

**APPALACHIAN GATEWAY COMMUNITIES
INITIATIVE:
AN ASSESSMENT AND
RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT
FOR NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
IN THE CUMBERLAND GAP REGION:**

CLAIBORNE COUNTY, TENNESSEE

BELL COUNTY, KENTUCKY

LEE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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Introduction

In March 2007, the Appalachian Regional Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts announced a new initiative to provide assistance to Appalachia's gateway communities in natural and cultural heritage tourism development. Gateway communities are defined as towns that border national and state parks, wildlife refuges, forests, historic sites, wilderness areas and other public lands. The initiative's intent is to assist communities in enhancing natural and historic assets and to emphasize the role of the arts in the development of a comprehensive strategy.

An application requesting an assessment visit and recommendations report was submitted in the 2008 grant round by Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee on behalf of a partnership which included representatives from Claiborne County, Tennessee, Bell County, Kentucky and Lee County, Virginia. Communities in these counties serve as gateways to Cumberland Gap National Historical Park as well as other public lands including Pine Mountain State Resort Park in Kentucky and Wilderness Road State Park in Virginia.

Gateway Assessment Goal

The application stated the assessment goal was *"to identify the assets of each constituent group, determine how each asset complements the competencies of other organizations and develop a planning strategy that will effectively bring each stakeholder group together in a comprehensive natural and cultural tourism promotion effort."*

Opportunities and Challenges Identified by the Local Assessment Planning Committee

As stated in the local planning team's application:

Opportunities

1. **The area already draws a significant number of visitors.**
The opportunity at hand is one of strengthening local efforts to further develop natural and cultural tourism efforts that align with the goals of the parks and the interests of visitors who annually travel to these parks.
2. **Byway designations are linking the region.** Progress has been made through designation of the Wilderness Road Heritage Highway through the National



Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

Scenic Byway Program. Claiborne County has begun a collaborative effort with other East Tennessee counties to gain scenic byway designation for a corridor that will connect the Wilderness Road Heritage Highway with the Cherohala Skyway.

3. **Inventories are being developed.** There are efforts being made by multiple constituencies to complete tourism plans and inventories of natural and cultural assets.
4. **There is a rich heritage of arts in the region.** Many bluegrass and gospel performances offered in the area by small groups, formal projects...support tourism projects related to the arts. Lincoln Memorial University plays a large role in arts offerings in the region.
5. **Partnerships are being developed.** The steering committee is representative of the desire of local stakeholders to work collaboratively.

Challenges

1. **Partnerships need further development.** The most salient obstacle facing the proposed effort is that multi-state partnerships in the area are still in a nascent stage.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Heritage Tourism Program and The Conservation Fund were retained by the Appalachian Regional Commission and National Endowment for the Arts to conduct the site visit and to prepare the assessment and recommendations report. Services were provided by Carolyn Brackett, Senior Program Associate, National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program, and Kendra Briechele, Senior Training Associate, Conservation Leadership Network, The Conservation Fund.

The assessment visit itinerary was developed by the planning team including Maxwell Ramsey, Resource Concepts Consulting; Mark Woods, Superintendent, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park; and Cindy Whitt, Vice President, Lincoln Memorial University.

The assessment visit was conducted April 20-22, 2009. The itinerary included opportunities to talk with members of the local planning team and community stakeholders to gather information about cultural, historic and natural resources and to discuss ideas, challenges and opportunities for tourism development and promotion. The area tour included cultural, historic, natural and recreational resources. (The itinerary is included at the end of this report.)

We would like to thank the many stakeholders in Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia who assisted with this assessment by providing tours, information and insights about the area:

Maxwell Ramsey, Resource Concepts Consulting

Mark Woods, Superintendent, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

Chris Phillips, Superintendent's Assistant, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

Scott Teodorski, Ranger, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park



Left to Right: Chris Phillips, CGNHP, Superintendent's Assistant; Jerry Hopson, Vice Mayor, Town of Cumberland Gap, TN; Judy Barton, Executive Director, Bell County Office of Tourism, Middlesboro, KY; Carolyn Brackett, Heritage Tourism Program, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Max Ramsey, Resource Concepts Consulting; Kendra Briechle, The Conservation Fund; Scott Teodorski, CGNHP Ranger.

Lynn Stanley, Southern Highland Craft Guild

Cindy Whitt, Vice President, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee

Tom Mackie, Director, Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, Harrogate, Tennessee

Sue Rosenbalm, Friends of Wilderness Road State Park, Ewing, Virginia

Jerry Hopson, Vice Mayor, Town of Cumberland Gap, Tennessee

Robert Vaughn, Vaughn and Melton, Middlesboro, Kentucky

Carol Campbell, Director of Programs and Tourism, Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum and East Tennessee Crossing Byway, Harrogate, Tennessee

Billy Heck, Park Ranger, Wilderness Road State Park, Ewing, Virginia

Judy Barton, Executive Director, Bell County Office of Tourism, Middlesboro, Kentucky

Gary Burchett, Planning and Zoning Commission, Harrogate, Tennessee

Sue Webb, Owner, Webb's Restaurant, Town of Cumberland Gap, Tennessee

John Douglass, Mayor, Town of Cumberland Gap, Tennessee

Joe Brown, Owner, Wilderness Road Outfitters

Kassie Hauser, Director, Discover Downtown Middlesboro, Kentucky

Rob Lincks, Councilman, Middlesboro, Kentucky

Dan Butler, Tourism Assistant, Discover Downtown Middlesboro, Kentucky

Ann Dudley Matheny, Bell County Historical Museum, Middlesboro, Kentucky

Edwin Robertson, Haymaker's Restaurant, Harrogate, Tennessee

Five Principles of Successful and Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism

Through its work with communities across the country, the National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program has developed five principles to help guide successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism development:

Principle One: Collaborate

By its very nature, cultural heritage tourism requires effective partnerships. Much more can be accomplished by working together than by working alone.

Principle Two: Find the Fit between the Community and Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism should make a community a better place to live as well as a better place to visit. Respect carrying capacity so everyone benefits.

Principle Three: Make Sites and Programs Come Alive

Look for ways to make visitor experiences exciting, engaging and interactive.

Principle Four: Focus on Quality and Authenticity

Today's cultural heritage traveler is more sophisticated and will expect a high level of quality and an authentic experience.

Principle Five: Preserve and Protect Resources

Many of your community's cultural, historic and natural resources are irreplaceable. Take good care of them, if they are lost you can never get them back.

Sustainable Ecotourism Principles

According to development expert Ed McMahon, sustainable tourism is about authentic experiences that are unique and specialized to the place's resources (its culture, heritage, and natural resources). Sustainable tourism emphasizes quality over quantity. Sustainable tourism focuses on distinctive destinations, unspoiled landscapes, and historic buildings. It differs from mass-market tourism by favoring locally-owned businesses, thereby increasing circulation of money in the local economy.

Sustainable tourism is a strong component of gateway communities. The Conservation Fund promotes the strategies used by successful gateway communities as cited in *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities* by Jim Howe, Ed McMahon, and Luther Propst (The Conservation Fund, 1997). Successful gateway communities:

- Develop a widely shared vision
- Create an inventory of local resources

- Build on local assets
- Use education, voluntary initiatives, and incentives as well as regulations
- Meet the needs of both landowners and communities
- Partner with public land managers
- Recognize the role of non governmental organizations
- Provide opportunities for leaders to step forward
- Pay attention to aesthetics

Additionally, the Rural Ecotourism Assessment Project by Gail Y.B. Lash and Alison Austin lists three components of community-based tourism:

1. Understand and meet the needs of the community
2. Realistically deliver a long-term quality tourism product
3. Make specific efforts to connect these products to international and local markets

Ecotourism Trends

Ecotourism and associated outdoor recreation represent fast-growing segments of the tourism industry and generate significant revenues for businesses and governments. According to the World Tourism Organization, ecotourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism market, with a 5 percent annual growth rate.

Nationwide, in FY 2007, visitors spent \$11.79 billion in local regions surrounding national parks, thus supporting 244,400 jobs in gateway regions. National parks received 275.6 million visits.

National Trends in Cultural Heritage Tourism

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines cultural heritage tourism as “*traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.*” In addition to creating new jobs, new businesses, higher property values and a diversified economy, a well-managed tourism program improves the quality of life, builds community pride and brings expanded goods and services that benefit visitors and residents alike. This is particularly true for the cultural heritage segment of the tourism market.

Communities need to weigh the benefits of tourism against the challenges it can bring. While tourism is generally a “clean industry”, large numbers of visitors can place demands on a community’s infrastructure. For communities that succeed in attracting visitors, it can be a challenge to balance the needs and interests of residents with those of visitors. For heritage attractions, competing in the tourism arena can be overwhelming as tourism is a competitive, sophisticated and fast-paced industry. Heritage tourism requires an initial investment and a commitment to ongoing marketing efforts.

Heritage tourism has seen tremendous growth in the past two decades and now is recognized as a major travel industry segment. According to the *2003 Historic/Cultural Traveler* study by the Travel Industry Association and Smithsonian magazine, 81% of the U.S. adults who traveled in 2002 were considered cultural heritage travelers. These travelers included historical or cultural activities on almost 217 million person trips, up 13% from 192 million in 1996.

Recent research indicates that cultural heritage travelers stay longer and spend more than other kinds of travelers. According to the Travel Industry Association, cultural heritage travelers:

- **Stay longer** than other types of travelers—5.2 nights compared to 3.4 nights
- **Spend more** than other types of travelers—\$623 per trip compared to \$457
- **Shop more** than other travelers—44% compared to 33%

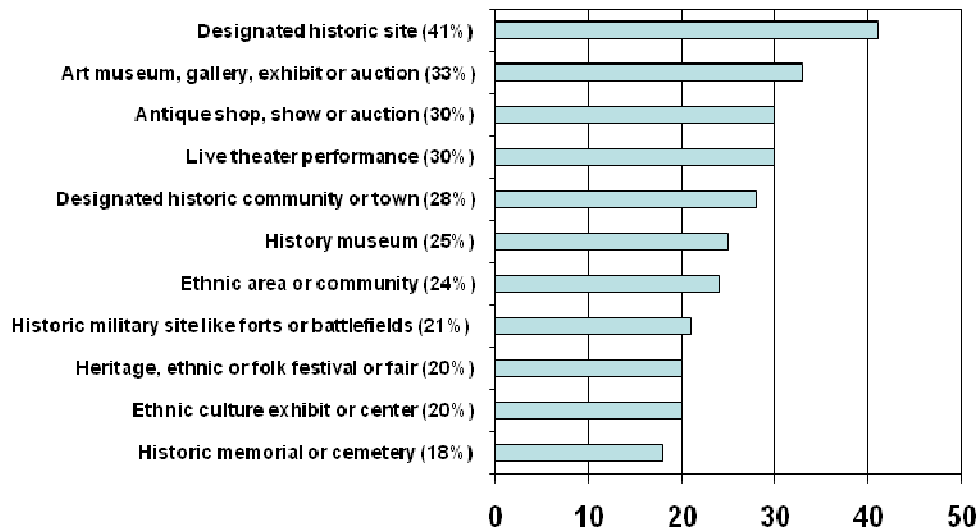
A TIA study of travelers who shop indicates that they are looking for stores they do not have at home (73%), items they cannot get at home (67%), items that represent the destination they are visiting (53%) and a unique shopping atmosphere (52%).

