



**PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN  
WEST KENTUCKY'S RIVER COUNTIES -  
NEAR THE CONFLUENCE OF THE OHIO AND  
MISSISSIPPI**

**PHASE ONE STRATEGIC PLAN**

# **WAVE STEERING COMMITTEE:**

1. Carlisle County Judge Executive Greg Terry, Chair
2. Fulton County Judge Executive Jim Martin, Co-Chair
3. Ballard County Judge Executive Vicki Viniard, Co-Chair
4. Hickman County Judge Executive Kenny Wilson, Co-Chair
5. Casey Allen, Ballard County School Superintendent
6. Josh Burgess, Burgess Grain
7. Robert Burrow, Heritage Bank, Fulton
8. Mark Cauley, Paducah Area Community Reuse Organization
9. Greg Curlin, Hickman-Fulton County Riverport
10. David Gallagher, former Fulton County Judge Executive
11. Melissa Goodman, Cooperative Extension Agency, Hickman and Carlisle Counties
12. Emerson Goodwin, KentuckyCare, Ballard and Carlisle
13. Pastor Rodney Hill, Fairview Baptist Church, LaCenter
14. Brian Hobbs, Hutson Inc., Bardwell
15. Bruce Kimbell, First Community Bank of the Heartland, Hickman
16. Megan Koch, Rusted Roots Boutique, Bardwell
17. Lynn Lane, Ballard County Clerk
18. Jim LeFevre, Director, Ballard County EDA
19. Charlie Martin, Wickliffe businessman
20. John McCuiston, Kentucky Farm Bureau, Clinton
21. Deana O'Neal, Bone & Co Realtors, Arlington
22. Corey Pace, LaCenter farmer
23. Jerry Pace, Ballard County EDA
24. Ivan Potter, City of Clinton
25. Greg Pruitt, Director, Hickman County EDP
26. Norma Pruitt, KYGRRO
27. Wendy Puckett, Director, Fulton County EDP
28. David Rambo, Citizens Deposit Bank, Arlington
29. Glenn Reid, Clinton Bank
30. Judy Stephens, Stephens Farm, Hickman County
31. Cubb Stokes, Fulton City Manager
32. Jimmy Todd, Airgas Mid-America, Carlisle
33. John Wood, retired Ballard County businessman



# **WAVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

1. Tony Brannon, Dean, Hutson School of Agriculture, Murray State University
2. Kristen Branscum, Commissioner, Kentucky Travel and Tourism Department
3. Jeremy Buchanan, Purchase Area Development District
4. State Senator Danny Carroll
5. State Representative Leslie Combs
6. James Comer, former state Agriculture Commissioner
7. Loretta Daniel, Kentucky Innovation Network
8. Janece Everett, Field Representative for U.S. Congressman Ed Whitfield
9. Mark Fletcher, Ceres Consulting
10. State Senator Stan Humphries
11. Bob Jackson, President, Murray State University Foundation
12. Damon Judd, Marquette Transportation Company
13. Tad Long, Kentucky League of Cities
14. Mary Anne Medlock, Purchase Area Development District
15. Rachel McCubbin, Deputy State Director for U.S. Senator Rand Paul
16. Katie Moyer, Western Kentucky Field Representative to Governor Matt Bevin
17. Bobby Miller, the Miller Law Firm, Paducah
18. Jim Morris, Banterra Bank
19. Corky Peek, Senior Project Manager, Kentucky Economic Development Cabinet
20. George Piccioni, American Commercial Lines
21. Travis Powell, General Counsel, Council on Postsecondary Education
22. Roy Riley, Peel & Holland Financial, Benton
23. Brian Roy, Kentucky Association of Counties
24. State Representative Steven Rudy
25. Jason Strait, Western Rivers Boat Management
26. Eric Thomas, Benchmark River and Rail Terminals
27. Tim Todd, Murray State University
28. Jim Walker, American Association of Port Authorities
29. Shawn Washer, HDR Engineering
30. Martie Wiles, Western Kentucky Field Representative to U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell
31. Anthony Wright, Harshaw Trane





## **The History:**

Back in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Mississippi River furnished an intimate and iconic stage for our nation's popular culture. In perhaps the greatest American novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, former riverboater Mark Twain captured the journey of Huck racing toward the intersection of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to secure his pal Tom's freedom from slavery. At that time as well, the Great Mississippi functioned as the country's economic backbone, with steamboats hustling the exports of the nation's nascent manufacturing economy toward destinations overseas.

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of course, river traffic began to take a backseat to planes, trains and automobiles. As the millennium concluded, the U.S. manufacturing economy struggled against the duel forces of cheaper international trade and the rapid emergence of a new technology-based information age. The four far-western Kentucky River Counties that abut the Mississippi – Fulton, Hickman, Carlisle and Ballard (the site of the intersection with the Ohio) – naturally suffered, a predicament worsened by the inattention of policymakers and politicians in the state capital, hundreds of miles away.

With the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, new opportunity has arisen. A major expansion of the Panama Canal – introducing a new lane, doubling the waterway's capacity, and tripling ship cargo loads – will result in a dramatic increase of cargo ship traffic up the Mississippi to destinations in America's heartland. Indeed, innovative new vessel technology, favorable federal regulation, and congestion at Western ports, freight rail routes, and on Midwestern roads all have positioned river shipping as preeminently economical, energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly. (See Appendix A for a summary of this development.)

Further, our national transformation into an information-based economy poses new opportunity for areas such as the River Counties that are geographically-remote from urban



centers. With a lauded public education system, partnerships with nearby Murray State University and West Kentucky Community and Technology College, and the pending expansion of affordable high-speed broadband, the River Counties are well-positioned to attract the high-paying, high-tech jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Most significantly, perhaps, in a system polarized and paralyzed by hyper-partisan, turf-conscious politicians, the four River County Judge-Executives – buoyed by the business and civic leadership of their communities – have banded together to develop a unifying, cohesive strategy – to expand regional assets, capitalize on joint resources and promote the region. This unprecedented, bi-partisan collaboration will help facilitate the navigation of a unique public-private partnership that could capture the state's, and indeed the national imagination, spurring economic growth and progress to a region that sorely needs it, and one that is ideally positioned for rebirth and revitalization.

## **The Journey:**

On April 1, 2016, the judge executives and economic development directors from each of the four River Counties gathered at the Ballard County Country Club in La Center to interview, and then ultimately hire, CivicPoint to facilitate a multi-year economic development project in the region. CivicPoint, the public affairs affiliate of the law firm Frost Brown Todd, is led in Kentucky by Jonathan Miller, the former State Treasurer and Secretary of the Finance and Administration Cabinet.

On May 26, 2016, the judge executives invited dozens of community leaders to county-based strategic planning sessions to serve as focus groups, tasked with helping design this new economic development project. Using a strategy developed upriver at Northwestern University called Asset-Based Community Development, CivicPoint facilitated four separate brain-storming sessions, in each of the counties, to identify local and regional assets and liabilities, and to develop plans to foster cooperation among the counties and economic growth to the region and each of the communities. (A list of all of the attendees is attached in Appendix B.) The focus group results are encapsulated in the section below entitled “Focus Group Discussion.”

One of the key recommendations for action was the establishment of a project Steering Committee, an informal governing body to direct Phase One actions, and ensure implementation of the Strategic Plan. The committee includes committed public sector and private institution champions who have committed to WAVE for the long haul, and who have pledged to facilitate the involvement and support of the region's constituents. The Steering Committee first met in person on July 14, 2016 at the Carlisle County Extension Office in Bardwell. From that point forward, the Steering Committee has reconvened monthly – by



conference call where convenient and in person when necessary. Details on the membership and work of the Steering Committee are included in the “Phase One Action” section below.

WAVE has also formally enlisted partners from outside of the four counties that include top officials from state and federal government, key stakeholders in the rest of the Purchase counties, and regional and national representatives of private industries and industry groups that could potentially help bring jobs and commerce to the River Counties. The membership and objectives of the WAVE Advisory Committee is detailed in the “Phase One Action” section below.

Finally, six Implementation Committees were established to focus targeted attention on six of the most significant issues identified in this strategic planning process: Port Authority Development, Agricultural Technology, Regional Asset & Infrastructure Development, Tourism, Education and Workforce Training, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Each of these committees have held several monthly meetings, and a description of their membership, responsibilities and agendas are described in the “Phase One Action” section below.

Among the key responsibilities of this ongoing committee work was the development and planning of an Annual WAVE Confluence, the first of which was held at Columbus-Belmont State Park on October 24-25, 2016. The Annual WAVE Confluence is a two-day affair, with featured speakers, implementation committee meetings and work sessions, supplemented with touring, local activities and social functions that will celebrate local assets and community leaders. Political and civic leaders from across the region, from Frankfort, and from the nation’s capital were invited to address the Confluence, and more importantly, to join in work sessions and be re-introduced to the extraordinary people, ecology and culture of the River County region.

Upon the conclusion of the first WAVE Confluence, Phase Two of the Strategic Plan will now be launched. Phase Two will continue to involve monthly meetings of each Implementation Committee identified in this Phase One plan. These committees would work to implement critical action items designated in the plan and work toward the development of the second Confluence in the fall of 2017. It is contemplated that this Confluence will be an annual affair – an opportunity for the region to assess its success and failures, revisit its priorities and bring key policymakers from Frankfort and Washington to celebrate the River County Region and join in fellowship.

During Phase Two, it is also anticipated that an Executive Director will be hired – likely from the Purchase region – to manage the project going forward, with CivicPoint taking a secondary, consulting role. The Executive Director would be chosen and hired by the Project’s Steering Committee.



A critical element of Phase Two, moreover, is that no local public funds will be employed – the four county governments who funded Phase One of the Project have completed their financial obligation. CivicPoint has led efforts, in conjunction with the Project’s Steering Committee, to identify and solicit private supporters, and federal grant funding to pay for the hiring of an Executive Director and all other consulting fees and expenses required going forward.

## **Focus Group Discussion:**

On May 26, 2016, focus groups were held in each of the four River Counties, involving the civic, political, education, religious, business and community leadership, as identified by the judge-executives. (A complete list of sites and participants is attached as Appendix B.)

CivicPoint facilitated these brainstorming sessions, using a strategy developed at Northwestern University called Asset-Based Community Development.

The table was set with a discussion of some universally-accepted recognitions about economic development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

- Our economic competition not only comes from neighboring states; instead there are highly competitive corporate markets around the globe;
- The utilization of technology and innovation are keys to success;
- There is a desperate need for a highly skilled, educated and motivated workforce;
- The new “live-work-play” environment is key to attract and retain young talent (“creative class”) as we see the baby boomers leave the workforce;
- We need a supportive business climate, with Public-Private Partnerships;
- Regional collaboration, investment strategies and transparency are keys to economic development success.

