

**Addendum to Surry County**  
**Tourism Assessment**  
**Report:**

**Facilitated by Sandra Tanner, VTC**

## **Background:**

Virginia Tourism Corporation worked with Surry County to develop an assessment of Surry County's tourism efforts in June of 2013. Steve Galyean, facilitated the sessions at the Government Complex with 20 active participants. A report was adopted in September 2013 with suggestions of how to strengthen Surry's tourism potential.

As a result of the Planning Assessment, Surry County contracted with Goldman and Associates Public Relations and Stephanie Slocum to develop Surry County Competitive Tourism Position Travel Market Research Study and Surry County Recommended Marketing Strategy. This work was done in 2014. These plans resulted in branding, positioning, and marketing efforts in strategic locations. Surry has positioned itself as a strong spoke from the Williamsburg market.

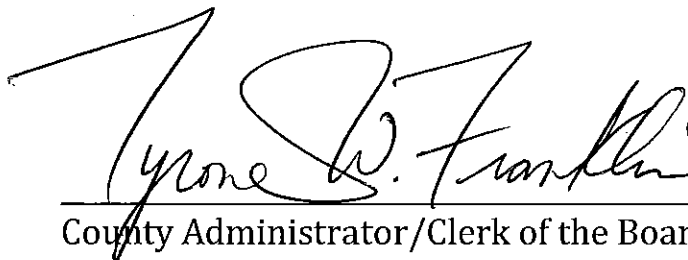
With many of the goals from the first planning session being completed, it was time to hold a planning session to determine next action steps to enhance and strengthen Surry's position in the Tourism market.

County Administrator, Tyrone W. Franklin, and Pat Bernshausen, Special Assistant to the County Administrator and DMO, reached out and met with Sandra Tanner, Tourism Development Specialist, VTC for guidance and facilitation of the next steps for their tourism growth. After meeting criteria for holding a planning session, dates were set for a full one day planning session held on November 2, 2016. The session was held at the Government Complex with 13 active participants.

\*See Sept. 2013 plan for more background

Adopted by action of the Surry County Board of Supervisors on May 4, 2017.

Attest:



Tyrone W. Franklin

County Administrator/Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

## **Acknowledgements:**

**This Report is the result of in-depth discussions by the following Surry County stakeholders. These stakeholders represent business owners, non-profits, attractions, restaurants, industry, local government, state parks, and others who are all interested in the development and promotion of tourism in Surry County as part of an overall economic development strategy to benefit the citizens through increased revenue, job creation, and quality of life.**

Jennifer Hurst-Wender	Preservation Virginia-Smith's Fort and Bacon's Castle
Carol Wiedel	Bacon's Castle
Judy Lyttle	Surry County Board of Supervisors
Nathan Younger	Chippokes State Park
Lynette Allston	Nottoway Tribe of Virginia
Diane Sheldon	Hampton Roads Winery
David Sheldon	Hampton Roads Winery
Catherine Walls	Realtor, Virginia Home and Land
Mary Padget	Surry County Historical Society
Tyrone Franklin	Surry County Administrator
Amy Drewry	Drewry Farms
Heather Marrs	Surry Seafood Co., Inc.
Donna Edwards	Edwards Virginia Smokehouse

## **Executive Summary:**

Surry's Tourism Department has done an exceptional job with limited staffing. They have completed several of the suggestions in the original plan:

- Renovated space for a Visitor Center
- Developed a Visitor Center program with part time staff and volunteers
- Developed a brand and positioning for Surry County's Tourism efforts
- Renovated the Marina and secured operators to run the marina/restaurant
- Working toward developing lodging at the Marina
- Developed marketing materials
- Hired firm to market Surry County to visitors at timeshares and resorts in Williamsburg.

1<sup>st</sup> critical issue raised: Concern over sustainability of the tourism program was expressed at the planning session. There are many things that need to be done to bring their Tourism Department to the next level. This cannot be done without hiring a full-time Tourism Director and funding a department with marketing dollars, etc. This is **key** to continued success and sustainability for Surry's Tourism Development. It was echoed from the participants at the planning session. The facilitator suggests that a study of surrounding Tourism professionals and departmental costs be done in order to develop a line item in the budget for a full time Tourism Department. VTC can assist with job descriptions, etc. as needed.

