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## **1. TRAVEL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT UNDERWAY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

The Division is leading a delegation of 16 leaders from North Carolina's travel industry who are in Washington, D.C. with hundreds of travel colleagues from across the country today (Wednesday) and Thursday, meeting with members of Congress to stress the recovery role that travel can play in the nation's economy. The meetings are a part of the U.S. Travel Association's annual [Travel Leadership Summit](#), which also includes updates on industry priorities and presentations by NBC News political director Chuck Todd and Four Seasons Hotel president and COO Katie Taylor.

The North Carolina delegation includes John Beatty, Grove Park Inn; Fannie Brown, Franklin County TDA ; Mike Butts, VisitCharlotte; Haddon Clark, United Energy Inc.; Patty Griffin, Chapel Hill/Orange County VB; Bryan Gupton, N.C. Division of Tourism,

Film & Sports Development; Gary Harris, N.C. Petroleum Marketers Assn.; Douglas Howey, N.C. Petroleum Marketers Assn.; Dave Horne, SmithAnderson; Kim Hufham, Cape Fear Coast CVB; Mamie Jones, Franklin County TDA; Penny Leary-Smith, Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center; Carol Lohr, Crystal Coast TA; Assistant Secretary Lynn Minges, N.C. Department of Commerce; Doyle Parrish, Summit Hospitality Group, Ltd.; Betsy Rosemann, Goldsboro CVB; Thomas Ruff, The Biltmore Company; and Steve Thanhauser, The Angus Barn and Travel & Tourism Board Chairman.

The summit will focus on House passage of the Travel Promotion Act that would establish a non-profit corporation to communicate United States entry policies and promote tourist, business, and scholarly travel to the United States; the bill passed the Senate earlier this month. Other topics will include the importance of the meetings industry, strengthening public-private coordination in response to an H1N1 flu pandemic, enhancing the environment through sustainable travel, and preserving and expanding the visa waiver program.

## **2. \$3,000 PARTNER PROGRAM PRIZE TO BE AWARDED AT MID-YEAR MARKETING UPDATE**

Participants at the Division's Mid-Year Marketing Update next Tuesday, Sept. 22, will have an opportunity to win a \$3,000 partner program credit that can be used to offset costs in a variety of Division initiatives including media missions, co-op advertising, VisitNC.com and more. The credit for 2009-2010 will be awarded at the conclusion of the afternoon's program to one registered participant present from North Carolina's travel industry.

This year's program at the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh features remarks from N.C. Cultural Resources Secretary Linda Carlisle and N.C. Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco. Dr. Mike Walden, economist and William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor at N.C. State University, will discuss "What's Ahead for the U.S. Economy." Dr. Walden will provide his perspective on current economic issues and how they may influence North Carolina's travel and hospitality sector in the coming year.

Lynn Minges will offer an update on Division programs, followed by the Partner Program Forum highlighting successes and upcoming opportunities while also seeking industry input to fuel strategic planning for 2010-2011.

Tomorrow (Thursday) is the last day to [register online](#); however, attendees will be able to register onsite. For the complete agenda and registration information, [click here](#).

## **3. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ASSIGNMENTS ANNOUNCED**

As the result of a legislative mandate to reduce human and financial resources in the Tourism Development Program, the program has been reorganized into three regions. The mission of the program is to support sustainable efforts to protect, preserve and promote the state's natural, historic and cultural resources. Development Officers serve as liaisons with local communities to develop tourism across the state. Each region is assigned one development officer, all of whom are managed by a director in the

Division office. Also as the result of the legislative mandate, one additional officer is assigned to the Blue Ridge Parkway's 75th Anniversary commemoration.

Kaye Myers is assigned to the Mountain region, with responsibility for the following counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Buncombe, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Iredell, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey. Kaye can be reached at (828) 687-7234, ext. 114 or via [kmyers@nccommerce.com](mailto:kmyers@nccommerce.com).

Frankie McWhorter is assigned to the Piedmont region, with responsibility for the following counties: Alamance, Anson, Cabarrus, Caswell, Chatham, Cleveland, Cumberland, Davidson, Davie, Durham, Edgecombe, Forsyth, Franklin, Gaston, Granville, Guilford, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Lee, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Moore, Nash, Orange, Person, Polk, Randolph, Richmond, Robeson, Rockingham, Rowan, Rutherford, Sampson, Scotland, Stanly, Stokes, Union, Vance, and Wake. Frankie can be reached at (828) 245-1494 or via [fmcwhorter@nccommerce.com](mailto:fmcwhorter@nccommerce.com).

