

NORTHERN FOREST DESTINATION SUMMIT – OCT. 27, 2022

RAW NOTES - TABLE DISCUSSION RESPONSES

Panel #1: Examples of visitor behavior or pressures, how they are currently working to address these challenges, and what success are they having. What is the one thing that really jumped out at you from the discussion, or other ideas, that you could apply locally? Record top 3 items

1. Using staff from other seasonal sites - ski resort/mtn biking - for an ambassador program
 - a. ambassadors (preferably paid) and in-person interactions
 - b. Ambassadors - personalized outreach
 - c. Having people there - to engage in person
 - d. It's important to have the right ambassadors that are well-trained.
 - e. Visitor education – helping them understanding their impact/responsibility – ambassadors
2. Develop community buy-in from entire region, not just at the heart of the impacted area.
Example: Use your network to support a statewide event like Vermont Clean Up day, to get everyone to contribute. Look at recreation users/tourists as people who can get involved in caring for the place.
3. Balance of sustaining quality of place
4. Communication and education
 - a. Storytelling
 - b. Sugar packets available at local biz and resorts in Banff had messaging to remind visitors they are a part of the scenery/landscape
5. Finding new ways to connect with new guests; Connect new information through technology
6. Need for better enforcement of expected visitor behaviors (how do we hold visitors accountable when they break guidelines)
7. Opportunities for community training for residents when interacting with visitors
 - a. Educate Residents: to understand their role (give up righteousness)
8. Utilization of existing pledge programs like Ride with Gratitude but for other recreational activities (e.g. Moosehead Lake boaters "Gratitude Without Attitude")
 - a. Pledge... upfront and critical
 - b. code of conduct, interactions between user groups (motorized and non), with related signage
 - c. Pledges - visitor investment
9. Friendly direct conversation with empowered stewardship meeting people where they are
10. Advance education by setting expectations and letting everyone know that it is interesting and fun
 - a. Know/develop/figure out the right words to educate without being "preachy"
 - b. Need to find a message that resonates and meet people where they are at without coming off as preachy
11. collaborating between orgs, including town government
 - a. Notion of repurposing partner content and building synergy across regions and platforms
 - b. Important to have a unified topic and voice that all partner organizations can rally around.
12. Creating a sense of responsibility in visitors
 - a. Appeal to human behavior
13. Marketing isn't enough to change visitation practices

14. Recurring visitors have a sense of stewardship
15. Incentives, including LOCAL swag
 - a. Make it cool - brand sustainability
16. Language: home/destination brand - make more inclusive language to bridge visitors/residents in stewardship
17. Engagement: take time to engage people who'd otherwise be dismissed (shared interests)
18. Balance for tourists and residents - Frustration when residents don't have access to amenities they normally enjoy; increased traffic; lack of jobs or affordable places to live
19. Infrastructure -> sanitary facilities & adequate parking

Panel #1: What will the optimal interface between visitors and rural communities look like in 5-10 years, and what ideas for getting there. What is the one thing that most inspired you, that you could apply locally? Record top 3 items

1. Concept: Engineer, Educate, Enforcement* - and not in a preachy way
 - a. *Enforcement can be done organically if you engineer and educate effectively, as long as you have the right solutions in place (example: can't enforce parking issues if you don't have alternative parking available)
 - b. Educate, engineer and enforce -bars as a place to galvanize responsiveness
2. Language: "Residents and their guests", instead of visitors versus locals, *many guests are very invested in the local community
 - a. Shifting from "visitors" to "citizen guests" who participate and engage in the local communities (similar to the neighborhood movement "drive as though your kids live here")
 - b. Verbiage and attitude change resident & visitor vs. resident and GUEST and treat all like locals
 - c. consider your destination as part of your home; especially second home and repeat visitors
 - d. Changing terminology from locals v visitors to residents and guests
 - e. Avoid "us vs. them" mentality
3. Approach: Plant Seeds of Awareness and Cultivate Them (Key is to figure out -- How to cultivate?)
4. Get political. In 10 years I foresee that local towns have authority to set direction and put management systems in place.
5. Systems/collaboration in place to spread impact around
 - a. Educate leaders locally and merge sectors between marketing, management, and sustainability
 - b. Atypical partners
 - c. have a stronger, unified public voice that articulate vision
 - d. Collaboration is really important
 - i. Challenge with lack of coordination with White Mountain National Forest
 - ii. Ideal - Open convo with people who are managing the forest locally
6. Overall, our table thought the panelists struggled to really answer the 10 year question, and we did, too. It is hard to envision what things look like then.
7. Integration of pledge programs at more visitors touch points (e.g., visitor centers, businesses who may provide incentives to visitors if they sign)
 - a. Partnerships with restaurants, bars and lodging establishments to share pledge - with QR codes

