



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 13, 2022

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Mister Bee Potato Chips To Unveil New Bag

Promoting New River Gorge Region at Saturday's Bridge Day

NRGRDA, WV Hive and New River Gorge CVB Collaborate

Glen Jean, W.Va. (Oct. 13, 2022) – The New River Gorge region, national park and preserve, and southern West Virginia are being featured on a new five-ounce chip bag that will be unveiled Saturday by West Virginia's only potato chip manufacturer -- Mister Bee Potato Chips based in Parkersburg.

Leaders from Mister Bee, New River Gorge Regional Development Authority, West Virginia Hive, New River Gorge Convention and Visitors Bureau, and guests will unveil the new chip bag design at 10 a.m. at the Mister Bee/WV Hive tent on the southern end of the bridge.

Mary Anne Ketelsen, president of Mister Bee, said the new chip bags will be available soon in local retail outlets throughout southern West Virginia and the Mountain State. “We encourage people to join us on Bridge Day and to enjoy the scenic beauty of the New River Gorge region,” said Ketelsen. She said 876 one-ounce bags of Mister Bee chips (representing the height of the bridge in feet above the scenic New River) will be handed out free at Bridge Day. Asher Agency in Charleston (with offices in Fort Wayne and Indianapolis, Ind., and Washington, D.C.) designed the new chip bags.

Jina Belcher, executive director of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA), and Judy Moore, deputy director of NRGRDA and executive director of the West Virginia Hive, created the idea of the partnership with Mister Bee and the new chip bag.

“Thousands of visitors from across the nation and the Mountain State are visiting the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve and taking in the sites and experiences in southern West Virginia,” said Belcher. “NRGRDA, the West Virginia Hive, and New River Gorge Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) cannot act rapidly enough to respond to the tourism, outdoor recreation, community development, and business growth. Judy and I were made aware of Mister Bee’s interest in reaching more customers in our region, so we proposed a new chip bag that would celebrate the state’s only potato chip company as well as the new national park and emergence of the New River Gorge region.”

Ketelsen said the idea resonated and the company is indebted to NRGRDA, West Virginia Hive, CVB, and Bridge Day planners for this opportunity. “The power of collaboration and dreaming and executing of big ideas are key reasons Mister Bee Potato Chips continues to grow so rapidly,” she said.

Mister Bee Potato Chips was started in 1951 and is one of the most popular snacks in the Mountain State. It was voted “Best West Virginia-Made Food Product” in 2021 by the readers of *West Virginia Living* magazine. The woman-owned, small business has been fully modernized and has expanded its market research and grown from 20 to 80 employees in the past two years.

“This success story is a prime example of how the entrepreneurial ecosystem we have built in southern West Virginia can add value to long-standing businesses as well as new start-ups and early-stage businesses seeking to grow or pivot,” said Moore.

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About Mister Bee Potato Chips: Mister Bee Potato Chip Company was founded in 1951 by Leo and Sara Klein and had its first offices on Mary Street in Parkersburg, West Virginia. At that time, the chips would be made in the morning and then Mr. Klein would distribute the fresh product in the afternoon. In November 1962, the company was moved to West Virginia Avenue, where the chips are still made today. Leo Klein operated the business until 1979, when he passed away at the age of 73. The company remained with the Klein family until incurring financial difficulties in 2010. Mister Bee now operates as West Virginia Potato Chip Company and was purchased in 2015 by new owners Mary Anne (Welch) Ketelsen, Douglas Ketelsen, James Richard Barton, Gregory Barton and Gregory Reed, along with Mary Maxine Welch participating in financing. **Website:** <https://misterbee.com/>

About New River Gorge Regional Development Authority: The New River Gorge Regional Development Authority's (NRGRDA) mission is to initiate, facilitate and support the economic and community development efforts within the counties of Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh, and Summers located in this region of southern West Virginia. NRGRDA stimulates the regional economy through business expansion and retention efforts, including an extensive portfolio of financial services; the management of sites for new companies locating to our region; and serving as a point of access for local service providers which offer a variety of technical assistance for business owners.

The West Virginia Hive is the entrepreneurship program of the NRGRDA and the administrator of the Country Roads Angel Network (CRAN). More can be found at <https://nrgrda.org/>

New River Gorge Convention and Visitors Bureau: The New River Gorge Convention and Visitors Bureau is a nonprofit marketing and sales organization whose sole purpose is to take the leadership role in developing the area's tourism industry and advancing Fayette County as a vacation, group tour and meeting destination. Visit the New River CVB at <https://newrivergorgecvb.com/>