



# PAMLICO COUNTY

## CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2025-2030





## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Existing Plans Review.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Setting.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Planning Process.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Plan Implementation Monitoring &amp; Evaluation.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Economic Positioning/Visioning Statement.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Pamlico County Outdoor Recreation Implementation Chart.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Priority Projects.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Timeline of Projects.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>25</b>



*Photos by Gary Dubiel at Spec  
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The REDD announced the technical assistance program offering Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Planning and Asset Development services in late 2022. Communities from across the state applied to engage with strategic planning services and 34 local governments were accepted to participate. NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center's Rural Planning Program, which is responsible for facilitating strategic economic development planning and implementation services, worked with local government staff to communicate the goals of the program, identify local opportunities, and assemble a planning work group.

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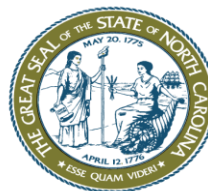
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## **CORE Plan Adoption**

Pamlico County	November 3, 2025
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## ***Economic Positioning Statement:***

***At the edge of coastal North Carolina, Pamlico County offers a rare opportunity to explore the pristine beauty of the central coast. With easy access to the ICW, a rich network of waterways, and unmatched hospitality, our region is the ultimate destination for outdoor recreation and inner coastal living. Our vibrant communities invite residents and visitors to unplug and immerse themselves in a variety of authentic outdoor experiences and local businesses.***

### **Executive Summary**

Through CORE, Pamlico County collaborated with the N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division staff members and local stakeholders through a strategic planning process to identify and develop outdoor recreation assets that present economic growth opportunities. Strategy development focused on leveraging outdoor recreation assets to increase tourism, encouraging small business development, enhancing quality of life for residents, planning for outdoor recreation asset and infrastructure development, and positioning communities to grow and attract outdoor gear manufacturing industries. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

The plan proposes strategies, goals, and actions that communities can take to increase economic vitality by leveraging outdoor recreation. For the purposes of this strategic planning program outdoor recreation is defined as all recreational activities undertaken for leisure that occur outdoors, with an emphasis on those activities that involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments. Furthermore, other community assets and economic institutions that benefit from or complement the outdoor recreation economy are addressed in the plan.

## **Executive Summary**

The CORE plan makes a total of 22 recommendations for actions under two priority strategies. These priority strategies and goals, identified by the local work group, include:

➤ **Strategy 1: Ultimate destination for outdoor recreation and inner coastal living.**

**Goal 1:** Create 3 new informational pieces that can be used by visitors and residents to identify outdoor recreation assets by the end of 2026.

**Goal 2:** Initiate 2 new or improved water access projects by the end of 2027.

**Goal 3:** Strengthen the County's marketing and branding of the Outdoor Recreation Economy by the end of 2027.

➤ **Strategy 2: Vibrant communities with a variety of outdoor recreation experiences and local businesses.**

**Goal 4:** Host quarterly networking events focused on tourism and outdoor recreation businesses to strengthen partnerships and collaborative opportunities, beginning in 2026.

**Goal 5:** Recruit or support the expansion of 1 outdoor recreation based small-scale manufacturer by 2030.

**Goal 6:** Develop or improve 2 multi-use trails by 2030.

**Goal 7:** Enhance 3 public amenities connected to outdoor recreation assets throughout the county by 2027.

These recommendations should serve as guideposts for Pamlico County as it considers future development efforts and should work in collaboration with other planning efforts undertaken by the county, municipalities, and related jurisdictions.



The CORE plan makes a total of 22 recommendations for projects under two priority strategies.



## Background

There is a long tradition of outdoor recreation in North Carolina. From the mountains to the coast and everywhere in between there are incredible landscapes and unique places to pursue a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities. Participation in these activities generates a large economic impact. In recent years statistics show that participation in outdoor recreation is increasing, particularly in the wake of COVID-19.

Continued growth in participation leads to the opportunity for the increased economic impact of outdoor recreation, particularly in rural locations where many of the state's outdoor recreation assets are located. Also, there is great potential to expose and engage people that have historically not participated in outdoor recreation activities at the same rate as others. It is important for all individuals to have the opportunity and access to enjoy recreational pursuits, and to have an opportunity to benefit economically from outdoor recreation. These factors, combined with other on-going outdoor recreation initiatives across the state, make it an ideal time to think critically about how this sector can continue to be leveraged to benefit local economies.

## Economic Impact

Outdoor recreation activity and associated expenditures generate a large economic impact. This is a broad economic sector that comprises a diverse range of industries including manufacturing, retail, arts, entertainment and recreation, as well as many supporting activities such as construction, travel and tourism, accommodation and food service, and many more.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis' Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, nationwide, in 2023, the outdoor recreation economy represented \$639.5 billion in current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP), or 2.3 percent of the United States' total GDP. The outdoor recreation sector of the economy is growing at a faster rate than the overall economy. "Inflation-adjusted ("real") GDP for the outdoor recreation economy increased 3.6 percent in 2023, compared with a 2.9 percent increase for the overall U.S. economy, reflecting a deceleration from the increase in outdoor recreation of 10.2 percent in 2022. Real gross output for the outdoor recreation economy increased 3.2 percent, while outdoor recreation compensation increased 9.0 percent, and employment increased 3.3 percent (national table 9)." Employment in the outdoor recreation industry increased in all 50 states during 2023.

At the state level, outdoor recreation contributed \$16.1 billion in total value-added economic impact to North Carolina's GDP. North Carolina ranked as the 11th highest state nationally in "Total outdoor recreation value added of current-dollar gross domestic product" in 2023. This included employment for over 145,000 individuals that resulted in over \$7.7 billion in total compensation. Employment in key industries within the outdoor recreation sector includes



6,930 in manufacturing, 52,439 in retail, 30,082 in accommodation and food service, and over 29,917 in arts, entertainment, and recreation. <sup>1</sup>

### Outdoor Recreation Participation

According to the 2022 Outdoor Industry Association ‘Outdoor Participation Trends Report’, “outdoor participation continues to grow at record levels. More than half (54%) of Americans ages 6 and over participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2021, and the outdoor recreation participant base grew 2.2% in 2021 to 164.2M participants. This growing number of outdoor participants, however, did not fundamentally alter long-term declines in high frequency or ‘core’ outdoor participation. <sup>2</sup>

Studies show that approximately 56% of North Carolinians participate in some form of outdoor recreation each year. <sup>3</sup> This includes more than 20.1 million visitors to North Carolina state parks in 2023. Many parks, national forests, and other public recreation areas report increased visitation as well. These numbers represent a solid base of individuals participating in outdoor recreation and contributing to associated economic activity. But there is still room to engage more individuals and continue to increase participation in outdoor recreation, particularly among populations that have not historically participated in outdoor recreation at levels comparable to others. Also, people increasingly want outdoor recreation opportunities that are convenient to where they live so they can participate on a regular basis without the need to travel long distances. <sup>4 5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021. <https://www.bea.gov/news/2022/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2021>

<sup>2</sup> Outdoor Industry Association. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2022-outdoor-participation-trends-report/trends-report/>

<sup>3</sup> The Citizen-Times. North Carolina outdoor recreation is a \$28 billion industry, poised for further growth. October 11th, 2019. <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/2019/10/11/outdoor-economy-conference-ashville-highlights-28-billion-industry/3923846002/> <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Headwaters Economics. Recreation Counties Attracting New Residents and Higher Incomes. <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract/>

<sup>5</sup> Outdoor Foundation. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022-Outdoor-Participation-Trends-Report.pdf>

## Existing Plans Review

In an effort to compliment and build upon subsequent community planning efforts, staff assembled and reviewed other relevant plans and documents. This review provides valuable insight and helps avoid duplication or contradictions of past planning proposals. The following documents were reviewed and considered during the CORE planning process.

### Eastern Carolina Council Community Economic Development Strategy

Pamlico County is located within the Eastern Carolina Council Economic Development District (EDD). The Eastern Carolina Council EDD's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy indicates that the region is "blessed with many natural resources that are attractive to tourists and others seeking outdoor recreational opportunities. Traditional tourism, eco-tourism, agri-tourism, and historic / cultural / heritage tourism all present economic growth opportunities for the region." One of the outlined approaches for their strategy is to "attract and retain younger talent by promoting the region's livability and access to exceptional nature and outdoor recreation opportunities."

### Pamlico County CAMA Land Use Plan

The Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) Land Use Plan provides the framework for land use regulation in Pamlico County's coastal regions, focusing on balancing development with environmental protection. The plan outlines zoning regulations, protected areas, and guidelines for sustainable growth. The CAMA Land Use Plan is highly relevant to outdoor recreation as it directly affects land allocation for recreational purposes such as parks, trails, and waterfront activities. The plan prioritizes environmental conservation, which aligns with sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation. The inclusion of protected areas and environmentally sensitive zones can guide the development of outdoor recreation facilities that preserve the natural beauty and resources of the region while promoting eco-tourism. It would be beneficial to further integrate outdoor recreation-specific initiatives into the CAMA Land Use Plan, perhaps through designated recreation zones or enhanced collaboration with local outdoor organizations to ensure development is aligned with the growing outdoor economy.

Photo by  
Gary  
Dubiel at  
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In 2023, outdoor recreation contributed \$16.1 Billion in total value-added economic impact to North Carolina's GDP.

### Pamlico County Comprehensive Transportation Plan

This plan outlines Pamlico County's transportation infrastructure improvements and prioritizes the development of roads, bridges, and public transportation systems. The plan seeks to enhance mobility across the county and strengthen transportation connections. The transportation plan is crucial for facilitating access to outdoor recreation sites. With improvements to roadways and transportation systems, it becomes easier for residents and tourists to visit recreational areas. Although the plan focuses primarily on roads and infrastructure, it has the potential to support outdoor recreation by improving access to key sites.

