

# 1ST QUARTER MARKETING REPORT

January - March, 2019

## MRCTI CAPITOL MEETINGS

#### Date:

March 5-7, 2019

## **Summary**

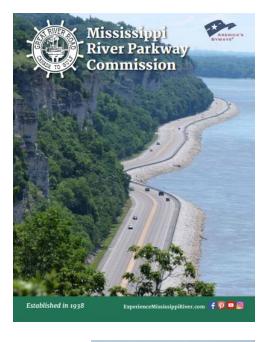
This informational packet was created for meetings that Terri Austin McCullough and Anne Lewis had with MRCTI representatives in Washington D.C. in early March. The packets contained a number of key pieces of information about the MRPC and the Great River Road (including history, economic impact, services and more) that were shared as part of the MRCTI meetings.

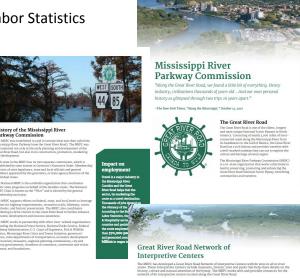
#### **Booklet**

- Content
  - Gathered 2018 stats, researched and drafted Annual Recap Marketing Summary
  - o Researched employment data through Bureau of Labor Statistics
  - o Wrote economic fact sheets
  - Identified all counties and parishes along the GRR
- Design
  - Mocked up map sample of GRR with surrounding cities for consideration
  - Designed cover
  - Laid out content
- Print
  - o Printed in-house
  - Bound booklets

## Package

- Assembled shipping package: including 13 booklets with GRR maps, thumb drive, 25 pins
- Shipped to DC, called hotel to assure acceptance of package
- Tracked packages





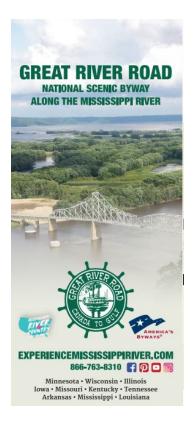
## 2019 GREAT RIVER ROAD MAP

## Quotes

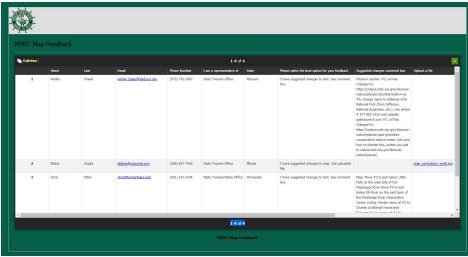
- Requested quotes for multiple quantities
- Collected printer bids and selected vendor

#### **Production**

- Cover
  - Searched through photo library for cover photo options
  - Created cover and back cover options with new photos
- Feedback Form
  - Created <u>online feedback form</u> including existing map files and live feedback summary
  - Collected feedback and compiled editable changes
  - o Updated map







## **MEETINGS**

## Semi-Annual Meeting - April 2-4 (Clarksdale, MS)

- Finalized agenda, transportation, meals, tours and other meeting related details
- Registration
  - Set pricing, created registration form (hard copy and electronically)
  - Printed and mailed form and email out to members
  - Worked with accommodations and hosts
  - Sent invoices, collected payments, sent receipts
  - Updated early bird pricing to regular pricing
  - Entered mailed/faxed in registrations onto database
- F-newsletters
  - Sent multiple e-newsletters to remind members of meeting and hotel reservations and any other news (see e-newsletter section)
- Designed and printed new tabletop signage

#### **Conference Calls**

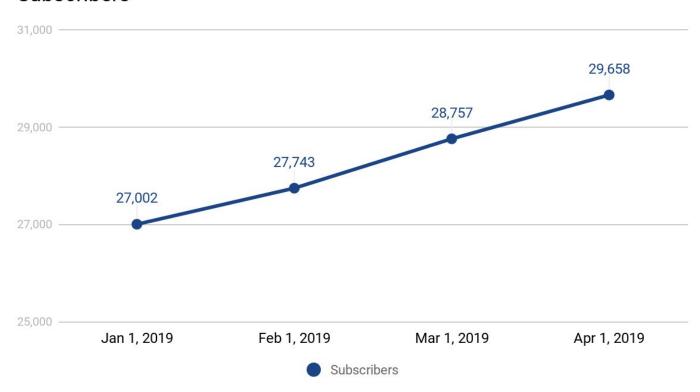
- February 5 MRPC Transportation Committee
   Conference Call
- February 8 MRPC Board Conference Call
- February 22 Call with Anne & Terri regarding legislative trip and state participation
- February 25 Marketing Conference Call
- March 13 Marketing Conference Call
- March 19 Culture & Heritage Conference Call
- March 26 Conference call with Terri
- Numerous planning calls and communications with MS-MRPC





