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Date: 2/17/2016 9:23:05 AM
Subject: Tourism is Now a \$19.1 Billion Industry in South Carolina

For Immediate Release – Feb. 17, 2015

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Tourism is Now a \$19.1 Billion Industry in South Carolina

Charleston -- Tourism in South Carolina generated an economic impact of \$19.1 billion in 2014, a 5.5 percent increase over the previous year, according to data released today by the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism. In a tourism update session at the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism & Travel in Charleston, SCPRT Director Duane Parrish called the growth impressive, and announced similar increases in other tourism economic indicators.

"It's striking that economic indicators for tourism in South Carolina are up across the board, showing significant levels of growth over previous years," Parrish said. "The recent performance of our industry is unprecedented in South Carolina's history and points to an exciting future."

In addition to tourism's overall economic impact, Parrish announced that:

- Hotel occupancy averaged 62.3 percent in 2015, up 2.1 percent over 2014.
- Revenue per available room (RevPAR) averaged \$65.36, an increase of 7.2 percent over the previous year and outperforming national RevPAR growth of 6.3 percent.
- Admissions tax collections totaled nearly \$37 million in fiscal year 2014-15, an 8.5 percent increase over the previous fiscal year.
- Revenue for the South Carolina State Park Service reached a record high of \$26.9 million in fiscal year 2014-15, an increase of nearly \$3 million over the previous fiscal year, putting state parks at an all-time high 94 percent self-sufficiency.
- And more than \$1.1 billion in tourism capital investment was announced.

"Everyone in this room knows that tourism is vital for South Carolina," Parrish said. "It enhances our quality of life. It provides a livelihood for one in ten of us. And it has a tremendous impact on the rest of our state's economy."

While multiple factors have boosted recent tourism growth in South Carolina, including a recovering economy and lower gas prices, Parrish said the influence of SCPRT's DiSCover marketing campaign, which included promotion of the official South Carolina Barbecue Trail, also motivated travel. He said more than half of consumer households in the campaign's target markets recalled seeing advertisements in the spring of 2015, compared to one-third of households in the previous year. Travel to Undiscovered South Carolina (rural areas of the state,) a primary message in the campaign, is 50 percent higher than when SCPRT started the campaign in 2013. Three quarters of visitors to these areas recall seeing one or more DiSCover ads. The DiSCover campaign is expected to win a national award Wednesday night from the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International.

Parrish also unveiled SCPRT's new marketing initiatives for 2016, including the development of a new trail called Satisfy Your Thirst, which promotes two of the state's traditional beverages -- sweet tea and milk -- as well as the state's thriving and innovative craft breweries and beverage distilleries. SCPRT also will put greater emphasis on golf promotion in 2016 and explore more opportunities in the international market.

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SAVE THE DATE: Mark your calendar for February 15 – 17, 2016 for the 2016 Governor's Conference on Tourism & Travel. Please visit www.scgovcon.com for more information.



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