



PILCH & BARNET

MARKETING REPORT

2023 | Q2 April - June

GOAL

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission’s marketing goals in Q2 2023 included:

- Promote travel along the Great River Road
- Highlight the Great River Road Network of Interpretive Centers
- Maintain current visitors and encourage repeat visits along the Great River Road
- Drive traffic to the experiencemississippiriver.com website
- Promote summer events along the Great River Road

STRATEGY

Tactics used to accomplish these goals were implemented across the Mississippi River Parkway Commission’s marketing channels, including e-newsletters, the Great River Road website, social media (Facebook and Instagram), a promotion, and more.

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At A Glance

Website

- Q2 2023 numbers were up significantly over Q2 2022 in terms of users and pageviews, likely due to the launch of the summer events campaign and related advertising
- The great river road the best drive in america page was the most visited page (7.0% of all website traffic) and Facebook was the top source of referring traffic (18.85% of all site acquisitions)
- Chicago, IL was top metro area (11.77% of all users); 55-64 was the top age group (27.5% of all users)

E-Newsletters

- The e-newsletters continued to top industry averages in open rates and click rate
- Added more than 2,000 new subscribers

Social Media

- Steady engagement and fan growth for Facebook and Instagram
- Performance was bolstered by summer events campaign and related advertising

Webinars

- Organized and created hour-long Spring Webinar Series on April 4, 11, and 18

Online Store

- Created graphics for use on merchandise on online store
- Shared store details on social media channels & e-newsletters

10-State Events Campaign and Giveaway

- Launched new promotion highlighting summer events

(Memorial Day to Labor Day) along the Great River Road

- Created events submission page, events calendar page
- Created and launched Summer Fun on the Great River Road Giveaway (\$100 gas card monthly giveaway in June, July, August)
- Collected information on potential ticket giveaways & launched first social media ticket giveaway (Great River Pottery Throwdown)

Pollinator Week

- Launched new campaign coinciding with National Pollinator Week (June 19-25) to raise awareness of pollinators along Mississippi River and the Great River Road
- Created logo/graphics & toolkit
- Created submission forms for Pollinator Week Events and info on local pollinator habitats

2023 Annual Meeting

- Several planning meetings held
- Meeting visuals created for communication and promotion
- Completion of the online Annual Meeting landing page
- Developed meeting materials

Fulfillment

- Fulfilled 3,354 map orders

Meetings

- There were total of 8 meetings held in Q2

Additional

- Q3 content calendar created

TACTIC: Website

Website Analytics Takeaways

Notable Stats

Top Pages

The /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ page was the most visited specific page of interest with 9,116 views and accounted for 7% of all website views

The /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ was the second most visited specific page of interest with 9,041 views and accounted for 7% of all website views

Acquisition

Organic Search accounted for 51.53% of all website users and was the highest channel of acquisition traffic (30,516 users)

- This means that the majority of users found the website through search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc, by searching for keywords that related to the content on the website.

Google was the #1 overall source of organic traffic and accounted for 47.44% of all site user acquisitions. (27,679 Users)

Facebook was the #1 overall source of referring traffic and accounted for 18.85% of all site user acquisitions. (11,000 Users)

Metro Areas

Chicago was the #1 metro area/city of visitors to the website and accounted for 11.77% of all website users. (4,071 Users)

- The most visited page of interest from this metro area was the /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ page. (577 views)

User Demographics:

The top reported age group of users was 55-64 (27.50% of reported site users)

- Boomers ages 58 - 67 born between 1955 - 1964 are more likely to travel than any other of today's age groups.
 - Average 27 travel days per year
 - \$44,370 Average income
 - Usually have a budget set aside for travel, book longer stays, prefer active relaxation activities (golf, hiking, massages, wine

tours, etc.), Bucket listers, more likely to stay at a repeat accommodation

Device Usage:

57.8% of reported users viewed the site on mobile devices (industry standard for mobile devices is 53.74%)

This Year vs Last Year Stats:

