



**POCAHONTAS COUNTY
CONVENTION
&
VISITORS BUREAU**

**2024
ANNUAL REPORT**

September 2024

301 8th Street, Marlinton, WV

304-799-4636

PocahontasCountyWV.com



CVB ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

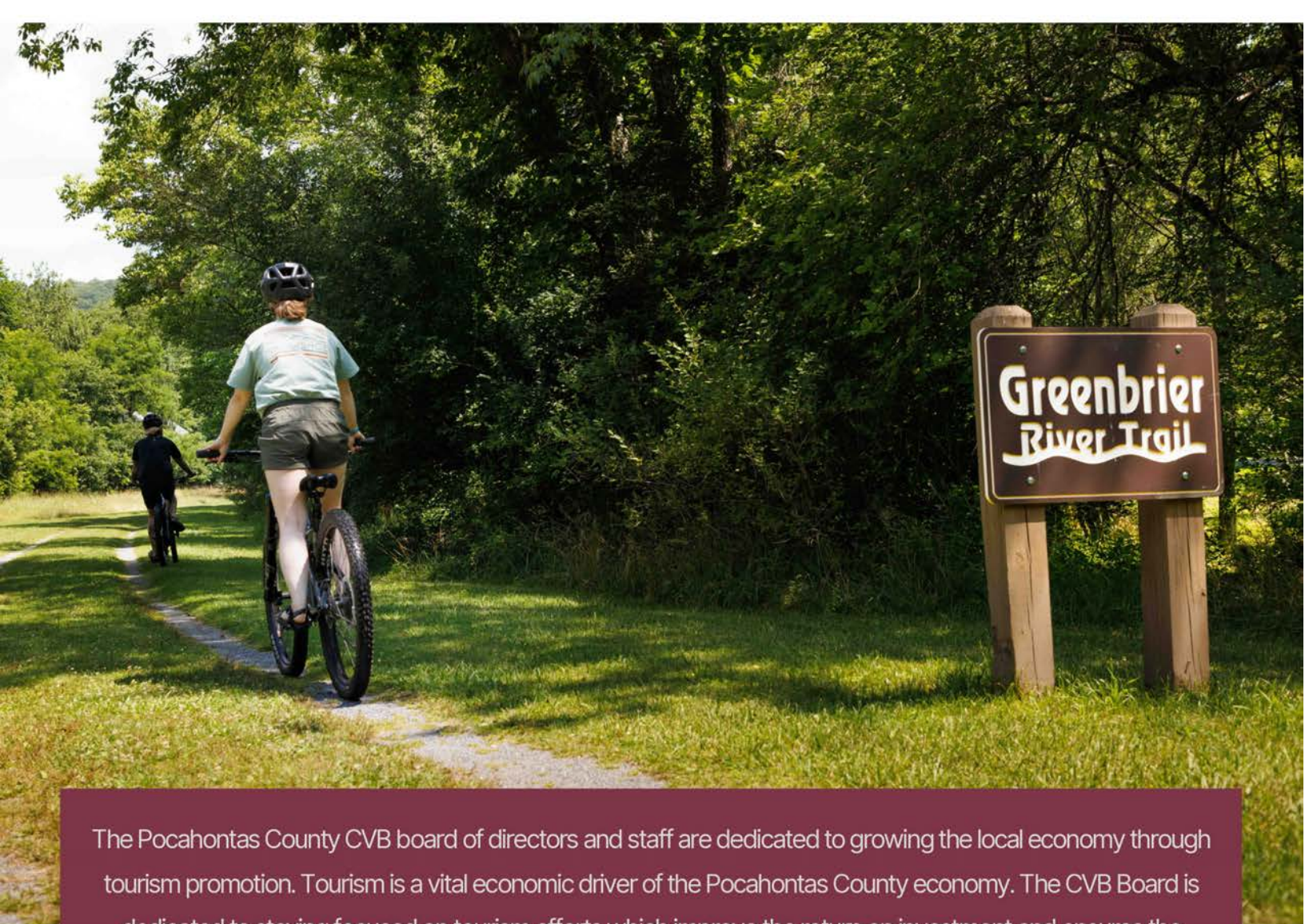
The State of West Virginia now requires that CVBs in West Virginia report not only to their local collecting authority - County Commission - but also to the State Auditor, the Joint Committee on Government and Finance, and the West Virginia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus. This report is the full report required by law.



INTRODUCTION

The Pocahontas County Convention & Visitors Bureau is a fully accredited member of the West Virginia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus. The accreditation program is endorsed by the West Virginia Department of Tourism and accreditation is now required by the West Virginia legislature.