8. Go to where visitors are
 - a. Make guests aware of all that is going on for an enhanced experience guest experience
 - b. Look for places where visitors to a region naturally gather for messaging, such as outdoor gear shops. Could be more bang for the buck as far as spreading messaging goes. incorporating local voice into tourism planning
9. education on multi-use of asset.
10. Different opportunity types that are suitable for kids - skill ramping
11. Focus on mobile users
12. Infrastructure
 - a. Building out infrastructure – not enough parking at the national park, parking happening in local neighborhoods instead. Rumny trails good example
13. Space for residents and guests to connect organically
14. All residents as ambassadors
 - a. Make sure there is local buy-in of the culture that you are trying to get visitors to adopt.
 - b. Collective Stewardship: be part of their group effort, community among users, volunteers
 - c. Educating residents on what's going on; applying a hard stick but getting buy-in from business community and understanding of impact
15. Education and Amplification: branding, ambassadors, reorganizing where people are- how to make messaging appropriate, be creative, swag
16. Be Proactive: we often collect after a problem - how to get ahead of it? Reusable Frameworks!
17. Inspiring visitors to be local volunteers

Panel #2: Managing destination impact takes time and money. How are you resourcing this work, and what success are you having? What funding and support approaches really jumped out at you from this discussion, or what other ideas do you have that could apply to this question? Record top 3 items

1. Build and maintain partnerships - especially with municipalities - to benefit from in-kind contributions - like Gorham's example of the road crew providing in-kind match.
 - a. Town allocations to some centered hub.
 - b. The need for municipal backing
 - c. Town Government cohesiveness and financial support
 - d. municipal support and funding. shift of mindset on what town can / should do
 - e. Town selectmen and Denise providing leadership in Gorham
 - f. Town board leadership
 - g. High light public works contribution
 - h. Using public works labor for in-kind grant matches seemed clever. Important to get town government buy-in to understand ROI.
 - i. Gorham has authored to seek a collaboration between grant writers and funders and community priorities. You come up with the ideas, identify private funding opportunities, write gov plan funded by private interest and leverage state/fed dollars
 - i. Avoid going to town hall meeting and asking for money; using tax dollars outside of what's budgeted
 - ii. Added 2k acres to the town forest without major impact on taxpayer dollars
 - iii. Not increasing the burden on residents for new projects
2. Put resources together across municipalities and organizations - like the Oregon Coast example.
 - a. Joint effort model- pooling budgets towards common objectives. Appealing model but is it actually achievable in this region? Contributing to the common good is good in

- concept, but in practice, contributing local dollars to regional efforts is not something that happens a lot in this region.
 - b. Collaboration on a regional scale with unified messaging.
 - c. get people to care / buy – in
 - d. having a backbone organization, helping collaborating across towns / regional thinking
 - e. Pooling resources
3. Needing to spread out the cost of paying for the impacts that the tourists bring to the community - the municipalities can't be left to deal with all of it.
 - a. membership and money to maintain
 - b. Memberships - user pays and user appreciates - creates but-in
 - c. Volunteering time to reduce costs
 - d. Optional memberships seemed intriguing. Could this be adopted by smaller trail orgs? Maybe even town forests as a "friends of" annual membership?
 4. Keeping priorities steady through changes in leadership through layered (coalition) leadership where responsibility and "power" doesn't reside with just one individual
 5. Entrepreneurial approach - seeing challenges as opportunities
 6. Telling the why - using education to find revenue and diversify sources
 - a. Diversify sources
 - b. Work with state agencies

