

Martin County Inventory & Action Plan for Adventure Tourism

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Study conducted by:

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Martin County Extension Service was awarded an ARC grant from the Kentucky Department of Local Government to develop a plan for adventure tourism within the county. Initially the focus was on one

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particular trail but after preliminary discussions with county leaders it was determined that Martin County needed first to inventory all of their assets before steps could be taken to develop one individual trail. WMTH Corporation was hired to conduct the inventory and develop the plan.

In Phase I of the project, the following was completed:

- Preliminary site visit and group meeting with representatives of the community for input and information.
- Inventory of entire county's offerings.
 - Photos taken of pertinent sites
 - Inventory map created
- Additional research compiled from on-site visits, the internet and interviews.
- Potential trails identified
- Preliminary website created.
- Follow-up meetings with key people in community
 - Tourism
 - Kingfisher Trail
 - ATV potential Trail sites

In Phase II, the following was accomplished

- Website was completed
- Maps were created for:
 - Motorcycle Route
 - Bicycle Route
 - Potential locations for ATV Trails and Trailheads
 - Potential locations Horseback Riding Trails and Trailheads
 - Mountain Bike Trails
 - Walking Trails
- A number of trails were GPS and meetings were set up with other landowners to gain permission to GPS the trails on their properties.
- Arrangements made and dates set for training in both hospitality and entrepreneurship.
- An dinner meeting set to explore the possibility of starting an ATV Club in Martin County.
- Property owners were identified and trails GPS by John Dennis with Big Sandy Area Development District for potential public use by ATVs.
- Hospitality training course was set up in the community to train people to better receive visitors.
- Entrepreneurship training course was set up for the community to educate people on how to start an adventure tourism business.

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SITE VISITS AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

On August 12th, a meeting was held at the Martin County Extension office in Inez. Those in attendance were Bill Knott (KY Division of Forestry), Regina Hall (Big Sandy ADD), Vera Joiner (Inez Tourism), Nita Collier (Trail Developer), Kevin Frey (KDFWR/Fisheries), Kenneth Goforth (KDFWR/Law Enforcement), Ricky Boggs (KY Division of Forestry), Roger Mollette (Martin County Extension Service), Debby Spencer (WMTH Corporation) and Eric Mills. The goal of this meeting was to discuss the potential for adventure tourism in Martin County and explore the current offerings and potential offerings if properly executed. The list compiled is included on the following page. On that same day, Dr. Steve Spencer, outdoor recreational specialist, toured the county and inventoried the recreational opportunities and offerings throughout the county from an outsider's perspective.

On September 19th, a follow-up meeting was held with Nita Collier, Regina Hall and Debby Spencer. Vera Joiner joined them that afternoon and they spent the rest of the afternoon touring the county and exploring potential trails.

On September 25th, Nita Collier and Debby Spencer met with John Dennis with Big Sandy ADD to GPS two potential ATV Trails, Milo Lake and a few of the walking trails within the county. A meeting was also held with the historian of the county Faye Hall to identify some of the historical sites within the county to include in the master plan.

The following day, Kevin Frey, Roger Mollette, John Williams and Debby Spencer toured the northern portion of the county. A second meeting was held that afternoon with the core group to review the inventory and discuss the direction the group should take. A meeting was also held with one of the primary land owners in the area and permission was granted to GPS the trails on his property. John Williams and Ms. Spencer spent the remainder of the day touring another potential site for a trailhead for both ATV's and horseback riding.

Arrangements have been made to have John Dennis continue to map additional trails throughout the county. On October 16th, an exploratory meeting will be held to establish an ATV club in Martin County and on October 23rd, both a hospitality training course and a course on entrepreneurship for starting one's own business in adventure tourism will be conducted for those who are interested.

*On the following page is the preliminary inventory compiled at the first meeting.
The remainder of the document addresses each area with recommendations and actions to take.*

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PRELIMINARY INVENTORY OF OFFERINGS

Below is the preliminary list of offerings within Martin County provided at the first meeting:

- I. Elk/Wildlife (Big Sandy Regional Airport)
Contacts: Roger Mollette and Gary Cox (Director of Big Sandy Regional Airport)
- II. Kingfisher Trail Contacts: Nita Collier
- III. River Access for both boating and fishing Contacts: Kenny, Ricky & Kevin
 - a. Williamson
 - b. Ramp at Warfield (small boats)
 - c. WV side at Nawatuck to boat to Louisa KY
- IV. Trail Ride @ Dewey Dam to German Bridge to Martin County at Dick's Creek near airport
- V. New four-lane – Route 3 – Bicycle Route
- VI. Proposed Mountain Bike Trail
- VII. Martin Co. / Inez – Need to be entered into GPS maps
- VIII. Roadside signs needed to guide tourists to Inez and Martin County
- IX. New Community Center under construction at Pigeon Roost
- X. Himlerville (Historical)
- XI. Coldwater (Rt 908) Martin Co Coal Property and Booth Property – ATV / Horse Trail
- XII. Rt. 40 – Possible Motorcycle Route
- XIII. City Plan needed to entice tourists
- XIV. Caves – Contact James and Linda Webb
- XV. Natural Bridge in County behind Inez Middle School
- XVI. Walking trail and park area along river
- XVII. Marker on Moses Stepp at Coldwater
 - a. Indians hung him up by his ears
- XVIII. Amphitheater

