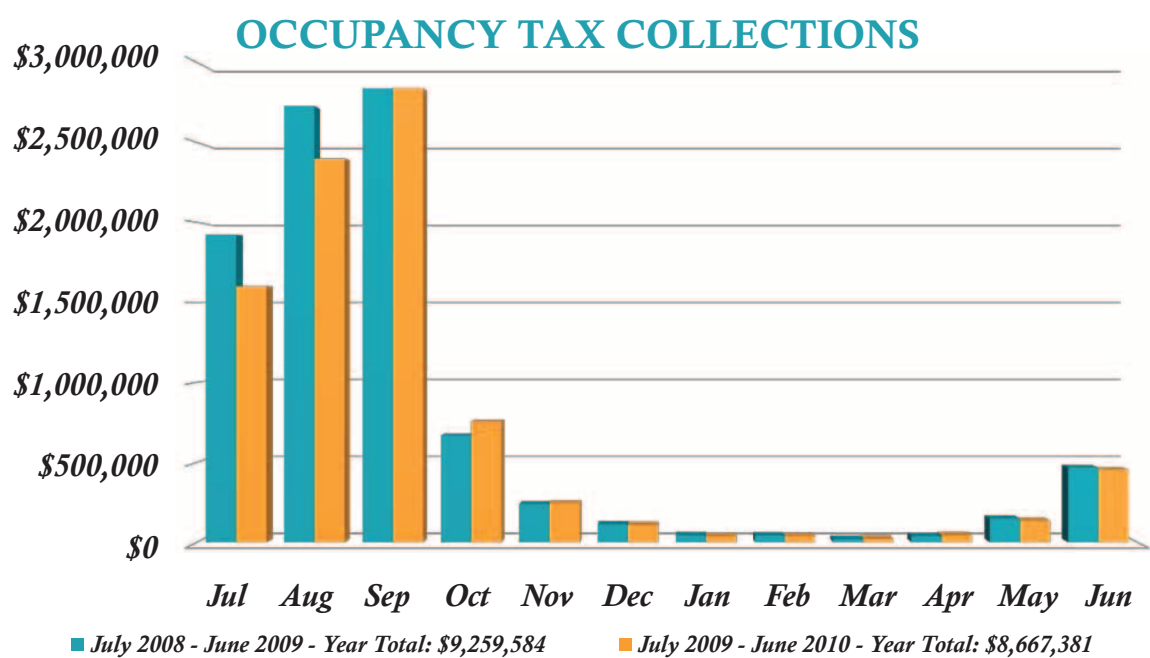


STATEWIDE TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

Tourism is one of North Carolina’s largest industries. In 2009, domestic travelers spent \$15.6 billion across the state. Domestic tourism expenditures directly supported 183,800 jobs for North Carolina residents. The tourism industry contributed \$3.96 billion to the state’s payroll in 2009. Traveler spending generated over \$2.5 billion in tax receipts. **NORTH CAROLINA RANKS SIXTH IN PERSON-TRIP VOLUME BY STATE** behind California, Florida, Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania, with 35.9 million person-trips taken in the state in 2009. Almost nine out of ten domestic overnight visitors came to North Carolina for leisure purposes, which included visiting friends and relatives, outdoor recreation and entertainment/sightseeing.

Tourism Economic Impact

Tax Collections



Occupancy Tax and Sales tax collections decreased from the 2008-2009 fiscal year, which reflects the overall state of the economy.

Advertising

Print ads have been placed in such publications as *USA Weekend*, *Budget Travel*, *Washington Post*, *Coastal Living*, *Southern Living*, *The Knot*, *Women's Day*, *AARP*, *Oprah Magazine*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Country Living*, and others.

