

Sitka Long-Range Tourism Plan Collaborative Process

Stakeholder Meeting #4

01 April 2006, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

University of Alaska, Sitka Campus

Meeting Summary: Stakeholders took one final look at the Concerns list and the eight topics that they were sorted under, then moved into identifying what information will be needed to make good decisions on these topics.

In attendance:

Stakeholder: Wendy Alderson, Harvey Brandt, Jeff Budd, David Clarke, Raine Clarke, Ken Corson, Vern Culp, John DeLong, Greg Dudgeon, Janet Eddy, Dorrie Farrell, Jeff Farvour, Peter Gorman, Roger Hames, Scott Harris, Judy Johnstone, Mike Littman, Bill Marx, Mim McConnell, Liz McKenzie, Mary Jo McNally, Tina McNamee, Karen Meizner, Mary Beth Nelson, Richard Nelson, Michael Nurco, Judith Ozment, Lucy Phillips, Deb Rear, Fred Reeder, Darryl Rehkopf, Tonia Rioux, Tim Ryan, Scott Saline, Andrew Thoms, Floyd Tomkins, Chuck Trierschild, Tommy.

Steering Committee: Julia Smith, Brian McNitt, Hugh Bevan, Stef Steffan, Cleo Brylinsky.

Facilitator: Matthew Turner

Agenda:

Introduction

Review "Concerns" Category...One more round

Information Needs

- Brainstorm

- Review what's missing

- Prioritize needs

- Content and Delivery

- Schedule

Matthew began the meeting by asking if there were any new stakeholders, only one person was new. Matthew posted all the concerns from the last meeting and listed them in the categories that a smaller group of SH had defined at the end of the last SH meeting.

The categories that the concerns fell under are: Local vs. Big business, Community Issues, Economics, Culture and History, Resources and Environment, Planning, Cruise Industry Concerns, and Quality of Visitor Experience. The SH were asked to comment on the placement of the concerns in each of those categories. Numerous suggestions were made for the movement of concerns between categories, but after some discussion and after hearing from those SH who put the concerns into categories it was agreed that we could spend days moving the concerns around and not come up with a more clear delineation into categories than the one that was presented. There was also some conversation about the category "Planning" and the idea that while we are

engaged in planning in this endeavor, the category "Planning" could suggest government planning in particular.

Some SH noted that even though last week the term "Visitor" was defined broadly, it seems that cruise ship visitors are most reflected in the concerns. So, some SH made reference to all the types of visitors and listed them in view so that these types of visitors will be considered through this process. The other types of visitors are: Migrant Workers, Volunteers (such as Vistas, VIMs, JVs), Major Family Events (weddings, funerals), Conventions, Medical Travelers (docs, nurses, PTs, lab techs), Students (SJC, Mt. Edgecumbe), Seasonal fishing fleets (gillnetters, longliners, herring fishermen, trollers).

Groups at each table were asked to add any concerns that they did not see on the board to the list, and to go ahead and put them under the topic category that they thought was the best fit.

The final list looked like this:

Question: When you think about visitors to Sitka and what they do, what concerns you the most?

ECONOMICS

Tourism Recession	Benefits of Industry Distributed Widely Among Sitkans	Reality of Deduction	Visitor Industry Creates Nonlocal Markets (that May Displace Local Markets)
How Does Economy from Convention/Events Visitors Compare with Cruise Ship Visitors	Locally Sponsored Small Cruise Ship	Tourism Taxes : Pay For Use	Displacement of Local Services and Goods
What if Tourists Stop Coming?	What is the True Cost of the Visitor Industry?	Cost / Value of Visitor Industry	Visitors are Seasonal
“Buy Local” Community Support	Distortion of Regular Economy	Visitor Industry Opportunities for Young Locals	Industry Profits Leaving Sitka
Continued Population Growth of Sitka	Ways to Stabilize Year Round Businesses	Not all Segments of Visitor Industry will be Considered	Loss of Local Businesses
Creating a Local Artist Economy	Industry Gets Too Big or Too Small	Impact on Infrastructure	

PLANNING

Access: (to & from Sitka) - Limited Air Capacity - Declining Ferry	Access: (once in Sitka) - Crescent Harbor vs Lightering Facility	Off Season Development	Tourists in All Season
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Capacity			
Plan for Commercial & Local-Use Only Resources (trails, etc.)	Revenue Generated by Sales and Bed Tax	Planning and Zoning	Altering Sitka to Attract Visitors
Managing Harbor Resources	Optimal Carrying Capacity	Taxation without Representation	Degradation of Sitka's Appeal
Crowding Outside Town	What are Limits to Growth?	Seasonal Hiring	Absence of Tourism Planning

COMMUNITY ISSUES

Sitka Must Maintain Control of its Destiny	(High Degree of) Volunteerism (at the park, SJ, Churches, etc.) Here	Lack of Respect	Perception of Charter Industry
Quality of Life	How do we Keep Sitka Whole? (Undivided About Tourism)	Visitor Industry Impact on Housing Opportunity	Provide Accurate and Unbiased Info to Locals
↑ Garbage Pollution \$	Traffic/Pedestrians	Emotions Trumping Openmindedness	Contention twixt Commercial, Sport, Charter
Ferry System	Educating Visitors to Benefit of Supporting Local Businesses and Goods	Laws – Rules – Standards Same For All	Character
Conflict between Visitors & Tourists for Local Space	Dock Decision	Affordable Housing	Demand for Infrastructure
Some Visitors More Valued	Possible Loss of Subsistence Status for Sitka		

