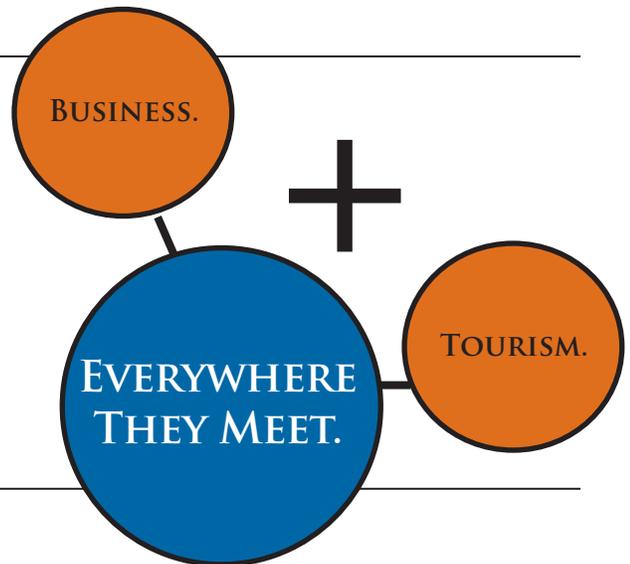


LINCOLN CITY

DECEMBER 12, 2008



Panelists:

Joe Ashor, Bureau of Land Management
Michelle Duarte, Wildspring Guest Habitat
Doug Hunt, Umpqua Bank
Gabrielle McEntee-Wilson, Mo's Enterprises
Rebecah Morris, Oregon Coast Visitors Association
Terry Thompson, Lincoln County Commissioner
Scott West, chief strategy officer, Travel Oregon

The drumming of the rain on a blustery Oregon Coast day punctuated a spirited discussion among business and tourism leaders at Travel Oregon's Town Hall meeting in Lincoln City.

Topics ranged from ecotourism to collaboration, from protecting traditional industries to developing innovative new ones. The one thing everyone wanted to talk about, however, was the coastal workforce.

"I've been in the industry for 20 years," said Gab McEntee-Wilson of Mo's Enterprises. "And one thing I know—kids need to learn how to work."

The lack of basic skills among younger employees is forcing employers to spend more time teaching them how to work. Participants attributed the problem to schools not teaching skills such as counting back change; decreased involvement in organized sports, which traditionally instill discipline; and parents who aren't requiring kids to take responsibility.

An audience member from Coos Bay offered a suggestion: "Kids might be lacking work skills and a work ethic, but we're lacking social marketing and technology skills," she said. "Instead of treating them like a challenge, treat them as the resource they are."

Changing demographics

While the number of people living on the Oregon Coast has not changed appreciably, the make-up of the population has. That has profound implications for the coastal economy. "In Lincoln County, the population has become heavily weighted toward retired individuals," said Doug Hunt of Umpqua Bank. "As the

Baby Boomers continue to retire, you will have fewer and fewer people coming into the workforce to replace them."

The ethnicity of the coast population is also changing. One audience member predicted that children of Hispanic heritage will soon make up 50% of Lincoln County school enrollment. "We are changing age-wise, but we are also changing culturally and that is going to be a challenge for us," he said.

Attracting and retaining employees is made more difficult with the lack of healthcare, day care and affordable housing, problems that affect the entire coast. Fifteen years ago, pointed out Joe Ashor of the Bureau of Land Management, the difference between median home price and median income was 120%; today it's 400%.

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DOUG HUNT
UMPQUA BANK

Sustainability and eco-tourism

The increasing popularity of eco-tourism is having a significant effect on coastal venues. "People don't want to be entertained any more, they want to be educated," Ashor said.

Increased interest from the affluent eco-tourist market has significantly changed the South Coast's strategy, said Michelle Duarte of Wildspring Guest Habitat in Port Orford. The region traditionally caters to visitors looking for inexpensive lodging and food. "As gas prices increase, that market got hammered," Duarte said. "And as they went away, the resources of the South Coast have been used to attract the eco-tourists, who are not as affected by that."



REBECAH MORRIS
OREGON COAST
VISITORS ASSOCIATION



MICHELLE DUARTE
WILDSRING GUEST
HABITAT



GABRIELLE MCENTEE-WILSON
MO'S ENTERPRISES

The trend toward education-based travel is also offering business an opportunity to expand their visitor offerings. "Too many people think walking on the beach is all we have to offer," said Terry Thompson, Lincoln County commissioner. "The more things we can create that have a longer-term impact, the longer people will stay and the stronger our communities will be. It's especially important in the area of environmental tourism."

Economic diversity

While tourism has a critical role in the coast economy, it can't be the only game in town, participants said. "If we don't have jobs other than tourism-based ones, we're going to have a hard time attracting and retaining families," Hunt said. "We need diversity in order to be able to attract and retain people at the coast."

Participants also felt it important to protect traditional industries, such as logging and fishing. "Industries like that give a lot of our cities character," said Skip Hauke of the Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce. "It's part of our job to keep those industries alive."

"The challenge is how to protect the traditional economy that defines us and still move forward to encourage new innovative ways of doing business," Ashor said.

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TERRY THOMPSON
LINCOLN COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Collaboration

Panel members agreed that ultimately, the best way to weather today's economic storm is by working together through partnerships, collaboration and networking.

"The tourist industry does collaborate with other industries," McEntee-Wilson said. "Mo's serves wild-caught salmon, even though it's more expensive. Why? Because I'm looking outside my office at the fishing fleet. We work together."

Collaboration within the tourism industry is also important, with participants talking the value of packaging the visitor experience and of promoting each other. "Instead of being more competitive, the key is to be more collaborative," said an audience member. "We should be marketing the coast instead of our own businesses."



PANEL MEMBERS (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT):

REBECAH MORRIS - OREGON COAST VISITORS ASSOCIATION, DOUG HUNT - UMPQUA BANK, JOE ASHOR - BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, GABRIELLE McENTEE-WILSON - MO'S ENTERPRISES, TERRY THOMPSON - LINCOLN COUNTY COMMISSIONER, MICHELLE DUARTE - WILDSRING GUEST HABITAT



DOUG HUNT
UMPQUA BANK



MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE