

**TOURISM ON OUR TERMS:**  
**Rural Community Tourism Development**  
**Impacts and Policies**

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**Western Governors' Association**

## FOREWORD

by Governor Mike Sullivan, Wyoming

Wyoming, the state with the least crowding in the entire nation, is for all practical purposes 100 percent rural. This report feels like it was written for us. Wyoming is considering a variety of steps to expand our tourism, but we want to do it "on our own terms," to borrow Governor Mickelson's theme for this year. This report helps us figure out how to do that.

Pat Long does a good job of laying out the questions communities should answer before they cast their tourism strategies, what the opportunities are for them, and what they will have to do to ensure the quality of their tourism efforts. He also does a good job in suggesting what states can do to provide technical assistance and other support to communities that want to proceed with a tourism strategy.

Most western states have communities with no obvious tourist attractions, ones that have attractions but don't want development, ones poised to capitalize on their assets, and ones where tourism has boomed, possibly overwhelming them. The message that this report sends is that decisions on how and whether to move forward are up to the community but that the state has important roles to play in helping those communities identify realistic and positive options.

The range of options for rural areas can be fun and nurturing for all concerned -- festivals, sports events, history, folk arts, special ethnic assets, learning vacations, experience vacations, and ecotourism, to name just a few growing specialties. Small communities can build an amenity base of restaurants, shops, performances and other assets which locals can enjoy. This base can also help develop a sense of civic involvement, identity, and community pride.

Small towns are especially able to capitalize on these emerging trends. They have the authenticity which is increasingly being sought, together with the friendliness, slow pace, and uniqueness which our growing markets for seniors, international visitors, and families with children appear to value.

The challenge to states is to help communities develop these enriching tourism experiences and avoid choosing options which may promise quick economic benefits but harm characteristics of the town which the locals value.

Pat Long provides a sensitive, practical, positive outline for all of us to learn from.



# **TOURISM - ON OUR TERMS**

## **RURAL COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS AND POLICIES**

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# RURAL COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

## IMPACTS AND POLICIES

***We need to develop what I call an ethic of place. It is premised on a sense of place, the recognition that our species thrives on the subtle, intangible, but soul-deep mix of landscape, smells, sounds, history, neighbors, and friends that constitute a place, a homeland. An ethic of place respects equally the people of a region and the land, animals, vegetation, water, and air. It recognizes that westerners revere their physical surroundings and that they need and deserve a stable, productive economy that is accessible to those with modest incomes. An ethic of place ought to be a shared community value and ought to manifest itself in a dogged determination to treat the environment and its people as equals, to recognize both as sacred, and to insure that all members of the community not only search for, but insist upon, solutions that fulfill the ethic. (Wilkinson, 1990)***

## INTRODUCTION

Poets, historians, anthropologists, and politicians, among others, have long idealized rural community life, especially in times past, representing it as having achieved, if not Wilkinson's "ethic of place," then at least some superior integration of human life into the natural environment. In "Why Save Rural America?" Daryl Hobbs points out that this idealized rural America "is a product of images, some based on experience, some created, and some based on selective perception and nostalgia" including "images of bedrock values, virtue and general well-being. It is always in an outdoor setting that one popular commercial concludes, 'Times don't get any better than this.'"

"Cherishing Our Past, Shaping Our Future: The Policy Implications" (WGA, 1990) argues that "with the growing size, homogenization, and complexity of metropolitan areas, . . . rural authenticity, uniqueness, and manageability will become an increasingly sought after alternative" (p. 1-2). In other words, if we cannot sustain or recapture the ideal sense of place in our own workaday urban communities, we are likely to seek it out in our leisure time and on our own travels.

Today, communities across the West, especially small, rural communities, are striving to capitalize on the imagined America by promoting rural tourism. It is important to recognize that this behavior does not necessarily constitute an exploitation of city folks' romantic illusions by greedy small-town sharpsters. But, for many rural communities today, tourism development is one of the few opportunities to enhance the local economy. It is estimated by the United States Travel and Tourism Administration that tourism is the nation's second largest retail industry. In every state, tourism is at least the third largest industry, helping to create jobs, including jobs for semi-skilled workers; to increase tax bases; to generate direct revenue for both private and public entities; and to heighten civic pride. State and local governments have become increasingly concerned with the development of tourism. Combined state government budgets for tourism marketing and management increased from 53.2 million dollars in 1977 to 234 million dollars in 1987, a growth of 440 percent (Stacey, 1987).

Wilkinson (1990) believes that the romantic illusion of rural America can in fact be reality and thus is part of the attraction for visitors. He goes on to argue

*Although the ethic of place is solidly positioned on economics, ecology, several physical sciences, law, and the psychology of interpersonal relationships, we can also find a streak of what can be fairly called romanticism. But I refuse to allow that to be a conversation stopper. Romanticism--or, put somewhat differently, beauty, imagination, cultural conservatism, and a love of history--is as real as youth, the market, the environment, or art. All are part of the landscape of the mind and we*

*deny something fundamental in ourselves if we deny the tangible existence of any of them (p. 93).*

Rural tourism can and should be, not the exploitation of an illusion, but the celebration of an ideal. Indeed, to be sustainable over the long haul, tourism development must catalyze the development of the host community towards its own ideal. As local residents, officials, and leaders come together to plan, implement, and evaluate tourism strategies, they are also determining what the future will be like for the community's permanent residents. To be effective, this planning process must begin and end with local people making local decisions about how far they can and will accommodate the impacts of tourism development and tourist visitations. This does not mean that there is no place in rural tourism development for outsiders. Indeed, since rural decision-makers (residents) are by definition relatively isolated and have limited resources, in order to use tourism as a community development tool they need help from state and federal government and from regional entities such as the Western Governors' Association (WGA).

The charge of the WGA's tourism program is to assist states in taking advantage of their tourism potential by identifying effective ways to assess and manage tourism through a strategic development plan. Such a plan must focus on building local and regional capacities for attracting visitors and on accurately assessing the impacts of tourism upon local communities and regional economies. Tourism development must be guided by a vision that recognizes the economic value while maintaining the authenticity and integrity of the attractions and service that contribute to long-term success.

Specifically, tourism development policy should aim at:

- o improving local officials' and residents' access to information, so that they can make informed decisions about community tourism development and fully understand its social, economic, and environmental impacts;

- o coordinating and where appropriate integrating, existing state-supported human and financial resources helpful to community tourism development;
- o encouraging cooperation among the private, public, and nonprofit sectors;
- o integrating the efforts of local, state, and federal government;
- o encouraging cooperation among neighboring communities within an existing or potential tourist area; and
- o making more use of higher education to (1) train students in tourism development, (2) provide technical assistance by faculty members, and (3) support research on community tourism development and its impacts.

However much assistance is provided, the final decisions must remain in local hands; and those decisions are essentially political. As Peter McCoy, then Undersecretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism, stated in 1982 in a national context, "Public policy formulation is a process of conflict and compromise. . . . In a democracy, the resolution of national conflicts is never finished: it is a process, a task that must be worked at. Tourism will be dealt with fairly in this process only if those who would advance the national tourism interest work for, and insist upon, justice" (that is, the tolerable accommodation of conflicting interests) (p. 277). Obviously, McCoy's observation also holds for policy development at the community level.

This report will address a number of questions critical to the examination of rural community tourism development. These questions focus on (1) do we believe there are opportunities for rural communities in tourism development, (2) if so, what actions need to be taken to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs, and (3) what is the role of western state governors in creating an environment and supporting activities necessary for success.

Although there has been a great deal of speculative hope that tourism can "save" rural communities, much discussion, and some accomplishments, there are yet few standards by which to measure success. There are examples of well-established and profitable attractions, activities, and community tourism systems. What we lack



most of all are accepted industry indicators by which to track over time the positive and negative impacts made by a tourism economy on community life.

