#EMERALDCOASTING

Annual Report 2014
OCTOBER 2013-SEPTEMBER 2014
2014 TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Rachel Joyce
General Manager, Hampton Inn
Ft. Walton Beach

C.H. “Bull” Rigdon
Seat VI, Ft. Walton Beach City Council

Thom Gossom
Owner - Best Girl, Inc. Marketing
and Communications Firm

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Joe Guidry
Manager, Ramada Plaza Beach
& RV Resorts, Ft. Walton Beach

Dale E. Peterson
Owner, Dale E. Peterson Vacations, Destin

Ed Schroeder
Executive Director, TDD

Kelly Windes
TDD BCC Liaison

Thomas Rice
Owner, Magnolia Grill Restaurant,
Ft. Walton Beach

Martin Owen
Regional Marketing Director, ResortQuest
by Wyndham Vacation Rentals

IN MEMORIAM

C.H. “Bull” Rigdon
Seat VI, Ft. Walton Beach City Council

“The end of an era. For 50 YEARS Bull Rigdon
was instrumental in shaping his community.”
Northwest Florida Daily News. Thank you for
your service, BULL, YOU ARE MISSED.
– TDC Apr 1, 2013-Dec 7, 2014

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LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR AND CHAIRMAN

Any way you look at it, 2014 was a stellar year for Emerald Coast tourism. Let’s take a moment to reflect on the year’s top achievements.

• The CVB sales team started the year off with a Your Military Reunion Connection (YMRC) Marketplace and Familiarization Tour. The Emerald Coast hosted 31 military reunion planners and 13 out-of-state industry suppliers, which generated the bookings of four reunions over the next two years.
• In June, we unveiled Bayview Plaza, a 30,000-square-foot, multipurpose outdoor venue. At the grand opening of the Emerald Coast Convention Center’s newest addition, we hosted both our fellow community members and a meeting planner Familiarization Tour.
• Our events team provided professional meeting and event planning services to over 160 clients, added $219,290.61 to the projected event revenue budget and assisted clients with raising money for local and regional charities.
• Finance could have been a theme this year, as our finance team worked diligently to establish a formal reserve policy to mitigate current and future budgetary risks and support long-term financial stability.
• In April, we launched our new Let’s Go Emerald Coasting! campaign. The hashtag #EmeraldCoasting was seen over 6.1 million times from April through September 2014 on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Consumers mentioned the Emerald Coast on Facebook over 324,200 times from April 2014 through September 2014, which is a 9.4% increase over the same time period in 2013! Over 1,400 photos have been posted to Instagram using #EmeraldCoasting, and our Facebook audience has grown to over 462,000 followers.
• The Western Destin Beach Restoration Project was completed on time and on budget. The project placed approximately 635,000 cubic yards of beach-quality sand along a 1.2-mile stretch of Destin beaches.
• Our film commission ensures we have the world’s camera focused on our destination, and 2014 was a huge year with the filming of the soon-to-be-premiered Destin to Fish television show on the Sportsman Channel. We continue to see growth and development of our local production industry, and for the first time ever, our own tourism commercials were filmed using all local crew and talent.

This year was impressive – record breaking, as a matter of fact. Okaloosa County had a 12% year-over-year increase in bed tax revenue during the summer season, and we were up 9.4% for the year (October 2013-September 2014). With momentum like that, we’re looking forward to the new year ahead. We have great campaigns lined up to bring even more visitors to the area. On behalf of all of us at Emerald Coast CVB, Convention Center and TDC, thank you for your support and all the great ideas you threw our way in 2014. We couldn’t have had a year like this without your support.

Happy 2015!

Ed Schroeder
Executive Director
Emerald Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau

Dale Peterson
Chairman of the Board
Emerald Coast Tourist Development Council

WHAT TOURISM MEANS TO THE EMERALD COAST

A strong Emerald Coast is dependent on STRONG TOURISM DOLLARS. The families that come to our area on vacation make the coast a better place for the families who live here year round.

• Tourism throughout the Emerald Coast supports over 9,000 JOBS across several industrial sectors, including food service outlets and drinking venues; accommodations; amusement and recreation industries; retail stores; and construction and non-residential, multifamily dwellings.
• These jobs PRODUCE OVER $263 MILLION in labor income.
• In all, tourism is estimated to have generated $460 million in value (gross regional product) and $835 million in economic output, while producing a nearly $183 MILLION FISCAL IMPACT.

