



ASSESSING REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IN WEST VIRGINIA

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Image of West Virginia vs. Pennsylvania

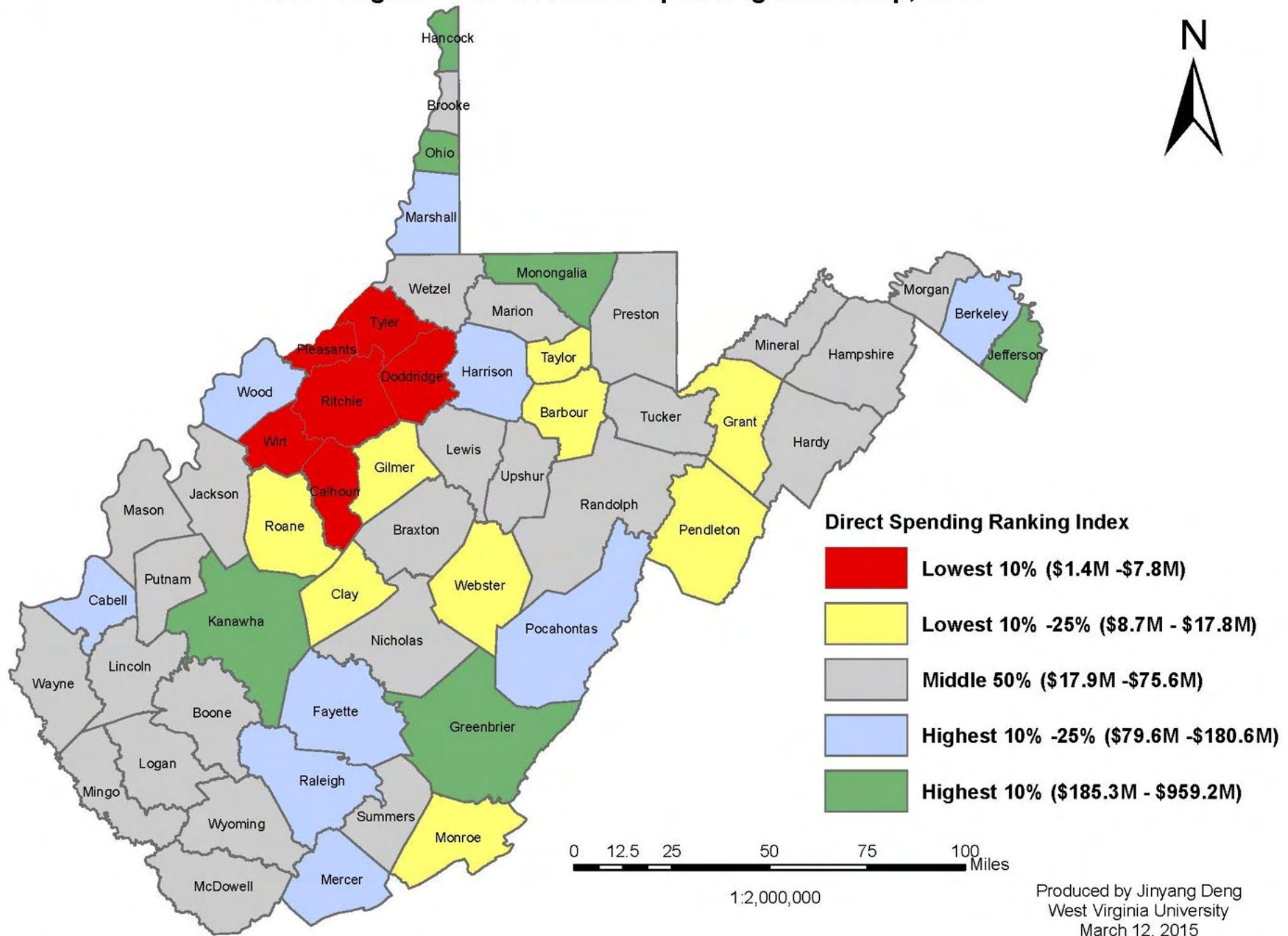
West Virginia Better For...

- ◉ *Known for beautiful mountains*
- ◉ *Great for white water rafting*
- ◉ *Great for hiking/backpacking*
- ◉ *Great for exploring nature*
- ◉ *Excellent hunting*
- ◉ *Great for canoeing/kayaking*
- ◉ *Known for pristine water*
- ◉ *Good place for camping*
- ◉ *Warm, friendly people*
- ◉ ***A real adventure***

Pennsylvania Better For...

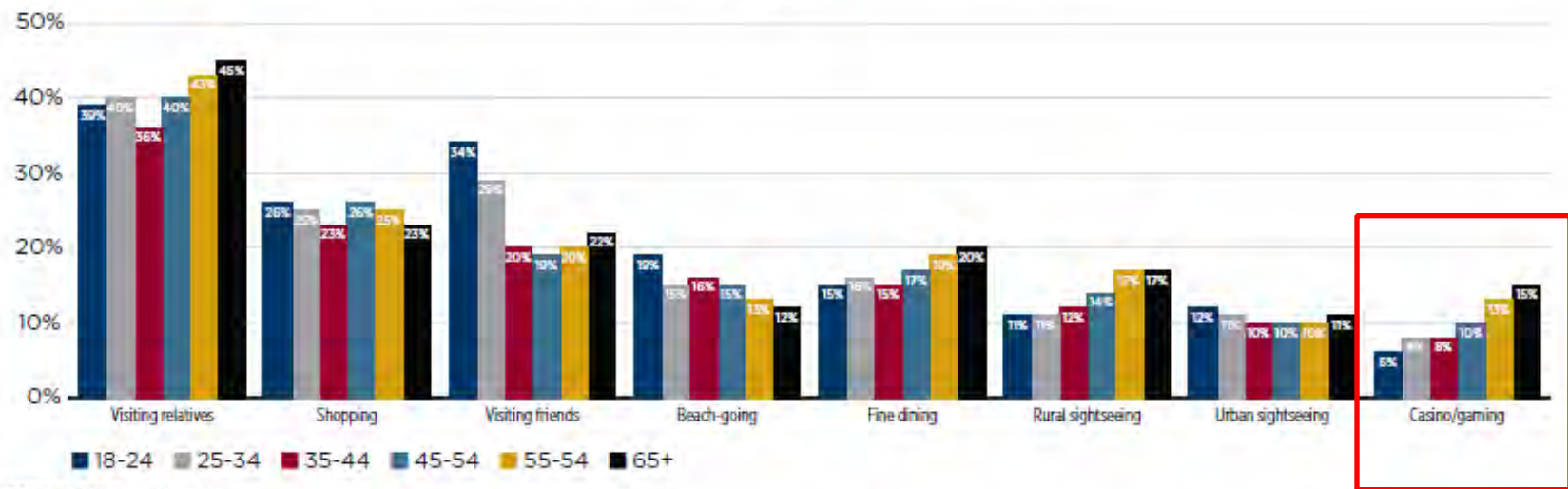
- ◉ *Well-known landmarks*
- ◉ *Variety of dining options*
- ◉ *Great for theater and the performing arts*
- ◉ ***Lots to see and do***
- ◉ *Excellent shopping*
- ◉ *Interesting antiques/arts/crafts*
- ◉ *Exciting nightlife/ entertainment/ shows*
- ◉ ***Children would especially enjoy***
- ◉ *Well-known destination*
- ◉ *First class hotels/resorts*
- ◉ ***An exciting place***