This year stats vs last year at the same timeframe

- 56,611 Users this year vs 45,692 Users last year
- 128,535 Views this year vs 112,877 Views last year
- 69,931 Sessions this year vs 56,919 Sessions last year
- 59s Avg. Engagement Time this year vs 1m 53s Avg. Engagement Time last year

The top 5 pages this quarter and year

- Homepage 22,312 views
- /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ 9,116 views
- /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ 9,041 views
- /4-historic-sites-you-should-visit-on-the-great-river-road/ 7,135 views
- /interactive-tools/webcams/ 5,584 views

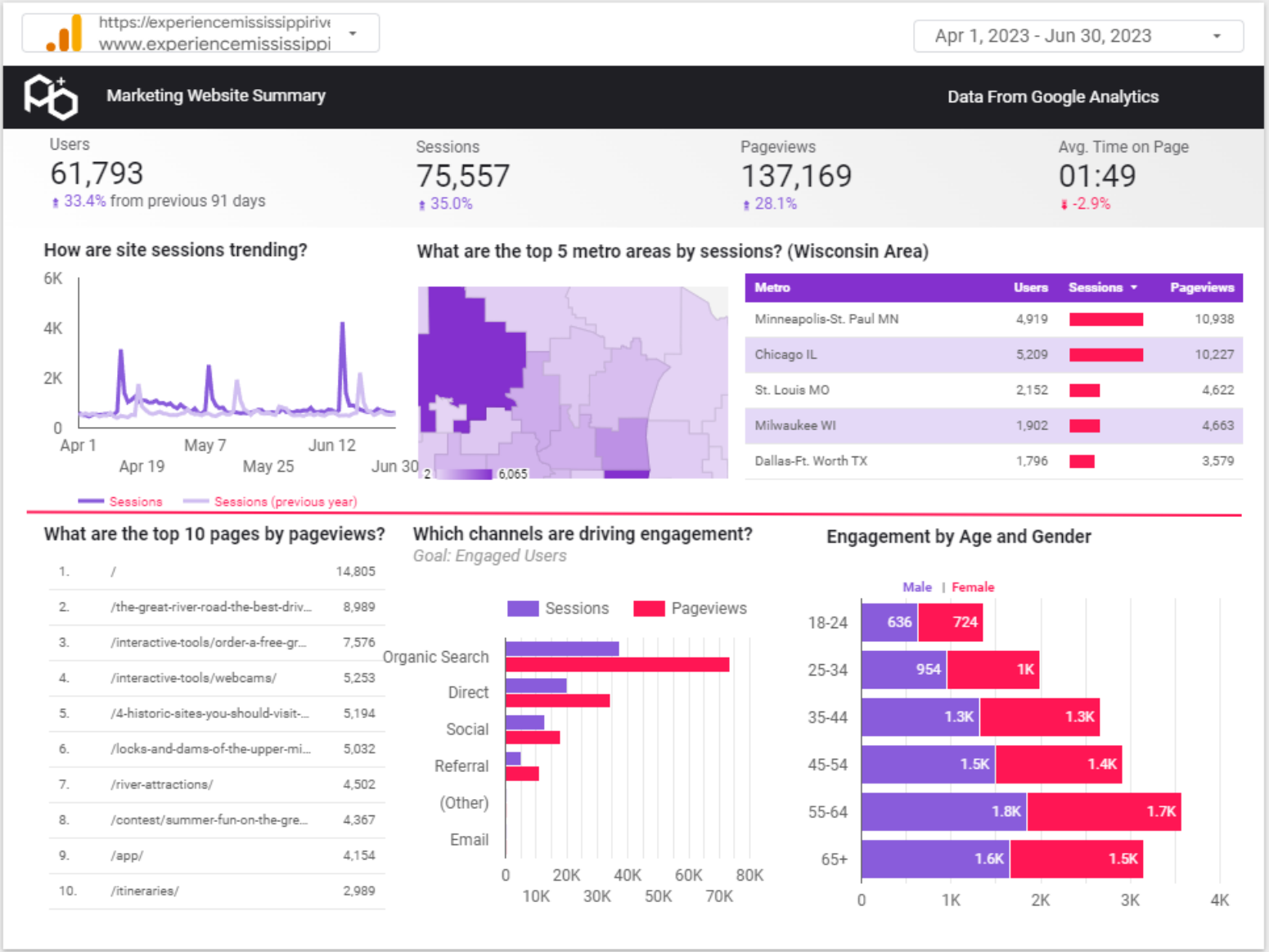
The top 5 pages last year for this same timeframe were

- Homepage 13,156 views
- /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ 9,251 views
- /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ 6,403 views
- /river-attractions/ 5,983 views
- /locks-and-dams-of-the-upper-mississippi/ 5,803 views

Last year's top page of interest for this same timeframe was /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/. | 9,251 views

This year the website had higher overall views, users and sessions compared to last year during this same timeframe. The website's acquisitions from organic search, direct traffic, and social media traffic were consistently higher throughout the quarter this year and contributed to 35.24% more site users.

Website Analytics Stats



Web Maintenance

- Monthly website checks
 - Tested and updated links as necessary
 - Checked copy and photos, ensured content was current
 - Monthly Mailchimp check to ensure lists are performing/functioning correctly
 - Renewing Instagram Tokens: Refreshing long-lived tokens before expiration, ensuring granted feed app permissions
 - Scanned the site for malware
- Analytics monitored weekly

Website Updates

- Updated MRPC members directory
- Looked into events being cached and not disappearing when expired
- Sped up events page
- Fixed event page from timing out
- Removed COVID information from website

TACTIC: E-Newsletters

Takeaways

The Great River Road travel e-newsletter performed well in Q2, adding more than 2,000 new subscribers and easily topping industry averages in open rate and average click rate.

One interesting note is that the June edition of the e-newsletter (the one promoting the launch of the summer events giveaway) was not the top performer, which is usually the case with editions that feature a promo announcement. It still performed well above industry averages in terms of clicks and open rate, but the most engaged-with e-newsletter in Q2 was the April edition, which featured a lead article about historic sites on the Great River Road.

E-Newsletter Stats

Subscribers

48,206

Average Open Rate

39.9%

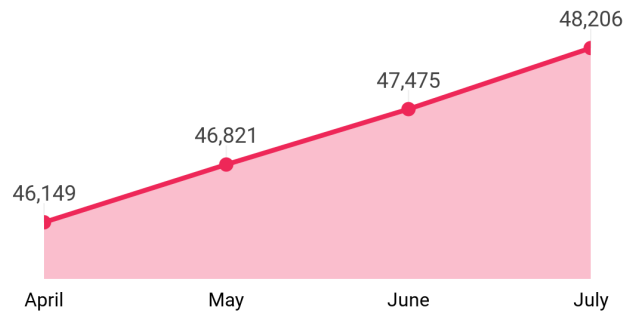
industry average: 20.2%

Average Click Rate

6.37%

industry average: 2.2%

Subscriber Growth





Recipients

47,422

Opened

19,809

Clicked

3,643

All E-newsletters Stats

External Tourism E-newsletter			
Article/Subject	Open Rate	Click Rate	URL
4 historical sites you should visit on the Great River Road (4/13)	41.8%	7.7%	View newsletter
Summer events along the Great River Road (5/8)	41.4%	5.4%	View newsletter
Enter for your chance to find fun summer events along the Great River Road (6/15)	36.5%	6.0%	View newsletter
Internal E-newsletter to Members			
Article/Subject	Open Rate	Click Rate	URL
Share your summer events with us! (4/14)	33.2%	3.3%	View newsletter
MRPC Q2 Update (5/11)	43.1%	9.3%	View newsletter
Reminder: Upcoming technical committee meetings (5/15)	35.4%	4.7%	View newsletter
We need your Great River Road summer events! (5/23)	30.7%	3.5%	View newsletter
Stewardship Award deadline approaching Get ready for Pollinator Week (6/6)	33.3%	2.5%	View newsletter
Spring Webinar E-newsletters			
Article/Subject	Open Rate	Click Rate	URL

Join us tomorrow for our first spring webinar! (4/3)	35.1%	4.4%	View newsletter
Join us for our second spring webinar tomorrow (4/10)	34.1%	3.4%	View newsletter
Last chance: Join us for today's webinar! (4/11)	29.0%	2.0%	View newsletter
Learn about the importance of pollinators at our next webinar (4/17)	32.6%	3.3%	View newsletter
TODAY: Learn about pollinators at our next spring webinar (4/18)	31.6%	1.3%	View newsletter
Thank you for attending our spring webinars—final session postponed (4/21)	35.6%	2.8%	View newsletter
Annual Meeting E-newsletters			
Article/Subject	Open Rate	Click Rate	URL
Registration is now open for the MRPC Annual Meeting! (6/12)	36.9%	4.9%	View newsletter
Reminder: Registration is now open for the MRPC Annual Meeting! (6/30)	32.8%	4.0%	View newsletter

TACTIC: Social Media

Takeaways

The Great River Road's Facebook and Instagram accounts performed well in Q2, increasing fan numbers and fan engagement. A wide array of advertising across Facebook and Instagram (promoted posts, website traffic, etc.) reached nearly 765,000 people and received more than 20,000 engagements and 12,000 link clicks.

Facebook Takeaways

The Facebook page continued to see steady engagement and added more than 1,700 fans in Q2. Links to [experiencemississippiriver.com](https://www.experiencemississippiriver.com) and scenic photos continued to be among the most popular topics, with the most popular post of the quarter asking fans what their favorite scenic overlook is along the Great River Road.

Instagram Takeaways

The Instagram account is steadily approaching 5,000 followers, and we continue to get good engagement (especially on the posts we promote with advertising dollars). As usual, Mississippi River scenery and history were among the most engaging topics on the account in Q2.

All Combined Social Media Ads Stats

Type of ad run	Amount spent	Result
Add Facebook fans	Facebook: \$60	2,701 page likes
Drive traffic to experiencemississippiriver.com	Facebook: \$423.09	4,307 link clicks, 2,410 landing page views
Boost Facebook posts	Facebook: \$351	2.227 page views, 620 link clicks, 89,109 reach (A/B test)
Boost Instagram posts	Instagram: \$74.80	147 link clicks
Boost posts - Summer events campaign (Facebook & Instagram)	Facebook & Instagram: \$125	796 page views, 66 post engagements, 65 link clicks

