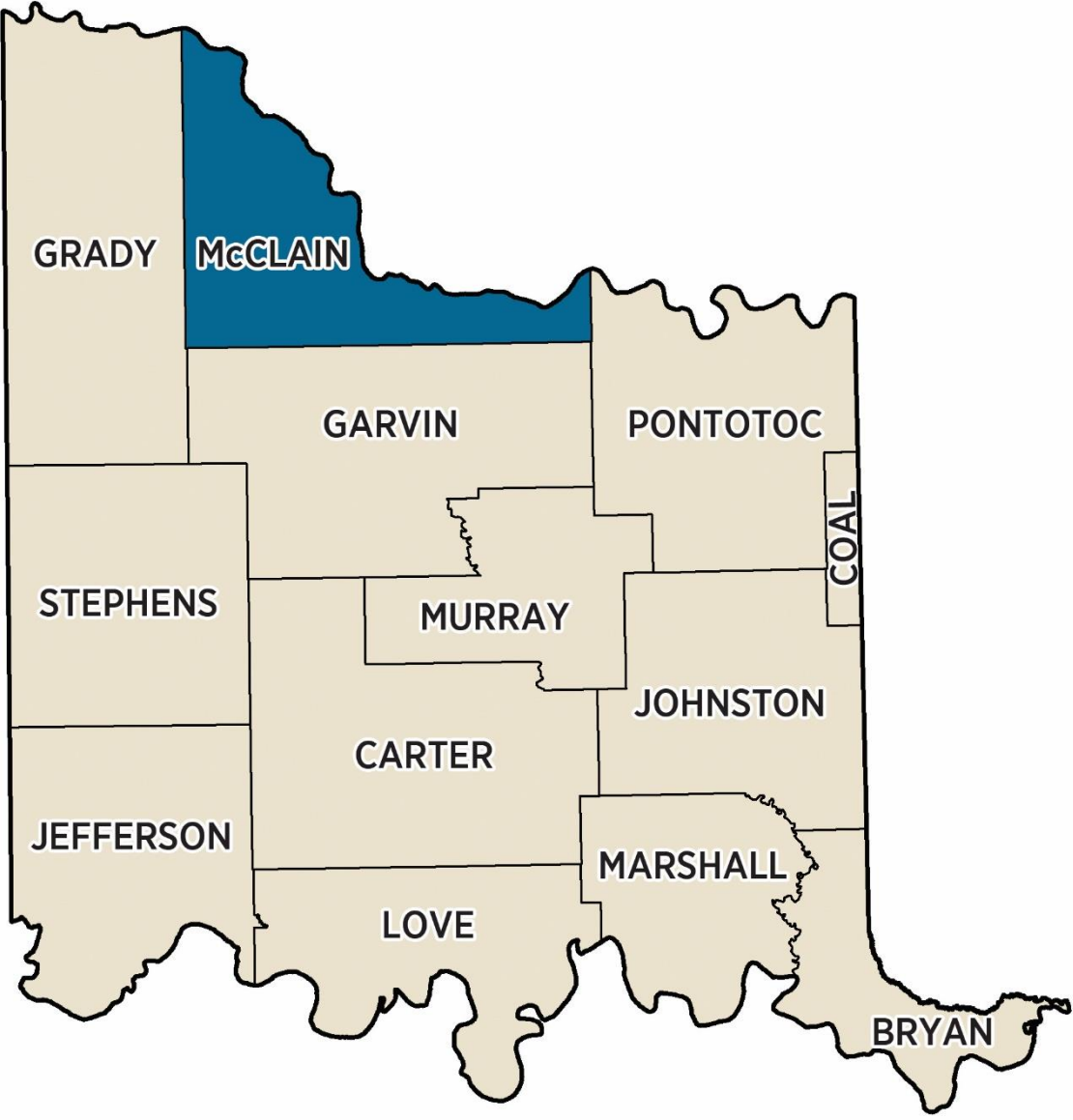


# McClain County

## Tourism Development Plan



# 2021 McClain County Tourism Assessment

## INTRODUCTION

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The McClain County Tourism Assessment is a roadmap to help move McClain County forward over the next five years and to harness its true tourism potential. The Chickasaw Country team was tasked with evaluating the current state of tourism assets, the untapped tourism resources and what tourism resources are needed to increase visitation within the county. This was accomplished by working with the major stakeholders of the county. The list of stakeholders includes cities, Chambers, CVB's, DMO's and local businesses.