2<sup>nd</sup> critical issue raised: There are numbers for economic impact for both the town and the county combined. While the museums, Marina, and Winery have seen an uptick in visitation, there needs to be a mechanism for measuring the County's marketing efforts. The facilitator suggests having an ROI study done to evaluate the county's tourism efforts and to determine if there are sources of unrealized revenue. This should result in the development of a formula for Tourism staff to use moving forward.

3<sup>rd</sup> critical issue raised: Strategies need to be developed for communication, collaboration, and for product development for Surry County. While these strategies can be developed, it is the recommendation of the facilitator that a full time Tourism Department be established with committee support in order to properly address these issues.

4<sup>th</sup> critical issue raised: Lack of water access for the public in Surry County. A recommendation was made to look at potential property to develop beach area and water access in addition to what the Marina will provide. The facilitator notes that outdoor recreation is a key driver for bringing visitors to the area.

## Tourism's Economic Impact in Surry County, VA

As you can see Surry County's Economic impact numbers and job creation have steadily increased since the 2013 planning session (see numbers below from 2011-2015). Facilitator notes that this is solely due to the effort by the part-time Tourism employee and the progressive efforts by the County Administration and Board.

Tourism contributes considerable revenue and jobs to Surry County, VA. In 2011, the Virginia Tourism Corporation reports over \$9.4 million in travel expenditures in Surry County. These expenditures generated over \$270,000 in local tax receipts, and over \$380,000 in state tax receipts. More importantly, tourism supports 99 jobs in Surry County with an annual payroll of over \$2 million.

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

### Surry

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Travel Economic Impacts</b>					
Employment	99	99	101	100	103
Expenditures	\$ 9,468,736	\$ 9,795,654	\$ 9,837,068	\$ 10,006,079	\$ 10,172,616
Local Tax Receipts	\$ 273,528	\$ 277,054	\$ 284,888	\$ 284,528	\$ 291,764
Payroll	\$ 2,086,591	\$ 2,126,389	\$ 2,206,526	\$ 2,235,018	\$ 2,327,565
State Tax Receipts	\$ 382,732	\$ 390,037	\$ 434,421	\$ 468,485	\$ 493,343

### Background

These summary profiles represent locality-specific travel-related data kept by the Virginia Tourism Corporation for the years 2011-2015.

### Travel Economic Impacts (TEIM)

The studies to estimate the domestic travelers' spending estimates were conducted by the Research Department of the U.S. Travel Association (formerly known as TIA). The studies provide estimates of domestic traveler expenditures in Virginia and its 133 counties and independent cities, as well as the employment, payroll income, and state and local tax revenue directly generated by these expenditures.

The data represent the direct travel impact estimates for the locality. These five impact estimates EXCLUDE indirect, or multiplier impacts.

Expenditures represent the direct spending by domestic travelers including food, accommodations, auto transportation, public transportation, incidental purchases, entertainment / recreation and travel generated-tax receipts.

## **Vision for Surry County:**

In order to develop a workable plan, the participants were lead in two exercises aimed at developing a clear vision for the future of tourism. The results are as follows:

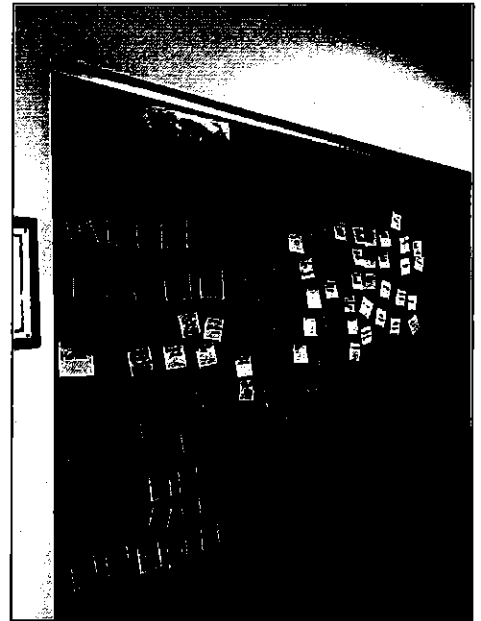
When asked what three things the group would like to accomplish by their attendance today, responses were varied and most were addressed during the planning process:

- Enhancement of Smith's Fort
- Addition of hotel/lodging
- Seasonal bus tours
- Increased transportation-connectivity
- Limited Ferry congestion
- More cycling events
- Pocahontas-development of her story in Surry
- Recognition of the arrival of African Americans-history development
- Local Agency involvement with POWWOW-Community Service and Education
- History/Cultural Tours – year-round
- Increased and more effective signage
- Community grocery store
- Community participation
- Coordinated Marketing (internal and external)
- Creation of a Tourism Director position
- Tourism promotion and Program Development
- Ferry Summer schedule extended through October
- Development of a Tourism Plan that is fluid
- Promote Core Businesses
- Downtown revitalization
- Teamwork and cooperation between attractions/sites
- Improved communication
- Better collaboration
- Development of a strong Community Identity
- Marketing attractions to locals
- Follow through on plans
- Volunteer recruitment
- Weekday openings of attractions

To develop a vision for Surry County's future in tourism the participants were asked to develop a Vision Board with thoughts, ideas, phrases that they hoped would be conveyed by visitors to Surry County ten years in the future. The results below are obtainable with a dedicated person to lead the effort. The results are:

- Fun at the Beach
- Interactive Activities
- Local Hotels with Country Flair
- Festivals Attract State Wide Visitors
- Great Restaurants
- Rural Area Trees Paths
- History Trails
- Hub of Shops and History
- Visit History
- You need to Experience Surry
- Shopped
- Learned
- I Ate
- River Tour
- A Step Back in Time
- Relaxed
- Village Visits
- Carriage Rides
- Preserved History
- Inter Active Activities
- Music
- Fishing
- Great
- Immersed
- Preserved Agriculture
- Thriving Downtown with Brick Walks and Lamp Posts
- Agritourism
- I saw lots of crops growing
- Story of Virginia Indians
- The Historic Sites where Inovative and Inclusive
- Happy locals
- Lovely Country Inn
- You need to visit Surry
- Lots of Eco Tourism
- Fossil Hunting at the beach
- Great Shopping
- Better Ferry Service
- African American History Museum
- Great B&B's
- There were great bars with good musical bands

- Kayaking/Canoe Adventure
- Relaxing
- Enhanced Tourism Efforts
- Outstanding Education System
- Great History
- Excellent Internet connection
- Educational
- Nice Walkable Downtown
- Wow, I'd like to live here!
- Great Island
- Great night life
- Great Trolley/Transportation system
- Nice motel with pool
- Entertainment
- Great Eats
- Grocery Store
- Amazing History, I didn't know until now!
- Awesome Walkable Main Street
- Quaint Downtown
- Learned about animal husbandry
- The difference between corporate food and sustainable food
- How the food Chain works
- Slow development invest in small boutique agribusiness
- Where meat comes from and how meat gets from pasture to plate



### **Asset Identification:**

Since the previous planning session, tourism product has been developed and opened in Surry County (i.e. the Surry Seafood Company and Hampton Roads Winery) which has resulted in job creation and increased tourism spending and tax receipts to the county.

In order to identify the tourism assets that Surry County can use to draw visitors to the county the participants were lead in several exercises.

#### **Current Tourism Products:**

- Hampton Roads Winery
- Surry Seafood Company
- Visitor Center
- Shops
- Farmer's Market



- African American Family Reunion
- Bacon's Castle
- Blueberry Jam Festival
- Camp Chanco
- Chippokes Plantation State Park
- Claremont
- College Run Farms
- C. W. Reeson Nursery
- Dendron Historical Society & Museum
- Drewry Farm
- Eastover Retreat Center
- Edward's Ham
- Endless Farms Alpacas
- Genealogical records
- Hog Island
- James River
- Jamestown-Scotland Ferry
- Lawne's Creek Church
- Nottoway Indian Pow Wow
- Pork, Peanut, and Pine Festival
- Road Side Markers
- Rolfe House/Smith's Fort Plantation
- Slades Raceway/Motorcycle Racing
- Surry Courthouse
- Surry County Historical Society & Museum
- Surry Power Station
- Surry Recreation Center - Soccer
- Taste of Surry