A foundation for the discussion in each county was laid with the following questions, which participants were asked to keep in mind for the brainstorming session:

- We need committed public sector champions that will be with us for the long-haul. Who are they?
- We need private institutions to step up and commit. Who are they and what can they do?
- We need the support of the constituents. How do we reach out?



- Can you adjust your core mission to reflect the changing nature of the economy and the opportunity posed by the Panama Canal Expansion?
- Can your local leadership change its culture to adjust to these new circumstances?
- Can you build new regional governance platforms while still embracing local leadership and customs?
- Can you “blur the lines” of counties and cities while still maintaining local identity?

Participants were then asked to respond to big-picture questions to frame the discussion and to understand the limits and parameters of the opportunity:

- Why do you live here? If you were born here, why did you stay? If you are from outside the region, what drew you here?
- If you were trying to woo a business or a family to live in this county, what would you tell them to entice them to dig up their roots and locate here?
- Many of you have family or friends that have left here. Why did they leave? What are the circumstances that would entice them to return?
- What is unique about this county? The culture? If you could brand the county in a few words, what would you say about it?

Finally, the participants were led in an Asset-Based Community Development-structured discussion of the following ten categories, asked to identify assets, red flags and opportunities that each category suggested. Participants were solicited to share their thoughts to the group, but also to jot down points of emphasis on supplied documents. The written option offered the ability for participants to volunteer to elaborate on key issues, or share anonymous feedback if privacy was necessary:

## 1. Infrastructure

- a. Physical infrastructure – how are the roads, bridges, rail – what are our assets and liabilities? What do we need to make them better?
- b. The River – existing ports, ferries – how can we seize on the traffic increase?
- c. Broadband – how affordable and fast is it? Where are there gaps? Would you like to be part of a statewide initiative?
- d. Energy – your utilities, water, sewer systems. Are there opportunities to generate energy from new sources? How energy efficient are your buildings?
- e. Is infrastructure better or worse than it was a decade ago?

## 2. Education



- a. What are the preschool opportunities and support?
  - b. How is your K-12 public education here compared to a decade ago? STEM programs? Leadership and youth development?
  - c. Are you satisfied with graduation rates? Concerned about drop-out rates?
  - d. Are there sufficient vocational programs for high school students?
  - e. How is collaboration with Murray State and the community college system? Are they involved in the community?
  - f. Is education better or worse than a decade ago?
3. Health and Human Services
- a. When are your health care options? Where do you go when you get sick? Seriously ill?
  - b. Are there charitable organizations to help those in need?
  - c. How is the drug problem in the region? Growing worse or getting better? What are the drugs most abused in the region? What is being done to help?
  - d. Are there enough affordable housing opportunities?
  - e. What programs are available for the region's senior citizens?
  - f. Is the demand for social services increasing or decreasing?
  - g. Is public health better or worse than a decade ago?
4. Agriculture
- a. What is the current state of farming in the county and region? What are the leading cash crops?
  - b. Are there efforts underway to diversify the crop rotation?
  - c. Are there programs for locally grown food?
  - d. Any new agriculture opportunities – industrial hemp? Wineries?
  - e. Is the agriculture economy better or worse than a decade ago?
5. Tourism
- a. What are your greatest tourism assets? Parks, trails, rivers, backwaters?
  - b. What are the opportunities for adventure tourism? Fishing, hiking, hunting?
  - c. Are there new initiatives to promote tourism using new models – zip lines, four-wheeling?
  - d. What are the most renowned local foods? Could we brand the area as being famous for a particular cuisine?
  - e. Is tourism stronger or weaker than it was a decade ago?



- 6. Industries**
  - a. What is the manufacturing footprint in the county and region?
  - b. What are the leading businesses and employers?
  - c. What are other activities that bring money into the region?
  - d. How are your downtowns – would their status attract or detract new businesses?
  - e. When traffic picks up on the Mississippi – what are the kinds of industries that are here than can thrive?
  - f. When traffic picks up on the Mississippi – what are the kinds of industries that you feel you can attract? Would there be opportunities for new manufacturing, such as the container-on-vessel program?
  - g. Is the local economy stronger or weaker than it was a decade ago?
- 7. Economic Development Resources**
  - a. Business owners
    - i. How is your business doing compared to a decade ago?
    - ii. What challenges are you facing in expanding your markets?
    - iii. How are you addressing growth opportunities?
    - iv. What resources would be helpful?
    - v. How could you seize on the Mississippi River opportunity?
  - b. Government/Civic Officials
    - i. What are your local economic development strengths?
    - ii. What are your local economic development weaknesses?
    - iii. What are your local economic development opportunities?
    - iv. How does collaboration among government and the private sector make the region more collaborative for investment?
- 8. Financing Mechanisms**
  - a. What kinds of state and federal funding have you secured to promote economic development? Tobacco settlement? Severance taxes? Tax incentives? State/federal grants and loans?
  - b. Have there been regional funding efforts? Dedicated revolving loan funds?
  - c. How have you used these funds – and have these efforts been successful or unsuccessful?
  - d. Have you used public/private partnerships? Have they been successful or unsuccessful?



## 9. Regional Collaboration

- a. What projects have you worked on in the past with the other river counties? Have they been successful or unsuccessful?
- b. What have been the barriers to inter-county collaboration?
- c. Would the county residents be open to more four-county collaboration? To formal institution of four-county programming?
- d. Has regional collaboration improved or worsened over the past decade?

## 10. The Future

- a. What is your vision for the next ten years? For your city? For your county? For your four-county region?
- b. If you could pick one uniting theme to brand the county to encourage economic development, what would it be?
- c. If you could pick one uniting theme to brand the four-county collaboration to encourage economic development, what would it be?

## **Focus Group Results:**

The raw notes and data of the Focus Group sessions were compiled by CivicPoint and are available for public viewing (with confidential information redacted to protect privacy.) Below are provided narrative summaries of the assets and red flags that were identified, and then recommendations for next steps in Phase One of the Project.

**\$ ASSET: Small Town Compassion:** One theme ran consistent through all four focus groups – from the answers to the introductory big-picture questions through the specific discussions in asset categories: Residents of the River Counties love the small-town life: the beautiful rural settings, the absence of crime and traffic, the slower, gentler quality of life. But most of all, it's the community spirit of compassion that drives their love of the region: The River County culture is the living embodiment of the Scriptural admonition to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Residents love the easy, natural interactions and civil courtesies, and understand that in times of hardship and emergency, their fellow neighbors will have their back. They are anxious for growth and opportunity, but never want to lose that small-town compassionate spirit. As one participant described their community, “it’s almost Mayberry,” and as others shared, “I know who’s pumping their gas next to me at the gas station.”



- ▶ **RED FLAG: Absence of Modern Conveniences:** One of the primary disadvantages of the rural, small-town life is the absence of modern conveniences that are found in larger communities. This is particularly seen as a liability by younger generations who have to travel some distance for the convenience of fast food restaurants, to shop at the larger box stores, or seek cultural entertainment. While there's no public demand to turn the River Counties into a suburban marketplace, securing economic growth will require an appropriate balance to attract a modern workforce looking for the ideal "live-work-play" environment.
- \$ **ASSET: Location, Location, Location:** If a strategic planner were looking for the perfect location to capture U.S. economic development posed by the Panama Canal Expansion, she'd likely select the River County region. Situated at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, the region is ideally located to serve as a center of export and import commerce between the Gulf of Mexico and American Midwest and Northeast corridors. From New Orleans to the Ohio River, there are no locks or dams on the Mississippi, meaning relatively unimpeded travel for barges and shipping; and at the confluence of the two rivers in Wickliffe, water access is naturally dredged with sufficient depth for the new paradigm of larger barges and container-on-vessel shipping. Further, the region is located in the center of the country, just a short drive to major U.S. population centers including St. Louis, Memphis, Nashville and Evansville: Indeed 67% of the nation's population lives within eight hours of the region, meaning that the region is an ideal spot for logistics and distribution activity. Half a million people reside within a 70-mile radius, including more than 65,000 workers in industrial-related occupations. Fulton is the site of both a Canadian National Railroad rail yard, as well as a flag stop for Amtrak passenger rail service, meaning that there is potential for further expansion in service of regional port operations. There is also considerable hope that the expansion of I-69 will benefit the region's infrastructure, especially once the prospective bridge is built in Henderson, linking Kentucky to Indiana.
- ▶ **RED FLAG: Remoteness and Poor Physical Infrastructure:** While big cities are relatively close by, the physical infrastructure between them is often quite poor – often decried were the two-lane highways that deter cargo travel and a dilapidated bridge to Cairo, Illinois. The current Hickman River Port faces challenges with water levels, high electricity rates, the inability to handle 21<sup>st</sup> century container-on-vessel shipping, as well as poor access to the rail system. Private property owners have been unwilling to cooperate with regional economic growth projects, with 91% of the area limited to agriculture

production. Many rural areas don't have access to water and sewer system because of the expense. A 2010 study by the Purchase Region Industrial Park revealed that the region's lack of a significant airport (there are small strips in Fulton and Paducah) is a significant detriment to economic growth. Worst of all is the geographical and psychological remoteness from Frankfort: Like many Western Kentuckians, River County residents don't believe that state policymakers pay any attention to them. And they are concerned that some key decision-makers are not even aware that there is a Kentucky west of Paducah and Murray.

- \$ **ASSET: Extraordinary Ecology and Culture:** River County residents could not be more proud of the extraordinary natural environment in which they live – and in fact, many claim that the opportunities to hike, fish, hunt and enjoy the natural landscapes are some of the main reasons why they continue to call the area their home. They are also quite proud of recent multi-county efforts to promote tourism, particularly KYGRRO, the Kentucky Great River Road project, that has fostered coordinated efforts to bring out-of-state visitors to some of the region's great attractions, from Wickliffe Mounds, to the Trail of Tears, to Columbus-Belmont State Park, to the Dorena-Hickman Ferry, one of the few remaining riverboat ferries in the country. The region features some of the nation's premier goose and duck hunting, bike tours, beautiful horse trails and opportunities for ATV riding and racing. And cultural opportunities extend far beyond natural resources: The Hickman County Historical Society is a national center for genealogy research; the National Civil War Heritage Trail is a scenic journey for history buffs; local museums commemorate African-American history, archaeology, and veterans; and the calendar is packed with arts fairs and festivals celebrating chickens, monster catfish, water fowl, bananas, pecans, barbecue, and Civil War heritage.
  
- ↑ **RED FLAG: Lack of Complementary Tourism Services and State Attention:** Visitors and adventure tourists who come to the River Counties to hunt, fish, hike, and trail ride have no hotels at which to stay and limited food options to enjoy. In many circumstances, it is even difficult to locate convenient sources of gas or camping supplies. Meanwhile, there has been little support at the state level to promote the extraordinary ecological opportunities in the region; too few Kentuckians are aware of this much-too-hidden treasure. Residents are particularly frustrated with Fish and Wildlife restrictions and the lack of partnerships with private industry to promote profitable land management.