Chickasaw Country is a destination marketing organization, within the Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce, promoting both Chickasaw-owned and non-Chickasaw tourism assets within the 13 counties in south-central Oklahoma known as the Chickasaw Nation. Chickasaw Country promotes tourism to local, regional, national and international visitors in hopes of generating exposure, garnering interest and driving visits to the region.

This assessment – and the related goals and strategies – is the result of the Chickasaw Country team's extensive conversation with stakeholders and McClain County leadership. The planning process used to develop this final document was open and transparent, with stakeholders encouraged to provide both positive and negative feedback about the current state of tourism within their region.

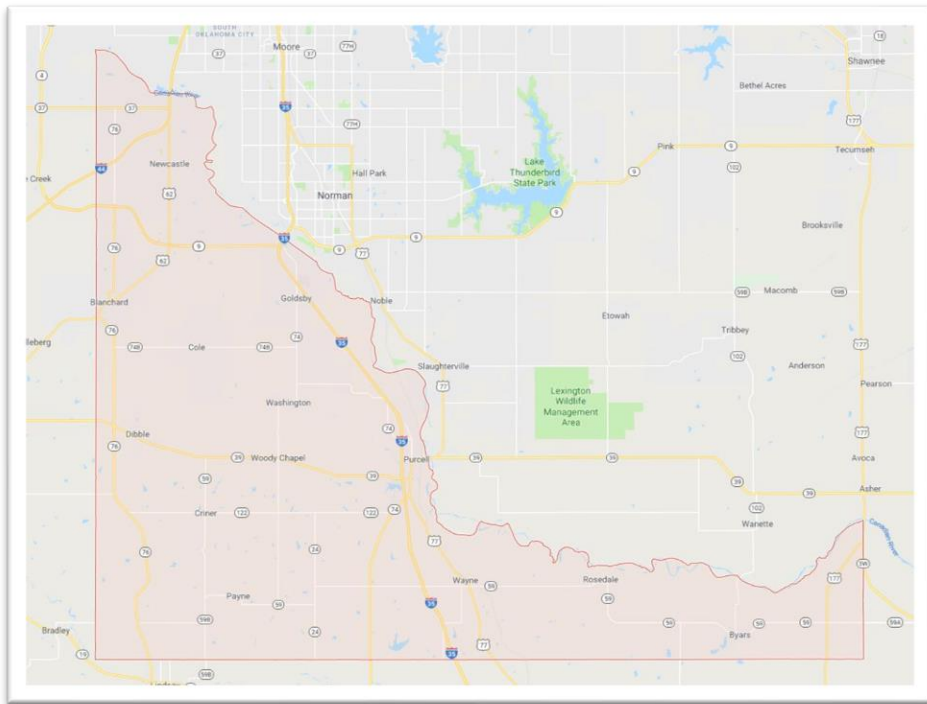
It is important to highlight that the plan was developed during an economically challenging time, for McClain County and stakeholders within both the public and private sectors. To help anticipate financial and time commitments required in implementation, the plan includes recommended phasing. Strategies in the early years are intended to ensure a smooth transition towards the fulfillment of this newly focused tourism strategy.

The factors outlined below are important in context to the plan and its strategic direction. These factors include a snapshot of the current McClain County tourism industry, prioritization of overnight visitors versus day trippers, the role of tourism in economic development, the characteristics of a highly functioning tourism system and the value of diverse assets.

### County Snapshot

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As part of the McClain County Assessment, the Chickasaw Nation Tourism team considered the current state of the tourism market within McClain County. The Dean Runyan Associates data indicates that McClain County employed 780 tourism workers in 2018 and attracted \$69.1 million in visitor spending<sup>[1]</sup>. This assessment seeks to continue the growth of the county's tourism industry by building upon its current strengths and potential tourism assets.