**Premier Products to attract Visitors:**

When asked, "What are the Premier Tourism Assets in Surry?" the responses were:

- Edwards Ham Shoppe
- Hampton Roads Winery
- College Run Farms-Seasonal
- Chippokes State Park
- Dominion Nuclear Power Information Center
- Bacon's Castle
- Smith's Fort
- Slade's Raceway
- County Records – Historic Courthouse

However, when asked what "cannot be missed" in Surry County, the responses were as follows, which reinforced their feelings for premier assets:

**Cannot be missed**

- Bacon's Castle
- Chippokes State Park
- College Run Farms

**Place where you must eat**

- Surry Seafood Company

**Must do**

- Chippokes State Park
- PowWow-Event
- Ferry Ride

After, more discussion and a better understanding of Premier Assets the following list was developed and should be marketed as the drivers to get more people staying longer and spending more money:

- Bacon's Castle
- Hampton Roads Winery
- Surry Seafood Company
- Jamestown-Scotland Ferry

**Premier Event:** Nottoway Pow Wow (September)

The following activities are important and should be marketed for the County:

- Boating
- Bird Watching
- Camping
- Canoeing
- Central location
- Fishing
- Geocaching
- Horseback Riding
- Swimming
- Cycling
- History
- Culture
- Hiking
- Hunting

## **Product Development Ideas:**

The group was asked for a list of potential tourism development projects that could make Surry County a destination for travel. New product needs to be developed constantly to keep Virginia and Surry County competitive in the travel market. Here is a list of new product ideas:

- Downtown improvements to the Towns of Surry, Claremont, and Dendron
- Trail Connecting Bacon's Castle to Chippokes
- Canoe and kayak opportunities
- Casual music jam sessions
- Year round tours of historic sites
- Engagement on ferry dock to make waiting easier
- Ferry updates
- Surry County app for planning
- "Farm to Fork" events
- Agriculture Demonstration gardens-cotton, Indian corn, etc.
- School Programs to encourage community involvement and pride in Surry
- Local products in all the shops
- Tour Surry from the James River
- Christmas Lighted Boat Parade
- Continuing Marina development and boat rentals
- African American driving tour
- Trolley/Bus Tours of local sites from Visitors Center
- County procurement of public beach property
- Cultural museum-Interpretive Center
- 3 Cultures-Driving Trail
- Heritage Trail Brochure
- Eco Tours on the James River
- Convert VA Ferry that is taken out of commission by VDOT to a vehicle for sunrise and sunset cruises
- Railroad Trail-thematic driving trail
- Arts Center in the Town of Claremont
- Lodging and B&B's
- High school greenhouse program
- Ferry Traffic Cams-for people to see back ups and times.

These ideas are obtainable and important for connecting all of the Towns in the county for tourism and economic growth. Virginia's Tourism Development Specialist can assist with technical support, guidance, and funding opportunities.

## **Community Assessment:**

Community assessments are important to tourism planning. The group was asked several questions about the community, such as infrastructure to support tourism, community perceptions, and red flags from the community that will stop or inhibit the County's tourism efforts. Following are the lists the group developed:

### **Infrastructure needs include:**

- County-Wide Internet/Broadband
- Signage
- Lodging
- Water/Sewer
- No bike trails/shoulders/bike lanes
- Roads need to be widened
- Ferry lines
- Parking/bus parking
- Public rest rooms
- ADA access to all attractions
- Staffing-lack of workforce

### **Community Perceptions include:**

- Ferry lines are too long
- Surry County is an island
- There is nothing to do in Surry
- Where is Surry? -No one knows where it is
- Not open for Business
- A Pass Thru
- Scenic experience
- Rural/Agricultural area
- Downtown improvements needed
- Work with owners of Surry House
- Tourism situation is improving

These perceptions can change with education and marketing efforts.