Cultural heritage travelers take frequent trips, with 25% taking three or more trips a year. With a growing interest in more frequent, shorter vacations to destinations closer to home, successful destinations must offer a variety of changing experiences to attract repeat visitation. Travelers to historic and cultural sites are also, in general, slightly older than other travelers and more likely to have a college degree (6 in 10).

Baby Boomers currently make up one of the strongest markets for cultural heritage tourism. Boomers make 241 million household trips each year, and 14% pay \$1,000+ for a vacation. Like all cultural heritage travelers, boomers are more likely to stay in a hotel or motel. In 1998, the National Tour Association completed a study of boomers which predicted “...because boomers are more experienced travelers, they will expect more from their experiences and terms such as cultural tourism, heritage tourism, sports tourism, active tourism, adventure travel and ecotourism will be commonly used within the next decade.” A decade later that prediction has come true with a host of niche tourism experiences being marketed to this target audience.

Visitation at Cultural and Heritage Attractions

Like many other sectors of the travel market, cultural heritage travelers are increasingly planning their trips with a shorter lead time. Fifty-five percent of cultural heritage travelers plan their trips a month or less before traveling. With shorter planning time, the Internet has become an essential marketing tool. At the same time, as busy lifestyles limit the amount of time travelers have for trip planning, an increasing number of decisions are being left until after visitors arrive. Thus although the Internet is becoming an increasingly important trip planning tool, it is still important to have more detailed visitor information and wayfinding tools such as maps easily accessible for visitors after they have arrived at their destination.



(Source: U.S. Travel Association)

Cultural heritage travelers are most likely to travel by car (68%). They are twice as likely as other U.S. travelers to take a group tour (7% vs. 3%), although the market for group tours is still a relatively small part of travel overall. The group tour industry has found that to attract today's traveler, it is important to offer exclusive opportunities for behind-the-scenes tours or other benefits that travelers would not be able to get on their own.

Cultural heritage travelers are more likely to take part in many different kinds of activities when they are traveling. 17% participate in four or more activities as compared to 5% of all travelers, with nature based attractions such as state or national parks being a strong draw.

The economic benefits of heritage tourism include creating new jobs and businesses, increasing tax revenues and diversifying the local economy. In addition to the economic benefits, heritage tourism is good for the community and there are quality of life benefits as well. Heritage tourism helps preserve a town's unique character, which results in more civic pride. Residents also have more opportunities available to them shops, activities, and entertainment offerings that the local market might not be able to support.

Cumberland Gap Region

Summary of Findings

If there were one way to describe the Cumberland Gap region, it would be that every turn in the road leads to new and intriguing experiences. The region reveals its cultural, historic and natural treasures to visitors as they hike a trail first followed by the Shawnee and other Native American tribes and then by settlers, visit a museum, stroll through a historic community, purchase a locally crafted work of art, or stand at Pinnacle Overlook looking down over the sweep of history encompassed in Bell County, Kentucky, Claiborne County, Tennessee and Lee County, Virginia.

There are three key factors that have influenced and will continue to influence the development of the region that should be kept in mind as sustainable tourism plans evolve. These factors represent both challenges and opportunities in developing a tourism program and also in sustaining the quality of life and traditional culture that makes the Cumberland Gap region special and unique.

- 1. The area's historic and natural resources are irreplaceable treasures that make this region special—and at the same time, these resources are extremely vulnerable to incompatible development. There is a need for an overall vision and plan to guide growth and development in the region.**

It is fortunate that almost 30,000 acres in Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee are protected in the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park including the recent addition of 4,500 acres through the Fern Lake addition. Other public sites such as Pine Mountain State Resort Park and Wilderness Road State Park also preserve land.

However, the lands beyond the park – the gateways that set the stage for the visitor experience by conveying the area's historical flavor as well as providing visitor services – are extremely susceptible to incompatible development and commercialization. Signs of the threat were evident in the entranceway into Middlesboro with its proliferation of strip centers and fast food restaurants, in Harrogate's



Cumberland Gap National Park, Pinnacle Point

commercial strip where signage competes with the mountain view, and in new real estate developments in Claiborne County that threaten to alter the area's scenic beauty. New development can further alter the character of the area. For example, an A.T.V. resort proposal is being actively considered between Middlesboro and Pineville, and while an A.T.V. resort can provide recreational opportunities, it must be carefully planned to fit the context of the community.

No place retains its special character by accident. Maintaining the natural and historical integrity of the Cumberland Gap region is fundamental to the region's economic well-being. Growth and development are important as a way to contribute to the region's quality of life and economy, however, development need not degrade the region's beauty. Strengthening the quality and design of new development, including the pattern, location and type of development, can reap benefits by improving the quality of life across the Cumberland Gap region. It is important to remember that it is not only the *individual* historic, cultural and natural sites that create a compelling visitor experience. It is also the *appearance of a community and region* that conveys the area's historical character and serves as the foundation for a visitor's impression of the experience that the region offers. These resources – the surrounding mountains, quaint downtowns and pastoral drives - are tangible reminders of the area's past and are essential in telling the region's story to visitors.

The journey into an area provides the first impression of the experience. For example, the Route 33 corridor offers an inviting journey: horse and cattle farms and beautiful forests and fields welcome visitors to the beauty of the region. Other roadways provide a more generic or uninviting welcome.

As with many communities, there are frequently conflicting feelings among residents about preserving the area's heritage and allowing for growth and development. Residents' pride in their heritage is evident in the development of museums, restoration of historic downtown buildings and historic homes and projects such as seeking National Scenic Byway designation for Highway 25 East.

At the same time, a connection does not seem to have been made to the "big picture" of how the region presents itself as a whole to visitors and the importance of preservation and conservation as well as compatible development in the effort to attract visitors. Keeping the area beautiful needs to happen through deliberate design. Growth and development should complement, not detract from, the existing conservation investments.

A successful sustainable tourism program will embrace the importance of saving and protecting those cultural, heritage and natural resources that make a place special and that offer Cumberland Gap a unique tourism marketing opportunity. At the same time it will ensure and encourage opportunities for development in line with the heritage and unique natural resources of an area.

2. The Cumberland Gap region offers a wealth of excellent events, programs and activities to draw visitors.

One of the many discoveries made during the assessment visit is that the Cumberland Gap region has a wide range of events, programs and activities to enhance the visitor experience. There are offerings for

every visitor interest, including living history re-enactments, music festivals, arts and crafts fairs, nature tours and programs and more.

It was obvious through all of our interviews that a great deal of thought has gone into deciding what activities to offer – and an enormous amount of work (both paid and volunteer) has been devoted to developing these activities.

The result is two-fold:

- 1) Visitors can have an outstanding experience that is tailored to their interests.
- 2) There are numerous opportunities for promoting the Cumberland Gap region by using one or more of the activities as the “hook” for generating media coverage.



Wilderness Road State Park, Virginia

This report will address ways to capitalize on the array of activities through enhanced communications with the media and reaching potential visitors directly through the Internet and other technologies.

3. The strength of partnerships – and the willingness to forge new partnerships – creates great potential for successful and sustainable tourism development.

Successful tourism programs that blend cultural, heritage and natural resources require strong partnerships across many disciplines including tourism professionals, historians, artisans, natural resource specialists and visitor service business owners – including retailers, restaurant and lodging owners, outfitters and others.

One of the most striking aspects of the Cumberland Gap region’s tourism effort is the willingness of stakeholders to bring together partners from numerous disciplines and to work not only across county lines but also across state lines. This is a remarkable testimony to understanding that visitors are interested

in a memorable experience without concern for geographic boundaries.

Also notable is the willingness of the management staff of Cumberland Gap National Historical Park to be both a leader and a partner in this endeavor. The park is without a doubt the “crown jewel” of the region as well as the major attractor of visitors, therefore, management’s interest in working with partners in a tri-state tourism program sets the stage for success.