LOCAL BUSINESS VS. OUTSIDE BUSINESS

Soundscape	Trickle Down Effect of Tourist Dollars	Crowding Downtown	Are All Players Visible? (Transparency in Influence)
Outside Interests Controlling Visitor Industry	Local Hire / Training	Loss of Local Ownership	Negative Perception of Certain Visitor Groups
Protect and Promote Sitka's Uniqueness	Diminished Wilderness Experience	Aesthetics	Industrial Tourism vs. Cottage on Local Tours
Local Ownership / Input			

QUALITY OF VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Provide and Authentic Experience	Different Impact of Different Visitor Groups	Visitors Encourage Fine and Traditional Arts Here	Link between Community Character & Repeat Visitors
Diminished Wilderness Experience	Affordability (for Visitors)	Greed Factor vs. Quality Experiences – Becoming Juneau, Ketchikan, Skagway	Visitor’s Perspective
Too Much Focus on Negative Side of Visitor Industry	Provide Accurate Information to Tourists		

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

Impacts on Limited Marine Resources (fisheries)	Impact on Natural Resources	Impact on Wilderness	Unrestricted Access
Risk of Resource Over-Utilization	Impact on Fishing, Water, Air, Noise	Impacts on Subsistence	Resources Management

CULTURE & HISTORY

Cumulative Impacts to Historic Settings	Preserve Russian History	Increase Visitor’s Awareness of Sitka	Sharing Indigenous culture(s) / Accurate Information
Compromising Cultural Values	Visitor Effect on Native Communities (Cultural Concerns)		

CRUISE INDUSTRY CONCERNS

Dominance by One Part of Tourism	Having Cruise Ships in Two Places	Impact of Cruise Ship Dock	Cruise Lines level of Stewardship in Industry
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The facilitator moved the discussion from the list of concerns by topic to the work of defining our information needs for each of those topics. The question for the SH group to answer was "What do we need to know in order to make good decisions on these topics". Matthew then shared a list generated from previous Steering Committee and Convener Group others concerning what types of information might be needed to address the topics. These topics and specifics under each topic were presented as an idea booster to the next exercise for the SH.

The list showed the following information:

Trends in Sitka's visitors

- Types of visitors coming (in terms of trip purpose, demographics)
Feedback from "repeat customers"
- Trends in numbers of visitors (how many, length of stay)
- Visitor activities, level of visitor satisfaction

Visitor impacts

- Average spending,
tax revenues,
business opportunities,
services subsidized,
crowding,
affects on main street retail,
#s of emergency calls in summer v. winter,
history of occupancy tax ("bed tax"),
reports from city engineers/planners, public works, those who provide
communication services to tourists
- Stories from Stakeholder experiences

other trends in tourism

- Other SE communities
high-volume
low-volume
no-volume
- other Alaska trends in tourism
- other impacts (i.e. flightseeing noise)
- where is tourism in Sitka heading; what would evolve if we weren't engaged
in this process?

Tourism "Resources"

- Examples of tourism plans from other communities
- Review of tourism attractions – natural attractions, history & culture, town
itself
- Inventory of tourism services and facilities – lodging, charter boats, tour
companies, etc.
- Analysis – what are strengths, what is missing, what additions are needed
- Negative impacts of tourism on communities

Community attitudes

- level of support for tourism
- Preferred types of tourism (specific markets, activities)

Current tourism marketing

- Current market image
- Marketing and promotion activities
- Funding mechanism
- Etc.

Next, the SH broke into smaller groups, randomly, to address the eight categories of concerns listed at the last SH meeting, there were approximately 5 people per group. It was important to be randomly assigned to groups so that diversity in groups was maintained. Each group was assigned a topic from the last SH meeting and in that group the work was to identify the types of information needed to address that concern. The types of information needed was further broken down into priorities based on urgency, time needed to gather that info, accessibility, credibility, and cost. Also, the information needed was evaluated with regard to whether or not it was something required of a content expert or could the accumulation of that info be homework for the SH? Lastly, could that information be a responsibility of the SH group as a whole, or could it be assigned to a sub-group? We were also asked to try to identify who might have the info that we need.

Each group finalized their list and the lists were gathered up for use at the next meeting, which will be Monday April 3 at 5:30 in room 106 on the UAS campus. Before departing Matthew asked the group if anyone would like to be part of a call in show on Raven Radio, Tuesday night April 4th from 8-10 pm. Tonya Rioux, Mike Litman, Richard Nelson, and Fred Reeder agreed to be there.

Finally, Matthew went around the room to give all the SH the opportunity to say how they were feeling about the process so far, if Kayla had been there she would have written all those comments down...but generally the comments were positive with many folks expressing appreciation for this process to address the perceived need for tourism planning in Sitka. Two folks felt rushed, others felt like they were accomplishing something, and many were glad to be able to work on this issue with a diverse group of fellow Sitkans.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 with a few folks sticking around to talk till 1:45 or so.

Next Meeting: Monday April 3, at room 106 on the UAS campus from 5:30 to 8:30 PM.