Julie Thomas is assigned to the Coastal region, with responsibility for the following counties: Bertie, Beaufort, Bladen, Brunswick, Camden, Carteret, Chowan, Columbus, Craven, Currituck, Dare, Duplin, Gates, Greene, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Jones, Lenoir, Martin, New Hanover, Northampton, Onslow, Pasquotank, Pamlico, Pender, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrrell, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Wilson. Julie can be reached at (252) 794-3140 or via [jthomas@nccommerce.com](mailto:jthomas@nccommerce.com).

Leesa Brandon is assigned to the Blue Ridge Parkway's 75th Anniversary commemoration. Leesa can be reached at (828) 271-4779, ext. 224 or via [lbrandon@nccommerce.com](mailto:lbrandon@nccommerce.com).

In addition to management and other duties, the Division's Tourism Development Director, Russ Haddad, will assist the development officers directly with Carteret, Chatham, Dare, Durham, Edgecombe, Franklin, Greene, Granville, Harnett, Johnston, Mecklenburg, Nash, New Hanover, Orange, Rowan, Sampson, Vance, Wake, Wayne and Wilson counties. Russ can be reached at (919) 733-7502 or via [rhaddad@nccommerce.com](mailto:rhaddad@nccommerce.com).

#### **4. STUDY LINKS BUSINESS TRAVEL AND BUSINESS GROWTH**

For every dollar invested in business travel, businesses experience an average \$12.50 in increased revenue and \$3.80 in new profits, according a recent study by global research firm Oxford Economics. The study establishes the first clear link between business travel and business growth as American businesses are planning their 2010 budgets and federal policymakers are looking to stimulate the American economy.

"This study shows that not all spending cuts are smart cuts," said Adam Sacks, managing director of Oxford Economics. "When companies reduce their travel budgets, there are negative consequences that we can now quantify, in terms of lost revenue and profit growth, and in terms of giving competitors a distinct advantage."

This is the first time that the return on investment of business travel has been successfully measured. The study found that curbing business travel can have a strong negative impact on corporate profits. The average business in the U.S. would forfeit 17 percent of its profits in the first year of eliminating business travel, and it would take more than three years for profits to recover.

“Business travel is economic stimulus,” said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, which commissioned the study. “In order to grow, businesses have to invest. This research shows that face-to-face meetings and incentive awards to top performers are among the smartest investments companies can make.”

“In tough economic times, many business executives have an understandable short-run focus on managing costs. The report points out the less visible – but significant – long-term benefits resulting from business travel, such as partnership building and new business opportunities,” said Dr. Martin A. Asher, adjunct professor of finance at the Wharton School. “Increased business travel in this economy can actually increase sales and reduce the financial decline companies might otherwise suffer.”

Business travel in the U.S. is responsible for \$246 billion in spending and 2.3 million American jobs; \$100 billion of this spending and 1 million American jobs are linked directly to meetings and events. In the first six months of 2009, business travel spending is down by 12.5 percent and business travel volume is down more than 6 percent. A 10 percent increase in business travel spending would increase multi-factor productivity, leading to a U.S. GDP increase between 1.5 percent and 2.8 percent.

Both executives and business travelers estimate that 28 percent of current business would be lost without in-person meetings. Roughly 40 percent of prospective customers are converted to new customers with an in-person meeting, compared to 16 percent without such a meeting. Executives cited customer meetings as having the greatest returns, approximately \$15-\$19.99 per dollar invested, with conference and trade show participation returns ranging from \$4-\$5.99 per dollar invested.

For copy of the full study and additional resources, visit [www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/value-meetings](http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/value-meetings).

## **5. TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT CLEARS U.S. SENATE**

The U.S. Senate passed the Travel Promotion Act last Wednesday afternoon with a 79-19 vote. The bill, which would establish a non-profit corporation to promote U.S. tourism and help explain U.S. security and entry policies at no cost to American taxpayers, now heads to the U.S. House of Representatives ([H.R. 2935](#)), where it is also expected to pass.

North Carolina’s senators were divided on the bill. Sen. Kay Hagan voted for the bill; Sen. Richard Burr voted against it.

Oxford Economics estimates that a well-executed promotion program would attract 1.6 million new international visitors to the United States and would generate \$4 billion in new economic stimulus and \$321 million in new federal tax revenue each year. The U.S. Travel Association estimates that this program would create nearly 40,000 new American jobs in the first year. The Congressional Budget Office reports estimates that the Travel Promotion Act will reduce the federal budget deficit by \$425 million over ten years.

Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, said, "The United States Senate today took a giant step toward regaining America's position as the premier travel destination and strengthening our struggling economy. Nearly every company, city, state and developed nation understands the power of promotion."

The Travel Promotion Act would be funded through a matching program featuring up to \$100 million in private sector contributions and a \$10 fee on foreign travelers from visa waiver countries, who do not pay \$131 for a visa to enter the United States.

## **6. INTERNATIONAL VISITATION TO US DOWN 10 PERCENT IN FIRST HALF OF 2009**

Through June, year-to-date international visitation is down 10 percent from the same time period in 2008, according to the U.S. Dept. of Commerce. Spending by international visitors is down 15 percent as compared to the first six months of 2008. Year-to-date Canadian visitation to the U.S. is down 9 percent. Visitation data is publicly released by the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries. For more information, visit

[http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/outreachpages/download\\_data\\_table/Monthly\\_Exports\\_Imports\\_Balance.xls](http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/outreachpages/download_data_table/Monthly_Exports_Imports_Balance.xls).

## **7. BORDER TRAFFIC PLUNGES UNDER PASSPORT POLICY**

The number of people crossing the northern and southern land borders into the USA has dropped sharply since a passport requirement began June 1. Businesses in tourism-dependent border communities blame the policy for making a bad year worse. The change is part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, an effort to make borders more secure after 9/11. The rules affect U.S. citizens entering by land or sea, who once could get across by simply declaring themselves citizens. The change also affects citizens of Canada and Bermuda, who previously did not have to show passports. Now, they must have passports or a handful of other documents including enhanced driver's licenses, which have more security features and are available in some Canadian provinces and Michigan, New York, Vermont and Washington. To find out more, visit [http://www.usatoday.com/travel/2009-09-08-borders\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/travel/2009-09-08-borders_N.htm).

## **8. ECONOMY SHOWS SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT**

**Bernanke: "The Recession is Very Likely Over"** -- Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said Tuesday (yesterday) the worst recession since the 1930s is probably over, although he cautioned that pain – especially for the nearly 15 million unemployed Americans – will persist. Bernanke said the economy likely is growing now, but he

warned that won't be sufficient to prevent the unemployment rate, at a 26-year high of 9.7 percent, from rising. "From a technical perspective, the recession is very likely over at this point," Bernanke said. "It's still going to feel like a very weak economy for some time because many people will still find that their job security and their employment status is not what they wish it was." To find out more, visit [http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/2009-09-15-bernanke\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/2009-09-15-bernanke_N.htm).

**Fed Beige Book Finds Signs of a Slow, Fragile Recovery** – A slow and still-fragile recovery is taking hold across the country, as residential real estate improves, manufacturing orders pick up, consumer prices become firm and businesses express wary optimism about sales. That was the Federal Reserve's assessment last Wednesday in its beige book, a regular snapshot of economic conditions in 12 Fed districts nationwide. North Carolina falls under the Richmond District, where tourism activity was generally stronger since the July report. Along the coast, contacts from the Outer Banks, Virginia Beach and Myrtle Beach all noticed an increase in occupancy rates, while tourism reports in the mountains varied. To find out more, visit [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/10/business/economy/10econ.html?\\_r=1&sq=Beige%20Book&st=cse&adxnnl=1&scp=1&adxnnlx=1253040343-2OQk/S2ClpEBDFPr376Q6A](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/10/business/economy/10econ.html?_r=1&sq=Beige%20Book&st=cse&adxnnl=1&scp=1&adxnnlx=1253040343-2OQk/S2ClpEBDFPr376Q6A).

To view the Richmond District report, visit <http://www.federalreserve.gov/FOMC/Beigebook/2009/20090909/5.htm>.

**Rebounding RV Business Auspicious For Economy** – Analysts watch recreational vehicle (RV) sales because motor homes and travel trailers are discretionary purchases that consumers defer in an economic slump. Sales in July, the latest available, ran at the strongest annual rate since October, according to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA). In the past year, 15 new RV makers have begun operations, according to the RVIA. To find out more, visit <http://www.honoluluadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2009909130341>.

## **9. BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY TO BE HONORED IN U.S. MINT PROGRAM**

The Blue Ridge Parkway will be honored by the U.S. Mint as one of its new America the Beautiful quarters. The U.S. Mint will issue five quarters each year, starting in 2010, and will be issued in the order that the parks and sites were established as national sites. The North Carolina's Blue Ridge Parkway quarter will be issued in 2015; Tennessee's Great Smoky Mountains National Park quarter will be issued in 2014. In January 2009, the United States Mint began working closely with representatives from each host jurisdiction to identify eligible national sites for depiction on the new quarters. Once sites were identified, United States Mint officials collaborated with officials from the Department of the Interior's National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as the Department of Agriculture's U.S. Forest Service, to determine a candidate site's eligibility and the dates on which the sites were first established by Congressional or executive action, creating, reserving or protecting the national site for its natural or historic significance. To find out more, visit [http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/2009-09-09-national-park-quarters\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/2009-09-09-national-park-quarters_N.htm) and [http://www.usmint.gov/mint\\_programs/NSQuartersProgram/](http://www.usmint.gov/mint_programs/NSQuartersProgram/).

