

CULTURAL & AGRI-TOURISM WORKSHOP

December 4, 2012

Attendees:

Cristie Amaral, Maupin Area Chamber Commerce
Sarah Ashley, Imperial River Company
Joe Becker, Prineville-Crook County Chamber of Commerce
Brenda Comini, Crook County
Serenia Groth, Creative Groth
Vicky Hastings, Maxwell PR
Kahseuss Jackson, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Joe Krenowicz, Madras Chamber of Commerce
Tory Kurtz, Forest Service
Michele Long, Frolic Fibers
Brent McLean, Northview Hotel Group/Brasada Ranch
Bobbi Meritt, Fall Wool Gatherings
Dean Noyes, Crooked River Roundup
Cate O'Hagan, Arts Central
Kristi Richter, Central Oregon Visitors Association
Maura Schwartz, Resident
Dave Slaght, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department/Cove Palisades State Park
Aurolyn Stwyer-Pinkham, Red Skye, LLC
Bill Vollmer, Mountain Photo and Graphics
Don Wood, Resident

Travel Oregon Staff

- Kristin Dahl, Senior Manager, Destination Development, Travel Oregon
- Harry Dalgaard, Specialist, Destination Development, Travel Oregon
- David Blair, Special Projects, Destination Development, Travel Oregon

What Attendees Want out of the Day:

- Joe Krenowicz – interested in anything related to tourism
- Christy – interested in anything related to tourism
- Sarah Ashley – figure out ways to work together
- Don Wood – interested in bringing outside
- Joe Becker – looking how agri-tourism can be a more prominent feature in our community
- Serenia Groth– looking for new ideas on how to support our clients
- Brent McLean – here to participate and contribute
- Maura Schwartz – serving as a consultant
- Cate O'Hagan – creating a regional cultural byway
- Dave Slaght – want to find out how businesses are incorporating experience with Cove Palisades state park

- Vicky Hastings – looking to hear what’s happening now and in the future
- Bill Vollmer – how I can help the area as a whole to develop and increase
- Bobbi Meritt – figuring out how to have a bigger impact in the area
- Michelle Long – how to expand participation in our event
- Brenda Comini – county is interested in their investment of \$\$ through the Chambers, want to see the economy grow
- Kristi Richter – to serve as a megaphone for sharing ideas
- Aurolyn Stwyer Pinkham, Red Skye LLC
- Kahseuss Jackson, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

CONNECTING TO THE VISION | Report Out

Where do you see cultural & agri-tourism fitting in to the vision of the future.

- Its authentic
- It's accessible
 - We might be able to promote some short term visits, rather than long term visits
- Enables exploration, not just recreation
- The richness (exploration) is as important as the recreation (fun)
- This sector may even be one of the key drivers of the vision
- Everything we have is fragmented right now, we need to figure out how people can participate on more than just a day trip
- Cultural and agri-tourism could become the foundation of the vision; need to identify significant cultural / agricultural sites that would be of interest to visitors – where things are grown, revealing how food is foundational to their experience (here's where your onions are grown, etc)
- Historically, this part of Oregon was significant for its fiber – encompassed ALL of Central Oregon. It would be great to pick a connection that doesn't have a significant amount of competition (something unique) – agritourism for fiber.

What's going to be the mechanism to bring the businesses together?

- We need to help them understand how these efforts will benefit their bottom line
- Share the regional vision with them
- Businesses are looking for leadership
- Help them say there is leadership from key people/organizations in the region
- By doing this as a region, we'll be able to better position ourselves with an international travel market
- It's difficult to get the federal, state, county, local level to get them to support a good idea – it can become very expensive to get to a point where we can try something out.

What potential do you think this region has to become an iconic destination for cultural and agri-tourism?

- If we spend as much energy with this segment as we do with outdoor recreation we *could* make this an iconic destination → the potential is definitely there
- We in this room are what will make it happen – clarity of vision, obtaining funding, get political
 - It will require an investment of time and energy from those of us here
 - *This group here today could help create a foundational group*
- Cultural/agri-tourism offerings would nicely complement outdoor recreation activities, but may not be a significant income stream
- Untapped potential with the Warm Springs Museum that experiences a high degree of international visitation. November is Native American heritage month, but we do very little to share this or connect with the rest of the region