A FEW OF THE UNIQUE FEATURES IN THE COUNTY



Moses Stepp gravestone and marker



Natural bridge



Petrified trees

From the list above, WMTH Corporation worked with community leaders and interested citizens to determine the value and the potential of each item listed in developing opportunities for

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adventure tourism in Martin County. An overall map was then developed in which each of the offerings above noted. *See following page for inventory map.*

OVERALL INVENTORY MAP DEVELOPED *(See end of this chapter for a full size pull-out map)*

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EXISTING AND POTENTIAL TRAILS IDENTIFIED

There were eight different types of trails identified including walking trails, a fitness trail, ATV trails, horseback riding trails, mountain bike trails, bicycle and motorcycle routes, and an elk & wildlife viewing trail.

WALKING TRAILS

KINGFISHER BRANCH FITNESS TRAIL

- i. 1 mile trail with trailhead next to tennis courts.
 - a. Easy accessibility to the trailhead with ample parking available at the community center.
- ii. Tremendous public support. Benches, bridge, railroad ties etc. have been donated. Also a house and school/church have been donated and will soon be moved to the site for interpretive purposes.
- iii. The trail is very challenging and should be noted as such. It is not designed to be handicapped accessible. It is geared towards giving one a challenging workout with a portion climbing a steep grade. Railroad ties will be used to create stair steps in the steepest portion of the trail.
- iv. An amphitheater has been proposed at the trailhead using a portion of the tennis courts for the seating area and the backdrop of the woods for the stage.



FUNDING:

Funding is being provided through a grant and community donations.

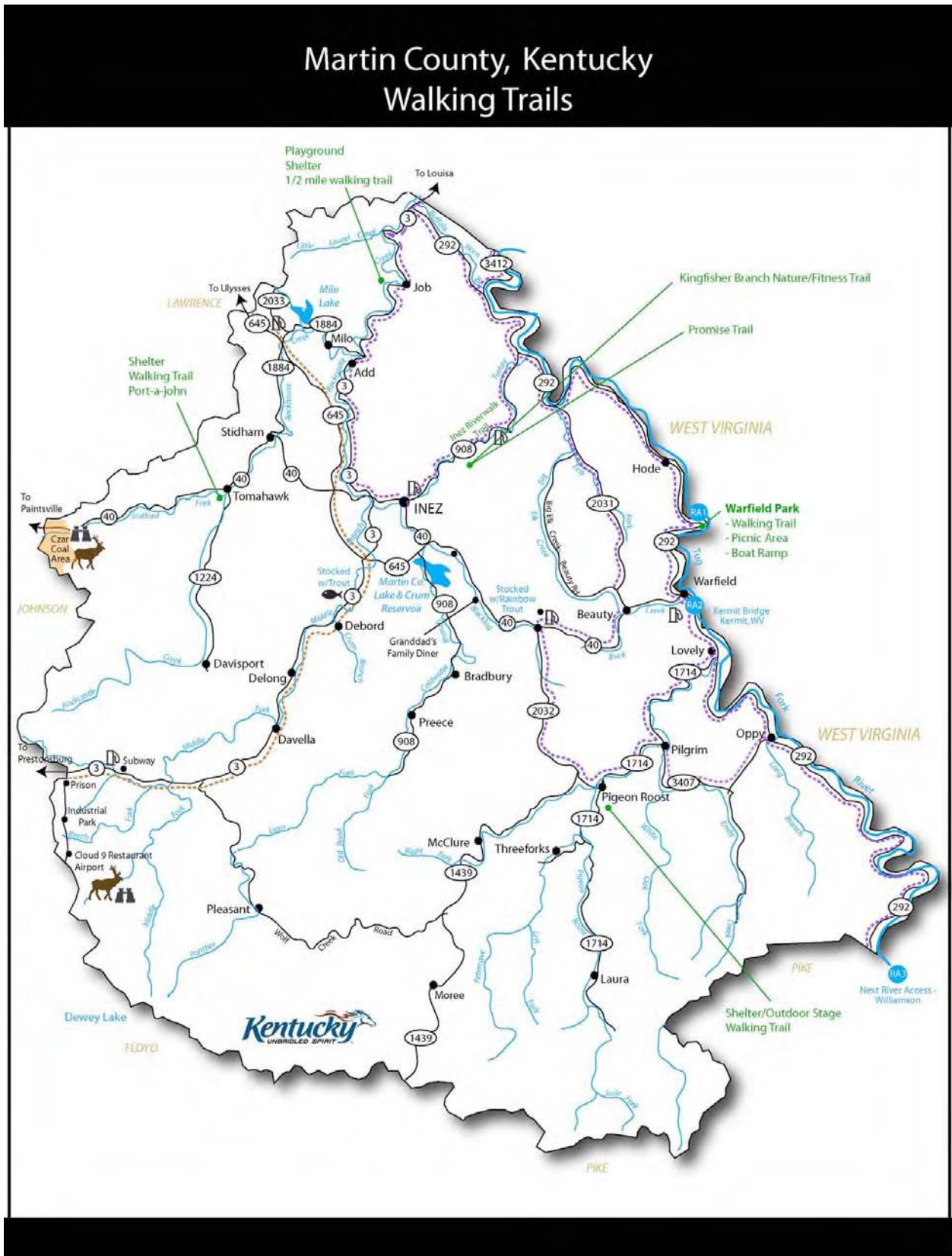
NOTABLE FEATURES:

Features include a bridge, numerous benches along the way, and locations for workout areas which will be added later. A stream runs along a portion of the trail with a small waterfall that flows in the spring. An inventory of plants has been conducted by a naturalist and photos taken of many one will see along the path.

ACTION: At this time, the development of this trail appears to be progressing fine under responsible leadership.



A few of the features along Kingfisher Branch Fitness Trail



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INEZ RIVER WALK TRAIL

Located off Hwy 908 in downtown Inez, this trail includes a large shelter and goes under two bridges. This is a beautiful walk but needs to weeds and overgrowth trimmed and trash picked up along the path. A trash can at the beginning of the trail would help.

ACTION: Need to start an adopt-a-trail program to keep the walking trails clean and maintained. Would be advisable to do this for all the walking trails in the county.



A few of the features along the Inez River Walk Trail

PROMISE TRAIL

Off Hwy 908 in downtown Inez, this walk is just over 1 mile long and has a beautiful story behind its creation that is now told on video.

ACTION: The video should add some photos of the trail itself and then be circulated to Churches and bible study groups throughout the region as a place to visit.



A few of the features along the Promise Trail

WARFIELD WALKING TRAIL

Off Hwy 2033 is the Warfield Riverfront Park which offers a boat ramp, picnic areas, a breathtaking view of the historic Warfield Railroad Bridge and 1.3 mile walking trail.

ACTION: The walking trail and picnic area appears to be well used and very well maintained. A decision needs to be made in regards to the concession stand in front and possibly a greater use for the historic rail car.

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A few of the features along the Warfield Riverfront Trail

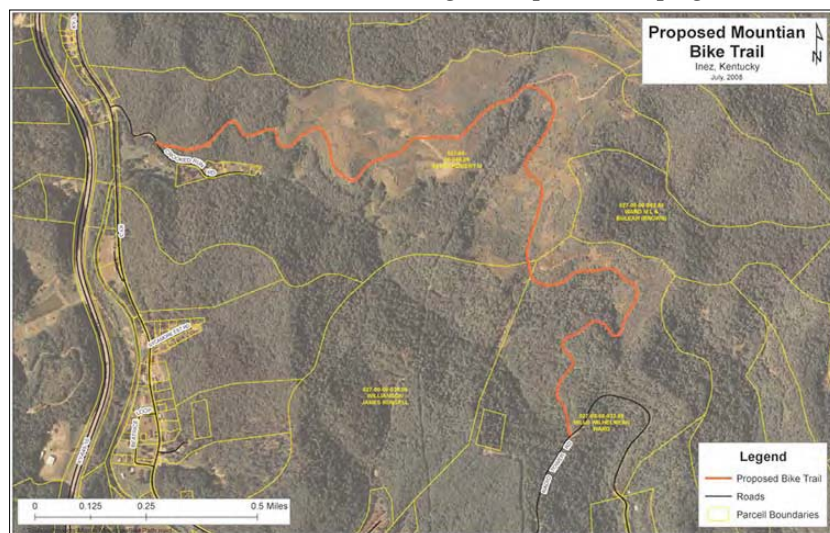
PLEASE NOTE: Other walking trails in Martin County include Pigeon Roost, Tomahawk, and Job which are more walking tracks rather than trails but do offer both residents and visitors an opportunity to exercise outdoors.

MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL

There is a proposed mountain bike trail which crosses two property owners in the northern quadrant of the county starting at Crooked Run Road and ending up on Radio Tower Road.



PROPOSED ROUTE (Larger map on next page)



ACTION: Obtain permission from property owners to allow public access to this trail.
Create a trailhead both along the Promise Trail off Radio Tower Road and off Crooked Run Road.

RECOMMENDATION: Try to work with landowners in developing the trail into a loop.

Once the trails are open to the public, contact the KY Mountain Bike Association at <http://www.kymba.org/> and have them add the trail to their website. Also add the trail to the state adventure tourism mapping site <http://kygeonet.ky.gov/crosskytrail/>

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ATV TRAILS

There are five potential locations for trailheads for ATVs and dirt bikes as identified on the map on page 12

IMMEDIATE ACTION: Develop an ATV Club who can begin to identify the landowners and help to police and maintain the trails.

ACTION TAKEN: A social meeting has been set for October 16th for all ATV riders to determine the interest in developing an ATV club.