## **TOURISM: A COMMUNITY INDUSTRY**

***The term "community industry" acknowledges that tourism is an industry, . . . but at the same time it extends decision-making beyond the business sector to consider the long-term interests of the host community . . . A destination community provides the community assets (landscape and heritage), public goods (parks, museums and institutions), and hospitality (government promotion and welcoming smiles) that are the backbone of the industry. . . . tourism should be viewed as a resource industry . . . In that the industry gives back to the community while extracting a living from it, so that both the industry and the community base can benefit mutually from a long-term partnership. (Murphy, 1983)***

The development of more tourism within a town or region does not just happen. Instead, it requires the commitment of local residents to provide settings and experiences that are attractive and satisfying to the traveling public. This commitment involves an honest assessment of an area's unique strengths and weakness, an understanding of those groups of visitors to whom an area will most appeal, strong community support of tourism, and, most importantly, commitment, organization, finances, and leadership. Especially problematic for rural areas are leadership and organization; regional vision and cooperation (since one rural town alone rarely has the critical mass of attractions and services to sustain tourism); and capital investment, marketing expertise, and other forms of technical assistance.

### **TOURISM DEFINED**

Numerous scholars have defined both tourism and community tourism development. Gunn (1988) defines tourism as "encompassing all travel with the exception of commuting." Mathieson and Wall (1982) define it as "the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs." At the 1963 United Nations Conference on Travel and Tourism a tourist was described as "any person visiting a country other than that in

which he has his usual place of residence, for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited"--definition adopted by the International Union of Official Travel Organizations in 1968. Tourism development has been described as "the network and activities of commercial businesses, governmental agencies, and special interest groups, that are concerned with attracting and serving the traveling public--that is, persons traveling outside their homes for any purpose not related to day-to-day activity" (Richardson, 1991).

Professor Gabriel Cherem, a geographer and heritage tourism scholar, has identified the components of quality heritage tourism development. His list, adapted for application to general community tourism development, reads as follows:

- (1) perpetuating an area's cultural, historical, and natural resources;
- (2) emphasizing the identity of an area and showcasing its unique facets;
- (3) empowering local hosts to interpret their own amenities to guests using contemporary interpretative skills and techniques;
- (4) enhancing the pride of local hosts in their heritage, thus helping to perpetuate indigenous lifestyles and values;
- (5) empowering local hosts to provide authentic and meaningful aggregate and multidimensional tourism experiences;
- (6) improving guest relations and service skills; and,
- (7) ensuring sustainable tourism development by nurturing respect for an area's heritage and thus the local host population's ability to serve as the true promoters of the projected culture.

The goal of rural community tourism development should be not only to diversify the local economy but also to maintain a high level of resident satisfaction with community life. Although tourism may help diversify and stabilize a local economy, contribute to the tax base, create jobs and business opportunities, and bring new money into the economy, it also entails costs that need to be taken into consideration. Mathieson and Wall (1982) noted that "whenever tourism activity is concentrated in time and space, builds rapidly, dominates a local economy, disrupts community life,

endangers the environment, and ignores community input, the seeds of discontent are sown" (p. 141).

## WHAT WE ARE STRIVING TO ACHIEVE

***The West...a place where the hand clasp was a little stronger, the smile a little longer, the skies a trifle bluer, and friendships were a little truer. (Arthur Chapman, 1976)***

A successful community tourist industry depends on intangible attributes, such as hospitality and pride, as well as attractions, services, environmental quality, location, and promotions. Obviously, communities and regions that are considering developing more tourism must ask: Do our attractions have the drawing power to attract more visitors? Do we have recreation opportunities and services that will encourage visitors to spend their money? But they must also ask: Is the citizenry of our community prepared to support tourism by extending their hospitality to visitors and by absorbing certain tourism-related costs? Tourism is unique among industries because it requires that residents of tourism-oriented communities play "host" to visiting "guests." Since it is not just an economic activity, but a social one too, it provides both social and economic benefits and imposes both social and economic costs.

Community residents and decision-makers face a difficult decision when economically their "backs are to the wall." But, what may appear to be the only alternative to expanding a community's economy may not in fact meet the long-term needs of residents nor serve the community's image. Yet, without an alternative, any action often seems better than none. Two recent examples of such difficult decisions are small animal shooting competitions and gambling (gaming). With these and similar activities intended to draw tourists the decision should be made only after careful assessment of the pros and cons of the event.

The controversy over killing small game to promote a community's economy remains high. In Hegins, Pennsylvania, over 150 people from ten states picketed a live

pigeon shoot, billed as the largest in the world. Participants pay to shoot birds released from cages and the proceeds are used to maintain a community park. At a recent event three state troopers were injured and 23 people arrested when several fistfights broke out, a skunk was thrown at demonstrators, and the windshield of a car was kicked out during the protest. In Baker City, Oregon, animal protectionists have argued successfully that porcupines were being exploited, chased, and worried for human amusement during the Miner's Jubilee Porcupine Race. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission has banned the event after this year. Nucla, Colorado, remains the site of the annual Top Dog World Championship Prairie Dog Shoot. It is billed as a way to introduce tourists to the scenic areas surrounding Nucla, to bring in needed cash, and to reduce the prairie dog population.

The decision to approve small stakes gaming for historical mining towns has also been difficult and controversial. Some opponents have suggested that this issue would best resolve itself if every rural community had such authorization. Others suggest that independent "gaming zones" be established outside the community where the negative impacts of gambling might be minimized. Unfortunately, information needed for communities to plan appropriately for a gaming economy and to monitor its' long-term impact is very limited. What is apparent is the need to (1) plan adequately to minimize the negative impacts of gaming on a community, and (2) insure that local residents benefit financially. If gaming revenues leave the community without passing through the local economy and if the infrastructure can not bear the burden of development, a gaming economy will not serve the needs of the community's permanent residents.

Before embarking on any program to enhance community tourism, therefore, it is important to ask: Is tourism the best form of economic development to meet our community's particular needs? If so, how can we maximize its benefits and minimize its costs? Most people think of tourism mainly as a way to enhance a community's economic condition, since it generates employment, income, sales tax, and new

business opportunities. But the benefits of tourism are not economic alone. Tourist attractions and services may also be enjoyed by local residents, and increases in the local tax base can help support parks, recreation services, and other community centers. Other benefits include enhanced civic involvement and pride and improved community image.

#### **Program Initiative #1**

**Alberta Community Tourism Action Program.** The Community Tourism Action Program provides financial assistance to Alberta, Canada, Municipalities wishing to implement tourism-oriented capital development projects. The Program provides \$30 million over a 5-year period that began in fiscal year 1988-89, with funding provided by the Alberta lotteries. Both private sector and not-for-profit projects are eligible for funding assistance. All projects must be identified in the community's Tourism Action Plan and must be endorsed by the Municipal Council.

The Community Tourism Action Plan must include (1) a tourism policy adopted by the relevant Local Authority, (2) the establishment of a Tourism Action Committee (sanctioned by the Local Authority) which will implement the Tourism Action Plan, (3) the completion of the Action Plan Process and the Plan Format, (4) conducting advertised public meetings to ensure community resident input prior to formal endorsement, and (5) formal endorsement of the Tourism Action Plan by the relevant Local Authority.

*Alberta Tourism, Planning Unit Development Division, 16th Floor, 10025 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3Z3. (403) 427-4340.*

Tourism is not just the private sector affair it is often thought to be. True, commercial lodging, food services, transportation, attractions, and retail industries generate the bulk of tourism spending. But it is communities and outdoor areas that provide the general settings for tourism. The main attractions are often natural resources, on which rural economies have historically depended; special events that celebrate rural life and attract urban visitors; and the culture and heritage of individual communities themselves. These attractions are often maintained by the public sector or by nonprofit organizations. Tourism therefore depends on cooperation among commercial, governmental, and nonprofit agency interests. To secure this cooperation

it is important to ask: How can we organize ourselves so that community interests are well represented? How can we ensure that each interest involved is represented by the ongoing and committed leadership necessary to see our initiatives to fruition?