### Pamlico Sound Hazard Mitigation Plan

This plan aims to reduce the risks associated with natural hazards in Pamlico Sound, including flooding, storm surge, and other climate related threats. It includes strategies to safeguard infrastructure and natural resources that are vulnerable to environmental risks. The hazard mitigation plan supports outdoor recreation by ensuring the safety and protection of coastal areas, recreational spaces, and ecosystems that are crucial for outdoor activities like fishing, boating, and beach tourism. By addressing flood risks and storm-related impacts, the plan helps to safeguard recreational infrastructure, ensuring continued access to these areas for the public.

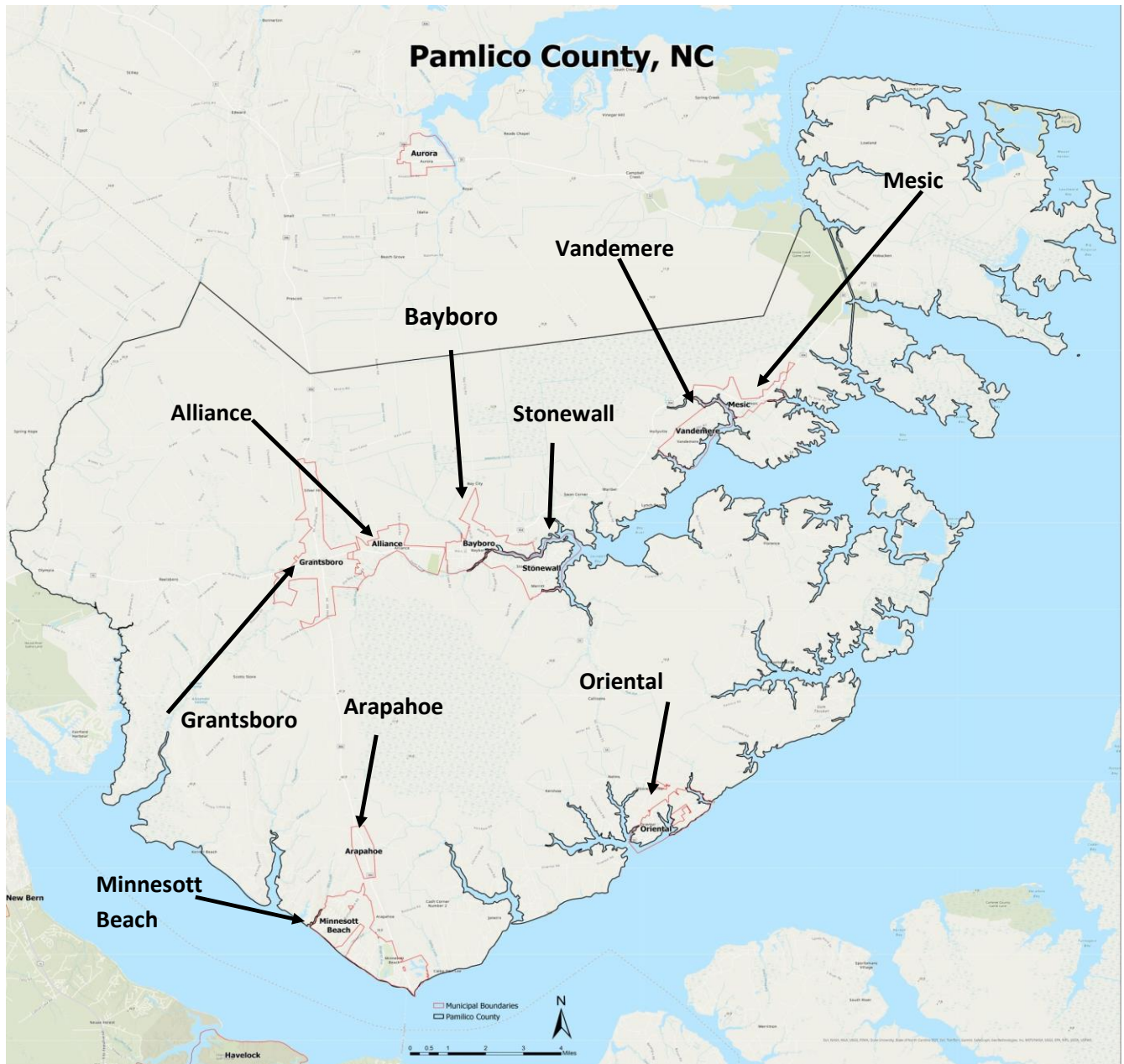
### Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plan

The Hurricane Matthew Resilience Plan was developed to help Pamlico County recover from the impacts of Hurricane Matthew and improve the county's resilience to future storms. It includes strategies to rebuild infrastructure, strengthen community resources, and minimize future disaster risks. The resilience plan directly impacts outdoor recreation economies by ensuring that recreational assets, such as parks, trails, and waterfront areas, are restored and made more resilient after storm events. This plan ensures that outdoor recreation areas remain viable and accessible even in the face of future hurricane events or other natural disasters.



## Setting

### CORE Plan Focus Area Map:



## Pamlico County

Pamlico County is anchored by nine municipalities, Alliance, Arapahoe, Bayboro, Grantsboro, Mesic, Minnesott Beach, Oriental, Stonewall, and Vandemere. The county boasts a small-town quality of life enhanced with an abundance of natural and cultural resources. Pamlico County is situated on a peninsula surrounded by the Neuse River, Pamlico Sound, the Bay River, and the Pamlico River, with the Intracoastal Waterway also running through the county.



## Local Demographics

Pamlico County, located in the heart of North Carolina's coastal plain, offers a rich history and a stunning natural environment, making it a prime location for outdoor recreation development. With a population of approximately 13,000 residents, Pamlico is a predominantly rural area, where the tight-knit community is deeply connected to the surrounding landscape.

The demographic makeup of the county is reflective of a largely older population, with a median age around 50. This is indicative of a community where many residents are retirees or are nearing retirement age. The county's aging population presents unique challenges, including a limited local workforce and the fact that many younger individuals have moved away in search of employment opportunities. However, this trend seems to have been changing in the last few years with new families settling in the area.

In terms of income, Pamlico County's median household income is lower than the North Carolina state average. Many of the county's residents are employed in industries such as agriculture, aquaculture, seafood processing, and an increasingly important tourism sector. Outdoor recreation, particularly related to the county's waterways, has the potential to diversify and strengthen this local economy.

Pamlico's educational attainment levels are mixed. A significant portion of residents have completed high school, but the percentage of individuals holding a bachelor's degree or higher is lower than the state average. This can be seen as an opportunity to develop youth engagement programs and skill-building initiatives that both enrich the community and provide local pathways for career development, particularly within the growing outdoor recreation sector.

Geographically, Pamlico County is characterized by a mix of agricultural lands, coastal wetlands, and scenic waterfronts. The county's natural beauty makes it an ideal location for outdoor activities. Visitors and locals alike enjoy hiking, fishing, and various water-based pursuits, thanks to the county's numerous state parks, wildlife refuges, and access to Pamlico Sound. Despite this wealth of natural assets, many of these outdoor opportunities are underutilized, creating potential for growth in tourism and local engagement with outdoor recreation.



## Local Tourism

Pamlico County's tourism sector plays a pivotal role in its economy. While the county's permanent population is small, the region sees an influx of seasonal visitors attracted by its picturesque waterways, tranquil rural landscape, and abundant outdoor activities, such as fishing, boating, kayaking, and birdwatching. According to Visit NC, visitors in Pamlico County spent \$37.76 million in 2023. These seasonal residents and visitors bring economic benefits but also create challenges when it comes to managing infrastructure and ensuring sustainable growth in tourism-related ventures.

Pamlico's water-based recreation opportunities—such as boating, kayaking, fishing, and birdwatching—attract both seasonal and year-round visitors. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission estimates that recreational fishing alone generated nearly \$2 billion in statewide economic impact in 2020. In Pamlico County, the recreational fishing sector is especially important, as the area is known for its rich fish populations in both Pamlico Sound and the Neuse River. Local fishing charters, boat rentals, and coastal accommodations benefit directly from this industry.

In 2020, the North Carolina Division of Tourism estimated that tourists in coastal counties like Pamlico spent an average of \$60 per day on accommodations, dining, entertainment, and transportation. This spending is a direct economic infusion into local businesses. By attracting more visitors interested in outdoor recreation, Pamlico County can significantly increase the economic benefits of tourism, particularly through sustainable growth in eco-tourism and nature based activities.

Additional market and tourism data is available in the appendices of this report.



*Photo by Gary Dubiel at Spec  
Fever Guide Service*



## Planning Process

Under the Rural Economic Development Division (REDD), MS&RP Center staff facilitates the CORE strategic planning process with participation from the local government and an established local work group. This work group is comprised of individuals who have a vested interest in leveraging outdoor recreation to enhance economic development. The planning process employs established planning methods including presenting economic and associated data, asset mapping, economic driver identification, SWOT analysis, stakeholder interviews, business questionnaires, local work group discussions, and more. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

Building on an initial foundation of economic data analysis, asset mapping, and community input, the planning process begins by establishing a shared understanding of the local context and opportunities. From this foundation, the team works collaboratively with local stakeholders to develop a five-year Economic Positioning Statement. This statement acts as the community's vision—defining the desired future identity and direction for outdoor recreation as a catalyst for economic growth.

Once this vision is in place, the planning process moves into identifying focused strategies to help realize the positioning statement. These strategies are broad, thematic areas of focus that guide the planning effort. For each strategy, the team and local work group then co-create SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—that provide a clear framework for implementation.

Finally, each goal is supported by concrete actions and projects. These actions identify responsible partners, potential resources, and a general timeline for implementation, ensuring that the plan is not only visionary but also actionable and grounded in the local community's capacity and aspirations.

## Situational Analysis

The MS&RP staff began the planning process by having conversations with town leaders to convey the intent of the CORE program and receive feedback on the overarching aspirations and expectations of what the town hopes to achieve through this strategic planning process. In December of 2023, a site tour was hosted so that MS&RP staff could have a better understanding of local recreational and economic assets. A questionnaire was developed to obtain feedback from the local planning committee prior to the formal work group meetings. The intent of this questionnaire was to obtain more detailed information on local assets, potential opportunities, and a better understanding of local priorities. As indicated above, a review of existing planning documents was also performed.

### Local Work Group Establishment and Involvement

The local work group was assembled by the local government's lead contact and included individuals with a vested stake in the Pamlico County community. These individuals included elected officials, outdoor recreation business owners, county employees, and other community members. These individuals provided local knowledge, input via questionnaires and topical discussion, and helped to shape the vision, strategies, goals, and actions outlined in this plan. As with any plan, these work group members will be essential participants in implementation after the planning process to begin addressing goals and objectives outlined in this plan and are critical to attaining the potential economic impact of these strategies.

A full outline of the work group meetings can be seen in the table below.

Meeting Date	Topics
December 7, 2023	Pamlico County Site Tour <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Review of Current Outdoor Recreation Plans</li><li>➤ Tour of Outdoor and Cultural Assets</li></ul>
November 11, 2024	Meeting #1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Overview of the CORE process</li><li>➤ Defining Outdoor Recreation and the Outdoor Recreation Economy</li><li>➤ Asset Mapping Exercise</li></ul>
December 4, 2024	Meeting #2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Review workgroup and community surveys</li><li>➤ Presentation on impacts of outdoor recreation in the county</li><li>➤ Itinerary Building Exercise</li></ul>
January 14, 2025	Meeting #3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Economic Positioning Exercise</li><li>➤ Review Market Data Report</li></ul>
February 12, 2025	Meeting #4 (Virtual) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Refining Economic Position/Vision</li><li>➤ Reviewing Commissioners Update Presentation</li></ul>
March 19, 2025	Meeting #5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Strategy and objective creation</li></ul>
May 6, 2025	Meeting #6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Project Development</li></ul>
July 9, 2025	Meeting #7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Refining Projects</li><li>➤ Final Plan Review</li></ul>



### **Asset Mapping**

During the November 2024 work group meeting, staff facilitated an asset mapping exercise to identify key outdoor recreation and related business assets in the community. Asset mapping is a process that identifies the strengths of a community, highlights areas for growth opportunities, and brings together key stakeholders. Identifying Pamlico County's unique assets helped to establish clear economic development strategies to achieve measurable growth. As a result of the asset mapping exercise, the work group focused on:

- The most valued aspects of Pamlico County
- The reasons why people place high value on assets in Pamlico County
- Opportunities to leverage Pamlico County's assets for economic growth

### **Public Engagement**

A multitude of public engagement efforts were undertaken during the planning process. The MS&RP created a community survey for public distribution. The community survey was open for 4 weeks and had a response rate of 191 people. The intent of this survey was to determine the public's perception of outdoor recreation, local assets, potential opportunities, and local priorities. The MS&RP staff also conducted stakeholder interviews with a variety of stakeholders. These stakeholders were identified by the local workgroup with the intent to get more detailed input on local assets, gaps and opportunities from residents, business owners, and stakeholders of the outdoor recreation economy in Pamlico County.

### **Additional Research**

MS&RP staff reviewed a variety of demographic and market data sources that were used to influence the final recommendations of this report. A Retail Marketplace Snapshot is attached as an appendix to this document.

### **Plan Review & Adoption**

A draft of this document was produced in July 2025 and shared with the Pamlico County CORE project local leads for review and comment. Following review, The Pamlico County Board of Commissioners adopted the plan on November 3, 2025.

### **Plan Implementation Monitoring & Evaluation**

Pamlico County will be responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting accomplishments on the objectives of this plan to the Rural Economic Development Division.

### **Plan Implementation**

Maintaining a dedicated group to follow through after the planning process to begin addressing goals and objectives outlined in this plan is critical to attaining the potential economic impact of these strategies. This could be the same work group that helped develop this plan, or another similar group that is representative of the community and can advance

the goals of this plan. The sustained presence of such a group builds ‘social capital’ within the group that improves their ability to work together and effectively address common goals. Furthermore, a dedicated group ensures continuity from planning stage through implementation, provides accountability to ensure that objectives are being met, and allows the community to react and respond quickly when an opportunity is presented. But this group should not be the sole entity responsible for implementing all the goals of the plan. Instead, the group should function as a convener and point of contact to connect to other individuals, organizations, and resources to help the broader community achieve these goals. Maintaining a regular meeting schedule will also help increase the effectiveness of the group, and the overall plan.

The implementation of the plan is designed as a collaborative and countywide effort. While the plan was developed with Pamlico County as the primary geographic and administrative focus, the strategies and projects identified within it are intentionally designed to be undertaken by a diverse set of partners. This approach reflects the deeply interconnected nature of outdoor recreation, economic development, and community vitality across the county.

Rather than placing the sole responsibility for implementation on the county government, this plan recognizes and embraces the strength of shared ownership. During the planning process, a variety of local, regional, and state stakeholders were engaged—including municipal governments, non-profits, business leaders, tourism and recreation organizations, educational institutions, and civic groups. As a result, each project identified in the plan should include partners whose expertise, capacity, and community ties make them well-positioned to lead or support implementation efforts.

This distributed responsibility model ensures that implementation builds stronger, more sustainable partnerships while increasing local capacity. By aligning the work of various entities under a shared vision and strategy, the plan supports the creation of a more cohesive and resilient outdoor recreation economy. Each project has an identified lead or key collaborator, and in many cases, cross-sector coordination will be critical to success. The county government plays a vital facilitative role but is not the sole entity responsible for plan execution. Ultimately, the success of this strategic plan depends on the collective engagement of all partners involved.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring and evaluation to review progress on the goals, objectives, and action steps in this plan, via regular review sessions with the Strategic Planning team and other community stakeholders, is critical to ensuring it remains a viable, living document. REDD staff will periodically communicate and provide assistance as needed to help advance the goals and document the outcomes of the plan.

## Economic Positioning/Visioning Statement



***At the edge of coastal North Carolina, Pamlico County offers a rare opportunity to explore the pristine beauty of the central coast. With easy access to the ICW, a rich network of waterways, and unmatched hospitality, our region is the ultimate destination for outdoor recreation and inner coastal living. Our vibrant communities invite residents and visitors to unplug and immerse themselves in a variety of authentic outdoor experiences and local businesses.***

*Photo by Gary Dubiel at Spec Fever Guide*

## Economic Positioning/Visioning Statement

An economic positioning/vision statement is the vision for the economic role that Pamlico County will play in the greater economy (local, county, regional) over the next five years. An economic positioning statement should demonstrate what the community can achieve and how the community will be different from other areas in the region. Economic positioning statements are grounded in growth opportunities and the economic development strategies are derived directly from the community's vision. The statement should be built on consensus and based in reality.

## Pamlico County Outdoor Recreation Implementation Chart 2025 – 2030

<p>Vision: At the edge of coastal North Carolina, Pamlico County offers a rare opportunity to explore the pristine beauty of the central coast. With easy access to the ICW, a rich network of waterways, and unmatched hospitality, our region is the ultimate destination for outdoor recreation and inner coastal living. Our vibrant communities invite residents and visitors to unplug and immerse themselves in a variety of authentic outdoor experiences and local businesses.</p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1: Ultimate destination for outdoor recreation and inner coastal living.</b></p>	<p><b>Strategy 2: Vibrant communities with a variety of outdoor recreation experiences and local businesses.</b></p>
<p><b>Goal 1:</b> Create 3 new informational pieces that can be used by visitors and residents to identify outdoor recreation assets by the end of 2026.</p> <p><b>Actions/Projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Identify outdoor recreation assets using asset mapping exercise from the CORE plan, county maps of trails and waterways, Visit NC information, and other existing resources.</li> <li>1.2 Design a comprehensive, user-friendly outdoor recreation map highlighting current assets.</li> <li>1.3 Update existing paddle trail and walking trail maps.</li> <li>1.4 Update the county website to include new and existing outdoor recreation information, ensuring accessibility by including ADA-compliant details.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goal 4:</b> Host quarterly networking events focused on tourism and outdoor recreation businesses to strengthen partnerships and collaborative opportunities, beginning in 2026.</p> <p><b>Action/Projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 Identify lead partners and organizations to coordinate the event.</li> <li>4.2 Survey local business owners to determine optimal event dates and times.</li> <li>4.3 Host an initial networking event; evaluate participation and determine the most effective format and frequency moving forward.</li> </ul> <p><b>Goal 5:</b> Recruit or support the expansion of 1 outdoor recreation based small-scale manufacturer by 2030.</p> <p><b>Actions/Projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1 Partner with the community college to develop job training programs aligned with outdoor recreation manufacturing skills.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Goal 2:</b> Initiate 2 new or improved water access projects by the end of 2027.</p> <p><b>Actions/Projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Advance the Town of Vandemere Fishing Pier Project.</li> <li>2.2 Assess and map site viability for small boat access sites at the county recreation area.</li> <li>2.3 Evaluate the potential for a recreational and cultural amphitheater at Alliance Park, incorporating water access and programming for education, music, and the arts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Goal 3:</b> Strengthen the County’s marketing and branding of the Outdoor Recreation Economy by the end of 2027.</p> <p><b>Actions/Projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Create a workgroup/advisory board for county marketing and branding that includes community representatives and strategic partners, including small businesses.</li> <li>3.2 Develop a cohesive outdoor recreation brand identity and style guide, with input from municipalities.</li> <li>3.3 Launch a dedicated outdoor recreation or visitor webpage on the county website by the end of 2026.</li> <li>3.4 Partner with local businesses to make outdoor recreation-based itineraries, videos, and marketing tools and share with strategic partners.</li> <li>3.5 Work with individual businesses to promote products and services that are engaged within the outdoor recreation economic sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.2 Compile a vetted list of qualified outdoor recreation businesses open to expansion opportunities.</li> <li>5.3 Host a regional outdoor recreation roundtable discussion with county schools, CC, small business center, etc. about potential for outdoor recreation manufacturing aligning with local priorities and supporting sustainable growth.</li> <li>5.4 Consider combining the roundtable and networking event with small businesses or alternating the topic of each.</li> </ul> <p><b>Goal 6:</b> Develop or improve 2 multi-use trails by 2030.</p> <p><b>Actions/Projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6.1 Identify and assess potential trail locations—both public and private—prioritizing one high-need area and one high-tourism area, supported by demographic and spatial data.</li> <li>6.2 Create a funding strategy and plan development for trail updates and obtain County Commissioner approval.</li> <li>6.3 Identify and strengthen partnerships with Pamlico County Parks and Rec, Boy and Girl Scouts, Camps, Master Gardeners, Farmers, Eastern Carolina Council of Government, NC State, etc. on design, funding, and maintenance of identified sites.</li> </ul> <p><b>Goal 7:</b> Enhance 3 public amenities connected to outdoor recreation assets throughout the county by 2027.</p> <p><b>Actions/Projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1 Conduct walkability and condition assessments for identified amenities and generate a list of needed upgrades.</li> <li>7.2 Install improved signage along bike routes, kayak trails, and public fishing piers to enhance visibility and usability.</li> </ul>
--	--

## Priority Projects

Pamlico County's CORE Plan is structured to support sustainable growth in the outdoor recreation economy, while simultaneously enhancing quality of life and attracting investment. The first phase of implementation prioritizes three interconnected goals that lay the groundwork for future infrastructure, small business, and manufacturing development. These early initiatives build awareness, strengthen partnerships, and set the stage for long-term transformation.

### **Priority 1: Creating Clear & Accessible Informational Resources**

#### *Goal 1: Create 3 New Informational Pieces Highlighting Outdoor Recreation Assets*

Goal 1 responds directly to one of the county's most pressing challenges: a lack of consolidated and accessible information about its natural and recreational resources. While Pamlico County has abundant waterways, trails, and scenic sites, these assets are currently scattered across various platforms and often lack ADA-accessible descriptions or cohesive presentations. Visitors and residents alike have expressed difficulty finding clear, up-to-date guidance on where and how to engage with these spaces. To address this, the county will begin by identifying and cataloging assets through a mapping exercise grounded in the CORE planning process. This foundational work will be used to create a user-friendly outdoor recreation map and to update the county's website to house a centralized hub for recreation information. This effort is critical to increasing engagement with existing amenities, supporting health and quality of life, and laying the informational groundwork necessary for attracting future visitors, grants, and investment.

### **Priority 2: Promotion**

#### *Goal 3: Strengthen the County's Marketing and Branding of the Outdoor Recreation Economy*

Goal 3 builds on the informational assets created in Goal 1 and seeks to unify how Pamlico County presents itself to the outside world. Currently, the county lacks a consistent visual identity or message that conveys its natural character, rural charm, or recreation opportunities. As a result, individual businesses, towns, and tourism advocates often promote themselves in isolation, missing the opportunity to build a stronger collective presence. Through this goal, Pamlico County will convene a representative workgroup to guide the creation of a brand identity that reflects the county's values and strengths. This identity—expressed through a logo, color palette, photography, messaging, and style guide—will help establish Pamlico as a nature-forward destination known for its outdoor recreation and cultural charm. A branded online presence will follow, with a dedicated outdoor recreation or visitor webpage launched on the county's site to house interactive maps, videos, and itineraries. Just as importantly, this

goal will foster partnerships with local businesses, enabling them to co-create content, amplify the brand, and directly benefit from increased regional and statewide visibility. As outdoor tourism becomes more competitive, especially in Eastern North Carolina, having a distinctive and authentic identity will be critical to attracting the right audiences and encouraging repeat visitation.

### **Priority 3: Outdoor Recreation Business Ecosystem**

#### *Goal 4: Host Quarterly Networking Events for Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Businesses*

Goal 4 prioritizes people over projects. While Pamlico has many passionate small business owners, artisans, outfitters, and civic leaders, there are few consistent opportunities for these groups to connect, share ideas, or collaborate. The quarterly networking events will fill this gap by providing a welcoming space to exchange resources, explore partnerships, and identify new opportunities related to the outdoor economy. The first phase of this goal involves identifying key partners and gauging local interests to ensure that events are accessible, relevant, and well-attended. Hosting a pilot event will offer insight into what format and frequency will work best—whether formal panels, casual mixers, or rotating thematic focuses. In the long term, these events will help foster the kind of trust and alignment necessary for broader economic development strategies. They will also serve as a bridge to other CORE goals, including workforce development, manufacturing expansion, and multi-use trail development, by strengthening the connective tissue between public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

## **Timeline of Projects**

Here's a suggested timeline for implementing the projects under each goal. The layout prioritizes capacity-building in early years and capital-intensive or complex projects in later ones.

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### **2025**

- 1.1 Conduct asset mapping exercise.
- 3.1 Form marketing and branding advisory group.
- 4.1 Identify lead partners for networking events.
- 5.2 Survey businesses on event preferences.
- 5.2 Start compiling a list of target businesses.

## 2026

- 1.2 Design and publish recreation asset map.
  - 1.3 Update the county website with outdoor rec info (include ADA).
  - 2.1 Begin advancement of Vandemere Fishing Pier Project.
  - 3.2 Finalize outdoor recreation brand and style guide.
  - 3.3 Launch outdoor recreation webpage.
  - 4.3 Host first networking event and evaluate format.
  - 5.3 Host regional outdoor recreation roundtable.
  - 6.1 Identify potential trail sites and analyze demographics/tourism data.
  - 7.1 Conduct walk studies and assessments of public outdoor amenities.
- 

## 2027

- 7.2 Install improved signage along key outdoor routes.
  - 2.2 Remap and assess boat access sites in Alliance.
  - 3.4 Launch partner-led marketing campaigns and outdoor recreation itineraries.
  - 5.1 Begin partnership with community college to align training with outdoor rec manufacturing.
  - 5.4 Decide whether to combine networking and roundtable events moving forward.
- 

## 2028-2029

- 2.3 Explore amphitheater concept and feasibility at Neal's Creek.
  - 6.2 Develop funding and trail development plan; seek Commissioner approval.
  - 6.2 Identify and strengthen partnerships with Pamlico County Parks and Rec, Boy and Girl Scouts, Camps, Master Gardeners, Farmers, Eastern Carolina Council of Government, NC State, etc. on design, funding, and maintenance of identified sites.
- 

## 2030

- **Final Reviews:**
  - Evaluate outcomes for each goal, gather feedback from partners, and update strategic plan as needed.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Market Data

### Pamlico County, NC Placer.ai Analysis



#### Metrics

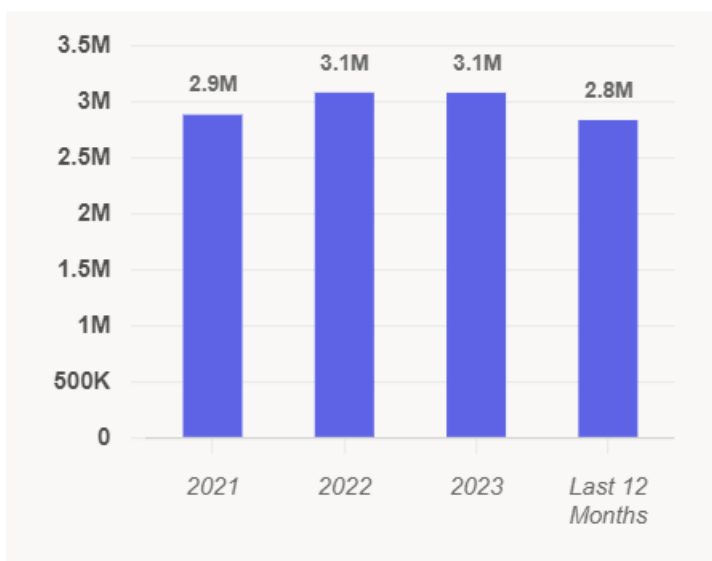
Property:

Pamlico County, NC / Chinchil...

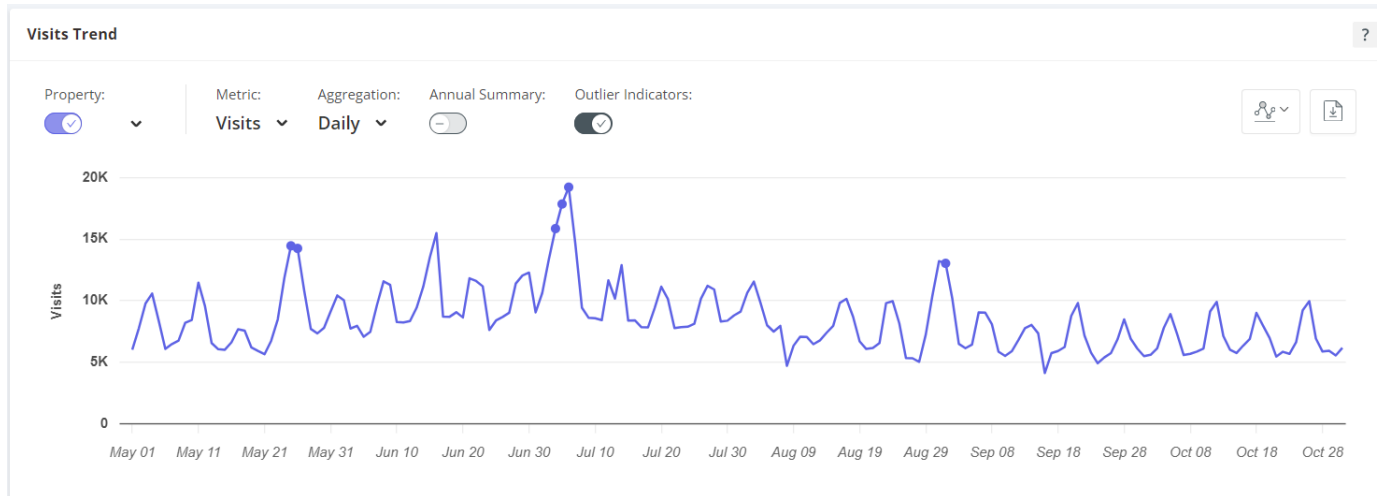


Visits	1.5M	Panel Visits	82.1K
Visitors	234.9K	Visits YoY	-9.6%
Visit Frequency	6.6	Visits Yo2Y	-10%
Avg. Dwell Time	410 min	Visits Yo3Y	-8.5%

Metrics: 234,900 unique visitors coming an average of 6.6 time for 1.5 million annual visitors.



