
MORGAN COUNTY TOURISM MARKETING PLAN

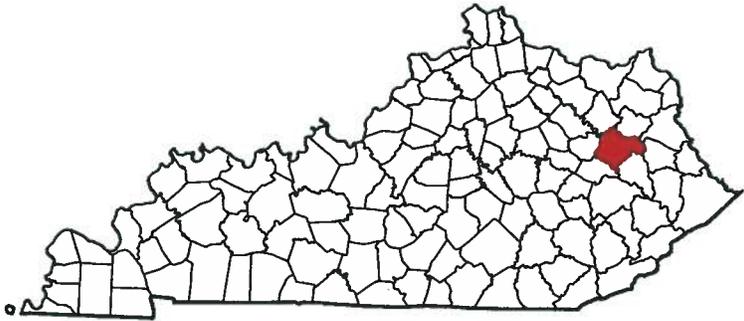


Prepared by: Gateway Area Development District
Planning Staff - 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Morgan County is home to many unique local tourism resources. As a designated economically distressed county within the Appalachian Region, the County desires to make every effort to increase economic development and tourism growth.

This document will be utilized as Morgan County's plan for the future development and expansion of tourism in Morgan County utilizing digital marketing media as an outreach tool to promote local tourism attractions within Morgan County. Special attention will be paid to one of the largest festivals visited in this area, the Morgan County Sorghum Festival. The plan will



look at ways to develop and implement digital marketing tools and focus on how to expand and improve the effective use of digital media in order to better market the County and its attractions.

This plan will also use the SWOT Analysis Tool to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the County's tourism industry. Other items of interest are noted such as partnerships and funding sources that can assist the County in its tourism efforts.



community growth and development.

Overall this plan will demonstrate a number of ways for the County to utilize digital marketing techniques in order to capitalize on its potential for making tourism one of the primary economic development tools utilized by the County. Communication and coordination are vital to this effort, as well as reaching out to various support groups that can assist Morgan County in reaching their goals for future

INTRODUCTION

The Morgan County Fiscal Court and the Morgan County Economic Development Committee partnered with the Gateway Area Development District with funds received from The Center for Rural Development through an Appalachian Regional Commission Flex-E Program Grant to develop the Morgan County Tourism Marketing Plan. The main component of this plan was the development of an interactive tourism map that highlights all major tourism and community sites within the County. Marketing efforts to be utilized will be concentrated on the promotion of the interactive tourism map through the use of digital media such as the Morgan County Website, Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Constant Contact E-Mail Messages, and a Text Messaging System that relays messages about important tourism happenings and events.

The Morgan County Economic Development Group spearheaded the effort and met on a regular basis with Gateway ADD Staff to identify components to be included on the interactive map that was to be developed and linked to the Morgan County Website. This committee focused on identifying tourism sites and activities and how they could cost effectively utilize digital marketing tools in order to better advertise Morgan County and its various attractions and events. Through a series of three organized planning meetings held over the course of five months, the Morgan County Economic Development Group, representatives from the Morgan County Fiscal Court, representatives from the City of West Liberty, and various local citizens with an interest in tourism and community development discussed components to be included in the interactive map and ways digital media could be used to market and encourage use of the interactive map and the Morgan County Website that will serve as a clearinghouse of tourism information for Morgan County. Particular attention was devoted to the need for the development of procedures for the updating of information to be included in the interactive map and on Morgan County's website. The need for a particular person or group to be designated as the party responsible for ensuring the information contained on the interactive map and the website was kept up to date was deemed essential in order for effective digital marketing strategies to be utilized. The need for training of those persons charged with the responsibility of the update tasks was also stressed by the planning group.