**Program Initiative #2**

**Idaho Community Tourism Planner.** This "self-study program" targets rural Idaho communities that have not undergone major tourism development and have limited resources for technical assistance. The program workbook introduces the tourism industry in a non-technical fashion and serves as the initial activity in the rural community planning process. Workbook exercises are designed to gather information about the following:

- community strategic placement
- attractions--water, land, and man-made
- services and service quality
- financing--for public and private development
- transportation--roads, air, bus, and train
- visitor profile--current and potential
- communication and marketing
- signage
- competition and cooperative efforts
- networking--local, regional, and state-wide
- seasonal influences
- summary and future directions

*Department of Resource Recreation and Tourism, College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Range Sciences, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83843. (208) 885-7911. Bill McLaughlin and Chuck Harris, Project Directors.*

Tourism development also requires a sound marketing orientation. Marketing is more than just promotions; it is a management process that addresses the following questions: Which groups of visitors are we currently serving and could we potentially serve? To which of these groups are our tourism opportunities best matched? Which groups are most compatible with the local residents who must act as hosts? How might our community (region) better meet the needs of these groups through attractions, services, or infrastructure? How do we communicate to these visitors about all our community has to offer? How do we evaluate the success of our efforts? Tourism promotions are not simply a matter of creating a brochure or engaging in advertising.

Effective promotional campaigns include a variety of approaches, not all of which involve expensive advertising. Indeed, in tourism, the best promotion is word of mouth from satisfied visitors.

Tourism is a dynamic industry, influenced by many factors: recreation trends, changing demographics, new technologies, new business opportunities, world events, the changing nature of destinations. Communities that wish to remain competitive must monitor their progress to determine changes in their markets and in their community "products."

**Program Initiative #3**

**Travel Reference Center.** The Travel Reference Center contains the largest collection of travel, tourism, and recreation research studies available in any one place in the United States. It was established jointly by the University of Colorado at Boulder and the Travel & Tourism Research Association to serve the travel industry and is housed on the UCB campus. The complete library catalog can be accessed by computer and features citations on over 5,000 items in the database. Using the 973 descriptors, searches can be made of all available library information.

*Business Research Division, College of Business and Administration, Campus Box 420, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309. (303) 492-5056. Gin Hayden, Project Director.*



## **THE BUSINESS OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

The word "rural" conjures up thoughts of wide-open spaces and a culture rich in the pioneering spirit of our country. According to the National Association of Towns and Townships, increasingly, people are seeking experiences to be found only in this rural American countryside; and rural communities are examining ways to benefit economically from this trend, without detrimental effects on their environment and their way of life. From bed and breakfasts to farm vacations to recreational trail networks to lease hunting and fishing to harvest festivals, tourism is inspired by the rural flavor and natural resources found in small-town America.

### **WHY THE NEED**

While in most urban areas, the 1980's were years of economic recovery and prosperity, this has not been the case in rural America. Rural problems run much deeper than agriculture and extend to inadequate infrastructure, poor schools, lack of access to quality medical services, and lack of leadership to solve problems that exist. While rural America may have once been dependent on agriculture, only 23% of the 3,106 counties in this country can now be described as agriculture-dependent, but more than three-fourths of the nations counties are nonmetropolitan in character (Options in Developing a New National Rural Policy 1988).

Rural America, especially in areas with an historic reliance on agriculture, lumber and mining, and the manufacturing industries, has been greatly affected by recent structural changes in the economy. Deregulation of the transportation and communications industries, along with the reduction of many rural subsidies, has crippled the ability of rural communities to compete in the emerging global economy. Although the 1970s had brought some growth and economic vitality to rural areas, the 1980s have been a time of economic decline and dislocation.

Many rural economies today suffer from slow job growth, high unemployment, outmigration, and underdeveloped human resources (Rural Economic Development in

the 1980's: A Summary.) A report prepared by Dr. William Chance of the University of Washington for the Western Governors' Association (July 1989) summarized these social and economic conditions

*The difficulties confronting rural areas are reflected in the tug of demographic change (the rural portion of the national population has declined from 47% to 23% in 45 years), the presence of deteriorating communities, the chronic absence of physical infrastructure and the associated problems of acquiring or attracting capital to risky rural ventures.*

#### **Program Initiative #4**

**Working Together For Rural America.** The Forest Service is working with rural residents to develop natural resource-based opportunities and enterprises that contribute to the economic and social vitality of their communities. This is an attempt to make lasting improvements in rural America by helping people solve their local problems in ways that enhance the quality of the environment in accordance with existing Forest Service authorities. The goals of this effort include:

- o Communicate to all Forest Service employees and the public that rural development is part of the agency's mission since rural resources--land and people--are key to local and national development;
- o Include rural development considerations in agency resource decisions to assist rural communities and the Nation in achieving long-term economic development and improved quality of life;
- o Actively participate in planning and implementing community-based rural development activities;
- o Understand and integrate the needs of culturally, geographically, and economically diverse communities in Forest Service activities;
- o Strengthen Forest Service participation in cooperative USDA efforts at the local level;
- o Develop and provide timely and current research and resource information on rural development opportunities.

This program emphasizes six points felt crucial to success in this endeavor. They include partnerships, customer satisfaction, building strong grassroots support, rounding out Forest Service programs, workforce diversity, and innovative/creative, people-oriented Forest Service culture.

*United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, 12th & Independence SW, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090. F. Dale Robertson, Chief.*

## **TOURISM: AN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION TOOL**

As a result of the widespread decline in traditional western rural industries, tourism is receiving increased recognition as a regional economic development tool (Getz, 1986; Liu and Var, 1986). Potentially, tourism is a basic industry that can provide local employment opportunities, tax revenues, and economic diversity; and it is especially well suited to the current rural policy emphasis on entrepreneurial development and small business assistance programs designed to encourage the start-up and growth of locally owned businesses (Watkins and Allen, 1988). Tourism capitalizes on both natural features (mountains, rivers, lakes, and beaches) and man-made resources (parks, recreation facilities, historic and cultural sites) often found in rural areas. In addition, it often requires the output of at least potentially rural "feeder" industries such as agriculture, milling, meatpacking, fishing, finance and insurance, travel, and communications, and can therefore help revive rural economies on a broader scale (Report of the Federal Task Force on Rural Tourism).

### **Program Initiative #5**

**National Park Service Route 66 Historic Highway Initiative.** A congressional bill (Introduced by Republican Senator Pete Domenici from New Mexico) has authorized a two-year study to determine ways to preserve and commemorate this historic highway. Each of the eight states which include New Mexico, Arizona, and California, supports an active Route 66 association. Route 66 is a last link to the time of waitresses named Mae, homemade cherry pies, Burma Shave signs, porch swings, neon storefronts, and driving below the speed limit. "If you want to make time and go lickety-split, by all means take the interstate. . . . But if you want to see genuine America, if you find time holy and want to rediscover yourself--rediscover this country--take Route 66." (Michael Wallis, Route 66--The Mother Road)

Across the country, rural residents who once looked at farming, ranching, mining, and manufacturing only as traditional ways of making a living are now looking at these same industries in non traditional ways. Capitalizing on the increased interest in personal health and better eating habits, farmers in the rural South are diversifying into organic farming. Ranchers in the West are pursuing ways of turning their working

ranches into "working guest ranches," charging a fee to visitors who help with the annual round-up or daily chores. Butte, Montana, where the region's largest mining operation recently closed, is developing an international high-altitude training center for Olympic hopefuls and trainees in speed skating, figure skating, ice hockey, and indoor cycling. Visitors there can now see world class sports as well as learn about the history of mining in the West.