## **10. FIVE NORTH CAROLINA EVENTS RECOGNIZED BY ABA**

Five North Carolina events have been recognized by the American Bus Association (ABA) among its annual "Top 100 Events In North America." They include the Annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games & Gathering of Scottish Clans, July in Linville; the Billy Graham Library's "Christmas at the Library," December in Charlotte; the Carolina Renaissance Festival, October-November in Huntersville; the N.C. Azalea Festival, April in Wilmington; and Christmas at Biltmore Estate, November-December in Asheville. Christmas at Biltmore Estate was further recognized as an "Internationally Known Annual Event."

While the Top 100 Events are not ranked, ABA does highlight both the Top U.S. and Top Canadian Events for each year. Studies from the ABA Foundation indicate a single motorcoach group of 55 travelers spending just one night at a destination can infuse that local economy with up to \$11,660 in tourism dollars spent on lodging, meals, admissions, fees, shopping, souvenirs, services and local taxes. And, of course, events drawing large groups can create jobs.

The 28th annual ABA Top 100 Events in North America is a key guide for professional travel planners and the general public. The list highlights the top fairs, festivals, parades, exhibits, theater and shows across North America. The list is chosen from more than 500 events nominated by state and provincial tourism officials, convention and visitors bureaus and destination marketing organizations from across North America. A 17-member selection committee of tour operators bases its selections on the events' broad appeal, their accessibility to large groups arriving by motorcoach and a variety of other criteria. To find out more, visit <http://www.buses.org/top100>.

## **11. N.C. GREEN TRAVEL: FREE NC DENR PROGRAM TO HELP GREEN OPERATIONS**

The N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources in January 2010 will start a free, voluntary two-year pilot program for organizations interested in greening their operations. This program is open to any businesses or non-profits operating in North Carolina. Participants in the program will receive free environmental training, technical assistance, and waste, energy and water assessments. In return, businesses will be expected to make a commitment to continuous environmental improvement and report annually on progress in waste reduction and conservation. On Oct. 7, there will be an online presentation outlining the details of the pilot program. For more information and to sign up for the Web presentation, visit: <http://www.p2pays.org/esi/PilotProgram.asp>. For any questions regarding the webinar or the program, contact Stacy Givens at (919) 715-6534 or via [stacy.givens@ncdenr.gov](mailto:stacy.givens@ncdenr.gov). For more information on implementing sustainable practices contact Alex Naar at (252) 737-1346 or via [anaar@nccommerce.com](mailto:anaar@nccommerce.com).

## **12. SURVEYS, MARKETING, TRAVEL & INDUSTRY TRENDS**

**Hotel Occupancy Seen Higher, On Discounts** -- Hotel occupancy will likely gain strength in late 2009 and 2010, but profit will remain elusive as hotels continue to use

heavily discounted rates to draw in more travelers, according to a revised U.S. lodging forecast from PricewaterhouseCoopers. The revision shows revenue down 16.1 percent in 2009 and flat revenue in 2010, compared with the company's June forecast of a revenue decrease of 15.7 percent in 2009 and a slight increase in 2010 revenue of 1.6 percent. While the occupancy forecast for 2009 is slightly stronger than the company predicted in June, it comes at the expense of room rates. Occupancy is expected to come in at 55.5 percent in 2009, up from the June forecast of 55.1 percent. 2010 occupancy is forecasted at 56.1 percent. To find out more, visit <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204348804574403220470945760.html>.

**Driving Itineraries Growing in Popularity and Number** – Looking to add some meaning and direction to your next road trip? Then pick an interest and follow the trail. The number of themed U.S. driving itineraries is growing, targeting everyone from bluegrass fans to cheese lovers. North Carolina has the Barbecue Trail, Connecticut an Art Trail and, in Arizona, a Salsa Trail. These routes typically are organized by tourism bureaus hoping to drive traffic to off-the-beaten-path spots. On their own, the small towns and hidden byways might not rate as a destination, but as part of a larger journey they offer big rewards. To find out more, visit [http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2009-09-10-trails-road-trips\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2009-09-10-trails-road-trips_N.htm).