COMMITTEE MAKEUP

This project was guided by the Morgan County Economic Development Committee as stipulated in the ARC Flex-E Grant awarded to the Morgan County Fiscal Court. The committee was composed of members representing varied interests and offices throughout the County in order to provide a wide representation of ideas, needs, and resources. Members of the committee and their affiliations are listed below:

Allan Gillum	General Manager - Mountain Telephone
Hank Allen	President, Chamber of Commerce
Helen Pennington	Retired School Principal
Jimmy Jones	Volunteer
John Ison	Ison Insurance
Johnathan Gay	Morgan Co. Technology Center
Kerry Howard	Licking Valley RECC
Langley Franklin	Volunteer
Linda Bradley	Morgan County Fiscal Court
Tim Conley	Morgan County Judge/Executive
Nellie Buchanan	Extension Office
Sarah Fannin-Holliday	Extension Office
Steve Gavalchik	ARH Hospital
Danny McKenzie	Tourism Commission
Belinda Jordan	Tourism Representative
Cindy Manning	Community and Technical College

The committee members listed here and various other interested groups and citizens who attended the meetings provided valuable information and insight into the many ways tourism development is perceived throughout the County. The contributions of this group contributed greatly to the development of this planning document. The continued efforts of this group and others interested in both tourism and community development is essential in order for the tourism industry in Morgan County to grow and prosper.



SITUATION ANALYSIS

The current status of tourism, including marketing tactics, was assessed by the Committee in order to gather the following information:

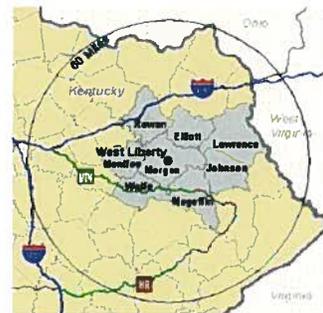
- What is currently taking place in relation to tourism?
- What attractions and activities have the largest turn out?
- What lodging, dining and other accommodations exist?
- The number and type of retailers that are in business.
- The marketing techniques currently used.
- Other information deemed relevant through the committee meetings.

INVENTORY

An inventory of attractions, events, lodging/dining facilities and tourism-related businesses was collected. This included items of interest outside of Morgan County that included Broke Leg Falls, Cave Run Lake, Paintsville Lake, Natural Bridge State Park and The Red River Gorge.

TOURISM STATISTICS

According to the Kentucky Tourism Cabinet, Morgan County had \$2,597,117.00 of direct tourism expenditures in 2008. Due to its proximity to an abundance of neighboring regional attractions, Morgan County could easily be a day trip destination from many eastern Kentucky localities. Most agree that Morgan County's biggest tourism attraction is the Sorghum Festival, held each year since 1971, during the last full weekend in September. The Sorghum Festival is described as being three full days of Kentucky mountain heritage, which includes such events as live music, a parade, and over 100 art and craft displays from a variety of local, regional, and national artisans.



DATA TRACKING MECHANISMS

No tracking tools are utilized by the County at this time to track the number of tourists who visit Morgan County. The Morgan County Website will track the number of people visiting the website. A short on-line tourism survey could be linked to the web site that could collect information about where visitors are actually coming from, their interests, what additional needs they have, etc. With a database of survey respondent information, the County could then have the capacity to utilize certain types of notification mechanisms such as e-mails, newsletters, and text messages to keep repeat customers up to date on events scheduled in their community.

SWOT ANALYSIS

The planning group utilized a SWOT Analysis discussion at one of their meetings to further examine the impacts of the current community situation to tourism and community development. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats.

Strengths and **weaknesses** can be defined as those positive or negative characteristics internal to the community. Strengths are those things that communities will want to carry forward and build upon, while weaknesses are things that the communities will want to improve, correct, or stop doing.

Opportunities and **threats** focus on things in the external environment that may have an impact on the future of the community. They are possible situations or conditions that communities must prepare for in order to ensure future success and sustainability.