The accreditation program ensures the credibility of CVB's receiving hotel/motel tax dollars and the continued improvement of services offered to the traveling public. In accordance with the state legislation, this report is also submitted to the WV State Auditor's Office, WV Joint Committee on Government & Finance and the WV Association of CVBs.



The Pocahontas County CVB board of directors and staff are dedicated to growing the local economy through tourism promotion. Tourism is a vital economic driver of the Pocahontas County economy. The CVB Board is dedicated to staying focused on tourism efforts which improve the return on investment and ensures the future of the industry. The Board meets monthly and holds regular planning retreats for the purpose of revising and identifying goals important to the growth of the Pocahontas County tourism based economy.

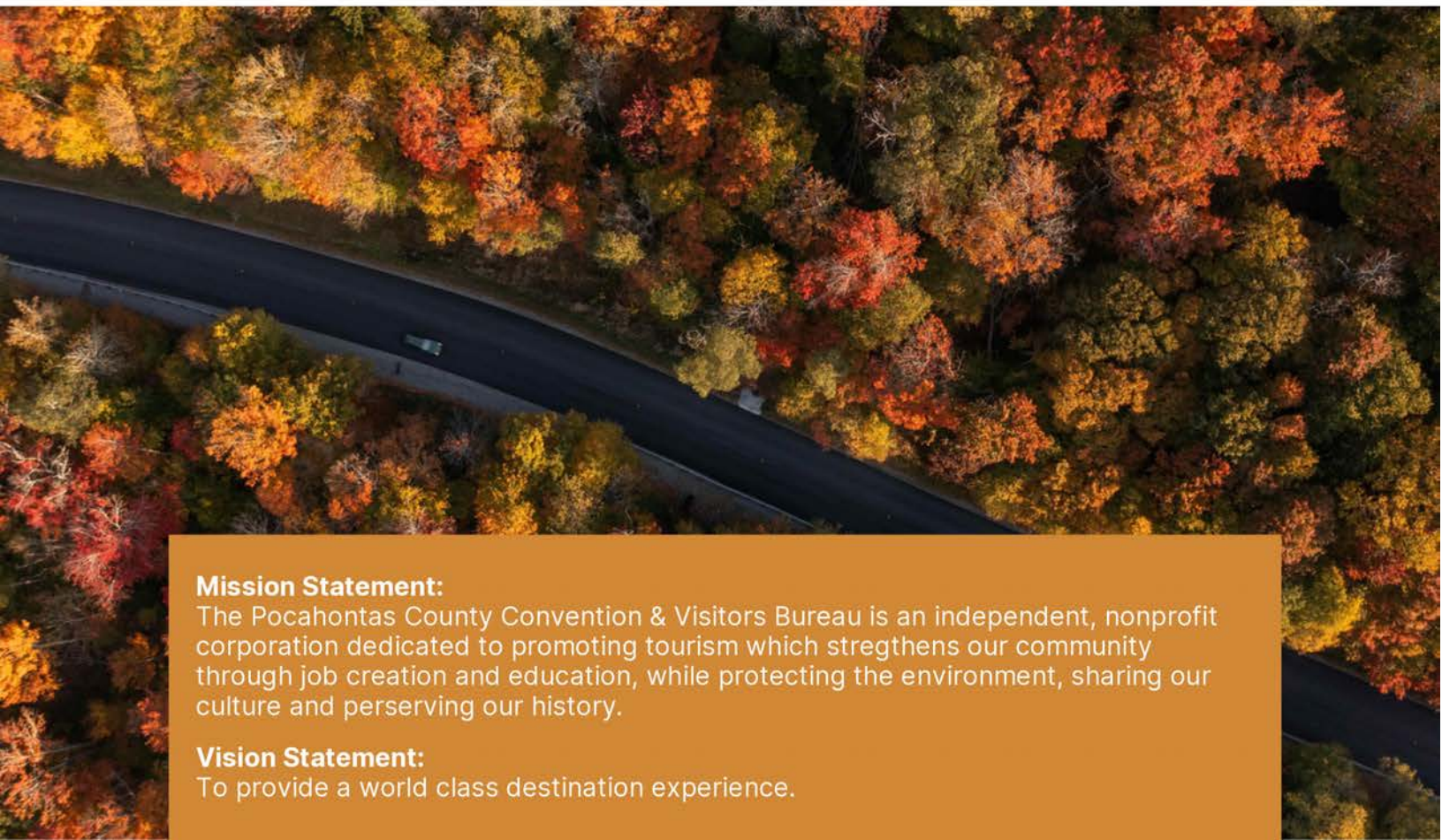
The board meets the third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m., with the exception of December. Meeting dates and strategic plan copies are available upon request.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY CVB ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