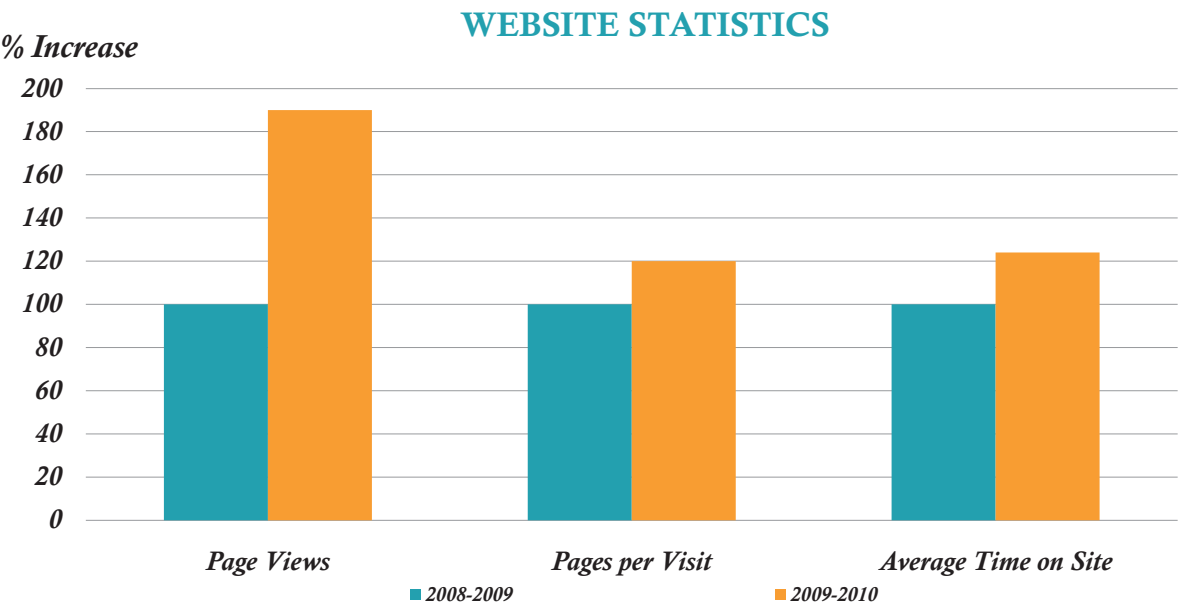
TOP LEAD GENERATING PUBLICATIONS

Publication	Leads Fulfilled
The Knot	21,190
Oprah Magazine	15,877
Explore the Southeast (published in various newspapers east of the Mississippi)	9,540
AARP	7,445
Woman's Day	6,735

Chart details leads generated July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010

WEBSITE STATISTICS - The tourism website has continued its growth with expanded online marketing efforts. Google search engine remained the main referral source for website visits.

Chart details statistics generated July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010



When comparing statistics for the 2008-2009 vs. 2009-2010 fiscal years, the tourism website saw other vast improvements:

The statistics show that VisitCurrituck.com is attracting more qualified users. While overall visits have seen a modest increase of around 1%, the overall page views have increased by 90% and the average time on site has increased by 24%. This shows that users are spending more time on the website, which results in a higher conversion rate from advertising sources. The most popular pages on the website continue to be the Specials page and Lodging page.

Promotional Outlets

CURRITUCK OUTER BANKS VISITOR'S GUIDE - The Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Guide includes a listing of accommodations, annual events, historical features and general travel information. This is the main promotional piece produced by the the Tourism Department. It is mailed to prospective vacationers when they request information through the website, reader response cards, and via the toll-free phone number. A total of 200,000 guides were printed in 2010.

WEBSITE - Currituck County tourism businesses and attractions are promoted free of charge online on the department's travel website, VisitCurrituck.com. This site is updated daily and includes a number of popular pages. These include: "Specials & Discounts," "Event Calendar," and "Maps." Vacationers can also access an online copy of the Visitor Guide, Shopping & Dining Guide, and the Wedding Planner.

SHOPPING & DINING GUIDE - This guide highlights dining and shopping businesses. Each business receives a complimentary listing, including: business name, address, phone number, website and a short description. Businesses are also listed on a correlating map.