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH EMERALD COAST TOURISM MARCH 2013-FEBRUARY 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPACT TYPE</th>
<th>EMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>LABOR INCOME</th>
<th>TOTAL VALUE ADDED</th>
<th>OUTPUT</th>
<th>FISCAL IMPACT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overnight Visitors to the Emerald Coast</td>
<td>8,896</td>
<td>$251 million</td>
<td>$445 million</td>
<td>$805 million</td>
<td>$178 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourism-Related Construction</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>$12 million</td>
<td>$15 million</td>
<td>$30 million</td>
<td>$5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,179</td>
<td>$263 million</td>
<td>$460 million</td>
<td>$835 million</td>
<td>$183 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Haas Center


TAX REVENUES
We had a record-breaking year with a 12% YEAR-OVER-YEAR INCREASE in bed tax revenue during the summer season, and up 9.4% for the year (October 2013-September 2014).

“We are thrilled to be part of a RECORD-BREAKING YEAR FOR FLORIDA TOURISM. It is so encouraging to see the boost that tourism gives to our local economy.”

– Ed Schroeder, executive director of Emerald Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau

“A thriving tourism industry is vital to growing jobs, and to report that Florida has experienced another record quarter for visitation is great news for Florida families. This year we invested $74 million in VISIT FLORIDA and set a goal to have 100 million visitors visit the Sunshine State, which we are well on our way to reaching. Together, we are creating an opportunity economy and continuing to grow more jobs for Floridians, with more than 1.1 MILLION INDIVIDUALS EMPLOYED in the growing tourism industry.”

– Florida Governor Rick Scott

“Florida tourism is maintaining strong momentum with all indicators up across the board for the quarter. With occupancy, rooms sold, average daily room rate, and tourism and recreation taxable SALES ALL CONTINUING TO CLimb, we are well on our way to making FLORIDA THE NO. 1 TRAVEL DESTINATION IN THE WORLD.”

– Will Seccombe, president and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA

BED TAX MONTHLY COLLECTIONS COMPARISON
ADVERTISING IMPACT

We communicated with our leisure audience throughout the year, while focusing on driving business during the shoulder season. We targeted our core demographic in regional drive markets, knowing that over 90% of our visitors come from these areas. We also continued to pursue our meeting and group business as well as wedding, snowbird, military and sports niche audiences. Through our yearlong marketing plan, we maintained awareness while layering media during key booking windows to maximize spend.

ANNUAL VERY EMERALD CHRISTMAS LAUNCH

We developed a campaign, A Very Emerald Christmas, to invite tourists to get a little sand in their soul during the holiday season and start a new family tradition. For the first time, our entire community came together to promote our version of a White Christmas. With sugar-white sand and emerald-green water year round, the beaches of Destin and Ft. Walton Beach provide the perfect backdrop for a holiday experience. The cohesive branding campaign brought Destin/Ft. Walton businesses together to promote the special, Southern small-town holiday charm the area exudes during this season. Throughout December, special offers at local establishments and events tied to the holiday theme kept visitors engaged. Area restaurants offered A Taste of the Emerald Coast promotion throughout the month, with special prix fixe menus.

RESULTS: In the first year of A Very Emerald Christmas, we saw a slight increase in bed tax revenues with an average of 4% in revenues between November and December of 2013.

LET’S GO #EMERALDCOASTING

In late March, the Emerald Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau launched a new marketing campaign called “Let’s Go #EmeraldCoasting.” The mission of this dynamic and colorful campaign was to communicate in a vibrant way that the Emerald Coast truly offers something for everyone. The multiple-image campaign showcased the diversity of activities and people who enjoy “Emerald Coasting.” The active #EmeraldCoasting hashtag invited guests to both post while they’re visiting and to follow the Emerald Coast on their favorite social media platforms. The marketing plan included print, radio, online banner advertising and new TV commercials.