# **E-NEWSLETTERS**

# Subscribers



## **Subscribers**

• Gained 2,656 subscribers over 1st quarter

#### **Members E-newsletters**

- 2/4 Vote to restart National Scenic Byways Program is 2/6 – ACT NOW!
- 2/7 Register now for the MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting: early bird registration, meeting agenda and hotel reservation information
- 3/1 Register now—early bird pricing ends March 10: early bird deadline reminder, hotel reservation information; annual meeting date, location and hotel reservation information.



#### Join us in Clarksdale on April 2-4!

The 2019 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting is fast approaching. The meeting will take place in Clarksdale, MS from April 2-4, and we have a full agenda planned.

Early bird registration is available until March 10. After that date, prices increase by \$20.

- Early Bird Delegate (\$150)
- Early Bird Spouse (\$125)
- One day (\$80)

Help advance the mission of the MRPC by registering today! Click here to register online.

Click here to print the registration form.

The Semi-Annual Meeting conference hotel is the quirky and historic Shack Up Inn. To make your reservation, call the Shack Up Inn at (622) 624-8329 between 8am and 8pm. Be sure to ask for the Great River Road block. Rates may vary, and the room block expires March 10. Make your reservations today!

#### MRPC Annual Meeting: Sept. 17-19 in La Crosse, WI

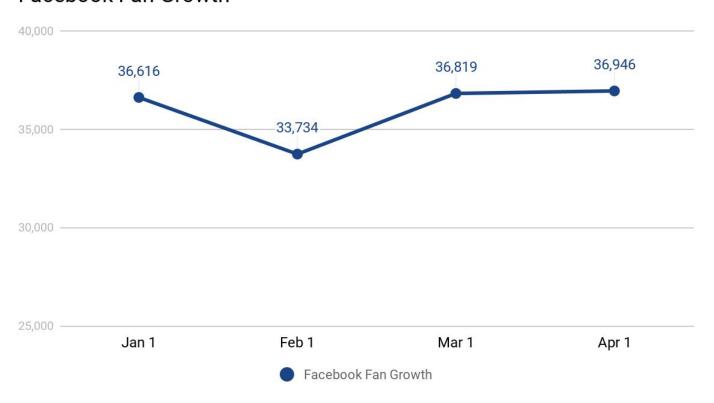
For those who would like to plan ahead, we have some information about this fall's annual meeting! The MRPG Annual Meeting will take place Sept. 17-19 at the Radisson Hotel in La Crosse, WI. A special rate of \$129 for a standard room with two queen beds is now available. To make your reservation, call (608) 784-6680 and ask for the Mississippi River Parkway Commission block.



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 @plichbarnet.com

## **FACEBOOK**

## Facebook Fan Growth



Facebook fans	New Facebook fans	Facebook updates
36,946	330	37

## Top posts

- 3/22/2019– ["Photo Friday: Lake Chicot located in southeastern Arkansas, is the largest oxbow lake in North America and was formed 600 years ago when it separated from the main channel of the Mississippi River"]
  - Drove traffic to arkansasstateparks.com
  - o 7,671 people reached; 464 reactions, comments & shares; 500 post clicks
  - o All people reached organically; 0 reached via paid ad
- 2/8/2019– ["You'll find lovely sunsets up and down the Great River Road" w/link to website]
  - o Drove traffic to experiencemississippiriver.com
  - o 12,817 people reached; 208 reactions, comments & shares; 142 post clicks
  - o 3,873 people reached organically; 9,160 reached via paid ad
- 2/2/2019– ["Have you ordered your free Great River Road map? Start planning your next trip along the Mississippi River today" w/link to website]

- o Drove traffic to experiencemississippiriver.com
- o 11,261 people reached; 322 reactions, comments & shares; 383 post clicks
- o 10,176 people reached organically; 1,085 reached via paid ad
- 1/25/2019– ["Well, there are far more than 10, but this is a pretty good start" w/link to 10Best.com article]
  - Drove traffic to 10best.com
  - o 9,089 people reached, 295 reactions, comments & shares; 691 post clicks
  - o All people reached organically; 0 reached via paid ad
- 1/4/2019– ["Looking for road trip ideas for 2019? We've got one in mind" w/link to website]
  - o Drove traffic to experiencemississippiriver.com
  - o 9,354 people reached; 216 reactions, comments & shares; 236 post clicks
  - o 5,813 people reached organically; 3,648 reached via paid ad

