

South Lincoln County: “We Speak” Version 2.0

THEME: South Lincoln County built on the concept of an innovative training program for community ambassadors, originally developed as part of the Oakridge Rural Tourism Studio in 2010-2011. In order to make the program more scalable and sustainable, this new iteration primarily uses DVDs narrated by local experts that can be shown repeatedly, and in a variety of settings rather than in a live workshop setting. The new design reflects lessons learned in Oakridge, and is more comprehensive, with twelve different subjects. The goal is the same: to ensure that every person who comes in contact with a visitor can be an informed ambassador for all the community has to offer.

PROJECT IMPACT: Nine DVDs were completed over the winter of 2014-2015 and will be available for use by March 2015: three additional topics are offered in slide form with detailed talking points. The videos were filmed as workshops before a live audience in various locations as appropriate. Each live workshop attracted an audience of 20-35 people, with an approximate total participation of 225 people (some overlap where people attended more than one training). These people now constitute a visible network of knowledgeable local residents to provide accurate and interesting tips for visitors, which will result in enhanced visitor experiences. The network will grow as the DVDs are re-shown throughout the region.

PLACE: South Lincoln County is located between the Coast Range and the Pacific Ocean along the central coast of Oregon. With an approximate area of 300 square miles, the landscape is diverse, from the steep 800 foot high Cape Perpetua headlands on its southern coast to wide flat beaches, estuaries and off-shore haystack rock formations to the north. The Alsea and Yachats Rivers create bays in Waldport and Yachats. Inland, the land rises swiftly into the Coast Range. While most known for its extraordinary coastline, the most dominant feature of the landscape may in fact be its forested nature. The vast majority of land in all of Lincoln County is forested, and in South Lincoln County, the vast majority of land is part of the Siuslaw National Forest. The area has a diverse natural resource base for outdoor recreation, as well as unique heritage and cultural assets.

South Lincoln County includes two incorporated cities: Waldport and Yachats, and well as two unincorporated communities, Seal Rock on the coast, and Tidewater inland. The total population of this area in the 2010 was 8,313. Tourism is a major driver of the regional economy in Lincoln County, and particularly in South County's smallest incorporated community, Yachats (population 690), where 87% of the municipal budget depends on revenue from local lodging tax. In larger Waldport (population 2033), tourism supports just a half of a percent of the municipal budget, primarily because its tax base is more diverse and there are relatively few places to stay overnight in the community. Historically and today, the two communities have different relationships with the tourism sector as a result. However, through the Rural Tourism Studio, the communities are actively collaborating around tourism.

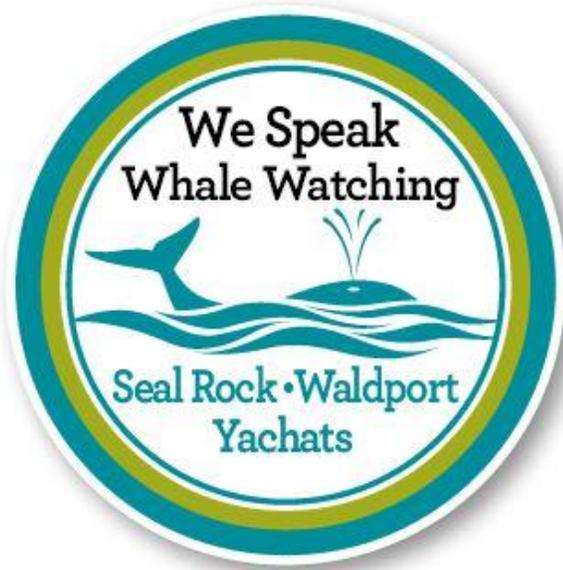
STORY: At the 2011 Governors Annual Conference on Tourism, representatives the first two Rural Tourism Studio communities, Wallowa County and Oakridge, presented on their projects and lessons learned. In the audience were two community leaders from South Lincoln County, who were intrigued by Oakridge's

description of its “We Speak” community ambassador program that engages local residents as friendly expert resources who “speak” the language of mountain biking, birding, snowshoeing and other topics to visitors.

The goal was to enable all the front line people that visitors might meet (at a restaurant, gas station, or other local business) to offer a friendly and knowledgeable “face of the community” by sharing information about the community’s visitor attractions. These ambassadors were trained by a cadre of local experts in various topics such as mountain biking, history, kayaking or birding, for example. Community residents interested in being ambassadors chose which topics to receive training on, depending on their own interests. And after the training, they were outfitted with identifying buttons, fact sheets, and display information for their place of business.

The Oakridge presenters also shared lessons learned about program logistics and sustainability that informed South Lincoln County.

- It is difficult to get businesses to send their front line staff to off-site training. A better design would be to take the training to the workplace.
- And it was not reasonable to expect a subject matter expert to indefinitely continue to volunteer to deliver training as new people become interested, especially if the program moved away from centralized, regularly scheduled workshops and toward a scattered site, on-demand format.
- Not everyone who is a subject matter expert is a good trainer. The quality of training varied greatly by volunteer, and quality control can be a delicate matter.
- Even with all volunteer trainers, there are hard costs and a need for constant coordination of effort, which requires ongoing fundraising.



Thus, in South Lincoln County, the approach was to identify relevant topic areas, recruit qualified presenters, and film professional videos on site for a more dynamic presentation. For example, 29 people gathered at the Cape Perpetua Visitor Center to scan the horizon for gray whales and learn from an Interpretive Ranger. Besides [Whale Watching](#), topics include:

- Hiking and Biking Trails
- Water Trails and Water Sports
- Fishing, Clamming, Crabbing and Shrimp Pumping
- Tide Pools and Marine Reserves
- Beachcombing for Agates and Fossils
- