

## *Request for Proposal*

**Marketing Consultant  
Public Relations  
Graphic Design Services**



### *Saltwater Connections*

Saltwater Connections is a community development initiative designed to support 21 unincorporated communities associated with the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway following Highway 12 southward from Whalebone Junction in Dare County, through Hatteras Island, across Ocracoke in Hyde County and through the communities along Core Sound in Down East Carteret County.

SWC aims to help sustain livelihoods, cultural heritage, and natural resources of the region through well-planned and community-support small business support and heritage development.

SWC grew out of the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway initiative in partnership with the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center and Hatteras Connection. Since 2010, these communities have been working to develop a comprehensive and community-led, regional asset-based economic development effort for the 21 Byway communities. For background information and current work underway, please go to [www.saltwaterconnections.org](http://www.saltwaterconnections.org).

### *Project Description*

As a result of two years of community assessment and planning, several initiatives have emerged as key components to the region's future as a heritage/eco-tourism destination as well as providing support to the year-round communities along the Outer Banks Byway.

Saltwater Connections, in coordination with its local partners and community leaders, has identified three distinct, but collaborative, projects that will require the services of a professional marketing-graphics team to work with regional community leaders to address these needs:

- Task I: Marketing Consultant to the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway Advisory Committee for Implementation of its Short-Term Marketing Plan
- Task II: Project Development and Design of Theme-Based Trail Systems for the Scenic Byway Region
- Task III: Marketing Consultant and Graphics Design Firm for NC Catch

This RFP is a call for individual proposals for three projects with pricing itemized separately. For potential contractors submitting proposals for all three projects, a package price for all three projects is requested.

#### **Task I: Marketing Consultant – Outer Banks National Scenic Byway**

The Outer Banks National Scenic Byway, designated as one of only 150 national scenic byways in the US, is led by an Advisory Committee representing the Byways communities located in Dare, Hyde and Carteret County. Local and regional partners (i.e. Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Cape Lookout National Seashore, NC Ferry System, Outer Banks Visitor Center and many others) have been working for years to plan and develop the

Outer Banks National Scenic Byway into a community-based economic development opportunity. This volunteer effort has accomplished:

- Development of the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan
- Provided the geographic outline for the development of the Saltwater Connections initiative
- Development of a graphic identity for the OBNSB
- Successfully planning, submitted and obtained two federal grants
  - o Wayfinding Signage – implementation 2014
  - o Interpretive Signage – implementation 2015
- Developed a Short-Term Marketing Plan (attached)

The marketing consultant requested in this RFP would be working with the Advisory Committee to implement the goals and objectives of the Short-Term Marketing Plan, specifically:

- Public Relations / Media packet for the Outer Banks Byway
- Support for the Website Development Committee for the Outer Banks Byway (website is being provided by another partner but coordination between the marketing consultant and the website designer will be paramount)
- Work with local tourism agencies to plan and implement Fam tours throughout the Byway
- Work with the Advisory Committee and tourism officials to develop itineraries for group and family travel, specifically in the shoulder/off-seasons
- Support and guidance in developing long-term alliances with local, regional and state agencies in the promotion of the Byway
- Build on partnerships with other National Scenic Byways throughout the US with similar intrinsic values

All steps taken in this short-term marketing effort would be in support of the 2014-2015 signage development, trails development (Task II) and in full collaboration with all local marketing initiatives throughout the region.

### **Task II: Development/Design Services for Theme-Based Trails – Saltwater Connections**

Modeled after themed trails located in rural areas along scenic byways and other culturally-rich regions, SWC community leaders have determined a trail system of theme-oriented visitor experiences to be a top priority for the region. Community members have begun to research and plan a series of trails throughout the Byway that would connect local traditions, history and natural resource assets into meaningful Byway experiences for travelers and residents.

Proposed themes include:

- Local History & Historic landmarks (lighthouses, shipwrecks, museums, historic sites)
- Arts & Culture (galleries, artists, carvers, music, storytellers, festivals)
- Local Foods / Fisheries (working waterfronts, fish houses, seafood markets, local chefs, farmer markets, culinary tourism)
- Nature-based Eco-Tourism (Hiking, kayaking, windsurfing, bird watching, shelling, recreational fishing)

In order to effectively and efficiently plan and develop these trails, the skills and experience of a professional marketing team and graphics designer are needed to provide these services to the regional trails committee:

- Evaluation of trail locations/experiences for successful trails development (marketability, tourism appeal, tourism-readiness, interpretive qualities); these recommendations would be made in consultation with both local and regional tourism agencies

- Consider how these trails could be designed to overlap across related trail themes to provide maximum benefit to local businesses and travelers through cost-effective marketing strategies
- Direct community volunteers in the research needed for effective trails planning
- Design trails materials in keeping with the Outer Banks Byway brand and in consideration of local community/sub-region individualities
- Provide editing and copywriting for inclusion in trail brochures, websites, travel apps
- Work with the Byway website development team to incorporate the trails on **www.outerbanksbyway.org** websites
- Develop a mapping system that supports wayfinding throughout the Byway
- Work directly with the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway Advisory Committee to build on preliminary interpretive plans included in the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

### **Task III: Marketing Consultant / Media Campaign / Graphics Design – NC Catch**

NC Catch is an umbrella organization working with the local Catch programs along North Carolina’s coast including Outer Banks Catch, Ocracoke Fresh, Carteret Catch and Brunswick Catch. NC Catch ties the work of the local groups together to foster collaboration, strength communication and to enhance a statewide and national presence in the seafood industry.

