



MARTIN COUNTY

CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028



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Acknowledgements

The Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) program is made possible by a U.S. Economic Development Administration State Tourism Grant which awarded \$6 Million to the State of North Carolina’s Supporting and Strengthening Resiliency in North Carolina’s Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Sectors Initiative. As a component of this Initiative, the North Carolina Department of Commerce’s Rural Economic Development Division (REDD) developed the CORE program. The CORE program offers strategic planning and technical assistance to help rural communities leverage North Carolina’s abundant outdoor recreation assets to bolster local economic vitality.



The REDD announced the technical assistance program offering Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Planning and Asset Development services in late 2022. Communities from across the state applied to engage with strategic planning services and 34 local governments were accepted to participate. Main Street & Rural Planning (MS&RP) staff, who is responsible for facilitating strategic economic development planning and implementation services, worked with local government staff to communicate the goals of the program, identify local opportunities, and assemble a planning work group.

Martin County Outdoor Recreation Economy Planning Committee

Steve Biggs, Martin County EDC Director	Cameron Braddy, Town of Williamston
Mayor Tina Brown, Robersonville	Chase Conner, Martin County TDA
Grey Corey, Martin County EDC	Mayor Charlotte Griffin, Bear Grass
Anthony Howell, Martin County Schools	Andrew Kuhn, Town of Williamston
Mayor Jerry McCrary, Parmele	Allen Overby, Town of Williamston
Jean Spruill-Boyd, Town of Oak City	Hank Winslow, Martin County EDC

N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division Staff

Lee Padrick, Northeast Prosperity Zone Planner
David McRae, Appalachian Regional Commission Assistant Program Manager
Karen C. Smith, AICP, NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center, Rural Planning Program Manager

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Executive Summary

Through CORE, Martin County collaborated with N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division staff members and local stakeholders through a strategic planning process to identify and develop outdoor recreation assets that present economic growth opportunities. Strategy development focused on leveraging outdoor recreation assets to increase tourism, encourage small business development, enhance quality of life for residents, plan for outdoor recreation asset and infrastructure development, and position communities to grow and attract outdoor gear manufacturing industries. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

The plan proposes a vision, strategies, goals, objectives, and actions that communities can take to increase economic vitality by leveraging outdoor recreation. For the purposes of this strategic planning program outdoor recreation is defined as *all recreational activities undertaken for leisure that occur outdoors, with an emphasis on those activities that involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments*. Furthermore, other community assets and economic institutions that benefit from or complement the outdoor recreation economy are addressed in the plan.



The plan crafts a Vision for the next 5 years and makes recommendations (endorsed by the Outdoor Recreation Economy Planning Committee) on Strategies, Goals, Objectives, and Actions that local stakeholders can take to accomplish the purpose of increasing economic vitality through leveraging outdoor recreation. The plan's Actions are subdivided into Organization, Marketing, and Projects. This template builds upon the current Martin County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) Strategic Plan, and many TDA actions are addressed in this outdoor recreation plan.

Vision: Martin County, the historic crossroads of the Roanoke River, is the destination for nature and equestrian enthusiasts and the center for wildlife and motorsports in eastern North Carolina.

Three (3) strategies emerged from the Vision Statement:

1. Historic Crossroads of the Roanoke River
2. Destination for Nature and Equestrian Enthusiasts
3. Center for Wildlife and Motorsports

Three (3) goals for each strategy were developed:

1. Enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors and residents by connecting them with the Roanoke River and developing a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure.
2. Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets.
3. Establish Martin County as the center of wildlife and motorsports racing.

Objectives to measure goal progress were developed, and Actions were associated with three subdivisions, or levels of responsibility:

1. Organization (County and/or Towns)
2. Marketing
3. Projects (Project Development)

A quick look at the plan outline is on Page 13. Also, an accompanying appendix is included that takes a deeper dive into each Action, assigns Tasks, and includes an Implementation Schedule, starting on Page 19.



Note. Roanoke River at the Williamston Boating Access

Background

There is a long tradition of outdoor recreation in North Carolina. From the mountains to the coast and everywhere in between there are incredible landscapes and unique places to pursue a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities. Participation in these activities generates a large economic impact. In recent years statistics show that participation in outdoor recreation is increasing, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. Continued growth in participation leads to the opportunity for the increased economic impact of outdoor recreation, particularly in rural locations where many of the state’s outdoor recreation assets are located. Also, there is great potential to expose and engage people that have historically not participated in outdoor recreation activities at the same rate as others. It is important for all individuals to have the opportunity and access to enjoy recreational pursuits, and to have an opportunity to economically benefit from outdoor recreation. These factors, combined with other on-going outdoor recreation initiatives across the state, make it an ideal time to think critically about how this sector can continue to be leveraged to benefit local economies.

Economic Impact

Outdoor recreation activity and associated expenditures generate a large economic impact. This is a broad economic sector that comprises a diverse range of industries including manufacturing, retail, arts, entertainment, and recreation, as well as many supporting activities such as construction, travel and tourism, accommodation, and food service, and many more.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis’ Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, nationwide, in 2021, the outdoor recreation economy represented \$454 billion in current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP), or 1.9 percent of the United States’ total GDP.



\$11.8 Billion in Total Outdoor Recreation Value-Added economic impact within North Carolina in 2021. How to capture a larger portion of this in Martin County?



The outdoor recreation sector of the economy is growing at a faster rate than the overall economy. "Inflation-adjusted ("real")

GDP for the outdoor recreation economy increased 18.9 percent in 2021, compared with a 5.9 percent increase for the overall U.S. economy, reflecting a rebound in outdoor recreation after the decrease of 21.6 percent in 2020. Real gross output for the outdoor recreation economy increased 21.7 percent, while outdoor recreation compensation increased 16.2 percent and employment increased 13.1 percent. Employment in the outdoor recreation industry increased in all 50 states during 2021.

At the state level, outdoor recreation contributed \$11.8 billion in total value-added economic impact to North Carolina's GDP. North Carolina ranked as the 11th highest state in "Value-Added Outdoor Recreation in Total Outdoor Recreation Activities" in 2021. This included employment for over 130,000 individuals that resulted in over \$5.9 billion in total compensation. Employment in key industries within the outdoor recreation sector includes over 8,000 in manufacturing, 44,000 in retail, 27,000 in accommodation and food service, and over 23,000 in arts, entertainment, and recreation.¹

To establish a baseline for progress and determine the economic impact of outdoor recreation on the county's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), an Economic Impact Analysis was generated. The minimal level of statistics to gather for a town or county's outdoor recreation economic impact was the following:

- County Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- 2020 North Carolina, County or Municipal Population (certified by North Carolina State Demographics)

Using these numbers, an estimate of the economic impact results of recreational boating, equine, wildlife watching, fishing, hunting, bicycling, and kayaking based on a per capita ratio of that activity's impact on the county GDP after all measurable activities' impacts were calculated.

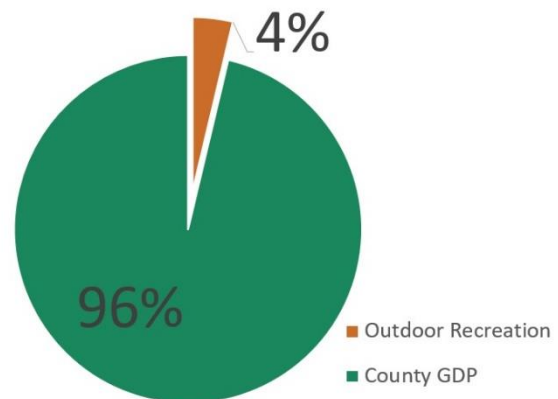
A recommendation for planning is for the local committee to consider surveying visitors for spending in the community. This is important for developing more localized and accurate economic analyses. This will be helpful in more accurately understanding the role of each outdoor recreation activity in the total economic impact. Surveying visitors and users of local outdoor recreation (e.g., intercept surveys at boat ramps or QR codes for online surveys in local businesses) will also provide objective quantitative measurements to gauge the progress and success of the identified goals and projects.

Figure 1.

Martin County Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Recreational Boating	\$13,330,981
Equine	3,492,055
Wildlife Watch	2,653,209
Fishing	1,451,234
Hunting	1,445,819
Camping	772,974
Kayaking	712,773
Bicycling	492,123
<u>Go-Karting</u>	<u>468,750</u>

County Outdoor Recreation Economy **\$24,819,917**



Martin County GDP **\$ 611,337,000**

GDP is the value of goods and services produced within a county

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis
www.bea.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/lagdp1222.pdf

Martin County, known as a regional outdoor recreation location for many years, not surprisingly exceeds the state proportion of GDP (1.8% of state’s GDP, versus 4% of the Martin County GDP) in terms of outdoor recreation impact. Recreational boating is the highest economic impact activity with over \$13 million in impacts, with Equine sports in second with \$3,492,055 in impacts. Wildlife watching contributes \$2,653,209 to the county’s GDP, with fishing (\$1,451,234), hunting (\$1,445,819), camping (\$772,974), kayaking (\$712,773), and bicycling (\$492,123).

Go-karting, a unique outdoor activity that has organically developed over the past few pandemic years, is a thriving sport that is attracting upwards of 500 people per race event. There are a handful of local go-karting tracks that have been built in the past three years, and go-kart races not only attract competitors and spectators, but also local business owners, such as food trucks. Go-karting was calculated to have an economic impact of \$468,750 annually.

Outdoor Recreation Participation

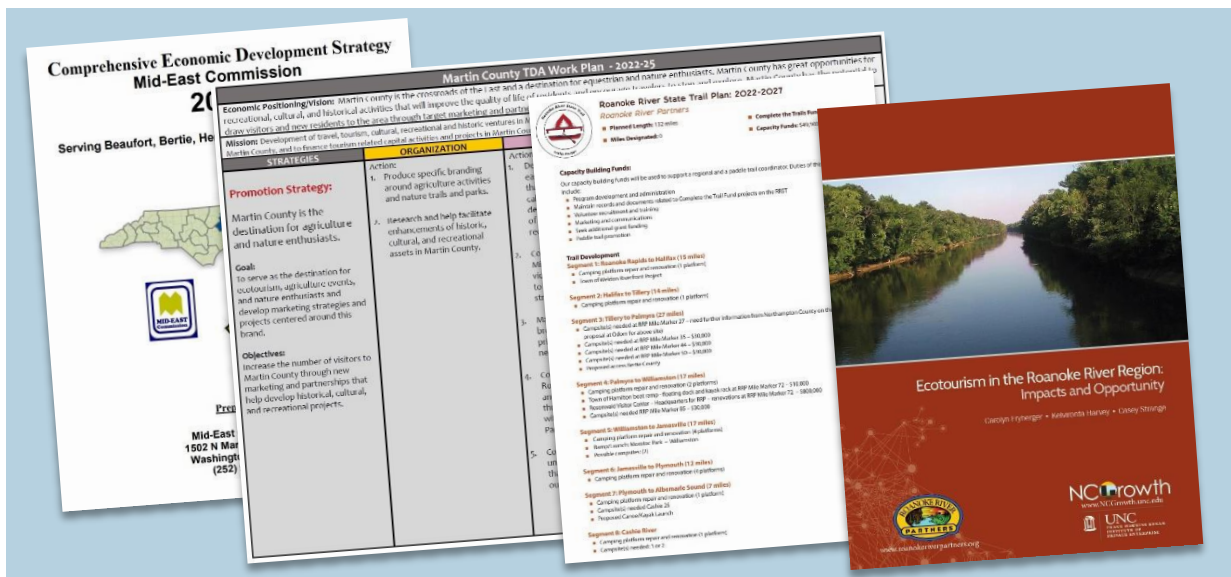
According to the 2022 Outdoor Industry Association *Outdoor Participation Trends Report*, “outdoor participation continues to grow at record levels. More than half (54%) of Americans ages 6 and over participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2021, and the outdoor recreation participant base grew 2.2% in 2021 to 164.2 million participants. This growing number of

outdoor participants, however, did not fundamentally alter long-term declines in high frequency or ‘core’ outdoor participation.”²

Studies show that approximately 56% of North Carolinians participate in some form of outdoor recreation each year³. This includes more than 22.8 million visitors to North Carolina state parks in 2021 — three million more than any other year on record. Many parks, national forests, and other public recreation areas report increased visitation as well. These numbers represent a solid base of individuals participating in outdoor recreation and contributing to associated economic activity. But there is still room to engage more individuals and continue to increase participation in outdoor recreation, particularly among populations that have not historically participated in outdoor recreation at levels comparable to others. Also, people increasingly want outdoor recreation opportunities that are convenient to where they live so they can participate on a regular basis without the need to travel long distances.^{4 5}

Existing Plans Review

To complement and build upon subsequent community planning efforts, staff assembled and reviewed other relevant plans and documents. This review provides valuable insight and helps avoid duplication or contradictions of past planning proposals. The following documents were reviewed and considered during the CORE planning process.