West Virginia Travel/Tourism Spending Index Map, 2012



2014 Domestic Travel Market Report

CHART 70: Detailed Activities* by Age
(2013)



SOURCE: TNS TravelsAmerica

*Multiple response

U.S. Spending on Domestic Overnight and Day Trips

45. West Virginia - \$2.9 billion, 28,503

37. Mississippi – \$6.1 billion, 84,920

30. Kentucky - \$8.1 billion, 87,313

18. Maryland – \$15 billion, 119,857

14. Ohio – \$17.1 billion, 173,437

9. Virginia – \$21.7 billion, 215,150

8. Pennsylvania – \$23.2 billion, 218,731

1. California - \$110.8 billion, 875,841

Source: U.S. Travel Association Impact of Travel on State Economies, 2012

DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS MODEL

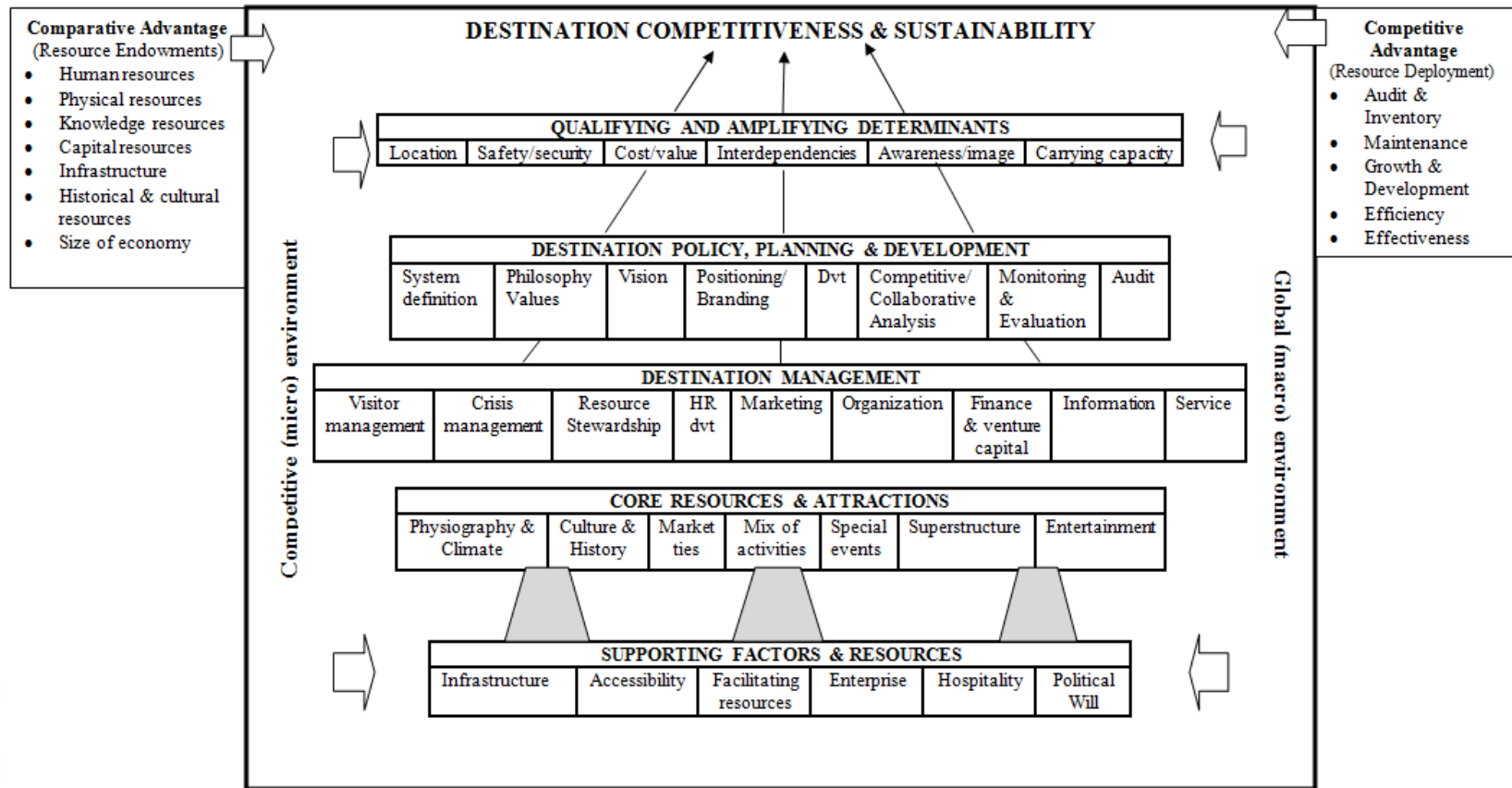


Figure 1: Destination Competitiveness and sustainability model (Crouch and Ritchie, 2003)

Participatory Action Research

- Community members are partners in research process, not object to be studied
- Integrated process of research, education, and action

Selener, J. D. (1992). *Participatory action research and social change: approaches and critique*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Cornell University, Ann Arbor.