**Studies Show Cost-Cutting Travel Moves Can Hurt Profits** – Businesses that drastically cut back on travel may be sacrificing profits for short-term savings, according to two new studies released this week. The reports, commissioned by groups representing the travel industry, sought to show in dollars and cents the effect travel can have on a business' bottom line at a time when companies have slashed travel in response to falling revenue and a public perception that some trips are more excess than necessity. The IHS report determined that U.S. companies are potentially missing out on \$193 billion in profits this year because most are not spending what they should on business trips. Another study, conducted by Oxford Economics, also found a link between travel and corporate profitability. Each dollar spent on travel by a U.S. company can generate an average \$3.80 in profit and \$12.50 in increased revenue. To find out more, visit [http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2009-09-15-studies-cost-travel\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2009-09-15-studies-cost-travel_N.htm).

### **13. HANDBOOK ON AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL TOURISM IN NORTH CAROLINA NOW AVAILABLE**

The American Indian Center has produced "A Handbook on American Indian Cultural Tourism in North Carolina" as a product of a workshop on cultural tourism that the Center held in June. The handbook is a compilation of information that was shared at the workshop, and it is intended to extend that information to members of the Indian communities in North Carolina who might be interested in cultural tourism for a number of reasons such as economic development, cultural preservation, educating people in the state about American Indians, or gaining greater visibility in the state. The handbook also provides information on a number of funding sources to spur communities to undertake cultural resource inventories and plan specific programs. To

view the handbook, visit <http://americanindiancenter.unc.edu/documents/Handbook-AmericanIndianCulturalTourisminNC.pdf>.

#### **14. MEDIA LEAD**

**Cities Showcasing Local Foods when Conventions Come to Town** – There’s no better way to incorporate the local flavor of a city or town than through its food. Small Market Meetings Editor Vickie Mitchell seeks information for an upcoming story about how second-tier and smaller destinations show off local specialties when meetings and conventions come to town. How are cities cooking up creative ways to incorporate local cuisine? Please include details about the food specialties served and the events that showcase them. Contact Mitchell by e-mail only at [vmitchell@smallmarketmeetings.com](mailto:vmitchell@smallmarketmeetings.com). **Deadline: Sept. 21.**

#### **15. STATESVILLE CVB TAPS LINT FOR INTERIM**

Lint was recently contracted by the Statesville CVB to handle numerous projects as the interim project leader. Lint will split her work time between the Visitors Center in Statesville and her home in Asheboro. She will stay on until the new director is hired and then train that person. To find out more, visit <http://www2.statesville.com/content/2009/sep/10/scvb-taps-its-interim-leader/news-local/>.

#### **16. “NORTH CAROLINA WEEKEND”**

For the week of Sept. 17 on UNC-TV’s “North Carolina Weekend,” enjoy the Carolina Ballet’s performance of “Swan Lake” in Raleigh. Whet your appetite at one of the Taste Carolina Gourmet Food Tours, based in Durham. Take in some art at the Street Painting Festival in Raleigh. View the mountains through a camera at the “George Masa: Photographic Vision of the Mountains” exhibit in Cullowhee. And the “House Special” samples the fare at The Old Place in Bear Creek. (*Please note: listings are subject to change.*) Exclusively underwritten by the N.C. Division of Tourism, “North Carolina Weekend” airs Thursdays at 9:00 p.m. with repeats on Fridays and Saturdays (*please check local listings*) on UNC-TV. In addition, UNC-TV has made recent editions of “North Carolina Weekend” available online. For more information or to download a podcast, visit <http://www.unctv.org/ncweekend>.

#### **17. UPCOMING INDUSTRY MEETINGS & EVENTS**

**Sept. 16-17** – Travel Leadership Summit, Washington, D.C.

**Sept. 22** – Mid-Year Marketing Update, Raleigh

**Oct. 26-28** – Marketing Outlook Forum, Little Rock, Ark.

**Nov. 12-13** – NCTIA Annual Meeting, Greensboro

**Nov. 19-20** – MPI-CC Meeting, Raleigh

#### **SHARE THE “NEWSLINK”**

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for "NewsLink," contact Publications Director Kathy Prickett at (919) 733-8302 or via [kprickett@ncommerce.com](mailto:kprickett@ncommerce.com).

**FEEDBACK WELCOME**

The N.C. Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development is committed to serving North Carolina's tourism industry. If you have feedback regarding any of the Division's programs, let your voice be heard at [visitnc@ncommerce.com](mailto:visitnc@ncommerce.com).