- OPRD – what we’re seeing is that people are coming to boat, but we’re seeing a larger number of people tagging along that don’t want to sunbathe or boat. OPRD interpretive programs saw an increase of 180%. Had over 1.5 million visitors in the day use area. Businesses could build on this and provide new offerings – there is most definitely untapped potential here.
- Imperial River Company – we get a lot of comments from rafters when guides provide local interpretation during the trip. There is an opportunity for cross linking.
- This could be a vehicle for leaning how we package and market a wide range of opportunities
 - Indigenous, cowboy culture, fine arts & crafts, etc
- Opportunity to develop entrepreneurs where there otherwise weren’t – *how do we develop this entrepreneurial spirit*
- Incredible opportunity for entrepreneurial development → this type of capacity building would be huge for our region
- Tourism is definitely an economic development tool – people come, visit and then want to bring their business here (Madras Chamber)
- There are a lot of ideas out there, but from a Chamber perspective we need to help provide more guidance on how they develop this idea

How can this sector benefit the region?

- It connects the more urban more organized activities in Bend with the rest of the region – this region has less organized activities, may help with developing off season activities (on farm experiences, etc. when they’re not on their bikes)
- COVA - fiber events take place in the shoulder season (last Sat in March and in September). Lodging properties would be good partners to help get the word out about these events to facilitate longer stays
- Agri-businesses are already doing a lot of international marketing, if they could expand their offerings to help people experience the process, they could be developing a whole new stream of income

What’s the unique destination and sector proposition? (This is the compelling story about why you should come here; and, what you will get) Something that fits with the area and is distinct.

- Connect to “realness” as the landscape is right in their face – people *feel* like they’re in Central Oregon
 - Ecosystem is distinctive, people are real
- It’s the diversity of the experiences here so a families/groups can all enjoy something while they’re here – always looking for, “well what else is there to do here?”
- Really close to being able to illuminate the agritourism opportunities that are currently here (one website & cultural trail away)
- You feel uplifted here – its real because of the air quality but also because there’s a *back to the land* nurturing thing going on here
- There is a sense of getting real –

Tailwinds in Agricultural Trends / Societal Shifts

- Rapid increase in international visitation – largest growth market in Oregon
 - How would we serve this market here regionally?
 - We lack a portal – there isn't ready access to things to submerge yourself in
 - We lack good public transportation – visitors are reliant on a vehicle
- Opportunity with no sales tax in Asian market
 - Love to buy luxury goods on vacation
- Central Oregon Visitor Association visitor association – have 2,000 visitors through their door per month in the summer months
 - Destinations are really close to one another from a visitor perspective especially when you say it's a "40 minute drive to Warm Springs Museum" – drive in minutes makes things easier to plan/ more accessible

Headwinds in Agricultural Trends / Societal Shifts

- People have less disposable income
- People are taking 'Staycations' more so than in the past. People are recreating closer to home.
 - Central Oregon experiencing more visitation from Portland rather than from further away, yet still people aren't aware of the assets in their own backyard
 - Saw this increase when the economy started to go south
- Deteriorating road conditions

What Struck You About the Case Studies?

- In Hayden's case, there was a visionary – one guy – but he enlisted a huge community of support. How did he do that? There is an incredible amount of
 - Hayden started very small and built that as a business over time
 - In Martinborough – an outsider came in, but was married to a local gal. Spent a lot of time talking to people.
- This is an opportunity to transform the community through these kind of projects.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL & AGRICULTURAL TOURISM SECTOR

STRENGTHS:

- Low cost, low-hanging natural resources to build our tourism economy from (rivers, lakes, birding, farming)
- There are a lot of businesses out there that would like to see their businesses grow
- 'Get Real' – it's a real place, not manufactured, it is old (original) mainstreet
- Between two populations centers (Bend, Portland), between two airports
- Still offer the small-town experience (less crowded/populated)
- Have a stout set of cultural and agricultural assets already; Products have grown organically
- entrepreneurial spirit exists, particularly in cultural/agricultural arena
- Isolation has stimulated a 'can-do' environment
- Farms are 320 acres or less, operated by one family → open to evolution and adaptation
- Near/on Hwy 26 and Hwy 97
- Similarly being off the beaten path
- A resilience / adaptability even despite global trends