## **ADVERTISING**

#### Page likes 2019

- Page likes campaign; runs continuously throughout year
- 22,824 impressions
- 585 clicks
- 2.56% click-through rate
- Added 187 fans

# The Great River Road Sponsored · (a)

Explore America's greatest drive! The Great River Road follows the Mississippi River through 10 states from northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. Plan your trip today!



The Great River Road
The Great River Road National Scenic Bywa...



#### Post engagement 2019

- Post engagement campaign; runs continuously throughout year
- 12,622 impressions
- 720 clicks
- 5.70% click-through rate
- Received 1,944 post engagements



Looking for road trip ideas for 2019? We've got one in mind.



EXPERIENCEMISSISSIPPIRIVER.COM Plan a Great River Road getaway -Experience Mississippi River

## Engaged fans (those who are liking, commenting and sharing)

- 69% women (22% ages 55-64), 30% men (10% of which are ages 65+)
- Top engaged cities (in order): Minneapolis, Cedar Rapids (IA), Louisville, Alton (IL), St. Louis

## **Takeaways**

- Posts of Great River Road scenery continue to perform well on the Facebook page. We usually pair these photos with links to the website (map order form, blogs, etc.) in order to get more exposure to some of the valuable content on experiencemississippiriver.com.
- The engaged audience continues to skew older, which matches the demographic data we see from our website visitors.

## WEBSITE POSTS

Researched and wrote blog articles that appeared on experiencemississippi.com homepage

- January
  - Winter bald eagle viewing on the Great River Road (1/29)
- February
  - Four fabulous foods to try on the Great River Road (2/14)
- March
  - Chasing blossoms on the Great River Road (3/20)

# Winter bald eagle viewing on the Great River Road

Tuesday, January 29, 2019

Some of the best places to see the national bird of the United States can be found along the Great River Road. Travelers on northern stretches of the Great River Road are treated to a majestic sight as the birds spend time in winter hunting grounds along the Mississippi. The prime season for viewing these majestic birds runs from December through March, so now is the perfect time to take in the spectacle. Here are some great places to see bald eagles.

#### Minnesota

#### National Eagle Center - Wabasha

This interpretive center is one of the best places in the country to learn about eagles. At the center you can watch wild bald eagles in comfort—the center has a wide bank of windows overlooking a pool on the Mississippi River. You can also see live bald eagles up close during daily educational programs at the center. Exhibits provide information about the bald eagle's behavior, nesting habits, diet and history.



#### Wisconsin

#### Great River Road Visitor & Learning Center - Prescott

This interpretive center offers a beautiful vista of the Mississippi River Valley—on winter days, you might see a few eagles soaring on the wind currents. Inside the center you'll find a life-size eagle's nest and other exhibits that give you a sense of the majesty of this impressive bird.

#### Illinois

#### Illinois Mississippi River Visitor Center - Rock Island

Eagles are a common sight around the Quad Cities, and a good place to see them is the Mississippi River Visitor Center on the Rock Island Arsenal. Located in Rock Island at Lock & Dam #15, the center provides a good viewing spot of the bald eagles that travel to the locks and dams of the Mississippi to feed during the winter. In early spring, the river opens to commercial navigation and visitors come to the locks to see boats pass by.

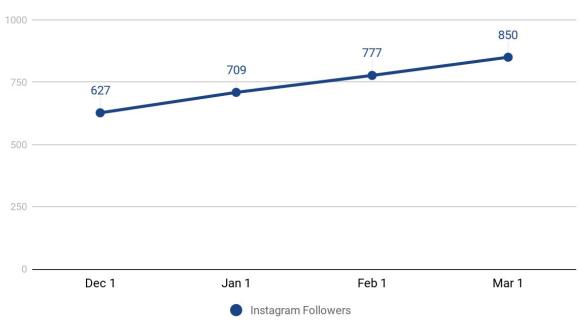
#### lowa

#### Effigy Mounds National Monument - Harper's Ferry

This 2,526-acre park contains more than 200 ceremonial earthen mounds constructed in the shapes of birds, bear, deer, bison, lynx, turtles and panthers. Some of these mounds were built more than 1,400 years ago. On Feb 22-23, the park will hold <u>Bald Eagle Appreciation Days</u>, a chance to see and celebrate this beautiful birds at an incredible riverside location.