- Workable solutions to community needs + develop local capacity

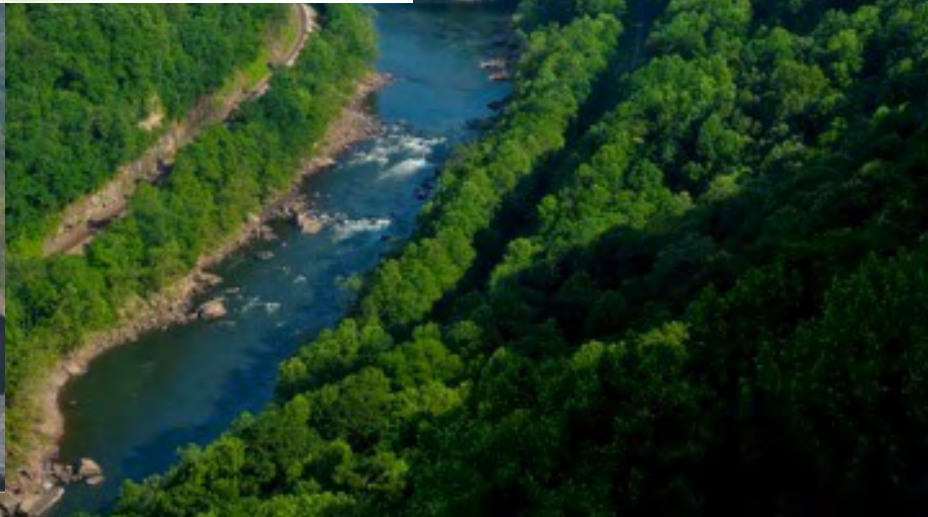
Ozanne, J.L., & Saatcioglu, B. (2008). Participatory action research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(3), 423-439.

STUDY REGION

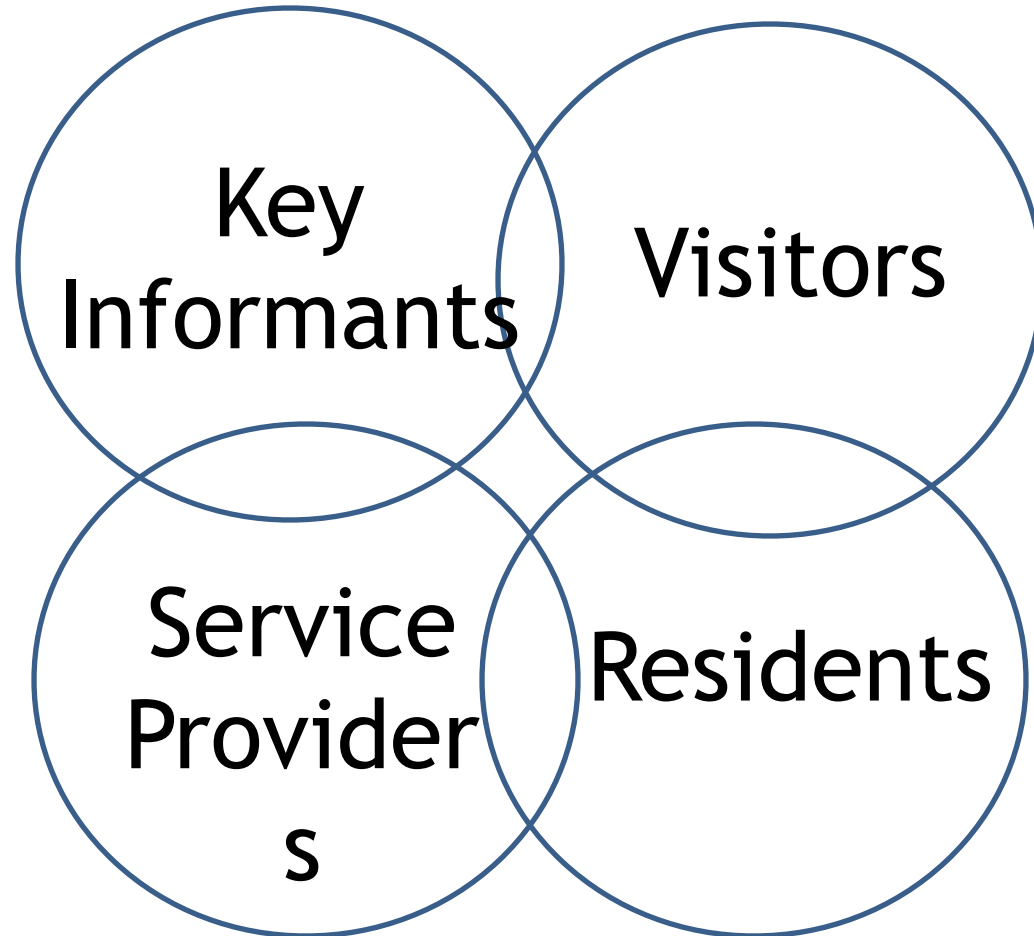
NEW RIVER GORGE, WEST VIRGINIA

- Nicholas County
- Fayette County
- Raleigh County
- Summers County





Destination Stakeholders



KEY INFORMANT PARTICIPATION

- Convention and Visitors Bureaus
- National Park Service
- State Parks
- Regional Development Authority
- WVU Extension
- WVSU Extension
- Local Government
- County Government
- Non-profit organizations



WHY COLLABORATE?

June 3, 2013 regional tourism leadership meeting

- More exposure to attractions
- Maximizing scarce resources in poorer counties
- Better management
- Increase awareness of resources
- Package regional assets
- Tourism product development
- County lines mean nothing to visitors



KEY INFORMANTS SURVEY

Please rate the **level of collaboration/cooperation** among destination leadership on a scale of 1-5 (1 = poor, 5 = excellent)

Item	Mean
<i>Setting overall community development</i>	3.1
<i>Setting tourism development goals</i>	3.0
<i>Achieving a shared tourism vision</i>	3.0
<i>Establishing a strong destination</i>	3.6
<i>Promoting the region</i>	3.6
<i>Marketing the region</i>	3.70



