

**Sitka Long-Range Tourism Plan Collaborative Process**  
**Stakeholder meeting #2**  
**20 March 2006, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.**  
**Centennial Hall Exhibit Room**

**In attendance:**

Steering Committee members: Julia Smith, Stef Steffen, Brian McNitt, Hugh Bevan

Stakeholders: Linda Behnken, Stacy Boles, Lisa Brendle, Chris Bryner, Jeff Budd, Tom Clarke, Emily Corso, Tom Corso, Ken Corson, Vern Culp, John Delong, Greg Dudgeon, Janet Eddy, Jeff Farvour, Chris Fondell, Kathy Fritz, Peter Gorman, Carol Goulante, Roger Hames, Mike Litman, Sandy Lorrigan, Dave Malone, Bill Marx, Mim McConnell, Liz McKenzie, Mary Jo McNally, Tina McNamee, Richard Nelson, Michael Nurco, Judith Ozment, Lucy Phillips, Fred Reeder, Darryl Rehkoff, Tim Ryan, Scott Saline, Linda Speerstra, Floyd Tomkins, Chuck Trierschild.

Facilitators: Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher

**Introduction:**

Matthew provides the group with a brief overview of where we've been so far, indicating that we're entering Phase 2 of the Process Map. Phase 2 involves bringing the Stakeholders to agreement about where Sitka's visitor industry is today. Matthew also notes that the question for Phase 3 has been reworded from "looking through the lens of the visitor industry, where do you want to see Sitka in 2, 5, and 10 years?" to "What do we want Sitka's visitor industry to look like in 2, 5, 10 years?"

The goals for Phase 2 are to define the issues/topics that concern Stakeholders about the visitor/tourism situation, and then to build a shared understanding about the current situation.

**Tonight's Agenda:**

- Establish ground rules for the collaboration process – we establish some rules for how we engage in this process; need to agree on these before we run into roadblocks, difficulties,
- Define "visitor industry"
- Break
- Survey the territory – start to identify the concerns, issues, etc. that Stakeholders have about this topic
- Break
- Categorize/group the issues identified by Stakeholders
- Based on those issues, start to identify the information we need to solve these issues (i.e. data, reports, expert perspectives, etc.)

**Ground Rules:**

Matthew begins with a few he's used in the past:

- Respect
  - For people and the process
  - Suspend judgment of people and ideas

- Fairness
  - Encourage all participants to have a voice
  - Equal time for speakers
- Listening
  - Listen to understand; suspend your replies until other finish speaking

- Openness
  - To other points of view and to the outcome
  - Come with a sense of inquiry; ask questions
- Committed
  - Be present – for three hours, try to hold the focus here. Be here now
- Assume the best intentions, from the facilitator, from one another

Matthew asks for additions, deletions, etc. from the Stakeholders:

- Timeliness – start on time, arrive on time, finish on time
- If you miss a meeting, do your homework (use the web, the library, one another to catch up on what you missed)
- Raise your hand to speak
- Don't interrupt
- Avoid being argumentative; don't take others' values personally
- Communication to the public – if individuals or groups express their opinions (especially negative opinions) to the public outside of the group, it could harm the group and the process – Stakeholders should promise to commit to the process; use SH meetings for addressing issues about the process; speak outside the room as you would speak here.
  - support and protect the process both in and outside the meetings

Comment from a Stakeholder (SH): some people have already lost a lot (i.e. IFQs); collaboration is a difficult word to those folks, other SH need to acknowledge their losses, and that this is a healing process for them; they've already been through a bunch of changes, going into more. People can't fish yellow eye anymore because it's already been taken away; we might be getting into a deal where we might lose more.

Matthew's response: Hope that small groups dialogues will help start some of those discussions and bring mutual understanding about difficult issues.

Another SH: There is a high emotional stake on fishing – we're not going to be on track if we're going to talk about fisheries – there's another place for that.

**Food has arrived – the group takes a break to get some food.**

### **Defining “visitor industry”**

The next step is to come to consensus about whether we're using the word “visitor” or “tourist” or something else as we proceed with this process. Matthew leads the group in the “Elevator Speech” exercise. After he asks the question, individuals will think about their own views for a moment. Then they will turn to someone else, share answers, think together about their answers, then come up with one together. The challenge is to come up with a definition that they could give if they were in an elevator with someone and had only the time until they reached the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to answer the question. After discussing it in pairs, then they'll move to quartets, octets, etc., until eventually the whole group has the same answer.

In conversations up until now, both “visitors” and “tourists” have been used in the descriptions of this process. Tonight we need to agree as a group which word/population we're going to focus on.

Q: What do we mean by visitors/tourists to Sitka?

