



Ocoee River Recreation and Economic Development Fund Board

December 1, 2025 Meeting Minutes

***9:00 a.m. Central Time / 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time**

Virtual via Teams

Roll Call:

In attendance:

Committee Members: Angelo Giansante, Lynne McClary, Carlo Smith, Whitney Mayor

1. Liquid Spark - End of Year Presentation

• Influencer Marketing

- Influencers reported high-quality engagement, including:
 - 10–15 direct trip-planning inquiries per influencer
 - Followers sharing trip photos and experiences
 - One influencer planning a 2026 hosted event on the Ocoee
 - Campaign reinforced authentic word-of-mouth and connection with new audiences.

• Website Growth

	2024	2025	% of change
Sessions	52,665	82,528	56.7
Pageviews	131,848	184,695	40.1
New Users	44,030	70,373	59.8

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• Email Marketing

- 46,124 opted-in contacts interested in Ocoee River rafting.
- Campaigns included:
 - Automated welcome series
 - Giveaway-based emails
- Peak summer nudges (early and late July)
- Open rates ranged from ~23% to nearly 40%; click-through rates exceeded benchmarks.
- Ongoing discussion needed regarding whether and how outfitter access to email lists can be expanded, pending legal/opt-in review.

• Tennessee Tourism Partnerships

- Full-page Tennessee Vacation Guide ad (separate funding source).

- Added attraction listing and secured a 2026 Attraction Spotlight at reduced cost.
- Website changes eliminated individual listings in favor of pop-up summaries; spotlight articles now provide deeper visibility.
- Earned placements in Tennessee Tourism emails and digital content continue to generate long-term value.
- **Outdoor & Billboard Advertising**
 - Billboards placed in Atlanta and Chattanooga corridors to target top feeder markets.
 - Chattanooga expansion aimed at western traffic flows.
 - Outfitters reported increased website traffic during billboard runs.
 - Emphasis intentionally placed on early-season visibility.
- **Digital & Media**
 - Outside Magazine digital/video campaign (May–June):
 - ~99% video completion rate
 - Strong awareness performance, though limited conversion tracking
 - 87.9% increase in total sessions
 - 88.2% increase in total users
 - 54.4% increase in engaged sessions
 - Jan-Oct 2025 46,200 video views, 88.1 hours of watch time and 390 total subscribers (89% increase)
 - Geofencing campaign in Atlanta – 1.3 million overall impressions
 - Overall results vs 2024 on programmatic campaigns
 - 3.2 times more website traffic
 - Doubled regional markets exposure
 - 12 new video ads for Atlanta, Nashville, Birmingham markets
- **Ocoee River Numbers (2025 vs. 2024)**
 - Middle Ocoee: down ~0.8%
 - Upper Ocoee: down ~7.3%
 - Two outfitters did not operate in 2025.
 - Average customers per operating outfitter increased slightly year-over year
- **Broader Industry Trends**
 - Declines reported across U.S. rafting destinations.
 - Multi-day trip outfitters particularly impacted.
 - Other rivers affected by hurricanes, delayed openings, or closures.
 - Grand Canyon rafting down ~7–8% following a flat prior year.

2. Strategic Recommendations for 2026

- Maintain Market Presence
- Billboards
- Digital & Programmatic Advertising
- Social Media
- Influencer Follow-Up
- Major Event Tie-Ins

- Airport Advertising
- Events & Festivals
- Website

3. Next Steps for Subcommittee

- a. Marketing proposal originally sent September 9 will be resent to the subcommittee.
- b. Key decisions to be made at the December 19 meeting regarding:
 - i. Scope of 2026 marketing
 - ii. Budget allocation
 - iii. Vendor engagement
- c. Liquid Spark is available to support planning through April 2026 and beyond.
- d. Email list usage and disclaimers under review by leadership.

Adjournment @ 12:40 pm