

Attraction Survey

The Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism retained Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. (RTM) to conduct an attraction manager survey with the Currituck County attractions as part of a strategic planning process for 2007. This report documents the questions asked of participants and the responses and findings.

Study Methodology

RTM conducted an attraction survey as part of this overall study. The survey instrument was sent to eight (8) attractions in Currituck County. Five (5) attractions elected to participate in this survey. The survey was conducted during the months of July 2007 and September 2007

This survey instrument (questionnaire) contained five (5) questions and was written by RTM and approved by the Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism. The results and data obtained from the completed surveys has been tabulated and documented and are part of this overall report.

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Year Attraction Opened to the Public

It is important to understand the age of local attractions and their relevance to the current traveling public. Product life cycle issues are important to monitor.

1. Year attraction opened to the public:

Attraction	Year
Currituck Banks National Estuarine Research Reserve	Unknown
Currituck Outer Banks Historic Jail and Courthouse	Unknown
The Whalehead Club	1999
Corolla WildHorse Museum	2006
Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education	2006

2. Attractions Annual Attendance:

RTM requested attendance figures from Currituck County attractions. Of the five (5) attractions that reported two (2) attractions did not retain attendance records; two (2) opened in 2006; and one provided attendance for the past five (5) years. For the two reporting for the years 2005 and 2006, visitation had remained relatively the same. It will be important to monitor the attendance to these attractions from year to year to determine visitor behavior patterns.

Attraction	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Corolla WildHorse Museum	na	na	na	na	10,000*
Currituck Banks National Estuarine Research Reserve	~	~	~	~	~
Currituck Outer Banks Historic Jail and Courthouse	~	~	~	100	100
Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education	na	na	na	na	102,802
The Whalehead Club	25,000	20,000	16,000	15,000	16,000

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3. Overall Visitor/Guest Mix Attractions

RTM asked the managers at local attractions to make their best estimate of the percentage that each of the following ten (10) market segments had for their total 2006 visitation. Four (4) local attractions provided responses as follows.

2006 ATTRACTION SURVEY					
	Corolla Wildhorse Museum	Currituck Banks National Estuarine Research Reserve	Currituck Outer Banks Historic Jail and Courthouse	Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education	The Whalehead Club
Individual Visitors (regular daily admissions)					
Local residents	10%	~	20%	15%	7%
Out-of-town visitors	90%	~	80%	85%	93%
	100%	~	100%	100%	100%
Groups:					
College/university/education groups	~	~	100%	80%	25%
Sports (tournaments, groups)	~	~	~	~	~
Group Tour/motorcoach	~	~	~	~	25%
Weddings/reunions/family events	~	~	~	~	25%
Social Clubs (Garden, Book, etc)	2%	~	~	10%	10%
Religious/Church Association	~	~	~	~	15%
Other(specify): visitors	98%	~	~	~	~
Total	100%	~	100%	100%	100%

One would expect out-of-town visitors to make up the substantial majority of visitors to Currituck County attractions. The makeup of visitor groups helps CCDTT to monitor which attractions are most appreciated by typical leisure visitors versus school/educational groups, and social clubs. Monitoring this visitor breakout from year to year will help CCDTT clearly understand its attraction visitation patterns.

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4. Visitation Patterns

RTM asked the attractions to report their slowest months, their busiest months and to provide a rank ordering of the four seasons in terms of visitation and attendance in order to gain an understanding of the busy and slow times of year.

a. Busiest and Slowest Months

The Currituck County attractions were asked to report their busiest and slowest months. Four (4) attractions responded to this question. Here we see July as the busiest month for two (2) attractions. April (1) and September (1) were reported as the next busiest periods. The slowest months reported included February and December.

Month	Busiest	Slowest
January	~	~
February	~	1
March	~	~
April	1	~
May	~	~
June	~	~
July	2	~
August	~	~
September	1	~
October	~	~
November	~	~
December	~	1

4.b. Typical length of time spent at attraction

RTM asked attractions to estimate the amount of time a typical visitor would spend at their attraction. Three (3) attractions reported time spent between one (1) to two (2) hours. Two (2) attractions did not report.

4.c. Top Feeder Markets

Two (2) of the attractions reported what they consider to be their top four ranked markets where out of town visitors originate. This is information that every attraction should track closely and it can be tracked easily with a simple map on the wall with push pins whereby visitors can mark where they live. Virginia communities clearly ranked first followed by Maryland and North Carolina. The top reported cities in Virginia were: Richmond, Hampton Roads and Williamsburg. These feeder markets match those reported in the lodging and visitor mail surveys.

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5. Attraction Admission Fees

Four (4) of the five (5) attractions that responded to this question do not require an admission fee from visitors, while one (1) attraction admission fees ranged from free to \$7.00.

6. Staff/Budget/ Facility

RTM asked the attractions in Currituck County to report the size of their staff and the amount of money they allocate annually to purchased advertising. Five (5) of the respondents reported as follow:

- Five attractions reported to RTM. Four of the five attractions that reported had full time staff positions. One had no fulltime staff. Of those, one respondent had nine fulltime staff positions; the second had seven; the third reported two fulltime staff positions and the final respondent reported one fulltime position.
- Four (4) attractions reported volunteer staff ranging from none to twelve (12).
- Purchased advertising: Attractions reported limited advertising budgets ranging from none (two attractions) to \$1,000 (one attraction); \$10,000 (one attraction) and a high of \$19,000 (only one attraction). Therefore, it is clear that Currituck County attractions rely heavily on promotion from the CCDTT.

The data on this page reveals that Currituck County attractions have very limited resources to market themselves. Therefore the Currituck County Department of Travel and Tourism must provide aggressive leadership to the attractions to keep these organizations focused on driving visitation at attractions from out of town visitors. The attractions must pool resources and understand that this is a clear case where a rising tide lifts all ships and there is no substitute for partnership with such limited resources.

It is also clear that it is important for the CCDTT to monitor the attendance patterns for these attractions every year. Documenting and tracking the changes in visitation over the years will help these attractions as well as the CCDTT to understand visitor preferences and behaviors.