- \$ **ASSET: First-Class Education:** In stark contrast to the stereotype of rural, small-town America, the River Counties boast a highly-respected, world-class public education system, with all schools ranked above average (some near the top 5% among their peers statewide), and most towns already validated for workforce quality through their designation by the state as “Work Ready Communities.” Industries and businesses looking to locate in the area will have the comfort of knowing that their employees’ children will receive a first-class education. Many credit outstanding leadership in the school systems, as well as strong relationships with Murray State University and the Western Kentucky Community and Technical College. However, the key asset is strong and deep support from the community, both in terms of parent participation, and the generosity of private philanthropists, most prominently, Robbie and Lisa Rudolph’s Four Rivers Foundation which since 2009 has helped ensure that all local high school students have free access to college dual-credit programs and has better prepared students for post-secondary training and assisted them in the transition to a career. Vocational schools have been developed in the area; there is a strong presence of certified welders: Indeed, in Ballard County, every child attends a class at the career and technical center. Further, Murray State and WKCTC have initiated higher education curricula that will be valuable for river-related industries, including agriculture technology and logistics and supply chain management. Establishment of the new Emerging Technology Center on WKCTC’s Paducah campus and the Skilled Craft Training Center in Graves County have helped ensure that the region boasts state-of-the-art workforce training facilities.
  
- **RED FLAG: Lack of Workforce Development and Adult Education Connections:** While the River Counties are producing a world-class, highly-educated workforce, there are few 21<sup>st</sup> century economic opportunities for them, particularly with the disappearance of the manufacturing economy in the last 20<sup>th</sup> century and the recent closing of the Westvaco/Verso paper mill. As a result, residents report the flight of the “best and brightest” students, with many of those who remain unwilling to work with local opportunities. There are few internship opportunities for young professionals to excite and inspire young residents. Further, the region’s proud educational achievements are fairly recent, meaning that older generations of citizens require better job training opportunities if the area will be able to fully brag about a qualified modern workforce. Worst of all, with near zero population growth, school enrollment is in decline, meaning potential loss of funding, potentially resulting in a long-term reversal of public education attainment.



- \$ **ASSET: Sturdy and Strong Agricultural Tradition:** Especially after the loss of much of the manufacturing economy, agriculture is the primary source of economic activity in the River Counties, and residents report that the farm economy has been quite successful in recent years. The primary opportunities are row crops such as corn, soybeans and wheat, as well as livestock, especially pork (with Harpers' Ham, famous for its presence in Cracker Barrels across the nation) and poultry (thanks to the presence of Pilgrim's Pride and Tyson Foods). Local farmers have developed some experience in agricultural development and technology, and many local residents bring back special expertise after securing higher education degrees in agriculture at Kentucky universities. Should the region develop the appropriate infrastructure, the area could pose an enormous opportunity for growing and shipping agricultural products up and down the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Already there is a modern granary facility in Hickman that could accommodate new materials; indeed, there is a backlog currently awaiting export. Best of all, as identified by the Purchase Region Industrial Park study, there is a growing global demand for food and ag-related technologies, meaning significant opportunity if agricultural infrastructure and expertise is fully developed.
- ↑ **RED FLAG: Lack of Modern Diversification:** Despite the considerable local expertise among local farmers, there have been few efforts to take advantage of the extremely profitable opportunities in new field of biotechnology, or with new crops such as industrial hemp. While Murray State is leading efforts to capture expertise in these lucrative arenas, they have yet to reach the plowed ground of much of the River Counties. And while there have been some local efforts into diversification of new crops such as canola, the lengthy distance to processing facilities outside of the region make them less profitable opportunities.
- \$ **ASSET: New Economy Development:** There have been successful and solid local efforts to take advantage of the technological revolution posed by the 21<sup>st</sup> century information age economy. Several towns in the region such as Cunningham and Wickliffe boast of affordable, high-speed broadband, allowing residents and entrepreneurs to access the information superhighway, helping overcome economic disadvantages posed by the region's geographical remoteness and challenged physical infrastructure. An existing natural gas pipeline that runs through Carlisle County offers the potential for low-cost energy to the region, and the Verso paper mill site in Ballard might be capable of generating hydro-power. Fulton and Hickman have launched efforts to reap the economic rewards and high-skilled workforce development opportunities created by



energy efficiency initiatives in public buildings; while many regional Pipefitter laborers have been trained to work on energy efficiency improvement projects. The Purchase Area Development District has launched an underused, but successful small business development center. And Murray State has been working with community leaders in developing entrepreneurship programs to assist with the development of small businesses. Meanwhile “old economy” small businesses that could serve river traffic needs remain present in the region – from an Arlington saw mill to Carlisle County’s manufactured storage building facility to Hickman County’s Ingram Barge and Peerless Premier stove manufacturer to Wickliffe’s new ARCO Construction facility. The region is ideally situated to serve as a manufacturing center – or product and service support center -- for the new larger types of ships that will result from the Panama Canal Expansion, including container-on-vessels which are the subject of considerable support from the US Department of Transportation.

- ▶ **RED FLAG: New Economy Stasis:** Many of the new economy assets noted above are unfortunately considered by many residents to be the exception and not the norm. In many areas of the region, broadband access is slow or completely inaccessible, often because of a lack of sufficient competition among providers. Much of the area’s building stock is dilapidated and deeply energy-inefficient. Utility rates in some areas are among some of the highest in the state, and there is not sufficient energy supply to serve current needs, not to mention any increase that would result from growth. Entrepreneurial access to angel funds and venture capital investors is mostly non-existent. Kentucky Business Incentive programs are structured in ways that disadvantage the region. Pay scales set by the state to attract economic development are too low to live on. Further, the Purchase Region Industrial Park study confirmed a number of liabilities inherent to the region: an aging manufacturing workforce, weak ties to industry allies, basic employability issues (background checks, drug testing, absenteeism), skills shortages in engineering and programming, the low profile of the region among potential investors and employers, skills restructuring leaving some workers behind, competing mega-sites with better availability to industrial land, and tensions between traditional and emerging energy sources.
- \$ **ASSET: Access to Social Services:** Most residents are quite pleased with the region’s support for the health care and social welfare of its citizens. Part of the small-town charm is doctors and nurses who are attentive to residents, make house calls, and understand the needs of all of their patients. Medivac helicopter service to the Mayfield



hospital is available for critical emergencies. The community's "love your neighbor" ethic means that its large senior citizen population is well served by both excellent nursing homes and individual philanthropy. Substance abuse is a problem, but is not seen to be at the same crisis levels faced by many other rural communities. Faith-based programs centered at local churches have been invaluable resources for both addressing emergency needs and supporting recovery efforts. A successful drug court serving Ballard and Carlisle Counties has achieved high success rates for treatment and decreased recidivism.

- ▶ **RED FLAG: Distance to Emergency Services:** With the nearest hospitals in Paducah and Mayfield usually more than a 30-minute drive away, there is local concern that new employers -- particularly in those industries where workplace injuries are unavoidable -- may be worried about locating a facility in the region. Additionally, with economic growth comes crime and drugs, and the River Counties currently don't boast the necessary resources to address increases in those areas.

## **Phase One Actions**

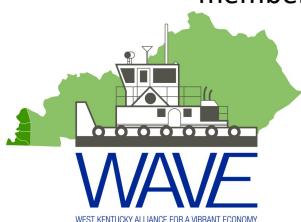
From the identification of the assets and red flags listed above came the following actions in Phase One of the WAVE initiative.

### **1. ESTABLISH AND ENGAGE A PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE:**

One of the key recommendations for action was the establishment of a WAVE Steering Committee, an informal governing body to direct Phase One actions. The Steering Committee – listed on page 2 of this report -- ultimately is responsible for ensuring implementation of the Strategic Plan. The committee includes committed public sector and private institution champions who have committed to the Project for the long haul, and who have pledged to facilitate the involvement and support of the region's constituents. The Steering Committee convenes monthly – by conference call where convenient and in person when necessary. CivicPoint will staff the Steering Committee in Phase One – beginning in Phase Two, an Executive Director would be hired to manage these activities.

Action items for the Project Steering Committee include:

- Serve as chairs for the Implementation Committees below and solicit membership in each committee.



- Plan for, promote, and successfully execute the fall Confluences.
- Develop long term plans to formalize regional cooperation, such as the creation of a regional community foundation, economic development board and/or a chamber of commerce. These institutions would be responsible for funding shared service initiatives, long term planning and marketing of regional efforts, as well as recruiting businesses, skilled workers and tourists to the four counties.
- Work with major private land owners and state officials to develop a land management plan to facilitate new industries and economic growth.
- Establish permanent economic development funds such as an endowment that captures Tobacco Settlement dollars, state and federal tax incentives and guaranteed loans.
- Provide site mapping of existing resources, identifying potential properties to locate new industries, support services and a potential labor pool.

The Steering Committee first met in person on July 14, 2016 at the Carlisle County Courthouse in Bardwell. The discussion included:

- The Panama Canal Expansion: A detailed summary of this presentation, which was the primary focus of this meeting, can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/jz3q6qh>.
- Twenty-First Century Agriculture: Former Agriculture Commissioner Jamie Comer led a discussion on how industrial hemp may prove to be a great agricultural resource for the area with a lot of economic potential.
- P3 - Public/Private Partnerships: State Representative Leslie Combs, sponsor of groundbreaking state P3 legislation, led a discussion on the financial tool that could be useful at the local level as a source for funding. The transparency of the process was emphasized.
- Renaming the Project: The naming involved participation from the community with the help of local radio and media outlets to encourage participation. (The name ultimately chosen by community vote was West Kentucky Alliance for a Vibrant Economy – WAVE).
- Confluence Plans: The group had preliminary discussions of dates, plans, costs, fundraising and media

2. **ESTABLISH AND ENGAGE A PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** The WAVE Project has formally enlisted partners from outside of the four counties that include: (1) top officials from state and federal government, (2) key stakeholders in the rest of the Purchase counties, and (3) regional and national representatives of private industries and industry



groups that could potentially help bring jobs and commerce to the River Counties. The WAVE Advisory Committee – listed on Page 3 of this report -- is invited to participate in steering and implementation committee meetings, participate in the Confluence, and most importantly, advise the Project on the steps to be taken to promote economic development opportunities.

3. **ESTABLISH AND ENGAGE IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEES:** The key work to be done in the months ahead will be performed by Implementation Committees. Focus group participants and other community leaders identified by the Steering Committee have been asked to join the six Implementation Committees outlined below. Over the summer of 2016, Implementation Committees took responsibility for the action items listed below, which involved research and identification of assets, needs, resources and allies. These working meetings will involve key local and state officials and stakeholders who will be tasked with developing a strategic plan moving forward, assigning deadlines and responsibilities, and securing the buy-in of local residents and state and federal public officials.