*This image represents a map of McClain County [4]*

**Current County Population: 40,474 (2019) [3]**

- Age 0-5            5.7%
- Age 6-18        25.5%
- Age 19-64      53.1%
- Ages 65+        15.7%
  
- Female            50.5%
- Male              49.5%

**Current County Unemployment Rate: [5]**

- April 2021      3.5%
- April 2020      11.7%
- April 2019      2.1%

**Cities with Tourism Product:**

- Blanchard
- Byars
- Cole
- Dibble
- Goldsby
- Newcastle
- Payne
- Purcell
- Rosedale
- Washington
- Wayne

**Current Economic Resources: [1-18]**

- Agribusiness
- Equine industry
- Manufacturing, distribution and retail trade/tourism
- Mid-America Technology Center in Wayne (15,000 business and industry students each year)
- the Chickasaw Nation
- Walmart
- Troy Wesnidge
- Newcastle
- Purcell Municipal Hospital and B&H Construction
- Goldsby Gaming Center
- Riverwind Casino
- Newcastle Casino

**Current Tourism Related Organizations: [6-18]**

- Heart of Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce
- Blanchard Parks Department
- Blanchard Chamber of Commerce
- Newcastle Chamber of Commerce
- Chickasaw Country Marketing Association
- Goldsby Town Board of Trustees

Overnight Spending

This assessment addresses leisure, business and event-based visitors who come from outside of the county. Visitors may come from a nearby county, surrounding states or internationally. Their stay may range from a few hours to a few days per visit. According to 2018 Dean Runyan Associates data, the average overnight spend per person in McClain County is \$94 and the average spend per person for a multiple night stay is \$249.

The ultimate focus of this plan is to generate additional overnight stays, and encourage travelers to stay longer, experience more and return to McClain County.

Much of the plan focuses on cross-promotion between experiences. It creates compelling, yet convenient, ways for visitors to see more than the main attractions that inspired their visit. This portion of the plan also serves to strengthen attractions for day travelers visiting McClain County.

### Tourism is Economic Development

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Tourism is the third economic driver for the state of Oklahoma creating 103,600 jobs in 2018. Domestic and international travelers to Oklahoma spent \$9.6 billion in 2018 and generated \$1.1 billion to federal, state and local governments. The tourism industry in McClain County represented approximately 4.3% of the county's total employment in 2018 and paid more than \$19.66 million in total wages in 2018<sup>[1]</sup>. Tourism jobs are valuable because they provide employment opportunities for a multitude of people. Some will advance up the career ladder in tourism, moving from entry-level service positions to higher-paying jobs while others will build on the skills and experience they gain in the tourism sector to branch out into other sectors.

Tourism brings in monetary funds that would otherwise never enter the local economy. In McClain County, visitors who spend money at tourist attractions, restaurants, overnight accommodations, gas stations and other related suppliers of tourism-related goods or services bring new currency to the area. Many of these funds get circulated within McClain County's economy, leading to additional jobs and income for residents. Many tourism investments work to attract and serve visitors while contributing to the quality of life for McClain County residents.

### Highly Functioning Tourism System

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The assessment builds on the successes of previous tourism efforts put forth by the stakeholders within McClain County, Chickasaw Country and the Chickasaw Nation. Strategies will be established to build on the strengths and weaknesses of McClain County. As a result of this planned approach, McClain County is expected to grow as a highly functioning tourism system. At the end of 2021 or five years (2026) the tourism system should include:

- Strong assets that attract visitors to McClain County and encourage them to stay longer, explore more and return often.
- Create/Update/Maintain the county's brand or image that builds on its strengths in a genuine and powerful way.
- Effectively market and promote the county's tourism efforts by cross-promotion.
- Strong supporting infrastructure and services, including overnight accommodations, restaurants and signage.

- A collaborative and coordinated network of partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors working together to strengthen the county's tourism market for the benefit of all.

## STRATEGIC APPROACH

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The strategic approach and foundational direction for this county's assessment is to focus visitor attention toward the anchor clusters and anchor attractions while simultaneously working to enhance and extend the visitor experience through sustaining clusters and sustaining assets.