Pocahontas County CVB Board of Directors

Name	Seat Represented	Board Term	Policy	Education	Personnel	Government	Finance	Marketing	Visitor Centers	Grants
Bob Sheets (<i>President</i>)	Green Bank District	2024-2027	X	X	CHAIR	X	X	X	X	X
Mikey Valach (<i>Vice President</i>)	Ski Industry	2024-2027			X		X		X	
Bill Jordan (<i>Secretary</i>)	Chamber of Commerce	2022-2025	CHAIR		X		X			X
Erica Engquist (<i>Treasurer</i>)	At-Large	2023-2026		X	X		CHAIR			X
Colby Brown	At-Large	2024-2027			X					
Gil Willis	At-Large	2024-2027	X					CHAIR		X
Jamie Walker	County Commission	Recurring				X	X			X
Sarah Guyette	Edray District	2022-2025	X	X				X		
OPEN SEAT - TO BE FILLED FALL 2024	State Parks & Forests	2024-2027								
Delsie Swearingen	Little Levels District	2024-2027						X	X	X
Felicia Smith	Huntersville District	2022-2025	X		X					
Karen Murphy	Lodging	2023-2026				X		X	X	
Jason Hattersley	US Forest Service (<i>non-voting</i>)	Recurring								
OPEN SEAT - TO BE FILLED FALL 2024	PCHS Tourism Club Representative (<i>non-voting</i>)	Recurring								

The Pocahontas County CVB Board of Directors is a diverse set of people representing a variety of tourism interests including tourism related businesses and sectors, voting district interests, and public interests in general.



Mission Statement:

The Pocahontas County Convention & Visitors Bureau is an independent, nonprofit corporation dedicated to promoting tourism which strengthens our community through job creation and education, while protecting the environment, sharing our culture and preserving our history.

Vision Statement:

To provide a world class destination experience.



The Pocahontas County CVB operates and staffs six visitor centers in Pocahontas County. This investment is important, making information easily accessible to visitors in our large and rural mountainous destination. Pocahontas County is large and satellite visitor centers provide visitors access to travel information in multiple areas of the county, including the Pocahontas County Free Libraries. All satellite visitor centers are in partnership with area attractions and is mutually beneficial to both the PCCVB, the tourism partner, and the guest.

Pocahontas County CVB Main Office: 301 8th Street, Marlinton

Open 8:30AM-5PM daily May-October; Monday-Sunday November-April. Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr Day, President's Day

Snowshoe Mountain Resort Visitor Center: Linwood Library, Slaty Fork

Open Friday-Sunday Memorial Day through Labor Day and through ski season

Cass Scenic Railroad State Park Visitor Center: Cass

Open in conjunction with train operations daily Memorial Day week through October

Cranberry Mountain Nature Center Visitor Center: Mill Point

Open 9AM-5PM Thursday-Monday, May-October

Durbin Visitor Center: Pocahontas County Arts Council Gallery

Open 9AM-5PM in conjunction with train operations Memorial Day-October

Green Bank Observatory Visitor Center: Green Bank Observatory Science Center

Open daily Memorial Day-Labor Day; Thursday-Monday Labor Day-October

Green Bank, Hillsboro, Marlinton, Durbin & Linwood Library: operate hours/days most conducive to offering services to guests, including at all locations, while maintaining library services and operations within budget.



PCCVB STAFF 2024

- Chelsea Faulknier:** Executive Director
- Linda Adams:** Office Manager, Events/Grants Coordinator
- Jake Hyer:** Marketing Specialist
- Makinsey Poeppel:** Social Media Manager
- Mike Moore:** Information Specialist
- Tammy Shoemaker:** Information Specialist
- Jack Osborne:** Information Specialist (*part-time*)
- Tara Bauserman:** Information Specialist (*part-time*)
- Mary Seldomridge:** Information Specialist (*part-time*)
- Carolyn McCloud:** Information Specialist (*part-time*)

The Pocahontas County CVB has been fortunate to retain a consistent staff year after year, which builds a wealth of knowledge about our destination, provides reliable visitor services, and a cohesive team within the CVB's office structure to perform duties and achieve goals.

PCCVB STAFF EDUCATION + ADVOCACY

With ever changing landscapes in destination marketing and management, the Pocahontas County CVB staff continues to dedicate time to furthering their knowledge and expertise in the travel and tourism industry.