E-NEWSLETTERS - The Travel and Tourism Department sends periodic e-newsletters to businesses in order to keep tourism stakeholders informed and up to date. E-blasts are also sent to prospective visitors. They include special offers, discounts, and announcements of events.

WEDDING PLANNER - The Currituck Outer Banks Wedding Planner assists couples with planning a destination wedding to Currituck County. Businesses offering wedding-related services are included free of charge. The planner highlights popular wedding ceremony locations and other essential wedding planning information.

CURRITUCK OUTER BANKS NEWSPAPER - This publication features key attractions and activities in the area and assists visitors in planning activities once they arrive. Popular features include "Activities for Kids" and "Rainy Day Ideas."

CURRITUCK MAP - The Currituck County Map displays attractions and activities on the Currituck Outer Banks. It is distributed to guests at County Information Centers and at local businesses. A new map was produced in May, 2010.

MEDIA KIT -A Currituck Outer Banks Media Kit is distributed to various media outlets in an effort to gain editorial coverage and increase public relations for tourism related businesses and attractions.

OTHER NICHE PUBLICATIONS - Several other informational pieces are also created and distributed by the Tourism Department. These include: Knotts Island Day Trip Planner, Farm Market Guide, Vineyard & Brewery Guide, Family Reunion Planner, and many more. These brochures highlight the unique aspects of Currituck County to those visitors with very specific interests.

GUIDES DISTRIBUTED

Publication	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Visitor's Guide*	141,638	163,821	121,995	85,341
Wedding Planner*	35,385	28,922	33,927	17,604
Shopping & Dining Guide*	21,097	21,150	-	-

Numbers above included brochures distributed in Currituck County information centers, at travel shows, requests made by phone, at distribution outlets, and via the tourism website. The Shopping & Dining Guide was a new publication in 2009.

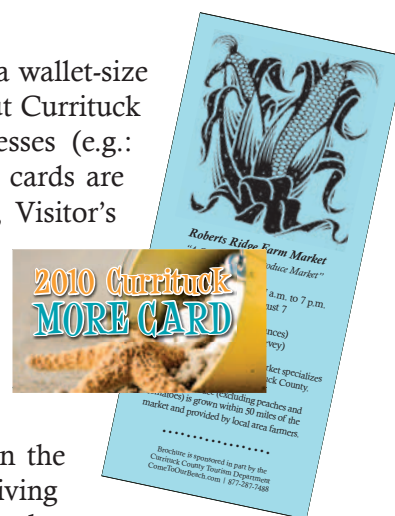
** Note: Does not include guides that were downloaded from www.visitcurrituck.com.*



VISITOR INFORMATION CENTERS - Visitor Relations Associates provided vacation information to nearly 90,500 guests from July 1, 2009- June 30, 2010, which represents a 29% increase from the previous budget year. Displays and brochures placed in the Currituck County Welcome Center in Moyock and Visitor's Center in Corolla feature businesses, attractions, and activities located throughout Currituck County.

MORE CARD PROGRAM - The Currituck MORE CARD is a wallet-size card that can be redeemed at participating businesses located throughout Currituck County. It provides discounts and specials at tourism-related businesses (e.g.: restaurants, retail stores, accommodations, attractions, gift shops.) The cards are free and available at Currituck County's Welcome Center in Moyock, Visitor's Center in Corolla, and online at www.visitcurrituck.com/morecard.

RACK CARD PROGRAM - Currituck County tourism-related businesses are being offered an affordable way to market their businesses to over 80,000 visitors per year. For a small fee, the Tourism Department will create and print a simple 4 inch x 9 inch rack card for participating business. This cooperative program places the cards in the county's Welcome Center in Moyock and Visitor's Center in Corolla, giving restaurants, retail shops, attractions and other businesses more exposure to the traveling public.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

TRAVEL WRITERS - Currituck County hosted a number of individual travel writers between July 2009 and June 2010. These writers cover travel in both print and electronic media, as well as television. Richard Wiese, host of "United States of Adventure," visited with a film crew to feature wildlife and the wild horses of Currituck County. The filming took place in the 4-wheel drive area of Corolla. Print media was represented by the editor of Our State magazine who visited May 23-24, 2010. As a result, Currituck was featured in several issues of Our State in 2010.