**a. Regional Port Authority**

The most discussed and debated local priority related to the opportunity on the Mississippi is the creation of a four-county regional port authority. Local rivalries have already reared their head in terms of siting. A consensus was reached to develop a four county port authority that manages a new port terminal in Wickliffe at or near the site of the closed Verso paper mill, and works closely with other port authorities in the region – including the Hickman/Fulton County Port Authority and the Paducah/McCracken County Port Authority – to coordinate planning in the region. Given its location near the Ohio and the nature of the water flow, the Wickliffe site could emerge as one of the largest and successful ports in the country; but efforts must also focus on how the new authority can boost traffic and business into the Hickman port as well.

Members: David Gallagher (Chair), Jonathan Miller (Staff) Greg Terry, Jim Martin, Kenny Wilson, Vicki Viniard, Jim LeFevre, Roy Riley, Bob Jackson, David Rambo, Tom Hodges, Judy Stephens, Bobby Miller, Katie Moyer, Corky Peek, Charlie Martin, Greg Cirlin, George Lane, Barry Kelley

Phase One Action Items:



- Discuss the development of a four-county agreement on a new port authority and the priorities for each port facility. Legally establish the port authority with governing input from all four counties.
- Meet with officials in New Orleans and the barge and shipping industry to understand the size, scope and content of potential new traffic that will result from the Panama Canal Expansion, as well as the potential for the region to emerge as a manufacturing and/or service and support center for the new generation of container-on-vessel shipping.
- Negotiate with Verso officials concerning the use of the idled plant and/or Verso land for the new Wickliffe port facility
- Meet with potential private sector partners in the port development, to secure their financial support of the Strategic Project, as well as their involvement in the community.
- Assess and evaluate infrastructure needs: transportation, energy, water, communications, wastewater, industrial projects, long and short term utility planning.
- Explore the creation of an EB-5 regional center – or partnering with an existing regional center such as the Bluegrass International Fund – to help attract international investment in the authority.
- Work with the Governor’s Office and Senator McConnell’s staff to identify potential sources of federal funding to assist in the port’s development.

Meetings: The Port Authority Committee first met on July 14 in the Carlisle County Courthouse in Bardwell. The discussion included:

- Steps to Establish Port Authority: (1) Develop Interlocal Cooperation Agreement; (2) Pass ordinance; (3) Judges appoint authority members
- Panama Canal and other Transportation Options. River industry expert Bobby Miller led a discussion on the economic potential of a port authority. Miller concluded that the expansion of the Panama Canal is not likely to affect the area for several months, but there are other immediate needs that a new riverport could viably serve today. He recommended a focus on south-bound traffic, especially grain. The area already has grain elevators, and could get companies interested if there is a viable port.



- The Verso Paper Mill in Wickliffe could serve as a good site for a riverport facility. There is already infrastructure in place and it could save a lot of money to use it.
- Foreign Trade Zones: Katharine Fischman led a discussion on the potential designation of the authority as a FTZ, but the application process is time consuming and expensive. A solution may be to join an already-existing FTZ located in Paducah.
- Bobby Miller took the lead on identifying a “hit list” of industry players with needs e.g., grain companies, oil companies, towers, barge management companies, logistics companies, etc. A loading facility on KY side of river could potentially benefit these groups.

Progress Being Made:

- On September 8, the WAVE Project announced the establishment of the state’s first multi-county, multi-municipality riverport authority, joining all four River County governments and the City of Wickliffe, which would be the likely site of a new port terminal. The new Authority will meet for the first time on September 9, at 10 AM at the Carlisle County Courthouse in Bardwell. The following individuals have been selected to serve as the first Board of Directors of the new Authority:
  - Representing Ballard County and Wickliffe: Mayor George Lane and Charlie Martin
  - Representing Carlisle County: Judge Executive Greg Terry and David Rambo
  - Representing Fulton County: Former Judge Executive David Gallagher and Lynn Major
  - Representing Hickman County: Judy Stephens and Bruce Kimball
- It is important to note – the establishment of the Authority does not necessarily mean that a new port terminal will be built. There are months ahead of intense meetings and negotiations to be conducted; and if in the end, there is not sufficient private sector support, the counties will not proceed in a manner that puts taxpayer dollars at risk. The WAVE project then would focus on the many other exciting opportunities identified in its Strategic Plan.
- Upon the formal establishment of the port authority, the Port Authority implementation committee has now transitioned into an advisory function, as opposed to a separate group with separate meetings.



- Representatives of the four counties, as well as the Economic Development Cabinet, have begun meeting with Verso officials to discuss disposition of that plant, and potential use as a port terminal.
- Bobby Miller will be leading efforts to set up meetings with river industry leaders with potential for involvement in the development of a new port authority terminal.

**b. Tourism**

In what is perhaps the best existing model for a four-county collaboration, KYGRRO has done an extraordinary job developing a strong foundation for a coordinated eco-, adventure- and cultural-tourism initiative in the River Counties. There is no need to reinvent the wheel – however, this Strategic Project's value is to bring new resources to the KYGRRO effort, as well as to shine a spotlight on their great work to attract the attention, support and attendance of the rest of the state. Most significantly, this initiative can help pool the resources of the four counties, the Purchase region, and the state to help achieve the vision of a Great River Road trail that supplements the scenic beauty with lodging, restaurants, boutiques, adventure tourism, and other, diverse programs with a small-town feel, similar to what has been created in Eastern Tennessee.

Members: Norma Pruitt (Chair), Brooke Parker (Staff), Bobby Clark, Kristen Branscum, Jeff Campbell, Melissa Goodman, Megan Koch, Deana O'Neal, Ivan Potter, Linda Strong, Thea Vowell, Ricky Waldon

Phase One Action Items:

- Refine strategic advertising and marketing programs, with aggressive media and social media outreach and promotion. Within this, develop a coherent regional brand, provide festival training, and share rosters of key events.
- Meet with representatives of restaurant, retail and lodging industries to share regional needs, seek advice on plans going forward and solicit private sector partners for the Strategic Project, in order to develop a trail system that combines adventure tourism (ATVs, bikes, zip lines) with cafes featuring local cuisine and boutiques with Kentucky products, while exploring the construction of a marina, a water park, and passenger rail.



- Meet with representatives of the Cherokee and Chickasaw Nations to offer them a homecoming to the region, securing their involvement in the Strategic Project and giving them ownership of plans to develop the Trail of Tears and the Wickliffe Mounds.
- Meet with officials at the state Tourism Cabinet and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to help address obstacles to tourism development and secure support for tourism initiatives, including marketing of existing sites and events.

Meetings: The Tourism Committee first met on August 2 in the Carlisle County Extension Office in Bardwell, and had several followup phone conferences. The discussions included:

- A strategic plan for advertising and marketing programs
- A coherent regional brand
- Identifying needs and complete trail system of the Great River Road
- Festival training and scheduling roster
- Meeting with representatives of restaurant, retail and lodging industries to share regional needs
- Seeking advice on plans going forward and solicit private sector partners
- Identifying and educating community producers on KY Proud labeling.

#### Progress Being Made:

- The Tourism Committee identified the suggested dates for the Fall Confluence best suited for critical partners as October 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>.
- As part of the Tourism Committee meeting for the Confluence, Commissioner Branscum offered a “Tourism Boot Camp” to be presented by her staff from the Department of Travel and Tourism.
- The committee was tasked with reserving Columbus-Belmont Park for the conference day and identify local restaurants/caterers to showcase local cuisine for lunch at the event. The committee also identified lodging opportunities in the region for guests who will be driving in and staying for the two days.

#### **c. Agriculture Technology**

With the potential for a new port authority securing the region’s place in the emerging development of Mississippi River traffic, there is significant potential for dramatic growth in the region’s agriculture footprint. Traditional crops and existing



livestock pose development opportunities, but even more exciting are the potential prospects for profit driven by new crops such as industrial hemp and by biotechnology developments. With the partnership of Murray State, a regional leader in agriculture technology, the four counties are poised to play a major role in 21<sup>st</sup> century agriculture.

Members: Brian Hobbs (Co-chair), John McCuiston, (Co-chair), Nolan Jackson (Staff), Robert Burrow, Dr. Tony Brannon, Dr. Brian Parr, Glenn Reid, Judy Stephens, Brandon Wilson, Kyle Yancey

Phase One Action Items:

- In conjunction with Murray State Agriculture Dean Tony Brannon, explore work being done to foster biotechnology research and development of new crops, including the development of canola and industrial hemp processing facilities, as well as the long-term creation of a regional biotech and agri-science school/job training center such as in northeast North Carolina.
- Meet with the state Farm Bureau and Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles to assess the market opportunities for traditional crops and position the region to grow with the Mississippi River traffic.
- Work with Commissioner Quarles and officials at the US Department of Agriculture to help secure federal and state grant and loan opportunities.
- Meet with leading agri-business companies to encourage their involvement in the Strategic Project and the industry's development in the region.
- Develop plans to implement and promote local farmers' markets and farm to school programs.

Meetings: The first meeting of the Agriculture Technology committee took place on August 3 at Clinton Bank in Clinton, and held several follow-up phone conferences. The discussion included:

- The committee agreed that its purpose is to outline and implement an economic development vision related to agriculture technology in the region.
- The committee agreed to focus on: (1) Harnessing increased Mississippi River traffic as Panama Canal expands; (2) Partnering with Murray State University in skills and technical training and hemp crop exploration; (3)



Developing and supporting local farmers' initiatives, including the Clinton Farmers Market; (4) Identifying potentially sustainable new crops for the region and new markets for existing crops in the region; (5) Integrating technology and support services so they better communicate throughout the region; and (6) Promoting available streams of agri-financing, including available public and private monies.

- The committee identified several key issues related to its focus, including: (1) Regional demand for highly-skilled technicians fluent in the language of automated machines used in farming operations, in partnership with Murray State University and area high schools; (2) Identifying and promoting available streams of agri-financing—USDA and National Science Foundation federal grant monies; Kentucky Agriculture Financing Corporation and Kentucky Agriculture Development Board; counties' Tobacco Settlement distributions; and supportive local lenders, including Clinton Bank; (3) An abundance of biomass and pulpwood and the need to find open markets for those commodities; (4) Infrastructural needs in getting products (animal products in particular) to market more efficiently—expanding highway 68/80 from Mayfield to Columbus; expanding highway 51 from the Tennessee line to Wickliffe; and reinforcing or rebuilding bridges into Illinois, for example; (5) Partnering with the Port Authority to develop and make use of acreage owned by the Westvaco paper mill facilities; (6) Exploring use of the Verso plant as a grainery or hemp oil refinery; and (7) Connecting local industrial specialists with farmers who need them (i.e. well-drillers, electricians, etc.)