Morgan County Strengths

- Community Support in Times of Crisis
- Good Community Facilities
(Farmers Market, Community Center, Public Library Facility, Health Department, Park Complex)
- Health Care Access
-Morgan County ARH Hospital and ARH Morgan County Clinic-Morgan County ARH Hospital, a critical access hospital, is the main provider of healthcare in the county.
<http://www.arh.org/MorganCo/default.php>
- Support of Community Festivals & Events - Morgan Sorghum Festival,
Old Mill Bluegrass Festival (showcases both local and regional bluegrass acts)

- Fire Departments, with a very active dedicated group of volunteers
- Ambulance Service- E-911 Center
- Good School System (four elementary schools, middle school, and high school)
- Morgan County Airport
- Regional Water Treatment Plant
- Mountain Telephone-Fiber Optic Communication
- Future Agriculture Business Park
- Good Volunteer Network
- MSU Center-educational opportunities
- Wellness Center
- Trained Workforce/Employable People
- Mideast KY Red Cross Chapter

Morgan County Weaknesses

- Lack of Adequate Wastewater Collection Infrastructure (as of 2009 11% served)
- Lack of Adequate Water Infrastructure (as of 2009 58% of the County is Served By Public Water)
- Flooding issues in some areas of the county.
- Geographical location
- Lodging/Retail/Restaurants

Morgan County Opportunities

- Local Officials that want to see efficient growth and vision
- Local citizens that want to see new growth

Morgan County Threats

- Drugs
- Health Statistics (**Strengths** - low motor vehicle deaths, low cardiovascular deaths)

(**Challenges** - smoking, physical activity, population age 65 or older, uninsured population, availability of primary care physicians, diabetes)

(**Outliers** - high obesity, poor oral health, high occupational fatalities, high breast cancer rate)

KY Institute of Medicine -

<http://www.kyiom.org/KMAWorkforceReport9-24-07.html>

FOCUS AREAS & PROPOSED STRATEGIES

A consensus of the planning group determined that the development of an interactive map would be the cornerstone of tourism promotion for Morgan County. It was determined that the utilization of digital and internet media to market and encourage the use of the interactive map was a cost effective alternative to commonly utilized traditional methods of marketing such as radio, TV, and print media. While the use of traditional marketing techniques remains relevant in many situations, it was determined that the best way that local governments and community groups could promote tourism in the County was to seek out and promote the use of internet technology as a cost effective marketing tool.

The following types of digital and internet marketing media are recommended to be considered by the Morgan County Fiscal Court and the Morgan County Community for use in the promotion of the newly developed interactive tourism map:

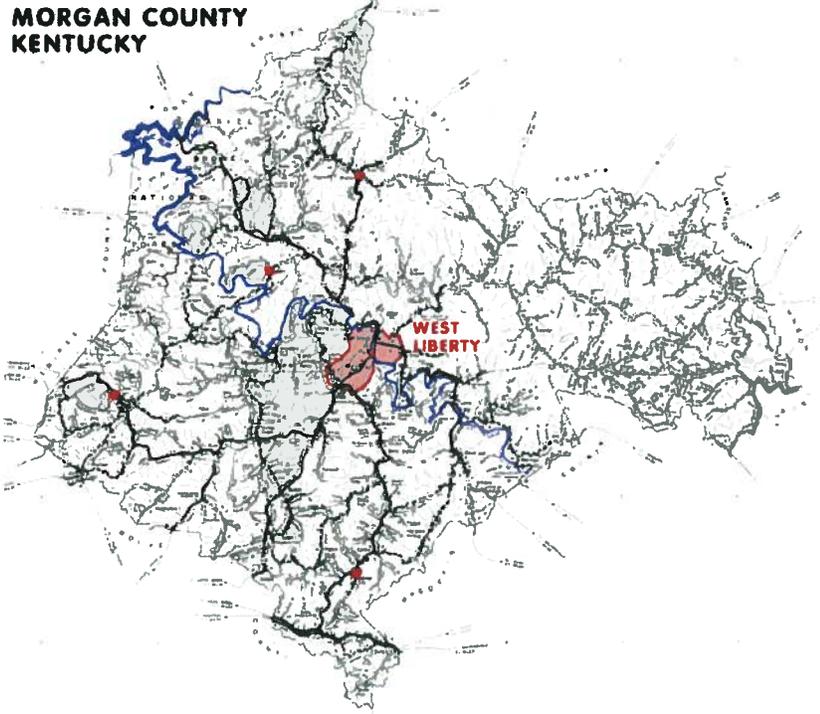
- Morgan County Website
- Facebook
- Twitter
- You Tube
- Constant Contact E-Mail Messages
- Text Messaging System

The combined use of these types of marketing media will allow Morgan County to target a wide variety of potential tourists. A discussion and recommendations on possible implementation strategies follows on each of the suggested media types.



