

# Wallowa Rural Tourism Studio Business Survey Results June 2011

## A. Highlights

- The response rate for the Wallowa business survey was 28%. This is the lowest response rate of all RTS communities surveyed, and lodging and restaurants are underrepresented.
- It's not surprising to confirm that the Wallowa County tourism economy is highly seasonal. Responding businesses support 12 full or part time year-round jobs in the region, as well as 42 seasonal jobs.
- Over the past six months, few businesses have developed new products or services for the visitor market. This may be reflective of the survey timing occurring at the end of the off-season period.
- More businesses have undertaken "green" initiatives, especially those focused on increased "local sourcing of local supplies and services".
- There is good awareness of Travel Oregon's marketing programs.

## B. Introduction and Methodology

A key goal for the Rural Tourism Studio program is to increase sustainable business opportunities, business revenue and jobs in the tourism sector.

According to the program logic model, we would begin to see tangible changes in the bottom line of businesses after a year passed since the pilot program delivery. The Wallowa County RTS program took place between April and May, 2009. The business survey was implemented 24 months after the program wrapped up.

In light of the sustained economic recession during and since the Wallowa RTS, we would not expect to see robust business growth to demonstrate the program's short term value as an economic development program. The information gathered here, however, can serve as baseline data for the planned follow up business survey in another 12-18 months

**The Wallowa survey was sent in early May, 2011 to a list of 29 sample businesses with tourism related products/services throughout the county.** By design, some businesses were selected because they actively participated in the Rural Tourism Studio: others were selected to ensure a representative range of business types, even if they did not participate in RTS at all. Kristin Dahl of Travel Oregon, Alice Trindle of Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, Vicki Searles of the Wallowa Chamber of Commerce and Sara Miller of Northeast Oregon Economic Development District contributed names to the list. The survey itself was distributed by e-mail under the auspices of Travel Oregon.

The electronic business survey included 13 questions, primarily multiple choice, in three sections:

- Business Overview (3 questions)

- Numbers (6 questions)
- Recent Innovations (4 questions)

The survey document is included as an appendix to this report. This survey is significantly modified from an initial version that was tested only in Wallowa County over the summer of 2010.

**Eight businesses, representing 28% of the sample, completed the survey.** This is lower than the 48% response rate in both Oakridge and the John Day River Territory. But it is higher than the 2010 Wallowa County survey *completion* rate of 13.8%. In the future, clearly more work is needed to increase survey response rates here so that the information is more representative and potentially useful.

The following sections provide a brief overview of the Wallowa business survey results. Full survey results are available on the Travel Oregon survey monkey homepage.

### C. Profile of Participating Businesses

Seven of the eight responding businesses indicated a zip code. Four have Joseph zip codes and three have Enterprise zip codes.

- Wallowa Lake Tramway
- Alpine Meadows Golf Club
- Winding Waters River Expeditions
- Bronze Antler Bed & Breakfast, Inc.
- Grande Ronde Guide Service
- Bookloft
- Stewart Jones Designs

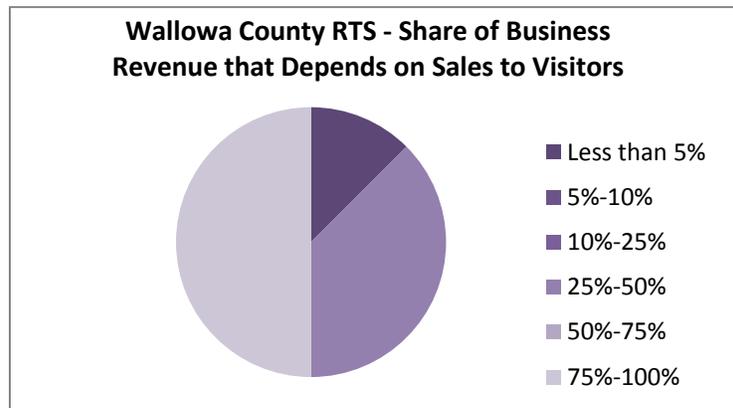
The respondent business mix is very diverse. **Although lodging and restaurants were more extensively included on the survey distribution list, they are underrepresented among respondents.** This is not surprising since such businesses did not actively participate in the Wallowa Rural Tourism Studio workshops.

**Type of Business, Responding Businesses**

Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Lodging	12.5%	1
Restaurant	12.5%	1
Tour Company	12.5%	1
Event/Festival	0.0%	0
Retail Store	25.0%	2
Guide/Packer	25.0%	2
Sports	12.5%	1
Visitor Transport (tramway)	12.5%	1
Cultural Attraction	0.0%	0
Historic Attraction	0.0%	0
Farm Stay	0.0%	0
Other Visitor Attraction (cooking classes)	12.5%	1
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>8</b>

All of the responding businesses are at least six years old. Five responding businesses (62.5%) are at least ten years old. Thus, newer start-ups are not represented at all.

