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## **Key findings about the 2022 Maple Festival released in Economic Impact Report**

*The 2022 festival generated between \$1.36 and \$2.02 million in direct spending in Highland County*

Monterey, VA – Key findings about the 2022 Highland County Maple Festival have been released in an Economic Impact Report created by Virginia Tech, including that the festival generated between \$1.36 and \$2.02 million in direct spending in Highland County.

About 26,500 visitors attended in 2022. Visitors spent between \$73.18 and \$105.76 on average. Visitors on average traveled 98 miles to attend the festival. 85% were from Virginia, although visitors from 14 states attended. Over 70% of visitors were repeat festival attendees, and returning visitors had on average attended the festival 13 times. Over 90% of visitors said they are planning to attend the festival again. 73% of visitors were interested in visiting the area during another season.

“The Chamber is excited to have reliable concrete data from this report, and it reinforces what the Highland County community has known for so long: the Maple Festival is special in the hearts of so many, and it is critical to the local economy,” says Chris Swecker, Executive Director of the Highland County Chamber of Commerce. “The information in this report will be used to help us improve the festival for future years, apply for potential grants, and to just plain celebrate all the hard work that goes in to holding this annual county-wide event.”

59% of visitors heard about the festival through word of mouth, followed by the next most common way via social media at 19%. The top three favorite activities of visitors included sampling maple products at 42%, visiting arts & crafts vendors at 23%, and learning about maple syrup at 21%.

The Highland County Maple Festival raised awareness about maple syrup production. Almost 78% of respondents reported they had learned at least a “moderate amount” about maple syrup during their visit. In addition, 20% of visitors learned about the difference between real and artificial maple syrup at the 2022 event. Only 67.51% of respondents had purchased maple syrup in the year leading up to the festival, and 88.37% of respondents said they would maybe or definitely plan to purchase maple syrup after visiting the festival.

Since 1959, visitors have been drawn to Highland County, Virginia to tour real maple sugar camps for a cultural and culinary agritourism adventure. In 1999, The Library of Congress designated The Highland County Maple Festival a “Local Legacy.” In 2014, the Governor of Virginia signed a bill into law designating the festival as the “official maple festival of Virginia.” Each year, visitors are drawn to this unspoiled, rural region of Virginia to celebrate the “opening” of the trees with maple syrup sugar camp tours, pancake and buckwheat cake meals, famous Maple Doughnuts, live entertainment, and over 100 juried arts & crafts vendors.

In conclusion, the reports states: “The educational, cultural, and economic value of this event makes it a vital part of the maple-syrup industry in Western Virginia. The festival serves as a way to foster new interest in maple syrup production and using forests in responsible ways that help people while still protecting the land. The Highland County Maple Festival showcases the value of agritourism as a way to create new long-term customers for farmers, as an educational experience for visitors, and as an economic boost for the surrounding community.”

The report was created by Virginia Tech with support from the Highland County Chamber of Commerce and Future Generations University. Data was gathered from surveys conducted during the event with visitors and vendors.

The Chamber thanks Virginia Tech, Future Generations University, all those who allowed surveying at their locations during the festival, and everyone who took the survey. Special thanks are also given to VDOT for supplying traffic count sensors. Work was funded through a USDA ACER grant: “Accessing South Atlantic markets for US Maple Syrup: educating consumers and enhancing distribution networks.”

For a copy of the full report, requests can be made to the Highland County Chamber of Commerce by emailing [director@highlandcounty.org](mailto:director@highlandcounty.org) or calling 540-468-2550. The full report, as well as a one-page highlight summary, will also be available for review on the Maple Festival website at [www.highlandcounty.org/maple-festival](http://www.highlandcounty.org/maple-festival).

Next year’s 63<sup>rd</sup> Highland County Maple Festival is scheduled for March 11 – 12 and 18 – 19, 2023. Information about the event will be updated at [www.highlandcounty.org/maple-festival](http://www.highlandcounty.org/maple-festival), with posts highlighting the festival available at [www.facebook.com/HighlandCounty](https://www.facebook.com/HighlandCounty) as the event draws near.

***The Highland County Chamber of Commerce is a 501(c)(6) membership nonprofit organization with a mission to lift up local businesses and entrepreneurs, promote Highland County, and champion economic prosperity and quality of life. For more information, please visit [www.highlandcounty.org](http://www.highlandcounty.org).***