INTERACTIVE TOURISM MAP

Staff from the Gateway Area Development District compiled the information collected at the planning meetings and created a digital template for the interactive map. The interactive map template included the following mapping components: Restaurants, Parks and Recreation Sites, Events and Entertainment, Shopping Venues, Lodging, Agri-Tourism Sites, and the locations of all of the barn quilt squares located in Morgan County. Staff from Gateway worked with Staff from the Commonwealth Office of Technology's Division of Geographic Information to further develop the technological



capabilities of the interactive mapping features. The Commonwealth Office of Technology also provided access to a data server that will house the mapping information for Morgan County. GADD Staff also coordinated an arrangement between the Gateway Area Development District, the Morgan County Fiscal Court, and the Commonwealth Office of Technology, whereby COT and GADD have agreed to provide annual updates for the interactive map at a cost to be determined based upon the amount of information requiring revision. The Morgan County Fiscal Court has agreed to provide funds to cover the costs of the annual update work with the Commonwealth Office of Technology.

The interactive map contains detailed information about each tourism and community site depicted on the map. This detailed information includes such things as directions to the site, hours of operation, as well as information about special activities and events.

The following tourism and community sites are included in the interactive map:



Restaurants:

West Liberty Food Court ■ Patty's Place ■ McKenzie's Pool Room ■ McDonalds ■ Giovanni's ■ Freezer Fresh ■ China King ■ Pizza Express ■ B&E Frosty Freeze ■ Subway ■ The Lemon Tree ■ B.J.'s Kwik Stop ■ Caney Valley Grocery ■ Maloney's Grocery ■ Sugar & Spice Bakery ■ Plowboy ■ Little Caesars ■ Double J ■ Countryside ■ Wrigley's 7-711



Parks and Recreation Sites:

Joe Stacy Recreational Complex ■ Patoker Campground and Stables ■ Wrigley Arch and Falls ■ Old Mill Park ■ Kiwanis Club Park and Pool ■ Treadway Memorial Park ■ PVCC Public Golf Course ■ Fair Grounds ■ Canel City Park ■ 21 Boat Ramp ■ Paintsville Lake State Park ■ Natural Bridge State Resort Park ■ Broke Leg Falls ■ Patoker Boat Ramp ■ Community and Wellness Center ■ Red River Gorge ■ Lost Creek Boat Ramp ■ Grayson Lake State Park ■ Cave Run Lake ■ Yatesville Lake State Park



Events and Entertainment:

Sorghum Festival ■ Old Mill Park Bluegrass Festival ■ Motorcycle Run ■ Car Show ■ Smith Creek Bluegrass Festival ■ Norma's Little Opry House

■ New World Video ■ Towne Cinema ■ Annual July 4th Festival ■ Old Fashioned Hometown Christmas



Shopping:

Caney Valley Antiques ■ Country Trends & Grandma's Quilts ■ Dean Hill Photography "Gallery of the Hills" ■ McKenzie's Department Store and Anne's Attic ■ Red Rooster Antiques & Craft Mall ■ The Primitive Homestead ■ Yesterday & Today ■ All Occasions Flowers ■ Seasons Florist and Gift Shop ■ United Methodist Mountain Mission ■ Gift Gallery ■ Shady Creek Fabric & Variety ■ Rod & Staff Publishers ■ Creek Side Building, LLC ■ Reber Woodworking ■ Big Sandy Woodshed



Lodging:

Days Inn of West Liberty ■ Patoker Campground and Stables ■ Brenda Lyons



Agri-Tourism:

University of Kentucky Extension Office ■ Morgan County Tree Nursery ■ Morgan County Agricultural Fair ■ Market in the Park ■ Morgan County Farmer's Market ■ Holbrook Brother's Sorghum ■ Fannin's Vegetables ■ Shenks Produce Stand ■ Sister's Greenhouse ■ Crockett Greenhouse & Outdoor Furniture ■ Lawn & Garden Center ■ East KY Sweet Potato Grower's Association ■ J.A. Oldfield & Son ■ Wrigley 7-711 Inc. ■ Plowboy General Store ■ Lyon Feed and Tack ■ Lee City Livestock

Company ■ Green Oaks Farm Registered Angus ■ Appalachian Meats ■ Mountain Poultry



Barn Quilt Squares:

Log Cabin ■ Card Trick ■ Seven Sisters ■ Lone Star ■ Pansy ■ Field of Dreams ■ Little Rock Block ■ Courthouse Steps ■ Grandmother's Fan ■ Star Flower ■ Basket ■ Corn and Beans ■ Star of David ■ Road to Paradise



MORGAN COUNTY WEBSITE

The official website for Morgan County is www.morgancounty.ky.gov. The newly developed interactive tourism map will be linked to this website. This website is easily accessible through the use of any standard internet search engines

(Google, Yahoo, Bing, Lycos, etc.) The Morgan County Fiscal Court, via the Morgan County Judge's Office will be the local



responsible party for the ongoing maintenance and updating of the website. They will also be responsible for maintaining information on requests for annual updates and/or additions or deletions from the interactive tourism map. Staff from the Fiscal Court will work in conjunction with Staff from the City of West Liberty, the Morgan County Economic Development Group, and other interested citizens and community groups to identify tourism information that needs to be included on the website. Kentucky.gov serves as the Commonwealth's official web portal. It has provided access to state government information and services for Kentucky citizens and businesses since 1998. Kentucky.gov offers a comprehensive, continuous, and easy to search website designed to provide a centralized place to find a variety of information and services. The Commonwealth of Kentucky contracts with Kentucky Interactive, LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of NIC Inc. for its web development, maintenance, hosting, and marketing. NIC, a leading eGovernment solutions provider, has similar agreements with 20 other states. The portal funding model is unique in that it is self-funded. Primary funding for the portal comes from the assessment of modest enhanced access fees for a select set of commercially valuable information and services. There are no direct hosting costs to the Morgan County Fiscal Court for the use of the website. Kentucky.gov also offers free training to those persons responsible for the daily maintenance of the website content.

Recommendations:

1. A contact person in the Morgan County Judge's Office should be named and contact information for that person should be listed on the website so that persons desiring to post tourism information will know who to contact about getting information on the website.

2. Internal procedures should be developed to determine how often website updates will be performed, to develop quality control measures to ensure the accuracy of website content, and to provide for a review mechanism to ensure that website information remains timely and relevant.
3. Staff from the Judge's Office and other interested parties should attend training offered by Kentucky.gov on how to perform website updates.
4. The Fiscal Court should work in conjunction with the Morgan County Economic Development Group to develop a tourism survey to be linked to the website that could collect information about potential tourists such as contact information, areas of tourism interest, and various other demographic information.
5. Encourage the Morgan County Judge Executive to list the website address as a part of his signature or header for the "Judges Corner" column in the newspaper.

FACEBOOK

Facebook, the popular social-networking site, allows organizations to create Facebook pages, otherwise known as fan pages. These pages differ from Facebook's personal profiles in that visitors do not become "Friends," but rather "Like" the page's service, product, or cause by clicking a button. Creating a Facebook page for a website involves the following steps:

1. Open the "Create a Page" section of the Facebook website – www.facebook.com/pages/create.php.
2. Click the "Brand or Product" box and select "Website" from the "Choose a Category" drop-down box.
3. Enter the name of the website in the "Brand or Product" box and check the box to agree to accept Facebook's terms. Click "Get Started" to begin.
4. Register the page by providing your email address, specifying the password you would like to use, entering your date of birth, and typing in the security text. Click "Sign Up Now".
5. Check your email for a Facebook confirmation message. Click the link inside the email to confirm your email address. You will automatically be directed to your new Facebook page.
6. Boost your website's online presence by posting tourism information and special tourism offers on your new Facebook page. A changing roster of fresh links, updates, photos, and promotions will encourage traffic on the website.