Combined Ads People Reached

764,993

Combined Ads Paid Impressions

1,584,380

Combined Ads Engagements

20,682

Combined Ads Link Clicks

12,465

Facebook Overview

Facebook Stats

Facebook followers

83,340

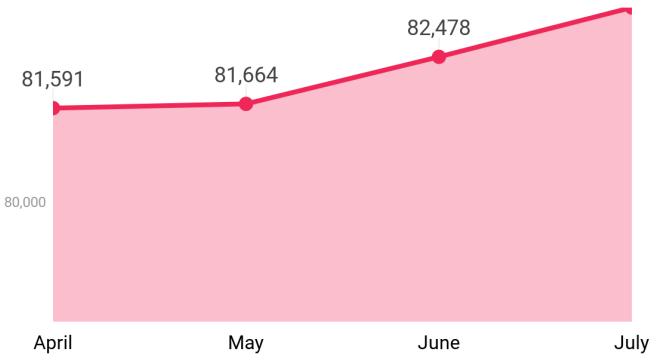
New Facebook followers

+1,749

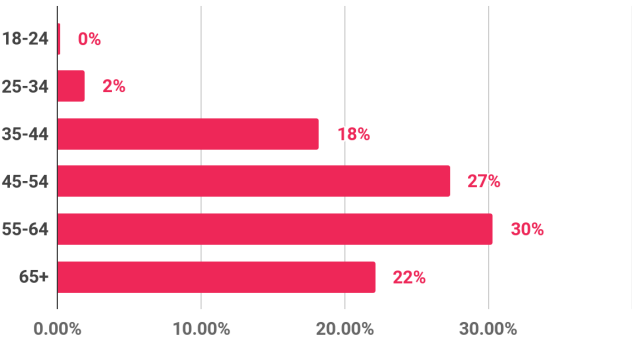
Facebook updates

45

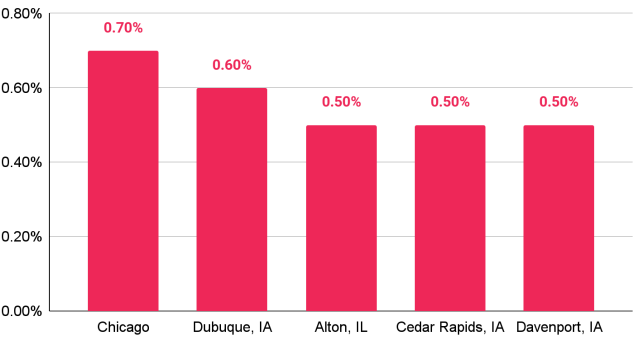
Follower Growth



Follower Demographics

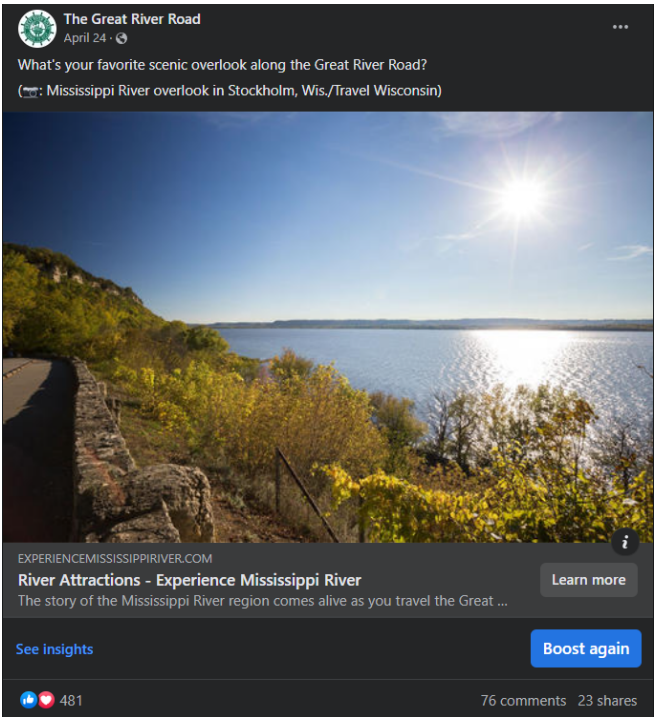


Top 5 Cities for Fans



Facebook Posts

Top Performing Post | Date: 4/24



People Reached

93,076

Organic Reach

7,099

Paid Reach

97,039

Post Reactions

627

Instagram Overview

