



PILCH & BARNET MARKETING REPORT

2020 | Q2

April - June

Setting Priorities

Supported AAR state applications

- Drafted national letter of support and worked with to collect letters of support from additional organizations
- Distributed newsletters and posted transportation information online at mrpcmembers.com
- Assisted in communication with states about application status and need for assistance from chairs

Communicated to general public to continue awareness but travel later

- Social media and newsletters continued with content that included education, history, happy pictures
- Promotions moved to later into year
- Phone calls, emails and map distribution continued
- Updated experiencemississippiriver.com homepage with COVID information

Supported Interpretive Centers

- Drafted support emails for Pat & John to approve
- Provided information on what MRPC/GRR was doing during pandemic
- Created several surveys to collect information on what ICs were doing/ needed
- Requested photos and links to any video/ virtual experiences used on social media
- Actively promoted information that was shared on social media
- Held Zoom session Roundtable for ICs to share ideas
- Edited the Roundtable audio recording to omit beginning and ending chatter, posted online and provided links to members who didn't attend.

Communicate with board

- Held Zoom trial for anyone who wanted to learn
- Scheduled board call for April 21
- Opened Zoom account to state chairs who wanted to hold commission meetings, which was used by Arkansas

MEETINGS

Interpretive Center Roundtable

- Gathered interpretive center contact info
- Created two surveys for information collection
- Participated in IC meeting
- Sent out four e-newsletters
 - 5/1
 - 5/6
 - 5/8
 - 5/12



Mississippi River Parkway Commission
701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202
Madison, WI 53703



REMINDER: Interpretive Center roundtable meeting is May 14

All members of the [Great River Road Network of Interpretive Centers](#) are encouraged to join representatives from the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) and other Interpretive Centers along the Great River Road for a videoconference at **3pm CDT Thursday, May 14**.


This free videoconference will allow Interpretive Centers to discuss the challenges they are facing and discuss strategies to reach potential visitors now and in the future.

Please RSVP to the conference [here](#). Once you register, we will send you final details about the call.


Thank you for your interest and your continued support of the MRPC and the Great River Road!

Follow us:   

Mississippi River Parkway Commission 701 E. Washington Ave., Suite 202 Madison, WI 53703
Toll Free: 866-763-8310 Phone: 608-268-0902 Fax: 608-242-8896 Email: MRPC@arkibarnet.com



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Don't forget to register for the Great River Road Interpretive Center Free Virtual Roundtable this Thursday.

May 14 Roundtable RSVP




Join us for an hour of insight with other Great River Road Interpretive Centers on **Thursday, May 14 at 3:00pm CST**. John Anfinson, superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, will lead us in idea-sharing.

You can expect to learn about:


- Shared closing and re-opening experiences
- National parks' lessons learned (and still learning)
- Safety concerns for staff and visitors

If you haven't already completed our survey, we'd like to know more about what you and your Mississippi River community are experiencing in these unprecedented travel times. We'll share findings during our call.


Take the survey

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We're here for you

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) has promoted travel and the [stories of the Great River Road](#) for more than 80 years. During these extraordinarily challenging times, we're proud to continue that work and promoting our valuable Interpretive Center partners like you. Calls from future visitors indicate interest in traveling the Great River Road remains high. Here's how we're continuing to engage and serve our shared visitor audience during the pandemic.

- **Toll-free Great River Road information line** to provide information to people planning future trips
- **Great River Road social media channels** ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) and [website](#) are increasing online visibility with user-friendly and aspirational content
- **10-state maps** continue to be requested and fulfilled
- **State and federal resources** for your organizations and businesses

How you can help us

Even though travel isn't possible right now—and we're not encouraging people to travel until it's safe—this is a great time to encourage people to dream about future travel experiences. To that end, we'd be grateful for any information you can share with us, including:

- Updated information on your Interpretive Center – hours, what's open to the public (e.g. trails, outdoor exhibits), scheduled opening date, etc.
- Photos (interior and exterior) of your Interpretive Centers
- Photos of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway or Mississippi River scenery
- Information on virtual tours or online tools visitors can use to explore your Interpretive Center virtually




Please use [this link/form](#) to share your information with us.

We also encourage you to post your updated Interpretive Center's information to our [Facebook page](#) for us to reshare.