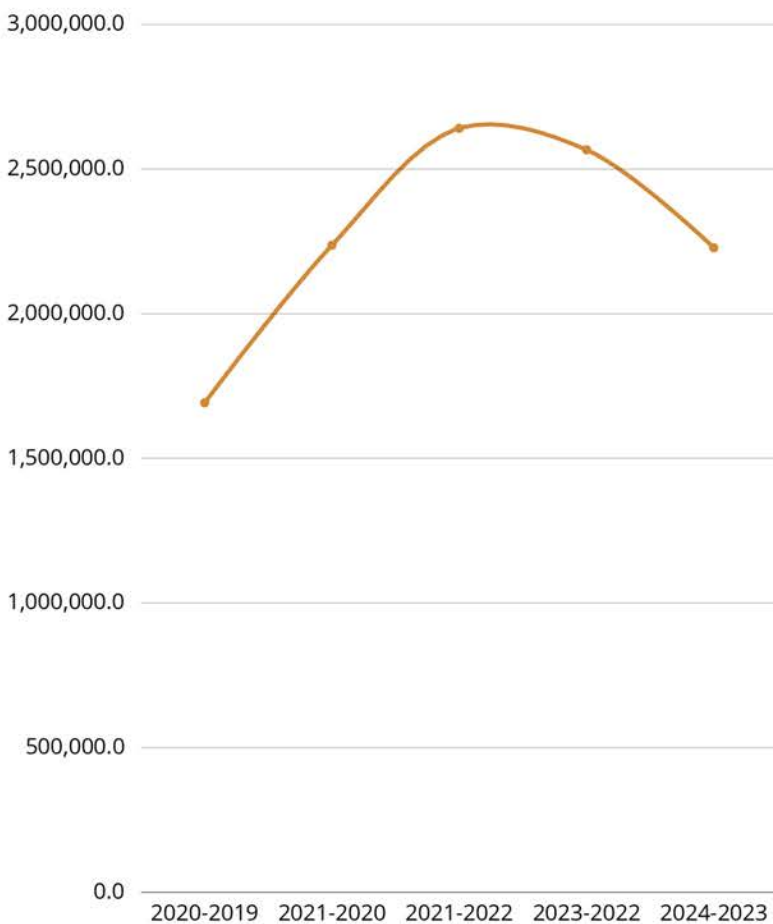
- WVHTA Hospitality University
- Pocahontas County CVB 8th Grade Business Luncheon
- Pocahontas County School Systems: Career Days
- WV Governor's Conference on Tourism Social Media Lab
- Journalism + Content Creation Lab
- STS Marketing College
- WV Tourism Weekly Webinars
- Web Statistics & GA4 Analytics Webinars
- Press Releases Tips Webinars
- Pocahontas County CVB Tourism Summit
- State + Federal Grant Workshops
- WV Tourism Day at the Capitol
- Advocacy Tables at Events + Festivals
- Outdoor Recreation Economy Conferences + Workshops
- Mon Forest Towns Partnership Regional Summit
- Hosting + Public Speaking at Panels, Workshops + Conferences
- Pocahontas County CVB Marketing + Social Media Training Workshops for Local Tourism Partners



YEAR IN REVIEW 2024

The Pocahontas County CVB saw a 13.2% decrease in hotel/motel tax collection in fiscal year 2024-2023. This significant loss in hotel/motel tax collection could be attributed to multiple things including a lackluster ski season, decreases in lodging prices, and the upcoming election. This decrease in revenue is also being felt throughout the state and country as hotels and travel attractions are facing similar losses. While 2024-2023 was very stressful on the economy, which impacted travel and spending, data is showing the economy is leveling out, providing a ripe time for travel amongst consumers.

