

Maine Beaches Conference July 17, 2015

Plenary Session Notes

Ron Cantor

Cathy Goodwin (Sen. Collins)

[all the money obtained for dredging, etc. – mentioned Sea Grant, Atlantic salmon restoration, finfish research at CCAR, etc.]

Paige Farmer

David's and Peter's Assoc, Kennebunk, visitor tracking data to MOT:

overnight visitors (694 respondents):

when they are here – most important activities are eating and touring/sightseeing. Eating lobster, going to beach, swimming, hiking, visiting historic sites and museums, outlet shopping.

Ogunquit Beach and Kittery Shopping Outlets most commonly visited attractions. MBA has been working to expand the list of beaches in the survey, which is currently incomplete.

78% will return.

11.5 million visitors to southern Maine beaches.
\$1.6 billion spent

info available visitmaine.com, industry section, MBC website

Charlie Colgan

More focused attention on beach users in Saco Bay and Wells-Ogunquit, under NSF NEST grant.

>8,000 visitors

One of the interesting things about studying Maine beaches, we have lots of info about number of people visiting, etc., but don't know how many people actually went to the beach. Don't have counts of how many people are on the beach any given day. One of the big untold beach stories.

"It's a very local crowd" that visits Maine beaches. Most from New England, within a day's drive. Canadian visitors mostly from Quebec – Montreal, eastern Ontario. New Brunswick/Nova Scotia is untapped potential. 74% of Quebec visitors go to Saco Bay beaches (OOB and Ocean Park).

88% of Saco Bay beach visitors said they will not go to another beach. Maine beachgoers are squatters, not shoppers. They don't travel around to other beaches.

Need to increase family tradition – otherwise looking at a decline in

best thing about beach? closest beach, family tradition, whole experience, uncrowded.

2/3 go in the water (but only 0.2% said best thing was going swimming).

Employment in York Co. ocean tourism and recreation increases 40% in summer and has grown by 26% 2005-2012. Seasonal housing is a major share of coastal tax base. Most seasonal housing, except perhaps Vermont in winter near ski areas. ME and VT lead the country in seasonal residents, driven by York and Hancock Counties.

How many checked beach advisory/read sign? Most who identified surfing and swimming, lifeguards as the best features of the beach checked the sign. Safety consciou

ME's beaches generally healthy, prosperous, relatively stable for 150 years. BUT beach population not growing. as a basis for economic growth, the beach as tourism resource is underperforming. Don't access new markets, experience the same every year. We can't the beaches for granted as a long term econ deve asset in Maine. The beaches themsevles are extraord threatened. Tide is rising. Southern ME beaches are at the top of vulnerability index for econom. vul. to slr. Under best scenario, a child born in 2015, lives to retire, will see almost no beaches in Maine. This is not tomorrow's problem.

Spent summer at Gooch's Beach in Kennebunk.

It's time to stop taking Maine's beaches for granted. The pop that uses them nor the sand of the beaches themselves will stay stable much longer.

Q.. Does the OOB efforts to accommodate the Quebecois make a difference?

A. yes. Makes it easier for people to keep coming back.

Q. Wouldn't econ. resilience planning say we should diversify/shift efforts away from relying on beach?

A. Vulnerabilit index incorporates diversity – with more diverse economies less vulnerable, but not the only answer. Coastal York Co. towns have diversified over the years, somewhat less dependent on summer tourism, but still a long way to go.

Q. Beach water quality, erosion does not appear to be a concern to people on the beach. If there were more awareness, how would it expect their responses?

A. We're looking at that now. Awareness is the first of a multiple-step process by which people learn about beach water quality. Risk assessment is the second step.

Q. How do you plan to learn more about how people choose anchor beaches and explore new ones? ("beach shopping")

A. Travel time is principle variable. 90% get to beach by car. Not sure what draws people to a new beach.