



Governor's Tourism Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday July 11, 2024, 8:30AM to 11:30AM

Fort Sisseton Historic Park

11907 434th Ave, Lake City, SD 57247

Board Members

Ann Lesch
Julie Ranum
Carmen Schramm
Kristi Wagner
Frank Smith
John Brockelsby
Caleb Arceneaux
Val Rausch
Gwyn Wathen

Tourism Staff

Jim Hagen
Wanda Goodman
Kirk Hulstein
Mike Gussiaas
Bailey Tysdal
Erin Weinzettel
Ann DeVany
Calvin Bloemendaal
Alexa Dorn
Cole Irwin
Shawntae Garrett
Teresa Tople

Marketing Agency Guests

Kathy Hagan
Lauren Corna
Camille King
Makenzie O'Holloran
Adelaide Simpson
Dallas Miller
Val Rasmussen
Julie Comstock
Marissa McEntire
Jenni Jaasz
Mariah Hanten
Brian Gebhart
Jessica Foreman
Victoria Ploansky
Jamie Fiedler



President Ann Lesch called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for coming to Fort Sisseton. She welcomed new board member Gwyn Wathen.

Secretary Hagen joined President Lesch in welcoming the board to the meeting. He thanked Ali Tonsfeldt, Park Director, for hosting the board at Fort Sisseton Historic Park and for providing an outstanding tour. The secretary shared that the NE corner of the state is among favorite areas in South Dakota. After his opening comments, Secretary Hagen shared news about some personnel changes that will be occurring within the department. He introduced Shawntae Garrett, the new Welcome Center Manager for Travel South Dakota. He also asked Kathy Hagan, Co-CEO of Karsh Hagan in Denver, to say a few words.

Kathy Hagan – Karsh Hagan

- This is the 3rd year Karsh Hagan has been working with South Dakota
- We are so proud of this state and to work alongside all of you
- All the team members at Karsh want to work on the South Dakota account
- Coming to South Dakota is an adventure and a wonderful opportunity to showcase this beautiful state
- South Dakota has all kinds of adventures to offer

President Lesch asked each board member to give a brief report from their area.

Caleb Arceneaux – Black Hills / LIV Hospitality

- Bookings are up
- Visitation is flat/slightly down
- Deadwood gaming is up

Carmen Schramm – Yankton

- Construction is horrific in the Yankton area
- Lewis & Clark is booked solid until end of August
- The park is looking at tightening up the cancellation policy
- The ice cream shop is booming with business
- There was a drone show on July 5 to celebrate Meridian Bridge

Kristi Wagner - Whitewood

- Rural communities have the utmost respect and appreciation for the department's focus on them
- Remedy's in Langford should become a Great Find
- No matter where you are in South Dakota there is a Great Find

Julie Ranum – Watertown

- Watertown airport is doing well
- 27th season at the Redlin Center
- Numbers were up all year except June
- Wind and rain are good for the Redlin Center, people want to get out of the rain
- Thursday night live downtown during the summer is doing well
- Excited for Rally Rush

Gwyn Wathen - Hill City

- They currently own 2 KOAs in the Black Hills, President wax museum, a dude ranch outside of Hill City
- Things are back to normal
- Camping was slow in May because of construction on Hwy 44
- Lodging is down ab it
- Camping and the store sales are up
- Wax museum is down in admissions but up in store sales
- East Coast KOAs are down
- West Coast KOAs are up

John Brockelsby – Rapid City/Reptile Gardens

- June was down
- July is up
- July 5th is the highest revenue in history, NOT visitation but revenue
- Staying even on visitation is a good thing
- Badlands is up 9%
- New Visitors Center at Badlands is critical to visitors
- Flooding in June may have hurt some of the visitation numbers – especially folks from Iowa and Nebraska

Val Rausch – Big Stone City /Abbey of the Hills

- Northeast is a unique area of South Dakota-off the beaten path
- There is more water than we know what to do with
- Camping, fishing, etc.is a full and busy season in the northeast
- There is a lot of activity happening in Milbank
- Big Stone City is flourishing
- Abbey of the Hills is a great facility- there are 30 different species of birds accounted for

Frank Smith – Gettysburg

- The Corp said the water would be down this year, but Mother Nature kicked in
- It has been a decent year with all the rain
- Campground and motel are up in numbers
- Looking forward to fall with all the rain and coverage for the pheasants
- Walleye fishing has been good

Ann Lesch – Ingalls Homestead, DeSmet

- DeSmet is doing good
- Opened early in May and it was a good month
- June was down with all the rain
- Visitors ask “What do you do when you get all this rain”
- There will be a South Dakota authors festival in the future at the Homestead
- Fishing has not been great, but picking up with the weather getting better
- Accepting the new normal

Wanda Goodman-Budget and Revenue updates

- Deputy Secretary Goodman shared the most recent budget and revenue updates, providing a snapshot of the full fiscal year 2024

Wanda Goodman, Strategic Plan update

- Deputy Secretary Goodman gave updates regarding the final year of the department’s current strategic plan.

Mike Gussiaas, Chief Marketing and Creative Officer, Global Marketing and Brand Strategy

- Gussiaas reported peak paid efforts are in full swing, including some new tactics and vendor partners like Atlas Obscura (played sponsored podcast), Pause Ads with Paramount+, new Arts & Culture video spots for year two of the campaign, Host Reads on Stitcher network (played Office Ladies host read) and a new, custom-Canadian effort (shared 15-sec French-language video spot).
- Gussiaas shared all the various audiences targeted through the numerous ongoing peak campaigns. He also shared an interesting finding from this summer: the General Audience, a combination of all others, has been outperforming the more targeted ones.
- The department paused all paid media ads from May 7 to 22 for brand safety concerns.
- Results to date on peak campaign efforts include 237+ million impressions tracked and 23+ million unique individuals reached, generating more than an estimated \$48.1 Million in hotel and flight booking revenue from more than 195+ thousand bookings and 339+ thousand total nights.
- Karsh Hagan provided an update and shared a peek at new assets from two weeks of shoots in the Black Hills in June. Future shoots will be on the Missouri River and the eastern side of the state in August, plus a western-lifestyle-focused shoot at the Buffalo Roundup, followed by another pheasant hunting shoot and a new winter-lifestyle shoot in 2025.

Alexa Dorn

- Brand USA
 - Currently running a Canada Digital Custom Campaign in partnership with Brand USA. Overall goal of reaching 10M impressions across all tactics using marketing outlets such as Sojern and Expedia. To date nearly 200 room nights have been booked in one month of the campaign being live.

- Canada Social Short Form Video Content
 - We are working on a pilot project with Brand USA, shooting 100 short story video clips that will be promoted in a social campaign in August of 2025. The campaign has a goal of 5M impressions, and the project will feature Outdoor locations in the Black Hills & Badlands region.
- 2024-2025 Brand USA Efforts
 - Upcoming efforts include Global Inspiration Program, Opti Channel Programs, Interactive Travel Guides, Canusa Germany Partnership, Travel Bag United Kingdom Partnership, and 2025 Spring Custom Campaigns.
- Passport
 - Launched the Family Fun Escapes- Southeast Attractions Passport at the end of June just in time for the 4th of July! Current promotion includes paid digital, organic social, consumer and industry emails, welcome center promotion, posters, window clings, OOH effort at West Roads Mall in Omaha, Rack Cards, Paid Social. The program is performing strong with 5,948 downloads since launch on April 1st. 11,282 business check ins, and 429 promotional items sent to visitors.