### **SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Existing small businesses and rural entrepreneurs in light manufacturing, food processing, retailing, telecommunications, and tourism are beginning to play important roles in revitalizing rural economies (Wall Street Journal, September 8, 1989). "Smoke-stack chasing" (luring factories or corporate divisions) is falling out of favor. Instead, rural communities are beginning to provide an environment for existing businesses to expand or for new "home-grown" businesses to emerge. For example, in Broken Bow, Nebraska, community residents have founded their own nonprofit development corporation, creating venture capital by selling stock and refurbishing a vacant downtown building to serve as a business incubator. Such community-based actions are representative of the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit found throughout rural America and suggest a return to the success of the 1970's when the expansion of existing, local firms was the largest source of net new employment in most rural areas of the country (Armington & Odle, 1982).

Small Business Administration figures show that companies with fewer than 20 employees created over 63 percent of the new employment between 1980 and 1986 for rural communities across the country (Wall Street Journal, September 8, 1989). Edgell (1990) noted that ". . . small businesses dominate the tourist/travel industry. For example, of the 1.4 million travel-related business firms in the United States, 98 percent of them are classified as small businesses."

#### **Program Initiative #6**

**Western Rural Development Resource Network.** Tourism development training is a component of this program which was recently established to provide economic and community leadership development assistance to rural communities in fourteen Western states. The WRDRN is jointly funded by the US WEST Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and administered through the Colorado Center for Community Development.

*Colorado Center for Community Development, University of Colorado at Denver, P.O. Box 173364, Campus Box 128, Denver, Colorado 80217-3364. Bob Horn, Director.*

In rural communities the presence of an "attraction" is only one of a number of factors that make a rural tourism system work. Besides attractions--which can be natural or man-made, cultural or recreational--a rural tourism system needs financing for new businesses and improvements of existing business (financial resources). The community must compliment a strong business base with a means of informing and attracting visitors (promotion and marketing); with roads, utilities, water, sewer, and a communications system (infrastructure); with lodging, food, fuel, and information (services); with local leadership to organize and manage tourism efforts (management and organization); and with plain, down home friendliness (hospitality).

#### **Program Initiative #7**

**Colorado Loves Company**, a state-wide hospitality training program, is designed for managers and employees of Colorado's tourism and hospitality industry. The program is based upon input from hundreds of tourism and hospitality industry representatives and was piloted in six state travel regions. The goals include:

- o Creating awareness of the impact of tourism on the economy of the community, region, and state;
- o Increasing understanding of the impact of the service provider on the visitor experience;
- o Improving capability of meeting and exceeding visitor expectations;
- o Improving skills necessary to create and enhance a memorable guest experience;
- o Increasing knowledge and ability to share information about tourism resources in the community, region, and state.

*Center for Recreation and Tourism Development, Campus Box 420, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309. (303) 492-5135. Kelley Trierweiler, Project Coordinator.*

Any successful business relies on the value of its product, a successful marketing effort, an internal support structure, a qualified and trained workforce, a distribution network, sound management, and the capital to begin or expand its operation. Rural communities wishing to capitalize on tourism and recreation development need to consider all these factors in assessing their ability to package an attractive experience for the traveler.

## **UNDERSTANDING TOURISM IMPACTS ON COMMUNITY LIFE**

Numerous research efforts have assessed the impact that tourism has on a host community, addressing, in particular, residents' perceptions of costs, benefits, and future impacts. This research has helped us to understand what factors must be considered in planning for community tourism development; especially, it has emphasized the importance of resident involvement in the planning process in order to minimize the negative impacts of tourism development on community ideals.

Many of these "community ideals" were identified at a recent WGA-sponsored work session (1989) charged with identifying the characteristics of a "healthy" rural community. Scholars, government officials, and community development practitioners used such words as endowed, renewable, persistent, proud, resourceful, entrepreneurial and self-reliant, in describing rural communities successful in today's society. Session participants agreed that a healthy rural community was one that was endowed with ideas; confronted and responded to changes; was ready to take advantage of new technologies and new markets; built upon its indigenous energy and sense of community attachment; and had a "sailboat" culture as opposed to a "slave-galley" culture. A "sailboat" rural community is forward looking, adjusting its course in response to events; a slave galley culture imitates and accepts direction from others, regardless of events around it.

Communities continue to be the gathering place where people interact and where they most frequently derive the daily satisfactions of life. Communities represent the environment within which we work, play, are educated, and establish and maintain our identity. The American Institute for Research (American Psychologist, 1978), in a study including nearly 3,000 people of various ages, races, and backgrounds and representing all regions of the country, categorized fifteen components of "quality of life" under five headings: (1) physical and material well-being, (2) relationships with other people, (3) social, community, and civic activities, (4) personal development and

fulfillment, and (5) recreation. Most of us, most of the time, meet these needs in our own local communities.

Incorporating visitors into a community necessitates change and therefore affects the well-being, relationships, personal activities, personal development and fulfillment, and recreation opportunities and patterns of permanent residents. To achieve the most positive results, D'Amore recommends that "at the local level, tourism planning should be based upon development goals and priorities identified by residents and that among such goals would be concerns for maintaining the integrity and quality of local opportunities for fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation, and an interest in themes and events that reflect the history, local lifestyles or geographic setting of the community" (Tourism in Canada, 1983).

#### **Program Initiative #8**

**The Colorado Plateau Community Initiatives Project.** This Project is designed to encourage the citizens and leaders of the 200 plus communities on the Colorado Plateau (including towns, counties, and Indian tribes) to develop and share effective and innovative ways to assure a sustainable economic future, maintain their special quality of life, and to protect and conserve their remarkable environmental amenities. This initiative consists of the following activities:

- o Conducting a community symposium "Coping With Change: Economy and Environment" in September 1991;
- o Working with individuals and groups in Plateau communities who will serve as sources of advice and information for the Grand Canyon Trust and who will represent the Trust on local issues;
- o Encouraging the development of a communication network among communities and between communities, state and federal agencies, and support organizations that will help in the local decision making process; and,
- o Assisting communities in obtaining skilled assistance on specific issues, conflict resolution in community decision making, and effective participation in Federal land use planning and activities.

*Grand Canyon Trust, "The Homestead", Route 4, Box 718, Flagstaff, AZ 86001. (602) 774-7488. Jim Ruch, Executive Vice President.*



## **SUBJECTIVE INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY TOURISM IMPACTS**

In the mid-eighties, Long, Perdue, and Allen conducted a series of studies of residents' attitudes toward rural community life and support for further tourism development. Their results suggested that there is a relationship between the degree of tourism development and residents' perception of certain dimensions of community life: public services, environmental concerns, and opportunities for citizen involvement. Apparently, low to moderate tourism development can be beneficial to the community, but as development continues past the point where 30 percent of local retail sales are derived from tourism, residents' perceptions tend to take a downward trend. A high level of tourism appears to be detrimental to residents' social consciousness--to their general feelings of comradery and the influence they possess in the community. Residents may begin experiencing a lost sense of community, a feeling of isolation or lack of control. Few local residents perceived a deterioration in the quality of local outdoor recreation opportunities; the most significant changes across varying levels of tourism development were in perceptions of the local quality of life and perceptions of crime.

With increasing levels of tourism development, residents tended to favor special tourism user fees and taxes. Residents of communities with substantial tourism industries apparently perceive that differential user fees and lodging taxes will benefit them personally by reducing their cost of using local parks and outdoor recreation areas, as well as by reducing their local property and sales taxes. This response may also indicate less willingness by residents of "high tourism" communities to spend general revenue tax funds on additional tourism development.

A critical aspect of this research investigated how such attitudes are affected by personal benefits from local tourism development. When the authors controlled for personal benefits, perceptions of tourism's impact were unrelated to sociodemographic characteristics. But as one would expect residents who perceived themselves as

benefiting from tourism development approved more such development, while those who perceived themselves to be negatively affected disapproved it. Residents' approval of further tourism development also correlated with negative perceptions of their community's future, a finding that seems to support Perdue's notion of tourism as a "doomsday" phenomenon: when the community's economy is perceived to be deteriorating, residents appear more likely to support tourism. Finally, residents who perceived tourism as affecting them negatively were more likely to support restrictions and taxes on tourism.