Recommendations:

1. The Morgan County Fiscal Court should create a Facebook Fan page for the Morgan County Website to promote tourism sites and events in Morgan County.
2. The Fiscal Court should promote the page by sending an email to all of their contacts that the Facebook Fan page exists. Request that their base of contacts to do the same to further promote the page.

TWITTER

Twitter is a website, owned and operated by Twitter Inc., which offers a social networking and microblogging service, enabling its users to send and read messages called *tweets*. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page. Since its creation in 2006, Twitter has gained popularity worldwide and is estimated to have 200 million users, generating 65 million tweets a day and handling over 800,000 search queries per day. Creating a Twitter Account involves the following steps:

1. Go to the Twitter website – www.twitter.com.
2. Read the What, Why, and How information sections on the Twitter website.
3. Click Join the Conversation to set up an account. Upon clicking the button you will be brought to the Create a Free Twitter Account page. Select an available username. It's recommended that you choose a username that represents you or your organization. This is the name by which other Twitter followers will recognize you.
4. Select a password, provide an email address, read the terms of service and click "I accept Create my account."
5. Add friends or skip it until you become more familiar with Twitter. The first screen you'll see when you successfully sign up for an account will ask you to add friends. Since you're brand new, it's best to get a little familiar with the service before adding friends. If you don't want to add friends at this time, click "skip." You can always add friends later.

6. Begin Twittering. If you don't like the way it looks, you can change the appearance, change your icon add your website and location by clicking on the settings tab. The amount of customization is up to the individual user.

Recommendations:

1. The Morgan County Fiscal Court should create a Twitter account for Morgan County Tourism to promote tourism sites and events in Morgan County.
2. The Fiscal Court should promote usage of the account by “adding friends” on their Twitter account and sending an email to all of their contacts that informing them that they now have a Twitter account.

YOU TUBE

You Tube is a video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos. You Tube is an excellent forum for posting videos of community events. Viewers can watch You Tube videos without having a You Tube account, but to post videos to the site you must create a You Tube account. Creating a You Tube Account involves the following steps:

1. Go to the website address www.youtube.com.
2. Click on the “Create Account” link. This will take you to the You Tube Account Application Form.
3. The first and most important field in the application form is the Username, otherwise known as your Account Name or more importantly your Video Channel Name. Do not get confused. In You Tube's eyes it is definitely your Username, but You Tube also assigns it as your Account Name and more importantly as your Video Channel Name. So pick your Username very carefully.
4. Once you have successfully chosen your Username, complete the rest of the application form and click on the “Accept” button to continue.
5. After clicking on the “Accept” button you are then asked if you would like this new You Tube Account attaching to your existing Google Account. If you do not have a Google Account, fill in the form on the right of the page to create a new Google Account. Having a Google Account gives you extra benefits, but these

benefits tend to be for Website Owners and not really for You Tube Members. When you have filled in this easy Google Account application form, which will then automatically be attached to your new You Tube Account, click on the CREATE NEW ACCOUNT AND FINISH button to continue. The WORD VERIFICATION edit box is in place to let Google/You Tube know that a human is the one applying for the Google Account and not a malicious piece of software.

