

# Oakridge Rural Tourism Studio

## Business Survey Results

### June 2011

#### A. Highlights

- **The response rate for the Oakridge business survey was close to 50%, which means that its results are useful for understanding tourism related business trends. However, the responding group is not a “typical” group of tourism related businesses in the community. One business alone accounts for nearly all of the seasonal employment.**
- **Responding businesses support 78 full or part time year-round jobs in the region, as well as 130 seasonal jobs. Three employers have ten or more year round employees. Three quarters of businesses do not expect any change in employment over the next six months.**
- **Over the past six months, a significant number of responding businesses (more than half) have developed new products or services for the visitor market, as well as initiatives to “green” their businesses.**
- **There is high 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 Oakridge RTS program took place between October 2009 and January 2010. The business survey was implemented 16 months after the program wrapped up.

In light of the sustained economic recession during and since the Oakridge 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 Oakridge survey was sent in early May, 2011 to a list of 25 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, Randy Dreiling of the Oakridge/Westfir Chamber of Commerce and Gordon Zimmerman of the City of Oakridge all 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.

**Twelve businesses, representing 48% of the sample, completed the survey.** This is the same response rate as for the John Day River Territory, and much higher than the 2010 Wallowa County survey completion rate of 13.8%.

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

### C. Profile of Participating Businesses

Ten of the twelve responding businesses have Oakridge zip codes, while the remaining two are based in Westfir and Lowell.

- Arbor Inn Motel/RV Park
- Lion Mountain Bakery
- Siuslaw Bank
- Ray's Food Place
- Double Diamond Lodge Bed and Breakfast
- Willamette Pass Resort
- Tired Dog Ranch
- Oregon Adventures
- Dairy Queen
- Four others that did not provide business names

The business mix includes those with both direct and indirect tourism related sales

#### Type of Business, Responding Businesses

Lodging	36%
Restaurant	36%
Tour Company	9%
Event/Festival	9%
Retail Store	36%
Guide/Packer	9%
Sports	18%
Visitor Transport	18%
Cultural Attraction	0%
Historic Attraction	9%
Farm Stay	9%
Other Visitor Attraction (please specify)	18%

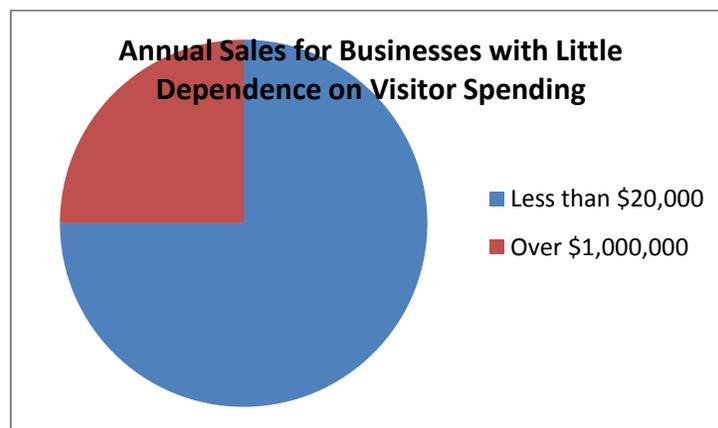
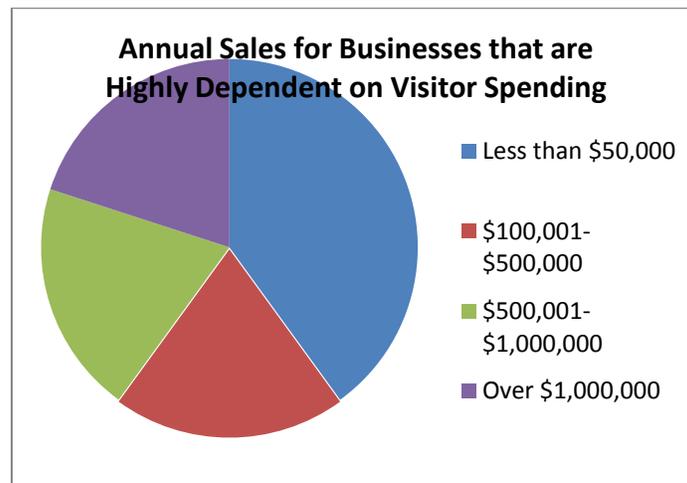
Five responding businesses (42%) are at least ten years old. Three of the responding businesses (25%) are very new, established since January, 2010.

**In terms of how much their revenue depends on sales to the visitor market, the responding businesses are split into two primary types.** Five of the eleven businesses that answered this question depend on visitor sales for at least 75% of their revenue. Five others depend on visitor spending for less than 25% of their revenue.

As a result, the data about “averages” is less meaningful than the trends within each group, as explored in Section D.

### D. Employment and Sales

Nine businesses answered the question about annual revenue. The businesses that are highly dependent on sales to visitors (at least 75% of their sales) were, on average, larger than those that are not (those with less than 25% of their sales to visitors). This seems accurate with respect to the actual mix of businesses in the Oakridge area.



Responding businesses support 78 full or part time year-round jobs in the region, as well as 130 seasonal jobs. While the majority of responding businesses are small, with an average of 1-4 year round jobs (full and part time), three employers have ten or more year round employees. Two of these larger employers

are highly tourism dependent. In terms of seasonal employment, one business alone accounts for nearly all the seasonal employment.

**The vast majority of businesses (10 of 11 respondents) have experienced no change in employment levels over the past six months. This is despite the fact that they did experience changes in revenue.**

Forty five percent reported increased revenue over the past six months as compared with the same six months of the prior year. Twenty seven percent report decreased revenue, and twenty seven percent reported no change in revenue. In terms of the three largest employers, one experienced increase sales, one decreased sales, and one no change; there is no trend to report here.

**Three quarters of businesses do not expect any change in employment 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.

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

**Seven of the twelve respondents indicated they have developed new products and services for tourists this past six months** (since December 2010). The most common new visitor product or service was based on “active outdoor recreation”.

Furthermore, **seven of the responding businesses indicated they have also undertaken new initiatives to “green” their businesses.** This addresses key sustainability goals for the RTS program. The most common green initiative was “new energy-efficiency improvements”.

<b>Have you developed any new products or services targeting the visitor market this past six months? Please check all that apply.</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
New packages with other area attractions	10%	1
New visitor experiences based on active outdoor recreation	40%	4
New visitor experiences based on history and culture	10%	1
New visitor experiences based on events or festivals	30%	3
New visitor experiences targeted for children and families	0%	0
New visitor experiences based on nature and environment	30%	3
New off-season activity	0%	0
Not applicable	40%	4
Other (local art gallery)		1
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>11</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>1</b>

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	46%	5
New water-efficiency improvements	27%	3
New or improved reduction of waste	18%	2
New or improved recycling program	18%	2
New or expanded purchasing environmentally-friendly products or services	0%	0
Increased local sourcing of supplies or services	9%	1
Travel philanthropy program (collecting donations from visitors for local environmental or social programs)	18%	2
Not applicable	36%	4
Other (have added or expanded organic gardens)	18%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>11</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

## F. Marketing Activities

Roughly one-third (36%) of responding businesses have undertaken new marketing initiatives over the past six months. Compared with the John Day River Territory RTS area, there is **very high familiarity “with Travel Oregon’s marketing programs to promote visitors to your area.” 91% of respondents indicate that they are aware of these programs.** This result is consistent with earlier participant interviews, which indicated “increased awareness of Travel Oregon and Travel Lane County programs” as a direct effect of the Rural Tourism Studio program series.

## G. Survey Template

Attached as Appendix