Annual Visitors	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>Last 12 Months</u>
	2.9 million	3.1 million	3.1 million	2.8 million



Visits Trends: Peaks normally indicate special events or activities.

<u>Fri. May 24, 2024</u>	<u>Sat. May 25, 2024</u>	<u>Sun. June 16, 2024</u>	<u>Thurs. July 4, 2024</u>
11,850 visitors	14,460 visitors	15,500 visitors	15,860 visitors
+8% vs 2023	+43% vs 2023	-9% vs 2023	+15% vs 2023

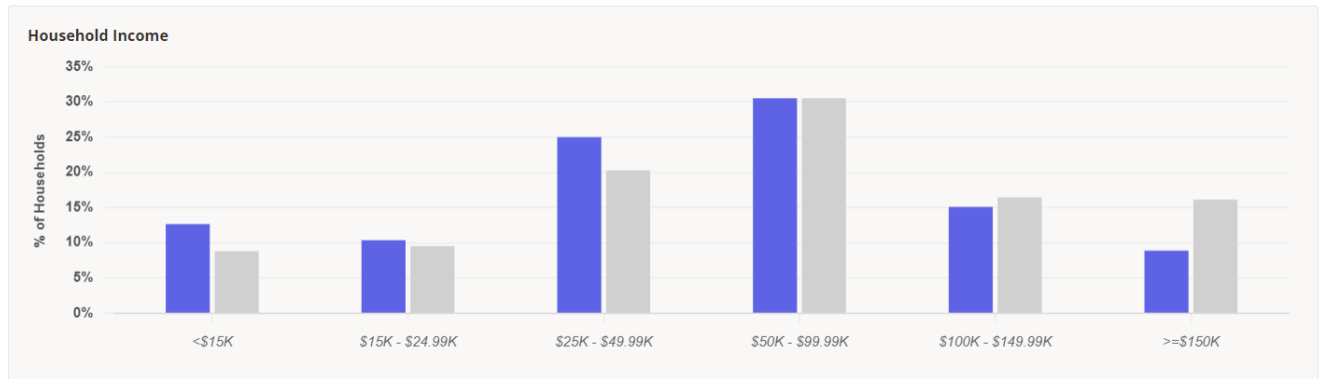
<u>Fri. July 5, 2024</u>	<u>Sat. July 6, 2024</u>	<u>Sun. Sept. 1, 2024</u>
17,860 visitors	19,230 visitors	13,000 visitors
+39% vs 2023	+46% vs 2023	-11% vs 2023

**Audience Overview**

Property: ☒ Dataset: STI: Popstats View: Captured Market Compare to: North Carolina

Property	Median Household Income	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Most Common Ethnicity	Persons per Household
Pamlico County, NC Chinchilla Drive, Bayboro, NC	\$56.8K	25.3%	White (63.7%)	2.29
North Carolina	\$68K	34.1%	White (61.3%)	2.44

Audience Overview-Median HH Income: \$56,800  
 Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 25.3%  
 Most Common Ethnicity: White (63.7%)  
 Persons per Household: 2.29



\*Demographics are based on a True Trade Area capturing 70% of visits | Data source: STI: Popstats

### Household Income

Less than \$15,000

\$15,000-\$24,999

\$25,000-\$49,999

\$50,000-\$99,999

\$100,000-\$149,999

\$150,000+

### Pamlico County

12.6%

10.4%

25.0%

30.5%

15.1%

8.9%

### North Carolina

8.8%

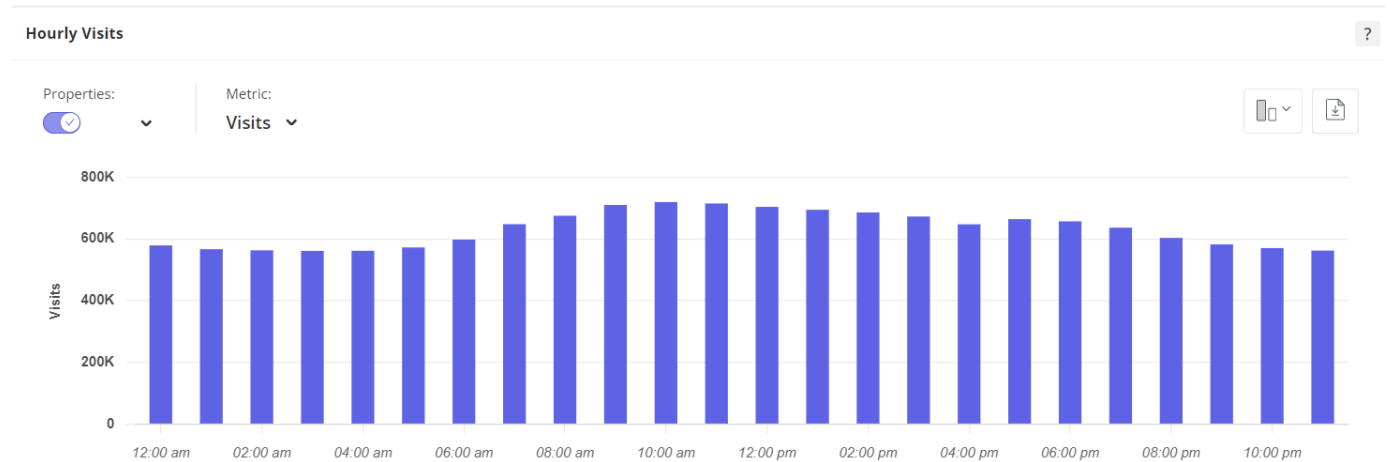
9.5%

20.3%

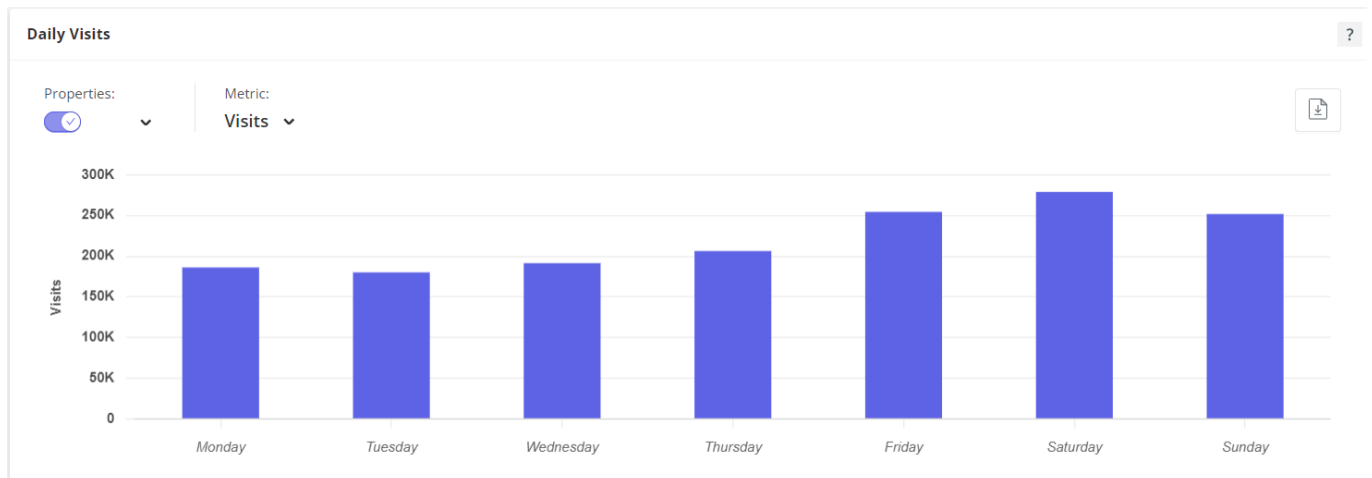
30.5%

16.4%

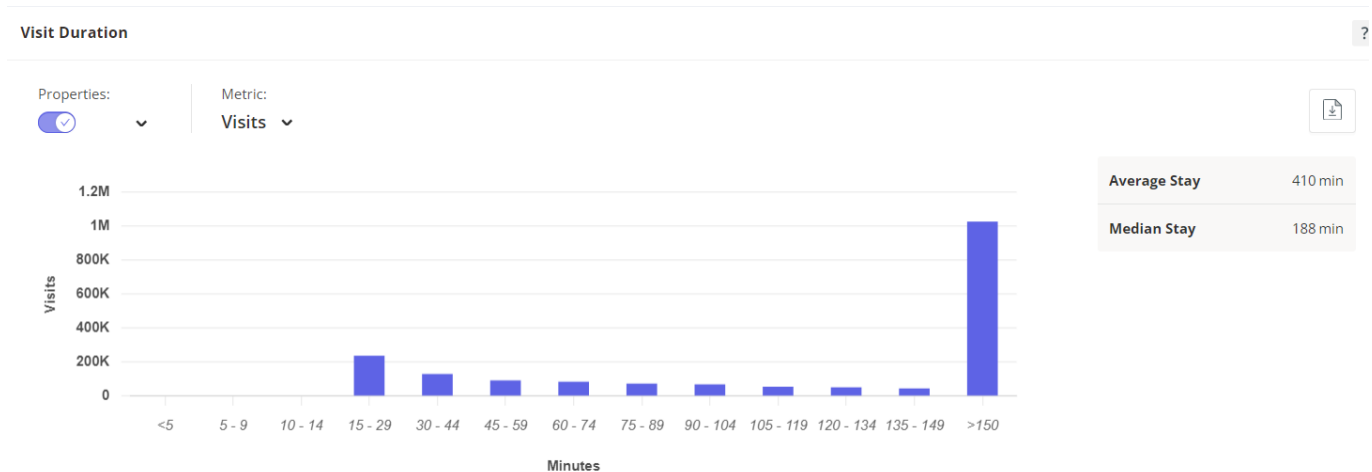
16.1%



Hourly Visits: Relatively consistent visitation across all hours.