Join us for a (virtual) roundtable later this month

We are inviting all Great River Road Network of Interpretive Centers to join us on a videoconference call on **Thursday, May 14 at 3:00pm CST** where organizations can share and discuss challenges they're facing, learn from other Interpretive Centers and discuss strategies for reaching fans now and potential visitors in the future.

Please use [this page](#) to sign up.

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Conference Calls/ Zoom Sessions/ Meetings

- April 6 - Call with Terri & Anne
- April 10 - MRPC Board Zoom Session
- April 21 - MRPC Board Zoom Session and MRPC Transportation Zoom Training
- April 22 - Transportation Committee Zoom Session
- April 23 - Marketing Committee Zoom Session
- May 6 - Culture and Heritage Leaders Meeting
- May 14 - GRR Network of Interpretive Centers Roundtable
- May 18 - AR-MRPC
- May 19 - Grant call
- May 21 - Marketing Committee Meeting
- May 26 - Call with Anne
- June 9 - MRCTI Conference Call on Annual Meeting
- June 12 - Teleconference with Anne
- June 16 - MRPC Annual Meeting Planning Session
- June 25 - MRPC Annual Meeting Planning with Anne and Terri
- June 30 - MRPC Transportation Committee Meeting

Fielded calls and emails from states/ commissioners on status of openings/closures/ and communication/ travel in their areas.

Set Up Awards meeting and provided chair with requested nomination information

Drafted, communicated and provided board materials and support for the April meeting.

Opened Zoom account and provided Zoom Training for the board and the marketing committee as well as made a staff person available for phone to assist with Zoom questions.

Made calls for Stewardship Award nominations.

National Meetings - Spring and Fall

- Continued to communicate with Sharon/ LA-MRPC to plan Semi-Annual Meeting
- Communicated recommendation to executive committee and LA-MRPC to cancel in-person meeting
- Created newsletter to registrations and full national commission regarding meeting cancellation
- Worked with Sharon/ LA-MRPC to follow up on any cancellation needs
- Continued to communicate with Bemidji, MN venues on cancellation terms and policies
- Communicated with Colin/ MRCTI to learn of their fall meeting plans
- Worked on draft of fall virtual meeting
- Created Save the Date newsletters for fall virtual meeting
- Updated Website and created a meeting landing page and meeting brand design
- Communicated with potential speakers, including Roger Carmack
- Researched interpretive centers that could participate based on diverse geo-locations, size and approach to pandemic and then started communication with possible interpretive centers speakers

WEBSITE

Overview

www.experiencemississippiriver.com		
Total pageviews	96,481	
Total unique pageviews	76,050	
Total sessions	44,312	
Unique users	37,365	
New users	88.8%	
Returning users	11.2%	
Pages viewed per session	2.2	
Time spent per page visited	0:53	
Avg. session duration	1:55	
Top 10 most visited pages		
	pageviews	avg. time on page
/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/	11,312	1:31
homepage	9,483	1:12
/interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/	6,499	1:59
/river-attractions/	5,579	2:21
/interactive-tools/webcams/	3,634	1:18
/historic-photos-sights-along-the-mississippi-river/	2,866	1:45
/app/	2,857	3:37
/interactive-tools/fun-facts/	2,730	3:43
/itineraries/	2,664	1:08
/states/minnesota/	2,143	2:03
Top 10 Referring Sites		
	sessions	avg. session duration
facebook.com	2,296	0:50
thediscoverer.com	2,031	1:31
shermanstravel.com	118	1:12
baidu.com	107	0:00
thrillist.com	100	1:16
www-thrillist-com.cdn.ampproject.org	92	0:36

styleblueprint.com	61	2:31
pinterest.com	60	0:31
mailchi.mp	45	3:14
parks.ky.gov	44	1:41
Top 10 Metro Areas		
	sessions	avg. session duration
Minneapolis-St. Paul MN	4,492	1:51
Chicago IL	4,325	1:38
St. Louis MO	2,112	1:46
Milwaukee WI	1,106	2:14
Madison WI	1,045	2:09
Dallas-Ft. Worth TX	985	1:47
La Crosse-Eau Claire WI	852	1:41
Cedar Rapids-Waterloo-Iowa City & Dubuque IA	844	1:16
Atlanta GA	811	2:03
New York, NY	789	1:48
Top 5 Channels		
	% sessions	avg. session duration
Organic Search	66.1	2:04
Direct	20.1%	1:48
Referral	8.4%	1:42
Social	5.4%	0:50
Email	0%	3:17
User demographics		
age	% sessions	avg. session duration
65+	24.1%	2:25
55-64	20.1%	2:23
25-34	18.2%	1:39
45-54	15.1%	1:56
35-44	13.9%	1:45
18-24	8.5%	1:24
gender	% sessions	avg. session duration
female	50.8%	1:58
male	49.2%	2:04