These findings must be viewed in relative terms, because the tolerance for tourism depends upon several factors, including the economic, social, and environmental resources of the community and the quality of tourism development planning. In many communities, environmental resources are at the heart of tourism development as well as general community development; residents realize that the physical resource must be preserved to maintain community well-being.

#### **Program Initiative #9**

**Wildland Recreation and Urban Culture Research Program.** The mission of this project is to develop effective visitor management strategies for wildland recreation areas with an emphasis on different cultural and user groups. Scientists at this research unit located at the laboratory in Riverside are developing ways to:

- o better understand the cultural and recreational differences between various types of people using National Forests;
- o improve service to recreation users and reduce conflict between user groups;
- o control vandalism and littering on recreation sites adjacent to urban areas; and,
- o reduce the costs of managing urban forests and to manage vegetation on recreation sites that are most impacted by urban development.

Forest Service researchers are studying the cultural and ethnic make-up of recreationists to identify their preferences and concerns. Scientists are also developing communication strategies to promote understanding between managers and cultural groups. These strategies may help reduce conflicts between the diverse groups such as hikers and mountain bikers, cross country skiers and snow mobilers, and off road vehicle users and recreationists who oppose them.

*United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station, 4955 Canyon Crest Drive, Riverside, California 92507. (714) 276-6285. Alan Ewert, Project Leader.*

## **OBJECTIVE INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY TOURISM IMPACTS**

Little has been written about the impact of tourism on objective social and demographic indicators. It is certainly important to know for example that local residents perceive increased tourism as contributing to increased crime; but it is equally important to ask whether this perception is accurate. Recently, Perdue, Gustke, and Long (unpublished paper, 1991), examined the relationships between level of tourism development and several objective measures of resident quality of life (population, economic indicators, education, health, welfare, and crime) in the 100 counties of North Carolina. This data clearly showed that there are a number of misconceptions about the effects of tourism development.

The North Carolina study came to the following conclusions. (1) There were no major differences in population age distribution by level of tourism development, despite the widely held perception that tourism development results in a significantly older population. (2) There were substantial differences in net population migration by level of tourism development, with communities at the highest level of tourism experiencing more than twice as much migration as those at the other levels. (3) Although the distribution of jobs by type varied significantly across levels of tourism development, there were no differences in unemployment rates. (4) The weak relationship between tourism development and per capita income contradicted the common perception that tourism leads only to low-paying service sector jobs. (5) Per capita retail sales receipts increased significantly with increasing levels of tourism development. (6) Tourism counties had significantly higher per-student education expenditures. (7) These counties also had a higher general level of education. (8) Available health care significantly increased with increasing tourism development. (9) Although quality of housing improved with increasing tourism development, other measures of welfare needs did not vary. Finally, tourism development was not related

to increased per capita crime rates in North Carolina counties during 1985. Counties at the highest level of tourism development had the lowest number of crimes per capita.

One must recognize the limitations of this effort: the data represent only one state, use of secondary data does not lessen the typical problems of data validity and reliability, secondary data are not available for each year, and in some cases the available data are incomplete. Yet to gain a complete picture of the impacts of tourism on Western communities we must continue to refine our techniques of looking at both residents' perceptions as well as actual data, however provisional.

#### **Program Initiative #10**

**Tourism Geographic Information System Research Project.** This pilot research effort is applying the techniques of geographic mapping and the geographic information system (GIS) to tourism data presentation. GIS is a computer based geographic data management system with automated mapping capabilities. It provides for rapid and efficient data retrieval and analysis, inexpensive data storage, data consistency and management, and effective communication between agencies and the public.

The initial application is being used to demonstrate the effectiveness of GIS when inputting basic tourism data (e.g. national and state parks, historic sites, counties by number of attractions, visitor days, tourist businesses and employment). Output will include a set of polygons defining counties with attribute files providing various social, economic, or physical data in the form of coverages or layers, with each coverage representing a specific data type. Currently, this application is using Wyoming and Colorado as test states.

*Department of Geography and Recreation, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming 82071.  
(307) 766-3311. Tom Buchanan, Principle Investigator.*

## RURAL TOURISM INITIATIVES

***Recent Initiatives by the United States Travel and Tourism Administration in rural tourism and small business development, the passage of Public Law 101-624 titled "Food, Agricultural, Conservation and Trade Act of 1991", continued interest and support from the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus, and actions by the National and Western Governors' Associations and the Small Business Administration have furthered rural communities' hopes that they can attract and retain the visitor dollar. (Kieselbach & Long, 1990)***

### Program Initiative #11

**National Rural Tourism Development Training Program.** The objective of this program is to establish a national network of resource people who can work with rural communities in establishing, improving, and expanding a community's tourism and travel industry. Funded by the Economic Development Administration, program staff will (1) conduct a national training teleconference, (2) create an information video featuring four communities that have successfully implemented tourism development, (3) prepare a comprehensive workbook for use as a community tourism development guide, (4) create a data base representing various degrees of tourism attraction and service development for access by communities seeking successful models, and, (5) establish a network of persons and agencies from each state to provide community tourism technical assistance.

*Tourism Center, 101C Green Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108. (612) 624-4947. John Sem, Barb Koth and Glenn Kreag.*

## NATIONAL EFFORTS

The most extensive study on rural tourism to date was conducted (1989) by the United States Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA) under a directive from Congress. This two-part national study was conducted to determine 1) the ways in which small businesses in rural areas can be promoted through travel and tourism, and 2) whether there was a need for federal policy concerning the development and promotion of small businesses in rural communities specific to travel and tourism.

**Titled National Policy Study on Rural Tourism and Small Business Development,** this effort found that the needs of rural tourism and small businesses were extensive and that many of the needs were most appropriately addressed at the

state and local level. It was also determined that "the tourism industry generally faced the same fundamental obstacles to growth and vitality that were identified by the National Tourism Policy Study conducted in 1978."

The obstacles to rural tourism small business development identified as common to most states included:

1. lack of funding for development, promotion, and operation;
2. lack of understanding and community support about tourism;
3. lack of infrastructure, principally roads and bridges;
4. lack of management and marketing expertise;
5. labor issues--shortages, seasonality, level of pay;
6. balancing tourism development and environmental issues;
7. lack of local leadership; and,
8. lack of attractions.

In general, the USTTA found that many of the economic development programs currently provided by state governments are not directed to small business and rural tourism development. However, trends in state economic development initiatives toward business retention and nurturing of home-grown firms, as well as the growing recognition of tourism as a viable economic development alternative are increasingly leading to the formation of programs that include rural small business and tourism considerations.

#### **Program Initiative #12**

**Enhancing Rural Economies Through Amenity Resources.** Amenity resources was the topic of this recent National Policy Symposium hosted by the Congressional Research Service in cooperation with The Pennsylvania State University. This symposium focused on evaluating the potential for amenity resource use as a rural development tool, identifying associated issues, and suggesting actions to be undertaken by all parties to facilitate the use of these resources. Information about the symposium is contained in [Congressional Research Service Report 90-380](#).

*Natural Resources Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. Washington, D.C. 20540. (202) 707-7284. George H. Siehl, Specialist.*

A second national effort looking at broad tourism policy issues was conducted in November 1990, with the convening of the Tourism Policy Forum held in Washington, DC. Sponsored by The George Washington University, World Tourism Organization, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, European Economic Commission, and the Organization of American States, this Forum addressed amenity resources and rural economic growth through tourism as one of its topics. Amenity resources are those aspects of the environment from which residents and visitors may derive beauty, pleasure, and experiences that are unique to a particular locale. Such resources could include historical attributes, cultural events, outdoor recreation opportunities, wildlife, scenery, and other natural or man-made resources and activities (Siehl, 1990).