The strategic approach begins with performing a SWOT Analysis of the county's current tourism climate. McClain County focuses promotional efforts around current strengths and opportunities of the county and establish goals and strategies to overcome weaknesses and threats. By performing this analysis, we are able to identify anchor clusters and anchor attractions within the county. The promotion of anchor and sustaining clusters is aided by cooperative marketing, maps, tourism packages, promotions, signage and technology-guided tourism. To support this approach, the plan outlines the need for an improved tourism infrastructure and refined tourism funding.

## SWOT Analysis

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As a Destination Marketing Organization, Chickasaw Country does not own all of the tourism assets within Chickasaw Country. It is vital that Chickasaw Country portrays realistic expectations on what this region has to offer which is why it is important for us to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting our ability to attract visitors. <sup>[1-18]</sup>

### Strengths:

- Annual community events
- Consistent community leadership
- Community infrastructure
- Developing main streets and shopping centers
- Educational opportunities residing in the county or within 45 minutes of county
- Two (2) cities with a population of more than 6,000
- Convenient location to largest metropolitan area in the state
- Several towns offering business-friendly atmosphere
- Growing housing market
- Several boutique and antique shops
- Low crime statistics
- Gaming & Entertainment
- Proximity to Interstate 35 and Interstate 44

### Weaknesses:

- Distance to major metropolitan areas are over half an hour
- Limited night life
- Limited population diversity with 86.4% Caucasian <sup>[3]</sup>
- Limited overnight accommodations
- Infrastructure - Goldsby currently lacks a community-wide sewer system
- Limited chambers or main street organizations in some areas
- Limited dining establishments
- Limited tourism assets

Opportunities:

- High volume of veterans – Blanchard’s Veterans Day Parade
- Newcastle is a main town on I-44 and serves as an entrance location for the west McClain County area and all western counties in Chickasaw Country
- Main streets for hosting events
- Goldsby has a park with growth potential
- More families are moving from the city to towns with more land opportunities to raise families
- Purcell has more than 5 antique and vintage shops on Main Street

Threats:

- High volume of veterans – financial community involvement
- Weather becomes severe throughout year
- Continuous construction on roads and nearest highways
- Limited attractions

Anchor & Sustaining Descriptions

**Anchor clusters and anchor attractions** were identified by the Chickasaw Country team through stakeholder interviews. These meetings and interviews revealed assets for which McClain County is best known as well as the most popular tourism draws. The Chickasaw Country team defines anchor clusters and attractions as those strong enough to attract large numbers of visitors from outside the county and those with built-in marketing infrastructure programs. <sup>[6-18]</sup> The list of anchor clusters includes:

- Tribal Assets:
  - Goldsby Gaming Center
  - Newcastle Gaming Center
  - Riverwind Casino
- Non-Tribal Assets:
  - Canadian River
  - James C. Nance Memorial Bridge
  - Purcell Lake
  - Boutique and Antique Shops
  - Golf Courses

Accommodations	Number of Rooms	Average Weekend Occupancy %	Average Weekday Occupancy %	Average Cost
Hotels, Motels, & Inns	425	65%	58%	\$75.28
Cabins & Lodging	0	0%	0%	\$0.00
RV’s & Campgrounds	0	0%	0%	\$0.00

*\*Data collected as of July 2021 <sup>[19-25]</sup>*

**Sustaining clusters and sustaining assets** constitute additional places to visit, experience and engage within the community. These clusters are the reason to stay longer, explore off the beaten path and experience local living. The sustaining assets can be even stronger than its anchor assets that do not currently have the drawing power to get visitors to McClain County on their own. However, a few of the

clusters and attractions listed as sustaining in this plan may evolve into future anchor attractions as they draw more attention and their marketing efforts grow. <sup>[6-18]</sup>

The list of sustaining clusters includes:

- Tribal Assets:
  - Gaming facilities
  - Chickasaw Nation Senior Centers
  - Chickasaw Nation Area Offices
  - Health facility
  
- Non-Tribal Assets:
  - Community parades and events
  - Community parks
  - Local dining establishments

### Hidden Assets Identified

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**Hidden Assets** were the third category of tourism assets identified in the strategic approach. Hidden assets are not well known and are closely connected with community life. The Chickasaw Country team identified places, people, culture and activities a tourist would consider ‘authentic’ and allow them the “live like a local.”