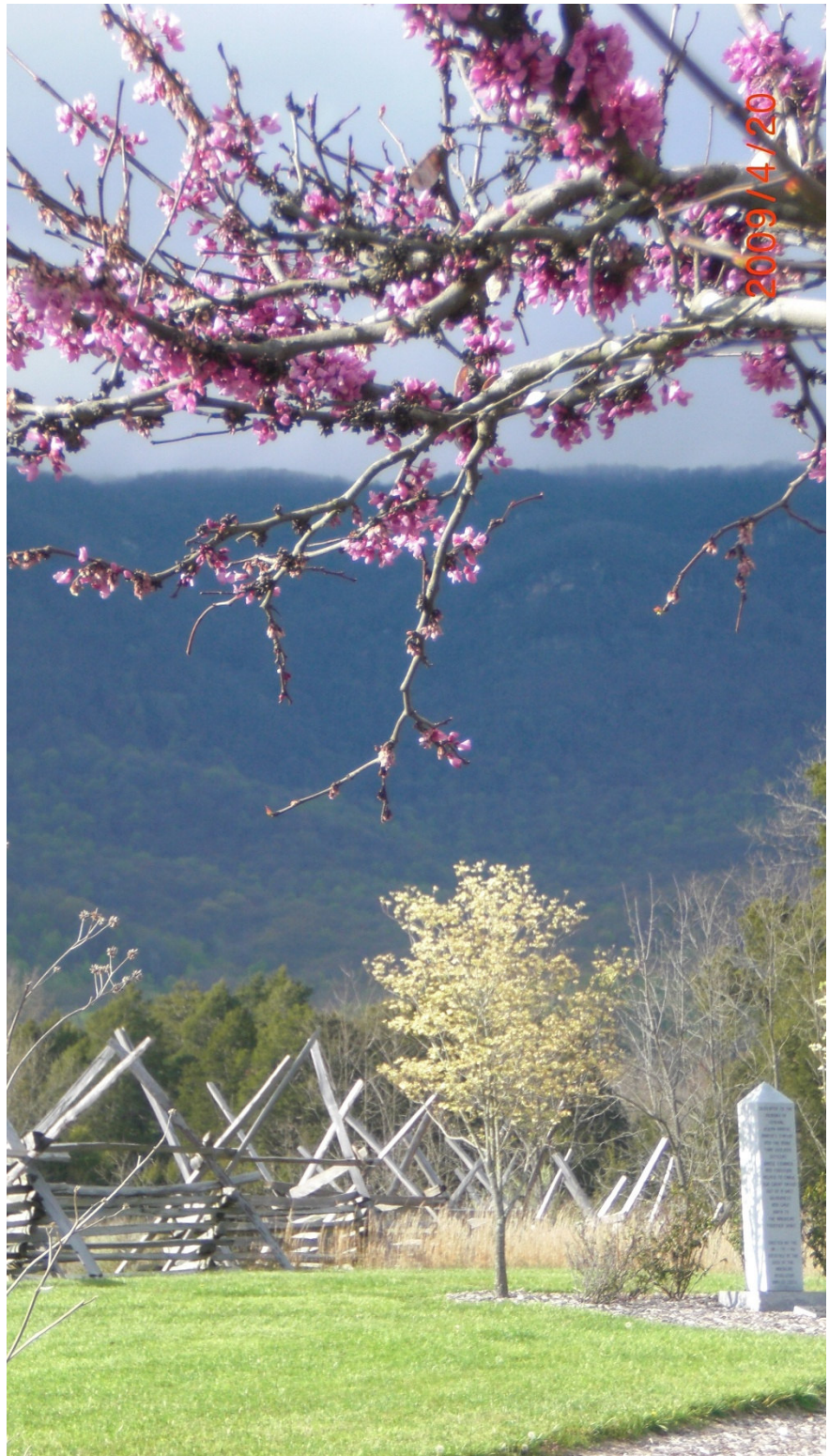
Recommendations

I. Complete an inventory of cultural, historic and natural resources.

The Cumberland Gap region is fortunate to have what can be called “an embarrassment of riches” in cultural, historic and natural resources. The challenge for a visitor is finding out about all of the resources and the options they can enjoy when visiting the area. Although representatives from each community or county are knowledgeable about resources in their area (Bell County has conducted a resource inventory as part of the First Frontier Corridor) creating a comprehensive inventory will serve as the foundation for further resource development, marketing and identification of funding opportunities. Lee County is in particular need of a resource inventory, given its very rural character.

Specific Recommendations

1. Determine categories for data collection – attractions (historic, recreational, arts, etc.), plans and land



use trends, maps, information on natural resources, economic data and trends, and visitor services (lodging, restaurants, shopping, etc.)

2. Determine what information needs to be collected. This can include broader information such as maps on land ownership and natural resources, plans and planning goals, land use trends, and existing resources, and priorities or threats to resources as well site-specific information such as a short description of each site, list of annual events and ongoing activities, hours of operation, admission fees, special tour rates, available visitor services (visitor centers, rest rooms, gift shop), directions and contact information. An important question to answer is “Is the site visitor ready?” – meaning is it open regular hours and days and does it have adequate staffing to accommodate visitors? It may also be useful to collect information on how each site is currently marketing to visitors.
3. A separate category may also be considered for data collection for *potential sites*. These are historic, cultural or natural resources that are not currently interpreted or made available to visitors, but could be developed for tourism at some point in the future. Identifying these sites can keep them in the forefront as funding strategies are considered and as overall regional development is implemented.
4. Create an inventory form for each category .
5. Determine a system for maintaining the database so that all partners will have access to the information and the data can be updated periodically. (A web-based system is recommended.)

Once the inventory is complete, actively harvest the database for marketing opportunities; assess whether each asset is sufficiently marketed to the general public and to the tourist. Create a map showing where resources are located. This will help tourism organizers understand where visitor resources are located and identify gaps such as the need for better signage, restoration opportunities, or more public restrooms. The inventory will also flag where incompatible commercial development may be planned.

II. Develop an organizational structure

The diversity of partners who participated in the assessment visit and who are committed to working together to build a tourism program is a strong indicator of the potential for success. The key to moving forward will be to determine if there is one organization that stands out as the logical leader or if it will be necessary to create a new entity to manage the three-state tourism effort.

Specific Recommendations:

1. **Determine if the three-state partnership will have a formal or informal structure.**

This could be facilitated by an organizational development expert in a meeting of all leadership partners. A formal structure would include identifying one partner to serve as the lead agency or creating a new 501c3 nonprofit organization. If one partner is selected as the lead, it will be critical that they embrace the overall mission of the three-state effort and that the tourism program fit within their organization’s stated

goals and operating structure. An informal structure would mean continuing as presently operating – as a loose affiliation of partners who all have the same desire to see tourism develop in the region.

Some pros and cons of each organizational structure to consider include:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Pros of formal structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Visibility of an organization dedicated to the three-state tourism program. * Ability to raise funds dedicated to the program. * Staff dedicated exclusively to the three-state tourism program. * Creates an “umbrella” for partner organizations to work within committee structures. * Provides clear point of contact. | <p>Pros of an informal structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bypass bureaucracy of obtaining and maintaining 501c3 status. |
| <p>Cons of a formal structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Necessity of raising additional funds to pay staff and administrative costs. * Paperwork to file for 501c3 designation and to maintain tax exempt status. * Management of a new organization – creation of a board of directors, bylaws, etc. | <p>Cons of an informal structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No single organization is dedicated to the success of the three-state tourism program. * No clear lines of who is responsible for fundraising, marketing plan development, etc. |

2. Determine the roles of all partners.

Each partner has the potential to bring unique skills and resources to the tourism effort. Consider how to make the best use of each partners’ abilities. For example, Friends of Cumberland Gap National Historical Park is in the process of being organized. This group is using its Facebook page and other outreach to bring together representatives from throughout the three states to not only assist the park, but to develop a wide network of residents who can become involved in new tourism efforts. Another example is Bell County Tourism. This convention and visitors bureau already generously includes attractions from Claiborne County, Tennessee and Lee County, Virginia in its promotions. This could be formalized within a new tourism partnership structure to make Bell County Tourism the lead marketing organization and to have the other counties contribute financially to promotions of the Cumberland Gap region.

3. Develop a funding system

Regardless of the organizational structure that is adopted, funding will be necessary for further development of attractions and for marketing to reach the intended audiences. A budget will need to be developed to include administrative activities, product development and marketing costs. Development of a budget will include answering questions such as:

- Can each partner contribute funds to a Cumberland Gap region tourism program?
- Are there opportunities to generate revenue from tourists – such as creation of (or an increase) a lodging tax or restaurant tax?
- Could special tours or other activities be developed for tourists, with revenues supporting the organization?
- What local, state, regional or federal grants could support the organization’s activities?
- Are there corporations or foundations that could be tapped for support or sponsorships?

III. Make preservation and conservation a continuous priority

As discussed in the Summary of Findings, the lands beyond the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park – the gateways that set the stage for the visitor experience by conveying the area’s historical flavor as well as providing visitor services – are at risk of incompatible development and commercialization. A sustainable tourism effort in the region must emphasize preservation and conservation.

“Sustainability” is *meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.* (Suzanne Cook, U.S. Travel Association, Great Smoky Mountains Sustainable Tourism Summit)

As characterized by the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations: *Sustainable tourism is the foundation for destination stewardship:*

- Protects its product – the destination
- Conserves resources



Cumberland Gap Creek

- Respects local culture and traditions
- Aims for quality, not quantity

The special characteristics of the Cumberland Gap region are readily apparent to a visitor after spending only a short amount of time in the area: beautiful scenic vistas, mountains and lakes that invite exploration and recreation, charming small towns, compelling historic attractions, unique arts and crafts and a seemingly endless calendar of events, programs and activities that reflect the region's history and culture.

It is these characteristics that currently draw visitors – and with increased promotion can draw even more tourists to enjoy the region and to create economic impact.

In recent decades, we have seen communities across the country exploit their natural resources and develop tourism destinations through commercialization of their areas. The result is often attractions such as water parks, outlet malls and fast food restaurants – all promoted with dozens of billboards and sky-high illuminated signage. This approach to tourism fundamentally changes the character of communities, destroying their uniqueness and creating instead what has been called “Anyplace USA.”

Interestingly, some communities which have taken this approach – including Gatlinburg – are now trying to create cultural heritage tourism programs to capitalize on this visitor demographic which will spend more money and stay longer than other visitors.

Others, such as Townsend, Tennessee, which is promoted as the “Peaceful Side of the Smokies”, (www.smokymountains.org), have capitalized on their natural, cultural and historic resources and have created successful tourism programs.

It would be a tremendous loss if the Cumberland Gap region joined the ranks of commercialized tourism destinations instead of building on its charm and uniqueness.

Because there is no one organization dedicated to the preservation and conservation of the region's historic, cultural and natural resources, it is recommended that the Cumberland Gap region tourism partnership embrace this as a primary mission.

Specific Recommendations:

1. Build a network of preservation and conservation partners.

Begin by identifying regional, state partners and national partners. Learn about resources – technical assistance, educational programs, grants and advocacy that these organizations can provide. These can include:

State government agencies:

- Tennessee Historical Commission
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources

- Kentucky Heritage Council
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation
- Kentucky Department of Natural Resources

State nonprofit organizations:

- Virginia Land Trust
- Preservation Virginia
- Preservation Kentucky, Inc.
- Tennessee Preservation Trust
- Land Trust for Tennessee

National organizations:

- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- The Conservation Fund
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Trust for Public Land
- National Geographic Society, Center for Sustainable Destinations
- Land Trust Alliance
- National Society for Park Resources
- American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration

Federal agencies

- National Park Service, especially Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance

These organizations can be good partners, possible funding sources, repositories for case studies and lessons learned from similar locales, etc.

Forge deeper relationships with these organizations but also build a local network for conservation of natural and heritage resources. The Friends of Cumberland Gap might be an appropriate umbrella network. The organizations involved in the Cumberland Gap tourism assessment should also commit to continued partnership and engagement. The organizations should attend select meetings of each other's organizations. This might include inviting Park Service leaders to attend a Bell County Chamber of Commerce meeting or having a Cumberland Gap Council member speak to Harrogate City Council.