6. After clicking on the CREATE NEW ACCOUNT AND FINISH button the following success message will appear, asking you to check your email in order to verify ownership of the email address you supplied in the Google Account application form. So the next thing you should do is close this window, as it will not be needed again, and then go and check your email from the supplied email address.
7. When your supplied email address has been verified a new web browser window will open to display the You Tube website. Remember your You Tube Account is still signed in, so you can now continue by clicking on your Video Channel's (Username's) drop-down menu and selecting the MY VIDEOS menu-item. This will take you to the My Videos page where you can then upload a new video.
8. To upload a new video, from the My Videos page, click on the NEW drop-down menu and then select the VIDEO UPLOAD menu-item. You could also click on the yellow UPLOAD button which does the same thing. Either way will take you to the Video File Upload page where you then need to click on the UPLOAD button. Doing so will then bring up a file requester that asks you to select the video file you want to upload to You Tube.
9. When the file requester appears navigate it to the video file you want uploading to You Tube, select that video file and then click on the OPEN button to continue. Your selected video file will then be uploaded to the You Tube server (computer) where it will then be processed and put into your video account storage area, if the video file is accepted by You Tube of course. You Tube is a little fussy when it comes to file types/formats and the length of videos, so try and use .wmv, .flv, .mov, .avi or .mpg formatted videos with mp3 audio when possible. And try to keep the display size (resolution) down to 640 x 480. The higher the quality the better simply because You Tube tends to downgrade a video's quality, for whatever reason(s).
10. While your video file is being uploaded, or even after it has been uploaded, you can enter a Title, Description and some Tags (Keywords) to help the viewer of your video understand what it is about, even before playing it. The tags should contain high ranking

words that best describe your video content and more importantly words that a viewer is likely to use in order to search out your video in the first place. After entering the Title, Description, and Tags you then need to select a Category, from the CATEGORY drop-down menu, for your video. Once that is done you then need to decide whether or not to make your video Public or Private by select the appropriate SHARE or PRIVATE setting. When you have decided which option to use click on the SAVE CHANGES button to continue.

11. With your video uploaded and settings saved; Go back to the My Videos page, by selecting the MY VIDEOS menu-item from your Video Channel (Username) drop-down menu, and there you should see your video.

Recommendations:

1. The Morgan County Fiscal Court should create a You Tube account for Morgan County Tourism to promote tourism sites and events in Morgan County.
2. The Fiscal Court should request tourism sites and various groups interested in Tourism to send them video clips for posting on the You Tube site

CONSTANT CONTACT EMAIL MESSAGES

Email marketing utilizes eye catching and professional looking email communications to stay in touch with customers and potential customers. One provider of this type of email marketing service is called Constant Contact. Constant Contact has a very user friendly and easy to navigate website – www.constantcontact.com – that provides potential users with an interactive feel for how the communication system works. Through Constant Contact, users can target groups to receive certain emails. They can schedule email delivery for a time when your audience is most likely to check email. Constant Contact tracks who reads and responds to your emails. Constant Contact has a reputation for being affordable, prices start as low as \$15.00 per month and a 60 day free trial is also available.

Recommendations:

1. The Morgan County Fiscal Court should investigate using Constant Contact for email marketing by participating in one of the 60 day free trial opportunities.
2. The Fiscal Court should talk to other Tourism Industry promoters such as the Kentucky Tourism Cabinet and TOUR Southern and Eastern Kentucky to see if they have opportunities for low cost email marketing campaigns in which the Fiscal Court could participate.

TEXT MESSAGING SYSTEM

Many businesses and organizations are utilizing text messaging systems to get the word out about their products and events. These types of services are very handy when event schedules need to be changed due to weather or other unforeseen events. Many school systems are now using text and email messaging systems such as e2Campus to get the word out to students about various school activities, events, and weather related closures and delays. A system like this would be an efficient way to let potential tourists know about last minute changes for activities and events.

Recommendations:

1. The Morgan County Fiscal Court should investigate the availability of text messaging systems and their cost effectiveness by talking with other users of such systems in the area, such as schools and other area organizations and businesses.

CONCLUSION

With the creation and development of the Morgan County Interactive Tourism Map, Morgan County has a solid foundation on which to employ a broad strategy of social and internet marketing strategies. The reliance on the use of free and low cost digital marketing opportunities will allow Morgan County to promote tourism in the area in both a cost effective and creative manner that reflects local flavor and customs unique to the area. As tourism opportunities grow and develop in the region, additional methods of social media marketing that do have costs associated with them can be explored.