Through the hidden asset analysis, the Chickasaw Country team identified five (5) “new” assets. The analysis revealed a number of cultural natural resources and sustainability events that would never surface through a conventional tourism assessment. The integration of these hidden assets with the more significant attractions and assets has many benefits. Beyond building respect for the communities where tourism occurs, these benefits include:

- Deepening and creating more authentic visitor experiences.
- Bridging business travel with leisure travel.
- Creating additional funding streams for tourism, such as Preserve America grants or Heritage Tourism funds.
- Improving the financial success of small towns and natural resource assets.
- Expanding the overall market for tourism by bringing in new visitors.
- Linking current and new residents to the history and culture of the area.
- Leveraging local residents as tourism ambassadors for visiting friends and relatives.

The list of hidden assets includes: <sup>[6-18]</sup>

- Tribal Assets:
  - Unique History dating back to the 1870’s with ranching operations north of the Washita River belonging to those of Native decent

- Non-Tribal Assets:
  - History of 1906 Oklahoma Central Railway (Established Washington, Cole and Blanchard)
  - McClain County Courthouse
  - Hotel Love
  - Heartland Flyer

## Overview of Goal & Strategies

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### Goals

- Goal 1: Improvement of community parks to increase visitor attendance and enhance visitor experience.
  - Strategy: Determine fundraising or sponsorship opportunities to beautify existing parks and secure community project volunteers.
- Goal 2: Create marketing plan to secure brand awareness to highlight tourism assets within a specific area.
  - Strategy: Identify stakeholders who will assist in designing the plan and determine budgeting aspects.

## TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

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### Goals, Strategies & Tasks

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Goal 1: Improvement of community parks to increase visitor attendance and enhance visitor experience.

Strategy: Determine fundraising or sponsorship opportunities to beautify existing parks and secure community project volunteers.

- Rationale – This goal and strategy is important to help increase attendance and encourage additional events to be hosted on property.
- Approach – Determine parks that need assistance and what those needs are. Determine fundraising strategy and prepare list of potential sponsors and sponsorship benefits. Determine the budget and if grants are available for the area. Create volunteer pool and determine project plan direction and completion date.
- Tasks – Select list of vendors for estimate proposals, secure city permitting, schedule timeline, schedule volunteers and schedule ribbon-cutting.
  - Timeline – Based upon fundraising and sponsorship fulfillment.
  - Resources – Project Manager, Architect & Designer, community organization support and City involvement (permits & utilities departments).

Goal 2: Create a marketing plan to secure brand awareness in order to highlight tourism assets within a specific area.

Strategy: Identify stakeholders who will assist in designing the plan and determine budgeting aspects.

- Rationale – This goal and strategy is important in order to generate awareness and increase visitation and revenue within the county.
- Approach – Determine individual or entity responsible for developing the marketing plan and identify tourism pillars to be marketed and determine budget.
- Tasks – Develop plan format and utilize County Tourism SWOT Analysis as a guideline to be adjusted as needed. Coordinate meetings to receive feedback from community stakeholders and



businesses. Compile received information and determine measurements, advertising mediums and budget.

- Timeline – This would be created at the beginning of each fiscal year (*suggested*).
- Resources – Community stakeholders, individuals, businesses, organizations and DMO's.

## TARGET MARKET

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### Introduction

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McClain County's target audience is determined by the following demographics, geographic markets and niche groups based on tourism offerings and resources.

### Demographics

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In the travel industry over 70% of all family vacations are planned by the female of the household, according to US Travel Research data. Based on tourism assets and gaming product available as well as conversations with community stakeholders, the following age range was determined as McClain County's target market: <sup>[1-18]</sup>