Note: Existing plans reviewed included Mid-East Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022, Martin County Tourism Development Authority Work Plan 2022-2025, Roanoke River State Trail Plan 2022-2027, and Ecotourism in the Roanoke River Region: Impacts and Opportunity 2016

Mid-East Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022

The [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#) is designed and required to bring together the public and private sectors in creating a comprehensive and performance-based plan to strengthen the regional economy. A CEDS is required for a region to be eligible for assistance through Economic Development Administration (EDA) programs.

Goal 1: Brand and market the Mid-East Region in order to support existing businesses, encourage entrepreneurship, highlight educational opportunities, foster continued development of target clusters, attract new employers, diversify the regional economy, and retain the millennial and Gen-Z generations.

Goal 1, Objective 6 & 7, respectively, is to “Create a marketing image that reflects the quality of life and unique assets of each area, such as water resources, peanuts, glassworks, historical and cultural sites, sports arenas, campgrounds, etc.” and “Assist businesses with the development of new adaptive capabilities.”

Goal 3: Support and help revitalize safe, walkable communities with vibrant urban and town centers, thriving rural areas, a variety of housing options, affordable services, and healthy citizens.

Goal 3, Objective 1 & 6, respectively, is to “Promote environmentally sustainable development patterns” and “Capitalize on natural resources and recreation opportunities in order to improve the quality of life for citizens and promote ecotourism.”

All the actions identified in the Martin County Outdoor Recreation Plan meet these goals and objectives.

Martin County Tourism Development Authority Work Plan 2022-2025

As permitted by NCGS and the Martin County Board of Commissioners, the Authority promotes travel, tourism, and conventions in the county, sponsor tourist-related events and activities in the county, and finance tourism-related capital projects in the county. Thirteen members comprise the Tourism Development Authority, each approved by the Martin County Commissioners for 3-year terms; one Commissioner appointed for a 1-year term (Finance Officer position is ongoing).

The mission of the Martin County TDA is to:

- Develop travel, tourism, cultural, recreational and historic ventures in Martin County through advertising and promotion;
- Sponsor tourist-oriented events and activities in Martin County; and

- Finance tourism related capital activities and projects in Martin County.

Several goals in the TDA's work plan touch on outdoor recreation. These goals include objectives and actions that produce specific branding of nature parks and researching and facilitating enhancements of historic, cultural, and recreational assets. Also, other actions are to brand the Roanoke River State Trail and camping platforms, work with the Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center and Martin Community College Equine Program and highlight African American and Native American history in the region.

An additional action included in the Martin County TDA Work Plan are to encourage the completion of the Moratoc Park Boardwalk to create a destination of outdoor tourism and expand upon other development projects such as an amphitheater, splash park, and the Rosenwald River Center.

Roanoke River State Trail Plan 2022-2027

The Roanoke River State Trail is a paddle trail extending from Weldon to the Albemarle Sound. Despite meandering through the coastal plain of North Carolina, this paddle trail offers a unique wilderness experience to all who venture along its length.

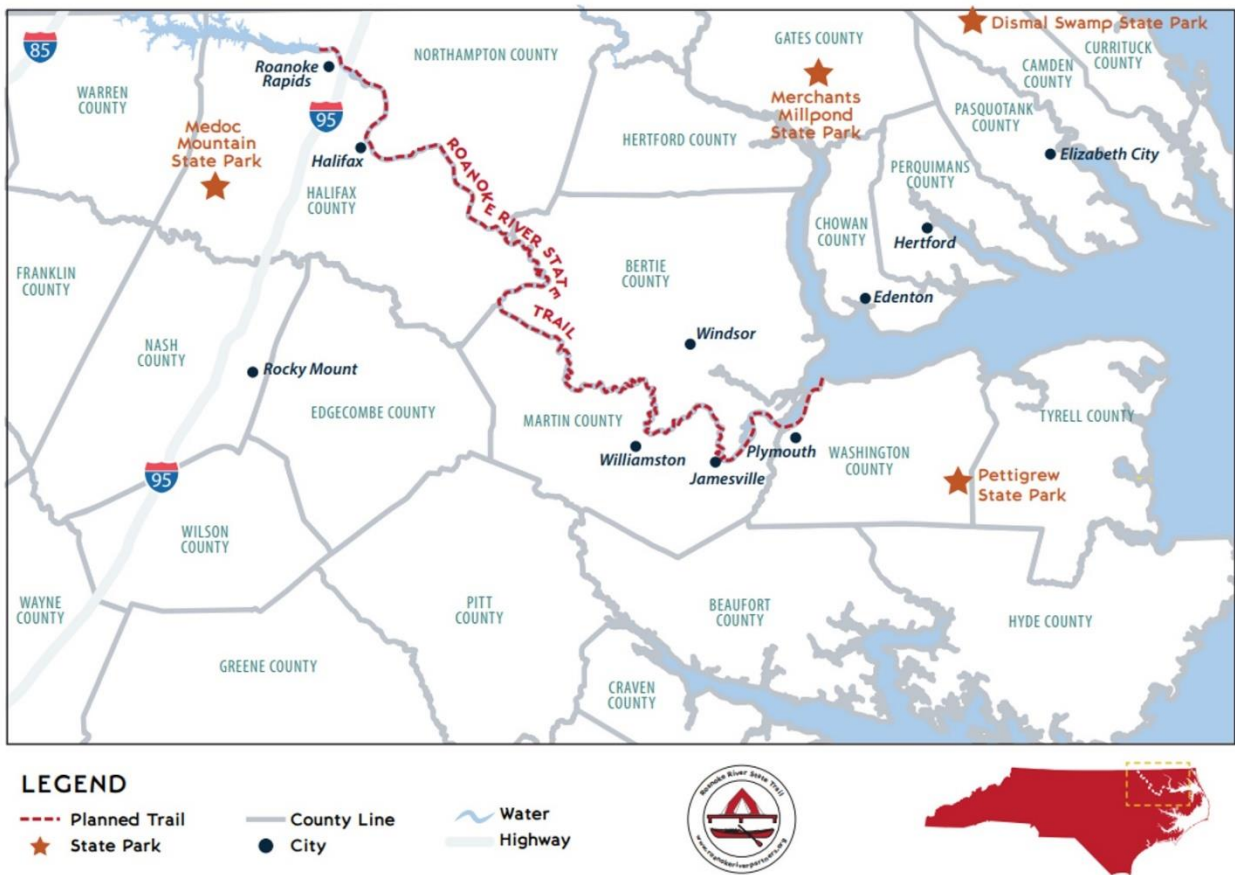
As part of the [Complete the Trail Program](#), each state trail partner organization was required to submit a five-year plan, outlining priorities and goals until 2027 for their trail.

Priority CTP projects:

- Camping platform repair / renovation
- Campsite(s) construction at RRP Mile Markers 35, 44, 50, and 85
- Town of Hamilton boat ramp – floating dock and kayak rack at RRP Mile Marker 72
- Rosenwald Visitor Center renovations at RRP Mile Marker 72

Figure 2.

Roanoke River State Trail Plan



Ecotourism in the Roanoke River Region: Impacts and Opportunities (2016)

NCGrowth in partnership with Roanoke River Partners (RRP) analyzed the annual economic impact of the Roanoke River Paddle Trail. It should be noted that the Paddle Trail is just one of Roanoke River Partner’s initiatives; the organization has a broader impact on the region not reflected in this report through a variety of collaborative partnerships and activities such as marketing and promotion of partner events, reoccurring partner meetings, and attracting and hosting regional, state, and national events.

This analysis found that the Paddle Trail is a unique asset that can be leveraged to boost the economic growth of the five county Roanoke River region (inclusive of Bertie, Halifax, Martin, Northampton, and Washington Counties). The current annual impacts of the trail include:

- **Employment:** The Paddle Trail supports approximately 7 jobs in the region over the course of each year.

- **Income:** On an annual basis the Trail contributes \$175,680 of personal income to workers in the region.
- **Economic Growth:** Each year the Trail contributes \$553,270 to the growth of the regional economy.
- **Multiplier Effect:** For every dollar spent because of the Paddle Trail \$1.64 is generated in the regional economy. This result is comparable to other rural ecotourism attractions that have been studied across the country.

These economic impacts are driven by two primary activities: the operational spending of the Roanoke River Partners organization and spending by Trail users on groceries, equipment, lodging, and other needs. RRP's efforts can boost the economic impact of the Paddle Trail by increasing visitor spending while they are in the region – either through marketing efforts to grow the annual number of overnight visits or through efforts to grow complementary attractions such as guided tours and unique dining experiences that enhance visitors' experiences. Encouraging visitors to shop at locally owned businesses, versus chain retailers, will also increase the impact of their spending as this reduces leakage out of the local economy. Strategies to increase the impact of the Paddle Trail are covered in the report.

Planning Process

The MS&RP Center staff facilitated the CORE strategic planning process with participation from the local government and an established local work group. This work group is comprised of individuals who have a vested interest in leveraging outdoor recreation to enhance economic development. The planning process employs established planning methods including presenting economic and associated data, asset mapping, economic driver identification, SWOT analysis, stakeholder interviews, local work group discussions, and more. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

In February 2023, the Martin County Outdoor Recreation Planning Committee began meeting to identify strategies, goals, objectives, and actions/projects that can grow the local outdoor recreational economy. The first step was to identify the types of outdoor recreation activities that are available within Martin County and its surroundings.

Figure 3.