NRG ATTRACTIVE ATTRIBUTES

June 3, 2013 meeting

Camp Washington Carver	The Ritz Theater	Regatta on the Lake	Cranberry Glades
Grandview State Park	WV Water Festival	Good Evening Ranch - Cabins	Mon National Forest
Civil War History	Rail Museum	Kirkwood Winery and	New River Festival
Nesting eagles on river at	Bluestone Dam and Lake	State Quilt Festival	New River Gorge National
Sandstone Falls	Burning Rock ATV Park	Blue Grass Festival	Coal Heritage Highway
Historic District	Pipestem State Park	Coal Mining and RR Tours	Lake Stephens and Beach
"Railroad Days"	4-H Camp - Summers County	Exhibition - Coal Mine	Daniels Vineyard
John Henry Park	New River Gorge Bridge	Little Beaver State Park	Glade Springs Resort
New River National River	Whipple Store	Regatta on the Lake	Cranberry Glades
Babcock State Park Cabins	Adventure Resorts	Good Evening Ranch - Cabins	Mon National Forest
Live Theater	Bridge Day	Kirkwood Winery and	New River Festival
Rafting	Hawks Nest State Park	State Quilt Festival	New River Gorge National
National Park Service (NPS)	Dining Destination	Blue Grass Festival	Coal Heritage Highway
Farmer's Market	New River Rendezvous	Coal Mining and RR Tours	Babcock State Park
Rails to Trails	Antique Mall	Exhibition - Coal Mine	Summersville Lake
Art	Gauley Season	Little Beaver State Park	Muddlety Trail
Plum Orchard Lake	Thurmond	Regatta on the Lake	Gauley Festival
The Summit	Part of Appalachian Scenic Byway - Motorcyclist	Good Evening Ranch - Cabins	Gospel Music Festival
Potato Festival	Gateway to the New	Lighthouse	



KEY INFORMANTS SURVEY

What are the top 3 things that make the New River Gorge **attractive** to visitors?

Number 1	Number 2	Number 3
New River	New River Gorge Bridge	New River Gorge
Rivers	Outdoor adventure	State parks
Beauty	Adventure	Nature
The Bridge	Whitewater	Trails
New River Gorge Bridge	Scenic Beauty	Outdoor Adventure
White Water Rafting	Lake activities	Zip Lining
Outdoor adventures	Variety of restaurants	Natural beauty



KEY INFORMANTS SURVEY

What are the top 3 things that make the New River Gorge **unattractive** to visitors?

Number 1	Number 2	Number 3
Poor customer service	Litter	Over development
Dilapidated structures/run down towns	Potentially intimidating	Vandalism
Don't know about it	More water options for family	Can be challenging to navigate logistically
Night life	Travel time between attractions	Hospitality
Lack of knowledge of area	Lack of local restaurants	Lack of explicit signage
Lack of shopping	Lack of local lodging choices	
Extensive business development along route 19		



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Visitor survey data collectors

- Summersville CVB
- Southern WV CVB
- Fayetteville CVB
- ACE Whitewater
- New River Alliance of Climbers
- Adventures on the Gorge
- Pipestem State Park
- Opossum Creek Retreat
- Cabins at Pine Haven



VISITORS' TRAVEL MOTIVES

(1=DISAGREE COMPLETELY ; 5=AGREE COMPLETELY)

Top Motives		Other Motives	
Seek adventure	5.0	Enjoy the good weather	4.0
Have fun	4.7	Indulge self/family	3.9
Be active	4.6	Increase my knowledge of new places	3.6
Get closer to nature	4.5	Reconnect with friends and family	3.6
Engage in sporting activities	4.4	Rediscover self	3.5
Relax	4.3	Get entertained/for entertainment	3.4
Escape from a busy life	4.2	Visit historical sites	3.2
Forget day to day problems	4.2	Mix with other tourists	2.8
Get emotionally and physically refreshed	4.2	Shop	2.5
Get away from home	4.1		

- The New River Gorge is an adventure/nature-based destination



Visitor Experience Rated – New River Gorge

Attribute	Good or Excellent
<i>Adventure activities</i>	96%
<i>Hospitality & friendliness of residents</i>	95%
<i>Nature based activities</i>	95%
<i>Historic/heritage attractions</i>	60%
<i>Cultural attractions</i>	43%
<i>Shopping facilities</i>	34%

IMPORTANCE OF AND SATISFACTION WITH ATTRACTIONS (BY COLLECTOR)

Adventures on the Gorge	Unaware of this Attraction	Important + Extremely Important
<i>Adventures on the Gorge</i>	3%	92%
<i>New River National River</i>	10%	75%
<i>New River Gorge Bridge</i>	4%	73%
<i>National Park Service</i>	36%	26%
<i>Summersville Lake</i>	44%	23%
<i>Bridge day</i>	32%	23%
<i>Hawks Nest State Park</i>	44%	22%
<i>Appalachian Scenic Byway</i>	45%	20%
<i>ACE Adventure Resort</i>	44%	20%

ACE Whitewater	Unaware of this Attraction	Important + Extremely Important
<i>ACE Adventure Resort</i>	0%	94%
<i>New River Gorge Bridge</i>	5%	72%
<i>New River National River</i>	13%	69%
<i>Adventures on the Gorge</i>	33%	36%
<i>National Park Service</i>	42%	19%
<i>Summersville Lake</i>	51%	19%
<i>Bridge day</i>	36%	19%



IMPORTANCE OF AND SATISFACTION WITH ATTRACTIONS (BY COLLECTOR)