**In terms of how much their revenue depends on sales to the visitor market, the majority of respondents significantly depend on such sales.** Four of the eight responding businesses (50%) depend on visitor sales for at least 75% of their revenue. Visitor sales make up 25-50% of total revenue for other three responding businesses. For one business, less than 5% of its sales are tied to visitors.

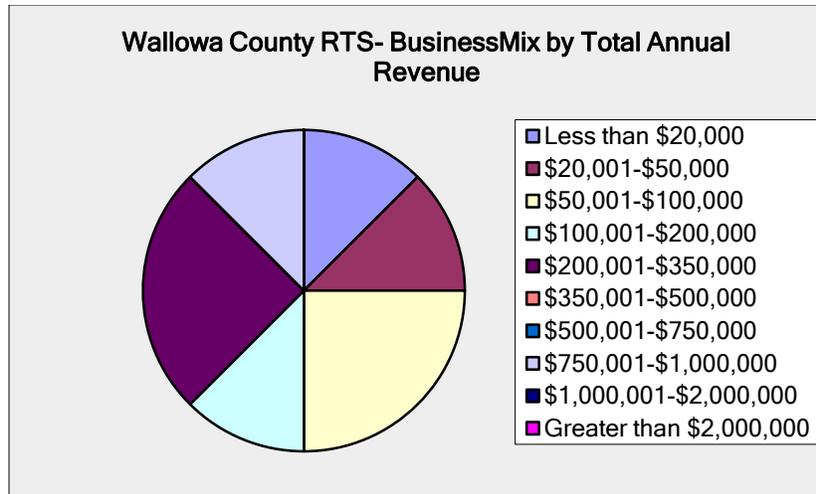


#### **D. Employment and Sales**

**Jobs associated with the responding businesses are, in general, highly seasonal. The average year round employment is less than 2 people per business. In total, the businesses report 12 year round jobs, half of which are full time. An additional 42 people are employed seasonally, and the majority of seasonal jobs are full-time.** Two responding businesses have only seasonal employees.

Five of the eight businesses responded to questions about changes in employment levels. Of those five, none reported changes in employment levels over the past six months. Three of the five expect no change in employment levels over the next six months. Of those who do expect a change in employment levels, they expect to add a total of 3 part time jobs.

**Half of the responding businesses have annual sales of less than \$100,000.** None of the responding businesses have annual revenue greater than \$1,000,000.



Most businesses (six of eight) experienced no change in revenue over the past six months as compared with the same six months of the prior year.

### E. Recent Innovations in Products, Services and Operations

Two of the eight respondents indicated they have developed new products and services for tourists this past six months (since December 2010). This low rate of product and service development may be due to the timing of the survey occurring right at the end of the off-season in Wallowa County. As one person specifically noted “not in winter!” to the question about introducing new products and services.

**Have you developed any new products or services targeting the visitor market this past six months? Please check all that apply.**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
New packages with other area attractions	0.0%	0
New visitor experiences based on active outdoor recreation	33.3%	1
New visitor experiences based on history and culture	33.3%	1
New visitor experiences based on events or festivals	33.3%	1
New visitor experiences targeted for children and families	33.3%	1
New visitor experiences based on nature and environment	0.0%	0
New off-season activity	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>3</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>5</b>

More than half of the responding businesses indicate that they’ve undertaken new initiatives to “green” their businesses. This addresses key sustainability goals for the RTS program. The most common green initiative was “increased local sourcing of supplies or services”, with two respondents specifically referencing increased use of local food sources.

Have you undertaken any new initiatives to "green" your business in the past six months? Please check all that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
New energy-efficiency improvements	33.3%	2
New water-efficiency improvements	0.0%	0
New or improved reduction of waste	16.7%	1
New or improved recycling program	33.3%	2
New or expanded purchasing environmentally-friendly products or services	0.0%	0
Increased local sourcing of supplies or services	50.0%	3
Travel philanthropy program (collecting donations from visitors for local environmental or social programs)	0.0%	0
Not applicable	16.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>6</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

### F. Marketing Activities

Half of responding businesses have undertaken new marketing initiatives over the past six months. **75% of respondents are familiar with "Travel Oregon's marketing programs to promote visitors to your area."** This meets another goal of the RTS program to connect rural areas with the regional and statewide resources that can help to develop and promote tourism in their communities.

### G. Survey Template

Attached as Appendix