The sugar-white sand and brilliant emerald-green water of the Emerald Coast set our dazzling beach destination apart from most others. Visitors were invited to discover not only the natural assets of our one-of-a-kind destination, but also the fishing and fresh local seafood, water sports and ecotourism opportunities, shopping, dining and nightlife. In addition, the Emerald Coast boasts fun family attractions, world-class golf courses and a full calendar of festivals – there’s something for everyone here.

It’s always a good time to visit the Emerald Coast. We encouraged leisure visitors to come during spring, summer, fall and winter by capitalizing on the variety of things to do here in each season of the year.

SPRING: Our campaign encouraged couples, groups and families to enjoy our beautiful beaches, unique outdoor shopping and world-class fishing.
Our hashtag, #EMERALDCOASTING, allowed for a multiplatform social strategy to drive engagement and encourage the sharing of fun family memories. We were able to connect and engage with our consumers on a daily basis. Via Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter, we interacted with millions of visitors. But we didn’t want to stop there. This year, we launched Instagram as an outlet to encourage visitors to show us through images what they do on the Emerald Coast, using the hashtag #EmeraldCoasting on their photos. To further our reach and engage our visitors, we launched two sweepstakes to encourage our online community to consider the Emerald Coast during the winter and fall. Both sweepstakes provided hundreds of authentic, visitor-generated photos of the Emerald Coast to be reused for future social content.

### SOCIAL

We designed, developed and produced a STATE-OF-THE-ART TOURISM WEBSITE to encourage visitors to come to the Heart of Florida’s Emerald Coast. EmeraldCoasting.com familiarized visitors with the abundance of activities, events and places to stay on the Emerald Coast. By highlighting all our great assets, we helped consumers understand why they should choose our beaches as their vacation destination.

We are constantly updating and enhancing our site with new features, content and events.

- Our blog features fresh new content that engages our consumers and enumerates for them all the qualities that make the area so unique.
- EmeraldCoasting.com/weddings, helps attract future brides and provide them with all the necessary tools to plan their perfect day.
- Instagram is now on our homepage, where we highlight user-generated content with #EmeraldCoasting, allowing potential visitors to see why others love our area.

### RESULTS

- We had over 560,000 visitors to our site.
- The hashtag #EmeraldCoasting was seen more than 6.1 million times from April through September 2014 on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Consumers mentioned the Emerald Coast on Facebook over 324,200 times from April 2014 through September 2014, which is a 9.4% increase over the same time period in 2013! Over 1,400 photos have been posted to Instagram using #EmeraldCoasting, and our Facebook audience has grown to over 462,000 followers.

### SUMMER

We encouraged multigenerational families to come and enjoy the beautiful sugar-white sand beaches, emerald-green water and a wide array of water sports and top-notch attractions.

### FALL

Summer lingers on the Emerald Coast. This was the season to invite couples and groups to soak up the sunshine and enjoy our unique fall activities, including the Destin Beer Festival, Destin Seafood Festival, Destin Fishing Rodeo and Destin Festival of the Arts, to name a few.

### SNOWBIRDS

Snowbirds: We put out the welcome mat for snowbirds, encouraging them to enjoy our warm weather, fresh seafood, unique shopping and a plethora of activities.

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12% INCREASE IN BED TAX REVENUE FOR SUMMER WITH A 9.4% INCREASE FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR.
MEETINGS & GROUPS

Groups, Meetings & Conventions continue to be growth areas for the Emerald Coast. Our campaign is an extension of the #EmeraldCoasting initiative, with copy that directly speaks to each niche audience. Within our Groups audience, we target motorcoach, sports, religious, military and regional groups. We also reach Meeting & Convention planners through targeted media that drives direct leads and generates business for the Emerald Coast Convention Center.

In February, we hosted a Your Military Reunion Connection (YMRC) marketplace with 31 military reunion planners and 13 industry suppliers from outside of the state, one-on-one appointments, and a Familiarization tour. This effort generated the booking of four reunions over the next two years in our area. In October, we hosted the Florida State H.O.G. Rally for the fourth time. This event brought in 1,350 out-of-town visitors and generated 2,745 reported room nights. In addition, we hosted, attended or sponsored over 30 trade shows and events promoting our area.

Our efforts at the ECC generated over 145 events this fiscal year, with an average of 12.1 events per month. In addition, we generated $640,045 in revenue. We also worked with over 208 groups including weddings, reunions, business meetings, church groups, sports events, tour groups and more!