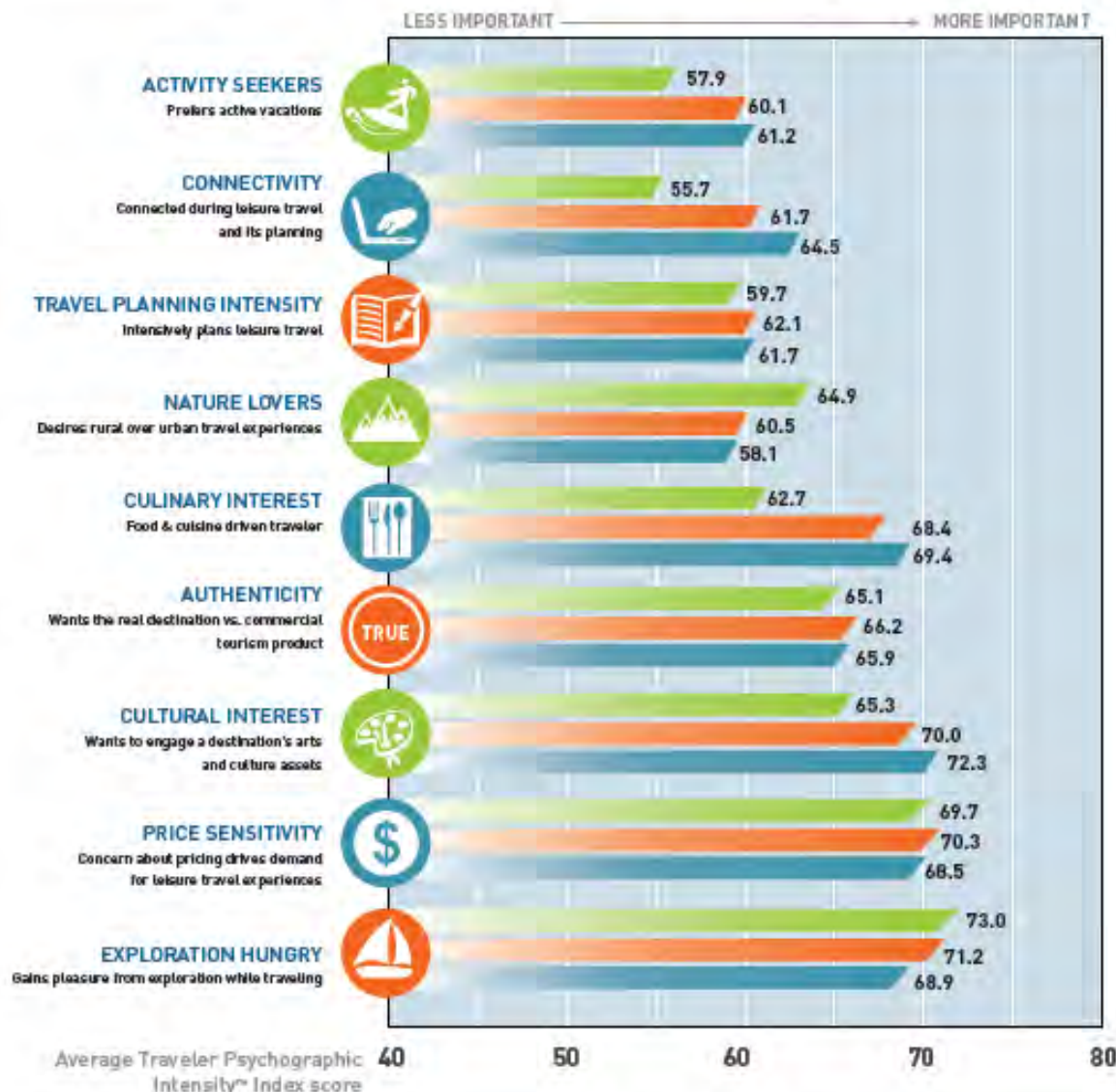
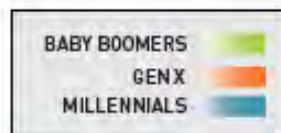
Pipestem State Park	Unaware of this Attraction	Important + Extremely Important
<i>Pipestem State Park</i>	4%	89%
<i>New River Gorge Bridge</i>	3%	76%
<i>New River National River</i>	3%	74%
<i>Hawks Nest State Park</i>	8%	64%
<i>National Park Service</i>	5%	63%
<i>Bluestone Dam and Lake</i>	9%	58%
<i>Babcock State Park</i>	9%	58%
<i>Sandstone Falls</i>	15%	57%
<i>Appalachian Scenic Byway</i>	20%	49%
<i>Summersville Lake</i>	18%	38%
<i>Grandview State Park</i>	22%	37%
<i>Bridge day</i>	13%	29%
<i>Little Beaver State Park</i>	25%	24%
<i>Adventures on the Gorge</i>	23%	23%
<i>New River Festival</i>	28%	22%

New River Alliance of	Unaware of this Attraction	Important + Extremely
<i>Summersville Lake</i>	2%	89%
<i>New River Climbers Rendezvous</i>	0%	87%
<i>New River National River</i>	2%	75%
<i>New River Gorge Bridge</i>	0%	59%
<i>National Park Service</i>	11%	51%
<i>Hawks Nest State Park</i>	20%	48%
<i>Bridge day</i>	3%	42%
<i>Gauley Festival</i>	32%	31%
<i>Adventures on the Gorge</i>	33%	25%
<i>New River Festival</i>	45%	26%
<i>Appalachian Scenic Byway</i>	47%	21%
<i>Babcock State Park</i>	37%	20%



The Generations: Different Travel Styles

Destination Analysts' Traveler Psychographic Intensity™ Indices show that members of the Millennial Generation are active, highly connected travelers with a desire for urban culture and culinary experiences. Baby Boomers are more interested in less active, rural experiences that yield a sense of exploration. GenX sits at the halfway point between the two generations, with one key unique differentiator, slightly higher levels of price sensitivity.



What is Culture?

Place-making:

Local connection to individuals, events, industry, agriculture, transportation, social history (religion, sport, education) and nature

- Architecture
- Craft
- Cuisine
- Gardens
- Historic homes, mansions,
- Literature
- Music
- Performing Arts: theatre, drama, opera
- Visual Arts

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

authentic, distinctive, alive

My SWVA

Create your Southwest Virginia experience

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Check out our blog!
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Dynamic Communities

Spend time in our revitalized downtowns

[tell me the story >](#)

Discover SWVA

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

authentic, distinctive, alive

Start exploring today!