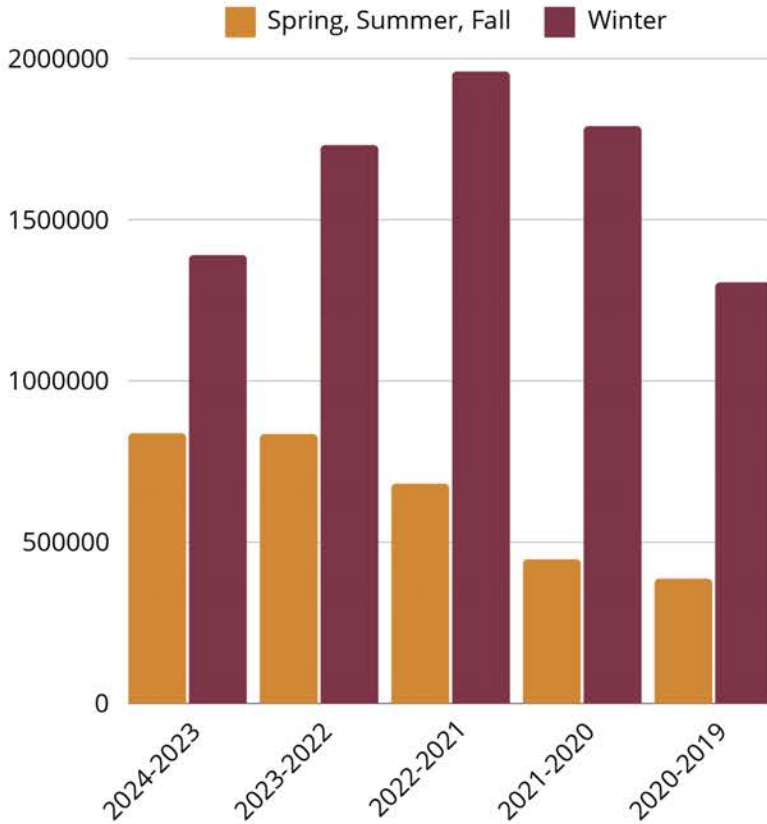
PC H/M TAX COLLECTION PREVIOUS 5 YEARS



Like many other outdoor recreation destinations, the Pocahontas County CVB saw tremendous post-pandemic growth with traveler interest's shifting from international and metropolitan travel, to more regional, rural destinations with the outbreak of COVID19. With record breaking hotel/motel tax collection during fiscal year 2021-2022 (\$2.6 million in revenue), Pocahontas County is continuing to face the ever evolving travel industry as we continue maneuvering through the return of international travel and economic concern. The graph of hotel/motel tax collection in Pocahontas County for the previous 5 years shows that while hotel/motel tax collection still exceeds pre-pandemic level, revenue is starting to plateau. To counter this, the PCCVB will be focusing on enhancing their seasonal marketing and advertising campaigns to encourage new travelers to visit during the spring, summer and fall seasons. The PCCVB will focus on reaching new audiences by targeting new markets and promoting new tourism products such as the Monday Lick Trail System, opening to mountain bikers in 2025. With a decrease in revenue, the PCCVB will also need to be strategic with marketing and ad buys to creatively promote with a smaller budget.

CONTINUING TO ENHANCE SEASONAL H/M TAX REVENUE

SEASONAL HOTEL/MOTEL TAX COLLECTION



The Pocahontas County CVB is continuing to grow its overall visitorship and annual revenue by focusing on increasing travel during the spring, summer and fall seasons. While winter is still our main economic driver, the PCCVB's marketing strategies involve higher ad spend and detailed campaigns outside of the winter season. As we continue to grow our revenue in the spring, summer and fall seasons, we will increase the total hotel/motel tax collection in Pocahontas County, aiding not only the CVB, but other countywide non-profit organizations and programs as well.

As Pocahontas County bolsters itself as a premiere mountain biking destination, the promotion and branding of our county is crucial to enhance our seasonal earnings. As a Silver-Level IMBA designated Ride Center, the Pocahontas County CVB will focus on promoting mountain biking, as it can be enjoyed throughout multiple seasons, without the need for cold temperatures, or winter weather.

The PCCVB will focus not only on promoting mountain biking, but other popular activities such as hiking, motorcycling and fishing.

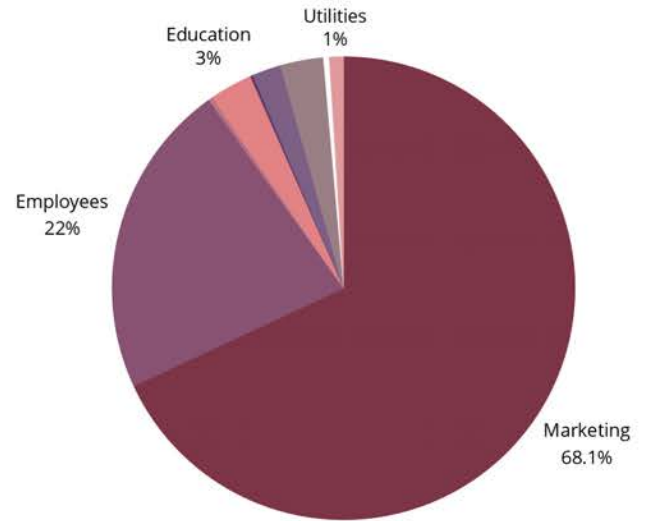


PCCVB OPERATING BUDGET

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR: JULY 2024-JUNE 2025

EXPENSES + PERCENT OF BUDGET BY CATEGORY

CATEGORY	EXPENSE	~% OF BUDGET
Marketing <i>direct marketing efforts, event marketing grants, partnership marketing, sponsorships, WV Dept. of Tourism co-op</i>	\$1,222,578	68%
Employee Expenses <i>wages, insurance, taxes</i>	\$402,439	22%
Professional Organization/Membership Dues	\$4,885	0.30%
Education	\$53,180	3%
Insurance <i>property, liability</i>	\$3,100	0.20%
Travel Expenses	\$32,275	2%
Visitor Center/Office Operations	\$57,239	3%
Promotional Products	\$7,000	0.40%
Utilities	\$25,655	1%
TOTAL	\$1,808,351	100%