The local Catch groups are a focus area of the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway recognizing that the seafood industry is a vital part of the region’s economy and cultural heritage. Through strong collaboration with the local Catch groups, NC Catch is evolving at the regional entity educating consumers on the culinary and nutritional value of local seafood, as well as the economic, cultural and ecological benefits for local communities and the state. More information on the work of NC Catch can be found at **www.nccatch.org**.

A short-term marketing plan for NC Catch has been developed, outlining the services needed by the public relations - marketing team as:

- The development of a tag line to work with the local Catch groups’ individual logos to establish a sense of collaboration among the local groups and with the NC Department of Agriculture’s “Got to Be NC Seafood” branding campaign
- Development of event/trade show displays and collateral materials (brochures, social media, display advertising) that local Catch groups can use locally/regionally
- Public Relations / Media campaign development and implementation focusing on the value of NC seafood; this would include fishermen/women-profiles (video and print), working waterfronts, community heritage, the role of seafood in the local foods movement and the role of fresh local seafood in the tourism industry
- Promotional programs that provide direct small-business support to local fishermen, markets, restaurants, distributors and consumers including (but not limited to) media/chef tours of local fishing operations, development of marketing materials for seafood delivery systems statewide and partnership-development for seafood providers within the foods systems of NC
- Training programs for local Catch group organizations in planning and implementing their local efforts within the context of the statewide initiative

### *Qualifications*

Saltwater Connections seeks a fully qualified marketing team with skills and experiences needed to meet the goals outlined in each project. Priorities in qualifications include:

- Strong record of working with groups to build community-collaboration and trust is paramount.

- Thorough knowledge and understanding of authentic cultural and natural heritage-related tourism development must be demonstrated in past projects
- Experience with developing a long-term grassroots public relations program is necessary. This should include various media formats (print, video, audio, social media) that can be updated by local volunteers.
- Travel to sites along the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway will be necessary to accomplish the goals of this project. Travel expenses for on-site meetings will be provided by Saltwater Connections. Experience in working with local and state agencies is very important

*Contract and Pricing Information*

Services will be contracted through Saltwater Connections, a project of the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center. Proposals will be accepted for one or more individual projects, or as a full-proposal for all three projects with individual project pricing.

Cost of printing and distribution does not need to be included in any project pricing. All production costs for web and multi-media (including video) must be itemized.

Funding for this project is grant-based and therefore time sensitive and requiring cost-effective measures for maximizing funds available. All project work outlined in this RFP must be completed by November 15, 2013.

Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward concise description of the marketing firm’s approach and ability to meet the needs outlined in this RFP.

Questions related to this Request for Proposal should be submitted promptly and in writing to : **saltwaterconnections3@gmail.com**. Responses will be returned within one business day. Please include a phone number for a return call.

*Request for Proposals Timetable & Submission Guidelines*

The following projected timetable should be used as a working guide for planning purposes only. The County reserves the right to adjust this timetable as required during the course of the RFP process.

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Distribution of RFP – Saltwater Connections	May 20, 2013
Last Date for Receipt of Written Questions	June 1, 2013
All Written Questions Responses Returned	June 3, 2013
Solicitation Deadline Date and Time	June 10, 2013 @ 5 pm EDT
Anticipated Evaluation of Submittals	June 17, 2013
Call for Interviews	June 20, 2013
Anticipated Completion of Contract Negotiations	June 30, 2013

Submission Guidelines

Applicants are responsible for all costs incurred in the development of their proposal.

The proposing marketing team understands and agrees that if it is awarded a contract, the work will be performed in accordance with the provisions, terms and conditions of the contract.

The release of this RFP and the selection of finalist do not guarantee that a contract will be awarded.

To facilitate the fair evaluation and comparison of proposals, all proposals must conform to the guidelines set forth in this RFP.

- Project proposals will be limited to 3 pages for Consultant(s) Qualifications and Experience
- 3 pages (per project) for Proposed Scope of Work
- Sampling (digital and/or hard copy) related printed and web-based marketing and public relations programs/projects

All proposals must be submitted electronically by **5 PM EDT June 10** to **saltwaterconnections3@gmail.com**, and will become the property of Saltwater Connections (CSWM&HC).

Additional supporting materials must also be received by 5 PM EDT June 10 at:

**Saltwater Connections**  
**c/o Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center**  
**PO Box 556, 1785 Island Road**  
**Harkers Island, NC 28531**