Kentucky

VIRGINIA

Tennessee

North Carolina

Upcoming Events

Welcome to My Southwest Virginia

Joe Wilson: Welcome to My Southwest Virginia



[Joe Wilson](#)
A Stunning
Place for Music

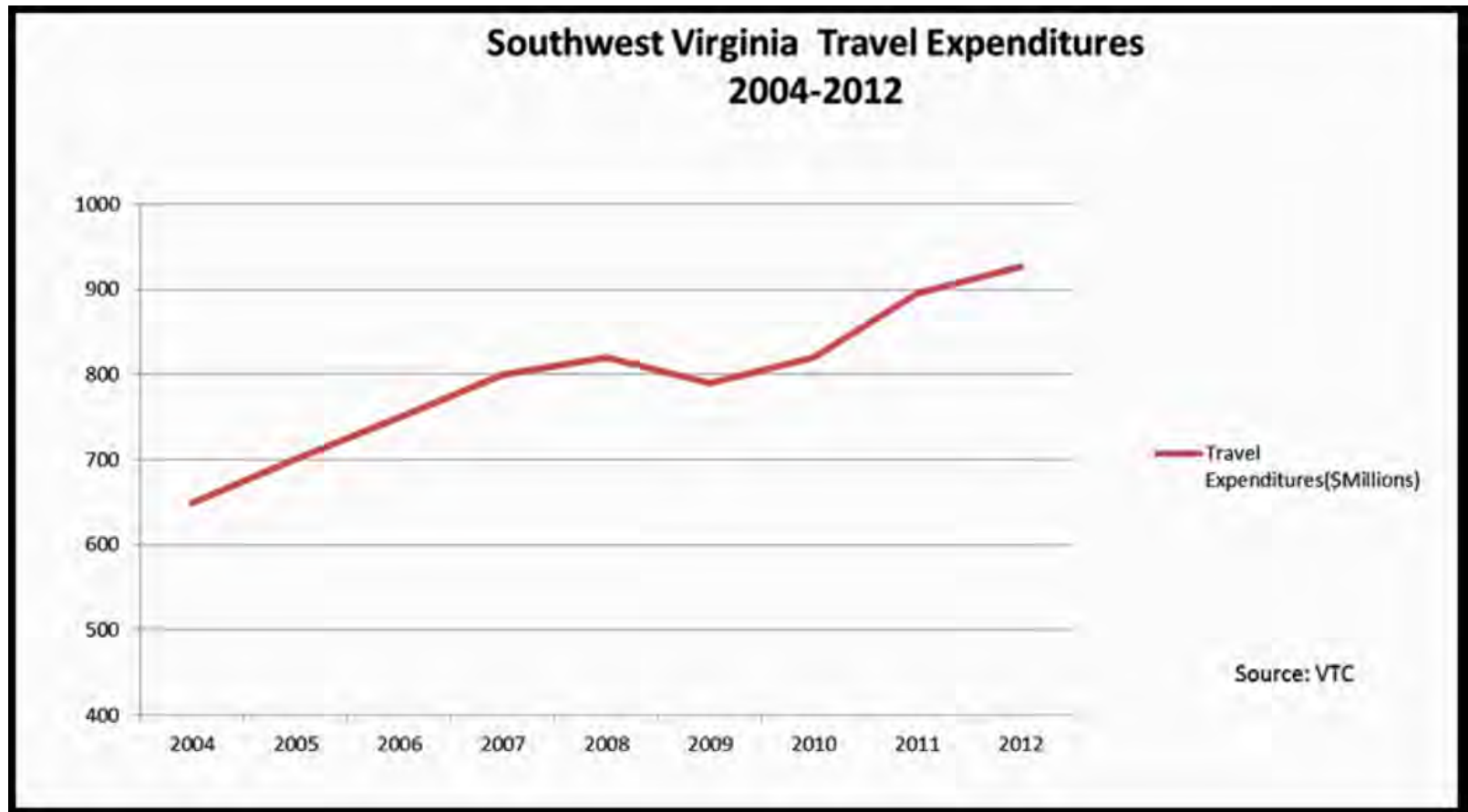
[Anthony
Flaccavento](#)
Great local food

[Betsy White](#)
Craft Traditions

Dillon Williams

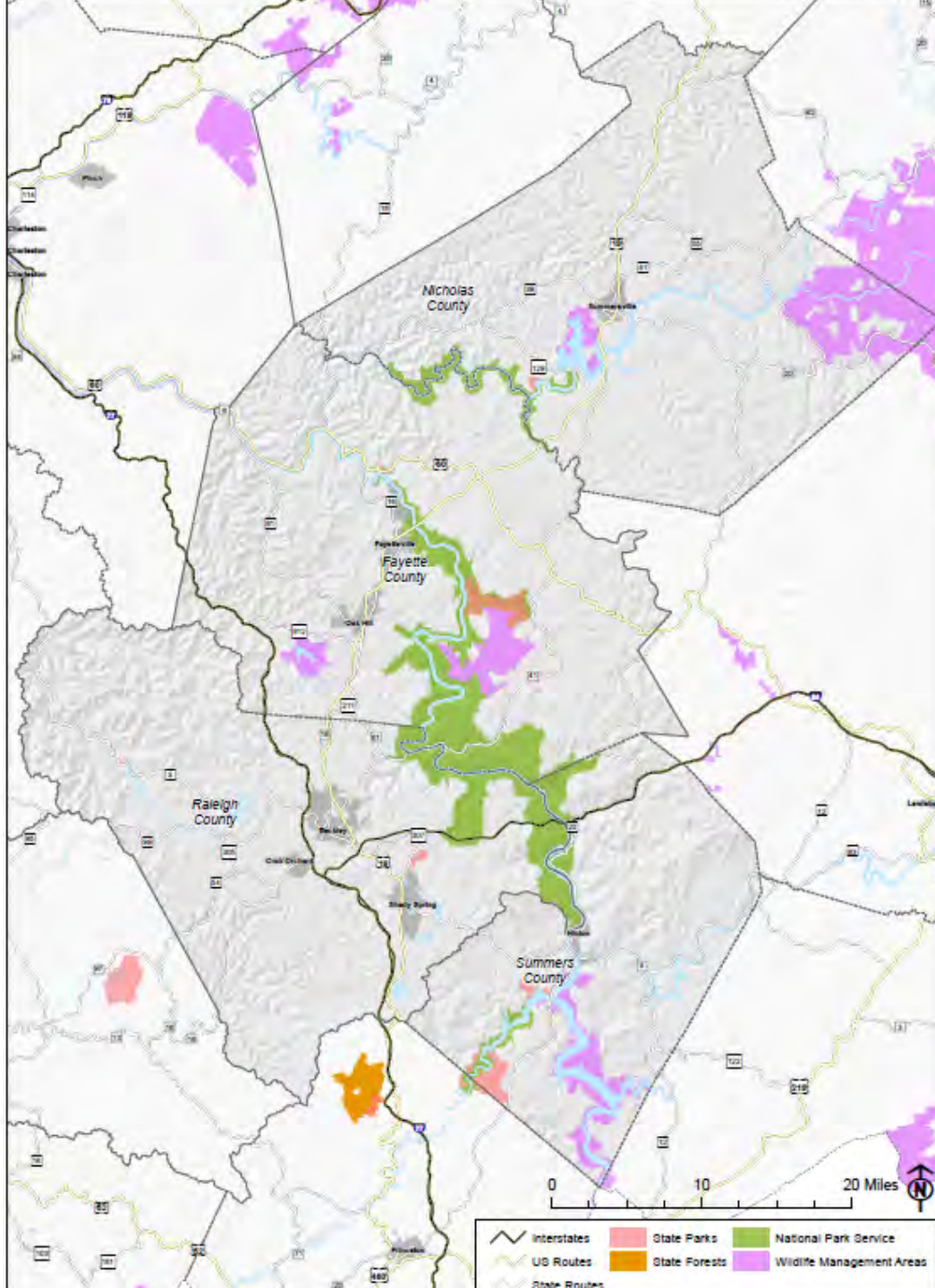
Development of a regional creative economy in Southwest Virginia

Travel expenditures increased by 43% from 2004-2012, reaching a record high \$927 Million in 2012. This was a higher increase in travel expenditures than the Commonwealth of Virginia as a whole during this same time period (41%).



