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The Kentucky Wildlands wins Traverse Award for Excellence in Kentucky Tourism from the Kentucky Travel Industry Association

The Kentucky Wildlands, a regional tourism destination spanning 41 counties in Southern and Eastern Kentucky, has received the prestigious Traverse Award for Excellence in Kentucky Tourism from the Kentucky Travel Industry Association. The award was presented during the 2023 Kentucky Travel Industry Annual Conference held Nov. 8-10 at the Sloan Convention Center in Bowling Green.

The regional tourism marketing initiative was awarded two Gold Traverse Awards for its public relations campaign and print materials for The Kentucky Wildlands Waterfall Trail, which launched in early 2023.

“We knew the need for connection trails across our region. With more than 800 waterfalls, this seemed to be the right trail to start with. We knew it would be popular among visitors to our region, but it has proven even more so than we ever expected. We look forward to expanding on it in 2024,” said Tammie Nazario, director of The Kentucky Wildlands.

Kentucky travel and tourism businesses and marketing organizations vie for Traverse Awards in 11 categories. A panel of out-of-state tourism industry experts judges the Traverse Awards. Award criteria include concept, creativity, results, and impact. A total of 199 entries were submitted from throughout Kentucky for the 2023 competition.

According to KTIA president & CEO Hank Phillips, “With nearly 200 entries and based on the judges’ comments about the across-the-board high quality of the entries, the 2023 Traverse competition was as close as it was intense. The larger picture of the awards is how they reflect

the results-oriented talent and creativity that exists throughout Kentucky's tourism industry. That talent and creativity last year attracted over 75 million Kentucky visitors, bringing with them the many benefits tourism provides to the people of the Commonwealth."

The Kentucky Travel Industry Association represents and serves all segments of Kentucky's tourism industry, which despite the pandemic's severe impact, contributed \$12.9 billion to Kentucky's economy in 2022. The nearly 1,000-member association engages in advocacy and provides its members with education, information, and business development opportunities. The association also works to inform the public of the enormous economic, employment, and tax revenue contributions tourism makes to the people of Kentucky.

About The Kentucky Wildlands: *The Kentucky Wildlands is a regional tourism initiative in 41 counties in Southern and Eastern Kentucky. It showcases the region's majestic beauty and rich heritage with the goal of driving economic development. Components of the initiative include a media campaign, hospitality education, itinerary development, and entrepreneur training. The initiative was launched by Eastern Kentucky PRIDE, Inc., which is a nonprofit organization, with grant funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission and Economic Development Administration.*

PHOTO CAPTION: The Kentucky Wildlands, a regional tourism destination spanning 41 counties in Southern and Eastern Kentucky, was awarded two Gold Traverse Awards from the Kentucky Travel Industry Association for its public relations campaign and print materials for the waterfall trail. From left are, Michelle Perry, director, McCreary County Tourism; Amanda Burdine, executive coordinator, The Kentucky Wildlands; Tammie Nazario, director, The Kentucky Wildlands; Rhonda Nix, matching funds program manager, Kentucky Department of Tourism; and Karen Hackett, matching funds program assistant, Kentucky Department of Tourism.