Instagram Stats

Instagram followers

4,700

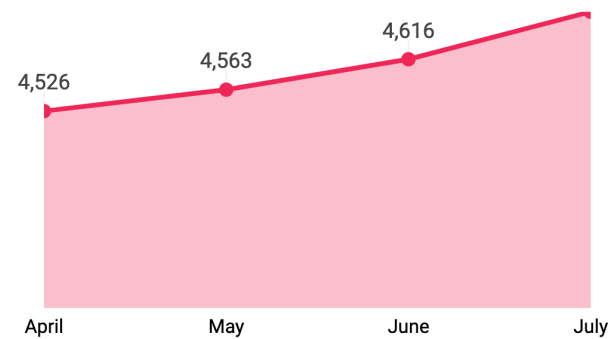
New Instagram followers

+174

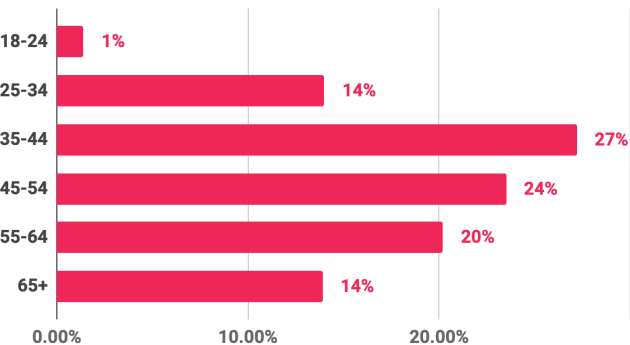
Instagram updates

12

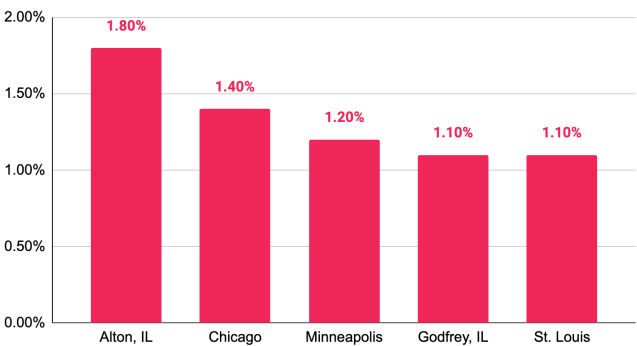
Follower Growth



Follower Demographics

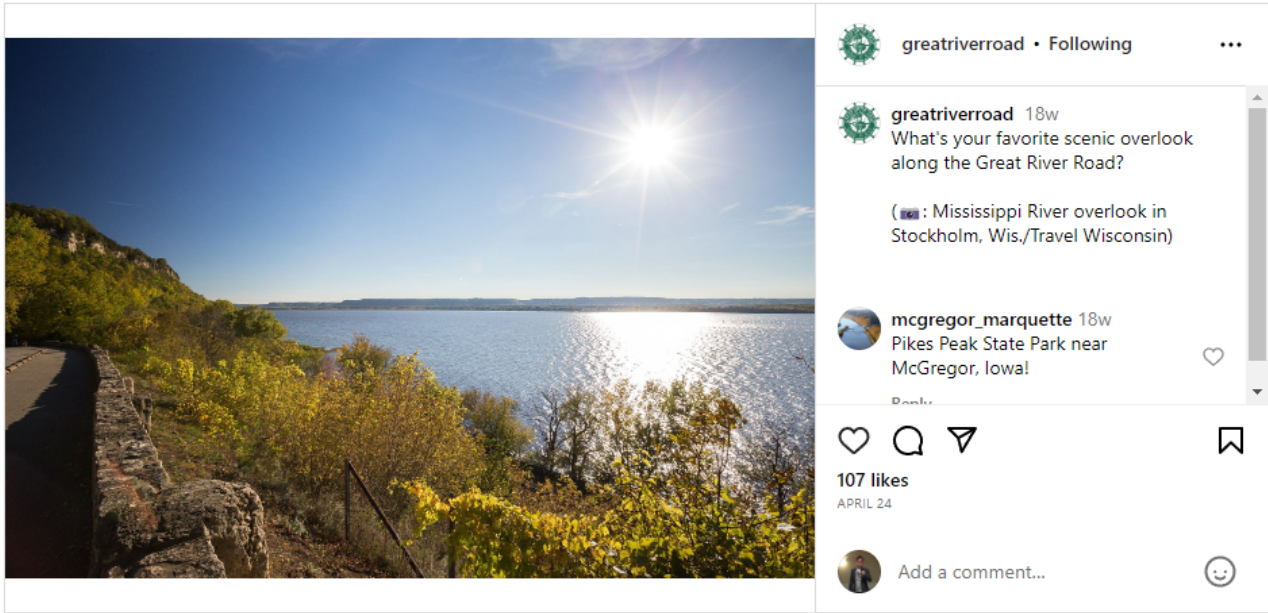


Top 5 Cities for Followers



Instagram Posts

Top Performing Post | Date: 4/24



Accounts Reached

9,232

Engagements

107

TACTIC: Webinars

Takeaways

Created a Spring Webinar Series for April, where we discuss topics of interest related to the Great River Road and the work of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission.