[individuals come up with their own definitions, then discuss in pairs until the pair agrees, then discuss in larger groups, until whole tables agree]

There are five tables in the room – here are the five definitions those tables arrived at:

- A visitor is anyone that comes here that doesn't live here; tourists is a subcategory of that – they people that come here for recreation
- Visitors and tourists are people that come to Sitka for whatever reason and are non-residents
- A non-local person coming temporarily to Sitka to with the intent to enhance their life experience or add value to it by being here
- Non-resident comes to our community short-term with a specific reason for being here
- Anyone here that is not a resident of Sitka – tourists is one segment of visitors

There is much discussion about this from the whole group. Some are concerned that visitors and tourists are different groups, and someone asks if we can even talk about visitors, because this is the long-range tourism plan?

Matthew acknowledges that the mission statement that was drafted was to draft a long-range tourism plan. But it is important to deconstruct that statement and make sure it makes sense for the SH. The Stakeholders need to some consensus about what they want to focus on first. He says the group can choose to either move toward deciding on one or the other, or they could split it into two and consider both.

One Stakeholder (SH) comment: You can't do anything to tourists that you can't do to visitors – like limit hotel rooms.

SH question: Can we look at this from the broader perspective of “visitors” or does that go against the Assembly's assignment?

Matthew says this group can do what it wants with the goal of creating action on some aspect of visitors coming to our community.

SH comment: It's a waste of time if it's not broad enough to include all visitors – if we're going to spend this much time working on this it should be as broad as possible.

SH comment: “Quality of life” is included in the mission statement – we should stay broad, and we can direct the plan toward specific sub-categories

SH comment: Even if you fall into a non-tourist category, you may be accessing tourist services. For example, people that come to town for a conference.

Although many comments favor keeping the definition broad and talking about “visitors” instead of just “tourists”, there is still some discomfort about it. SH return to small-group discussions at their tables to explore whether they want to tackle the whole “visitor” or narrow to a smaller definition.

When the whole group comes back together, Matthew comments that this may feel slow, but agreeing on this first definition is building the foundation – this is the process we’re involved in here. Coming to agreement about this may imply some high stakes because we’re essentially defining the scope of what we’re about to undertake.

Comments from the table discussions:

- We’d like to keep it broad and deal with the segments as they arise
- We should not just stay broad to look at the impacts visitors have on our communities, but also stay broad to seek solutions – narrowing it may compromise some other aspects of it.

*The group has reached consensus that we will refer to and focus on “visitors” to Sitka, with the understanding that “tourists” is a sub-category of “visitors.”*

Then, to fully answer the question, what do we mean by visitors to Sitka?

The group looks at the definitions that were originally proposed. Comments on those definitions (see above):

Prefer “non-local” to “non-resident” – residency has some limitations

Perhaps it should include “does not intend to be a resident”

“enhance life” might miss some who are here for health care

Steering Committee member Hugh Bevan suggests we be careful about how much information we set out to look at. Don’t have time or resources to understand the impacts of every visitor who comes to visit our town.

SH comment: I thought I was coming here to talk about tourism – you keep saying we’re going to come back to it, but feel as though we’re being steered away.

SH comment: There may be other ways to look at it – rather than talking about the different type of visitors, maybe we could look at it more in terms of time – there is a core tourism time that most folks might say we need to manage, then there’s the shoulder season, and the off-season that we might want to draw more visitors into.

SH comment: The definition doesn’t tell us what we can or can’t study – if we start broad we don’t leave anything out, but we can focus on “tourists” later

SH comment: If we decided to talk about this seasonally, I assume we’d focus on summer; but that doesn’t look 10-20 years down the road when maybe there is a winter industry but we didn’t talk about it here; also, we talked about the concern in leaving it too broad – we don’t want to leave out the tourist thing, but if we decide to start broad and then go deeper into subcategories – I assume Matthew would help us narrow that and look closely.

SH comment: my concern with narrowing it to just “tourists” – the first mission statement talks about businesses but also quality of life; we need to recognize that all visitors have an impact on our quality of life.

SH proposal: What if we defined a “visitor” as a non-local who comes to Sitka temporarily and is not a resident?

Matthew proposes the group take a 10-minute break to ponder this, and when we come back, maybe we can reach consensus on this point.

When the group reconvenes, Matthew recaps that we’re near a point of reaching consensus on how to define “visitors to Sitka” – but first the Stakeholders need to agree on the “Stages of Consensus.” He points out that everyone in the room is probably not all going to hold hands and be of one mind about many of the decisions we will come to, but instead of having just “agree” and “disagree,” there are several stages of disagreement. Before we can come to a final decision on this question, the group needs to agree on different stages of consensus. Matthew proposes the following 8 stages:

- Endorsement: “I like it.”
- Endorsement with a minor point of contention: “Basically I like it.”
- Agreement with reservations: “I can live with it.”
- Abstain: “I have no opinion.”
- Stand aside: “I don’t like this, but I don’t want to hold up the group.”
- Formal disagreement, but willing to go with majority: “I want my disagreement noted in writing, but I’ll support the decision.”
- Formal disagreement, with request to be absolved of responsibility for implementation: “I don’t want to stop anyone else, but I don’t want to be involved in implementing it.”
- Block: “I veto this proposal.”