Finally, engage the tri-state Congressional delegations and state legislators in the Cumberland Gap efforts and needs. Congressman Hal Rogers of Kentucky has certainly been a supporter of the region's tourism. Representative Rick Boucher of Virginia is also a strong advocate for tourism. The region's leaders should provide a unified front to Congressional and state legislators, informing them of the desire to promote the region for natural, cultural and heritage tourism and engaging them as partners in the continued promotion and enhancement of the region's assets.

2. Prepare and submit a proposal to host a "Your Town" workshop.

Your Town: The Citizen's Institute on Rural Design (www.yourtowndesign.org) is a leadership initiative funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Workshops are specifically designed to address the challenges of rural areas such as the Cumberland Gap region as they face pressures from incompatible development while working to maintain their identity. The 2 ½ day workshop brings together architects, planners, landscape designers, community leaders and others to address regional challenges and to develop strategies for addressing those challenges. Past workshops have focused on strategies for sustainable tourism development. Workshops are held in a retreat-type setting and are limited to 30 attendees. Participants are engaged in interactive planning sessions lead by national experts. These workshops have been highly successful in assisting communities across the country, with more than 50 workshops held since the program's inception in 1991. Communities are selected through an annual competitive application process. Up to \$22,000 in funding is provided to local organizers to host the workshop. The Cumberland Gap region's tourism partners should review information on the Your Town website to learn about past workshops and to review guidelines for submitting an application for 2010. (Note: The National Endowment for the Arts was one of the funders of the Gateway Assessment Report. If the region submits an application for a Your Town workshop, be sure to note that NEA has already supported planning efforts in the Cumberland Gap region.)

3. Organize a team to attend the Balancing Nature and Commerce workshop.

The Cumberland Gap would benefit from the action planning provided by the Balancing Nature and Commerce workshop hosted by The Conservation Fund. During this four-day course, teams focus on the economics, natural resources and community character of their area and learn valuable partnership building skills. At the end of the four days, teams leave with a specific action plan for implementing a collaborative project in their community. This course may also be tailored to the specific needs of the

region and offered as a place-based workshop. More information is available on The Conservation Fund's Web site <http://www.conservationfund.org/node/458>. Scholarships are available for team participation.

4. Engage residents and elected officials.

An ongoing series of educational programs can be offered to help residents and elected officials understand the benefits of preservation and conservation as well as the importance of appropriate new development to maintaining community character and the investments in the region. Programs should always emphasize the importance of preservation and conservation to successful sustainable tourism programs. Leaders from the Cumberland Gap region partnership should preface or follow presentations by talking about plans for tourism development using the area's cultural, natural and historic resources. Educational programs can include topics such as:

- Who are the players in conservation and preservation and what are their roles?
- What types of funding is available from partner organizations?
- What are the tools of preservation?
- What are the tools of conservation?
- How can the region embrace and benefit from conservation and preservation activities?
- What are examples of other communities that have used conservation and preservation strategies to develop sustainable tourism programs?
- What are examples of communities that have encouraged new development that fits with or enhances existing community character?

In addition, since one third of Cumberland Gap visitors hail from the immediate surrounding or close by, even more programming can focus on encouraging the exploration of the wealth of resources in the region. Local programming such as stargazing days and local musicians are great existing programs. The region can build on these events by providing "Locals Days," with free or reduced prices at area attractions, or hosting bicycling or hiking tours. Any local events should provide additional information on other attractions and events in the region. When possible, the events should also feature local businesses such as outfitters, food purveyors, locally-grown food and regional crafts that further reinforce the hometown flavor and pride.

5. Develop design guidelines

The region can promote better development through inspiration and ideas, rather than advocating for regulation. Many communities have discovered the use of design guidelines that encourage development respectful and reflective of community character and sense of place. Carroll County, Maryland created its *Design Expectations* guide about five years ago (<http://ccgovernment.carr.org/ccg/compplan/design/default.asp>). The guide provides developers and landowners with examples of the vernacular architecture.

At county pre-application meetings, staff request that landowners incorporate specific design elements in construction or redevelopment. This voluntary process has resulted in changes to new development in the county.

The two-year old *Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guide* is another guide that has resulted in new commercial buildings integrating traditional and/or culturally appropriate building styles. These guides provide local government officials and staff with a way to open a discussion and ask for development that respects community character, creating good economic opportunities and sense of pride for the place. (See Pennsylvania Wilds Resource Center at <http://www.pawildsresources.org/index.html> for link to Design Guide and information on Small Business and Community Outreach)

In recent years, the *Cane River National Heritage Area* in Natchitoches, Louisiana has seen the threat of incompatible new home developments in the historic “downriver” section of the national heritage area. Forging partnerships with developers and new home owners was determined to be preferable to advocating for regulations. The Cane River National Heritage Area worked with a landscape architect to produce a booklet of design guidelines titled *Finding Common Ground*. The guidelines help builders understand the unique history of the area and encourage compatible new construction. The booklet provides information about native plant species and suggestions for landscaping, architectural styles that are appropriate to the area, materials for roadways, fencing and signage and recommendations for site planning. A case study from a housing subdivision that was developed following the guidelines is also included. (A PDF of the booklet is included with this report.)

Better Models for Commercial Development is a good overview resource. Through extensive use of photos and illustrations, Better Models focuses on ways to improve the quality and design of franchises, chain stores and big box retailers. Whether it is a new fast food restaurant, a gas station, a convenience store, a chain drug store or a big box superstore, the booklet shows how new commercial development can be designed to respect local community character and identity. This booklet was written for elected officials, planning commissioners, developers and interested citizens around the country. Better Models shows how new commercial development can be made more attractive, more efficient and more profitable. (A copy of the booklet is included with this report.)

IV. Brand “The Cumberland Gap”

There are many definitions for branding. One that effectively conveys both the purpose and the outcome of branding is:

A brand is a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer.

According to the company Building Brands, this definition emphasizes some key points:

1. This definition makes it absolutely clear that a brand is very different from a product or service. A brand is *intangible* and exists in the mind of the consumer.
2. This definition helps us understand the idea of brand *loyalty*.

3. This definition makes it clear how to build a brand. A brand is built not only through effective communications or appealing logos. A brand is built through the *total experience* that it offers.

Generally, people come to visit the Cumberland Gap region – not specifically Claiborne, Bell or Lee counties. Over 1 million visitors a year do come specifically to enjoy the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. This is the biggest concentration of tourists in the area, so it is logical to build a brand on the already recognized “Cumberland Gap” name. Creating a brand will unify the region for local organizers and in the mind of the visitor.



The region’s leaders should also consider what destinations compete for the attention of potential Cumberland Gap visitors. Is the region an alternative to the Smokies? What differentiates the region from other areas? Where are potential visitors learning about the region—and its competitors? Use this data to inform the region’s marketing in order to develop a brand that compels potential visitors to come to the Cumberland Gap.

Specific Recommendations

1. Gather input from diverse community members for ideas on a brand.
2. Work with a marketing expert and graphic designer who have experience in brand development to create several options for a logo and tagline. Reach consensus on the preferred design.
3. Test the brand with a diversity of visitors. Evaluate feedback – does the brand convey the visitor experience? Does the brand make people want to visit the region? How compelling is the brand compared to comparable areas that tourists visit within the region?
4. Prepare final design based on feedback.
5. Trademark the brand, and develop guidelines for who can use the brand logo and tagline. (see the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources guidelines on use of the Pennsylvania Wilds logo use at the Web site <http://mediaroom.visitpa.com/default.aspx?id=38>)

6. Develop a fee structure for use of the logo and tagline for commercial enterprises (such as t-shirt manufacturers).

V. Develop themes that can become marketing messages

Themes are statements that capture the important stories and characteristics of a region, building on and reinforcing the brand. Themes are used as the basis for developing interpretive plans. They can also be the foundation of marketing messages that communicate the area's offerings to visitors.

Current messages from the Cumberland Gap region targeted to tourists include:

- Southeastern Kentucky – Daniel Boone Country
- Cumberland Gap – Kentucky's #1 Treasure: The city built in a crater – Home of the Narrows, Bell County, Kentucky
- Claiborne County, Tennessee – East Tennessee's Gateway to the West
- The Lincoln Experience: Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum
- Pine Mountain State Resort Park – A Haven for all Seasons
- Claiborne County – A Great Place to Visit!
- Bell County – Gateway to the West

Themes and messages have three purposes:

- 1) Guide tourism development – Describing the important stories of the Cumberland Gap region makes it easy to prioritize goals for new interpretive development.
- 2) Convey the experience – To provide a succinct image of the experience that awaits visitors to the Cumberland Gap region
- 3) Call to action – To motivate travelers to seek information about the Cumberland Gap region and to encourage a trip to the area.

Development is a two-step process:

- 1) Factual Themes – For internal use by the Cumberland Gap partners. The purpose of a factual theme is to describe the important stories that the area can tell.

Example: The state of New Jersey is developing a set of themes which will guide its heritage tourism program development and serve as the foundation for marketing messages:

1. Revolutionary War battles fought in New Jersey reflect America's quest for independence.
2. Industry and innovation shaped New Jersey and helped transform the world.

3. Farming and fishing has always been part of life in the Garden State.
 4. Waves of immigration have diversified New Jersey's population.
 5. New Jersey has a history of hosting vacationers seeking relaxation and inspiration.
- 2) Descriptive Messages – For external use to reach targeted audiences. The purpose of these statements is to convey the Cumberland Gap region's story in descriptive terms that can be used in promotional venues such as press releases, websites, brochures and advertisements.

Example: The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (Virginia) decided that the overarching message they want to convey is that the Shenandoah Valley has many Civil War stories to tell. The message they developed to communicate this idea is: *Experience Shenandoah at War: One Story, a Thousand Voices*

Additionally, they decided that there are no more compelling words to describe the Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley than from those who lived through it. A series of quotes is being developed to use in partnership with the overarching message such as:

We shall never any of us be the same as we have been.

Lucy Buck, Front Royal, Diary Entry, 1862.

Your country calls...I now offer you, a beardless boy of 17 summers...

Mother sending her son to war, Winchester Virginian, 1861

If this Valley falls, Virginia falls...

General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, 1862

Specific Recommendations:

Current messages being used by tourism promoters in the Cumberland Gap region do not strongly convey the uniqueness of the area or create a unified voice.

