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## Outdoor Journalists' Meeting Impacts Virginia Economy

### Media Only

Martha Steger, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Public Relations Director

TEL (804) 545-5572

EML [msteger@virginia.org](mailto:msteger@virginia.org)

### Virginia Tourism Corporation

901 East Byrd Street  
Richmond, VA 23219-4048 USA

TEL (804) 545-5500

FAX (804) 545-5501

[www.virginia.org](http://www.virginia.org) (consumer)

[www.vatc.org](http://www.vatc.org) (industry)

**RICHMOND, Va.** – To get an idea of the economic impact of the recent Outdoor Writers of America conference in Roanoke, one only has to chat with Tom Brown, fishing manager at Orvis's Roanoke retail store.

“We saw a dramatic increase in sales -- \$12,000 over a three-day period,” Brown reported to the Virginia Tourism Corporation. “That’s 40 percent more than average.”

Conference registrants totaled 500 including journalists, associate members and sponsors. Approximately three dozen participants took part in organized tours. The majority went on OWAA-sponsored, pre- and post-conference tours to areas of the state as far away as the Eastern Shore; and others, such as a New Jersey member who visited the upper Shenandoah Valley on her way to Roanoke, planned their own trips. One couple called VTC's Richmond office on their way up from Florida for information on visiting Jamestown.

OWAA filled approximately 1,000 rooms over the four-day period, predominantly at the host property – the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center -- as well as the Holiday Inn Express, and Courtyard by Marriott. The Roanoker Restaurant provided local flavor for a meal served during the evening event at the Virginia Museum of Transportation.

At least one journalist -- award-winning broadcaster Chris Lawrence with West Virginia Metro News Radio Network – will be returning to Virginia to get other stories in the very near future. He notes, “OWAA tends to present my best story opportunities of the year since I don't get too many chances to get out to these kinds of places.”

Alisa Bailey, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, says, “This is the kind of long-term benefit that caused us to pitch OWAA three years ago with the Roanoke Valley CVB. We'll see results from the relationships built at the conference for years to come.”

Bailey served as West Virginia State Tourism Commissioner when OWAA held its annual conference there several years ago. Based on the direct economic impact of the meeting in West Virginia, Virginia's direct economic impact would be more than \$404,000.

Tourism in Virginia is a \$16.5 billion industry, supporting more than 207,000 jobs for Virginians. The Roanoke Valley's share of the industry's impact is \$531 million and more than 2,000 jobs.

For Roanoke tourism information, go to [www.visitroanokeva.com](http://www.visitroanokeva.com), or call 1-800-635-5535. For Virginia vacation-planning assistance, go to [www.Virginia.org](http://www.Virginia.org), or phone 1-800-932-5827.

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