Device usage	% sessions	avg. session duration
Mobile + Tablet	54%	1:59
Desktop	46%	2:17

Web Maintenance

- Monthly website checks
 - Tested and updated links as necessary
 - Checked copy and photos, ensured content was current
- Flipped social media and website content to summer on 5/14
- SEO/analytics monitored weekly
- Posted COVID-19 resources page
- Blogs
 - Historic photos: sights along the Mississippi River (5/20)
 - Locks and dams of the upper Mississippi River (6/22)

Takeaways

The website performed well during a time that travel nationwide was disrupted by a global pandemic.

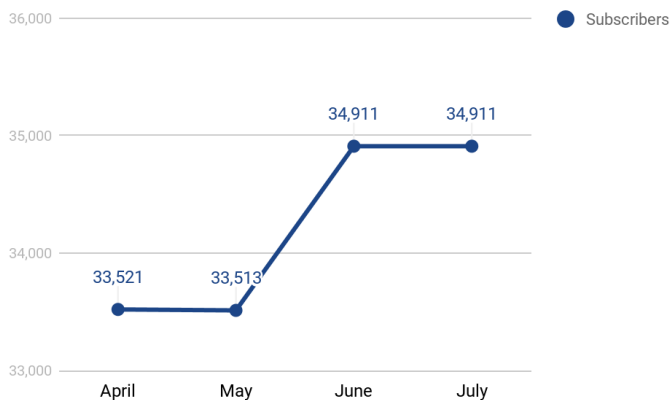
- Overall page views on the site declined by about 14 percent relative to Q2 2019, but some of that decline can be attributed to different run dates for the summer promotion. The 2020 promotion-related traffic (Flavors of the Great River Road) will appear in the Q3 report.
- There was a shift in site traffic this quarter, due to a change in how Google ranks the site's pages in search results. For several years, the "Best Drive in America" page has been a top entry point for the site, outperforming even the homepage. The apparent reason: it had a top Google page ranking. The page has good content and links to key areas of the site so it has been a fine entry point for visitors, but recently, Google began giving the home page top billing in search results. The impact: traffic to the "Best Drive in America" dropped 50 percent, traffic to the home page increased by about 40 percent.

- While various state orders had an impact on travel on the route and visits to the site, views on the attractions page increased—this page lists information like interpretive centers and scenic overlooks—and it saw strong organic traffic. Google searches were up 20 percent so clearly people were using the site to plan travel, even during some challenging months.
- The website also saw some demographic shifts this quarter. Visits by people aged 18-24 and 25-34 increased significantly over Q2 2019. While there were still more visitors over age 55 on the site, growth in interest in younger travelers is encouraging, as we look to future years promoting travel on the route.
- The website attracted a substantial number of visitors from states along the route but also received considerable traffic from Texas, California and Florida. While the majority of site traffic is domestic, top international markets reached by the site include Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

QUARTERLY E-NEWSLETTER

6/18 e-newsletter

- Subject line: Photo Gallery: Historic sights along the Mississippi river
- Wrote article: Take a historical trip along the Great River Road
- Open rate: 26.0%
- Click rate: 7.3%



View this email in your browser
Forward to a friend

Great River Road

Take a historical trip along the Great River Road

A drive along the Great River Road is a drive through the history of America. If you can't hit the road quite yet, join us on a virtual trip through the Mississippi River region with this gallery of historic photos.

[Read more](#)

Museum, historical sites, overlooks & more

From north to south, the Great River Road is filled with unmissable attractions. Marvel at impressive locks & dams, take in panoramic views at scenic overlooks and visit museums that tell the stories of the people and cultures of the Mississippi River region.