Panel #2: Over the next 5-10 years, what creative new approaches would be helpful, or might we see emerge, to help accelerate the investment in destination impact management work? What new ideas for funding and support did you find most promising, or what other ideas do you have, that you could apply to this question? Record top 3 items

1. Collaboration between groups and towns for coapplying for grants as a way to find what works for both groups and then to have the money to do it.
 - a. Municipal cooperation state, federal, local to mitigate the impacts with no tax impact on the community. Multiple resources coming together. Can't do this alone.
 - b. Establishment and utilizing partnerships as a way to combine resources and make money go further
2. Bring municipalities into the conversation to make outdoor recreation a priority. More conversations are needed to develop this and get to this point. In many cases, working regionally is the best way to do this.
 - a. starting conversation across user groups under broad outdoor rec coalition.
 - b. Engaging municipal leaders
 - c. Active town involvement
 - d. The idea of collaboration between multiple entities and knowing each of the recreation and infrastructure assets.
3. General long term practices to ensure funding streams- including town leadership, securing small grants to position for larger grants, and co-applying
 - a. Significance of a strategic collaborative in a Region.
 - b. The NEK should be the main agency for grants and funds and trickle down.
 - c. get funds and coordination for bigger grant writing
 - d. Fund grant writers
 - e. Investing in relationships, partnerships, and ability to co-apply for grants
4. From the Oregon example, noted that they are the neutral third party - can bring people together, are the subject matter experts, but are not the decision-makers. This seems like a

critical piece for moving forward getting various entities to collaborate together, which is needed to work at the scale that is needed.

- a. The concept of thinking in terms of non-profits providing important public service announcements/ messaging acting as general contractors was appealing.
 - b. Having an entrepreneurial mindset and asking the question "why not our agency" was a refreshing way of thinking.
 - c. Selling ourselves as "subject matter experts" and charging appropriately for said services was also encouraging.
5. Giving back to communities- how is economic benefit from tourism/rec flowing back to community needs, and landowners.
 - a. Need to balance evaluation of a community by their tax rate; if you build out an asset for the community (like the Jackson Ski Tour vision), home values go up and have a huge influx of second homeowners. That hurts community members already there.
 6. Develop new tax/revenue models.
 - a. Taxes not the answer - need to pitch community benefits
 7. State money is often tied to tourism marketing rather than destination management which restricts the use of state funding ("mismatch on how systems are set up and how they NEED to be set up")
 - a. Chambers are resistant to spend \$ on destination management.
 8. Position tourism as a tool/vehicle to support community goals
 - a. convince folks to contribute as they are getting benefits
 - b. be future focused
 9. What existing resources can be leveraged for efficiency? e.g. marketing campaigns/LNT
-

Regional Plenary: What do we need to keep going, build momentum, and position the tourism and recreation economy as a positive contributor to rural communities?

1. Legislation (at least in VT, Act 250)
2. Develop a culture of being welcoming communities across the region so that visitors feel embraced and welcomed.
 - a. welcoming diverse people.
3. Borderlands does a great job of elevating the industry at the regional scale. And that's just one group. Broadening any sort of group that can share like ideas to elevate the industry could influence a regional change. What about "hike with gratitude", for example?
4. Legislation to create Funding Streams: Regional/State sponsored program that gives tourism money back to counties/municipalities that can then give it back to organizations working on tourism.
 - a. NFC should be on the NBRC grant and should be continually involved. The NFC connects New England in perpetuity
 - b. Convene. ask funders for consistent process. emergency services, and can pull in different funding. what money is available, how can it be directed towards this plan. have data to support and articulate positive impact.
 - c. Need to find ways to invest in the local/municipal capacity
5. New mechanisms for collaboration across business, local state, federal NGOs - But we are uncertain as to what that looks like, or how that happens. Question: who leads? What scale makes sense? Full region feels too big. Sub-regional collaboratives perhaps linked together when issues and opportunities dictate that.
 - a. Joint marketing efforts for April 8 2024 for the eclipse... people coming and no borders.

