



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Southern and Southeast Ohio Unveil Unified Regional Tourism Brand**

*Ohio's Rolling Hills launches at Ohio Tourism Day as a collaborative tourism initiative representing 18 counties across Southern and Southeast Ohio.*

COLUMBUS, Ohio – May 12, 2026 – Last week at Ohio Tourism Day at the Ohio Statehouse, regional leaders, tourism partners, community organizations, and local stakeholders unveiled Ohio's Rolling Hills, a collaborative tourism brand representing counties across Appalachian Ohio.

Home to Ohio's only national forest, more than a dozen state parks, historic river towns, vibrant arts communities, and some of the state's most dramatic landscapes, Southern and Southeast Ohio now share a common identity designed to strengthen tourism, support local economies, and elevate the region on a national stage. The brand, called Ohio's Rolling Hills, will support tourism-driven economic development, strengthen regional collaboration, and increase visitor awareness of Southern and Southeast Ohio.

This initiative was made possible through an Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA) led Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER grant and brought together partners from across the Buckeye Hills Regional Council and the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission footprints to shape a shared vision for the future of Appalachian Ohio tourism.

"Ohio's Rolling Hills is bigger than any one organization or county and is intended to complement and amplify existing local tourism brands and community identities, not replace them," said Jessie Powers, Executive Director of the Outdoor Recreation

Council of Appalachia. “Regional branding is one of the most powerful tools available to rural economies and this initiative creates a unified way to tell the story of Appalachian Ohio while supporting local economies, small businesses, and community-driven tourism efforts,” she continued.

### **A Community-Rooted Process**

Developed through a collaborative effort that included interviews, regional working sessions, tourism and economic development input, competitive landscape analysis, the process included participation from elected officials, convention and visitors bureaus, nonprofit organizations, community leaders, economic development professionals, and regional stakeholders representing all 18 partner counties.

“As one of Ohio’s most historic river communities, Marietta is proud to be part of a regional effort that celebrates the authentic character, outdoor adventure, arts, and heritage that make Appalachian Ohio so special,” said Deana Clark, Executive Director of the Marietta-Washington County Convention and Visitor Bureau.

“Initiatives like Ohio’s Rolling Hills help us tell a stronger collective story while still honoring the unique identity of each community. With growing recognition of our region’s outdoor recreation assets– including Marietta’s recent designation as an IMBA Trail Town– this collaborative brand arrives at exactly the right moment for Washington County.”

ORCA partnered with Blue Ion, a Charleston, South Carolina-based brand strategy firm with experience developing regional destination brands across Appalachia and the Southeast, to guide the branding and creative process.

### **What the Brand Represents**

Ohio’s Rolling Hills reflects the landscapes, culture, and communities that define Southern and Southeast Ohio. The brand embraces the region’s outdoor recreation opportunities, historic downtowns, artistic traditions, river communities, and deep Appalachian heritage while creating a shared identity that complements, rather than replaces, existing local tourism efforts.

“As Executive Director of the Visitors Bureau of Highland County, I am incredibly proud to see Appalachian Ohio come together under the Ohio’s Rolling Hills brand,” said Jamie Wheeler, Executive Director of the Visitors Bureau of Highland County.

“Highland County: The Gateway to Getaway has always celebrated the authentic experiences, outdoor adventure, and strong community spirit found in the foothills of Appalachia. This regional initiative strengthens our ability to invite visitors to explore all that Southern and Southeast Ohio have to offer while still honoring the unique character of each county. By working collaboratively, we are telling a bigger story about our rolling hills, historic communities, locally owned businesses, and natural treasures, and that benefits residents and visitors alike.”

The brand is built around three core themes: outdoor recreation and conservation, history and preservation, and arts and culture. Together, they tell the story of a region shaped by resilience, creativity, natural beauty, and strong community connections.

### **Learn More**

Visit [www.ohiorollinghills.com](http://www.ohiorollinghills.com).

### **About the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA)**

The Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia is a council of governments made up of jurisdictions within Athens county, working to advance outdoor recreation, community development, conservation, and economic opportunity across Appalachian Ohio. ORCA proudly manages the Baileys Trail System, an 88-mile mountain bike optimized trail system, in partnership with the Wayne National Forest. Learn more at [www.orcaohio.com](http://www.orcaohio.com) and [www.baileystailsystem.org](http://www.baileystailsystem.org)

ORCA's advisory council includes representatives from partner counties across the Ohio's Rolling Hills region and includes: **Adams, Athens, Brown, Clermont, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Vinton, and Washington counties.**



*Participants during a Full Moon Paddle with Touch the Earth Adventures on Dow Lake in Strouds Run State Park on May 25, 2021. ©2021 | Athens County Convention and Visitors Bureau ©2021 | Joel Prince*

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