Daily Visits	Rank	Day	# of Annual Visitors
	1	Saturday	279,000
	2	Friday	254,500
	3	Sunday	251,900
	4	Thursday	206,400
	5	Wednesday	191,400
	6	Monday	186,100
	7	Tuesday	180,000



Visit Duration: Average stay 410 minutes; median stay is 188 minutes.

Favorite places for Pamlico County residents



## Favorite Places



Category:   
 All Categories ▾

Min. Visits:   
 1

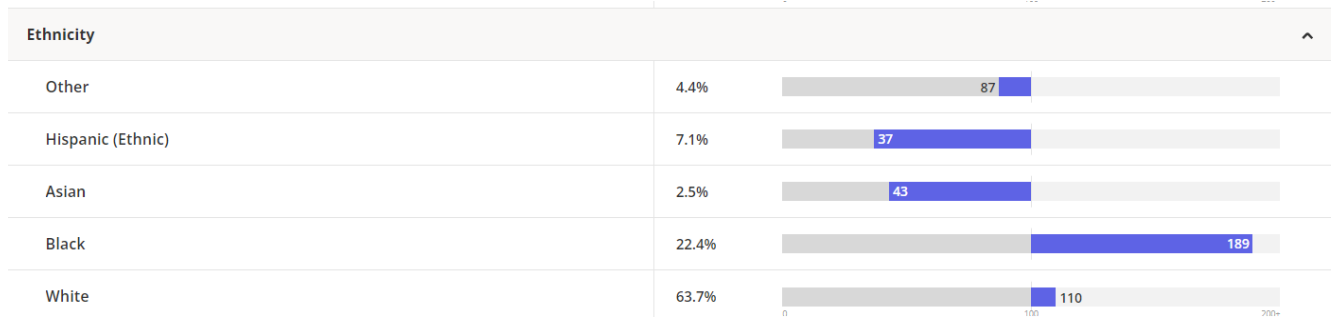


### Pamlico County, NC / Chinchilla Drive, Bayboro, NC

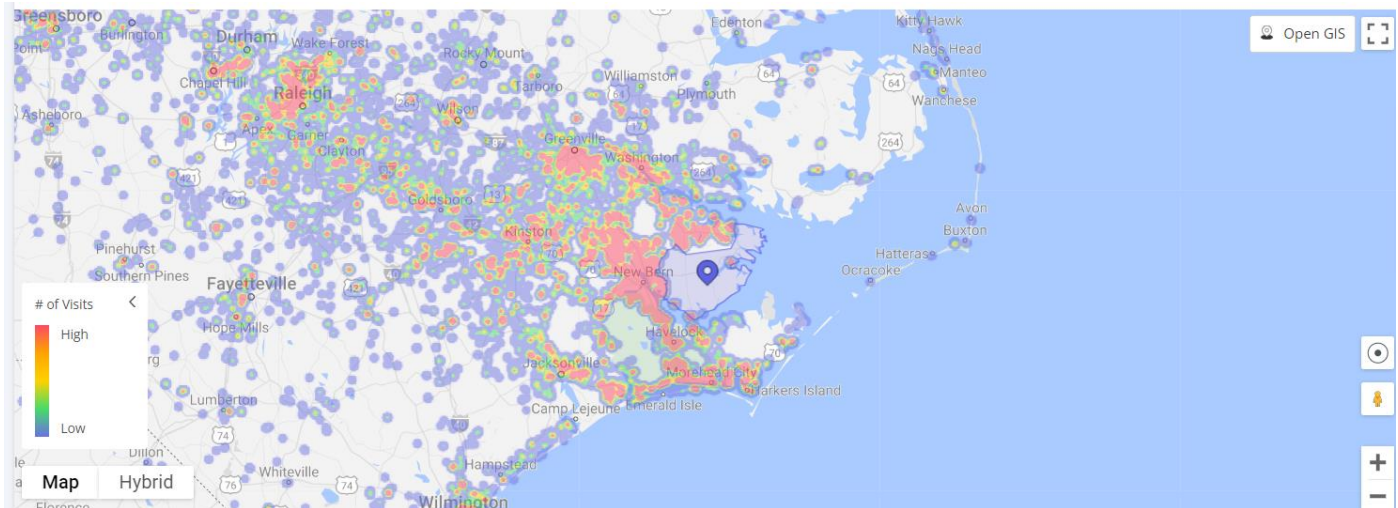
Rank	Name	Distance	Visitors
1	New Bern Marketplace / 3511 Dr. M.I.k. Jr Blvd, New Bern, NC 28562	20.7 mi	69.2K (29.5%)
2	Rivertowne Square / 3005 Dr. M.I.k. Jr Blvd, New Bern, NC 28562	19.8 mi	64.6K (27.5%)
3	New Bern Mall / 3134 Dr. M.I.k. Jr Blvd, New Bern, NC 28562	19.9 mi	57.8K (24.6%)
4	Walmart / 3105 Dr. M.I.k. Jr Blvd, New Bern, NC 28562	19.8 mi	50.6K (21.5%)
5	Raleigh-Durham International Airport / 1750 E International Dr, Morrisville, NC 27560	126.2 mi	42.5K (18.1%)
6	Crystal Coast Plaza / 5160 Hwy 70 W, Morehead City, NC 28557	28.1 mi	41.5K (17.7%)
7	River Place / 2002 S Glenburnie Rd, New Bern, NC 28562	20.5 mi	40.6K (17.3%)
8	Walmart / 11233 B NC 55 Hwy, Grantsboro, NC 28529	5.4 mi	39.9K (17%)
9	University Commons - Greenville / 3040 Evans St, Greenville, NC 27834	47.1 mi	37.7K (16.1%)
10	Target / 3410 Dr. M.L.K. Jr Blvd, New Bern, NC 28562	20.3 mi	33.3K (14.2%)

## Demographics

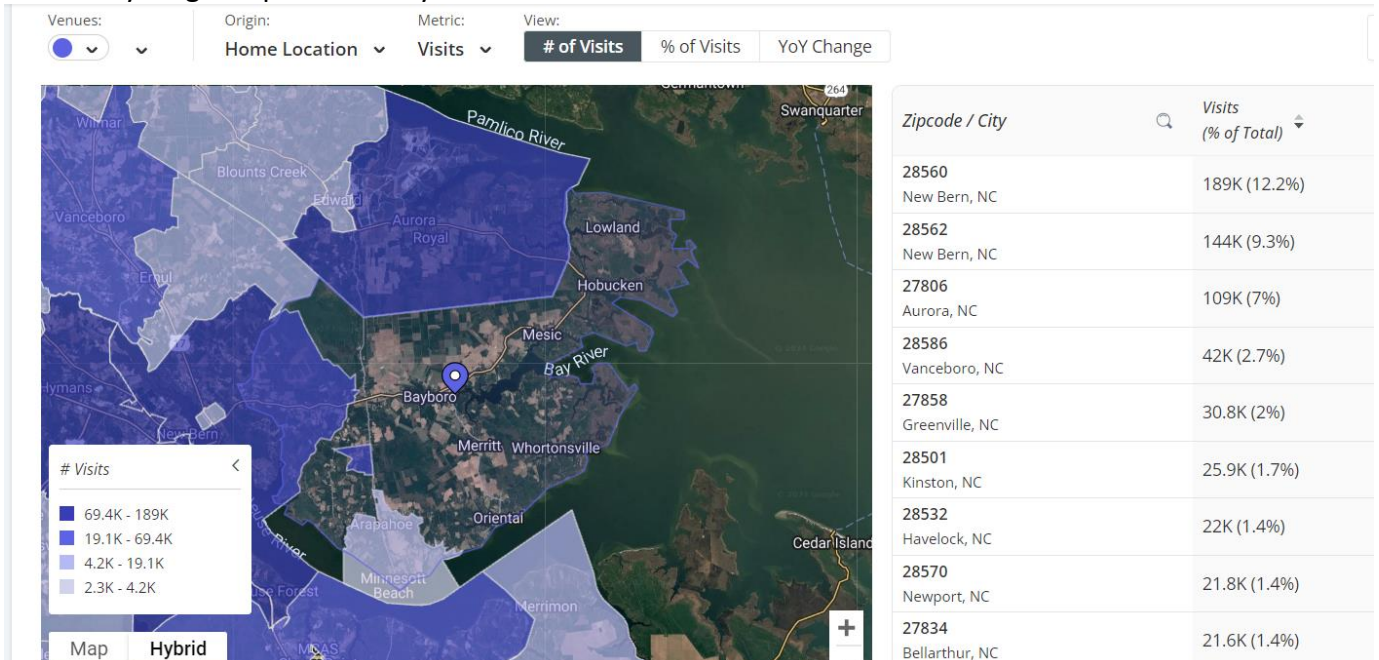
Overview				⌵
Persons per Household	2.29	90		
Household Median Income	\$56,778.48	75		
Household Median Disposable Income	\$48,917.05	74		
Household Median Discretionary Income	\$34,421.73	72		
Median House Value	\$273,819.83	76		
Households in Poverty	19.6%	155		
Household Median Wealth	\$69,427.95	86		
Households with Children	22.8%	85		
High School Graduate or Higher	90.7%	102		
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	25.3%	73		



Trade Area: Where all of Pamlico County annual visitors originate.