Erin Weinzettel

- The “Forever 605” Stewardship campaign continues to perform well as we launched the second year of the paid campaign.
 - Year-to-date there have been 4,134 pledges signed for a free sticker, 50 states represented, 131 international pledges signed as well
 - This year’s campaign focuses on the core pillars of the program, reminding travelers and residence to pack it out, travel far close to home, shop locally and care for our past and protect our future – messages shared through out-of-home, print, video, digital and social.
 - The team has finalized the online training module for individuals and employees to further understand the daily practices and efforts of Forever 605.
 - Also in production are flags and signage with the state parks, a partnership being worked on through Game, Fish and Parks.
- Shared an overview of this year’s efforts for the “Hunt the Greatest” and “Fish the Greatest” campaign, campaigns running in partnership with Game, Fish & Parks, generating 30.6M+ in impressions.
 - The campaign launched July 1st with recreational fishing messages, followed by Hunt the Greatest elements starting August 1st, with closing out the season with a Spring fishing push beginning in January 2025.
 - The campaign will align with last year’s Hunt the Greatest campaign, with creative updates aligning with Peak 2024 creative, and be ran through a broad range of elements including print, video, digital, audio and partnerships with Field Ethos, Pheasants Forever, Bassmaster, Game & Fish and Gun Dog.

Lou Hammond Group

- The Global PR & Content Strategy team reported on FY24 highlights. PR ended FY24 with 146 earned pieces which resulted in 3.5 billion media impressions. Social ended FY24 with 29.5K new followers and 88.5 million impressions. We discussed upcoming PR efforts and content that we are looking forward to such as Buffalo Roundup and Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. Along with Sturgis Motorcycle Rally we presented an update

on Rally Rush which will have 32 participating communities in its first year. Finally, the website team reported the progress on the upcoming relaunch of TravelSouthDakota.com which will occur in late 2024.

Cole Irwin

- Recap of Tradeshows
 - IPW
 - IRU
- Canada Connect Recap
- Upcoming Travel Trade major events schedule
- India market breakdown and upcoming mission
- IRU 2025 Rapid City
- Motorcoach program recap

Kirk Hulstein-Industry Outreach and Development Team

- Provided YTD Travel Indicators
 - Visitation flat but spending up 5.3%
 - Mount Rushmore visitation down 26%
 - National Parks as a whole down 10%
 - Occupancy and demand dead even with last year
 - Air Travel up 10%
 - Camping nights up 13%
- Travel outlook and Forecast
 - YTD Average Daily Rate \$101 and is competitive with our region
 - Business travel is rebounding, and short-term outlook is promising.
 - Short Term Rental guest nights pacing out to 11/30/2024 is up 29%
 - Short Term Rental property listings between 5k-6k.
- Consumer sentiment
 - Positive sentiment is increasing over past few months
 - Consumers are prioritizing travel
 - Some concerns remain about economy and personal finances
 - 94% of Americans have travel planned in next 6months.
- Personas Study
 - Provided update on methodology
 - Shared the top motivators for travel by each persona type
 - Shared what are the top activities that interest each persona type
- TAP Grants
 - Shared listing of each TAP grant Award
 - Showed distribution across the state.

Miles Partnership

- Miles Partnership provided updates on the new print guides that are being produced. The inspiration guide will be done by the end of the year. The Scenic Guides piece will be ready in 2025.

Bailey Tysdal

- We have selected the 4 keynote speakers for the 2025 South Dakota Governor's Conference on Tourism. Penny Zenker, Chris Bashinelli, David Reichbach, and Shawn Achor.
- We will be adding additional programming to Tuesday's portion of the conference, including an exhibitor preview, workshops, and a newcomer orientation.
- Scholarship Opportunity.
 - Four sponsored by Travel South Dakota and four sponsored by the Art Council. Applications due September 1.
- We've added a second, independent module to the online hospitality training. The Forever 605 training module consists of 3 lessons and quizzes and is a great way to learn more about the stewardship program.
- Our webinar series will resume in the fall, and cover Accessible Tourism Resources and Etiquette, Wacipi Visitor Etiquette, and How Best to Utilize the Interstate Welcome Centers.

President Lesch asked if there were any other questions or comments and thanked everyone for coming and the great tour for the Fort Sisseton Historical Park facility.

Secretary Hagen thanked the board for their steadfast support and for the industry partners who attended the meeting. He encouraged all to reach out to the Tourism team with any questions.

Meeting adjourned around 11:30 AM.