## **INSTAGRAM**

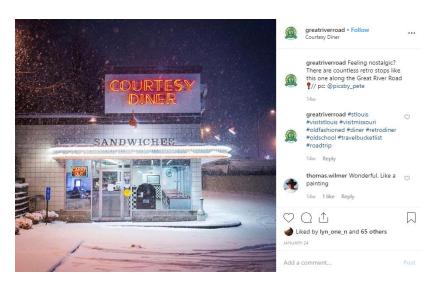




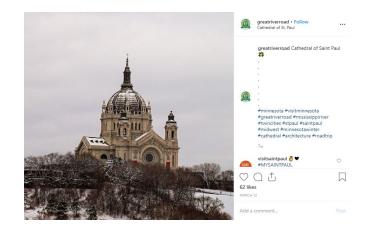
Instagram followers	New Instagram followers	Instagram updates
917	290	22

## **Top posts**

- 1/24/19 Photo of a diner in St.Louis.
   User-generated photo shared from
   @picsby\_pete captioned: Feeling
   nostalgic? There are countless retro
   stops like this one along the Great
   River Road."
  - 456 people reached, 82 engagements



- 3/12/19 Photo of Cathedral of St.Paul in Minnesota. Caption: Cathedral of Saint Paul"
  - o 507 people reached, 67 engagements



## **Advertising**

## Instagram brand awareness 2019

- Brand awareness campaign; runs continuously throughout year
- 28,209 impressions
- 76 clicks
- 0.27% click-through rate
- 1,570 estimated ad recall (people)

## **Takeaways**

Followers and engagement continue to grow at a steady level.

# greatriverroad Sponsored S

Instagram

## **PINTEREST**

- Added pins to state boards
  - o Re-pinned city itineraries including dining, recreation and sightseeing opportunities
- Highlighted bridges and sunsets, music venues and restaurants

# PR/PUBLICITY

- On-air radio interviews with Greg Taylor, Program Director Host of AM 1230 KWNO, Winona, MN:
  - January: Great River Road trivia
  - o February: Four places to love along the Great River Road
  - March: Comfort foods along the Great River Road
- Created statement in case requested for MRPC's relationship with Mississippi River Country

# **WEBSITE**

www.experiencemississippiriver.com/		
2019-01-01 to 2019-03-31		
Total Pageviews	103,358	
Total Unique Pageviews	80,654	
Total sessions	46,140	
Unique users	38,402	
New users	88.3%	
Returning users	11.7%	
Pages viewed per session	2.2	
Time spent per page visited		
Avg. session duration	2:07	
Top 10 most visited pages	pageviews	avg. time on page
/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/	13,268	1:35
/interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/	9,010	2:03
homepage	7,219	1:14
/interactive-tools/fun-facts/	6,248	3:47
/river-attractions/	6,164	2:21
/interactive-tools/webcams/	4,156	2:18
/itineraries/	4,034	1:11
/interactive-tools/maps/	2,538	1:54
/app/	2,346	3:24
/states/minnesota/	2,041	2:02
Top 10 Referring Sites	sessions	avg. session duration
facebook.com	2,965	1:08
drivethegreatriverroad.com	188	0:52
pinterest.com	169	0:20
kiddle.co	144	1:58
classroom.google.com	97	0:48
thrillist.com	90	2:16
doityourselfrv.com	85	4:05

49 0	www-thrillist-com.cdn.ampproject.org
39	greatriverroad-illinois.org
38	r.search.aol.com
sessions avg. session durate	Top 10 Metro Areas
4,052	Chicago II
3,205	Minneapolis-St. Paul MN
1,385	St. Louis MC
1,032	Dallas-Ft. Worth T
998 2	Milwaukee W
974 1	New York NY
954 2	Los Angeles CA
952 2	Madison W
860 1	Atlanta GA
831 1	New Orleans LA
% sessions avg. session durate	Top Channels
72.8%	Organic Search
15.9%	Direct
6.9%	Socia
4.4%	Referra
	User demographics
% sessions avg. session durate	age
23.1%	55-64
19.7%	65+
18.4%	45-54
16.9%	25-34
16.5%	35-44
5.4%	18-24
% sessions avg. session durate	gende
50.6%	female
49.4%	male