[Find attractions](#)

MISSISSIPPI RIVER COUNTRY ASSOCIATION
U.S. TRAVEL USA ASSOCIATION

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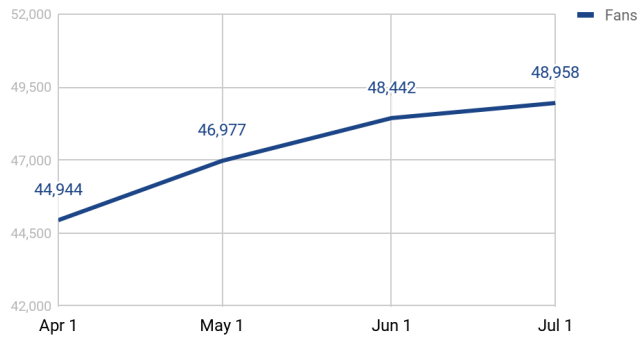
[Facebook](#) [Pinterest](#) [YouTube](#) [Instagram](#)

FACEBOOK

Overview

- Facebook fans: 48,958
- New Facebook fans: 4,014
- Facebook updates: 40

Facebook fans



Facebook Top Posts

- 6/2/20
 - “Here are some wonderful photos along the Mississippi River throughout the years” w/link to blog on experiencemississippiriver.com
 - 31,564 people reached, 3,689 engagements, 1,094 post clicks
 - 4,107 people reached organically; 27,850 people via paid ad
- 4/30/20
 - “Throwback Thursday: “A look at flour mills along the northern Mississippi River in Minneapolis in 1939. (Note the Gold Medal Flour sign, which still exists over the Mill City Museum to this day)” w/photo
 - 26,493 people reached, 3,416 engagements, 1,587 post clicks
 - 5,382 people reached organically; 21,061 people via paid ad

The Great River Road
June 2 · 🌐

Here are some wonderful photos along the Mississippi River throughout the years.



EXPERIENCMISSISSIPPIRIVER.COM
Historic photos: sights along the Mississippi River - Experience Mississippi River

👍 2.1K 💬 15 Comments 267 Shares

The Great River Road
April 30 · 🌐

Throwback Thursday: A look at flour mills along the northern Mississippi River in Minneapolis in 1939. (Note the Gold Medal Flour sign, which still exists over the Mill City Museum to this day.)



👍 1.5K 💬 20 Comments 98 Shares

- 6/19/20
 - “Did you know you can walk across (or wade through) the headwaters of the Mississippi River? Head to Itasca State Park in northern Minnesota to enjoy this can't-miss experience” w/ photo
 - 19,889 people reached, 2,857 engagements, 1,449 post clicks
 - 19,889 people reached organically

Demographics/Engaged fans

- 47% women/52% men, 39% ages 55-64 (18% increase)

Facebook Advertising

Page likes


- 141,119 impressions
- 5,770 clicks
- 4.09% click-through rate
- Added 3,730 fans

Post engagement

- 98,695 impressions
- 6,646 clicks
- 6.73% click-through rate
- Received 5,517 engagements

The Great River Road
June 19 · 🌐

Did you know you can walk across (or wade through) the headwaters of the Mississippi River? Head to Itasca State Park in northern Minnesota to enjoy this can't-miss experience. (Photo: Sandra Dempsey/Unsplash)




👍❤️👤 503 74 Comments 131 Shares

The Great River Road
Sponsored · 🌐

Explore the scenic beauty of the Great River Road, which follows the Mississippi River from northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Great River Road
Sponsored · 🌐

Looking for some scenic spots on your Great River Road trip this spring? Here are a few places you shouldn't miss.



EXPERIENCEMISSISSIPPIRIVER.COM
Scenic views along the Great River Road - Experience Mississippi River

MISSISSIPPI RIVER



The Great River Road
The Great River Road National Scenic Byway... 👍

Ruben Marin and ... 42 Comments

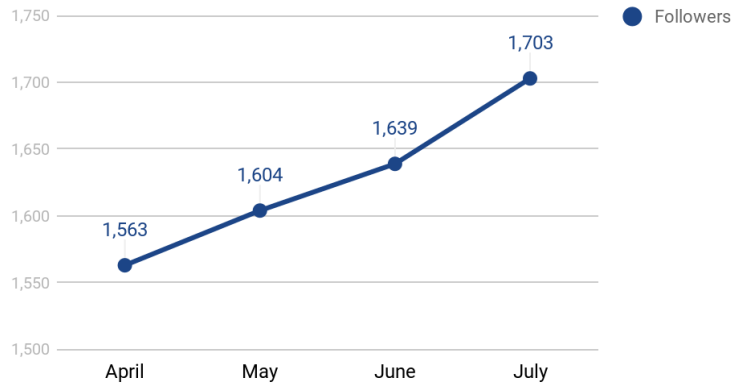
👍❤️👤 Tammy ... 18 Comments 110 Shares

INSTAGRAM

Overview

- Instagram followers: 1,703
- New Instagram followers: 140
- Instagram updates: 15