Martin County Outdoor Recreation Activities



CAMPING
RV campsite
Tent campsite
Rustic lodge
River platform



OFF-ROADING
Go-Karting
ATV
4x4 and Jeep



TRAIL SPORTS
Running 3+ miles
Horseback riding



HUNTING
Sport shooting
Shotgun
Rifle
Bow



WHEEL SPORTS
Bicycling, paved road
Bicycling, off-road
Regional Trail Road
Skateboarding



WATER SPORTS
Boating:
cruising, sightseeing
Kayaking
Canoeing



FISHING
Recreational
Recreational fly



EMERGING ACTIVITIES
Pickleball
Disc golf
Skydiving



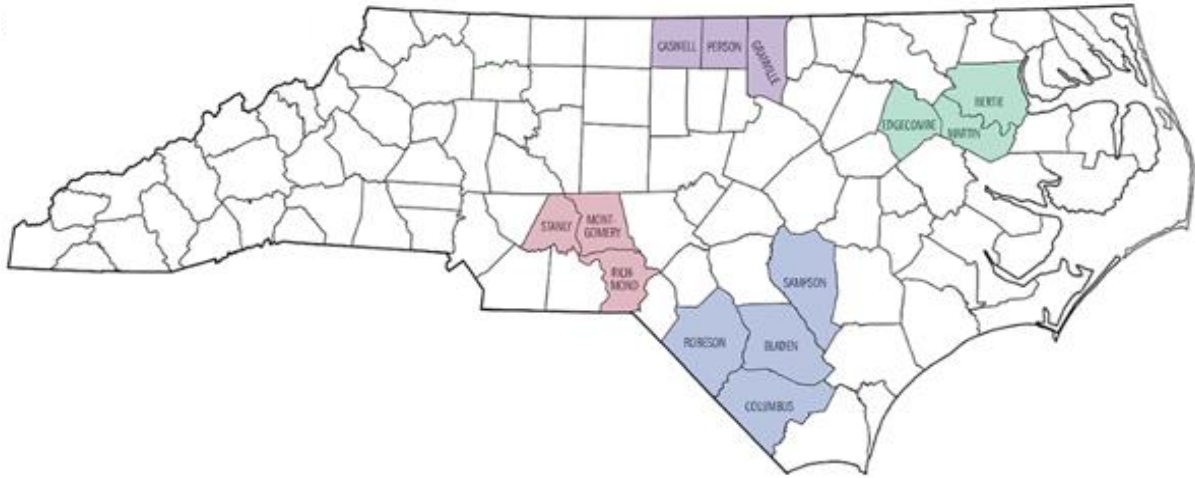
WILDLIFE VIEWING

While most activities fall within the normal definition of “outdoor recreation,” other traditional recreational activities (such as go-karting, pickleball, disc golf, and skydiving) also make up Martin County’s outdoor recreation economy and were included in this plan.

There are several EDA-grant funded programs occurring simultaneously in Martin County. In addition to CORE, there is the UPLIFT (Understand, Plan, Link, Innovate, Finance, and Tell) program which is focused on rural tourism in North Carolina. UPLIFT works regionally – across county borders – to support local tourism leaders and practitioners in realizing their vision for tourism in the community, including natural, recreational, cultural, agricultural, culinary, built, and other tourism.

Figure 4.

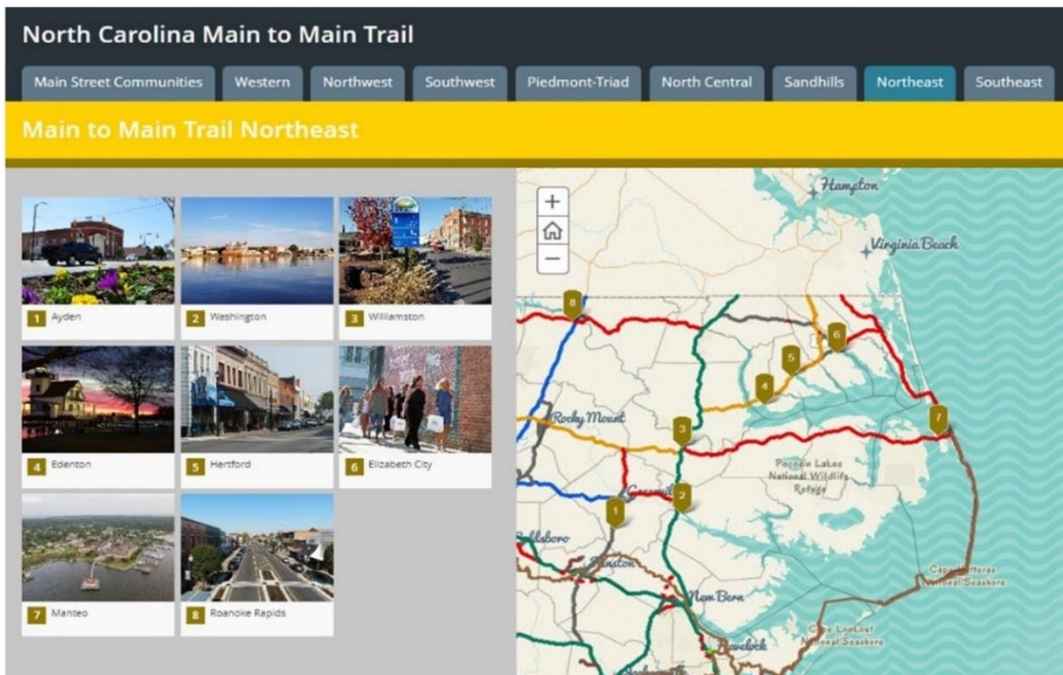
UPLIFT Communities



Also, the EDA-funded NC Main To Main Trail is a unique way to experience North Carolina communities. Since 1980, the State of North Carolina has been selecting cities and towns of all sizes to carry the distinction as designated North Carolina Main Street communities. These communities are actively engaged in the Main Street America network and are following the Main Street Approach™ to revitalize their downtown districts. Williamston is a participant in the NC Main Street Program.

Figure 5.

NC Main to Main Trail



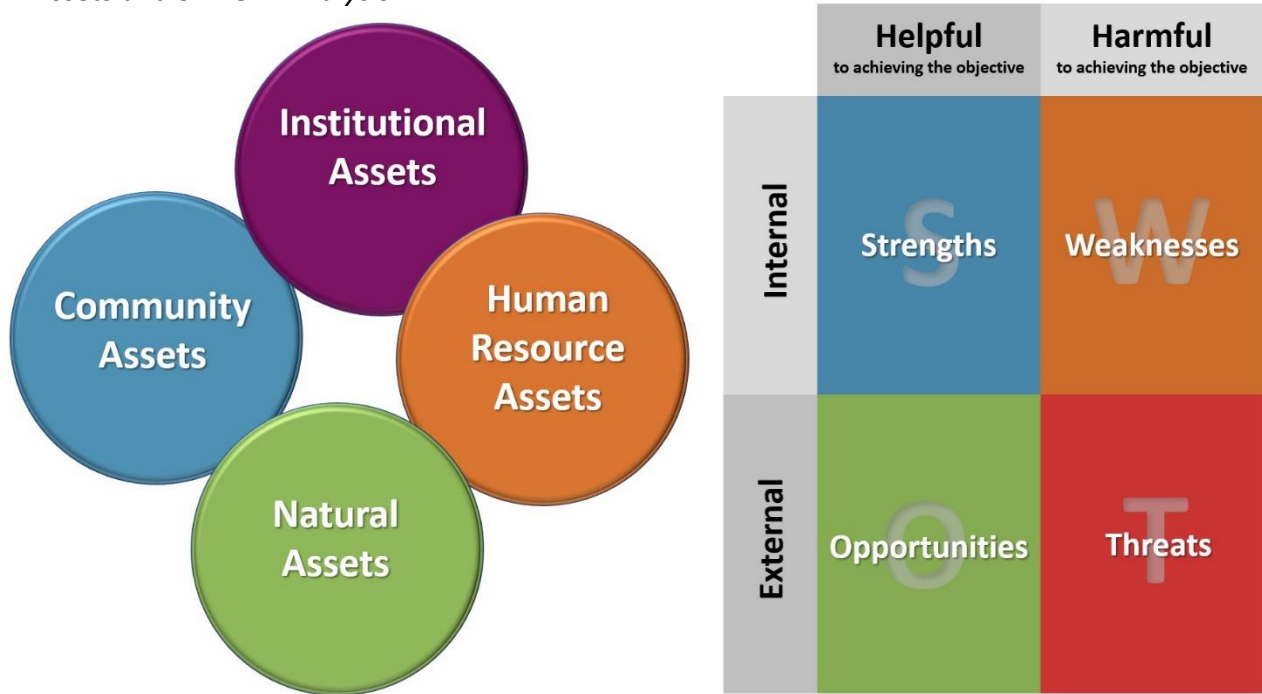
Source: <https://www.ncmainstreetandplanning.com/nc-main-to-main-trail>

The NC Main to Main Trail leads locals and visitors through the state’s designated Main Street communities, highlighting each town’s best downtown and outdoor experiences, and providing links to the local Main Street program, [VisitNC](#), and the local tourism websites.

The time horizon for the planning process is approximately 5 years and is intended to identify actions and fundable projects that will increase the community’s value for investment and put the community in a better economic development position regarding outdoor recreation. The Planning Committee undertook the traditional steps of strategic planning. The first steps were to identify the outdoor recreation assets and to acknowledge the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (S.W.O.T.).

Figure 6.

Assets and S.W.O.T. Analysis



After determining the assets and the S.W.O.T., the committee developed their vision, strategies, goals, objectives, and actions. The actions are subdivided into Organization, Marketing, and Projects. Each identified action has a series of tasks, detailed in the Appendix.

Figure 7.

Strategic Planning Process



Martin County Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028

Vision: Martin County, the historic crossroads of the Roanoke River, is the destination for nature and equestrian enthusiasts and the center for wildlife and motorsports in eastern North Carolina.

Strategies, Goals, and Objectives	Organization (County and/or Towns)	Marketing	Projects
<p>Strategy 1: Historic Crossroads of the Roanoke River</p> <p>Goal 1: Enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors and residents by connecting them with the Roanoke River and developing a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure</p> <p>Objectives: Increase water access points, maintain paddle trail information, reuse brownfield sites, market to new user groups</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop list of uses for Hamilton and Jamesville brownfield sites 2. Support Roanoke River Partners' rehabilitation of the Rosenwald School project in Hamilton 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a marketing campaign to promote the recreational opportunities along the Roanoke River to both local and regional visitors 2. Continue branding the Roanoke River State Trail and camping platforms as a regional paddle destination 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phase the Roanoke River State Trail Plan, including all 10 segments and Complete The Trail (CTF) projects 2. Identify and develop alternative put-in/take-outs along Roanoke River to make more amenable to paddle trips along river by decreasing distances between river access points
<p>Strategy 2: Destination for nature and equestrian enthusiasts</p> <p>Goal 2: Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets</p> <p>Objectives: Secure funding for Hamilton Feasibility Study, complete the Equine Trail by June 2024, increase number of visitors annually, support more short-term lodging options</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pursue funding and support for Hamilton Feasibility Study, which links Town of Hamilton Boat Access Ramp, downtown, the Rosenwald School, and the Hamilton Recreation Park 2. Implement the Martin Community College Equine Trail with secured funding 3. Coordinate Fort Branch with historic architectural walking tours in Hamilton and Williamston 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate the marketing of festivals and activities with events at Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center 2. Help local property owners develop more short-term lodging options and market the county as an ideal location for new lodging developments 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and maintain signage and informational materials to educate visitors on safe and responsible paddling and fishing/hunting practices 2. Complete the Williamston Boardwalk expansion, including a 3-hole disc golf course and a dog park

Strategies, Goals, and Objectives	Organization (County and/or Towns)	Marketing	Projects
<p>Strategy 3: Center for wildlife and motorsports</p> <p>Goal 3: Establish Martin County as the center of wildlife and motorsports racing</p> <p>Objectives: Grow the number of wildlife and motorsports participants, evaluate level of engagement with regional partners</p>	<p>1. Engage with Bertie County to promote the Lower Roanoke River Wetlands Game Lands and Roanoke River Wildlife Refuge for wildlife watching and hunting</p>	<p>1. Partner with NC Cultural Resources to include East Carolina Motor Speedway as a stop along the NC Moonshine and Motorsports Trail</p> <p>2. Work with emerging go-kart racing community and Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center's motorsports racing events to promote Martin County as a motorsport racing destination</p>	<p>1. Map existing wildlife watching access points to compliment marketing efforts and identify new wildlife observation points and trails</p> <p>2. Recognize and promote local venues as stops along the Underground Railroad Trail and NC Birding Trail</p>

Plan Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Martin County will be responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting accomplishments on the strategies, goals, objectives, and actions in this plan to REDD.