- b. Need capacity for herding the cats and keeping ppl accountable to their shared responsibility
 - c. Shared common vision that engages multiple sectors - find existing capacity but pull it out and put it to work.
 - d. Consistent communication and collaboration
 - e. Align efforts in strategic planning between sectors (ex creative economy and outdoor recreation)
 - f. create regional framework and resources to support community education
6. Need an opportunity to shift the model of existing structures and organizations in this space. E.g. Chamber destination marketing models not necessarily aligned with current needs. Revenue flows- e.g. do rooms and meals tax revenues flow back to the places that are generating them for destination management and stewardship needs?
- a. What is the incentive for destination marketing entities to shift their models?
 - b. Destination marketing should be on point, distributed, and AMPLIFIED (and properly managed)
 - c. Help state partners reinvent traditional modalities of tourism - are all state agencies in the space to support Dest Stewardship?
 - d. Funding – room/board tax doesn't go back into communities
 - e. One restaurant paid more in taxes than Gorham got in funding
7. (bethel table) 4 town collaboration; be well facilitated, probably needs a consultant. Focus on future and what we want to be. Town Plan coordinated, or at least outdoor rec plan. With outdoor rec, go out of your way to invite all user groups. towns need to contribute.
8. Data to make the case
- a. Strategies should be informed by data
 - b. It would be helpful to conduct some research on public perceptions, particularly by businesses that benefit from outdoor recreation and tourism, on the shift from a focus on destination development to destination management/ stewardship. Are they on board?
 - c. Conduct focus groups on the answer to the question "How would the ideal visitor to this region behave?" and/or "What do you wish they knew?"
9. A place to access info, data, resources - because I can't attend all meetings!
10. Amplify rural voices - advocacy and lobbying
11. position/think of tourism/recreation as a stable economic driver (the way we've thought of paper industry in past)
- a. Funding mechanism needed for nonmotorized activities
 - i. Snowmobile/ATVs/boats require state registrations – funds then available to support those industries and incentive those activities
 - ii. Hikers/hunters – not looking to spend money, expect to “live off the land”, live free or die, more independent
 - iii. Visitor education/shifting perspectives
 - iv. Selling the concept of contributing – if you try and create any kind of funding mechanism or expectation (like consistent parking fees), help people understand they have an impact and they can help carry that
 - v. The Rhode Island beaches charge \$10 to access the beach in any capacity
12. Recurring multi-state summit

Community Plenary: What do we need to keep going, build momentum, and position the tourism and recreation economy as a positive contributor to rural communities?

1. For a community to stay relevant, they need a better understanding of the importance of the industry. Show the municipalities the value of the industry, and reframe people's minds as to what outdoor recreation is and what it contributes to the economy and the community, and isn't replacing the local culture - it's adding to it. That it's an investment in the community.
 - a. Identify fears of "others" and provide education/ opportunities for the mingling of locals and guests to decrease fears/ animosity and create common ground via a shared appreciation for recreational assets.
2. Work with the schools to develop a longer term culture shift - for the youth to benefit from the industry and to grow up understanding the value to their own lives, the local economy, and the community.
 - a. Ensure local youth have opportunities to engage in local recreational activities.
3. Need the municipalities to see the value that outdoor rec has to add by making the communities attractive places to live - so that people will want to live here and we'll all have people to work in all the businesses.
 - a. Education on a community level about outdoor rec
 - b. Communicate the community benefits of recreation and how visitation supports that - using regional framework/thinking
4. Data collection, utilization, and reported of community values (what is being measured, when is it measured, and who is it reported to?)
5. Greater awareness of what is good (to build resident appreciation for the benefits of tourism as well as community pride) and where there is need
 - a. Improve communication between entities and residents
6. More partnerships
7. Creative housing solutions
 - a. WHY ARE WE NOT TALKING ABOUT HOUSING? (Workforce housing priced for local jobs.)
 - b. Housing - missing middle - need policy approaches - needs to be about a structural solution not just "we need more"
 - c. Need to start thinking about community planning/zoning to address housing challenges
8. Added capacity at town level - leaders can say "yes that's needed" but who does the work?
9. Help communities welcome visitors
 - a. Create spaces to "break bread" with residents and visitors both
10. Opportunity/challenge - municipalities taking authority over trail building on private land - to address impact on neighborhoods, and parking
11. Strengthen relationships between local providers of recreational assets/ attractions to local communities to help ensure a local connection to the resource.