#### **Program Initiative #13**

**Idaho Recreation Initiative.** This is a tourism partnership program that assists public recreation providers in the development, expansion, and marketing of their recreation resources. The program also assists agencies to implement projects through cooperative funding and staff resources which would not be possible by a single entity. Federal agencies participating include the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation. State partners include Idaho Fish & Game, State Parks, and State Commerce. Other government and private sector entities are encouraged to participate on an ad hoc basis. The program focuses on customer satisfaction, fostering partnerships, and pursuing excellence.

*Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation, State House Mail, Boise, Idaho 83720. (208) 327-7444. Jack Lavin, Project Coordinator.*

Recommendations from this Tourism Policy Forum further echoed the extensive findings of the National Policy Symposium (see Program Initiative #13) recognizing that not every rural community has the potential to thrive economically through tourism as a result of using its amenity resources. Nor, can amenity resource use quickly offset the loss of high-paying jobs as other sources of employment are reduced or vanish. Nonetheless, if select policy decisions are implemented, clusters of rural amenity

resources can contribute to increased spending to enhance rural economies through tourism related activity (Shafer & Zeigler 1990).

Thus, policy recommendations centered around partnerships, transportation, and maintaining the quality of rural community life. They include (1) helping communities assess and use planning information; (2) better coordination of existing government and private sector programs to support rural tourism; (3) support Scenic Byways program; (4) improve opportunities for non-driving travelers to visit rural areas; (5) provide appropriate signage and local informational radio broadcasts; (6) reduce the detrimental effects of acid rain on rural communities; and, (7) restrict the importation of solid waste into rural environments without local citizen input.

#### **Program Initiative #14**

**National Trust for Historic Preservation Tourism Initiative** is designed to increase awareness of historic resources within the travel industry and to help the preservation community understand the value of tourism. Objectives of the program include (1) coordinate educational programs by preservationists and planners on the importance and benefit of tourism to communities; (2) produce resource materials to help journalists, tour operators and other travel industry personnel become familiar with historic resources at the local, state, and national level; and, (3) enhance the image of historic resources to tourism through joint promotions, presentations, and the formation of a Tourism Development Council representing the tourism industry, media, and preservation community, and that can serve as an advisory group to the National Trust Tourism Initiative.

A state "pilot" program has also been established to help communities develop long-term travel strategies; build partnerships between the preservation community, tourism industry, corporations, civic organizations and government agencies; prepare attractions; and to build the infrastructure to support increased visitations. Currently, communities from Tennessee, Wisconsin, Texas and Indiana, are participating in this pilot effort.

*Tourism Initiative. National Trust for Historic Preservation, 511 16th Street, Suite 700, Denver, Colorado 80202. (303) 623-1504. Cheryl Hargrove, Project Manager.*

A third initiative is the recently passed Senate Bill 1204 "Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991". This proposed five year surface transportation program incorporates several amendments that will promote rural tourism and improve public



lands road infrastructure for tourism and recreational purposes. continuation and expansion of the National Scenic Byways Program. The amendments include: The Rural Tourism Development Foundation Act of 1991 to promote rural areas to foreign visitors; and the Federal Tourism and Recreational Development Act of 1991 to assist in the development of an infrastructure to support the use of public lands for tourism and recreational travel. The Senate-passed bill includes the following tourism-related initiatives:

**1. Federal Lands Highway Program**--authorizes \$1 billion for public lands highways including forest roads; \$1 billion for Indian Reservation roads; and \$600 million for U.S. Parks and Parkways. Encourages states to select projects under the public lands category that implement federal tourism and recreational travel initiatives such as the Forest Service Scenic Byways Program, the Bureau of Land Management Back Country Byways Program, and the National Trail Systems Program. The amendment qualifies specific project enhancement costs such as interpretive signage, acquisition of scenic easements, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and visitors centers for funding under the Federal Lands Category. The amendment's main purpose is to encourage states to develop an infrastructure to support the tourism economy which is an important part of every western state's economy.

**2. National Recreational Trails Trust Fund Act**--establishes a National Recreational Trails Trust Fund by repealing an existing law that refunds nonhighway recreational fuel taxes. \$50-75 million per year would be allocated to states to fund projects promoting safe and environmentally sensitive use of recreational trails. Half of the money would be distributed to states on an equal basis with the remainder based on recreational usage. The main intent is to provide funding for recreational trails that are not on federal land and that have statewide benefits. Funds could also be used for education, enforcement, and training activities to prevent further erosion and damage to existing trails.

**3. Rural Tourism Development Foundation**--a non-profit, non-government managed, privately funded entity that will finance planning, development, and implementation of projects and programs that have the potential to increase travel and tourism export revenues by attracting foreign visitors to rural America. This Foundation

would establish a public/private source to promote our federal lands along with state, local, tribal, and private attractions. A major goal would be to promote lesser known federal land tourism and recreational destinations in order to divert traffic from overcrowded sites and protect the natural resources in those areas.

**4. Education and Training Program**--provides a statutory base for the Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) which is run through 48 state highway centers. Amendment adds a \$5 million tourism and recreational travel program to provide small communities access to expertise and a framework in which to resolve complex issues associated with tourism and recreational travel such as design, planning, and land-use zoning; designates four centers to provide American Indian tribal governments special services; and, provides funding for the existing RTAP at \$8 million per year, double the current level.

**5. Scenic and Historic Byways Office and Program**--creates a National Scenic and Historic Byways Office and Program to implement the recommendations from the national study completed by the Federal Highway Administration in January 1991. The office would provide technical assistance and grants to states for planning, design, and development of state scenic byways programs with funding available for road-user amenities such as information services, maps, brochures, and interpretive displays. Section establishes an "All American Roads" program that recognizes a limited-mileage, non-interconnected group of roads that have outstanding qualities of scenic, historic, and cultural attractiveness. Goal is to use scenic or historical byway designation to preserve and protect roads and their unique characteristics to enhance rural tourism economic development by making them world-class tourism destinations.

**6. Statewide Planning and Project Selection**--requires each state to have a continuous transportation planning process which takes into account international border crossings and access to ports, airports, national parks, recreational areas, monuments, historic sites, and recreational travel and tourism. "Transportation Enhancements" would include certain safety related improvements, facilities for bicycle and pedestrian use, projects to acquire, preserve, rehabilitate and protect scenic and historic values, operation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities, landscaping and beautification efforts such as scenic parks, and the mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff.

## **WESTERN STATE PROGRAMS**

As a part of this tourism initiative, the WGA staff conducted a survey of member state travel directors and tourism officials to determine the status of state services for rural community tourism development. Specifically, the survey asked about rural development and its relationship to rural tourism development, how "rural" was defined for purposes of state assistance, whether rural tourism development was approached differently than urban tourism development, and what state agencies, other than the respondent's, provided assistance for rural tourism development. Seventeen states and three territories responded to the mailed questionnaire. Following is a question-by-question summary of the results.

### **Question 1. Does your state have a Rural Development Program? Is this separate from your state's tourism program?**

Although most states indicated they had no comprehensive state program for rural tourism development, many noted that because their state was predominantly rural, existing economic development programs provided some assistance with tourism. Alaska currently is conducting a rural tourism inventory study; Idaho's state tourism program is part of a rural development "GEM" communities program and the Idaho Recreation Initiatives program; Kansas has a rural development program and indicated that the Travel Industry Association of Kansas was developing a rural tourism program; New Mexico offers assistance through its Mainstreet program; North Dakota has proposed a rural development program; South Dakota supports rural tourism development through its Guide to Opportunities for Local Development, Community Development Block Grant Program, and Mainstreet Program; Utah has a rural development program that promotes a positive rural business environment and provides direct technical assistance to help retain and expand existing businesses; and Washington offers assistance in tourism development through its Rural Revitalization Program and the Rural-Urban Linkages Program.