Plan Implementation

Maintaining a dedicated group to follow through after the planning process to begin addressing goals and objectives outlined in this plan is critical to attaining the potential economic impact of these strategies. This could be the same work group that helped develop this plan, or another similar group that is representative of the community and can advance the goals of this plan. The sustained presence of such a group builds ‘social capital’ within the group that improves their ability to work together and effectively address common goals. Furthermore, a dedicated group ensures continuity from planning stage through implementation, provides accountability to ensure that objectives are being met, and allows the community to react and respond quickly when an opportunity is presented. But this group should not be the sole entity responsible for implementing all the goals of the plan. Instead, the group should function as a convener and point of contact to connect to other individuals, organizations, and resources to help the broader community achieve these goals. Maintaining a regular meeting schedule will also help increase the effectiveness of the group, and the plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Constant evaluation of the goals, objectives, and actions in this plan, via regular review sessions with the Strategic Planning team and other community leadership, is critical to ensuring it remains a viable document. Martin County will continually monitor progress on how well and successful the region is at managing projects, meeting deadlines, communicating internally and to multiple external audiences, and utilizing the resources available.

The Martin County Outdoor Recreation Plan is a living document used to prioritize the needs of the community and outline the region’s objectives. The value of the plan lies with the ability of Martin County to set realistic goals — and implement innovative strategies — against which progress can be measured. It also allows the community to gauge the ongoing product of its local government.

Implementation, evaluation, and modification will be continuous for the plan and Martin County to remain relevant, responsive, and proactive. This strategic effort will provide greater accountability and represents an organization-wide approach to the preservation and enhancement of the quality of life that Martin County enjoys, and to improve upon it.

The most successful strategic planning efforts approach implementation from a network-based model, versus a more traditional hierarchical model (top-down approach). By working with economic partners such as NC Department of Commerce, Mid-East Commission, and other regional partners, Martin County's outdoor recreation plan can leverage resources and capacity. The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center (NC MS&RPC) division of NC Department of Commerce has yearly Actions & Tasks templates (used in the Appendix of this plan) to assist the area in measuring progress, and the Implementation Committee should reach out to the regional Northeast Community Economic Development Planner (NC Department of Commerce) once a year to help evaluate success.

The Implementation Committee will revisit the plan twice yearly (at budget time, and in November) to mark progress and amend the plan as necessary.

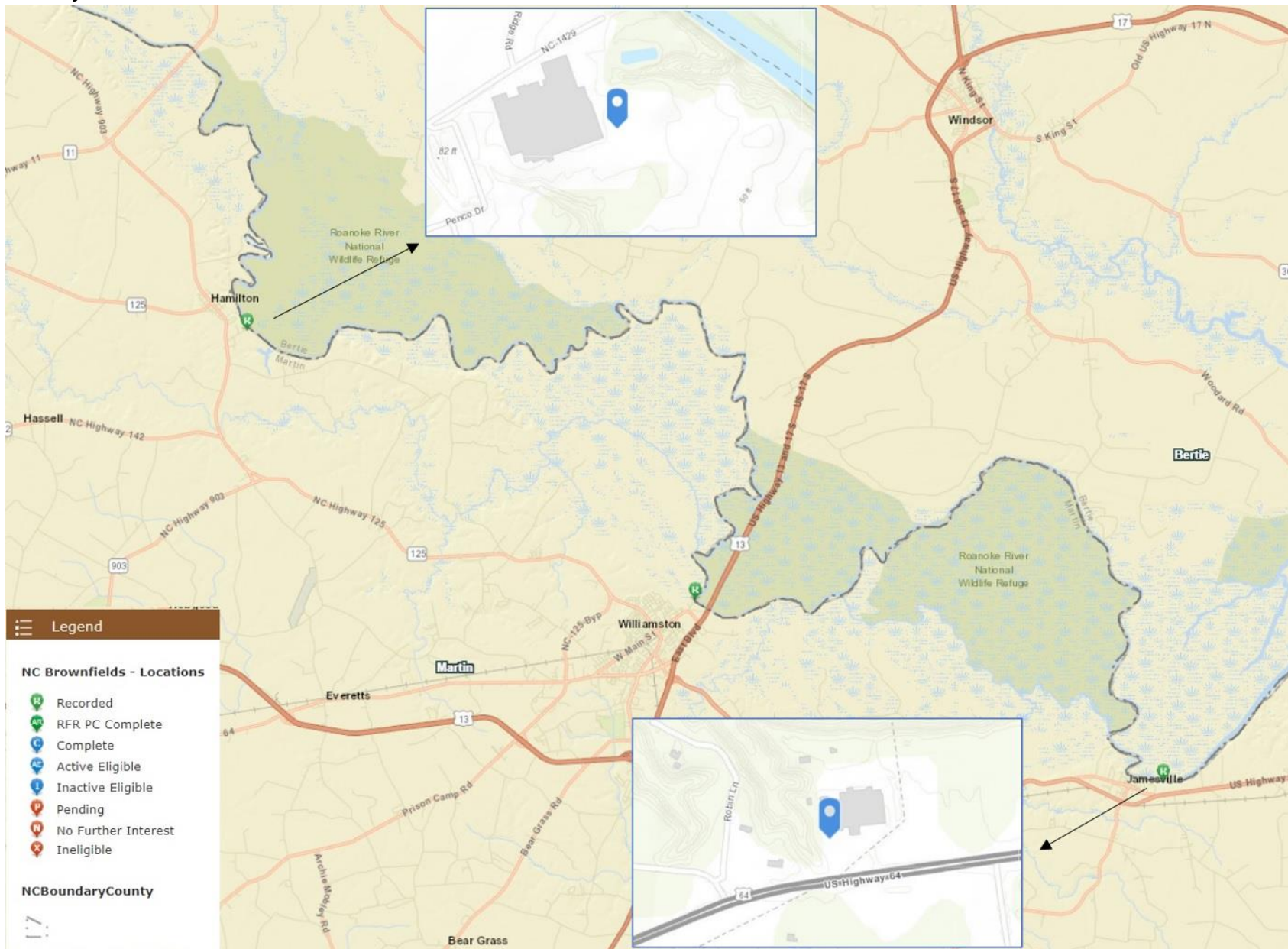
Appendix

Implementation Schedule: Actions and Projects with Delineated Tasks

Strategy: Historic Crossroads of the Roanoke River				
Goal 1: Enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors and residents by connecting them with the Roanoke River and developing a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure				
Objective: Reuse brownfield properties				
Organization (County and/or Towns)				
Action 1. Develop list of uses for Hamilton and Jamesville brownfield sites				
<p>There are three brownfield sites located along the southern bank of the Roanoke River in Martin County. The Alamac Knit Fabrics property in Hamilton, the Royster-Clark property in Williamston, and the Liberty Fabrics property in Jamesville. The Williamston site is being addressed as a stand-alone project in this report and is being developed for outdoor recreation activities.</p> <p>The location of the Hamilton property and the Jamesville property along the river offer opportunities for remediation and reuse, specifically for outdoor recreation. A list of potential uses for the two sites would assist the respective towns and Martin County with cleaning up and redeveloping the properties.</p>				
Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Contact property owners and inquire about future uses of the properties and the possibility to partner	Martin County EDC	In-House	10 hours	NC DEQ
2. Develop list of potential uses for both properties	Martin County EDC	In-House	10 hours	Martin County TDA
3. Include both properties in regular regional brownfields applications for state and federal mediation grants	Martin County EDC	In-House	Ongoing	Mid-East Commission
4. Develop project development proposals for both properties if owners are willing to partner	Martin County EDC	In-House	Ongoing	NC Commerce

Figure 8.

Brownfields Locations



Source: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/waste-management/science-data-and-reports/gis-maps/brownfields-projects-map-inventory-and-document-download>

Strategy: Historic Crossroads of the Roanoke River

Goal 1: Enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors and residents by connecting them with the Roanoke River and developing a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure

Objective: Reuse brownfield properties

Organization (County and/or Towns)

Action 2. Support Roanoke River Partners' rehabilitation of the Rosenwald School project in Hamilton

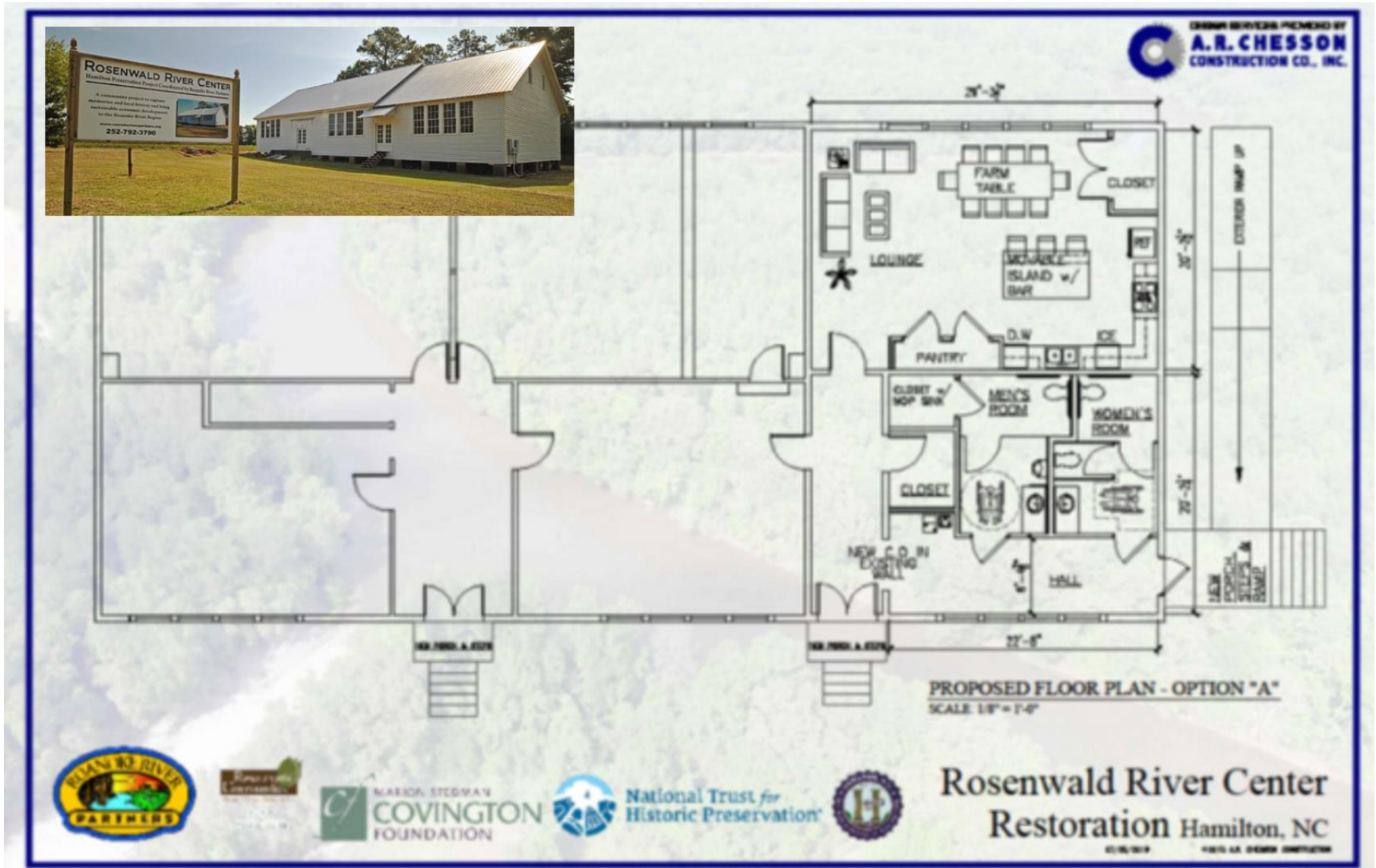
This circa 1920 Rosenwald School will provide a headquarters for Roanoke River Partners and the Roanoke River State Trail. The facility and associated enhancements will equip this site to serve as a community center for the Town of Hamilton and for the entire Roanoke River Region. It will be a depository for Roanoke River history and riverine science exhibits, Roanoke River Underground Railroad history and artifacts exhibits which feature the Roanoke River as a part of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, and an authentic Rosenwald School setting with associated historic artifacts, printed materials, and oral histories. Incorporating both indoor/outdoor gathering space, the completed river/community center will facilitate regional events & activities and serve as office space for the Roanoke River Partners and the Roanoke River State Trail.