Visitors by Origin: Zip Code Analysis

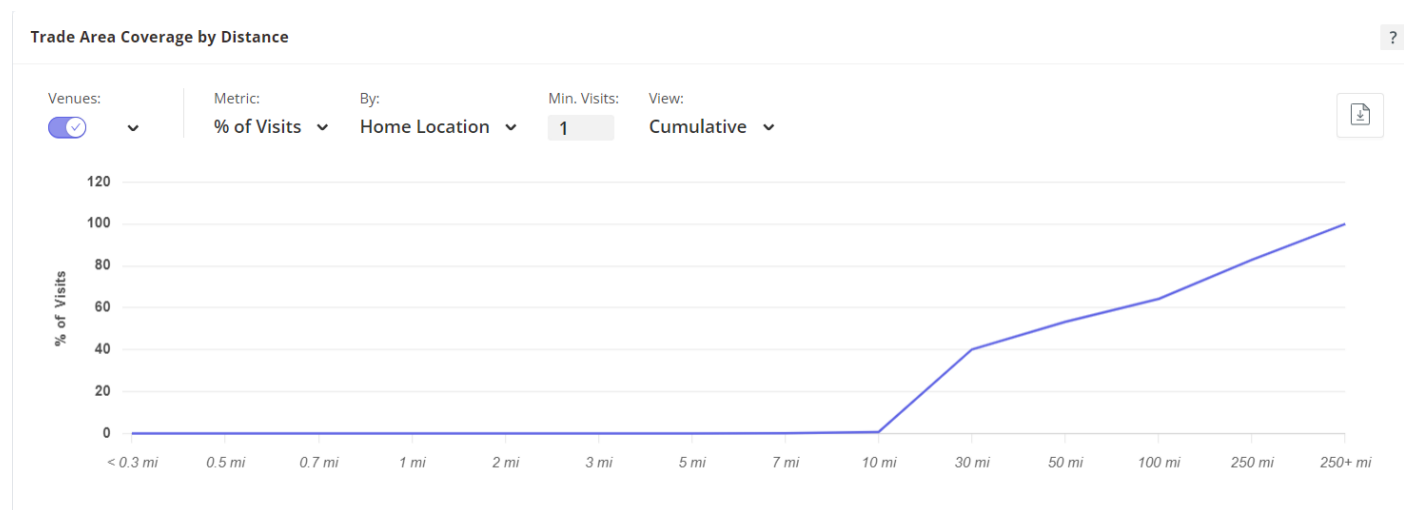


28560 New Bern 12.2%  
28562 New Bern 9.3%

27889 Washington 1.2%  
28527 Ernul 1.1%

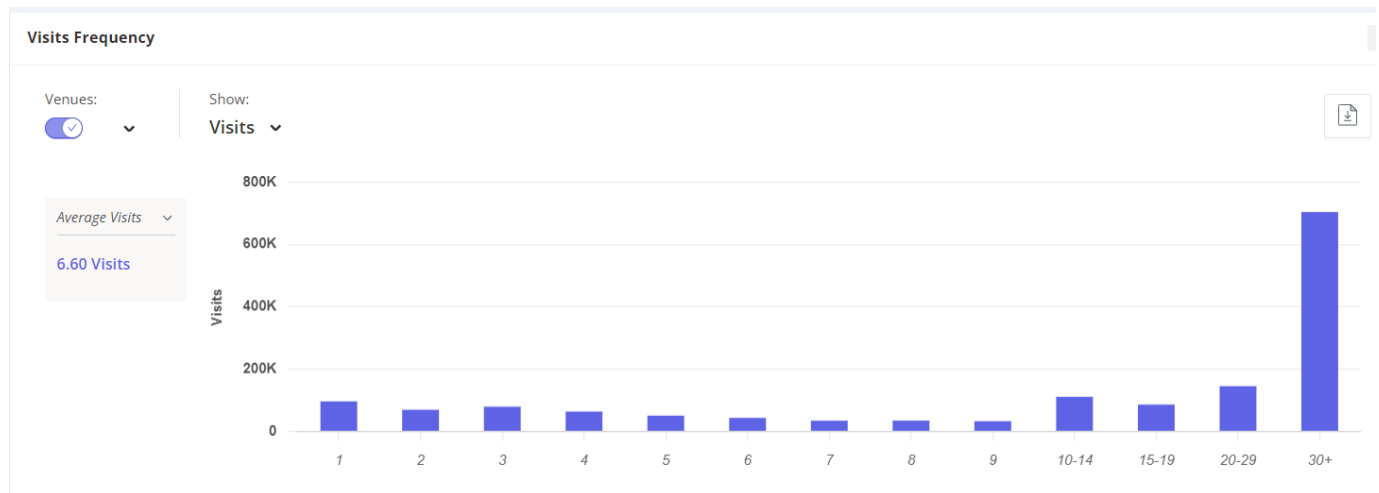
28546 Jacksonville 0.6%  
27607 Raleigh 0.6%

27806 Aurora 7.0%	28516 Beaufort 1.0%	28403 Wilmington 0.5%
28586 Vanceboro 2.7%	28504 Kinston 1.0%	27612 Raleigh 0.5%
27858 Greenville 2.0%	28523 Cove City 0.8%	10012 New York NY 0.5%
28501 Kinston 1.7%	27814 Blounts Creek 0.7%	27530 Goldsboro 0.5%
28532 Havelock 1.4%	28590 Winterville 0.7%	28539 Hubert 0.5%
28570 Newport 1.4%	28578 Seven Springs 0.6%	27577 Smithfield 0.5%
27834 BellArthur 1.4%	27518 Cary 0.6%	27817 Chocowinity 0.5%
27821 Edward 0.5%	80214 Denver, CO 0.4%	27707 Durham 0.4%
28557 MHC 0.5%	28580 Snow Hill 0.4%	27713 Durham 0.4%
27837 Grimesland 0.5%	28607 Boone 0.4%	27615 Raleigh 0.4%
28519 Bridgeton 0.5%	27613 Raleigh 0.4%	27520 Clayton 0.3%
28526 Dover 0.5%	27534 Goldsboro 0.4%	28585 Comfort 0.3%
28573 Pollocksville 0.5%	28555 Maysville 0.4%	28572 Pink Hill 0.3%
27603 Raleigh 0.4%	27606 Raleigh 0.4%	27576 Selma 0.3%
28540 Jacksonville 0.4%	28584 Swansboro 0.4%	28530 Grifton 0.3%
28365 Mount Olive 0.4%	92283 Winterhaven, CA 0.4%	27892 Williamston 0.3%



Trade Area Coverage by Distance

<u>Distance</u>	<u>% of Annual Visitors</u>
Fewer than 10 miles away	0.64%
Fewer than 30 miles away	40.07%
Fewer than 50 miles away	53.25%
Fewer than 100 miles away	64.20%
Fewer than 250 miles away	82.88%



Visits Frequency

<u>Visits</u>	<u># of Annual Visitors</u>	<u>% of Annual Visitors</u>	<u>Visits</u>	<u># of Annual Visitors</u>	<u>% of Annual Visitors</u>
1	96,200	6.2%	8	34,500	2.2%
2	69,400	4.4%	9	32,600	2.1%
3	79,100	5.1%	10-14	110,800	7.1%

Visits Frequency

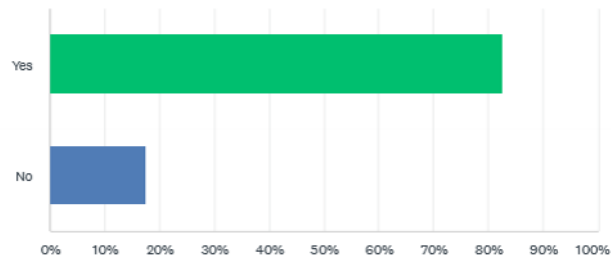
<u>Visits</u>	<u># of Annual Visitors</u>	<u>% of Annual Visitors</u>	<u>Visits</u>	<u># of Annual Visitors</u>	<u>% of Annual Visitors</u>
4	63,500	4.0%	15-19	85,900	5.5%
5	50,400	3.2%	20-29	145,200	9.3%
6	43,200	2.7%	30+	704,400	45.4%
7	34,200	2.2%			

## Appendix 2: Community Survey Response

Pamlico County Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies Community Questionnaire

### Q1 Are you a resident of Pamlico County?

Answered: 189 Skipped: 1

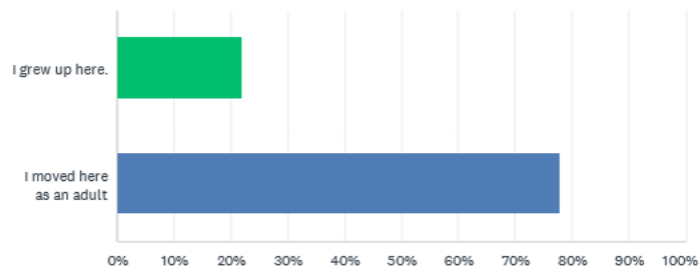


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	82.54%	156
No	17.46%	33
Total Respondents: 189		