1. Develop factual thematic statements that reflect the region's uniqueness. Topics could include:
 - Native American history
 - Crossing the Gap
 - Settlement of the Frontier
 - Revolutionary War

- Early agriculture
 - Civil War
 - Music
 - Arts and crafts
 - Outdoor recreation
 - Natural history of the Gap region
2. Using the thematic statements as the basis, develop a series of descriptive marketing messages that can be used by all partners.
 3. Work with departments of tourism in each state. Share drafted thematic statements and marketing messages for review and comments by tourism office staff. Ensure that the Cumberland Gap region's messages are not duplicating (or are too similar) to those in other parts of each state. Make adjustments as needed.
 4. Coordinate final marketing messages with brand (logo and tagline) and make available to partners.

VI. Tell the Story of the Cumberland Gap

Unlike many destinations that offer a stagnant experience for visitors, filled with reading markers about buildings that are no longer standing or taking canned tours of historic sites, the Cumberland Gap region offers an abundance of programs, events and activities that bring the area to life and engage tourists in a memorable visit. By creating a unified plan that links together the stories of the Cumberland Gap, visitors will be able to not only learn about the area's rich heritage and natural resources, they will also be able to experience the area in a way that encourages them to keep exploring from one area to the next. Working with an interpretive specialist will ensure that the region develops a comprehensive strategy to tell its story.

Specific Recommendations:

1. Begin by reviewing the inventory to see what stories are currently being told throughout the Cumberland Gap region. Questions include: Where are these stories being told? Are they authentic (thoroughly researched and documented)? Why are they important to tell? Which are most appealing to visitors?
2. Next identify what stories are not currently being told. Questions include: Why are they important to tell? Where can they be told? How can they be told? In particular, it was noted that there should be more interpretation of the story of Native Americans' role in the evolution of the area. Additional research and documentation should be undertaken as needed in order to incorporate this story into the region's interpretation. In addition, tell the story of the tunnel and its affect on the town of

Cumberland Gap, the transportation through the area, and the resulting restoration of the historic Gap trail.

3. Review plans for the East Tennessee Crossing (US25E) Scenic Byway which include many strategies for interpretation. Work in partnership with byway planners to coordinate – not duplicate – interpretive planning efforts.
4. Once a list of important stories has been determined, compare it to the thematic links and marketing messages. Make sure that themes, message and the product all reinforce each other.
5. Create a series of trails (walking, bicycling, and driving) to thematically link activities and sites. The trails will serve two purposes – enhancing and linking existing interpretation and creating new venues to tell the stories of the Cumberland Gap.
6. Determine other interpretive methods – such as guidebooks or interpretive panels – to develop. (A handout with types of interpretive methods is included with this report.)
7. Support development of museums (such as Lincoln Museum, Bell County Historic Society Museum and Arthur Museum) to help tell the story of the Cumberland Gap region. (See site specific section for recommendations on museums.)
8. Use Web sites, Facebook, and blogs to further tell the story in ways that reach today's tech-savvy travelers.



Abraham Lincoln Museum, Harrogate, TN



Cumberland Gap Tunnel

VII. Guide visitor planning and the visitor experience with a Cumberland Gap Region website.

Many research studies show that use of the Internet for travel planning is second only to asking friends and family for recommendations on places to visit. A January 2009 study by Destination Analysts, Inc. found that 30% of travelers use the Internet as their *primary* travel planning resource compared to 31% who rely on friends and family. A 2004 U.S. Travel Association report shows that 64 million travelers



Pine Mountain State Resort Park, KY

use the Internet for travel planning with 44 million booking some or all of their trips online. Among the uses of the Internet for online travel planners are: maps/driving directions (70%), things to do (49%), local event calendars (35%), travel packages (35%) and places to go (34%).

In recent years, a significant shift in use by travelers is that the Internet is now not only used for planning the logistical aspects of a trip

(booking hotels, purchasing tickets, etc.) it has become a tool to *shape and influence the visitor experience*. The ability to download audiotours to take along on a trip, to read blogs and view videos made by other travelers to a destination, to interact with other tourists on travel websites for destination recommendations, to build a customized itinerary and to post blogs on destination websites about a trip are only a few of the multitude of ways that the travel experience can be shaped and influenced by the Internet.

Because of the unique capabilities of the Internet to influence travel decisions, trip planning and the visitor experience, the Internet is now seen as a tool to address *both* product development *and* marketing.

Currently there are numerous websites that provide information on various aspects of the Cumberland Gap region. These include tourism websites for Bell County and Claiborne County, Lincoln Memorial University (which includes the Lincoln Museum), Cumberland Gap, Bell County Historical Society and Museum, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (through the National Park Service website), Pine Mountain State Resort Park, Wilderness Road State Park, and the Southern Highland Craft Guild among others.

A potential tourist must first find these websites and then search through each one to understand all of the area's attractions and then must put together a travel itinerary. Even though some of these sites (such as Bell County Tourism) have links to other attractions and towns, it is still difficult for a visitor to grasp the concept of visiting a three-county region that is linked by its heritage, culture and natural resources.

Specific recommendations:

We recommend that the Cumberland Gap region tourism planning team place a major emphasis on development of a regional website that encompasses the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park and the surrounding three-county region. This will enable a potential tourist to easily understand the vast array of things to see and do and to quickly identify particular areas of interest. The website should also have an interactive component to engage tourists to share information on their trips and help others plan to visit the area.

1. If the newly-formed Friends of Cumberland Gap National Historical Park plans to develop a tourism website, consider developing the Cumberland Gap region website in partnership with this group.
2. Present information on activities and attractions through themes (discussed in Recommendation #5). The Lancaster-York Heritage Region (Pennsylvania) has an excellent website that is presented thematically – www.lyhr.org.
3. Appeal to niche markets by creating sections for photographers, bird watchers, hikers, etc. This can include suggested itineraries for particular interests, tips for planning a visit, maps, etc. The Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association’s website offers suggestions for birdwatchers, hikers and other niche travelers on its website – www.tennesseeoverhill.com.
4. Create a section for events (using the inventory previously collected) and present by type such as music, arts and crafts shows, re-enactments, etc.
5. Develop suggested itineraries using various themes, niche interests and scenic routes. Also allow the visitor to create his own travel itinerary by building a list of sites of interest. Experience Mississippi, a partnership of 10 states along the Mississippi River, has created a series of itineraries posted on www.experiencemississippi.com including topics such as “Art and Icons of the Midwest,” “Delta Crossings,” and “Memphis for the Musical.”
6. Include interactive features on the website. Offer a place for travelers to blog about their visit to the Cumberland Gap region and to post pictures and itineraries. The Friends of the Smokies visitor website, www.thegreatsmokymountains.org has an area for visitors to post content and pictures from their visit and to make suggestions which will help others plan a trip. The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Corporation also gives visitors the opportunity to post podcasts of tours on its website www.soundaboutphilly.com.

VIII. Develop additional marketing tools

After developing a unified brand, logo and marketing messages for the Cumberland Gap region, the next step will be to develop marketing tools to attract visitors to the area. There are a multitude of marketing tools available – ranging from media communications to travel trade shows to purchasing advertising. Marketing can be a very expensive undertaking, therefore, it is critical to carefully choose tools that can be tracked for return on investment.

The tourism office in Bell County does an outstanding job of marketing the region through co-op advertising with the Kentucky Department of Travel. The tourism office is funded through a 3% local lodging tax and a \$25,000 annual grant from the Kentucky Department of Travel. In responding to leads generated by this advertising, the office's fulfillment package includes information on (in addition to Bell County information) Wilderness Road State Park, the Abraham Lincoln Museum and other attractions in Claiborne and Lee counties. Additionally, the tourism office staffs a visitor information desk at the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park three days a week.

As the Cumberland Gap region's tourism partnership grows, a comprehensive marketing plan will need to be developed that includes media communications, advertising, travel industry sales and special promotions based on visitor research to identify target audiences. A marketing budget will need to be developed as part of



the overall financial plans discussed in Recommendation #2 (Develop an organizational structure). In the next few years, focus should be given to reaching the 1 million+ visitors to the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park as well as visitors to other sites in the region, such as Pine Mountain State Resort Park which draws 500,000 visitors annually, and letting them know that there is lots to see and do throughout the three counties. Reaching potential visitors in the surrounding region - and serving the needs and interests of residents - is also important and can be accomplished through the website (Recommendation #7) and a media communications plan.

Specific Recommendations

1. Work with each state tourism office – Kentucky Department of Travel, Tennessee Office of Tourism Development and Virginia Tourism Corporation – to ensure that updated information on attractions, events and visitor services is provided to these offices for inclusion in visitor guides, websites and other promotional venues. It will be especially important to have links from each state tourism office website to the Cumberland Gap region's website since state tourism offices are generally forbidden to promote sites outside their state.
2. Create tear off maps that show the three-county region and identify key points of interest for visitors. Tear off maps have become a popular way for tourism destinations to inexpensively provide information to visitors about what there is to see and do in the area. These pieces are usually printed in pads of 100 at a cost of about \$700-\$800 for 10,000.

The placemat sized piece has a map of the area on one side and listings on the other



Wilderness Road State Park Visitor Center, VA

side of attractions, restaurants, shopping, etc. A sponsor can often be found to underwrite the cost. The maps should be distributed throughout the Cumberland Gap region, in particular at the visitor information desk at the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park visitor center. The pieces can also be posted on a website to be downloaded by visitors.

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, a regional tourism organization representing parts of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, has used this approach to create a series of thematic tours highlighting shopping, outdoor recreation, history, farm stands and family fun. Examples are found at <http://www.tourblackstone.com/detours.htm>

3. Placement of information center kiosks in strategic locations throughout the region will provide visitors with ready access to the most up-to-date information on things to see and do in the region as well as providing travel directions. Starting with one or two kiosks, more can be added as funds become available. The first kiosk should be placed at the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park visitor center. Other key locations include the Bell County Visitor Center (Arthur Museum), Lincoln Museum, Pine Mountain State Resort Park and Wilderness Road State Park. There are many companies that develop kiosks. Tourism partners should plan to bid out this project to obtain a cost effective price. One such company is www.netkey.com which developed kiosks for the Oregon Trail.
4. Creation of a media communications plan will generate awareness and interest in traveling to the Cumberland Gap region to enjoy events, attractions, performances, shopping and dining.
 - Develop an annual schedule of press releases including a “What’s Happening” release for distribution in January, followed by releases promoting special events, tours, openings and other activities.
 - Create a series of suggested story ideas to post on the Cumberland Gap region and partner websites (including state tourism office newsrooms).
 - Media lists can be obtained from the Virginia Tourism Corporation, Kentucky Department of Travel and Tennessee Department of Tourist Development for media within each state and in surrounding states as well as national publications.