### **Program Initiative #15**

**Intermountain Rural Recreation & Tourism Project.** This project provides support for rural communities to develop and market their recreation amenities for both residents and visitors alike. The Intermountain Project is administered by a consortium of universities and professional associations from Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. Using a recreation and tourism development model as a guide, project staff within each state work directly with community leaders and residents to assist them in determining their recreation and tourism potential and to plan for local development. The process generally takes an average of three years and includes a needs and interest assessment; short and long-term strategic planning; on-site organizational leadership and development; project evaluation and follow-up; and implementation of an action plan that enables the community to move through the development process and achieve its goals.

*Funded by the US WEST Foundation and administered by the Center for Recreation and Tourism Development, College of Business and Administration, Campus Box 420, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309. (303) 492-3725. Patrick Long, Project Director.*

Three states (California, Nebraska, and Nevada) have specific programs in rural tourism development. California has a Rural Regions Tourism Grant Program to help travel regions defray costs of attending travel shows and state-sponsored sales missions, to develop booth exhibits, and to sponsor regional familiarization tours for professional travel planners and media people. In addition, a Rural Tourism Marketing Advisory Committee provides a forum for rural regions to communicate their needs and concerns and a way for the State Tourism Office to disseminate information to the rural regions. Other projects include regional brochures, an annual rural tourism conference, in-state sales missions, AAA driving tours, an AVIS frequent renter program, rural regions radio promotions, an adventures guide, and media familiarization tours.

In Nebraska, the State Travel and Tourism Division has initiated the Tourism Assessment Resource/Growth Evaluation Team (TARGET) -- a program that provides professional, on-site evaluation of a community's tourism resources by outside experts. In addition, two rural tourism workshops were recently offered: one on B&B's, and one on guest ranch and hunting lodge development. Nevada promotes rural tourism through "Discover Both Sides of Nevada" and a Rural Grants Program. The "Other Nevada" is promoted as including the "state's friendly, picturesque rural communities,

where it's still possible to close a deal with a handshake and a person's word means something." The Rural Grants Program provides promotion and advertising funds on a matching basis to rural counties.

**Question 2. How does your state define "rural" for tourism or community development program purposes?**

"Heck, with 454,000 people in the entire state [Wyoming], we are, as Governor Sullivan has so aptly put it, 'a medium size town with unusually long streets!'" In almost every case either the response to this question was "not applicable" or "most of the state is considered rural." California has twelve tourism regions, of which all but four have been designated as rural. Colorado defines a rural community as having fewer than 15,000 residents for state tourism award purposes. Kansas defines a rural community as one having fewer than 20,000 inhabitants and located out of an urban area. Minnesota considers any community outside a few major cities as rural. In Nebraska, a population under 5,000 is considered rural for community development program purposes. The "Growing North Dakota" economic development program defines a population below 30,000 as rural; whereas Nevada considers a community to be rural if it has a population less than 35,000 with minimal attractions, lodging, and restaurants. The area outside Utah's Wasatch Front is all considered rural, and Washington considers any distressed community dependent upon a single industry as rural.

**Question 3. How is rural tourism development similar to or different from urban tourism development?**

Response to this question centered on issues of tourism product development and maintenance, land control, attractions, transportation, accommodations, hospitality, small business development, regional cooperation, and the outdoor experience. In Alaska, distinctively, rural tourism development issues are based on native cultural considerations, subsistence lifestyle intrusion potential, and fish and wildlife habitat

protection. California notes that rural community leaders and residents may not fully understand the economic importance and benefits of tourism development. In Colorado, touring and resort trips, as well as outdoor trips, are considered rural for marketing purposes.

Kansas characterizes the rural tourism industry as lacking expertise in developing attractions and activities and needing access to educational and material resources. Nebraska notes that urban development focuses more on the arts, entertainment, and recreation, while rural tourism development centers on outdoor recreation and scenic or historic attributes. South Dakota notes that rural areas often lack control of land or are hampered by federal agencies that control local lands.

Washington notes that for rural tourism to compete effectively, it must be based upon very strong, unique features and very specific markets. It often requires a longer time frame for success than urban tourism development and is more dramatically affected by outside factors. Tourism businesses are frequently more dependent on the rural attraction; thus conflict or misunderstanding has a greater impact upon working relationships. Washington also noted that urban areas benefit from a critical mass of both attractions and visitors and that rural tourism ends up being more "niche-specific."

**Question 4. What other state or state-supported agencies provide assistance in tourism development to communities in your state?**

Among other state agencies that provided assistance in tourism development to rural communities the most frequently mentioned were university extension services and state travel/tourism region offices. Other state agencies mentioned included departments responsible for community and regional affairs, local affairs, parks and recreation, fish and game, transportation, museums, wildlife, trade and economic development, and economic planning and stabilization; arts and humanities councils; film divisions; and small business development.

## **Program Initiative #16**

**Tennessee Valley Authority Technical Assistance Program.** This program of tourism technical assistance and research targets the seven mid-south states it serves. A wide variety of subjects areas are included and assistance is available at the local level. The TVA also maintains a library of self-help printed materials for general distribution. These materials include: Small Towns Who Have Successfully Used Tourism As Economic Development; Tourism: A Great Way To Stimulate Rural Economic Development; Ways To Package Scenery In Rural Areas; Community Travel Development Manual; and Tourism: How Seasonal Is It.

*Tennessee Valley Authority, Old City Hall 2C-41-B, Knoxville, Tennessee 37902. (615) 632-7410. Gale Trussell, Program Director.*

## **WHERE STATE TOURISM POLICY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

***Although explicit tourism policy in the United States is rare, government at all levels directly or indirectly affects the facilitation and promotion of tourism or controls its negative efforts. (Loukissas, 1983)***

### **GENERAL POLICY SUMMARY**

There are 4,874 towns in the eighteen WGA states with populations of less than 5,000. These towns represent 5,025,871 residents, or about ten percent of the total population of the western states. As western rural areas draw millions of Americans and foreign visitors, many of these towns will attempt to develop tourism. Although some of them will not survive to the year 2000, many can indeed use tourism and recreation to achieve a more stable economy.

Almost every state responding to the Tourism Initiative Survey of the WGA described itself as having a significant number of rural communities (range of 33 to 748 with population < 5,000), many of which were considering tourism development. Tourism is increasingly being recognized as providing economic benefits to communities and is being viewed (and pursued) as an economic diversification strategy. But concern continues that without careful planning, this strategy can have inadequate or negative results. Few of the WGA states have formal policies for rural tourism development, but all states have agencies that can contribute substantially to such development needs.

Rural communities can maximize their benefits from tourism development by (1) linking the local recreation experience with tourism initiatives; (2) securing cooperation among all sectors of the community; (3) understanding the community's carrying capacity; (4) building a community character; (5) developing community support by emphasizing benefits for residents; (6) working regionally to develop year-round potential; (7) maintaining a high level of service quality; (8) nurturing community



leadership; (9) recognizing and responding to trends; and (10) adopting a marketing orientation (Long & Richardson, 1988).

Senator John Rockefeller in a recent address (Fifth Annual Travel Review Conference, 1990, Washington, D.C.) called for "the development of a well-formulated and properly funded national tourism policy." Policies that strengthen the ability of rural communities to benefit from tourism development are important at every level of government. Statewide policies send a very strong message to counties and municipalities; indeed, without such policy support, local government units are less able to initiate successful community tourism activities.

It is important that states recognize tourism as a legitimate and important component of rural community development. Most states currently provide substantial resources for the promotion and marketing of statewide tourism, yet support for local and regional community tourism development initiatives is, for the most part, fragmented or nonexistent. States must fully understand the extent to which communities throughout the West need their assistance to maximize the benefits of tourism development for all residents. They need to send strong messages to Congress about the needs of rural communities and encourage federal policy that recognizes the role rural America plays in our tourism economy, and, encourage government units to work cooperatively. Although it is crucial that the motivation for tourism development be local, it is equally important that support be available from the state.