The Pocahontas County CVB confirms compliance with the budget allocation industry standard of 40%-40%-20% (marketing, personnel, administration)

FINANCIAL STANDING & ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT:

The Pocahontas County CVB owns the primary business location in Marlinton and is managing the assets through a financial policy requiring the CVB protect assets to eliminate risk and remain solvent. The PCCVB retains \$250,000 in a restricted flood recovery fund and also \$250,000 in a restricted emergency fund for cashflow in fall and early winter. The working deposit account is protected by FDIC limits through a sweep account ensuring that all our cash assets are insured and have no risk. Fixed assets include the Marlinton building and office equipment. A balance sheet is included in this report.



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Partner & Tourism Development Support:

Tourism Person of The Year Award

Media Outreach & Public Relations

Monthly Industry Newsletter

PCCVB Event Marketing Grants & Event Sponsorships

Cal Price Appalachian Enrichment Series

Mountain State Maple Days

Public Art Installations (Marlinton, Durbin)

Make It Shine Road Clean-Up Campaign

Continued Trail Maintenance Efforts Through GAOA Funding

Monday Lick Trail System Construction

Allegheny Trail 50 Year Anniversary Celebration

Snowshoe Mountain Hosts 2024 UCI World Cup Marathon

Pocahontas County Tourism Summit

2023 Pocahontas County Visitor Market & Economic Impact Report

CVB Strategic Plan:

Pocahontas County Housing Taskforce

Mountain Culture - Tourism Community Advocacy Campaign

Continued Partnerships with:

WV Department of Tourism, Snowshoe Mountain Resort, US Forest Service, Mon Forest Towns Regional Partnership, Mountaineer Trail Network Regional Authority, Pocahontas County Broadband Council, Pocahontas County Chamber of Commerce, Snowshoe Highlands Area Recreation Collaborative, Green Bank Observatory, State Parks & Forests, Mountain Rail Adventures, Pearl S. Buck Birthplace, WV Scenic Trails Association, Leave No Trace



Investment into the Tourism-Based Workforce:

Annual 8th Grade Business Luncheon

PCHS Tourism Scholarship

PCHS Tourism Club

Mountain Culture Hospitality Training

Field Trip Support for K-8th Grade Students

Adventure Pocahontas

Nature's Mountain Classroom

NICA Mountain Bike Team



Snowshoe Highlands Area Recreation Collaborative (SHARC):

Focused on continuing the growth, maintenance, and sustainability of the Snowshoe Highlands Silver-Level IMBA Ride Center and the mountain biking trails that encompass Pocahontas County. With the Monday Lick single track, bike-optimized trail system scheduled for completion in spring of 2025, the Snowshoe Highlands Area Ride Center and the Town of Marlinton will prepare to see an influx of mountain bikers coming from all over the globe to ride these phenomenal trails. GAOA Funding in collaboration with the PCCVB, SHARC, the USFS, Benedum Foundation, and Just Transition Fund, has allowed the PCCVB to employ a trail maintenance crew including 3 full-time employees and 6 seasonal employees to focus on the maintenance and mapping of our countywide trail systems. Other notable actions include: volunteer and training efforts, education and community development and planning.



Mon Forest Towns (MFT) Regional Partnership:

Regional partnership focused on collaboratively working with 12 MFT gateway communities to grow recreational economies. Since 2019, MFT has leveraged over \$7 million in local, state, & federal funding for the 12 towns. Both Durbin and Marlinton are apart of MFT MFT submitted an ARC POWER Grant in the spring of 2024; the funding would be used to further establish the partnership through improved branding and marketing efforts, community and business outreach, and partner communications.