OPPORTUNITIES

- A tourism ambassador program who could be familiar with all the opportunities in the region
- Build upon the region's recognition as an outdoor recreation destination
- GOOD WEATHER: 300 days of sunshine
- Build our story line and differentiate the experience here in the region
- Wide variety of ag
- Things already happening here that we can branch out from – possibility of broadening audience for knitting events, etc. Possibility to 'knit these experiences together'
- To collaborate
- Build a coherent regional strategy that is inviting to entrepreneurs as well as strategically engaging public agencies
- Museum @ Warm Springs celebrating its 20th Anniversary -- 2013

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of capacity to promote/market an event likely due to a lack of knowledge of 'how-to' & resources
- Region is outside the fast-responding media; events/issues not covered
 - Mistrust of key media outlets
- An unwillingness from farm business owners to open an agritourism business – regulations?
- It is also daunting for a small farmer to open an agritourism business due to the regulatory environment
 - Fear of what could jeopardize my business potentially
- Seasonality – mountain pass becomes a barrier during winter months
- Pioneering spirit can also be self-limiting and hamper collaboration

- Difficult for one-family farm owner to expand their services
- Lack of a destination marketing organization for this destination (this region) within current activities / organizations
- Crime, drugs, alcohol issues due to location to I-97; rapidly declining transportation infrastructure

THREATS

- Fear of local laws/ordinances for business start ups – and the reality of these
- Reaching carrying capacity – how much can we grow in areas that may be at risk of being ‘loved to death’
- Large projects imploding leaving a major void
- Energy crisis
- Perceptions of what’s here – peoples only experience may be driving through on Hwy 26 or Hwy 97
- Tax-funded initiatives coming and going
- Short term vs. long-term thinking

BUILDING THE INDUSTRY – REPORT BACK FROM TABLE GROUPS

Key Products/Events/Experiences that can be leveraged?

- Cultural Events
- Rodeo
- Airshow.
- Pow Wows
- Arts
- Working Ranches
- Salmon Bakes
- Idiosyncratic cultural events
- What makes Oregon weird?
- Agricultural offerings- Cada vida cheeses
- OSU small farms tour
- Variety of conceptual day tours
- Foods
- Pumpkin Patch
- Fiber Marketing
- Wool
- Steak
- Buffalo

Cross Linkages need to be created?

- Linking these opportunities through itineraries and trail systems. Identify travel routes then find natural agricultural linkages along route.
- Signage needs to be improved – this can help link/leverage.
- Wine and beer tours
- Connect geographic extremes via product
- Talking about layers of trails that link regional attributes.
- Determine what experience is desired then communicate

What Gaps are there?

- Create an ambassadors group that can ascertain what destinations have the “x” factor
- Gap in ability to recognize experiences that will provide good quality hospitality
- Lack of coordinated publicity
- Lack of RCC marketing strength/ability

How does cultural and Agricultural Tourism link into overall RCC offering?

- Larger tourism regional focus –

- passport book for geotours
- certificate program
- Local currency that stays within community.
- Classes
- National Instruction furthering RTS themes.... Further help with implementation of niche markets. e.g. wool expert could come in from NZ/AUS

BIG IDEAS/ KEY IDEAS/TOUR IDEAS /ACTION STEPS THAT WILL UNIFY THE AREA FOR CULTURAL-AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- Tours – e.g. “From Salmon bake to Bison Steak”
- A meat lovers paradise
- Take advantage of house boats – offer dinners/ experiences on house boats
- Railroad revitalization ideas – daytrips on the Deschutes
- Process- Facilitations - Overall marketing apparatus – Establish overall strategy that pulls overall efforts together
 - What is the best utilization of resources for identifying sustainability for this
- How do we link it all – cultural byways?
 - Create interconnectivity
 - Develop Regional Structure/ Identity
 - Creation of action teams
 - Curate the experience
 - Through local itineraries
- Cultural and Agritourism is a value addition
- Location or database of events and activities
 - Collecting a database of local knowledge
 - Stories
 - Online format
 - History
 - Local Nuggets
- Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
- Calendars need to be up to date – and updated across platforms (orb, dmos, rdmos)
 - Tie-ins need to be topical and time based
- Build and maintain databases
- Become tech-enabled and use tech tools to reach smart phones and such.
- CULTURAL AND AGRITOURISM ACTION TEAM IS DESIRED FROM RCC
 - The key roles by an Action Team / Working Group includes:
 - Develop policy and regulations with County Governments and other key entities to help support agri-tourism

- Convene local event organisers to help build on what is already happening and create important linkages
- Develop the content in the sector -
- Create and advance and agenda