### **Red Flags:**

- Ferry service delays and/or disruptions
- Front line staff is not well educated about County assets
- No full-time Tourism Director
- Lacking appropriate signage

- Community education/change of perception
- Distance between assets in County
- Being a pass thru
- Limited funding
- Communication-state agency to county events
- Lack of space for retail/restaurant (Developers should be part of this solution)

**Business Gap Analysis:**

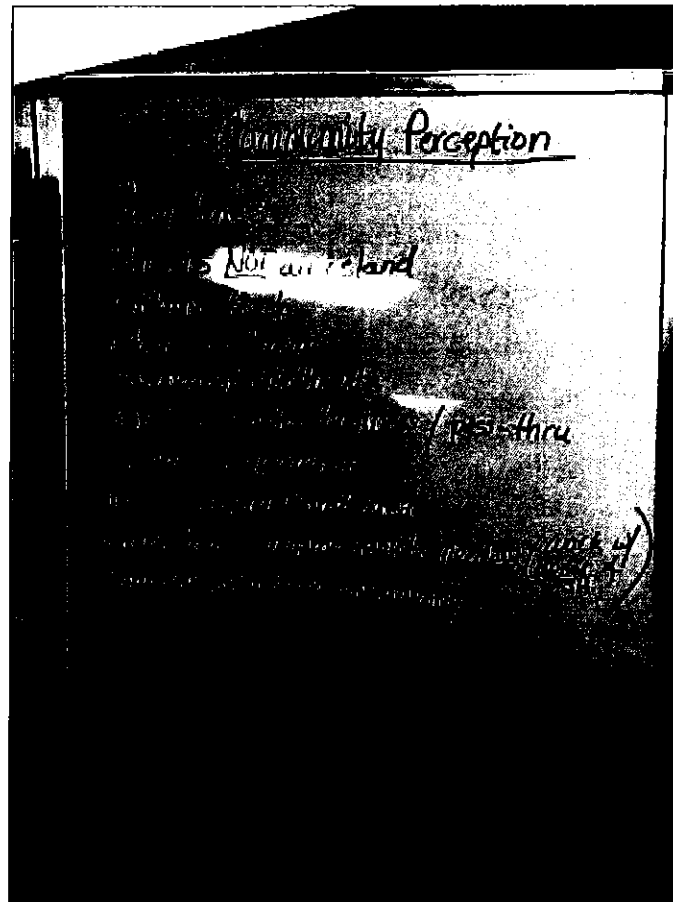
It is essential to recognize the gaps in businesses that the tourism industry supports and create a plan for small business development in the county.

Here is a short list of Business Gaps that would be supported by visitors to the County:

- Brewery
- Caterer
- Grocery Store
- Café/deli/diner
- General store
- Weekly Auction
- Flea Market
- Bicycle Rentals at Chippokes
- Coffee Shop
- Craft Shop with Classes
- Gallery, "local Art"
- Little Theater-performance, spoken word, music
- Fishing/canoe guides/tours
- Ice cream shop
- Breakfast restaurants
- Grocery
- Souvenir
- Bakery
- Market
- Rental cars/taxi-transportation
- Lodging: cabins, B&B's
- Restaurants
- Laundry
- Boutique shops

- Stables-Equestrian
- Outdoor sports
- Night life-cultural
- Food hub
- Roadside assistance
- Photographer-documenting family vacations
- Event rentals

\*\*Special Note: Community members expressed a need for additional health/medical facilities. A possible solution would be a satellite office or urgent care center. While this is not directly tourism related, it is indirectly related as often tourists need medical assistance when travelling.



**Goals:**

The groups were asked to write headlines for Surry twenty years into the future. The premise for the exercise was first steps in developing a set of goals and action steps.