Camping is available on site.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Request updates every six months regarding the progress of the project	Martin County Manager	In-House	2 hours	Roanoke River Partners
2. Provide resolutions of support as needed for each phase of the project's development	Martin County Commissioners	In-House	Ongoing	Roanoke River Partners
3. Serve as applicant and administrator of state and federal grants as needed	Martin County Manager	In-House	Ongoing	Mid-East Commission

Figure 9.

Rosenwald River Center Restoration



Source: <https://roanokeriverpartners.org/project/rosenwald-river-center/>

Figure 10. Source: <https://roanokeriverpartners.org/project/rosenwald-river-center/>

Strategy: Historic Crossroads of the Roanoke River

Goal 1: Enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors and residents by connecting them with the Roanoke River and developing a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure

Objective: Attract more local and regional visitors per year

Marketing

Action 1. Create a marketing campaign to promote the recreational opportunities along the Roanoke River to both local and regional visitors

A marketing campaign by Martin County will bring more local and regional visitors to the area to utilize the natural assets in and along the Roanoke River. Along with existing and traditional methods of marketing, new methods can be developed to meet a more diverse group of potential users.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Identify metrics that measure how many people presently visit the area for outdoor recreational opportunities along the Roanoke River	Martin County TDA	In-House	\$5,000	NC Commerce LEAD, VisitNC
2. Determine what markets current visitors of the Roanoke River come from	Martin County TDA	In-House	\$2,000	NC Commerce LEAD, VisitNC
3. Develop marketing materials to disseminate to preferred markets. These materials should include a mix of online and offline marketing to reach a broad range of potential visitors	Martin County TDA	In-House	\$5,000	VisitNC
3. Create engaging content that showcases the benefits of exploring the area	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	VisitNC, NC Growth, ECU Crisp Center, Roanoke River Partners
4. Partner with local businesses and lodging providers to create packages and promotions that encourage visitors to stay and explore the area	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	Martin County Chamber of Commerce
5. Attend outdoor events and trade shows that cater to the target audience to promote the area's natural amenities	Martin County TDA	In-House	\$2,000	NC Outdoor Recreation Industry Office

Figure 10.

Martin County Tourism Trail



Strategy: Historic Crossroads of the Roanoke River

Goal 1: Enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors and residents by connecting them with the Roanoke River and developing a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure

Objective: Market Martin County to more user groups

Marketing

Action 2. Continue branding the Roanoke River State Trail and camping platforms as a regional paddle destination

A 2016 report by [NC Growth, Ecotourism in the Roanoke River Region: Impacts and Opportunity](#) identified by survey the paddle trail users as 81% male, Baby Boomers and Generation X, educated with a bachelor’s degree or higher, affluent with a total household income of \$100,000 or more, and while on the paddle trail most participated in wildlife watching. Marketing efforts to reach these demographics will build awareness of the paddle trail beyond North Carolina and would be impactful.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Determine what areas within North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina meet the paddle trail users’ demographics	Martin County TDA	In-House	\$2,000	NC Commerce LEAD, VisitNC
2. Evaluate existing marketing materials and update to disseminate to paddle trail users	Martin County TDA	In-House	\$5,000	VisitNC
3. Partner with local businesses and lodging providers to create paddling packages and promotions that encourage visitors to stay and explore the area	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	Martin County Chamber of Commerce

Figure 11.

Roanoke River Paddle Trail User Profile

User Profile

In addition to spending patterns the survey results gives insight into who the typical Roanoke River Paddle Trail user is. From this survey sample, Paddle Trail users *tend* to be:

- Male: 81% of survey respondents were male.
- Baby Boomers and Generation X: 31% of respondents were age 55-64 and 45% of respondents were age 35-54.
- Educated: 86% of respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Affluent: 50% of respondents reported a total household income in 2014 of \$100,000 or more.
- Naturalists: while on the Paddle Trail 74% reported participating in wild-life watching and 57% participated in bird watching.
- Dedicated: 78% reported they were very satisfied with their most recent trip on the trail and 84% indicated they plan to return in the next year. This satisfaction rate is quite high and shows that the Paddle Trail has a dedicated user base.
- Local: 79% of registered trail users are from North Carolina. This matches the percentage of North Carolinians in the survey response data as well. Drilling down further in the survey data, 35% of respondents from within the state were from Wake County. The Paddle Trail draws users from 23 additional states, see the Appendix for maps of survey respondents and a complete list of registered users' states of origin.

Source: [NC Growth: Ecotourism in the Roanoke River Region: Impacts and Opportunity](#)

Strategy: Historic Crossroads of the Roanoke River

Goal 1: Enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors and residents by connecting them with the Roanoke River and developing a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure

Objective: Develop Segment 4, 5, and 6 of the Roanoke River State Trail Plan

Projects

Action 1. Phase the [Roanoke River State Trail Plan](#), including all 10 segments and Complete The Trail (CTF) projects

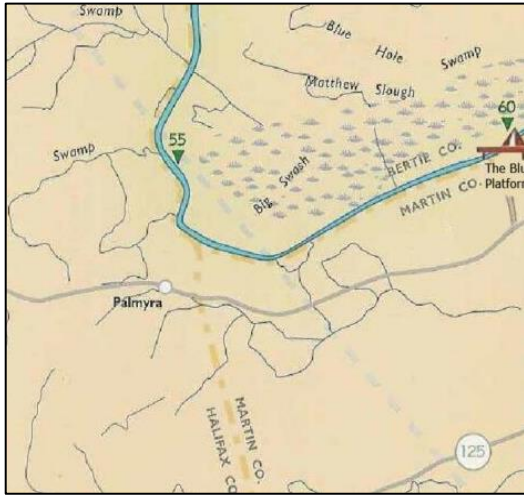
The Roanoke River State Trail is a paddle trail extending from Weldon to the Albemarle Sound. Despite meandering through the coastal plain of North Carolina, this paddle trail offers a unique wilderness experience to all who venture along its length.

The Roanoke River State Trail Plan: 2022-2027 is a multi-phase planning document that identifies the needs along the upper and lower Roanoke River to build out facilities and capacity to meet the needs of river users. Projects in the Roanoke River State Trail Plan include promotion, trail development, celebrations, and additional goals of trail signs and rack cards. The Roanoke River Partners are designated by state legislation as the nonprofit partner with NC Division of Parks and Recreation and have a Memorandum of Understanding in place.

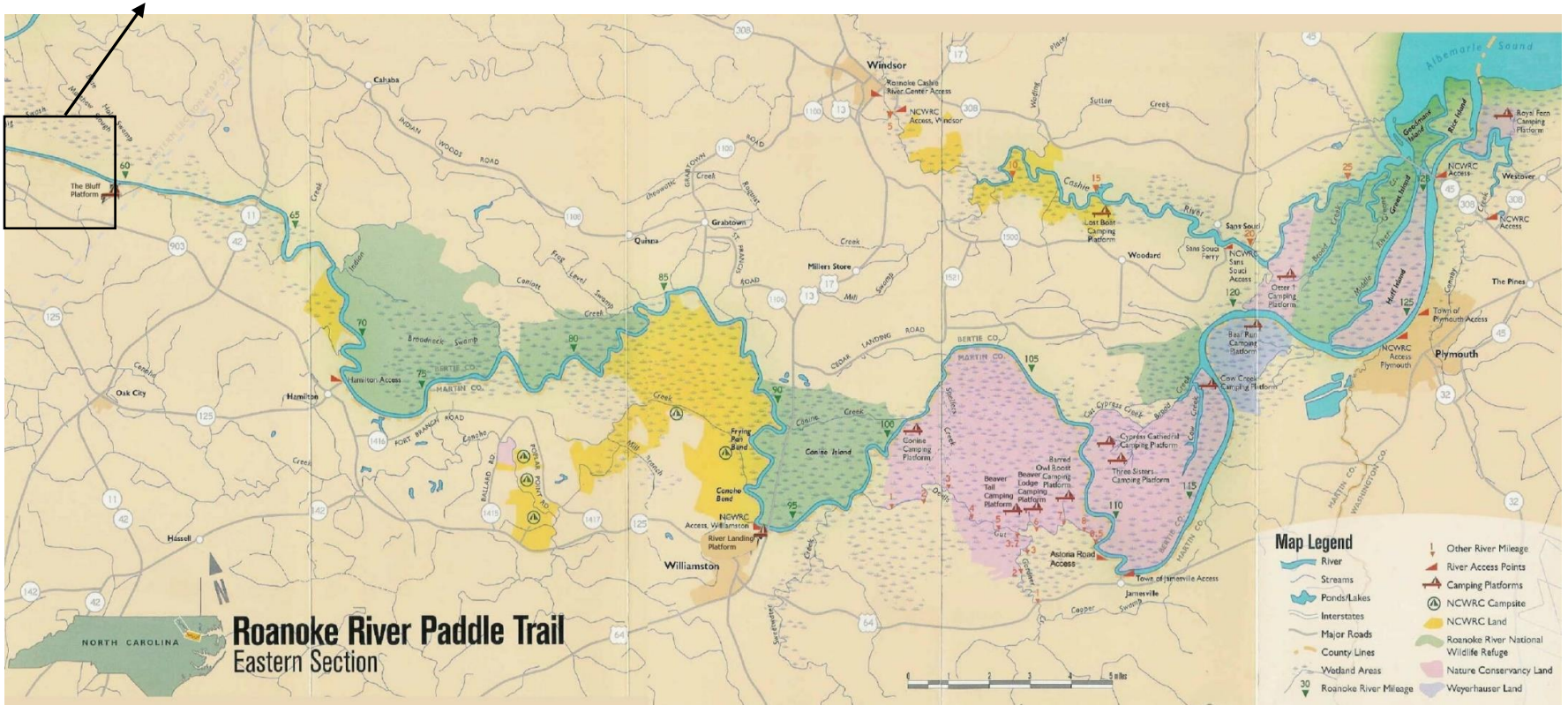
Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Develop Segment 4: Palmyra to Williamston (17 miles), including camping platform repair and renovation (2 platforms), floating dock and kayak ramp at Town of Hamilton Boat ramp, and a campsite needed at RRP Mile Marker 85	Roanoke River Partners	In-House	\$50,000	NC Parks and Recreation
2. Develop Segment 5: Williamston to Jamesville (17 miles), including camping platform repair and renovation (4 platforms), a kayak ramp/launch at Morotoc Park, and two possible campsites	Roanoke River Partners	In-House	TBA	NC Parks and Recreation
3. Develop Segment 6: Jamesville to Plymouth (12 miles), including platform repair and renovation (4 platforms)	Roanoke River Partners	In-House	Ongoing	NC Parks and Recreation
4. Add needed paddle trail segments to the Great Trails State Coalition website	Roanoke River Partners	In-House	1 hour	Great Trails State Coalition

Figure 12.