- Female: Age 35 – 65
- Male: Age 25 – 65

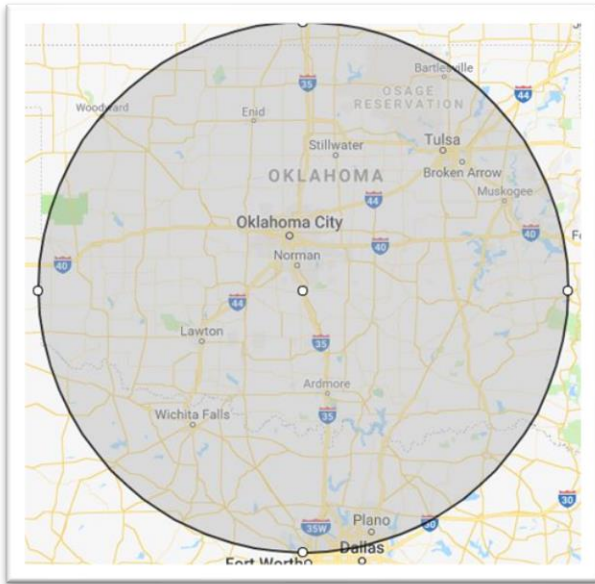
Riverwind Casino (Visitor Age Range): <sup>[17]</sup>

- Age 18-29 / 17.15%
- Age 30-39 / 15.54%
- Age 40-49 / 17.27%
- Age 50-59 / 21.24%
- Age 60-69 / 17.49%
- Age 70-79 / 8.95%
- Age 80-89 / 2.15%
- Age 90 + / 0.21%

### Geographic Regions

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Research shows that a traveler feels a 150-mile radius is a comfortable distance to travel for a vacation or getaway and we believe that North Texas and Oklahoma City metro areas are ripe markets for the unique experience McClain County has to offer.



*Radius of 150 miles from McClain County [2]*

- **Oklahoma**
  - Tulsa
  - Oklahoma City
  - Norman
  - Broken Arrow
  - Muskogee
  - Ponca City
- **Texas**
  - Plano
  - Wichita Falls
  - Gainesville
  - Denison

## Other Customer Segments

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### Niche Markets: [6-18]

- Golf enthusiasts
- Unique event seekers
- Gaming entertainment seekers
- Group Tour Market
- Meeting and Convention (Riverwind Casino)
- Antique Shoppers

Chickasaw  
COUNTRY

## EVENTS

McClain County plans to continue hosting events in select communities. Events are planned to help drive tourist to the community and help local businesses generate revenue. McClain County hosted the following annual events: <sup>[6-25]</sup>

CITY / EVENT	TIME OF YEAR
<b>Blanchard</b>	
St. Patrick's Day Event	March
May Daze Festival	May
Movies Under the Stars	June & July
Independence Celebration	July
Annual Bluegrass Festival	August
Veteran's Day Parade	November
Blanchard Christmas Parade	December
<b>Goldsby</b>	
Goldsby Light Display	December
<b>Purcell</b>	
Rabbit Run 5K	April
Purcell Lake Fireworks	July
Fourth of July Fireworks	July
McClain County Heart of the OK Rodeo	August
Trade Days & Trade Show	August
McClain County Free Fair	September
Loose Caboose Craft, Art & Antique Festival	September
Lights from the Heart	December
Parade of Lights	December
Christmas Parade	December
<b>Riverwind</b>	
Riverwind Concerts & Events	Throughout year
<b>Tuttle</b>	
Ice Cream Festival	June

By supporting community events with local Chambers, businesses and cities, it gives McClain County the opportunity to be seen as a destination attraction.

## RESOURCES

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- 13) Heart of Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce; Personal Communication, 2017
- 14) Newcastle Chamber of Commerce; Personal Communication, 2017
- 15) City of Blanchard; Personal Communication, 2017
- 16) Town of Goldsby Administrator, Jerome Hale (gathered information from the Mayor); Personal Communication, 2017
- 17) H. Rudd, Riverwind Casino; Personal Communication, 2017
- 18) R. Sykes, Newcastle Casino; Personal Communication, 2017
- 19) Overnight Accommodations: Comfort Inn & Suites (Newcastle); Personal Communication, July 2021
- 20) Overnight Accommodations: Holiday Inn Express; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 21) Overnight Accommodations: Newcastle Motel; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 22) Overnight Accommodations: Econo Lodge; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 23) Overnight Accommodations: Executive Inn; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 24) Overnight Accommodations: Ruby's Inn & Restaurant, July 2021
- 25) Overnight Accommodations: Riverwind Hotel, July 2021