SITE A – Located off Hwy 3, near Venter’s Branch Road accessing trails on Green Construction/Pocahontas Land Company property including those in Left fork of Venter’s Branch, Peg Fork and coming out at Coldwater Creek near Preece on Hwy 908.

ACTION TAKEN: Through the efforts of John Dennis with Big Sandy Area Development District, primary trails have been GPS.

ACTION: Talk with land owners on the potential of developing trailheads just off Hwy 3 and Hwy 908 and getting authorization to mark the trails for public access.



ACTION: Talk with the current owners of Venter’s Branch Branch School to determine if a campground could be set up on the grounds. Potential for the school itself to be turned into lodging and, depending on the shape of the facilities, using the cafeteria for dining during special events.

Property next to Venter’s Branch School could be developed into a campground.



SIDE TRIPS:

- *About 1.3 miles into the trail, there is a location called Camp City where many of the riders stop for lunch or to rest among the shade of the trees. This area could be further developed.*
- *Another point of interest along the way is a 1 mile side trip to Preece Cemetery where graves from the 1800’s along with WWII veteran are buried.*



World War II Veteran

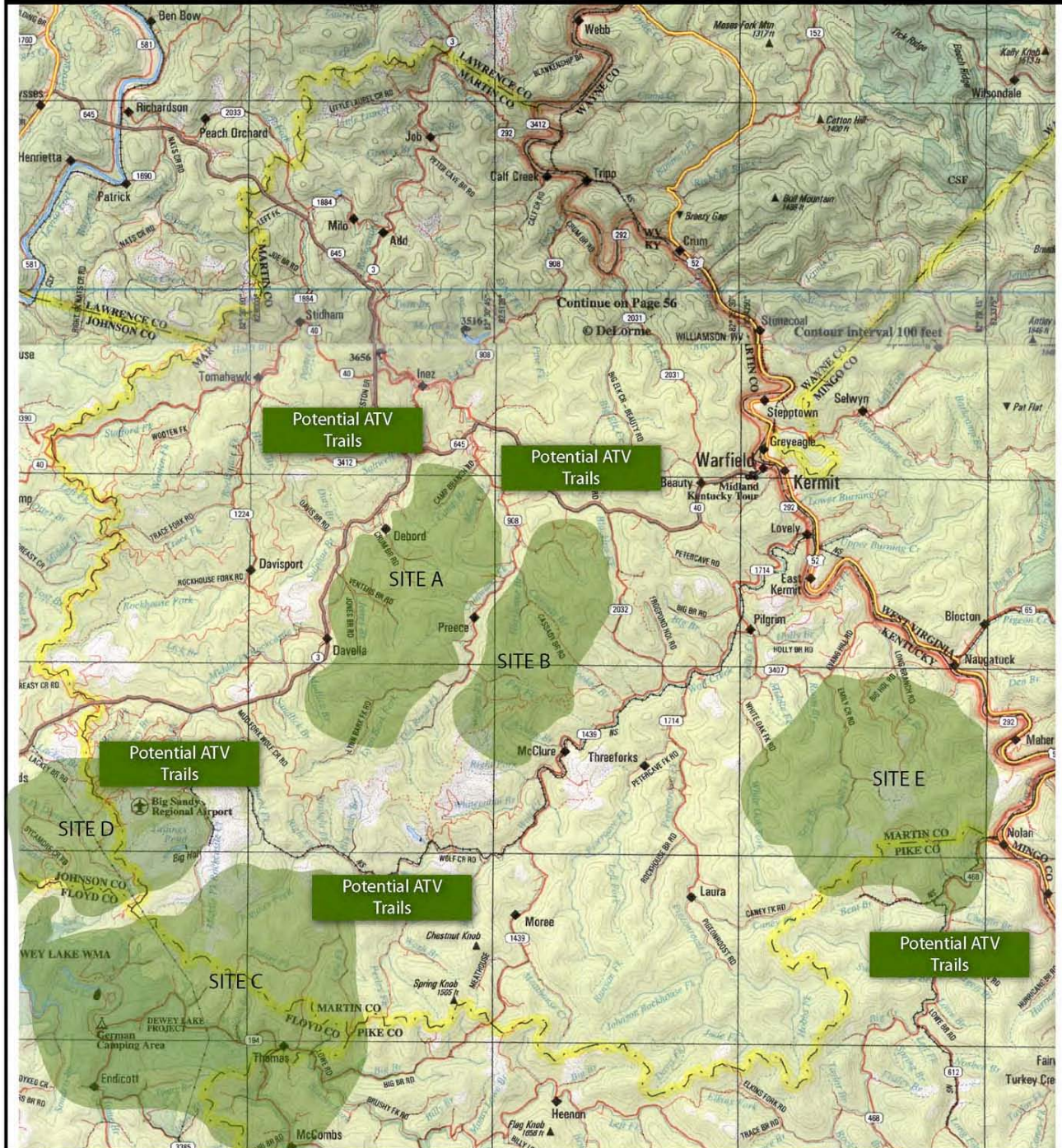


1873 – 1931 Headstone



1925 – 1949 Headstone

Martin County, Kentucky Proposed ATV Trails

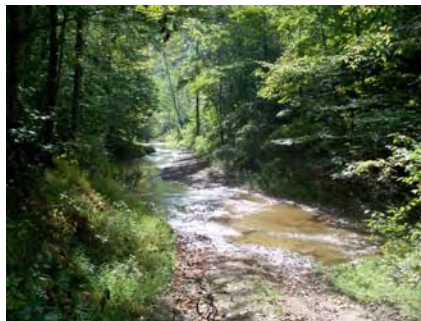


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SITE B – Located off Hwy 908 near Pegs Fork access trails on Martin County Coal Company property. Much of the trail crosses streams and wetlands.