Leave No Trace - PCCVB Partnership:

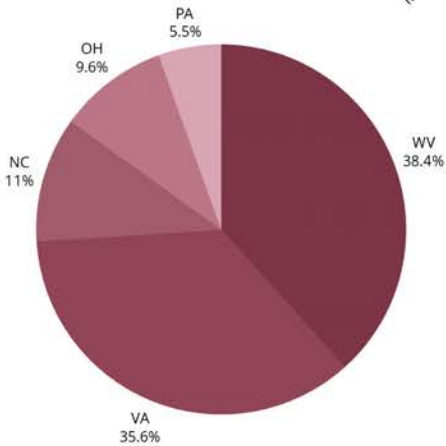
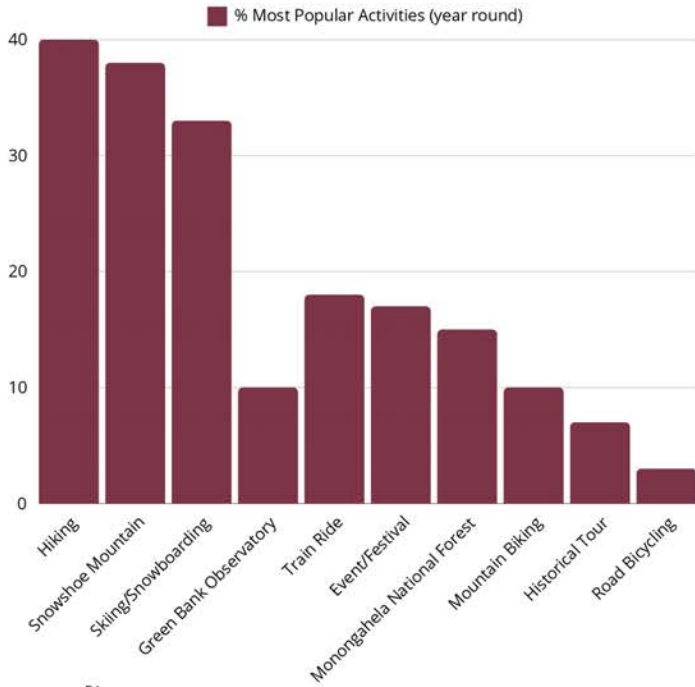
The Pocahontas County CVB is a proud partner of Leave No Trace, promoting the Leave No Trace Seven Principles.



SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

DESTINATION: POCAHONTAS COUNTY, WV

KEY DATA 2023 VISITOR MARKET STUDY



Secondary Markets:

MD
KY
SC
TN
DC

94% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience in Pocahontas County

93% were satisfied or very satisfied with recreation + outdoor activities in Pocahontas County

Survey Conducted
January - October 2023
at 17 various locations across
Pocahontas County

Produced 941 valid visitor responses

Male respondents = 51.2%
Female respondents = 47.8%

Visitor ages 25-34 + 45-54 = 40%

College Degree = 70%
HHI +\$100,000 = 42%

77% travel for leisure/vacation

66% were repeat visitors
34% were 1st time visitors

Average length of stay = 3.2 nights

Average group size = 5.3 people

Total Average Group Spending
\$1,598.46

Overall Average Spending/Person
\$340.78

Total Average Spending/Person/Day
\$141.72



“THE REST” POCAHONTAS COUNTY CREATIVE ADVERTISING + BRANDING CAMPAIGN

The Pocahontas County CVB, with guidance and support from Digital Relativity, crafted “The Rest” campaign that highlights the beauty in the juxtaposition of Pocahontas County’s offerings. Using alliteration was key in creating “The Rest” campaign messaging. Each primary word in “The Rest” campaign corresponded with a specific outdoor activity in the county that begins with “R”. In messaging where multiple activities were featured at once, other forms of alliteration were used in reference. For example, “Come to Roam. To walk the winding trails and follow the flowing rivers. Come to Roam, Stay for the Rest.” The clever use of iteration within this campaign’s messaging was paired with imagery that evokes emotion through both print and video mediums.



SPRING 2024 “THE REST” CAMPAIGN RESULTS FLIGHT DATES: MARCH 1 - APRIL, 30, 2024

Overall:

10 million impressions
112,000 website clicks
1.11% CTR

META Ads:

51,900 website clicks
5.46% CTR

“The Rest” Spring Campaign Landing Page:

63,000 sessions
66,000 views
54,000 users



POCAHONTAS COUNTY ORGANIC SOCIAL STRATEGY

The Pocahontas County CVB utilizes social media to highlight unique and lesser-known activities and places in Nature's Mountain Playground. With an abundance of one-of-a-kind experiences, Pocahontas County CVB relies on social media to give authentic glimpses into what a vacation in Nature's Mountain Playground looks like.

Leveraging the power of organic videos, Pocahontas County CVB has seen tremendous success on its social media channels. Since consistently posting Instagram Reels starting in January 2023, the CVB's Instagram account has experienced significant surges in key metrics.

The CVB's social strategy showcases the beauty of Pocahontas County, highlighting outdoor adventures, unique attractions, inviting accommodations, local businesses, breathtaking scenery and exciting events.

From January 2023 to June 2024, the Pocahontas County CVB account posted 624 posts, with over half (349) being Reels. This focus on video content has resulted in a 1,426% increase in video views.