The second meeting of the committee was telephonic on September 7. The discussion included:

- The revised Confluence structure. On Monday afternoon of the Confluence, the committee will host a panel discussion. Instead of presenting a programmed breakout session with guest speakers, each with a time-limited speaking slot, the committee will facilitate a broader discussion with expert panelists. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage panelists through direct discussion.
- With respect to discussion topics, our first meeting highlighted several potential areas of focus, including (1) identifying new agri-business and economic development opportunities for local farmers (i.e. hemp, hogs);



- (2) identifying profitable markets for existing crops; (3) promoting available state and federal agri-financing monies (i.e. state and federal grants and loans); (4) future use of the Westvaco facilities; (5) supporting a granary in Ballard County that captures local hauling (that might otherwise travel across state lines); and (6) coordinating technology communication systems in the region.
- Dean Brannon summarized Murray State University's inheritance of Eagle Rest Plantation, 500+ acres of real property in Ballard County. The plantation presents exciting agriculture and education opportunities for Murray State University and the Four Rivers region.

Progress Being Made:

- In August it was announced that long-time district judge Jimmy Don Robinson donated his 534-acre farm and two homes in Ballard County to the Murray State University Foundation to benefit the Hutson School of Agriculture. As key members of the WAVE project Advisory Committee and its Agriculture Implementation Committee, Foundation President Bob Jackson and Hutson School of Agriculture Dean Tony Brannon will keep the WAVE project officials apprised of the farm's operation and development as they determine the most effective use of these properties to preserve the Robinson legacy and to provide benefits to the University and the WAVE core mission of economic development.
- The committee is designing programming for its session at the Confluence, to include:
  - Emphasis of regional career readiness and the success of area schools' dual-credit programs with Murray State University and developing new technical training programs;
  - Education on the potential introduction of industrial hemp to the region, though the committee admitted concerns about the viability of harvesting hemp efficiently and profitably;
  - Promotion of funding streams available to local farmers, including by representatives from USDA and Kentucky Department of Agriculture; and
  - Perspectives from other Ohio River counties' port authorities and their economic development initiatives along the Ohio River

d. **Regional Asset and Infrastructure Development**



While the WAVE initiative will identify and try to secure any potential opportunity for public funding, the culture of the region favors a “hand up” as opposed to a “handout.” Accordingly, a critical goal of the initiative will be to unleash the private sector in efforts to promote regional assets and help build out the necessary infrastructure – physical and technological – to spur job growth in the new information age economy. Moreover, recent passage of public/private partnership (P3) legislation in Frankfort will provide another tool for the toolkit, a new financing strategy to promote 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies, infrastructure, and economic models.

Members: Jeff Campbell (Co-chair), Mark Cauley (Co-chair), Steve Robertson (Staff), Leslie Combs, Corey Peek, Roy Riley, Cubb Stokes, Anthony Wright, Jim LeFevre, Bob Jackson, Tom Hodges, Greg Cirlin

Phase One Action Items:

- Meet with officials at KentuckyWired, the new statewide affordable broadband program to understand the scope of their project, secure their involvement in the Strategic Plan, and attempt to make the river region an early model for its innovation.
- Expanding off of the successful early ventures in Hickman and Fulton, secure the participation of an energy savings company in the Project, and ask them to perform a free energy efficiency assessment of the region’s public building stock and that of leading private property owners. Ultimately, a region-wide energy efficiency program will create jobs in the high-tech green construction industry, necessitating close collaboration with high school vo-tech programs and community college and university instruction.
- Meet with experts in P3 transportation projects to determine how to apply that model to potential new infrastructure – roads, bridges, water, wastewater, rail, etc. -- in the River Counties and secure the involvement of large private firms in the P3 space.
- Study P3 approaches, and engage the non-profit sector—to explore providing shared regional services: health care, substance abuse, public safety and corrections.

Meetings: The first meeting of the RAID committee took place on August 17 at the Hickman County Extension Office in Clinton. Discussion centered around



energy efficiency projects (see below) and the development of P3 initiatives to help improve area infrastructure.

Progress Being Made: Recognizing that energy performance improvements of their buildings and utilities produce extraordinary tax savings for their citizens, the Cities of Hickman and Fulton in 2016 have announced major energy efficiency initiatives, in conjunction with Louisville's Harshaw Trane, projected to save taxpayers millions of dollars. In August, the Fulton County Schools announced receipt of a \$27,505 check from TVA following energy upgrades under a guaranteed energy savings contract with Harshaw. Now, on behalf of the WAVE initiative, Harshaw is conducting free inspections of other River County public buildings to determine the potential for region-wide initiatives that not only would produce tax savings, but could ultimately help create a new energy efficiency job force in the area.

#### e. Education and Workforce Development

With the region boasting strong educational leadership in both its public schools and in nearby institutions of higher education, there already has been much work done with cradle to college collaboration, particularly with dual credit programs. But with the new opportunities posed by the new Mississippi River traffic, it will be critical to re-calibrate to ensure that there is sufficient training for the jobs that could be created. Additionally, this will require greater efforts to promote adult education, to train folks that have lost their jobs or looking for new opportunities, and to become versed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

Members: Casey Allen (Chair), Kevin Havelda (Staff), Jay Simmons, Casey Henderson, Aaron Collins, Tamara Smith, David Meinschein, Mary Anne Medlock, Dr. Steve Freeman, Dr. Tim Todd, Chris Woolridge, Dave Gallagher

#### Phase One Action Items:

- Take a full inventory of educational assets in four county systems to determine sufficiency of career-readiness programs, college and career fairs, dual credit programs, and information age technical programs such as computer coding and energy efficient construction.
- Meet with the Rudolph family and its Four Rivers Foundation to assess their plans going forward and secure their support for both the Project and new education and job training initiatives.



- Meet with officials in New Orleans and the barge and shipping industry to understand the potential new jobs that would be created as a result of the Panama Canal Expansion. Secure the participation of those companies that will need to hire new workers both in the Strategic Project as well as ongoing job training programs.
- Examine the establishment of an employment training/retraining mechanism in the region focused on unemployed and under-employed individuals.
- Explore introduction into school curricula education for entrepreneurship, studying other U.S. and international models to create an entrepreneurial mindset among children in the region.

Meetings: The first meeting of the Education and Workforce Development committee was held on August 2 at the Hickman County High School library in Clinton. The group held several follow-up phone conferences. The discussions included:

- Purpose of Committee -- to identify how to promote an already excellent K-12 system and how to address the deficit in adult workforce training.
- \$100 Million Workforce Development Grant. The first round of applications was due in August, and there was discussion as to whether this committee should submit an application. Mary Anne Medlock's discussed the PADD's existing application which includes 1) Enhancing Secondary Training; 2) Creating Career Pathways for High Schools and 3) Focus on Adult Learners. Dr. Steve Freeman also discussed his work for WKCTC and the grant process.
- Asset Inventory
  - Open Communication/Teamwork between Four Counties (Superintendents). This could potentially be a huge advantage to being awarded a Workforce Development Grant, since the River Counties could share resources and facilities with one another.
  - Dual Credit -- This program owes much of its success to the Rudolph Foundation; is unique to the area.
- Obstacle Inventory:
  - Exporting Skilled Workers out of region
  - Adult Training (quick turn-around)
  - Transportation (could be solved with emphasis on technology-based classrooms; online learning centers for all four counties)



- Partners already at the table v. outside thinking
  - Public Assistance
- Other Ideas/Issues Discussed:
  - Waivers- Communication is a problem: effective communication with someone inside KDE to obtain waivers for ATCs and other regulatory burdens
  - Hiring Adjuncts from recent retiring teachers
  - Development of an alternative area high school, for separate career paths and vocational instruction

Progress Being Made: Because of the short timetable for the Workforce Development grant, it was determined that a separate application should not be submitted this month. However, a new round of applications will occur in January 2017 which will be a real opportunity for this project to secure needed new funds for private/public workforce training initiatives. In the course of the intervening months, the committee will:

- Inventory each County's Assets (furthering the Asset/Obstacle exercise on a micro level per county in order to increase communication about what each county can offer the other): K-12 programs; Dual Credit programs; adult education; workforce training; transportation capacity; Decision Makers (and what they're able to do)
- Explore closely the concept of an alternative high school and online education.
- Research a pilot adult training welding program to take place at night in Ballard county
- Establish contacts with outside models (like area high schools and ATCs in Tennessee)
- Once the port authority vision becomes more clear, explore private partners who can help fund an innovative project that would help develop the kinds of jobs needed in the new economic construct.

**f. Small Business, Entrepreneurism, Seed Capital and Leadership Development**

While the Project's top economic goal will be to attract new River-related employers to the region, any long-term sustained growth in a rural region will rely on the development of small business and entrepreneurs. Often times these firms will provide goods or services to larger manufacturing companies; other times they will carve out niches in international markets, made available by



Internet technologies. Considerable work and study has been done nationwide to understand small business development and to nurture and empower the spirit of entrepreneurship. Such research should be identified and employed in local efforts in the four counties.

Members: Megan Koch (Chair), Bobby Clark (Staff), Rob Austin, Fred Baumann, Robert Burrow, Martha Campbell, Loretta Daniel, Marta Elliott, Bob Faulkner, Melissa Goodman, Al Hubler, Daniel Kimbell, Jim LeFevre, Tad Long, Katie Moyer, Corky Peek, Deena Pittman, Ivan Potter, Norma Pruitt, Linda Strong, Chris Wooldridge

Phase One Action Items:

- Explore development of an angel investor venture capital fund, securing investment from firms and businesses interested in the region, benefiting local entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- Explore the establishment of regional funds to support youth development and startup ventures, with the assistance of the state Economic Development Cabinet, and bring greater attention to small business development centers such as the successful program managed by the Purchase Area Development District.
- Meet with experts at Murray State and organizers of the Eastern Kentucky SOAR initiative to understand entrepreneurship models and apply them to the region. Develop ideas concerning businesses that can be conducted from remote locations.
- Develop a young professionals program in the four counties – modeled after Leadership Kentucky, to help foster leadership development in the region.
- Meet with University of Kentucky officials about bringing free Youth Engagement Leadership Program – focused on youth development in smaller, rural communities – to schools in the area.
- Meet with Delta Regional Authority officials to develop local programming that meets that agency's strategic objectives, therefore qualifying for federal funding. This would include projects that promote social innovation and entrepreneurship, attracting and retaining talent, high-growth business development, and economic resilience and disaster recovery (with the New Madrid Fault posing potential danger).