FAMILIARIZATION TOURS - Visitor information center employees for Currituck and Dare counties recently spent two days visiting area attractions in an effort to become better acquainted on what each county has to offer visitors.

The Fam (short for Familiarization) tours were organized by staff of the Currituck County Tourism Department and Outer Banks Visitor's Bureau. Employees visited such attractions as the Currituck Beach Lighthouse, Wright Brothers Memorial, Elizabethan Gardens, Whalehead Club, Roanoke Island Festival Park and the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education. In addition, the group explored Currituck's four-wheel-drive beaches, saw the wild horses of Corolla, and toured Corolla Light Resort. This is one of several projects the Currituck Tourism Department is partnering on with the Outer Banks Visitor's Bureau in an effort to better promote the two counties to potential vacationers.



TRAVEL SHOWS - Travel shows are a great opportunity to showcase a destination. The Tourism Department expanded its presence at travel trade shows, both nationally and regionally. The department partnered with local businesses to create "vacation giveaway" packages that generated nearly 5,200 leads. Tourism staff promoted Currituck County at the following travel shows: Adventures in Travel - NY Metro; AAA - Columbus, OH; AAA - Philadelphia, PA; Adventures in Travel - Washington, DC; AAA - Baltimore, MD; and AAA - Richmond, VA.

July 2010 - June 2011 Fiscal Year

THE 2010-2011 BUDGET FOR THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT IS \$3.1 MILLION. Over \$2 million of that budget is spent directly on marketing the county to potential visitors. The remaining money funds the operations of the Visitor Information Centers, contracted services, salaries, supplies, etc.

The current fiscal year is already off to a great start. An increased social media promotion, enhanced public relations initiatives, and an expanded television commercial campaign are just a few of the new programs that are promoting the Currituck Outer Banks to potential vacationers.

TOURISM ACTION PLAN

A Tourism Action Plan was created by the Tourism Department staff. The plan outlines goals, objectives, and actions for the coming months and years. These include:

BUDGET - Additional marketing funds (\$300,000) were approved to increase promotions for the 2010 summer season. This initiative earned the Currituck Tourism Department a first-place award from the Destination Marketing Association of N.C. (DMANC).

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTERS - Additional display cases were added at the Welcome Center in 2010, providing more space to showcase businesses. Employees at the center frequently contact local businesses and request brochures and items for the display cases. A new warehouse and expanded restrooms are helping the center to function more efficiently.

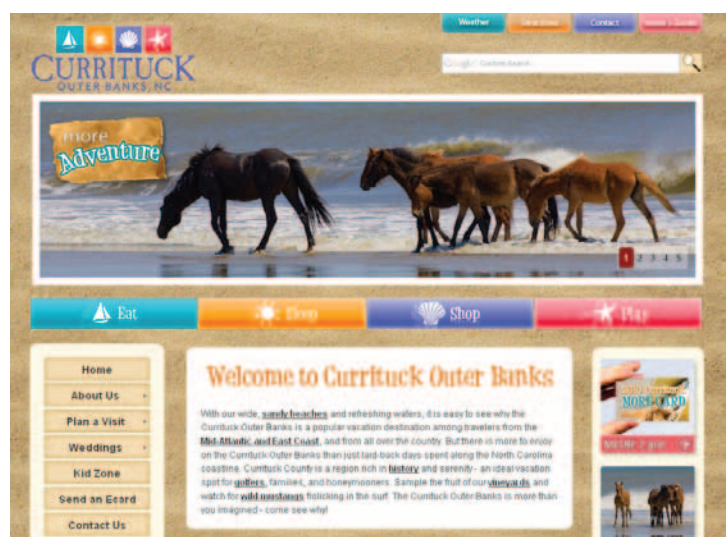
PRINT ADVERTISING - Print advertisements continue to be placed in regional, national and international publications such as *USA Weekend*, *Budget Travel*, *Oprah Magazine*, *Washington Post* and *Southern Living*.