Beyond video views, the impact of the Pocahontas County CVB's social strategy has enhanced overall social media engagement across multiple channels. Compared to 2021-2022, the Pocahontas County CVB Instagram account has seen a 294% increase in impressions, a 66% increase in new followers and a 26% increase in total followers.



FOLLOW US:

Facebook
Instagram
Pinterest
TikTok
Reddit
YouTube
X



Nature's
**MOUNTAIN
PLAYGROUND**
FOUNDED IN 1986

+ WEST
VIRGINIA

PLAN
NOW

The West Virginia Department of Tourism provides state tourism partners with the Cooperative Advertising Assistance Program. This program a public-private partnership that allows industry partners to tap into state advertising funds and resources to promote themselves and steer travelers to their destination. Each season, The West Virginia Department of Tourism offers various media opportunities including print, social, out-of-home, digital, and more at a 50/50 ad spend match for single partners, and 75/25 match for regional partnerships.

WEST VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

COOPERATIVE ADVERTISING PARTNERSHIP

JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024

\$76,083 PCCVB SPEND

\$152,166

WITH 50/50 WVDT MATCH

7,711,809 Impressions

107,701 Clicks to PCCVB Website

Vendor Sources:

Google

Meta

Madden Media - Meta

Nfluence

Pinterest

Stackadapt

Cooperative Buys Purchased:

Paid Social

Paid Search

Programmatic

Brand Ambassador Program



STRENGTHS

Pocahontas County is a uniquely poised four-season destination that boasts some of WV's most interesting and iconic outdoor attractions, activities + scenic views.

Home to Snowshoe Highlands Ride Center, creating a world-class destination for global mountain bikers + their families.

Home to Snowshoe Mountain Resort, one of the East Coast's premier ski resort + mountain biking destinations.

Nearly 1/3 of the Monongahela National Forest is in Pocahontas County.

Rich cultural heritage + historical landmarks.

Increase in new amenities throughout the county, from lodging and dining, to outfitters and shops.

Strong brand-awareness within the in-state audience.

Deep-rooted, authentic hospitality + experiences.

OPPORTUNITIES

Build brand awareness as a four-season destination + premiere getaway for adventure + relaxation regionally + nationally.

Build nationwide brand awareness for the Snowshoe Highlands Ride Center among the mountain biking audience.

Capitalize on the Pocahontas County CVB's active social media following to increase awareness of activities + attractions.

Build upon the authentic hospitality, uniqueness and diversity present within communities.

Cultivate collaborative partnerships with local businesses, accommodations and attractions to create the best visitor experience.

WEAKNESSES

Low brand recognition of Pocahontas County beyond regional travel.

Rural nature of the destination limits availability of amenities and the development of infrastructure, which could inconvenience visitors.

Absence of public transportation options to and within the county could potentially discourage visitors.

Lack of diversity and inclusion within Pocahontas County communities.

As a rural destination with limited lodging, the capacity for visitors to stay overnight is limited.

THREATS

Economic downturns or uncertainties could negatively impact travel budgets, potentially deterring travel.

Changes in travel trends + preferences could influence types of destinations + experiences travelers are likely to desire.

Overuse + sustainability issues could hurt the county's wilderness + local resources..

Neighboring destinations with similar activities + attractions could capture the attention of visitors.

A shortage of housing + labor in local workforce could cause limited business hours and services.

Presence of dilapidated structures impacting viewsheds coupled with issues of littering affect both private properties and public roadways.



POCAHONTAS COUNTY SWOT ANALYSIS

2024-2025 POCAHONTAS COUNTY CVB STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN SUMMARY

With a decline in hotel/motel tax collection in fiscal year 2023-2024, the Pocahontas County CVB will continue to address key challenges that face the travel industry.

An emphasis on promoting travel in the fall, spring, and summer seasons will be crucial in building overall revenue. The Pocahontas County CVB is uniquely poised to capitalize on activities such as mountain biking and hiking, to capture new visitor audiences interested in recreation that is not weather dependent.

Fostering partnerships with Pocahontas County attractions, regional initiatives, and the West Virginia Department of Tourism will be crucial in bolstering growing interest in Pocahontas County as a premiere outdoor recreation destination.

As the Pocahontas County CVB maneuvers through an ever-changing, post-pandemic travel industry, crafting cost effective, authentic advertising and marketing campaigns will be key in connecting Pocahontas County to new audiences in new markets, in-turn, growing our overall outdoor recreation economy.





Nature's 
MOUNTAIN PLAYGROUND
POCAHONTAS COUNTY, WV®

POCAHONTAS COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted By:
Chelsea Faulknier
Executive Director, Pocahontas County CVB