Segment 4, 5, and 6 of the Roanoke River State Trail Plan



Source: <https://trails.nc.gov/maps/map-pdfs-roanoke-river-state-trail/open>



Source: <https://roanokeriverpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/16-Jun-2022-Roanoke-River-Paddle-Trail-Map-scaled.jpg>

Strategy: Historic Crossroads of the Roanoke River

Goal 1: Enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors and residents by connecting them with the Roanoke River and developing a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure

Objective: Develop two new put-in/take-out access points for paddlers

Projects

Action 2. Identify and develop alternative put-in/take-outs along Roanoke River to make more amenable to paddle trips along river by decreasing distances between river access points

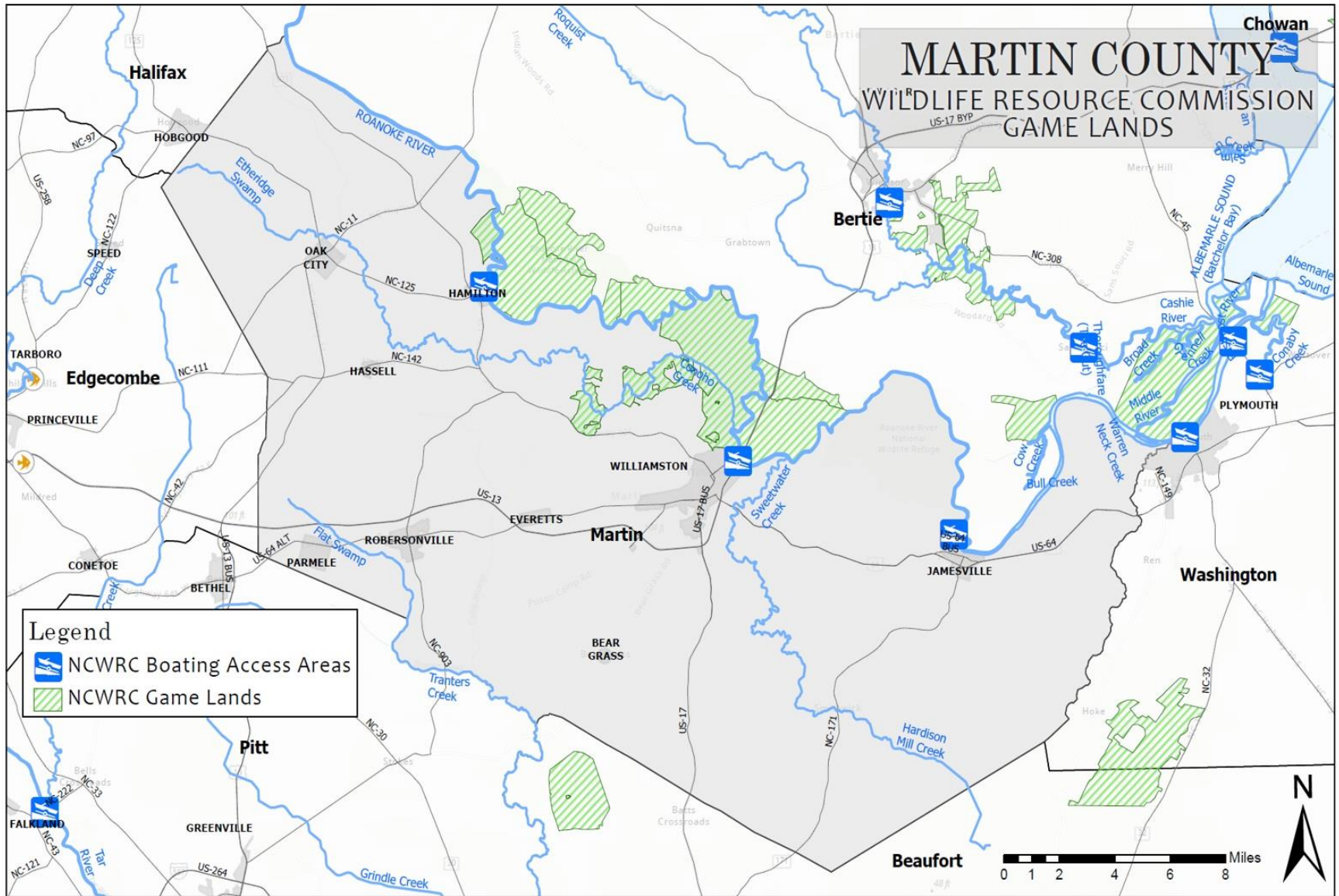
Martin County has three public boating access points: Hamilton, Williamston, and Jamesville. While these three points need renovation to be more paddle-friendly, the length of paddling trips between the three boat ramps requires paddlers to commit a great deal of time to paddling adventures, with the length of trip between current access points often exceeding 5 hours.

The identification and development of alternative put-in/take-outs between the existing boat ramps will open opportunity to more locals and visitors who do not wish to commit to lengthy paddles. Alternative put-in/take-outs at the halfway point between the existing access points will provide paddlers with shorter trip opportunities.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Identify potential alternative put-in/take-outs approximately 8-9 miles between Hamilton and Williamston and 8-9 miles between Williamston and Jamesville	Martin County Commissioners	In-House	10 hours	Roanoke River Partners, Town of Hamilton, Town of Williamston, Town of Jamesville
2. Contact property owners in the identified alternative put-in/take-outs areas and inquire about potential partnerships	Martin County Commissioners	In-House	30 hours	Roanoke River Partners, Town of Hamilton, Town of Williamston, Town of Jamesville
3. Develop project summaries for each of the two identified new put-in/take-out areas to use for securing grants and/or conversations with NC Wildlife Resources Commission	Martin County Commissioners	In-House	30 hours	NC Commerce-Rural Planning, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Figure 13.

Martin County Boating Access Areas



Strategy: Strategy: Destination for Nature and Equestrian Enthusiasts

Goal 2: Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets

Objective: Secure funding for Hamilton Feasibility Study

Organization (County and/or Towns)

Action 1. Pursue funding and support for Hamilton Feasibility Study, which links the Town of Hamilton Boat Access Ramp, downtown, the Rosenwald School, and the Hamilton Recreation Park

The Town of Hamilton has identified connecting the downtown to the Roanoke River as a priority. The Roanoke River Partners (RRP) own the Rosenwald School on East Waldo Street and are rehabilitating the building as an office/community events center. The project goal is to provide a pedestrian-friendly, well-lighted, ADA-compliant walking path, linking the Town's amenities. Hamilton needs a feasibility study depicting how the Boat Access Ramp, downtown, the walking track at Andrews School, Rosenwald School, Hamilton Recreation Park, and Hamilton Veterans Community Village (HVCV) are connected to the river. A feasibility study will aid in securing implementation funding from local, state, and federal funding sources.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Develop basic narrative for potential grant applications	Mid-East Commission	Outsource	Complete	NC Commerce, NC DOT IMD
2. Secure funding for Hamilton Feasibility Study	Town of Hamilton	In-House	\$60,000	Mid-East Commission
3. Identify various potential funding sources from federal and state grant opportunities	Town of Hamilton	In-House	Ongoing	Mid-East Commission, NC Commerce
4. Support Hamilton Feasibility Study via adopted resolution(s)	Hamilton Town Martin County Commissioners	In-House	Ongoing	Mid-East Commission

Figure 14.

Hamilton Feasibility Study



Strategy: Strategy: Destination for Nature and Equestrian Enthusiasts

Goal 2: Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets

Objective: Complete the Equine Trail by June 2024

Organization (County and/or Towns)

Action 2. Implement the Martin Community College Equine Trail with secured funding

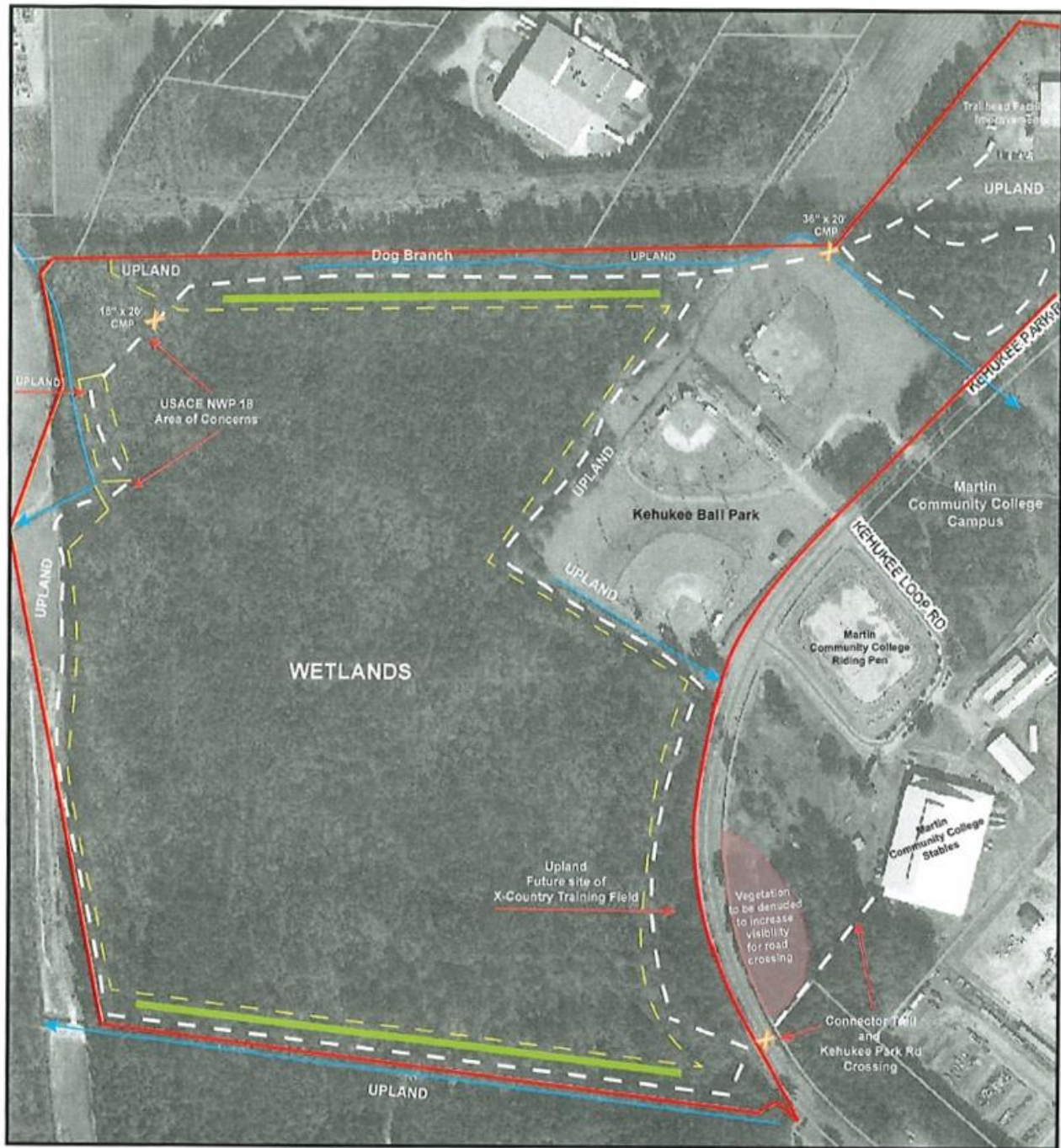
The development of a horse trail along an 85-acre tract at Kehukee Park will provide Martin County with another tourism asset. Approximately 3-5 miles of new equine trails will be constructed beginning at this trailhead and connecting to the Martin Community College Equine Facilities. The County has secured funding for this project's first phase (a 1 to 2 mile trail), with the following sources and budget:

NC Trails Grant	\$ 100,000		
Tourism Development Authority	16,000		
Martin Community College	5,000		
CXS Grant	1,000	Administration	\$ 21,000
Dominion Energy Grant	8,000	Construction	<u>144,000</u>
NC Horse Council Grant	10,000	Total Expenses	\$ 165,000
Martin County	<u>25,000</u>		
Total Revenue	\$ 165,000		

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Update the construction costs for the project	Martin County Commissioners	In-House	20 hours	NC DOT Division 1
2. Determine annual maintenance costs	Martin Community College	In-House	20 hours	NC DOT Division 1
3. Develop a Request for Proposal to build the Equine Trail	Martin County Commissioners	In-House	10 hours	Mid-East Commission
4. Schedule a groundbreaking ceremony and invite all grantors	Martin Community College, Martin County TDA	In-House	5 hours	Martin County Commissioners, Senator Bob Martin Ag Center

Figure 15.