ACTION TAKEN: John Dennis with Big Sandy Area Development District also has GPS the major trails through this area.

ACTION: Talk with land owners on the potential of developing a trailhead just off Hwy 908 and getting authorization to mark the trails for public access.



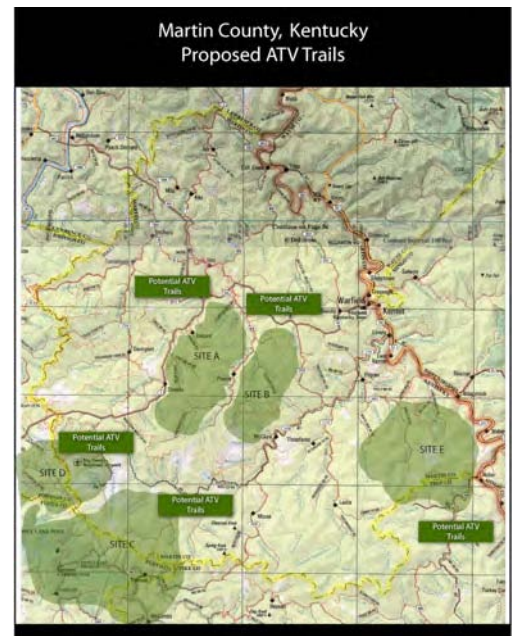
A few of the sites one will see along the trails

SITE C – There are numerous potential trails on Massey Energy property that crosses into both Floyd and Pike County.

ACTION: Ask permission to access the property and, working with John Dennis with Big Sandy ADD, GPS existing trails. Once mapped, work with Massey Energy in possibly opening a portion of the trails for public use.

SITE D – There is the potential to develop trails on the Booth Energy property in the southwest corner of the county for both ATV and horseback riding opportunities as well as elk viewing but the existing trail system must first be mapped.

ACTION TAKEN: Permission has been granted by Jim Booth to GPS map the trails on the Booth Energy property. John Dennis and Nakita Collier are working



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with those at Booth Energy to set a time to map the trails.

ATV TRAILS AND TRAILHEADS continued.

SITE E – Located off Hwy 292 on Long Branch near the Pike County line there is an excellent location for a trailhead which could include lodging facilities, campground and large recreation or storage area.

From this site there are miles and miles of ATV trails and possibly even horse trails. The buildings are in excellent shape. Even the road coming in was in pretty great shape. All asphalted. This would make a fantastic camp area with an asphalted area for RV and Trailer Parking, an area for more primitive camping. The warehouse could be converted into possibly horse stables or a recreation facility or both.



ACTION: Work with the county officials and the current landowners to determine the possibility of acquiring this property.



Main office building which would make excellent lodging facility.



Large warehouse could have multiple uses.

Large asphalt parking area exists

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MOTORCYCLE TRAILS

One thing East Kentucky is known for, and Martin County is blessed with, is wonderful windy curvy roads that are ideal for love to ride motorcycles.

A few of these roads are noted in purple on the map on the following page.



ACTION: Work with the Kentucky Motorcycle Safety Commission in obtaining special signs that mark the motorcycle routes along Highways 908, 2031, 1714, 2032, 292 and Old Hwy 3.

A few sites along the route include a number of restaurants, scenic views, historic towns and buildings:



Two of the unique restaurants one will find along the route.