Tourism partners should identify a point person within their group to serve as the contact person for the media. The point person would field calls from journalists and route them to the appropriate tourism partner to answer questions or provide information.

IX. Develop increased bicycle transportation around area

The Greenway Trail is a newly constructed treasure connecting the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park and the Wilderness Road State Park with the town of Cumberland Gap, the cities of Harrogate and Middlesboro, and Lincoln Memorial University. The Greenway also links to additional trail miles within the parks and the university, providing bicyclists with about 70 miles of trails to explore town and country.

Bicycle rentals are currently provided in the town of Cumberland Gap and at Wilderness Road. The resource and the support facilities are available but the area lacks a map of the overall system. Mapping, signs and trailside information could help create a more bicycle-friendly region, to the benefit of both residents and visitors.

Efforts to make the towns more pedestrian-friendly (see information on Middlesboro) could also include considerations to improve bicycling on the street networks and make links between the trail network and the in-town attractions and services.

Adventure Cycling Association conducted a demographic survey that indicates most bicyclists are financially established, have families and disposable income for bicycles and bicycling vacations. Attracting bicycle tourists must include facilities and amenities that accommodate a diverse sector of cyclists from the frugal-minded individuals to families, to larger tour groups, to organized events. Bicycle tourism and use of trails has a lengthier season and attracts more families and groups than traditional outdoor recreation such as hunting and fishing.

According to Bikes On Tours, the bicycle tourist is seeking:

- bicycle friendly streets and paths - wide enough for bicycles and other users
- access to scenic roads, natural areas, waterfront, cultural and historic attractions
- good restaurants
- accommodations with a hearty breakfast either provided or nearby
- bicycle repair shops and other interesting stores
- adequate and secure bicycle parking
- theatre, music and arts festivals
- route maps and effective advertising

All these fit well in the sustainable tourism efforts of the Cumberland Gap region.

Specific Recommendations

1. Create a map of the region's trail system
 - The map should include the overall Greenway trail system and links to trails within the parks and on university grounds. It should indicate the trail surface condition, difficulty, and whether it on or off-street. The map should also include information on outfitters, support facilities, lodging (ranging from



Bike rentals at Wilderness Road State Park, VA

campgrounds to hotels to B&Bs), and great eats—both snacks and hearty meals. The map should be printed in a brochure form for easy use by cyclists as well as reproduced and posted along the trails.

The Kodak American Greenways Awards provides small grants to support local efforts to create and enhance greenways, including mapping and signs. See http://www.conservationfund.org/kodak_awards.

2. Produce Greenway signs – Indicate throughout the region where the Greenway trails are and post signs that inform users of the overall network, including the map.
3. Post trailside signs linking trail users to nearby services and attractions – Information signs are critical for trail users to know about opportunities to fix a tire, take a hike over the Saddle Gap, rest for the night, fill up a water bottle, or grab an ice cream cone. Signs should be informative and sized for trail riders, avoiding trailside billboards.
4. Organize a regional support group – The Cumberland Gap Hike and Bike Club appears to be an earlier attempt to organize trail users for both group events and trail care. However, based on the club’s Web site, the group seems to be inactive. This club could be the basis of a revival in organizing broader interest in bicycling and hiking in the area and supporting trail maintenance and increased trail use.
5. Work with each state tourism office – Contact each state’s tourism office about bicycle tourism in the state. Be sure Cumberland Gap’s resources are included.

X. Investigate opportunities for new lodging accommodations.

As visitation to the Cumberland Gap region increases, there may be a need for additional lodging accommodations and a greater variety of accommodations. An assessment of this need should be undertaken.

Specific Recommendations

1. As part of the previously discussed inventory, obtain a count of the total number of lodging facilities and rooms available in the region as well as price ranges.
2. Work with a consultant with expertise in lodging facility recruitment and development to determine the potential need for more lodging and the types of facilities that are needed.
3. Be sure that plans for new facilities are compatible with overall sustainability of the region and do not contribute to a commercialized appearance for the region.



Specific Site Recommendations

1. Wilderness Road State Park, Ewing, Lee County, Virginia

Located in Lee County, Virginia, this is one of the state's newest parks. The park tells the story of Martin's Station, established in 1775 by Captain Joseph Martin as a frontier fort for those passing through the Cumberland Gap. The state of Virginia purchased the property in 1993, and in 1999 Martin's Station was reconstructed. Although not located on the original site (which unfortunately is now the location of commercial development), the station, finished in 2001, was painstakingly reconstructed using authentic building practices from the era. (Note: The website indicates that the Martin's Station is a replica of a colonial frontier fort that was on this site in 1775. This contradicts information provided to the assessment team.)

The site is open from the second weekend in May through the last weekend in October. Situated in 320 acres, the park includes the fort, a LEED-certified interpretive center which shows an excellent introductory film and has a small museum, as well as picnic shelters and a 10-mile hiking, biking and horseback riding trail that connects the state park to Cumberland Gap National Historical Park.

A full annual calendar of events brings Martin's Station to life including re-enactments of the 1776 raid on the fort, a heritage festival and frontier Christmas event as well as special programs highlighting life on the frontier. The fort site, with six cabins and a stockade fence that provided a safe haven for settlers, also features authentic pioneer-era crops and historical livestock breeds.

The park is quickly becoming a popular attraction with 138,000 visitors in 2008 – double the previous year's visitation. The annual re-enactment, held each May, attracts 7,000-9,000 attendees.

Park managers have also been successful in reaching out to the surrounding region. An active Friends of Wilderness Park group supplies volunteers. A programmatic agreement with Cumberland Gap National Historical Park brings volunteers from the national park to assist with nature programs, provide help and referrals, and also ensures that these two important sites work together to coordinate activities.

Clearly this is a site that sets a standard for how to develop a historic park including historical research, reconstruction of the fort, building the visitor/interpretive center and developing museum exhibits, producing the introductory film and hosting numerous events and programs to engage visitors. The response of the public, with the tremendous increase in visitation, is a strong indicator of the site's potential to become a premier regional destination.

The Cumberland Gap Region tourism partners should make every effort to support plans for future development and programming of the site.

Specific Recommendations

1. A larger "Wilderness Road State Park" sign is needed at the park's entrance.
2. Create an audiotour - A challenge for Martin's Station is to make the site "come alive" during times when there is not an event happening at the site. Visitors who view the introductory film are caught

up in the historical events that Martin's Station witnessed. As visitors exit the theater and begin touring the site, the drama of the site's history could continue through an audiotour that includes period music, a narrator and voices from the past of characters who lived at the fort or passed through on their way through the Cumberland Gap. The audiotour could be placed on the Wilderness Road State Park's and the Cumberland Gap region's websites for visitors to download before they arrive for their tour. As funds permit, MP3 equipment could be purchased to make available to visitors at the site.

3. Clarify admission fees - The park's promotional brochure and website do not provide information about admission fees. It is assumed that admission is free, but this should be clearly stated on all promotional information.
4. Consider Frontier Culture Center expansion – Park ranger Billy Heck indicated an interest in expanding the site to include some type of Frontier Culture Center that would provide room for year-round activities and more interpretation of the time period. This idea is definitely worth pursuing because it would build on the success the site has already experienced and would help, in Mr. Heck's words, "perpetuate history through art."

However, there are already two sites not too far from the park that have a similar pioneer/frontier theme – the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia (www.frontiermuseum.org) and the Museum of Appalachia in Clinton, Tennessee (www.museumofappalachia.org). As consideration of this expansion progresses, it will be important to conduct a feasibility study to determine the potential for a new facility and to identify the points of difference that will make such a facility unique. One suggestion would be to broaden the concept to focus on the Revolutionary War era while encompassing the frontier story as there are no other facilities in the region that tell – or can tell – the Revolutionary War story as effectively as Wilderness Road State Park.

5. Consider hosting bicycle tours – Given the proximity to the area's Greenway network of paved bike-hike trails and the bike rental facility on site, offer bicycle tour options allowing visitors to explore Wilderness Road Park as well as connect to Cumberland Gap and other area attractions. Post a map of bicycle facilities and support facilities and offer snacks and limited supplies on site to facilitate more bicycling visitors.

2. Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, Harrogate, Claiborne County, Tennessee

The story of how this library and museum came to be located on the campus of Lincoln Memorial University is as remarkable as the collection it houses. In 1863 Lincoln told one of his Union army generals, Oliver Otis Howard, that when the Civil War ended he hoped that the general would establish a university in gratitude for East Tennessee's support of the Union. In 1888, Reverend A.A. Myers opened Harrow School to provide an education to the area's children. General Howard soon arrived to give lectures at the school and remembered his commitment to Lincoln. An organizational effort in the coming years succeeded, and Lincoln University opened in 1897. Today, over 3,000 students attend the university. Shortly after opening, the university began receiving gifts of artifacts

related to the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln. The collection eventually grew to 30,000 artifacts, and in 1977 a building was constructed for the museum and library.

Today, the museum is open year-round and charges a modest admission fee. Approximately 15,000 visitors are hosted annually.

The remarkable collection ranges from the cane that Lincoln carried to Ford's Theater on the night he was assassinated to 2,000 pieces of original mid-19th century sheet music that Lincoln might have listened to or that memorialized the president. There is also a gallery that features changing exhibits. In addition to tours of the museum, programs are regularly offered including lectures and re-enactments.

Currently, museum managers are beginning implementation of a one-to-two year plan to redesign the museum using a six primary themes: 1) Myth of Lincoln, 2) Frontiersman, 3) Lawyer and politician, 4) President and Civil War, 5) Death and 6) The Legacy. Plans also call for obtaining the American Association of Museum's prestigious accreditation (a designation achieved by only 776 museums nationwide as of 2009).

The Lincoln Museum is the type of attraction that surprises and delights visitors when they discover it. With the implementation of the redesign plans, the site has the potential to become a "must-see" stop for visitors to the region.



Abraham Lincoln Museum, Harrogate, TN

Specific Recommendations

1. As part of the redesign plan, consider creating an introductory film that tells the story of how the museum and university were established as well as introducing the themes of Lincoln's life that visitors will explore in the museum. There will need to be a separate room to show the film. If space is not currently available that can be adapted for this use, consider constructing a small addition to the current facility.

2. According to the museum's website, the 2000+ collection of sheet music published between 1826 and 1940 includes pieces representing many musical genres. This collection has the potential to be a useful tool in generating visibility of the museum and attracting visitors:

- 1) Consideration should be given to reproducing selected pieces of music and releasing these pieces periodically for

sale. This can generate revenue for the museum and also create visibility through media coverage about each piece that is issued.