- Study new initiatives that promote digital entrepreneurship, worker development and community building programs that use state-of-the-art job creation tools and highly focused entrepreneurial training to create jobs in rural areas – connecting local entrepreneurs virtually and in-person to mentors, investors and resource providers -- typically involving online customer service, e-commerce and sustainability.

**Meetings:** The first meeting of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship committee was held on August 2 at the Carlisle County Extension Office in Bardwell. The group held several follow-up phone conferences. The discussions included:

- Loretta Daniel, Director, Kentucky Innovation Network office at Murray State University talked about the culture of entrepreneurship and focus on youth and education. The Kentucky Angel Network funds and other opportunities to help entrepreneurs through other state and federal funding options available for your company like the SBIR Matching Funds Program and the Kentucky Enterprise Fund.
- Ivan Potter talked about 60-80 Dell computers that are available for small business incubators in the four counties.
- Chris Wooldridge, West Kentucky District Director at Murray State University talked about their services that provide one-on-one confidential consultations at no cost to existing and potential entrepreneurs in Western Kentucky. The SBDC also meets the educational needs of the local small business community by offering a variety of low cost training programs.
- There is a Young Professionals group in Paducah and everyone agreed that this type of group would be very helpful for the four river counties.
- Bobby Clark, President of Sustainable Business Ventures, provided an overview of new initiatives that promote digital entrepreneurship, worker development and community building programs that use state-of-the-art job creation tools and highly focused entrepreneurial training to create jobs in rural areas.
- The Kentucky Entrepreneur Hall of Fame (KEHOF) from 2010-2015 has inducted 29 entrepreneurs including Billy Harper and John Williams from Paducah. KEHOF inductees also serve as mentors. This committee needs to identify other very successful entrepreneurs in the four river counties and recruit them as mentors.



Progress Being Made: In order to secure needed funds to jump-start any new initiatives, the committee is studying the Delta Regional Authority strategic plan objectives and developing plans to access this support. This would include projects that promote social innovation and entrepreneurship, attracting and retaining talent, high-growth business development, and economic resilience and disaster recovery.

#### 4. HOST THE FIRST ANNUAL WAVE CONFLUENCE:

The eyes of the Commonwealth – and the presence of many of its leaders, including Governor Matt Bevin – were on the grounds of Columbus-Belmont State Park, as the region gathered for the first annual “Confluence” of the River County Economic Development Project on October 24 and 25, 2016. The two-day event involved leaders from across the state and country who participated in forums focused on the area’s economic opportunity, as well as self-guided tours of the region’s extraordinary ecology and cultural landmarks.

The Confluence served as the grand debut of the initiative’s new logo, featured on the cover of this report. The logo was the subject of a design contest won by three Ballard Memorial High School students -- AJ Ross, Grant Dunning, and Connor Booking -- using the new project name, which was reached after an online vote of community residents.

The Confluence was sponsored by private sector partners to help advance the multi-community efforts. Unlike typical events which charge fees for prominent advertising, the River Counties identified true corporate partners – joining local officials and community leaders over the course of the initiative. Indeed, the money raised as part of this sponsorship effort will be utilized well beyond the event itself. Because of the generosity of our sponsors, WAVE raised more than \$50,000 (including in-kind services) to enable WAVE to pay for all of its Phase One activities. Sponsorship dollars were used to finance the successful execution of the First Annual WAVE Confluence, including expenditures for food, transportation, lodging, and consulting fees for the Confluence and followup work; and to pay the startup fees for the West Kentucky Regional Riverport Authority, including costs for legal advice, insurance, title work, travel and administration.

The Confluence’s agenda – and listing of private sector sponsors -- can be found at [Appendix D](#).



More than 225 people participated in the Confluence program. The speakers' list reads like an all-star government official and industry leader gathering in New York or Washington, DC; but instead, public officials and industry leaders traveled to this rural remote area to join in fellowship and brainstorming for true economic development. Much of the event was videotaped by Murray State's television station. We will be sharing the video online once edited.

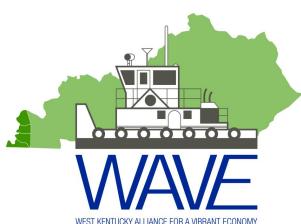
Outlined in the next section are the Phase Two Recommendations for Action that emerged from the illuminating discussions at the Confluence.

## **Phase Two Recommendations for Action**

As the WAVE Initiative transitions from a consultant-driven strategic planning process to a locally organized plan of implementation, the following recommendations for action are offered for Phase Two:

**1. Identify and Solicit Phase Two Funding Sources:** Initiatives that could truly transform the River County region into a force for economic revitalization will, of course, require funding. While ultimately any success will emerge by unleashing the private sector to create jobs and economic development, many of the initial ambitious plans – especially the hiring of staff – will require a financial jumpstart. Fortunately, the Confluence identified a number of potential funding sources:

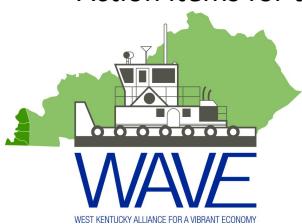
- a. The Delta Regional Authority – represented at the Confluence by its Co-Chairman, Christopher Masingill -- has already offered to help identify financial assistance to help ensure appropriate support for Phase Two of WAVE.
- b. The U.S. Maritime Administration – represented at the Confluence by its national Administrator, Paul N. Jaenichen, Sr, and its Inland Waterways Gateway Director, Branden Criman – has offered its assistance in identifying federal grant and loan programs to assist in WAVE startup activities. The national Waterway Council – a leading association of private river industries, represented at the Confluence by Mike Toohey, CEO and President -- has also offered assistance in identifying federal funding and private sector partners.
- c. The Small Business Administration – represented at the Confluence by its District Director, Ralph Ross, and the State Director of its SCORE program, Al Hublar – can be a font of support in securing dollars for business development and entrepreneurial mentorship.



- d. Governor Matt Bevin – the Confluence’s headlining speaker – has secured from the General Assembly millions of workforce training dollars to be awarded to grant applicants across the state; the second tranche of grant opportunities will be open for application in January 2017, offering WAVE’s educational projects some potential funding sources.
- e. Local philanthropies, such as the Four Rivers Foundation (represented at the Confluence by Lisa and Robbie Rudolph) and the Community Foundation of West Kentucky (represented at the Confluence by Tony Watkins) have already been extraordinarily generous to the region and may want to participate in future activities.
- f. River industry associations and businesses – with dozens of representatives at the Confluence – have already served as Sponsors of the initiative and can be asked to join in public-private partnerships.
- g. Special financing opportunities may be made available through an alliance with the Paducah/McCracken County Riverport Port Authority under its already-established Foreign Trade Zone program; as well as through the creation of an EB-5 regional center – or partnering with an existing regional center such as the Bluegrass International Fund – to help attract international investment.

**2. Hire an Executive Director:** As WAVE transitions from a consultant-driven study to a locally-run action plan, it is critical that a full-time individual – hopefully from the Purchase Area -- be hired to guide the process going forward. As money is being raised to hire such an individual, the Ballard County Economic Development Authority has stepped forward to provide Executive Director services free of charge over the next several months. And since the WAVE Executive Director will double as the Executive Director of the West Kentucky Regional Riverport Authority, the Authority is tasked with raising the necessary funds and conducting interviews for the dual position, in consultation with the four River County Judge Executives.

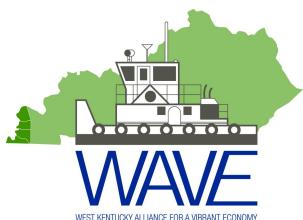
**3. Envision and Execute Plans for a new Riverport Terminal – if There’s Sufficient Private Sector Demand:** The signature accomplishment of Phase One of the WAVE strategic effort was the creation of the state’s first multi-county, multi-municipality riverport authority, a time-intensive accomplishment that demonstrated the region’s bipartisan political unity and dedication to progress. In Phase Two, the West Kentucky Regional Riverport Authority is tasked with assessing the feasibility of a new terminal in Wickliffe, with priority one being the identification of private sector partners to determine interest. Action items for the Authority include:



- a. Identifying a potential port terminal site, and conducting the necessary study and research to determine viability. For months, the region's first site option has been the idled Verso paper plant, but should that not prove ultimately viable, alternative sites must be identified and examined.
- b. Following up with officials in the agri-business industry that participated in the Confluence to determine the desirability of a new port terminal to assist with downriver exporting needs, particularly using Kentucky-grown agricultural commodities.
- c. Following up with officials in the barge and shipping industry who attended the Confluence to understand the size, scope and content of potential new traffic that might result from the Panama Canal Expansion – or other new transportation and infrastructure developments -- as well as the potential for the region to emerge as a manufacturing and/or service and support center for the new generation of container-on-vessel shipping.
- d. Ultimately identifying potential private sector partners in the port development, to secure their support of the project, as well as their involvement in the community.
- e. Assessing and evaluating infrastructure needs: transportation, energy, water, communications, wastewater, industrial projects, long and short term utility planning, and working with state and federal officials to help realize the solution; and meeting with experts in P3 transportation projects to determine how to apply that model to potential new infrastructure – roads, bridges, water, wastewater, rail, etc. -- in the River Counties and secure the involvement of large private firms in the P3 space.

**4. Take Concrete Steps to Improve Cell Service and Broadband Access in the Region.** The only sour note at the Confluence was the inability for most participants to access the outside world at the state park, as their cell phones struggled to find service (often times leading to annoying, and sometimes humorous, disruptions of the A/V system.) But the frustration illuminated a key objective of the initiative – the need to improve cell and broadband access in the region. Action items for the WAVE initiative should include:

- a. Meeting with officials at KentuckyWired, the new statewide affordable broadband program, to understand the scope of their project, secure their involvement in the WAVE initiative, and attempt to make the river region an early model for its innovation. While the actual statewide broadband link won't reach the region for at least a year, the area can take the preliminary steps needed to position itself for immediate access once the cable has been laid. Connected Nation out of Bowling



- Green can be a valuable resource in assisting with community planning efforts to prepare for broadband.
- b. Partnering with Murray State University which is already envisioning the development of a wireless broadband feasibility study.
- c. Working with local and regional phone companies to construct new cell towers in the region, securing federal funding for those efforts if necessary.

## **5. Develop a Regional Energy Efficiency Initiative to Save Energy Costs and Create High-Tech Jobs:**

**5. Develop a Regional Energy Efficiency Initiative to Save Energy Costs and Create High-Tech Jobs:** Expanding off of the successful early ventures engaged in by the cities of Hickman and Fulton, the municipal governments in the four counties are in the process of exploring a coordinated regional effort to promote energy efficiency, starting with improvements to municipal buildings. Ultimately, such a program could create jobs in the high-tech green construction industry, necessitating close collaboration with high school vo-tech programs and community college and university instruction. Action items include:

- a. Completing work on the current energy efficiency assessment of the region's public building stock, to then determine the feasibility of a region-wide energy performance program involving public and private buildings.
- b. Working with Murray State University which is exploring similar ventures on campus and could serve as an educational training center for long-term efforts.
- c. Meeting with private businesses to explore use of the state's new public-private partnership legislation to develop regional water and wastewater modernization programs.
- d. Assisting small businesses in the River Counties to apply for US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Energy for American Program (REAP) grants – that provide 25% of funding to offset the cost of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects that significantly reduce utility costs.

