

MRPC Marketing Committee Meeting Notes
New Orleans, LA
October 7, 2015

Attendees: MN, WI, IA, KY, AR, TN, MS, LA, National Office (NO)

Meeting started at 2:01pm. Agenda taken out of order.

- **New fulfillment piece/map**
 - A copy of the current map was passed around so committee members could provide their written comments. NO will send a revised draft once the changes are made for final review by the state.
 - Committee determined to print a one-year supply of maps reflecting the submitted changes. The states and NO will assess the distribution plan and number of additional changes needed after the map printing such as interpretive center changes and will provide recommendations for future map printing frequency and quantities. Sponsorship options to offset printing costs will also be discussed prior to the next printing.
 - Committee requested NO receive print quotes for 100,000/150,000/200,000 maps.
 - States will provide NO the quantity of maps they will need for a year's fulfillment
 - Committee will recommend a quantity and 2016 budget item to the Board once the state requested quantity is balanced with the print quotes.
 - Each state will get the same number of maps.
 - States will be responsible for distributing their map supply. NO will direct any requests from IC or other destination marketing organizations to a state representative for fulfillment.
 - Marketing committee budget will supply each state with one shipment of their map order. If shipments need to be sent in multiple mailings, states will pay the shipping charges for each mailing after the initial mailing.
 - Discuss about sponsorship options should be added to future marketing committee agendas.
 - Marketing committee recommends to the Board that the map is printed in March/early April with vetted interpretive centers that have been reviewed annually with reviews completed 6 weeks prior to printing date. Motion by MN. Second by WI. Motion carried.
 - By October 16, NO will provide print quotes and marketing committee will provide their estimated map usage for 2016. Printing quantity and shipping for one time print run will be approved by the marketing committee over email and a recommendation submitted to the Board for inclusion in the 2016 budget. States will incur additional expenses for additional map printing and/or shipping will require an additional fee. Motion by LA. Second by MS. Motion carried.

- **National Geographic (NG) project:** Most states are in the process of meeting with assets and assisting them with their online submissions. States are now aware that each asset has to be their own contact and cannot be added by a third party, unless the third party wants to take responsibility for all future updates. Two contributors can be named per asset but the stakeholder has to be on the asset to make updates and changes. The instructional information is available. States recommended that while the instructions are online, it is easier to print them as a reference while making the additions. The Geotourism committee will develop a sustainability plan to keep each asset updated annually. States will update the marketing committee of this plan as it becomes available. LA estimated that the cost for each printed map through the project was \$1.25 apiece.
 - Committee requested NO to ask NG for use of the logo and if the logo isn't available, to create a marker or banner that can be placed on marketing items stating that we are a member of the NG program. Use LA's banner as an example.
 - Database sharing: NO has been in communication with Jim Dion from the NG project. Each individual asset would need to provide written approval for NG to share their submitted information. Committee decided that if it is determined that this information is needed; states will work with NO to obtain the approvals.

- **Drive the GRR 2015 promotion:** Ran the month of September as part of the month-long promotion Drive the Great River Road Month.
 - Budget/ Promotional outline
 - \$500 giveaway
 - Simple sweepstakes: "Like" us on Facebook, provide email address and general contact information
 - Toolkit for promotion provided at the end of July and resent the first week in August to states. Toolkit included: press release template, website buttons, artwork,
 - \$5000 budget includes production, prize, Facebook advertising, postcards for distribution
 - Promotion received 2,131 entries up from 774 entries last year. 1,020 Facebook fans were gained. NO will provide a detailed promotion report by the end of October.
 - Committee recommended extending the Drive the Great River Road month contest into October in 2016.
 - Committee requested building on the success of the promotion by creating seasonal promotions.
 - Committee requests Board budget \$3,000 to be split between three contests in 2016: late winter/early spring birding in conjunction with the "Year of Birding," spring biking, Drive the Great River Road. Motion by TN. Second by MN. Motion carried.

- **Promotional toolkit:** WI shared concerns with the visibility of the business cling. NO said they will look at a more expensive option and opaque background for future printings.
- **Other business:** Culture and Heritage committee requests more events be added to experiencemississippiriver.com. Committee decided to add a seasonal events page organized by season and state. Committee determined it is too difficult to create a comprehensive listing of all events on the website which also duplicates the state tourism website. However, to create visibility for events along the GRR, events or DMOs can submit the event website link to a state commissioner. Commissioner will submit the link to the NO for inclusion on the website. Posting the link will keep the website current as committee was concerned that many events do not always share their updated schedules.
- **Merchandise set up:** NO reported that the quality of merchandise available through Café Press is not to their, or the organization's standards, and recommended using Land's End as the printer. Committee agreed. LA and IA have had positive experiences working with them. WI recommended Riverland Expression, Landsing IA. NO recommended taking down the Café Press link for merchandise and developing the options with Land's End. NO explained the cost of the merchandise will be more, and there is no opportunity for adding organizational profit. Committee felt the higher quality merchandise was better for our target market and branding the GRR was goal in merchandising, not necessarily profit.
- **Reporting:** Committee discussed creating an annual report that lists accomplishments, budget, and a work plan for the future. The document should answer "what did we accomplish?" and "what are hoping to accomplish in the future?" Committee recommended adding the economic impact of travel to the region which is available through each state tourism office.
 - Create a benefit sheet/marketing talking points document making the case for the significance and importance of the Great Road should be added to the strategic planning document. Motion by MN. Second by MS. Motion carried.
- **2016 committee budget request:** Marketing committee requests \$15,000 to the Board for an advertising/marketing/PR budget with the placements to be determined. Motion by TN. Second by IA. Motion carried.
- **Item for December agenda:** NO to contact Meredith Publishing regarding their interest and expense to do a special feature/travel guide.
- **Create a new work plan:** Committee reviewed each item that was related to the marketing committee. Most items were added to the marketing committee work plan. A few items were recommended to be given to other committees to take the lead. Work plan addendum is attached.

- **Foundation idea:** Committee recommends the foundation committee should consider using funds to bring youth to the Mississippi River.

- **Other business:**
 - Invite C&H to meet with marketing committee the last 30 minutes of the meeting session at semi-annual meeting.
 - Committee would also like to discuss collaboration between the committees and how to do that in a productive way.
 - MN requested the committee explore a relationship with Gayle Harper, the author of “Roadtrip with a Raindrop: 90 Days Along the Mississippi River” and Jamie Jensen, the author of “Road Trip USA Great River Road” to have their books on the website. WI asked if she could possibly speak in WI at the semi-annual meeting. Committee feels like MRPC should be relationships with people of influence that could be used to showcase the GRR. Recommendation to contact these authors to sell their books on experiencemississippiriver.com. Motion by TN. Second by WI. Motion carried.

- **Schedule conference calls for remainder of 2015**
 - NO will send out options for the next conference call.

Meeting adjourned at 5:17pm.