

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a black jacket, blue jeans, and black sneakers, stands next to a large, dark brown bronze statue of a dog, likely a St. Bernard. The dog is sitting on a circular concrete pad. The background features a lake, several tall, bare trees, and a cloudy sky. The scene is outdoors during the day.

North Dakota Tourism Industry Newsletter

March 2, 2021



Weathering the storm: tourism took a hit and responded to changing travel habits in 2020

While COVID-19 took a big bite out of traditional travel, new opportunities arose to serve a traveling public starving for safe and spacious outdoor recreation. The 2020 annual report details the impact of coronavirus and North Dakota Tourism's creative approach to marketing the state as the perfect place to reconnect and rejuvenate.

See how North Dakota Tourism revised its marketing strategy to promote safe travel during the height of the pandemic. For a complete report on the industry, marketing metrics and new research, click below.

[Click here for a digital 2020 Annual Report](#)



Legislative Update

Senate advances tourism funding to House through Commerce bill

Where does North Dakota Tourism stand at crossover of the 67th North Dakota Legislative Session?

[Senate bill 2018](#), which includes the Tourism Division budget passed the Senate last week. The bill maintains ongoing funding for tourism operations at the same level as 2019-2021 and includes an additional \$7 million in one-

time funding for destination marketing. Sen. Brad Bekkedahl, who chaired the appropriations subcommittee, cited the need for increasing the budget to allow expanded and improved marketing during a time when it is needed to support businesses. The bill now moves to the House's Education and Environment Division of the Appropriations Committee where it is scheduled to be heard March 3 at 3 p.m.

[HB 1380](#) and [HB 1425](#) regarding the Legacy Fund earnings to support infrastructure improvements and economic development continue to evolve. HB 1425 would invest 20% of the legacy fund investments into North Dakota projects and 10% would go toward equity investments within the state.

Legislative roundup

North Dakota Parks and Recreation budget bill gets Tourism support

North Dakota Parks and Recreation appropriation bill, [HB 1019](#), contains several provisions that provide funding for the improvement and repair of state parks Infrastructure. Maintaining aging infrastructure and improving recreational opportunities based on customer demands remains top priorities for the department.

The bill passed the House with \$7.5 million from the Strategic Investment Fund for deferred maintenance and includes carryover authority for any unexpended funds that were appropriated in previous sessions for park enhancements and extraordinary repairs.

But the bill does not include a proposed \$9.88 million bonding package for capital projects that would modernize amenities and \$10 million appropriation for deferred maintenance to be funded by the earnings (not principal) of the Legacy Fund that was in the executive budget recommendation. The department has a \$74 million deferred maintenance backlog.

In addition, the bill does not include \$10 million funded by the earnings of the Legacy Fund for a proposed State Park Matching Grant Program. This program would be a one-to-one matching grant program for every dollar raised by a non-state entity for the purpose of capital projects dedicated to the improvement of North Dakota State Parks and Recreation managed properties. Furthermore, \$20.6 million for a Park District Infrastructure Grant Program will continue to be discussed.

Historical Society budget update

The State Historical Society of North Dakota received \$125,000 in ongoing funding and \$25,000 for one-time funding for State Archives Digital Repository storage as part of [HB 1018](#), which passed out of the House and was referred to the Senate Appropriation Committee before crossover.

The SHSND budget was reduced by \$200,000 but the agency received \$1.4 million in one-time funding from the Strategic Investment and Improvement Fund for extraordinary repairs.



COVID relief

Round 2 of Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant PLUS application period opens on March 9

The window for Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant round 2 has closed with 401 applications for \$11.3 million. The grants are being adjudicated and applicants should receive word in the next week. This leaves \$20 million available for round two of the Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant PLUS, which focuses on businesses in the lodging sector. The funds will be used to

reimburse eligible entities for costs in operations like payroll, rent, utilities and other expenses that comply with federal guidelines. Payroll taxes and other taxes are not eligible for reimbursement.

This application period opens March 9 at 10 a.m., CST and closes April 1 at 5 p.m.

[Click here for details](#)

Help for small businesses

Last week, the Biden administration announced several changes to the Paycheck Protection Program in an effort to increase opportunities for very small businesses to access PPP loans. During an exclusive two-week period beginning ending next Wednesday, the Small Business Administration will not review or accept applications from businesses with more than 20 employees. After the 14 days, all qualified businesses can resume applying.

We urge you to complete and submit your PPP loan applications prior to next Wednesday. Submitting materials sooner will help ensure that your application is reviewed earlier.

The current application deadline for PPP loans is March 31, 2021. You are encouraged to take advantage of this benefit, including the opportunity to apply for a second draw loan.

[Click here for details](#)

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY GRANTS

Round one update:

\$7,638,782 approved for accommodations and food services

- 251 restaurants, 89 hotels

\$1,674,856 still under review

- 92 restaurants, 24 hotels

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Travel Tidbits

Tourism Industry Chat March 15

You and your colleagues are invited to join the next North Dakota Tourism Industry update call on March 15 at 2 p.m. CST. This presentation will feature a legislative update, updates on recovery assistance and the latest data and trends on travel and visitor spending in North Dakota.

These presentations are open to anyone in North Dakota's travel and tourism industry. You are welcome to forward the log-in information to colleagues. We also share updates for future calls in our Tourism Industry Newsletter and on our website at: www.NDtourism.com/tourism-industry. If you are unable to join, a recording of the presentation will be [available here](#) on our website.

[Click here to join meeting](#)

In the News



[Forum editorial: Tourism needs financial commitment.](#)



Visitation up and down at North Dakota's top tourist spot.



[What's on Your Mind.](#)



[Bill supports travel industry.](#)