### **Headlines consisted of the following:**

- SURRY FARMER'S COOP OPENS
- COUNTRY INN EXPANDING
- HR WINERY OPENS BREWERY AND DISTILLERY
- SURRY HOUSE REOPENS!
- HIGH SCHOOL OPENS GREEN HOUSE PROJECT
- ROUTE 10 EXPANDS TO 4 LANES
- BROADBAND IS HERE!
- WARREN BUFFET SURRY BENEFACTOR
- WATERFRONT LAND BEQUETHED TO SURRY COUNTY
- SURRY IS MECCA FOR HEALTHY LOCAL FOODS
- ODEC DONATES LAND TO SURRY FOR RECREATIONAL USE
- SURRY COUNTY FALL FESTIVAL THIS WEEKEND
- GOLD DISCOVERED IN SPRING GROVE
- SPORTS COMPLEX FEATURES COLISEUM DESIGN
- COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS COME TOGETHER FOR SURRY TOWNS' REVITALIZATION
- TOP 10 SMALL TOWN IN THE UNITED STATES
- SURRY COUNTY DESIGNATED #9 RURAL TOURIST SPOT
- FIOS COMES TO SURRY
- BBB CELEBRATES IT'S 5<sup>TH</sup> SEASON
- PAT BERNSHAUSEN RETIRES AS FULL TIME TOURISM DIRECTOR
- SURRY COUNTY RECORDS COMPLETELY DIGITIZED AND SEARCHABLE ONLINE

Goals and action steps were completed from a compilation of the days' work. Here are the results:

#### **I. Develop Tourism Program**

- Hire full time Director of Tourism/development
- Status Assessment to determine current effectiveness of existing marketing efforts. This assessment could be done by a contractor and Surry County is encouraged to pursue VTC Marketing Leverage funding for this purpose.
- Tourism Revenue and Impact Study – Information garnered from this study could result in funding to sustain a full-time position and program costs.
- Establish a working (emphasis on working) Tourism Committee composed only of 4-6 members of the tourism industry sector who would provide quarterly updates to the BOS
- Identify possible funding sources
- Development of a Volunteer Program

## **II. Marketing**

- Increase marketing in the Richmond/Tri-Cities and Chesapeake/VA Beach areas where travelers are not constrained by travel involving the J-S Ferry
- Develop communication plan for the community to know what is available in their own backyard
- Evaluate current marketing effort for ROI
- Examine best use of itineraries on [www.Virginia.org](http://www.Virginia.org), etc.

## **III. Transportation Plan**

- Ferry wait time opportunities to make wait times easier during peak travel times
  1. Signage
  2. Radio Station-AM
  3. Pod Cast
  4. Guide by cell
  5. Market non-peak travel times

## **IV. Communications**

- Develop an Internal Communication Plan for County to organizations
- Develop Event Calendar and submit to [www.Virginia.org](http://www.Virginia.org)
- Develop coordinated effort for collaboration between attractions such as “Lunch and Learn” networking sessions
- Develop better communication between state agencies for events (ex. paving during PowWow event and notification of cycling events)

## **V. Education**

- Develop educational packets for local business’ front line staff for new employee orientation
- Surry Pride Campaign – Develop programs for students and encourage County staff to tour attractions and evaluate their experiences
- Develop education plan/talking points for community members about benefits of tourism as an economic driver
- Develop education/talking points for elected officials about benefits of tourism as an economic driver
- Develop a Customer Service Training Program to be implemented with the assistance of Workforce Development to include local businesses, County Staff and Sheriff’s Department
- Develop Community Awareness/Student Tourism Ambassador Program
- Workforce training for tourism jobs



- Establish quarterly networking meetings for attractions/businesses to inform of new/changing programming

#### **VI. Funding for Tourism**

- Develop sustainable funding source for the County's tourism program
- Create budgetary line items for full tourism department, to include staff and marketing costs
- Seek grants for development projects
- Identify existing tourism revenues

#### **VII. Build or Enhance Infrastructure**

- Develop beautification projects
- Work with developers for hotel/lodging
- Develop unique lodging opportunities
- Establish means for internet connectivity/County-wide broadband service
- Invest in water/sewer infrastructure to encourage future growth
- Develop an anti-littering campaign
- Invest in more, and effective, directional signage
- Expand Visitor Center hours
- Introduce bike lanes/bike paths for cyclists
- Increase availability of public restrooms
- Increase parking and bus parking opportunities