Martin County Equine Trails



LEGEND	
Planned Borrow Pit	
Property Lines (approximated)	
Planned Equine Trails	
USACE Wetlands Delineation Line	
Relative Permanent Waters (RPW)	



PROJECT SPECIFIC MAP

Martin County Equine Trails
 North Carolina's Recreational Trails
 2020 RTP Pre-Application



Scale 1" = 300'

Strategy: Strategy: Destination for Nature and Equestrian Enthusiasts

Goal 2: Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets

Objective: Increase historic asset visitation 10% by 2028

Organization (County and/or Towns)

Action 3. Coordinate Fort Branch with historic architectural walking tours in Hamilton and Williamston

Martin County has several historic sites for locals and visitors to learn more about the history of the region. Along with the [Fort Branch Civil War Site](#), both Hamilton and Williamston have historic walking tours of local National Register Historic Districts, landmarks, and architecture.

A common issue with the County's historic assets is the availability of volunteers to promote and maintain the local attractions. Also, making information about local historic assets accessible to diverse groups of locals and visitors has been identified as a weakness. The County needs to coordinate efforts to attract more people to these assets.

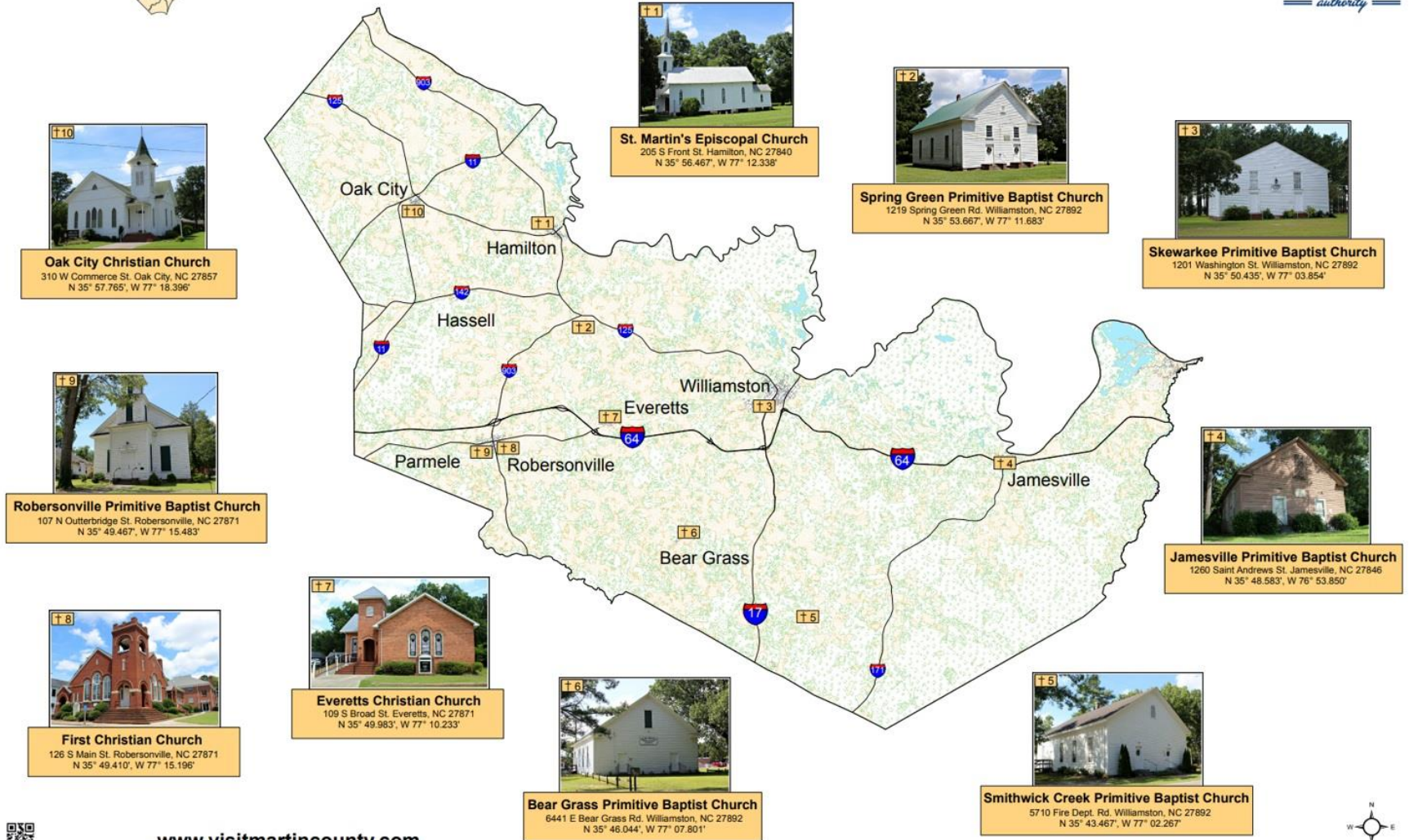
Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Reach out to local organizations, such as historical societies, museums, and community groups, to advertise the need for volunteers	Fort Branch, Town of Hamilton, Town of Williamston	In-House	20 hours	NC Dept of Cultural Resources
2. Provide training and support for volunteers to help them understand their roles and responsibilities	Fort Branch, Town of Hamilton, Town of Williamston	In-House	Ongoing	NC Dept of Cultural Resources
3. Create and update maps of historic walking trails in Hamilton and Williamston	Town of Hamilton, Town of Williamston	In-House	20 hours	Mid-East Commission, NC Commerce-Rural Planning
4. Use storytelling techniques and multimedia tools to make the history come alive and engage visitors	Fort Branch, Town of Hamilton, Town of Williamston	In-House	Ongoing	NC Dept of Cultural Resources, ECU Libraries
5. Continue to promote the Martin County Historic Church Trail and Fort Branch Civil War Site	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	NC Dept of Cultural Resources

Figure 16.

Martin County Historic Church Trail



MARTIN COUNTY HISTORIC CHURCH TRAIL



www.visitmartincounty.com



Strategy: Destination for Nature and Equestrian Enthusiasts

Goal 2: Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets

Objective: Increase the number of people using and visiting the Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center and the County's natural and cultural assets

Marketing

Action 1. Coordinate the marketing of festivals and activities with events at Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center

Martin County is fortunate to have the Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center located just south of US Hwy 64. The Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center draws thousands of people to the facility and the County. The center is a multi-purpose arena and meeting center. This is one of the finest equestrian facilities on this side of the Mississippi River. The arena is used for horse shows almost every weekend and there is generally no admission for spectators. There are special shows at the arena that may have a charge for admission. They are Truck/Tractor pulls, Go-Kart Races and Mounted Shooting exhibitions (riders using black-powder vintage-type pistols). The meeting center is used for events such as reunions, corporate meetings, and wedding receptions.

The County also has regular events and people visit the area to experience the natural and cultural amenities. Promoting other activities in the region to attendees of the Agricultural Center events will increase and enhance visitor experiences.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Continue to promote the "2 Day Trip Kits"	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center
2. Meet with staff of Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center at least every 6 months to coordinate promotional activities	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center

Strategy: Destination for Nature and Equestrian Enthusiasts

Goal 2: Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets

Objective: Increase the number short-term lodging options

Marketing

Action 2. Help local property owners develop more short-term lodging options and market the county as an ideal location for new lodging developments

Martin County has 6 hotels and several Bed and Breakfast lodging options. Because of the popularity and attendance at events in the County, there is regularly a shortage of rooms for overnight visitors on the weekends, while the weekdays offer more vacancies.

As the County's visitor rate increases, so does the need for more short-term lodging options. In addition to recruiting new hotels, the County can also use more options, particularly in the smaller towns in the area and in downtown Williamston.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Coordinate a session with Martin Community College on developing AirBnBs	Martin County TDA	In-House	40 hours	Martin Community College Small Business Center, ECU Recreation Sciences
2. Explore how National Register Historic District tax credits can be used to create short-term lodging in the downtowns of Martin County's towns	Martin County TDA	In-House	50 hours	NC State Historic Preservation Office
3. Develop a feasibility study to attract a major hotel chain to the County	Martin County TDA	Outsource	\$50,000	NC Restaurant and Lodging Association, ECU Hospitality Management

Strategy: Destination for Nature and Equestrian Enthusiasts

Goal 2: Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets

Objective: Place signs at selected outdoor venues

Projects

Action 1. Develop and maintain signage and informational materials to educate visitors on safe and responsible paddling and fishing/hunting practices

As the usage and demand for outdoor amenities increases in Martin County, residents and visitors will need signage and informational materials to educate and inform them on safe and responsible practices.

Signage (including mile markers and local conditions) at river access points will allow users to have a more enjoyable and safe experience.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Create a list of outdoor recreation venues that would be enhanced with signage and informational materials	Martin County TDA	In-House	10 hours	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Roanoke River Partners
2. Ensure website information is up to date, user-friendly, and informative	Martin County TDA	In-House	50 hours	Martin Community College
3. Develop a map of existing signage and evaluate the condition and the information provided, and update where appropriate	Martin County TDA	In-House	20 hours	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Roanoke River Partners
4. Research other venues around the country that have signage and informational materials and develop a "Best Practices" plan	Martin County TDA	In-House	50 hours	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Roanoke River Partners
5. Secure funding for signage and place at appropriate venues	Martin County TDA	Outsource	\$30,000	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Roanoke River Partners

Strategy: Destination for Nature and Equestrian Enthusiasts

Goal 2: Create a robust outdoor recreation infrastructure and develop a range of lodging options while promoting the county's unique natural and cultural assets

Objective: Place signs at selected outdoor venues

Projects

Action 2. Complete the Williamston Boardwalk expansion

The Williamston Waterfront Redevelopment District is a collection of former industrial properties, vacant lands and wetlands, located between Williamston's East Main Street and the Roanoke River. The properties encompass a total of 47 acres and are adjacent to the North Carolina Wetlands Game Land, the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge, a public boat access, and US Hwy 17. The site is uniquely positioned to connect visitors and the local community to significant natural assets and recreational opportunities.

The next phase of the project is to complete the river boardwalk expansion section between Moratoc Park and NC Wildlife Boating Access area, and to construct a 3-hole Disc Golf Course, and a 1-acre dog park.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Develop a 10 ft. wide elevated boardwalk, 575 ft. in length, to connect the existing boardwalk to Moratoc Park and include two fishing access points	Town of Williamston	Outsource	\$707,000	Mid-East Commission
2. Develop one acre with fencing, play equipment, dog waste system, benches, signage, and construction costs	Town of Williamston	Outsource	\$29,100	Mid-East Commission
3. Develop a 3-hole disc golf course to include a path through the course, equipment for each hole, and concrete pads	Town of Williamston	Outsource	\$9,650	Mid-East Commission
4. Secure funding for technical services costs associated with the boardwalk expansion location and surrounding environmentally sensitive riverine and wetlands	Town of Williamston	Outsource	\$172,500	Mid-East Commission

Figure 17.