Matthew asks the group what they think of using something like this as we go forward with the process.

SH question: Does block mean if someone blocks it then we stop and go back and resolve it until they can go ahead?

A: Yes.

Matthew suggests one way for a group this size to show which level of consensus they are at is to place 8 cards with the different levels around the room and when we reach a point where we need to know how close to agreement we are on a question, then everyone will go and stand by the card that reflects their level of agreement. Then we can look at the composition of the group and decide whether we have enough agreement to go forward. We could also do this by blind vote or show of hands, but with a group this size it might take a while to count. Of course, ideally we’d reach a point where everyone “fully endorses” and agrees, but if several people are falling into the other categories, the group decides if they want to go forward.

So, on the question of defining “visitors to Sitka” – **our operating definition of visitor is “a non-local who comes to our community for a short term with a specific reason for being here.”**

Matthew draws an imaginary continuum along one wall, indicting one side as “Endorsement” and the other as “Block.” He asks the Stakeholders to go stand at the point on the continuum that reflects their feelings about this definition. The majority of the group stands on the “endorsement” side of the continuum. One person is at “I can live with it”,

and another is at “stand aside.” Matthew asks the Stakeholder who is furthest from agreement what the group can do to help him be more comfortable with this decision. He says his concern is losing the word “tourist” from the definition, and he needs to know that at some point we will get back to addressing the “tourists” in this process. The group agrees to do that, and that Stakeholder agrees to hold the group to doing that.

There is one more big discussion question that we will begin tonight. First, Matthew reminds the group of the ground rules they agreed to earlier, and that our goal right now is just to develop a shared understanding of what visitors do to us, for us, with us – we’re not developing a vision about it. A lot of our work in this stage of the process will involve dialogue in pairs and small groups. Everyone came here with concerns about visitors to Sitka. We’re going to begin learning from each other about what those are. Matthew stresses that right now we’re learning – we’re not selling our perspective. It’s not to win others over right now, it’s to understand why people think the way they do. He presents a poster that distinguishes between debating and being in dialogue.

<b>Debate</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>
Assuming that there is a right answer and that you have it.	Assuming many people have part of the answer
Combative: participants attempt to prove the other side wrong	Collaborative: participants work together toward common understanding
About winning	About exploring common ground
Listening to find flaws and make counterarguments	Listening to understand, create shared meaning, and find agreement
Defending our own assumptions as truth	Revealing assumptions for evaluation
Seeing two sides of an issue	Seeing all sides of an issue
Defending one’s own views against those of others	Admitting that others’ thinking can improve one’s own
Searching for flaws and weaknesses in others’ positions	Searching for strengths and value in others’ positions
Discouraging further conversation by creating winners and losers	Keeping the topic open even after discussion ends
Seeking a conclusion or vote that ratifies your position	Discovering new options, not seeking closure

**Based on using these principles, the next goal is to start discussing the concerns/issues the Stakeholders have about visitors in Sitka.** Stakeholders are asked to brainstorm their own list of concerns, and then they will share their lists with another person, and also listen to their partner’s list of concerns. Stakeholders have the chance to share with two different partners before the end of the meeting.

The group reconvenes for a few minutes before the meeting ends. Matthew asks for a few quick responses from the group about what they think about the dialogues they just had. Their comments:

- I’m hearing issues I’d never thought of.
- This is the type of thing we need to spend most time doing
- It’s not threatening – we’re just sharing; not giving up anything

- There is equal apprehension across the board – stakes are high

Matthew tells the Stakeholders that much of our future work will be done in pairs and small-group dialogues like these. He encourages them to engage in these dialogues outside of these meetings with others in the community too.

Next time we meet, we're going to start right here again, continuing with the partner dialogues about concerns and issues. After we do this a few times, until Stakeholders stop hearing new things, we're going to collect those concerns and put them on the board for the whole group to consider. Stakeholders are invited to put their name on their lists and give them to Kayla – we'll have them for you on the sticky wall next week.

**A few housekeeping items:**

There are still some holes in the grid of Perspectives and Experiences we are hoping to have reflected in the Stakeholder group, namely Alaska Natives, Asian/PI, youth, students, entry-level staff, AML Sampson, and off-island transportation. Everyone needs to be aware that we are looking for these perspectives in our discussions.

SH question: If some people can't make meetings, aren't there other ways to get their opinions?

A: Yes – now we know who wasn't represented here tonight, can ask for their input on the side.

**Food:**

Steering Committee member Stef Steffen addresses the group. He says we're really underfunded on this project, and the Assembly balked at buying food for the Stakeholders every week. He asks if folks could make some contributions to the food cause. He also asks for input on the food – people can talk to him afterward.

**Future Schedule:**

There are 5 Mondays to go before summer break. We might need 2-3 Saturdays to get where we want to go.

Stakeholders ask that it not be folk festival weekend (April 8) or Easter (April 15).

April 1 and April 22 are penciled in as possibilities.