We are proud to say that April 2014 it was our 7th-highest revenue-generating month since we opened our doors. Also, in total, we generated $25,898,558 estimated direct economic impact from the CVB marketing and sales efforts.

Economic Impact Generating Events:

• Masquerade Dance hosted its largest event to date, with an estimated 2,000 room nights over the course of its 7-day event.
• Athletic Championships hosted over 2,000 participants at its cheer competition this year, with an estimated total of room nights of over 1,000.
• Common Faith Network hosted 600 participants for a 10-day event.

In June, Emerald Coast County and tourism industry officials unveiled the expansive new Bayview Plaza. This spacious outdoor venue at the Emerald Coast Convention Center adds 30,000 square feet of exhibition and event rental space to the facility. The large concrete pad will provide additional space for events such as cheerleading and volleyball competitions, trade shows and exhibits, and various flexible event space for boat, automotive and RV shows. Bayview Plaza provides an expansive space that vendors can’t find anywhere else in Northwest Florida.
The natural beauty of the Emerald Coast is one of our greatest assets. Our breathtaking beaches are popular with wildlife lovers and ecotourists alike. Ecotourism helps drive visitors to the Emerald Coast each year. To help capitalize on this, we offered educational nighttime beach walks during the 2014 turtle nesting season. This event was free and open to the public. By creating a special section on the website and utilizing social media, we gave visitors one more reason to visit the Emerald Coast this year.

Throughout the year, our media relations efforts generated consistent editorial coverage, with over 50 STORIES IN TOP-TIER MEDIA including New York, New Orleans, Little Rock, Chattanooga and Birmingham, to name a few. In addition, our efforts led to two Familiarization trips, the first focusing on driving fall travel to our area via a “Girls Getaway” weekend. The second was focused around the annual Destin Fishing Rodeo. From these press trips, we were able to garner nine out-of-market placements, with more to come. In addition, the team assisted with onsite media relations during the opening of Bayview Plaza. The opening of this new outdoor space resulted in 14 placements across all types of media outlets. There was also much coverage in top national meetings & conventions focused on travel and trade. In addition, Emerald Coast participated in National Travel & Tourism Week in May 2014. We hosted a special social media contest where participants were given clues for finding a specific picture hidden in the tourism album. The first 15 people to share the correct image each day won a National Tourism Week T-shirt.

What could be better than giving your heart to another in a beautiful wedding in the Heart of the Emerald Coast? We wanted to make sure brides knew that getting married on the Emerald Coast could make them shine even brighter, so we developed EmeraldCoasting.com/weddings, a unique section of our website providing brides with everything they need to know about having a destination wedding in our area. This section is a one-stop shop to give brides all of the insight they need to plan the perfect wedding. In addition to the website, we developed the 50-page Flagler Award-winning Emerald Coast Wedding Guide. SO FAR, WE HAVE WORKED WITH 104 INDIVIDUAL WEDDING GROUPS AND COUNTING. Why just get married in white when you can say I do on sugar-white sand?

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DESTINATION ACCOLADES

- Fodor’s Go List 2015, Fodors.com
- 10 Most Popular U.S. Beaches 2014, Yahoo!
- One of the 2014 10 Happiest Cities in America (Ft. Walton Beach), MSN.com
- The Happiest City in Florida (Ft. Walton Beach), MSN.com
- Best Beaches in the USA 2014 – #7 Destin, FL, U.S. News & World Report
- Best Spring Break Destination of 2014 – #6 Destin, FL, USA TODAY
- 10 Best Places in July, 2014, USA TODAY
- Top 10 U.S. Summer Travel Destinations for 2014 – #4 Destin, FL Mashable.com
- 10 Destinations on the Rise, TripAdvisor.com
- 2013 Readers’ Choice Award, Convention South Meeting Planners
- Top Gulf Beaches to Visit (Ft. Walton Beach) FlipKey.com
- Bronze Flagler Award for the Emerald Coast Wedding Guide, 2014
- Gold ADDY Award for the Emerald Coast Wedding Guide, 2014
- HSAMI Platinum Adrian Award, Public Relations Excellence, 2013