

Southeastern Wildlife Exposition

- 1.) SEWE does not support the redistribution of tourism accommodation dollars earned in Charleston to the state PRT at the 5% level and raising the SCATR funding from 2% to 5%.
- 2.) For those not familiar with the event, the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition (SEWE) is in its 29th year and is of the largest events of its kind in the country. SEWE takes place in February of each year, which is historically the slowest time of the year for tourism in our market. For that reason alone, with the approximately 35,000 attendees SEWE draws annually, it is very important that it continue to receive support from the City of Charleston.
- 3.) Economic contribution to the state
 - a. millions of dollars into the state treasury
 - b. tens of millions of dollars to total economic impact
- 4.) Local governments (in our case, The City of Charleston) certainly know best which local events need and deserve support from the accommodations tax collected in their market. What TRAC is proposing will seriously jeopardize SEWE and its leveraged marketing dollars, and general marketing dollars do not bring in tourism nearly as effectually as specific marketing dollars targeted to specific events, attractions, locations, etc. In our opinion, to take more dollars away from the City of Charleston and put it in a general marketing fund with a state run organization would create a seriously diminishing return on investment.
- 5.) SEWE is very concerned about the state taking funds away from the City of Charleston because that is where we get most of our public support. Last year we applied for a \$25,000 grant from PRT, but according to them, did not “meet the criteria.” We do not have confidence that state-level politicians and bureaucrats have enough first-hand information to decide when and if we should get funding. If the City of Charleston lost the additional funds and could not help SEWE, it could, essentially, lead to the demise of the event.
- 6.) It is the efficient use of advertising dollars with which we should be concerned. If \$10,000 were spent to promote an obscure local festival in a small town and \$10,000 were spent promoting SEWE in Charleston, how many out-of-town / state attendees would you get at each event? How many “heads in beds” would you have as a result? If money is put into a large fund in Columbia, it would be spent on general marketing, which would be substantially less effective than if that money were left in Charleston to be allocated and spent on events that are proven in generating tourism.