Pamlico County Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies Community Questionnaire

### Q2 Did you grow up in Pamlico County or relocate as an adult?

Answered: 169 Skipped: 21



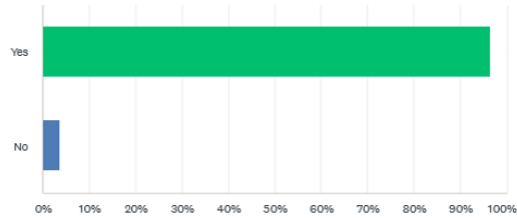
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I grew up here.	21.89%	37
I moved here as an adult	78.11%	132
TOTAL		169



Pamlico County Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies Community Questionnaire

Q6 Do you or your immediate family members participate in outdoor recreation activities? (such as hunting, fishing, hiking/walking, cycling, canoeing/kayaking)

Answered: 136 Skipped: 54

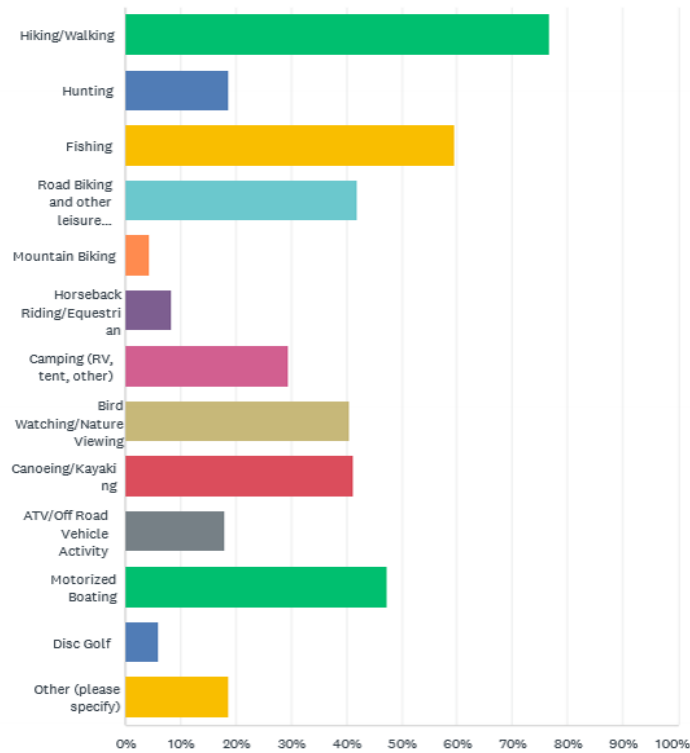


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	96.32%	131
No	3.68%	5
Total Respondents: 136		

Pamlico County Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies Community Questionnaire

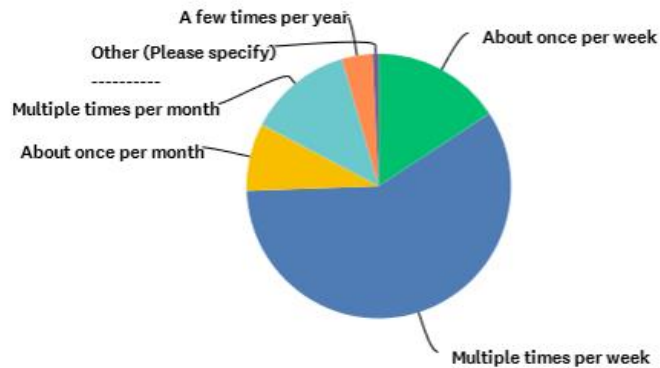
Q7 Which outdoor recreation activities do you participate in regularly?  
Select all that apply.

Answered: 133 Skipped: 57



### Q9 How often do you participate in outdoor recreation activities? Select one option.

Answered: 133 Skipped: 57



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
About once per week	15.79%	21
Multiple times per week	58.65%	78
About once per month	8.27%	11
Multiple times per month	12.78%	17
A few times per year	3.76%	5
Other (Please specify) _____	0.75%	1
TOTAL		133

### Q10 What are your favorite areas in your community for outdoor recreation? List all that apply.

waterfront Dawson Creek Bay River tributaries Creek biking area Beach  
 Park fishing Neuse River streets Oriental  
 Arlington Place walking Village neighborhood many river live  
 roads Minnesott Beach Water

Q11 Are there any improvements that could be made to these recreation areas? Please describe.

trails hiking trails Oriental river beach near county bike lanes water  
 Minnesott Beach walk public better recreation areas roads  
 walking trails need kayaks access Pamlico county  
 areas public access parks launch fishing boat ramps boat N  
 bike ramp Yes improvements kayak launches

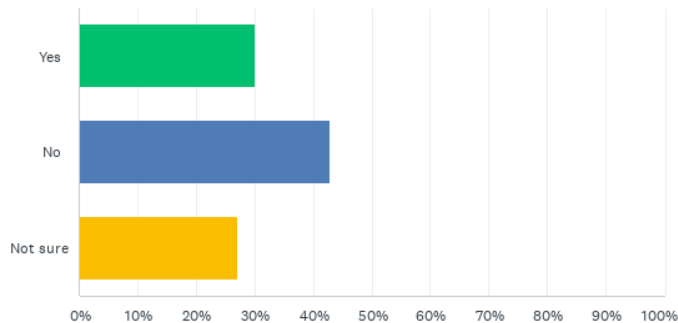
Q12 Are there any additional areas or facilities (such as parks, trails) needed to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in the community? Please describe.

community Minnesott Beach ACCESS boat See waterfront places kids Bike  
 trails great walking recreation areas pickleball courts parks  
 Oriental trails great public bike lanes need dog park  
 hiking trails hike Yes River fishing beach areas nature walking paths  
 playgrounds

Q13 Are there any additional outdoor recreation activities that you would like to see made available in the community? Please describe.

courts bike community N pickleball kayaking canoeing fishing families  
 park outdoor areas walking trails trails pickle ball hiking  
 walking Bike trails Disc golf kids paths

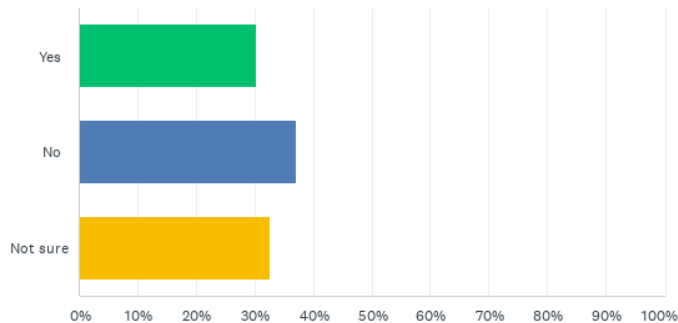
Q14 Do you believe that there are outdoor recreation activities available for all ages in the community? Select one option.



Q15 If no, what activities are missing? Please describe.

water Everything nothing available playgrounds school walking area trails  
running activities courts parks go biking outdoor  
children swimming public facilities fishing older kids kids

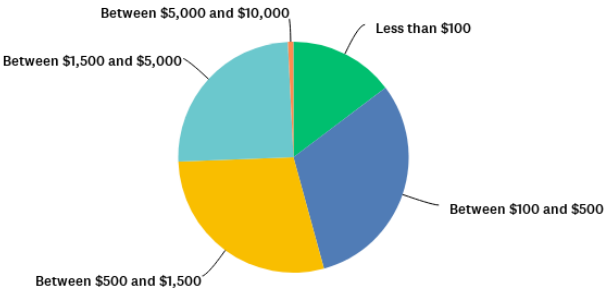
Q16 Do you believe that there are outdoor recreation activities available for all skill levels in the community? Select one option.



Q18 Where do you currently shop for outdoor recreation supplies? Please list all that apply.

local Morehead City stores Bait Tackle Academy Neuse Sport  
Walmart Sporting Goods New Bern line  
online West Marine Academy Sports used  
Shop REI Dicks Amazon

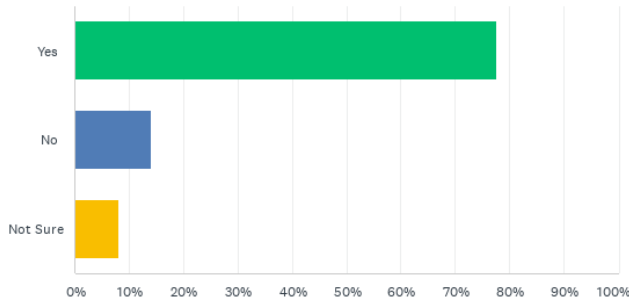
Q19 How much would you estimate that you spend on outdoor recreation supplies on average per year? (Select one option)



Q22 Are there any additional businesses (such as a bike shop, tackle shop, guide service, etc.) needed in your community to support outdoor recreation? Please describe.

outdoor equipment guide service sure kayak area store needs  
Tackle shop rental bike shop nice Yes repair  
shop know fishing place

Q24 Do you believe that tourism is an important part of the economy in your community? Select one option.





Q28 In your opinion, what are Pamlico County's greatest strengths? Strengths are typically internal factors that are within the community's control such as local culture, physical infrastructure, specific areas of the community, and more.

waterfront greatest strengths natural land river together nature natural resources  
 fishing Low traffic local environment people county  
 community Lots water s access Rivers creeks  
 rural Natural beauty friendly great areas traffic Local culture  
 Proximity water small Beautiful

Q29 What are Pamlico County's greatest weaknesses? Weaknesses are typically internal factors that are within the community's control such as local culture, physical infrastructure, specific areas of the community, and more.

access good restaurants options want Pamlico local parks outdoor  
 facilities people infrastructure public county hotels  
 Lack things limited Shopping areas Public transportation  
 Need stores activities Nothing recreational poverty Poor lodging  
 restaurants