The department continues, with success, to handle nearly all of the ad/promotional material design work in house. A consistent design has been used in all promotions, and more continuity between print and online ad design is being done.

Off season promotions have been expanded each year and have included e-newsletters, more cooperative advertising opportunities, and featured pages on the tourism website.

WEBSITE - The www.visitcurrituck.com website will continue to offer visitors a more interactive experience while online. Updated navigation will improve usability and help vacationers find what they are looking for with fewer clicks.

The landing page of the website has been revamped to make it easier for visitors to find information. The "Find What You Need" feature allows visitors to locate area businesses in one click. Other features that were added to the homepage include: a search box, news feed, event feed, Facebook feed, YouTube feed, Twitter feed, and a quick contact form.



SOCIAL MEDIA - Currituck County's presence on social media has increased significantly over the past 12 months. The Currituck Outer Banks Facebook page currently has over 9,000 fans, and that number continues to grow. Monthly giveaways are being offered to attract more fans and promote area businesses. The Currituck Outer Banks Twitter account has over 500 followers and is linked to Facebook to provide consistent updates. Staff is also utilizing YouTube advertising with clickable videos that point visitors to the website.

EDITORIAL COVERAGE - The Tourism Department continues to utilize Vocus, a web-based software used to monitor editorial coverage and distribute press releases. Between July 1, 2009 - October 31, 2009, Currituck received editorial valued at over \$418,740 (for printed publications only).

Recent visits from the press have resulted in articles in such publications as *Southern Living*, *Our State Magazine* and *The UK Times*.



EVENT PROMOTIONS - Promotion of local tourism-related events has expanded with the hiring of a full-time Promotions and Events Coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for planning and promoting events that help attract visitors to the county, as well as serving as a liaison between the county and local businesses and civic and community groups that organize events. Utilizing social networks and public service announcements, the Promotions and Events Coordinator works to advertise local events to both county citizens and the traveling public.

HOSPITALITY AWARDS - The Currituck County Hospitality Awards Program was implemented in 2010. The program encourages local businesses to reward employees who provide excellent customer service to visitors and set a positive example for their co-workers. An awards luncheon was held to recognize the eleven winners for 2010.



TRADE SHOWS - The Tourism Department increased its exposure at travel shows to include Orlando, Florida (AARP Expo) and Wilmington, DE (Vacations & Destinations Expo.) These events showcase Currituck's many attractions, accommodations and activities.

TELEVISION CAMPAIGN - Television commercials featuring the Currituck Outer Banks air throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Prime markets include: Hampton Roads, VA; Raleigh, NC; Charlotte, NC; Baltimore, MD; Richmond, VA; Columbus, OH; and Washington, DC. The television advertising focuses on the identified positioning statement and those activities that attract visitors. Airing of the commercials has expanded to some southern states (e.g.: Orlando, FL) in response to the oil spill along the Gulf Coast.

TOURISM AWARDS - The Tourism Department received several state awards this year from the Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina (DMANC). Platinum Awards (First Place) were received for Destination Marketing Initiative (website and internet marketing), Destination Constituents Communications (business electronic e-newsletter), Destination Print Advertising - Leisure; and Destination Constituents Communications - Annual Report. Gold Awards (Second Place) were received for Destination Publications (Visitor's Guide) and Destination Marketing Initiative (The 2009 Economic Boost Campaign.) Currituck County competed in the "large budget" division, meaning that the Currituck bureau competed against other North Carolina destinations such as Charlotte, Raleigh, and Durham.