Williamston Boardwalk Expansion



Source: Mid-East Commission

Strategy: Strategy: Center for Wildlife and Motorsports

Goal 3: Establish Martin County as the center of wildlife and motorsports racing

Objective: Increase visitation to Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge

Organization (County and/or Towns)

Action 1. Engage with Bertie County to promote the Lower Roanoke River Wetlands Game Lands and Roanoke River Wildlife Refuge for wildlife watching and hunting

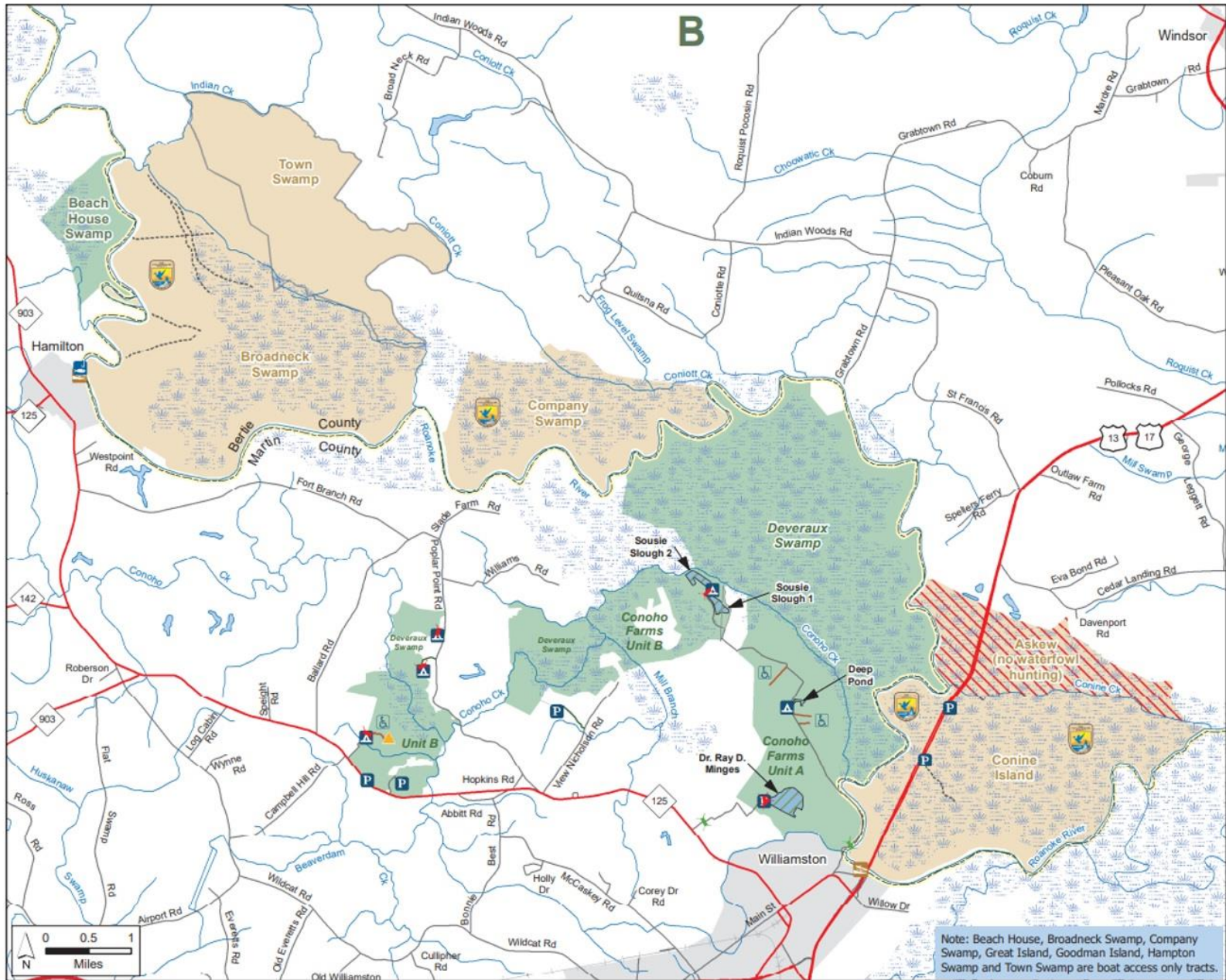
The Lower Roanoke River Wetlands Game Lands (32,000 acres) and the Roanoke River Wildlife Refuge (21,000 acres) are large publicly owned tracts of land on both sides of the Roanoke River. A large portion of these lands are located on the north side of the river in Bertie County.

Martin County and Bertie County can work together to promote the use of these natural resources and attract visitors to both counties to also enjoy other natural amenities located in the two counties.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Adopt a resolution emphasizing cooperation on marketing efforts to wildlife watchers and hunters in both counties	Martin County Commissioners	In-House	5 hours	Bertie County Commissioners, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service
2. Meet every 6 months with Bertie County counterparts about regional cooperation	Martin County TDA	In-House	5 hours	Bertie County Economic Development, Roanoke River Partners
3. Work with Bertie County to help implement the Destination Bertie plan	Martin County TDA	In-House	5 hours	Bertie County Economic Development, Roanoke River Partners

Figure 18.

Lower Roanoke River Wetlands



Source: <https://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Hunting/Game-Land-Maps/Coastal/Lower-Roanoke-River-Wetlands.pdf>

Strategy: Strategy: Center for Wildlife and Motorsports

Goal 3: Establish Martin County as the center of wildlife and motorsports racing

Objective: Add East Carolina Motor Speedway to NC Moonshine and Motorsports Trail

Marketing

Action 1. Partner with NC Cultural Resources to include East Carolina Motor Speedway as a stop along the NC Moonshine and Motorsports Trail

The East Carolina Motor Speedway is a popular car racing track located in Robersonville, a town in Martin County, North Carolina. It was built in 1990 and has since then become one of the most well-known short tracks in the region, hosting various races throughout the year. The track is a 3/8-mile asphalt oval with 12-degree banked turns and a 10-degree banked straightaway. The racing events at the East Carolina Motor Speedway attract many spectators, including both locals and visitors from neighboring areas.

The speedway has hosted various racing events over the years, including Late Model Stock Car, Super Late Model, Limited Late Model, Street Stock, UCAR, and Legends Car races. In addition to its regular season races, the speedway also hosts several special events each year, such as the Thanksgiving Classic and the Rodney Cook Classic.

The East Carolina Motor Speedway is not only a popular destination for racing enthusiasts but also a valuable contributor to the local economy, drawing visitors to the area and creating job opportunities for residents. Its inclusion on the [NC Moonshine and Motorsports Trail](#) would help to further promote the track and the Town of Robersonville as a destination for motorsports tourism.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Work with owner of East Carolina Motor Speedway to help facilitate upgrades and renovations	Martin County Economic Development	In-House	5 hours	NC Cultural Resources, NC EDPNC
2. Promote scheduled events at East Carolina Motor Speedway	Martin County TDA	In-House	5 hours	Martin County Economic Development
3. Collaborate with NC Cultural Resources to feature East Carolina Motor Speedway as a prominent destination on the NC Moonshine and Motorsports Trail	Martin County TDA	In-House	20 hours	NC Cultural Resources

Strategy: Strategy: Center for Wildlife and Motorsports

Goal 3: Establish Martin County as the center of wildlife and motorsports racing

Objective: Increase participation and viewing of go-kart racing events

Marketing

Action 2. Work with emerging go-kart racing community and Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center’s motorsports racing events to promote Martin County as a motorsport racing destination

Martin County as an organic racing industry that has grown significantly since the pandemic. Go-kart racing in Martin County and neighboring areas attracts 50-80 competitors, with up to 500 fans, at each event and the area hosts 5 go-kart tracks. These events draw hundreds of spectators and food trucks, adding value to the local economy.

The Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center hosts events for go-kart racing each year. The County should work with go-kart racing track owners, event coordinators, and the Agricultural Center on promoting this emerging activity.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Meet with staff of Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center at least every 6 months to coordinate promotional activities	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center
2. Work with East Carolina Motor Speedway to partner for go-kart racing events	Martin County TDA	In-House	5 hours	East Carolina Motor Speedway
3. Meet with go-kart racing track owners every 6 months to promote upcoming events	Martin County TDA	In-House	20 hours	Go-kart Track Owners
4. Develop “ 2 Day Trip Kits ” for the go-kart racing demographics	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Center

Strategy: Strategy: Center for Wildlife and Motorsports

Goal 3: Establish Martin County as the center of wildlife and motorsports racing

Objective: Grow the number of wildlife and motorsports participants

Projects

Action 1. Map existing wildlife watching access points to compliment marketing efforts and identify new wildlife observation points and trails

The project aims to develop a comprehensive map of wildlife observation points and trails in Martin County. The project's objectives include identifying existing wildlife observation points and trails, assessing their condition and suitability for use, and mapping them to provide an easy-to-use resource for residents and visitors interested in wildlife watching. Additionally, the project seeks to identify potential new observation points and trails, considering factors such as habitat quality, accessibility, and safety.

The completed map will include detailed information on each observation point and trail, such as location, trail length, difficulty level, and the wildlife species that can be observed. The map will be made available to the public through a variety of channels, including the county website, brochures, and social media.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Conduct a thorough inventory of existing wildlife observation points and trails in the county, including those in the Roanoke River Wildlife Refuge and other natural areas.	Martin County TDA	In-House	50 hours	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Roanoke River Partners
2. Work with local wildlife experts and enthusiasts to identify potential new observation points and trails	Martin County TDA	In-House	10 hours	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service
3. Develop a detailed map of all existing and new observation points and trails	Martin County TDA	In-House	20 hours	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service
4. Encourage residents and visitors to share their wildlife observations and experiences through social media and other platforms	Martin County TDA	In-House	Ongoing	Roanoke River Partners

Strategy: Strategy: Center for Wildlife and Motorsports

Goal 3: Establish Martin County as the center of wildlife and motorsports racing

Objective: Increase visitors to Martin County stops along the Underground Railroad Trail and NC Birding Trail

Projects

Action 2. Recognize and promote local venues as stops along the Underground Railroad Trail and NC Birding Trail

The project aims to recognize and promote local venues in Martin County as stops along the Underground Railroad Trail and the NC Birding Trail. The project's objectives include identifying local venues with historical connections to the Underground Railroad and those that are key locations for birdwatching.

Once identified, the project will work to promote these venues through various channels, such as social media, websites, and brochures. This will help increase awareness of these sites and attract visitors who are interested in learning more about the area's historical significance or observing the diverse bird species that reside in Martin County. The project will also work to improve the venues themselves by providing interpretive signage, educational programming, and other resources that enhance visitors' experiences.

Tasks	Responsibility (Name)	In-House or Outsource	Cost / Time	Partners / Assistance
1. Research and identify local venues with historical connections to the Underground Railroad, as well as key birding locations in the area	Martin County TDA	In-House	50 hours	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Roanoke River Partners, NC African American Heritage Commission
2. Create maps and brochures that showcase the various venues along the trails, and promote these materials through various channels, such as social media, websites, and local visitor centers	Martin County TDA	In-House	50 hours	NC Cultural Resources, Roanoke River Partners
3. Collaborate with other nearby communities to create a regional trail that connects to the Underground Railroad Trail and NC Birding Trail, which can help attract even more visitors to the area	Martin County TDA	In-House	20 hours	NC Wildlife Resources Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NC Cultural Resources, Roanoke River Partners

References

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² Outdoor Industry Association. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2022-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>

³ The Citizen-Times. *North Carolina outdoor recreation is a \$28 billion industry, poised for further growth.* October 11th, 2019. <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/2019/10/11/outdoor-economy-conference-asheville-highlights-28billion-industry/3923846002/>

⁴ Headwaters Economics. Recreation Counties Attracting New Residents and Higher Incomes. <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract/>

⁵ Outdoor Foundation. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2023-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>

⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021. <https://www.bea.gov/news/2022/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2021>