#### **VIII. Product Development and Enhancement**

- Continued preservation of the County's history and agriculture heritage
- Prioritize product development-determine cost sharing
- Work with Towns for downtown revitalization and economic restructuring through tourism development
- Develop outdoor recreation products (i.e. canoe/kayaking, hiking and biking trails)
- Agritourism Development- local hosting of "Farm to Fork" events
- Enhance historic sites for year-round tours
- Develop a year-round tourism program for Surry County
- Develop driving tours representative of Native-American, European-American and African-American cultures
- Connect sites through bus/trolley type tours
- Develop Cultural Arts Center/Museum
- Sports Center Development
- Provide opportunities for public beach access along the James River
- Develop high end festivals

- Develop music centered events in downtowns through the development of a stage/amphitheater area

#### **IX. Small Business Development**

- Provide a Business Development Assistance Program
- Develop list of businesses that will support tourism development
- Provide grant writing assistance for small business owners
- Provide tax incentives to encourage business development/expansion
- Develop Tourism Zones
- Develop an inventory of available retail/business sites within the County
- Develop a “Town Center” Concept
- Recruit and incentivize local restaurants
- Recruit and incentivize unique lodging opportunities
- Create an education program for businesses to help them understand their role in tourism
- Encourage businesses to provide consistent hours of operation and to be open when visitors are traveling
- Work with VTC and DHCD’s Community Business Launch Program.

These goals are obtainable and address the 4 critical issues listed at the beginning of the plan. VTC can assist with technical assistance, guidance and resources to help Surry County reach their goals.

#### **Itinerary building:**

The participants were broken into groups and tasked with developing itineraries to be marketed on [www.virginia.org](http://www.virginia.org) to draw visitors to Surry County. These itineraries can be built upon and marketed immediately:

#### **Day Trip:**

##### **Day Cruise to the “Island” of Surry**

Come to Surry via the ferry from Jamestown. While on “the island” visit Smith’s Fort and Drewry Farm, have lunch at Edward’s Ham Shoppe, shop at Nature’s Acre, have dinner at Anna’s , enjoyed live entertainment at Surry Seafood Company before taking the last ferry back to Jamestown.

OR

Come to Surry for Genealogical research, visit Smith’s Fort, the Historic County Courthouse and Historical Society for records, enjoy breakfast at Edward’s Ham Shoppe, Lunch Anna’s, shop at Johnson Brothers Gift Shop and tour cemetery for research, dinner at the Surry Seafood Company.

### **Day Trip Family of Four:**

Come to Surry for family fun at Chippokes State Park, enjoy swimming at the river beach or the swimming pool, visit the Farm & Forestry Museum, have lunch at the concessions at the pool, shop at the gift shop, canoeing before going home in the evening.

### **Weekend in Surry**

#### **Savor the Secrets of Surry**

Come to Surry County, Stayed at the Claremont River House, visited Chippokes and Bacon's Castle, dined at the Surry Seafood Company, visited College Run for pick your own, and had wine tasting at Hampton Roads Winery.

#### **Enjoy Life on the River**

Come to Surry for a weekend of scenic drives and relaxation, ride the ferry over from the Williamsburg area stay at the Claremont River House, visit Chippokes for a River Walk, tour Bacon's Castle and Smith's Fort, dine at the Surry Seafood company, shop at Farmer Joe's, visited Hampton Road Winery.

#### **PowWow Weekend**

Come to Surry for the PowWow, camp at Chippokes State Park or stay in one of their guest cottages, visit College Run Farms for pick your own and ice cream, attend the PowWow, visit Bacon's Castle, enjoy lunch on the porch at Edwards Ham Shoppe, visit Farmer Joe's.

## **Summary:**

Surry is rich in history, outdoor recreation, water activities and products that can be developed. The opening of the Hampton Roads Winery and the Surry Seafood Company and Marina are examples of new product that will need to be developed for economic growth, job creation, and competitiveness.

Surry is progressive and has made great strides in the area of Tourism; however, there are four critical issues, detailed in the Executive Summary which will need to be addressed. Priority should be given to the development of a full-time Tourism Director and to marketing and revenue study. With the branding and marketing positioning that has already been developed, Surry County's next step should be to concentrate on product development to ensure continued success and to become a destination where tourists will desire to stay longer and spend more money.