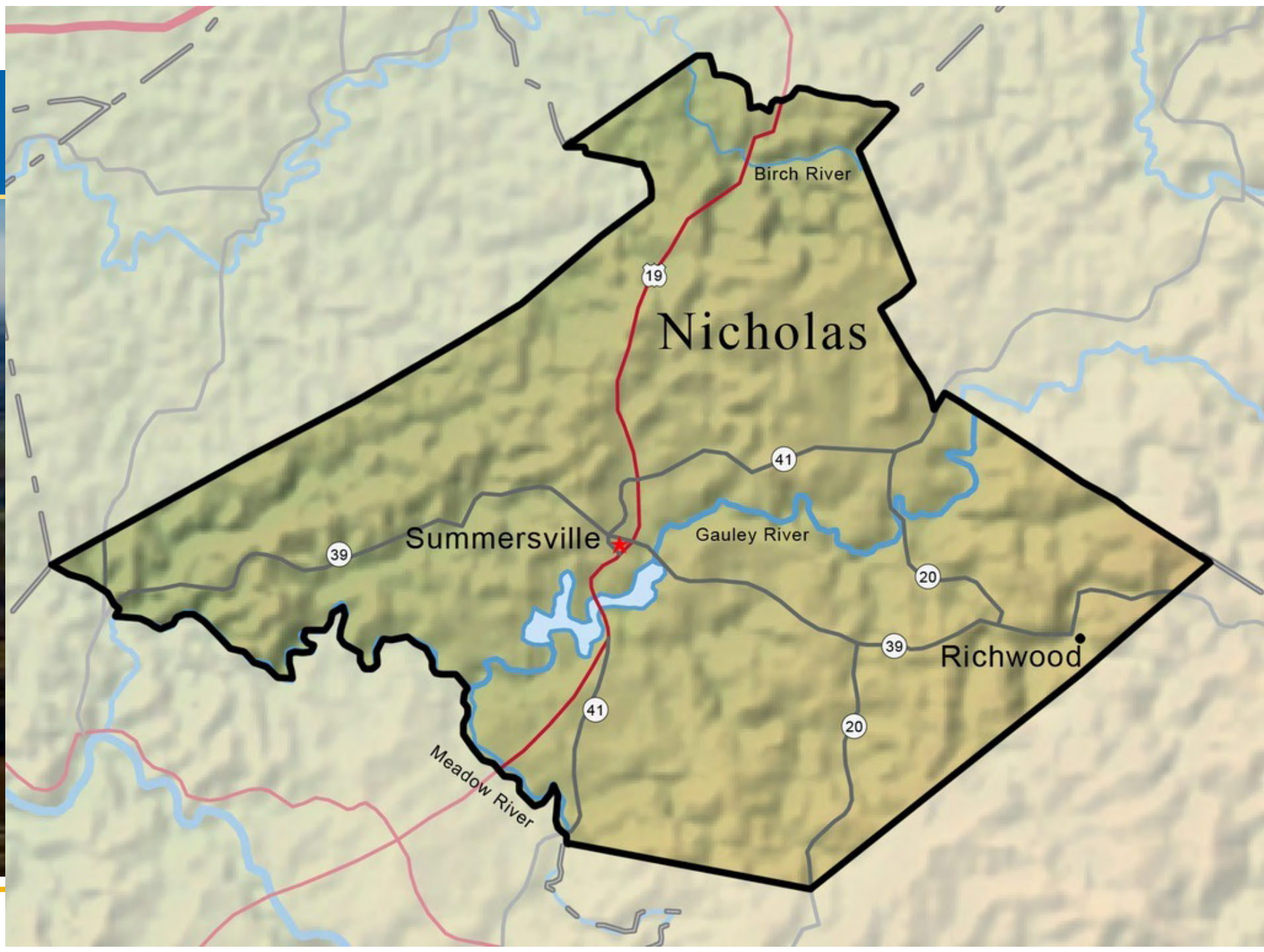
Implications

- Visitors are satisfied but are they aware?
- Opportunity to diversify and incorporate secondary a
- Collaboration is key -open lines of communication
- Strengthen regional identities
- What makes us authentic?
- Communities can be cultural centers
- Get Millenialls involved
- West Virginia can be that place!



New River Gorge region

- Nicholas County
- Fayette County
- Raleigh County
- Summers County



Birch River

19

Nicholas

41

Gauley River

Summersville

39

20

39

Richwood

20

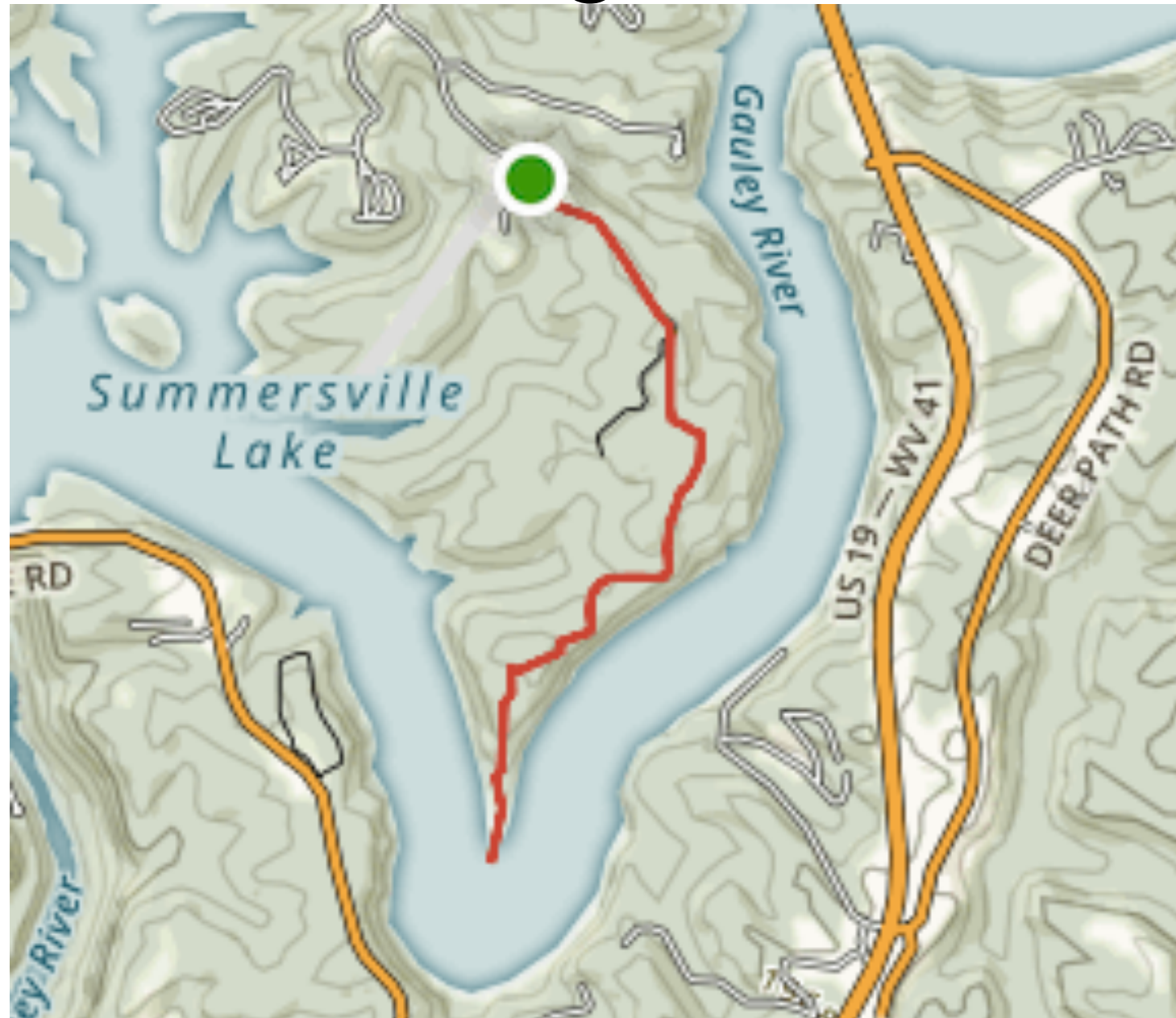
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Meadow River