Mobile + Tablet	52.5%	2:15
Desktop	47.5%	2:22

## **Takeaways**

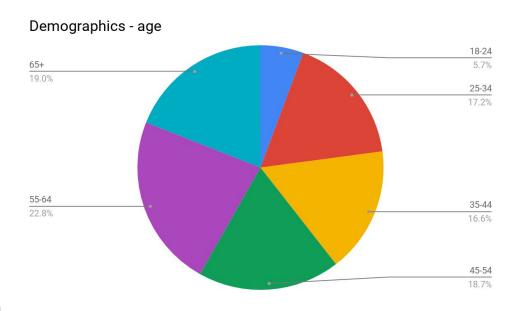
Strong organic traffic to key pages in the site contributed to solid Q1 site metrics. Overall site pageviews were up more than 11 percent compared to Q1 2018. The top page on the site was again *The Great River Road* — *The Best Drive in America* (the site's "about" page). The page is very SEO friendly, as it answers some key questions that travelers have about the byway. Google has awarded the page with the top position in search results for the term "Great River Road" (followed by the <u>experiencemississippiriver.com</u> home page), so it generates substantial traffic to the site. It's a good entry point for the site, reflected by the relatively low bounce rate (42%).

The Order a FREE Great River Road 10-state map page has the site's second-highest page views (9,010, up 31% over Q1 2018). Organic search helped lift this page, although it also drew considerable traffic from direct links and our social media posts.

In terms of demographics, our site audience was split fairly evenly between men (50.1% and women (49.9)

The site audience was also fairly evenly split across most age demographics in Q1, although the site received a bit more traffic from the 55-64 audience and fewer visits from the 18-24 audience. Overall, the site is reaching all age demographics.

About 86% of site visitors came from the United States. The United Kingdom was the top source of overseas site visitors, followed by Canada, Germany and Australia.



In terms of the U.S. audience, Chicago was metro area with the largest number of site visitors (3,574), followed by Minneapolis-St. Paul (2,714), St. Louis (1,221) and Dallas-Ft. Worth (903).

## Ongoing web checks & 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 spring on March 18
- Monitored site analytics weekly
- Updated webcams page
- Updated agritourism assets collection form on member site

## **MOBILE APP**

#### iOS

• # of downloads in Q1: 742

# of downloads to date: 13,644

#### **Android**

# of downloads in Q1: 401

# of downloads to date: 6,742

## **Total (combined)**

• # of downloads in Q1: 1,143

# of downloads: 20,386

# 80<sup>™</sup> ANNIVERSARY/FOLLOW THE PILOT'S WHEEL CAMPAIGN

## **Keychains/postcards**

- Admin
  - Continued to collect requests from Interpretive Centers to refill postcards
  - o Continued to collect email sign ups and enter email addresses into email subscriber list.
    - Near 180 emails added to email list in quarter 1

## **ADMIN/MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **Financial**

- Collected, filed and organized cash and check donations, meeting registration and dues
- Monthly check reconciliation
- Paid related expenses
- Reviewed fund statements and include in reconciliations

## **Bookkeeping**

- Invoiced states for 2019 dues
- Created info packet for funding source in Illinois
- Monthly reconciliation and financial reports

#### **Fulfillments**

- Over 2,000 requests in 1st quarter
  - o Includes online requests, phone requests
- Mailing materials: print envelopes and letters
- Corresponded to emails, followed up on phone calls/voice messages, research

#### I Drove the Great River Road Certificate

• Sent four certificates to those who drove the entire Great River Road and shared their story

#### TRADEMARK

- Received response to application from US Patent and Trademark Office in January
- Reviewed, made edits and re-submitted request in February

## LOGO USAGE

- Approved request for logo usage from Fort Madison for a brochure printing
- Discussed logo request with Village of Potosi

#### **CMP**

- Provided cost estimates for work related to National Scenic Byway Foundation (NSBF) survey request
- Assisted in formatting CMP resource documents to be user friendly to all
- Posted documents to member site

## **RODNEY SLATER**

- Created logo poster
- Printed and mailed to Washington D.C.
- Followed up by telephone and email to request a photo

## **RELAY OF VOICES**

- Fielded many communications with questions and follow up on project
- Worked with attorney to amend language based on concerns of running, walking or biking the Great River Road
- Communicated back and forth with Victoria on concerns, language, funding, etc.