



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Visit North Carolina released visitor economic impact numbers – Catawba County and the Hickory Metro saw an increase in all areas

HICKORY – Governor Roy Cooper and Visit North Carolina released 2018 Tourism Impact Numbers and visitors to Catawba County spent \$293.05 million in 2018, an increase 5.69% from 2017.

The U.S. Travel Association prepared the 2018 economic impact of travel in North Carolina counties for Visit North Carolina. The study uses sales and tax revenue data, employment figures and other industry and economic data to determine the overall impact of visitor spending in North Carolina.

“Out of 100 North Carolina counties, Catawba County had the 16th highest in revenues from visitor expenditures, which is impressive and something positive to talk about in our community and beyond,” said Mandy Pitts Hildebrand, Chief Executive Officer of the Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau. “We are a destination for business and leisure travelers and have seen an increase over several years in all categories and with all the upbeat energy and projects going on in our area, I remain optimistic about the strong momentum we are experiencing which in my mind indicates the strength of our community.”

- Catawba County Tourism Impact 2018 Highlights:
 - 2,490 people directly employed in travel & tourism industry in Catawba County.
 - \$56.45 million in total payroll generated by the tourism industry in Catawba County.

- \$16.04 million in state tax revenue generated in Catawba County through state sales tax, and taxes on personal and corporate income.
- \$8.75 million in local taxes generated from sales and property tax revenue from travel-generated and travel-supported businesses.
- \$156.35 saved by Catawba County taxpayers due to travel and tourism revenue generated by visitors.
- Catawba County ranks 16th out of North Carolina's 100 counties in visitor expenditures in 2018.

“The increase in all areas is a win for attractions, restaurants, hotels and the community as a whole. It's great to be in an industry that makes people happy because when people come here to visit for business or leisure, they are impressed with all there is to do in our community, our hotels, shopping opportunities and the wide variety of restaurants.”

Local businesses generate a lot of business travel, which is an incredible benefit to the community. Educational institutions like Lenoir-Rhyne University also bring people to the area, which also makes a big difference on the economic impact.

There are about two dozen lodging establishments within Catawba County, hundreds of restaurants from farm to table cuisine to well known chains. There are numerous attractions within Catawba County including the Hickory Furniture Mart, Hickory Crawdads, Hickory Motor Speedway, Catawba County Historic Association museums and sights, Hickory Community Theatre, Green Room Community Theatre, Catawba Science Center, Hickory Museum of Art, and many other arts and culture organizations, as well as parks, recreation centers, sporting events and tournaments.

Additional 2018 Hickory Metro Tourism Visitor Impact numbers:

- Alexander County - visitors to Alexander County spent \$21.93 million in 2018, an increase of 5.22 percent from 2017. The travel and tourism industry directly employees about 130 people that equals \$3.47 million in payroll, and tax savings per resident in Alexander County is \$55.18.
- Burke County - visitors to Burke County spent \$107.15 million in 2018, an increase of 5.80 percent from 2017. The travel and tourism industry directly employees about 750 people that equals \$16.65 million in payroll, and tax savings per resident in Burke County is \$96.60.
- Caldwell County - visitors to Caldwell County spent \$55.59 million in 2018, an increase of 4.82 percent from 2017. The travel and tourism industry directly employees about 360 people that equals \$8.94 million in payroll, and tax savings per resident in Caldwell County is \$56.59.

Domestic visitors spent a record \$25.3 billion statewide in 2018, an increase of 5.6 percent from 2017. State tax receipts as a result of visitor spending neared \$1.3 billion in 2018, and local tax revenues directly resulting from visitor spending totaled \$774.6 million. Visitor expenditures directly supported more than 230,000 jobs and generated more than \$6.3 billion in payroll income across North Carolina.

Noting that North Carolina ranks sixth in the nation for overnight visitation, Visit NC Executive Director Wit Tuttell said the spending growth in all 100 counties confirmed the appeal of the state's destinations. "There's a lot of competition for travelers' time and money," Tuttell said. "But people come to North Carolina when they know about the state's natural beauty, our residents' welcoming spirit, and the irresistible mix of tradition and innovation."

For more information about North Carolina Tourism go to www.VisitNC.com and for more information about the Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau go to www.visithickorymetro.com or call (828) 322-1335.

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