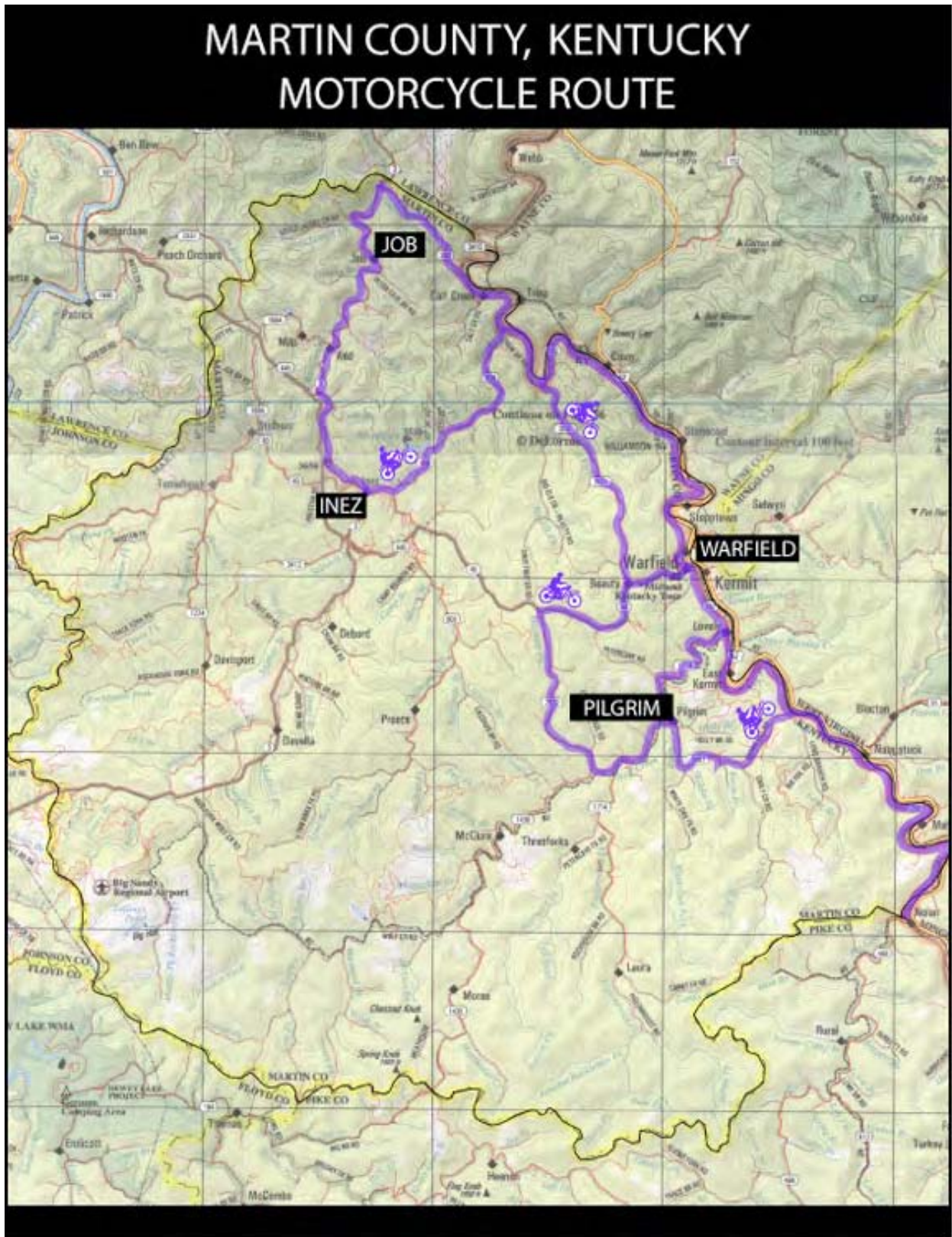
Himler Coal Camp Store



Warfield Railroad Bridge



One of the windy roads in Martin County



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BIKE ROUTE

Both Highway 3 and Highway 645 through Martin County have 8' to 10' shoulders making them excellent bicycle routes. Currently only Hwy 3 and portions of Hwy 908 and Hwy 292 are noted by the state as bicycle routes. Neither Hwy 908 nor Hwy 292 are safe routes for bikes.

ACTION: Contact Kentucky's Department of Transportation Division of Planning at (502)564-7183 and request Hwy 645 be added to the state's bicycle routes. Also request special signage and road markings along both roadways designating them as bike routes and ask that the route along Hwy 645 be added to the state map. (*Larger map on following page.*)

ACTION: Also request Highways 908 and 292 be taken off the state's bicycle route and request they be placed on the state motorcycle route if such a designation exists.



Please Note: The wide 8 foot to 10 foot shoulders along both Highway 645 & Highway 3 make excellent bike routes as evident in the photos.



A worthwhile side trip for bicyclists is the Cloud 9 restaurant at the Big Sandy Airport about 2 miles off Highway 3 where one can find good food, watch planes take off and possibly see an elk or two along the way.

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ELK VIEWING AND WILDLIFE TRAIL

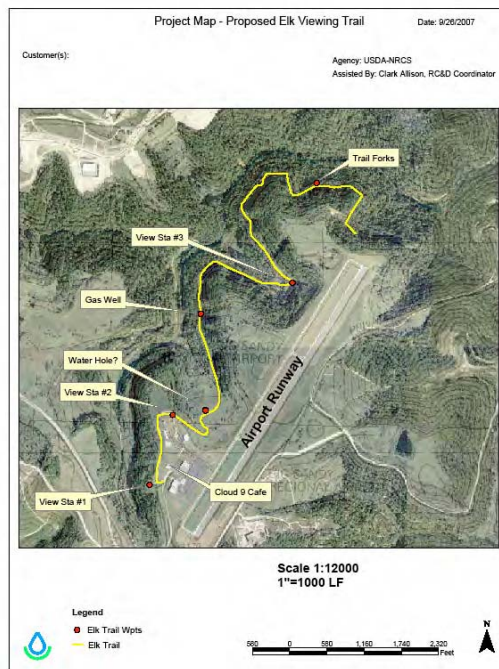
Martin County was the first county in Kentucky to install an interpretive sign informing the public about elk and their habitat. The wayside exhibit is located beside Cloud 9 Restaurant near the airport where people often come to see elk. It has been proposed to develop an elk and wildlife viewing trail starting at this site.