## **6. Inventory Regional Educational Assets to be Prepared for River Industry Job Growth:**

While it is premature to develop educational curricula for specific industries given the current lack of certainty for long-term economic opportunities in the region, it is certainly timely to prepare the region by analyzing its strengths and weaknesses and exploring other state models that have been demonstrated to be effective in rural areas. Action items for Phase Two should include:

- a. Conducting an inventory of each county's specific educational assets, including K-12 programs; dual credit programs; adult education; workforce training; transportation capacity; and the abilities of local decision makers.



- b. Exploring the concept of an alternative high school and online education, and potentially accessing a state workforce training grant to fund startup costs.
- c. Researching a pilot adult training welding program to take place at night in Ballard County.
- d. Establishing contacts with outside models (like area high schools and ATCs in Tennessee).
- e. Once the port authority vision becomes more clear, exploring private partners who can help fund an innovative project that would help develop the kinds of jobs needed in the new economic construct.
- f. Garnering support from local industry to participate more directly in local schools in the form of career awareness, apprenticeship training opportunities, and other purposeful contact with local industry leaders, helping create the “push and the pull” effect so that graduates of local universities are invested to return to the region to work high-paying jobs in the industry.

## **7. Develop Programming for Small Businesses, Entrepreneurs, and Youth Development:**

As demonstrated by the success stories shared at the Confluence, the River Counties can emerge as a hub for small business and entrepreneurial innovation, modeling the region after other geographically remote rural areas that have spawned success in the new informational age economy. Action items for Phase Two should include:

- a. Developing a Purchase Area angel investor venture capital fund, securing investment from firms and businesses interested in the region, benefiting local entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- b. Establishing regional funds to support youth development and startup ventures, with the assistance of the state Economic Development Cabinet, and bring greater attention to small business development centers such as the successful program managed by the Purchase Area Development District.
- c. Developing a young professionals program in the four counties – modeled after Leadership Kentucky -- to help foster leadership development in the region; promoting the Kentucky Innovation Network’s Next Big Thing, a regional competition for high school students that promotes entrepreneurial innovation; and meeting with University of Kentucky officials about bringing to the region its Youth Engagement Leadership Program – focused on youth development in smaller, rural communities – to schools in the area.
- d. Meeting with Delta Regional Authority officials to develop local programming that meets that agency’s strategic objectives, therefore qualifying WAVE for federal funding. This would include projects that promote social innovation and



- entrepreneurship, attracting and retaining talent, high-growth business development, and economic resilience and disaster recovery (with the New Madrid Fault posing potential danger).
- e. Securing grant funding and private sector support for new initiatives that promote digital entrepreneurship, worker development and community building that use state-of-the-art job creation tools and highly focused entrepreneurial training to create jobs in rural areas – connecting local entrepreneurs virtually and in-person to mentors, investors and resource providers -- typically involving online customer service, e-commerce and sustainability.
  - f. Secure funding for the Kentucky Small Business Development Center’s “Grow Kentucky” economic gardening program that helps existing small businesses in the region focus on strategic growth challenges, providing assistance with market research, geographic information systems, search engine optimization and social media marketing.

**8. Promoting the Local Agricultural Economy:** As discussed at the Confluence, opportunities for local farmers, particularly in conjunction with the private agri-industries represented at the Confluence and the leaders at Murray State, are limitless. It is incumbent that in Phase Two, the region seizes the opportunity presented by the unprecedented region unity to benefit the already thriving farm community. Action items should include:

- a. Placing students in experiential training and internship opportunities with private agri-industries, which Brandon Wilson has implemented at Davis Brothers Farms. These efforts promote workforce readiness, inspire local careers in agriculture, and introduce young people to, and train them on, specialized equipment. Further, connecting young people with private partners builds bridges between young human capital and the region, incentivizing young people to remain in the region.
- b. Identifying facilities for a hemp refinery that could bring skilled jobs to the region and incentivize new crop production. Working with state Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles, and using new USDA funds that have just become available for hemp research, WAVE and its private sector partners could hire a consultant to study and identify existing, vacant facilities that can accommodate a refinery, or embark on new construction that can attract a refining operation.
- c. Congregating farming operations to share their specific workforce needs. Many local operators have mentioned needing on-site skilled specialists (to maintain and repair automated equipment, for example). Other locals have mentioned needing skilled laborers for ulterior projects—electrical, plumbing, etc. WAVE could



advertise these workforce needs collectively, connecting skilled laborers with the local operators and could solicit laborers to the region—from university agriculture schools, Chambers of Commerce and agriculture industries. Once local needs are identified, one by one, WAVE could use its resources to fill positions on behalf of local operators, acting as a quasi-Chamber of Commerce for an agriculture workforce.

- d. Include in the mission of the riverport authority research the demand for and feasibility of a grain elevator. As noted at the Confluence, the worth of a riverport partly depends on its technologies. To capture high levels of traffic, the regional riverport might include a grain elevator for loading and off-loading grain.
- e. Ensure that broadband access studies (see above) contemplate agricultural needs and concerns. As Barry Carson of Huston, Inc., mentioned during the Confluence panel discussion, broadband access is imperative for efficient automated processes on farms and interconnectivity of telecommunications in the region.
- f. Working with Murray State University, explore innovative uses of the recently-donated Eagle Rest Plantation in Ballard County, to determine the most effective use of these properties to preserve the Robinson family legacy and to provide benefits to the University and the WAVE core mission of economic development.



# **APPENDIX A**

## **THE PANAMA CANAL EXPANSION**

### ***And the Potential Economic Boost to Kentucky's Mississippi River Counties***

Upon its completion in June 2016, the \$5.2 billion, decade-in-the-making Panama Canal Expansion was the largest project undertaken at the Canal since its opening in 1914. The Expansion is intended to double the capacity of the Panama Canal by increasing the *number* of ships, through the addition of a new lane of traffic, and by increasing the *size* of ships, though a boost in the maximum allowed width and height: The 150% size increase will nearly triple the Canal's cargo capacity.

The Expansion will have a dramatic impact on U.S. maritime trade. Specifically, it will help drive down the cost of imports and permit U.S. exporters to have stronger access to Chinese and other Asian markets. Because of prior limits to Canal traffic, a vast majority of Asian imports are currently shipped to California ports and then transported by rail or truck to East Coast consumers. These ports have become deeply congested, and rail and truck transport are by far more expensive and energy-intensive than water travel. By permitting larger and heavier capacities through the Canal, importers and exporters will secure cheaper transportation to East Coast locations through New Orleans, via the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.

Gulf Coast ports – many of which were devastated by Hurricane Katrina, are looking at this as an opportunity for dramatic growth. Development of more extensive port infrastructure to accommodate the new traffic generated by the Expansion will also project the potential for significant water import traffic from Mexico, which currently exports via land billions of dollars of agriculture products, pharmaceuticals and manufactured goods. This opportunity for cheaper, more efficient water transport from Mexico's East Coast could further augment traffic up and down the Mississippi.

Fortunately, U.S. policymakers have anticipated this opportunity: Last year, the U.S. Department of Transportation designated an official “container-on-vessel” project to help move goods throughout the nation in a much more efficient manner. This form of shipping – which involves specifically made cargo ships capable of carrying hundreds of truck size containers – will relieve freight bottlenecks currently on the Mississippi, opening the River up to the expected increase in post-Expansion traffic.

Kentucky's four Mississippi River counties are ideally poised to seize the economic advantage created by the Expansion. The region is 800 miles upstream from New Orleans, via a route that involves no time-delaying lock facilities and is generally free from ice and weather hazards. The region's central location in the heart of mid-America places it as a potential transportation hub for significant population centers in the Heartland. Perhaps most significantly, Wickliffe's siting at the confluence of the Mississippi and the Ohio, places it as an essential pass-through to the lucrative markets of the upper Midwest and the East Coast.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Focus Group Attendees**

**FULTON COUNTY-Pontotoc Community Center, 9 -11 AM**  
**HICKMAN COUNTY-First United Methodist Church, 12-2 PM**  
**CARLISLE COUNTY-Extension Office, 3-5 PM**  
**BALLARD COUNTY-BBTC Building, 6-8 PM**

Allen, Casey	Ballard Co. Schools
Austin, Rob	Austin Insurance
Bean, P.W.	Bean Farm LLC
Bencini, Gaye	Hickman Co. Times
Buchanan, Jeremy	Purchase ADD
Burrow, Robert K.	Heritage Bank
Caldwell, Hugh	Fulton Co. EM
Callison, Henry	Fulton Co. Magistrate
Campbell, Anita	Ballard PVA
Campbell, Jeff	Retired
Campbell, Martha	Hickman Chamber
Carroll, Danny	State Senator
Collins, Aaron	Fulton County Superintendent
Cauley, Mark	PACRO
Crawford, Allison	WKMS
Curlin, Greg	Hickman Riverport
Davis, Nancy	Davis Farms
Dillard, Wynita	Hickman County Treasurer
Elrod, Clyde	Ballard Econ
Everett, Janece	Cong. Ed Whitfield
Ferguson, Kay	City of Columbus
Flowers, Chuck	Carlisle Extension
Fuzzell, Benita	Fulton Leader Newspaper
Gallagher, David	Retired
Goodman, Melissa	Hickman County Extension
Henderson, Casey	Hickman Co. Schools
Hobbs, Brian	Hutson Inc.