Local Tourism Focus

- Inventory tourism assets
- Assess access, signage, mapping, local awareness
- Collaborate with tourism partners
- Heritage, history, recreation...
- Connect communities to the assets

Long Point Trail





Local Tourism Focus

- Capitalize on regional attractions
- “A Day in Every Direction”
- Nicholas County, The New River Gorge Region, and West Virginia can be the place!

Asset Mapping

Tourism Mapping for Doddridge, Gilmer, Ritchie and Tyler Counties

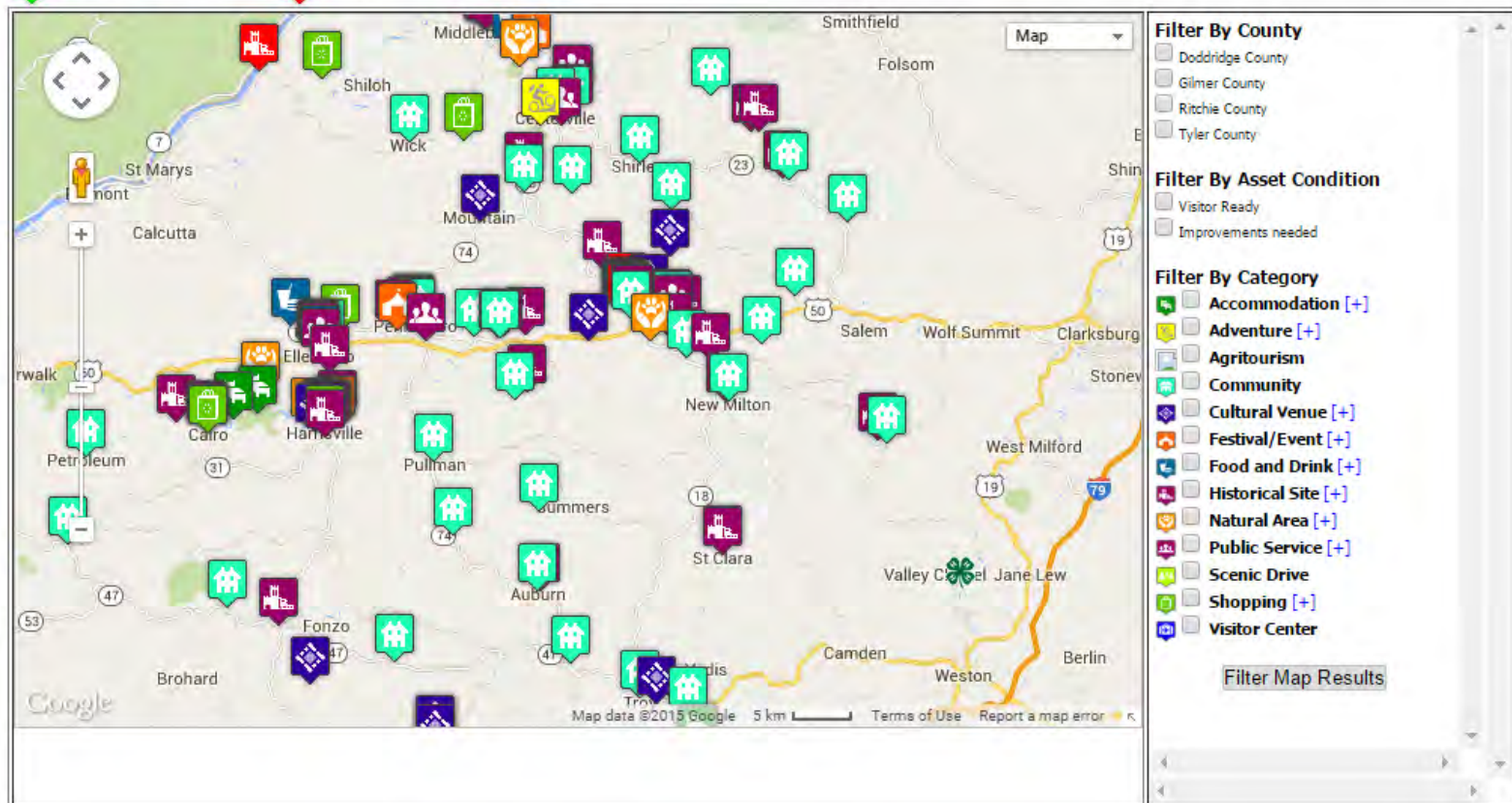
Double Click on the MAP to Zoom into that location.



Site is Visitor Ready



Improvements needed to be visitor ready



THANK YOU

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