Interpretive sign about elk in Kentucky



Please Note: The fence around the airport was recently added to keep both elk and other wildlife off the runway.

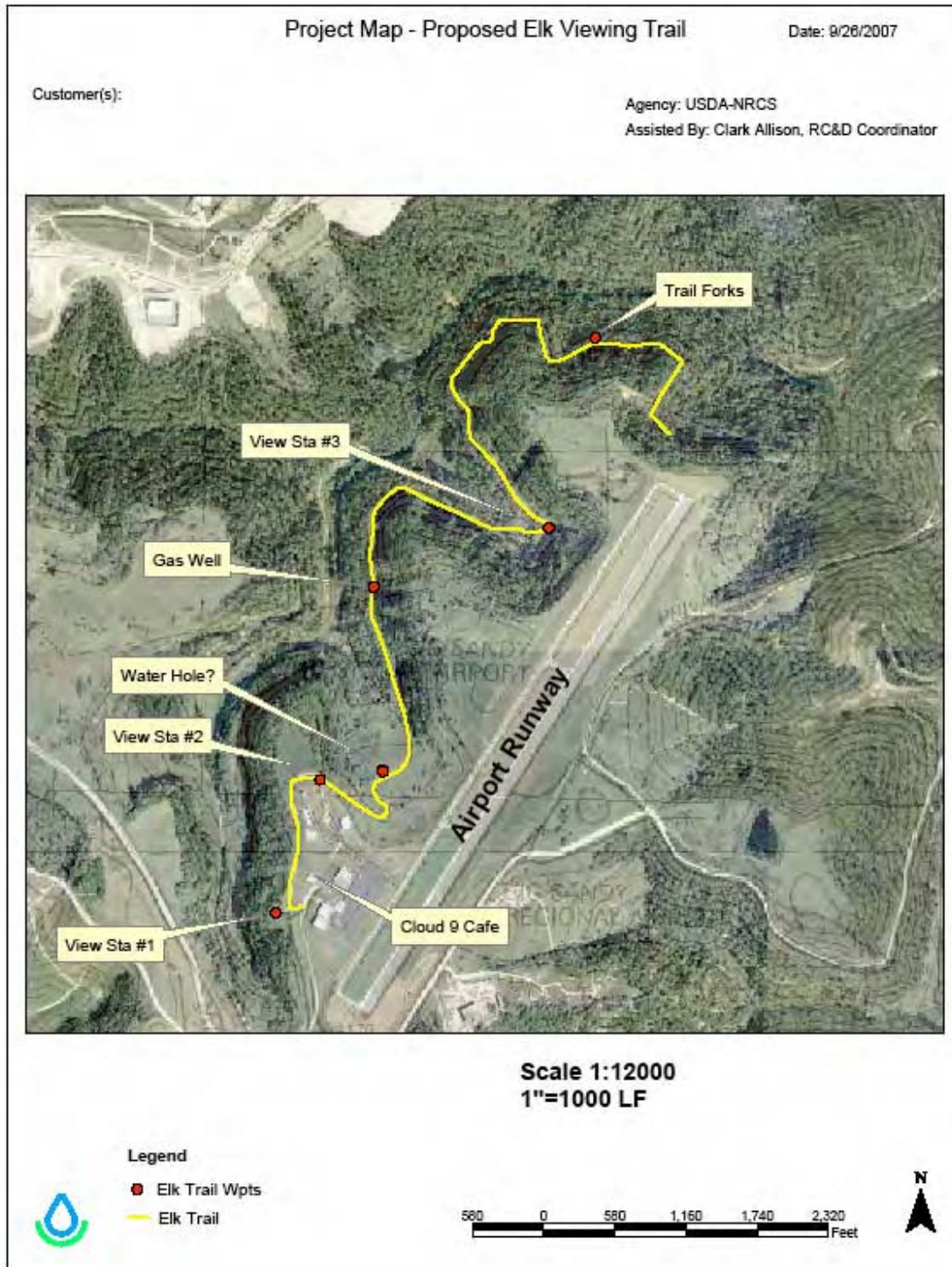


After discussions with community leaders, airport officials and representatives of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, it was decided to reconsider the route for the elk trail.

Conversations are now underway to direct the trail southward onto the Booth Energy property where more elk can be found and land is available to develop food plots.

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PLEASE NOTE: The proposed elk viewing trail encircling the northwest boundary of the Big Sandy Airport noted below is in the process of being revised. It has been suggested that a more southern route might be better and could allow for a loop to be developed which is preferred by both walkers and hikers.



HORSEBACK RIDING TRAILS

There are three primary areas identified within the county as potential sites for developing horseback riding trails. One is the same site proposed for a major ATV Trailhead in the southeast quadrant of the county. (*Site E on the map on the next page.*) Due to the expansive size of the area and the existing infrastructure, it is our recommendation to develop trails for both from this one location. The large warehouse could be converted into a stable and the existing brick building into lodging for the riders.