- 2) Partner with a local orchestra (perhaps at a university) for presentations of selected pieces of music. Performances could be held on the lawn of the museum or at venues throughout the three-county region. Ticket purchases could also include admission to the museum.
3. Create a café area to offer food service. This could begin by creating a café area outside during warm weather and offering sandwiches, snacks and drinks. As funds permit, an enclosed area could be constructed to offer food year-round. A café will generate revenue for the museum and encourage travelers passing by to stop for a meal – and hopefully to decide to tour the museum.

3. Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

As the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park celebrates its 50th anniversary (July 4, 2009), park officials are completing a new management plan to guide the park's future. The Cumberland Gap National Historical Park provides a first-rate visitor experience. The park's 30,000 acres include 70 miles of trails and 16,000 acres of wilderness area. The park attracts one million visitors yearly, many seeking out the outdoor recreation afforded by the park's beautiful terrain. Hikers can pick from moderate hikes over the Saddle Gap or seek a backcountry adventure. Caves, the remote Hensley settlement and stargazing invite additional exploration.

The park hosts 8,000 overnight stays at the 160 sites at Wilderness Road Campground and another 1,000 backcountry overnight stays. The park also provides accessible trails as well as accessible entertainment at the Wilderness Road amphitheater built by park staff. The Pinnacle Overlook rewards visitors with breathtaking views of the Gap, Fern Lake, and the surrounding three states.

At the visitors' center--the film, the interpretive museum and special events, the on-site Cumberland Crafts store and bookstore—all provide a great introduction to the area's history, culture, and natural resources.

The park also hosts special events such as a Frontier Festival, Civil War Days, and Nature festival.

The Park's stories are interwoven with those at Wilderness Road State Park and the area's towns, highlighting the geologic history as well as the history of the gap that underscore that "this is a special place." Cumberland Gap's story starts with bison passing through the gap, followed by Native Americans, including Shawnee and other tribes, then pioneers seeking passage over the mountains and toward the frontier of Kentucky. It also includes the military skirmishes of the Revolutionary and Civil wars and their effect on the region.

Even the parking lots tell a story! The Daniel Boone parking lot provides a stepping off point to experience the trek over the Saddle Gap by immersing the visitor in the living feel of history.

Visitors walk through a small covered bridge, surrounded by the sounds, images, and prints of animals and people—bison, settlers, native Americans, soldiers. The mixed media provide a powerful example of translating the story of a place through art and experience.



Cumberland Gap National Historical Park Visitors Center

The Cumberland Gap National Historical Park management plan update is scheduled for release for public comment in November 2009, providing ideal timing

for coordination with tourism recommendations in this report. Expanding the park's regional partnership role, adding new features and services and enhancing management and interpretation offers the opportunity to contribute to economic growth through tourism by serving as the gateway to the region. The park celebrates the historic role of natural features in the country's development. While securing land to protect the region, the park was also made available for public enjoyment and for interpretation of important historic stories. An expanded mission for the park is vital to the success of compatible growth through tourism.

Specific Recommendations

1. Continue leadership of area's partnership. The park unites the stories and efforts of the region's sustainable tourism. Park staff and leadership are respected for the guidance and resources they provide to local coordination and cross promotion efforts.
2. Work with area leaders to promote additional bicycle visitation of the Gap.

4, Cumberland Crafts

Cumberland Crafts is located in the visitor center at Cumberland Gap National Historical Park which is open daily—the “best job in Bell County” according to the store manager. The shop is part of the Southern Highland Craft Guild which also has two shops in Asheville, N.C. and shops in Blowing Rock, N.C. and Gatlinburg. The shop sells beautiful objects ranging from jewelry to pottery to decorative pieces. All artisans are selected through a five-step juried process. Merchandise ranges in price from \$10 to more than \$500, offering a range for varying shopper budgets.

In addition to selling merchandise, the mission of Cumberland Crafts is to educate visitors and residents about the region's traditions in arts and crafts. A series of workshops is offered on doll making, knitting and other traditional arts and crafts. Artisans present demonstrations of their work throughout the year.

The crafts store is a model for what all parks should offer. The quality of the goods results in frequent purchases by park visitors as well as by residents.

Specific recommendations:

Increasing visibility for this beautiful shop should be a goal of the Cumberland Gap region tourism partners.

- 1) Currently, the shop is mentioned on the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park website under "indoor activities." The site simply says that the shop showcases handmade crafts from the region. To raise visibility, a separate heading should be added for Cumberland Crafts with additional information about the types of arts and crafts pieces that are sold and profiles of some of the artisans. The schedule of demonstrations and workshops should also be posted.
- 2) As the Cumberland Gap region website is developed, Cumberland Crafts should also be included as a key attraction.
- 3) A sign should be placed in front of the Visitors Center letting travelers know that the shop is located inside.
- 4) Show videos of artists. The craftspeople have incredible stories related to the heritage of the Cumberland Gap.

5. Middlesboro, Bell County, Kentucky

Middlesboro is the largest town in the three-county region and has a fascinating history including the fact that it is the only town built in a meteor crater. The town was incorporated as a planned community in



Cumberland Crafts at Cumberland Gap National Historical Park-

1890 to house workers in manufacturing and coal industries which did not flourish although the town remained and grew.

Today, Middlesboro provides services for visitors including lodging and restaurants. The town has 275 hotel rooms which maintain a 70-75% occupancy, primarily through business travelers. A new motel is under construction with 60 rooms. The Bell County Office of Tourism has one full-time executive director and one part-time staff person. The office is located in the historic Arthur Museum building downtown. The tourism office also hires seasonal staff for the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park Visitor Center information desk.

Countywide, the Bell County Chamber of Commerce and the judge executive's office received a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to host a public visioning meeting in December of 2008. Some 125 residents attended and brainstormed in focus groups on topics including downtown revitalization, small business development and tourism. Ideas that emerged from this session are currently being reviewed and evaluated.

A particular area of focus for county leaders is adventure tourism, including hiking, biking, horseback riding and ATVs. Adventure tourism is also a focus of the governor of Kentucky.

Local leaders have recently formed Discover Downtown Middlesboro, an organization that focuses on downtown revitalization. A program manager has been hired and application is being made for designation as an official Main Street community which will bring technical assistance from the State of Kentucky. The program is following the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Main Street 4-Point Approach" of design, promotion, organization and economic restructuring. Recent activities include an assessment of



Bell County Office of Tourism & Visitor Center, Middlesboro, KY

downtown buildings, a farmer's market and installment of four fountains on the corners of downtown's main intersection and lightpost banners and planters lining the main street.

The Bell County Historical Museum is located in the downtown area and is housed in a 1910 Carnegie Library building. The museum is managed by a small group of dedicated volunteers and

includes displays on various aspects of the city and county's history. The museum is open three days a week and other times by appointment. Admission is free.



Middlesboro Main Street, KY

Challenges include lack of a planning commission or city planner. Additionally, although building owners are interested in restoring their buildings, there are no design guidelines and little support for historic zoning.

Specific Recommendations:

I. Discover Downtown Middlesboro should be strongly supported by local leaders. Successful

revitalization of Middlesboro can provide a real “small town” experience for visitors.

Priority steps include:

- 1) Encourage building owners to rehabilitate their buildings using appropriate restoration techniques. Invite a staff person from the Kentucky Heritage Council (the state historic preservation office - <http://heritage.ky.gov/>) to make a presentation on the benefits of appropriate restoration – explaining tax credits but also highlighting the overall economic benefits to communities that revitalize their historic downtowns.
- 2) Identify case studies of successful revitalization in similar-sized downtowns and invite business owners to make presentations to building and business owners. A peer-to-peer discussion is likely to have tremendous impact with local business persons in understanding the economic benefits of appropriate restoration.
- 3) Develop a downtown walking trail. The trail can include interpretive signs with historic photographs and text to lead visitors through the downtown.
- 4) Return Cumberland Avenue, the main road through downtown, to a pedestrian friendly road. Trees used to arch over the street, providing needed shade and beauty. Unfortunately, “improvements” over the years have converted the road to an uninviting expanse of concrete that encourages travelers to stay in their cars and keep driving. We recommend retaining the services of a pedestrian-focused transportation expert to help devise plans to convert Cumberland Avenue into a visually pleasing, pedestrian (and car) friendly boulevard. (Contact Dan Burden, www.walkable.org. Another resource is www.ContextSensitiveSolutions.org).

Simultaneously create a more bicycle-friendly environment, adding bike racks in town and providing signs indicating links to the Greenway.

- 5) Use murals to help tell the town's story. Embedded in the town are numerous historic themes that are not readily transparent: how the meteor shaped the town's topography, the coal mining history, the Civil War, the era of vacationers, the P-38 plane once housed in Middlesboro, the Ragtime past. All these themes, and more, can be depicted in murals that offer sites along a walking trail and attractions in their own right.

Since painting its first mural in the early 1990s, Silverton, Oregon has added more than a dozen murals throughout the town, showcasing famous residents, past industries, community events, and intriguing historic twists. The town has its own nonprofit Silverton Mural Society and has mapped the murals (with sponsorship of local businesses) to help visitors explore the artwork and introduce them to the town's shopping and food. See the Silverton Mural Society Web site to link to the map at <http://silvertonor.com/murals/>.

2. The Bell County Historical Museum has a large collection of artifacts, photographs and documents. The museum's volunteers are also tremendous resources because of their knowledge of the history of Bell County and its communities. To help visitors better understand the history of the area, exhibits should be organized and presented to follow a thematic storyline. Grants are available from the National Endowment for the Humanities (www.neh.gov) for planning, research, storyline development and exhibit construction.
3. The Arthur Museum, which houses the Bell County Tourism Office, was built in 1890 for the offices of Alexander Arthur's American Association. Currently there are several display cases with memorabilia related to Arthur as well as the original diorama map showing the area's geographic boundaries. The large reception room is ideal for displaying exhibit panels that tell the story of the city's founding in pictures and text. Four or five stand-up panels can be created and placed in the center of the room. The panels can be constructed on movable stands so that they can easily be removed and stored if the room is needed for events. Exhibit labels should also be written for the objects on display in cases around the room. In its capacity as a visitor information center, the site should also be open on the weekend.