Instagram Followers

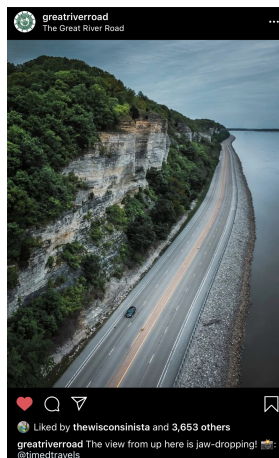


Demographics/Engaged fans

- Top age range: 35-44 (28%)
- Top locations: Alton, Godfrey, Minneapolis, Chicago
- Top gender: Women (63%)

Instagram Top Posts

- 4/22
 - Caption: Buena Vista Park in Alma, Wisconsin is gorgeous when everything turns green
 - 632 people reached, 658 reactions, 8 saves
- 5/27
 - Caption: The view from up here is jaw-dropping
 - 814 people reached, 3,691 reactions, 12 shares, 72 saves
- 6/24
 - Caption: Located along the Great River Road, the Saint Francis National Forest is a great place to stop for some picturesque views
 - 552 people reached, 1,087 reactions, 3 shares, 23 saves



Instagram Advertising

Post engagement

Post engagement on various posts; runs year-round

- 55,332 impressions
- 140 people clicked on the ad
- 0.25% click-through rate
- Received 6,065 engagements

ADMIN/MISCELLANEOUS

Financial/Bookkeeping

- Collected, filed and organized cash and check donations, meeting registrations, and meeting refunds
- Paid related expenses and issued meeting registration refunds
- Paid and send letter to Victoria Bradford/ Relay of Voices
- Processed reimbursement to Pilot for MRCTI travel to DC
- Monthly check reconciliation
- Resent state dues invoices and followed up on needs

Fulfillments

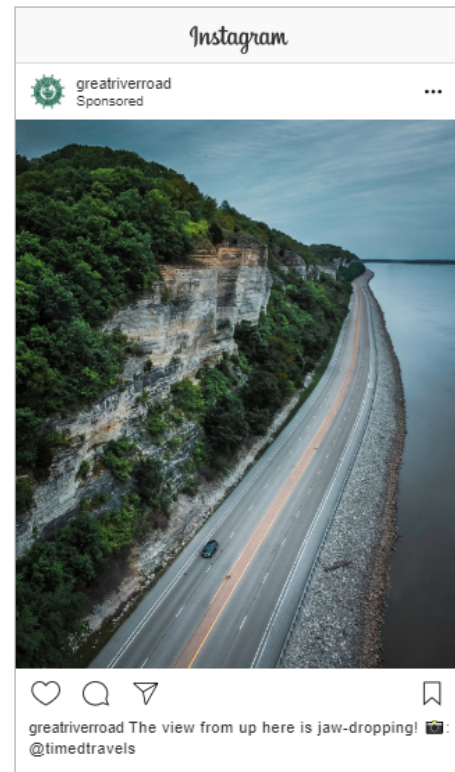
- Fulfilled 1,370 requests this quarter
- Created address and shipping labels and mailed
- Prepped guides for fulfillments

Phone, Email and Online Inquiries

- Answered phone calls, returned voicemails
- Corresponded to online inquiries

Donation Letter

- Recreated donation letter file as high res, re-uploaded file and submitted to vendor



COVID-19 Messaging

- Outlined messaging and social media strategy amidst COVID-19 pandemic
- Created COVID-19 resources landing page
- Updated copy as needed
- Created reputation management flyer

All-American Road (AAR)

- Application status survey
 - Wrote copy, created form, created webpage, sent to group
- Drafted letter of support
- Made ongoing web updates and email correspondence
- Sent weekly AAR Resource e-newsletter based on new posted information
- Created and sent doodle polls for setting meeting dates and communications with AAR/transportation group

Photos

- Pulled Minnesota Great River Road photos for Star Tribune reporter
- Pulled historical photos

Misc

- Research CARES Act Recovery Funding and provided overview
- Participated in May Webinar with Delta Workforce Development Program and provided overview