Hobbs, Roger	Farmer
Hodges, Tommy	Fulton Co. Judge's Office
Jones, George	Fulton Co. Fiscal Court
Kellett, Sheri	River Valley Ag Cr
Kimbell, Bruce	FCB
Koch, Megan	Rusted Roots Boutique
Lampe, Chad	WKMS
LeFevre, Jim	Ballard County EDA
Martin, Charlie	Ballard LLC
Martin, Jim	Fulton County Judge Executive
Mathis, Dawn	Co. Judge's Office
McCuston, John	Kentucky Farm Bureau
McCuston, Paula	Hickman Co. Extension
McCubbin, Rachel	U.S. Sen. Rand Paul
McTurner, Johnny	City of Hickman
Medlock, Mary Anne	Purchase ADD
Meinschein, David	Ballard Co. Schools
Miller, Jonathan	CivicPoint
Mitchell, Mattea	Hickman County Extension Office
Moyer, Katie	Governor's Office
Nelms, Billy	Fulton County Magistrate
O'Neal, Ricky	Carlisle County
O'Neal, Deana	Carlisle County
Pace, Jerry	Ballard County EDA
Parker, Brooke	CivicPoint
Pittman, Deena	FCB/Chamber
Potter, Ivan	West Ky Journal/City of Clinton
Potter, Mary	W Ky Journal
Prater, David	Mayor of Fulton
Pruitt, Greg	Hickman County EDA, Inc.
Pruitt, Norma	KYGRRO, Inc.
Puckett, Wendy	Fulton EDP
Pyron, Cheri	HC Gazette
Reid, Glenn	Clinton Bank
Rimbell, Bruce	FCB
Rodgers, Chris	Citizens Bank/EDP
Rudy, Steven	State Representative



Simmons, Jay	Carlisle County
Stephens, Judy	Stephens Farms
Stokes, Cubb	City of Fulton
Strong, Linda	Hickman Chamber
Stroud, Irvin	Hickman County
Sullivan, Emily	Gibson EMC
Sullivan, Terry	Fulton Co. ATC
Terry, Greg	Carlisle County Judge Executive
Todd, Jimmy	Airgas
Todd, Tim	MSU
Viniard, Carissa	Carlisle Co. FC
Viniard, Vicki	Ballard County Judge Executive
Voegeli, Dan	EDP – Fulton
Vowell, Thea	Fulton Tourism
Waldon, Ricky	Waldon Lodge
Weatherford, Debbie	Gibson EMC
Wilson, Brandon	Davis Brothers Farms
Wilson, Kenny	Hickman Co. Judge
Wood, John	BBTC
Wooldridge, Chris	Murray State University



## **APPENDIX C:**

### **Press Coverage**

The WAVE Project has already received extensive coverage in the state and local press, which can be found at the following links:

*Kentucky Sports Radio*

["Rebound on the River?"](#) July 3, 2016

*Lexington Herald-Leader*

["Panama Canal Expansion Could Have Economic Impact on Western Kentucky,"](#) June 26, 2016  
(article and podcast)

*Paducah Sun:*

["River Counties Seek to Build New Port,"](#) August 17, 2016  
["Riverport Authority Coming Together,"](#) August 22, 2016  
["River County Partnership will be Known as WAVE,"](#) September 9, 2016  
["Riverport Authority Looking for Private Investment,"](#) September 12, 2016  
["State, Federal Officials to Speak at Economic Development Forum,"](#) September 16, 2016  
["Bevin Lauds United Efforts in River Region Counties,"](#) October 25, 2016

*West KY Journal*

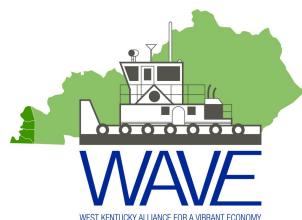
["River County Economic Development Project Looking for a New Name,"](#) August 17, 2016

WKMS Public Radio (Murray)

["Panama Canal Expansion Spurring Western Rive County Collaboration,"](#) May 26, 2016  
["River County Economic Development Project Seeks Public Input,"](#) August 18, 2016  
["A New WAVE of Economic Development in in Far Western Kentucky,"](#) September 9, 2016  
["Gov. Bevin to Headline 1<sup>st</sup> WAVE Confluence in Hickman County,"](#) October 14, 2016  
["Bevin Says Kentucky Needs More 'Shepherds' to Spur Economic Development,"](#) October 24, 2016

WPSD-TV (Paducah)

["River Counties Work to Establish Port Project,"](#) August 16, 2016  
["Four Counties Collaborating to Create New Jobs,"](#) August 16, 2016  
["Panama Canal Expansion Could Bring Jobs to River Counties,"](#) October 24, 2016



## **APPENDIX D**

### **GOLD SPONSORS**

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### **WESTERN KENTUCKY ALLIANCE for a VIBRANT ECONOMY (WAVE) Annual Confluence – Columbus Belmont State Park Convention Center**

#### **MONDAY, OCTOBER 24**

11 AM-Noon: REGISTRATION

Lunch and slide show of River County region highlights

Noon-1PM: CONFERENCE BEGINS

Convened by WAVE Chair, Carlisle County Judge Executive Greg Terry

Opening Prayer: Rev. Rodney Hill, Pastor, Fairview Baptist Church, La Center

Pledge of Allegiance: Fulton County Judge Executive Jim Martin

Presentation of new WAVE Logo by Judge Executive Greg Terry, Ballard County



**FINAL – 11/7/2016**

**46**

Superintendent Casey Allen and high school student winners of design contest

**Headline Speech:** The Honorable Matt Bevin, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Introduction by Charlie Martin, Secretary, West Kentucky Regional Riverport Authority

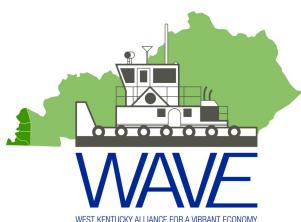
Welcoming Remarks by WAVE Co-chairs: County Judge Executives Greg Terry, Vicki Viniard, Kenny Wilson and Jim Martin

**Keynote Speech** by Paul N. Jaenichen, Sr, Administrator, U.S. Maritime Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. Introduction by Judy Stephens, Vice Chair, West Kentucky Regional Riverport Authority

Remarks by Mike Toohey, CEO and President, Waterway Council, Inc. Introduction by Wendy Puckett, Executive Director, Fulton County-Hickman County Economic Development Partnership

1-4 PM: PLENARY SESSION – WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE RIVER COUNTIES -- INTERACTIVE PANELS (60 minutes each)

- Port Development, River Transportation Issues and Workforce Needs on the River – With Insurance and Financing in the Mix: What does the Panama Canal expansion really mean? What economic development tools should be implemented? What could a regional Western Kentucky Regional Port Authority add? What are the site development, financing and business issues?
  - Panelists:
    - Darin Adrian, Executive Vice President, Marquette Transportation
    - Roger Beck, Market Director, HDR Engineering
    - Bob Blocker, Senior Vice President, American Commercial Barge Lines
    - Bill Miller, Executive Director, Paducah-McCracken County Riverport Authority
    - Jim Morris, Executive Vice President, Banterra Bank
    - Baxter Southern, Executive Vice President, McGriff, Seibels & Williams



- Moderated by Bobby Miller, the Miller Law Firm, Paducah - New Orleans, PLLC
- Educating a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce: The prospects for river-related economic development can only be realized with a properly trained and educated workforce. What are the degrees and job skills needed for this workforce, and how should the region best address them? How can higher education and our public schools best fit into the new public-private partnership model being embraced by Kentucky policymakers?
  - Panelists:
    - Robert Davies, President, Murray State University
    - Sheila Clark, Executive Director, West Kentucky Workforce Board
    - Steve Freeman, Vice President, West Kentucky Community and Technical College
    - Billy Harper, former Chair, Kentucky Board of Education
    - Brian Mitchell, Retired President Emeritus, Bucknell University
    - Mike Nemes, Deputy Secretary, Kentucky Labor Cabinet
    - River County School Superintendents
      - Ballard County Superintendent Casey Allen
      - Carlisle County Superintendent Jay Simmons
      - Fulton County Superintendent Aaron Collins
      - Fulton Independent Schools Superintendent Tamara Smith
      - Hickman County Superintendent Casey Henderson
    - Moderated by Tim Todd, Dean, Arthur J. Bauernfeind College of Business, Murray State University
- Agriculture Technology and New Opportunities for River Exports: Early economic projections suggest that the best short term opportunities for increased river traffic will emerge from agriculture exports, specifically shipping Kentucky products down the Mississippi. What are the transportation and logistics needs of agri-industry, and how should the region develop its plans to best promote opportunity for local farmers?
  - Panelists:
    - Barry Carson, President, Hutson
    - Mark Fletcher, Co-Owner, Ceres Consulting



- Dan Mecklenborg, Senior Vice President, Ingram
- Keith Rogers, Chief of Staff, Kentucky Department of Agriculture
- Ryan Thurston, Regional Manager, ADM
- Brandon Wilson, Davis Brothers Farms
- Moderated by Tony Brannon, Dean, Hutson School of Agriculture, Murray State University

4 PM-Night: Tourism and Dinner Options – List in Registration Packets

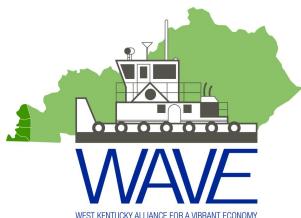
## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25

- 8:00-9:00 AM: BREAKFAST AND SECOND DAY REGISTRATION  
Light breakfast and slide show of River County region highlights
- 9:00-11:00 AM: SECOND DAY PLENARY OPENS  
Convened by Hickman County Judge Kenny Wilson  
Opening Prayer: Aaron Collins, Superintendent, Fulton County Public Schools  
Pledge of Allegiance: David Gallagher, Chair, West Kentucky Regional Riverport Authority, former Fulton County Judge Executive

## LEGISLATIVE PANEL

Prospects for 2017 Kentucky General Assembly session and the next U.S. Congress; regional infrastructure needs, public/private partnerships, federal grant funding for port terminals and other priorities.

- Panelists:
  - State Senator Danny Carroll
  - State Senator Stan Humphries
  - State Representative Steven Rudy
  - State Representative Richard Heath



- Rachel McCubbin, Deputy State Director for U.S. Senator Rand Paul
- Moderated by Bill Bartleman, McCracken County Commissioner, former Paducah Sun reporter

#### SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP PANEL

As demonstrated in the Eastern KY SOAR initiative, rural economic development has been spurred by small business and entrepreneurial innovation, augmented by access to high speed broadband. How can the River region develop and nurture small business under this new model?

- Panelists:
  - Loretta Daniel, Director, Kentucky Innovation Office, Murray State University
  - Al Hublar, State Director, Small Business Administration SCORE program
  - Rod Jetton, former Missouri Speaker of the House
  - Ralph Ross, District Director, U.S. Small Business Administration
  - Bob Smith, Paducah Program Manager, Fluor
  - Tony Watkins, Executive Director, Community Foundation of West Kentucky
  - Local Entrepreneurs shared success stories and challenges:
    - Matt Haney, Hillbilly Stills
    - Brian Harper, Harper's Food
    - Megan Koch, Rusted Roots Boutique
    - Karen Langford, Kentucky Nut Company
    - Angie Yu, Two Rivers Fishery
- Moderated by Bobby Clark, President and Founder, Sustainable Business Ventures

11:00-Noon: Tourism Boot Camp led by Kristen Branscum, Commissioner, Kentucky Tourism Department. Introduction by Norma Pruitt, Executive Director, Kentucky Great River Region Organization Inc.

Noon: Tourism and Lunch Options – List in Registration Packets