Bell County Historical Museum, Middlesboro, KY

4. Town of Cumberland Gap, Claiborne County, Tennessee

Tiny Cumberland Gap (pop. 235) has been transformed since the completion of the tunnel in 1996. Where once thousands of cars and trucks rumbled down the main street, the town has returned to a peaceful oasis surrounded by the park. Given its scale, businesses and links to the park and surrounding towns and attractions in the tri-state, the town provides a charming gateway to the park and the region. The town has long hosted visitors, ranging from those visiting the Pinnacle Overlook to couples seeking a peaceful country place to marry at the Wedding Chapel.

Colwyn Street runs along the historic route of the Wilderness Trail. From there, downtown visitors can walk to trailheads for the Iron Furnace, Gap Cave, the Saddle Gap, and bike to Middlesboro, Harrogate, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park and Wilderness Road State Park. A visitor can also explore the downtown historic district, with numerous intact historic buildings, including the post office and several shops. A few houses have recently been restored and some, too degraded, have been lost. An empty square in the center of town, between Colwyn and Pennlyn streets, includes the foundations from pre-war homes. The “Little Tunnel Greenway” uses an 1890s railroad bed as a bike-hike trail connected the town with the park, Harrogate, and Middlesboro.

The town changed hands several times during the Civil War and was eventually won by the Union during the battle for the Gap from September 7-9, 1863, an event reenacted annually.

A few local business owners are deeply vested in the town’s modest commercial success. Webb’s Restaurant provides food and live music. Sue Webb also runs the town’s 3,200-square foot convention center, available for meetings and special events, and the 30-room town inn. She also plans a “band barn” to offers larger live music performances. The Old Mill Bed and Breakfast inn provides another seven guest rooms.

Wilderness Road Outfitters, run by Joe Brown, provides outdoor gear for sale and rental as well as sponsors local bicycle and running races.

A bright-green brochure evokes a raffle ticket to market the town’s businesses, trails (hiking and biking), and attractions in a very low-cost and informative way.



Town of Cumberland Gap, TN

Specific Recommendations

1. Cumberland Gap should tell its story throughout the town. Since the town is now off the main road, it is quietly tucked away, waiting for discovery.
 - 1) Inventory the town's assets. As stated previously, the town needs to know what exists, in order to promote it.
 - 2) Post a directional sign to "Historic Town of Cumberland Gap" alongside Daniel Boone parking lot. Visitors may not realize that the town is there.
 - 3) Create an audiotour – Just as the Daniel Boone trailhead surrounds visitors with the sounds of the Wilderness Road, the town can help visitors experience the rich history of the town. Be sure to include information on the creation of the tunnel and its effect on the town.
 - 4) Post plaques that tell the history of the Civil War battle. For those visitors unable to attend the once yearly reenactment, provide a way to learn about what happened during the Civil War. Since the battle ran through the streets of the town, informational plaques can describe the skirmishes that happened on the streets—and why. The borough of Gettysburg recently took a similar action which resulted in more visitors in town, visiting shops and restaurants as they walked in the soldier's footsteps.
 - 5) Tell the story of the tunnel – The tunnel's creation has had a striking effect on the area—restoration of the Wilderness Road pass through the mountain, improved connections between the area's towns, and a much quieter downtown in the town Cumberland Gap.
2. Determine uses for empty lots at Colwyn and Penn. Preserve the historic foundations but consider a new use for these prime lots in the center of the town. This could be the site of a town square or restoration of homes or businesses.
3. Encourage building owners to rehabilitate their buildings using appropriate restoration techniques. Invite a staff person from the Tennessee Preservation Trust (the state's nonprofit historic preservation organization - <http://www.tennesseepreservationtrust.org/>) to make a presentation on the benefits of appropriate restoration – explaining tax credits but also highlighting the overall economic benefits to communities that revitalize their historic downtowns. Consider combining this effort with Middlesboro's outreach to the Kentucky Historic Preservation office. The town should act to prevent further loss of historic structures. New development should complement existing historic structures. This means that signs, parking lots and structures should echo traditional patterns.
4. Determine a marketing strategy for the town. The town is poised to offer vehicle-free natural and heritage tourism for the area. Visitors could leave their cars and stay multiple days in the town. Likewise, promote the town as a destination for bicyclists or hikers from Wilderness Road State Park or the Wilderness Road campground.
5. Work with Middlesboro and Harrogate. Coordinate plans with the nearby cities and park

6. Pine Mountain State Resort Park, Pineville, Bell County, Kentucky

Pine Mountain, overlooking the Kentucky Ridge State Forest, became Kentucky's first state park in 1924 and attracted a half-million visitors in 2008. The Pine Mountain ridge is one of the last great contiguous stretches of unfragmented forest in Kentucky and is a haven for a wide variety of native plants and animals.

The park provides lodging for the area, with 30 rooms at the Herndon J. Evans lodge and 20 cabins. The Mountain View Lodge has modestly priced country dining fare at a restaurant that delights up to 125 diners with spectacular mountain scenery. The park also offers a golf course and a swimming pool. Fifteen miles of self-guided trails draw hikers to Chained Rock, the Hemlock Garden and other trails with names like Honeymoon Falls, Rock Hotel and Living Stairway. The new Pine Mountain Trail will pass near the park, connecting Pine Mountain State Resort Park with the Breaks Interstate Park to the northeast and Cumberland Gap National Historical Park to the south when completed.

Visitors also come for the bird and wildlife watching and events such as the annual Mountain Laurel Festival.

Specific Recommendations

The assessment team did not visit the park's resources so recommendations are limited.

1. Include Pine Mountain in planning and promotion of the region. The state park provides much needed lodging in a more natural setting, offering an alternative to the chain hotels. It also provides an extension of the Cumberland Gap's natural resources.
2. Prioritize the completion of the Pine Mountain Trail as a tremendous regional connector.

7. Norris Lake and Claiborne County, Tennessee

Claiborne County is home to the region's third largest attraction, Norris Lake, as well as golfing and additional water-based recreation on the Powell River. While the Powell River offers canoeing and kayaking, the Norris Lake attracts thousands of visitors, interested in boating, fishing and other forms of lakeside recreation along the 800-mile of shoreline as well as lake home rentals and a second home market. Seventy miles of trails cross the 24,400-acre Chuck Swan Wildlife Management Area offering opportunities for camping, hunting, mountain biking, hiking, as well as off-road riding. In addition, Big Ridge State Park provides swimming and tennis.

Specific Recommendations

The assessment team had limited exposure to sustainable tourism opportunities around Norris Lake and the surrounding region. New real estate developments threaten to alter the area's scenic beauty while the proliferation of houseboats mars the beauty on the lakes. The Norris Lake region provides another tourism experience, but one outside of the sustainable tourism purview of this assessment. Cumberland Gap's promoters may provide information on the Gap to the Norris Lake visitor seeking alternatives to the lake recreation. Some of the area's more sustainable nature-based attractions, such as opportunities for flat-water paddle sports, might be included in the Cumberland Gap promotions.



Pine Mountain State Resort Park, KY

Summary

In summary, the consultant team was overwhelmed with the richness of the cultural, heritage and natural resources in the Cumberland Gap region and impressed with the strength of the partnerships that have been formed for sustainable tourism development.

It is hoped that the recommendations and resources provided in this report will provide the foundation for the Cumberland Gap region's partners to develop a plan that addresses the sustainable development, the tourism product, visitor services and marketing. With careful planning and methodical implementation, the Cumberland Gap region is poised to become a popular sustainable tourism destination in the coming years.

Assessment Visit Itinerary**April 20, 2009**

- 11:00 A.M. Kendra arrives at Knoxville Airport and is met by Carolyn and they are joined by NPS Supt. Mark Woods, for the trip to Harrogate. Chris Phillips, NPS, will be Van Host for visit.
- 11:15 A.M. Group drives up Interstate 75 from Knoxville to Caryville, TN, exiting at TN Rt. 63, through Lafollette to Harrogate - Lunch in route, possibly at Cove Lake State Park, if time allows.
- 2:30 P.M. Arrive Harrogate, and check in at Guest quarters on LMU Campus. Cindy and Max will be there..
- 3:00 P.M. Report to Lincoln Museum on Campus for power point presentation and meet rest of team available for this portion of tour. (Sue Rosenbalm, Gary Joe Burchett, Jerry Hopson, Bob Vaughn) Max in charge
- 3:45 P.M. Depart Campus for Lee County, VA, and tour of perimeter of N.H.P. Properties in Virginia and scenic views.(Mark Woods, Sue Rosenbalm, Jerry Hopson) Mark in charge. Cindy and Max have prior commitments.
- 5:00 P.M. Arrive Ewing, VA, and Wilderness Road State Park for brief meeting.
- 6:30 PM Dinner at Pelanchos Restaurant, Middlesboro.
- 7:45 P.M. Depart for return to LMU Campus. End of day.

April 21, 2009

- Team Breakfast in quarters
- 8:45 A.M. Depart Campus for N.H.P. Headquarters and Visitor Center for meeting and tour of National Park facilities in Middlesboro, KY, area. Discuss Park Master plan, etc. (Cindy, Max, Mark, Bob, Jerry, Judy Barton) Mark in charge.
- 11:30 AM Drive to Pine Mountain State Resort Park for Lunch in Sasafra Room
- 1:00 P.M. Leave for tour of certain sites in Claiborne County: LMU Campus, Haymakers Farm Complex, Town of Harrogate/Powell River/ Town of Cumberland Gap/ Tiprell. (Cindy, Judy, Mark, Max, Jerry, Bob, met by Gary Joe) Jerry/Gary Joe in charge.
- 5:30 P.M. Dinner at Webb's Restaurant in Cumberland Gap. Will be joined by John Douglass, Mayor of Cumberland Gap, Sue Webb, Restaurant Owner/local Developer, Local Outfitter, and possibly 1 or 2 others.

7:00 P.M. Return in van to the Covenant United Methodist Church in Middlesboro, for a 7:30 performance by the LMU Concert Band and Jazz Ensemble, directed by Dr. Sean Green., followed by a visit to Shades of Brown Café for Coffee and Desert, if time permits.

April 22, 2009

Team Breakfast in quarters

8:00 A.M. Van picks up Team for return to Middlesboro, meeting at the Alexander Arthur Building and the Tourism Office of Judy Barton, for a briefing and tour of Middlesboro, and Bell County sites.(Judy and committee members) Bob Vaughn in charge.

11:00 A.M. Lunch meeting and wrap up at Haymakers Restaurant in Harrogate. Discussion of possible National Scenic Byways element. Definition of next steps and additional information needed, along with process for securing final report..

1:30 P.M. Depart for Knoxville Airport, on US 25E and SR 33, across Norris Lake, into North Knoxville.