In addition, the 2010 American Inhouse Design Award was presented by Graphic Design USA. Currituck won for its internet website, www.visitcurrituck.com.



2010-2011 GOALS & 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.
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.



Goals & Objectives

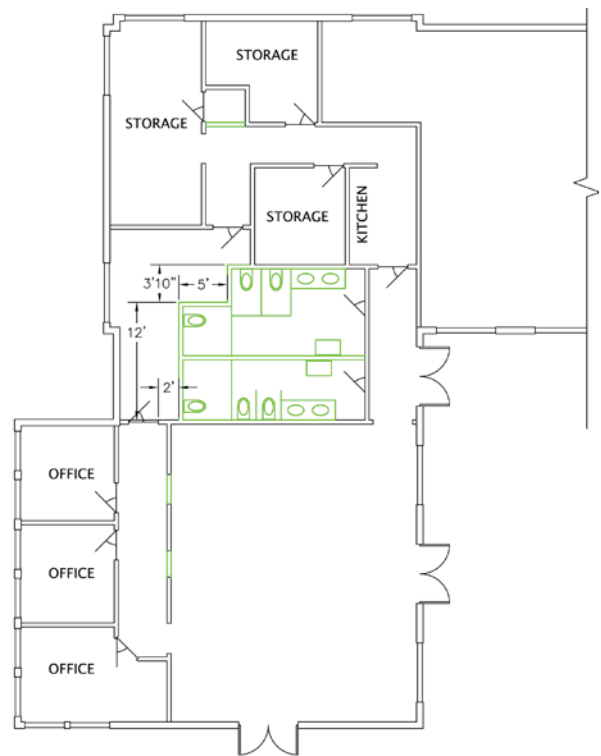
RENOVATIONS UNDERWAY AT COROLLA VISITOR'S CENTER

Currituck County's visitor information center in Corolla is getting a much needed upgrade. The center, which services over 37,500 guests each year, is closed for the winter but will reopen this coming spring with expanded restroom facilities, additional brochure racks, and a remodeling of its interior.

"This has been a long time coming," said Leeann Walton, Center Manager. "It's typical in the summer for us to have very lengthy lines of people waiting to use the restrooms. We currently only have two stalls, so expanding to six stalls will make it much more convenient for the visitors."

Walton says some of the walls in the center's lobby will be moved, making it roomier in the common area. This will allow for more brochure racks and display areas that will highlight local businesses. The project is being funded from the occupancy (lodging) tax paid by vacationers.

The center is expected to continue to see an increase in visitors as the number of people choosing to vacation in Currituck County grows.



LEARN MORE

For additional information about the Tourism Department's marketing strategies, visit the Business Resources section of VisitCurrituck.com. From there, you can download reports and research, such as the 2010-2011 Marketing Plan, monthly reports, the Randall Travel Marketing Comprehensive Tourism Research & Strategic Plan, and more.





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Vance Aydtlett
Barry Nelms
Janet Taylor
Gene Gregory
John Rorer

Travel & Tourism Department

Diane Nordstrom, Director
dnordstrom@visitcurrituck.com

Irina Coccetti, Marketing Program Manager
icoccetti@visitcurrituck.com

Stuart Chamberlain, Web Development
schamberlain@visitcurrituck.com

Michele Ellis, Public Relations Coordinator
mellis@visitcurrituck.com

Clayton Howard, Events Coordinator
choward@visitcurrituck.com

Leeann Walton, Manager of Info. Centers
lwalton@visitcurrituck.com

Nancy Garris, Visitor Relations Coordinator
ngarris@visitcurrituck.com

Judy Vassar, Visitor Relations Coordinator
jvassar@visitcurrituck.com

Currituck County Visitor Information Centers

Currituck County Welcome Center
106 Caratoke Hwy.
Moyock, NC 27958
252.435.2947 | 877.287.7488

Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Center
500 Hunt Club Drive
Corolla, NC 27927
252.453.9612

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