

Marine EXTENSION *in action*

Sustainable Tourism along Maine's Coast

Tourism is Maine's largest industry. In 2003, tourism generated \$13.4 billion in sales of goods and services. In 2004, tourism provided for 176,633 jobs, generated \$3.8 billion in wages, and \$530 million in tax revenues.*

Governor John Baldacci formally recognized the economic and ecological importance of tourism by highlighting it as one of the five primary industries at the Governor's 2003 Conference on Natural Resource-based Industries. Access to the natural resource base, and the need to collaborate with other resource-dependent industries, were identified at the conference as cutting across multiple industries, including tourism.

Since the Governor's Conference, several studies and proposals have pointed to the need for university-based extension in the area of sustainable tourism development. The University of Maine has heeded this call by creating a new Center for Tourism Research and Outreach. And the state recently unveiled its new nature-based tourism initiative. The premise of many of these proposals is that, if carefully planned and managed, tourism can contribute to the economic development of Maine's rural and urban areas.

This is particularly true in Maine's coastal zones. The leading regional destinations for tourists in 2004 were all on the coast: Southern Maine coast (29%), the Downeast Acadia region (18%), and Greater Portland/Casco Bay (17%). This coastal trend is consistent with years past. While



successful tourism-based economic development initiatives will increasingly draw visitors to Maine's inland areas, tourists themselves continue to rank coastal experiences among their most sought after. For example in 2004, 59%

came to explore the beach and ocean and 43% ranked eating lobster as integral to their Maine experience. The economic power of tourism and its affiliated businesses result in a coastal industry larger than fisheries and



aquaculture combined. The impacts of tourism, both good and bad, affect all industries, communities and individual residents along our coast.

The Marine Extension Team and Tourism

The Marine Extension Team (MET) is a partnership between the University of Maine Sea Grant College Program and Cooperative Extension. The MET responds to coastal needs by providing extension and outreach programs for fisheries, aquaculture, ecosystem health, and coastal communities. As the impact of tourism on each of these areas continues to grow, so does the need for outreach programs that address the inter-related aspects of these issues. The MET began to address coastal tourism in 2002 by hiring a Sea Grant extension agent focused specifically on coastal and sustainable tourism. This person is based at College of the Atlantic on Mount Desert Island, an area where tourism is one of the greatest factors affecting coastal communities. Working in partnership with organizations and towns throughout the state, the MET strives to present accurate information and foster communication among diverse interests. For example, where fishermen, tourism-businesses and summer residents all rely on limited and diminishing access to the waterfront (such as piers, ramps and mudflats), communities need reliable information and dialogue to design solutions that work.

**Statistics from Travel and Tourism in Maine, the Visitor Study Management Report, which is prepared annually for the Maine Office of Tourism by Longwoods International.*



Marine Extension in action provides updates on Marine Extension Team activities for coastal communities. It was produced by Maine Sea Grant with programming support provided by University of Maine Cooperative Extension.



The MET Addresses Tourism Resources on the Coast

Coastal Access: The MET helps coastal communities address declining recreational and working access to the coast. In partnership with many coastal organizations, programs include meeting facilitation, educational materials, and community forums.

Recreational Island Monitoring: In response to *2004-2014 Recreational Management Plan for Public Islands*, Sea Grant coordinates the multi-agency and non-profit Island Monitoring Task Force to establish methods for monitoring recreation impact on Maine's coastal islands.

Beach Monitoring and Education Programs: The Maine Healthy Coastal Beaches Program includes 47 beaches in 20 participating towns and State Parks to monitor beaches for the health and safety of thousands of beach visitors. MET also coordinates volunteer beach profile monitoring to deliver data on the physical status of many of these same beaches.

Downeast Region: The MET collaborates with Downeast RC&D's Vacationland Resources Committee to implement DESTINY 2010, the Downeast Sustainable Tourism Initiative, a 10-year strategy for sustainable tourism and economic development in Washington and Hancock Counties.

Other Sea Grant sustainable tourism resources and projects:

Conference sponsorship (Maine Beaches Conference, Maine Coast Natural History Seminar, UMaine Nature-based Tourism Symposium), **internet capacity** (Economic impact of sea kayak industry survey); **on-the-water leadership** (Gulf of Maine Expedition, Ambassadors of the Bay); **boating safety education** (Coast Guard open houses, sea kayak safety and stewardship brochure); **articles on sustainable tourism and coastal resources** (*Maine Policy Review*, *Atlantic Coastal Kayaker*), and **presentations at conferences** (*Governor's Conference on Tourism*, *First Conference on Ecotourism in the US*). Finally, Sea Grant sponsors a **biennial research competition** open to tourism and recreation researchers at institutions throughout the state (a recent funded study: *Measuring the Economic Damages from Oil Spills to Maine's Marine Economy*)

This information is intended to inspire collaboration for a sustainable approach to coastal tourism development.

For more information, please contact

Natalie Springuel
Maine Sea Grant Marine Extension
College of the Atlantic
105 Eden St. Bar Harbor, Maine 04609
207-288-2944x298
nspringuel@coa.edu

www.seagrant.umaine.edu

What's in a name?

Increasingly, coastal residents and tourism experts strive for a thoughtful approach to tourism development. As the world's largest industry, terminology abounds for describing the diverse methods, such as experiential tourism, nature-based or recreation tourism, heritage or cultural tourism, geotourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism... The labels may seem confusing, but all share one goal: **tourism that contributes positively to local communities while providing a quality experience for the traveler.** Along Maine's coast, where tourism's economic engine is larger than fisheries and aqua-culture combined, thoughtfully planned tourism can make a sustainable contribution to our coastal economy.



Sustainable Tourism along Maine's Coast



Maine Sea Grant supports marine science research and outreach activities to promote the understanding, sustainable use, and conservation of ocean and coastal resources. The University of Maine Marine Extension Team is a collaboration of Maine Sea Grant and Cooperative Extension, providing educational and applied research programs in coastal communities, ecosystem health, fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.



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