Earlier in this document it was suggested that tourism development policy generally should focus on the following:

- o improving local officials' and residents' access to information, so that they can make informed decisions about community tourism development and fully understand its social, economic, and environmental impacts;
- o coordinating and where appropriate integrating, existing state-supported human and financial resources helpful to community tourism development;

- o encouraging cooperation among the private, public, and nonprofit sectors;
- o integrating the efforts of local, state, and federal government;
- o encouraging cooperation among neighboring communities within an existing or potential tourist area; and
- o making more use of higher education to (1) train students in tourism development, (2) provide technical assistance by faculty members, and (3) support research on community tourism development and its impacts.

Communities currently are not equipped to assess and understand their potential for tourism development. To determine tourism potential a community must know its carrying capacity--the balance between the long-term demands placed upon the community's resources and the quality of the visitor experience. Currently, most rural communities have neither the information nor the technical expertise to determine this potential. Additionally, communities are often not capable of preparing and implementing a strategic plan for long-term tourism development.

Communities need easy access to existing data bases (every state should have a repository for tourism-related information), they need information that is not currently collected about visitors and visitor expenditures, and they need assistance in using information to plan appropriately for tourism development. Successful tourism initiatives need to be documented for imitation by others, technical assistance providers need appropriate background and training in tourism development, and printed and video resources need to be made available.

Generally, there is too much fragmentation and too little coordination in state government support for community tourism development. In some states there are no services available, or the people providing such services are not appropriately prepared for the work. It is not necessary (and it may not be effective) for any one agency to assume total responsibility for a state's tourism development. Instead, state governments should focus on organizing and coordinating state agency resources and on determining what additional resources are needed.

State travel divisions (boards, bureaus, etc.) are commonly charged only with marketing and promotion; seldom do they bear any responsibility for product development. Their charge could be more broadly defined, and they could be funded to assume responsibility for community tourism development. A second alternative would be for states to create a state tourism policy coordinating committee comprising representatives of state agencies that control resources important for local community tourism development. Such a coordinating committee could be a "one-stop shopping" place for consumers and could serve as a clearinghouse for community requests. This committee could also review state tourism policy and identify gaps in services, assigning and reassigning responsibilities as necessary.

Communities seeking solutions to severe economic problems often seek partnerships and coalitions they might otherwise avoid. It is important to capitalize on current opportunities for cooperation among the business community, public entities, and nonprofit organizations. For small tourism-related businesses to succeed, they need to know what public and private investment monies are available and how to secure them. Additionally, most potential businesses need help in conducting the sophisticated market research necessary to secure loans and/or to succeed. Unfortunately, the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC), used by the federal government for classifying statistics, does not categorize tourism businesses beyond noting general lodging and food establishment tax revenues. This limitation makes it hard to measure the economic impacts of tourism and thus to make important decisions about tourism investments. Businesses are also plagued with high insurance costs, employee shortage or turnover, and the general perception that the tourism industry is an "employer of last resort."

On the public side, rural community officials are often naïve about tourism and do not understand how to determine its impacts nor how to plan it effectively. As a result community zoning and planning decisions do not reflect an acceptance and

understanding of the industry. Because they lack information or experiences, local officials may see environmental issues, regulation, intergovernmental interaction, and interaction with the travel industry as insurmountable barriers.

Few rural communities have both the attraction(s) and the infrastructure--lodging, restaurants, support services--necessary to draw travelers off major highways and to meet their full expectations. Accordingly, most states have created state travel regions. Within these regions, states should discourage competition. Instead, communities should aim at increasing visitation to their region generally by coordinating attraction scheduling and cooperating in marketing and promotion efforts. State policy decisions must give communities both incentives for and assistance in working cooperatively to identify their resources and to plan for long-range tourism development.

Institutions of higher education offer one of the few low-cost alternatives for rural communities needing assistance with tourism development. They also represent a virtually untapped source of knowledge and manpower for tourism development initiatives. Unfortunately, higher education frequently lacks quality academic programs in tourism, it is difficult (if not impossible) to draw on faculty for technical assistance, and community decision-makers may have limited access to meaningful research data.

Each state should support at least one excellent graduate program in tourism. Such a program should prepare students to contribute to the state's tourism data base as well as to manage a tourism system. This program should be housed in an academic unit that is committed to tourism development but should also reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the industry. It should be adequately funded to attract competent faculty, conduct meaningful research and secure necessary library resources; and it should include a community-based internship requirement.

Policy must also encourage faculty involvement with local communities. The current reward system in higher education and the lack of financial support for work

within a community environment make faculty reluctant to participate in community-based research. It is important that states reward service to community and fund travel to and from communities that are seeking technical assistance.

Finally, educational policy must address the collection, storage, and distribution of information on tourism in rural communities. Ideally, each state should have a university-based tourism center that conducts research and prepares useful community documents. Such a center would serve as a "meeting place" where faculty, students, and community/industry groups could discuss tourism issues and seek solutions to community tourism problems.

### **SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

States can strengthen their economic base and improve the quality of life in many rural communities through tourism development. If approached in an appropriate fashion such development can be sustained over time, reap many positive outcomes, and have minimal negative effects. The following recommendations on policy are based upon the emerging needs of rural communities and the success of existing tourism initiatives. If implemented, these policies can help western states to support rural community tourism development.

**First**, communities need information to assess their tourism potential, understand their markets, and monitor the short and long-term community impacts. States need to expand data bases (e.g. visitor profiles and cost/benefit information) and make them accessible to community decision-makers. A system to monitor on-going economic, social, and environmental impacts should be established and maintained.

**Second**, states should provide technical assistance on developing a community tourism strategic plan and for special tourism initiatives. This assistance should be available over a multi-year time period and reflect a sensitivity to the decision-making process of rural communities. It should be provided by people who know and understand community tourism and recreation development.

**Third**, states should establish a tourism coordinating council or charge the state's tourism board with the coordination and monitoring of services and activities for community tourism development. Each state should have a central clearinghouse for assistance requests, a mechanism for coordinating state resources, and a "system" that can respond to the changing needs of the community tourism industry. The matching grants programs that have proved so successful should be implemented in each state and include a rigorous evaluation component.

**Fourth**, cooperation between communities, travel regions, and WGA states should be encouraged. The various levels of government and numerous government agencies providing tourism and recreation services must also coordinate their efforts. Travel regions should be strengthened and successful efforts to increase visitation to a region encouraged. Broader reaching efforts that cross state boundaries and encourage cooperation between states need to be pursued.

**Fifth**, higher education programs of excellence in tourism need to be established. Students must learn to manage and evaluate tourism systems, faculty expertise needs to be made available to communities and faculty rewarded for community service, and research that identifies new information and strategies must be conducted to keep pace with the tourism industry.

**Sixth**, special community tourism initiatives need to be supported. Programs such as the National Rural Tourism Development Training Program (#12), the National Forest Service Recreation Initiative (#4), and the Tourism Initiative of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (#15) offer unique opportunities in tourism development for rural communities. States should support such initiatives and create other opportunities unique to the individual state.

**Seventh**, states need to create an environment friendly to tourism and recreation businesses and to the development of local entrepreneurial activity. Small business assistance centers and other appropriate state agencies should provide assistance in tourism and recreation business development in rural areas and state policies should recognize the important contribution private enterprise makes to community tourism development.

**Finally**, states need to better understand successful community tourism development and encourage the replication and recognition of "models of excellence." Communities

learn well from one another but there are few opportunities for such interaction. The understanding of community tourism development must be increased and successful efforts documented for dissemination.

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# **Rural Community Tourism Impacts and Policies**

## **Selected Bibliography**

# Rural Community Tourism Impacts and Policies

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