Warehouse could be converted into a stable.



Potential lodging facility for riders.



Another possible area for horseback riding include the Booth Energy property (SITE D) in the southwest quadrant of the county which could have trails leading to and from the German Camping Area, Dewey Lake WMA and Jenny Wiley State Resort Park in Floyd County.

The third potential site for developing horseback riding trails is on the Massey Energy property (Site C) in the southern portion of the county merging into Pike County.

ACTION: All three properties need to have the trails GPS and meetings set with the land owners to determine the possibility of opening up any of the trails for public access. Once determined, maps should be made and signage installed to make sure riders stay on the designated trails.

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LAKES, RIVERS AND STREAMS

WMTH Corporation only took a cursory look at the waterways in Martin County noting that there were two primary lakes, a small pay lake, multiple streams and the Tug Fork River. Below are just a few observations and suggestions. It would be our recommendation that further exploration be done in this area to fully capitalize on the many water resources found throughout the county.

TUG FORK RIVER

Creating the eastern border of the county, Tug Fork River separates Martin County Kentucky from West Virginia. There are only three boat ramps to access the river with just one of those located on the Kentucky side. Hwy 292 follows the river which could result in beautiful view sheds if river overlooks were developed periodically along the route. There is some river traffic and the potential for a canoe outfitter to develop a canoe livery service at Warfield Landing.



Scenic overlook of the Tug Fork River

MILO AND MARTIN COUNTY LAKES

There is some confusion on the two primary lakes in the county. The locals refer to the lake in the northern quadrant as Milo Lake and yet the state (and the sign in front) reference it as Martin County Lake which is the same name people call the reservoir located in the center of the county near Inez.

ACTION TAKEN: Kevin Frey plans to move the existing sign to the reservoir and make a new sign for Milo Lake.

A fishing pier and picnic tables have recently been added at Milo Lake and the lake and surrounding area was very clean and inviting. It is a true asset for the county and should be marketed more. The possibility has been suggested to add a hiking trail around the lake along with potential trailheads for horseback riding, ATVs or both.

ACTION: A private land owner owns the land around the lake and efforts are underway to contact him and determine his interest level in working with those in the county to map and mark the trails for public access.



Sign currently at Milo Lake



Beautiful setting



New fishing pier at Milo Lake

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PARADISE MOUNTAIN PAY LAKE

A pay lake has reopened in the northern portion of the county. The new owners plan to expand their hours, opening in March and closing in late October.

ACTION: The Tourist Commission should contact the new owners and help to promote this entrepreneurial venture by including information on their website and future publications.

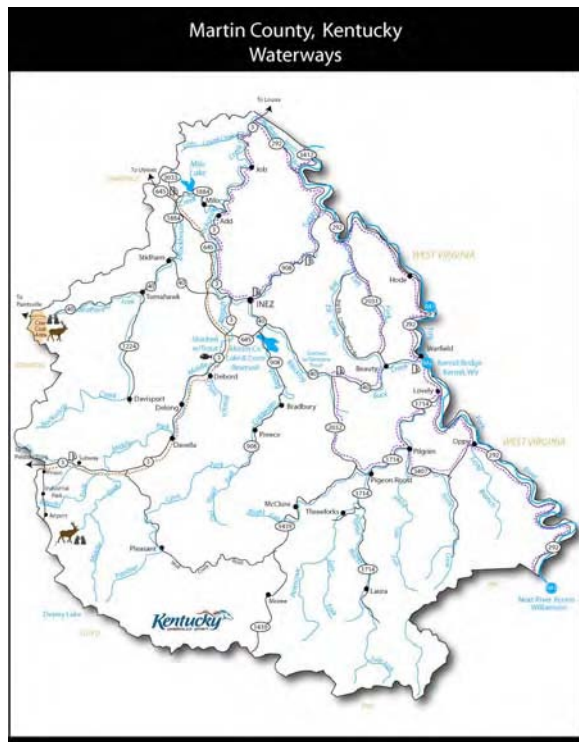


LAKES, RIVERS & STREAMS

There are numerous small rivers and creeks throughout the county. Some flow year round. Others are more wet weather streams. One of the year-round streams is the Middle Fork Branch that follows Hwy 3 through the county. It is stocked periodically with trout by the Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources and is known to be an excellent fishing stream.

RECOMMENDATION: Build a fishing pier and small parking area on the northwest corner of the intersection of Highway 3 & 645 for public access to fish.

(Larger map on following page)



RECOMMENDATION:

With the numerous waterways throughout Martin County, it would be our recommendation to develop a Blueways similar to what has been done in Warren County Kentucky.

Visit the website at :
<http://gismaps.wku.edu/website/wcbw/viewer.htm> for more information about blueways.

Martin County, Kentucky Waterways



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On the following page is a full size map of the many offerings in Martin County.

Also included in this document is a copy of the Martin County website which was created by WMTH Corporation as part of the process in inventorying all the county has to offer.