Topics included:

- ❖ Sense of Place and Getting the Most From Being on the Great River Road (April 4)
 - ❖ Social Media Marketing and Great River Road Summer Event Promotion (April 11)
 - ❖ Pollinators and the Great River Road (April 18)
-
- Created landing page for webinar series and separate pages for each webinar on mrpcmembers.com
 - Created Zoom registration for each webinar
 - Sent out weekly email reminders for upcoming webinars & details on how to register

TACTIC: Online Store

Takeaways

- Created graphics for apparel, stickers, accessories and more
- Shared store details via social media & newsletters

TACTIC: 10-State Events Campaign and Giveaway

Takeaways

We launched a new campaign that put a focus on Great River Road summer events (Memorial Day to Labor Day) with a push to a new webpage where viewers can select from state and month to view events. Additionally, we launched a monthly giveaway for a \$100 gas card (drawings will take place in July, August, and September) and social media giveaways for featured events. We also created a form to collect event info (event name, date, location, description, event website, etc.) and event images for promotion.

Proposed Campaign Period: Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend

Goals:

- ❖ Bring attention to the Great River Road through variety of shared events
 - ❖ Collect event listings
 - ❖ Collect event photos for future promotional use
 - ❖ Create reporting with large numbers, such as entries, collection of events, web and social traffic, co-op ad participants
-
- Created project charter for events campaign
 - Developed campaign look
 - Created events submission page, events calendar page, reviewed and published events
 - Created look/graphics for Summer Fun on the Great River Road Giveaway (\$100 gas card giveaway), created contest pages, launched promotion on 5/26 (runs through 9/5)
 - Collected information on events who wanted to provide free tickets for social media giveaways
 - Launched one social media giveaway (Great River Pottery Throwdown)

A full recap will appear in the Q3 report.

TACTIC: Pollinator Week

Takeaways

We launched a new campaign to raise awareness of pollinators and their importance to the ecological health of the Mississippi River and the Great River Road. It was launched in conjunction with National Pollinator week in June.

Goals:

- ❖ Promote National Pollinator Week along the Great River Road
 - ❖ Provide resources for Great River Road states and local organizations
-
- Created logo/graphics for Pollinator Week Along the Great River Road
 - Created National Pollinator Week toolkit that included information on National Pollinator Week, ideas to promote National Pollinator Week, sample social media posts, and resources
 - Created submission forms for National Pollinator Week events and local pollinator habitats on the mrpcmembers.com page

TACTIC: 2023 Annual Meeting

Takeaways

- Several planning meetings held
- Contacted and worked with potential speakers
- Worked with hotel and event staff
- Meeting visuals created for communication and promotion
- Completion of the online Annual Meeting landing page
- Developed meeting materials
- Promotional enewsletters developed & sent
- Agenda finalized

TACTIC: Fulfillment

Fulfillment

3,354

TACTIC: Meetings

- 4/3 - Pre-webinar
- 4/4 - Webinar
- 4/11 - Webinar
- 4/17 - Annual Meeting planning
- 4/18 - Webinar
- 4/19 - with Norma
- 5/1 - Annual Meeting planning
- 5/15 - Annual Meeting planning
- 5/16 - Culture & Heritage
- 5/18 - Marketing
- 5/26 - PR
- 5/31 - Annual Meeting planning
- 6/1 - ERA
- 6/2 - Collaborative
- 6/5 - Pollinator
- 6/9 - Board

ADDITIONAL

Content Calendar

- Created Q3 content calendar detailing social media posts, e-news topics, ad budgets and goals.

Miscellaneous

- Transfer stripe & paypal funds to bank account
- Reconciled financials
- Completed state's requests for additional paperwork to process state dues
- Public Relations - Met w/UK travel show reps, follow up
- Coordinated state's map needs
- Contacted pervious sign company, Lange Signs - East Dubuque, IL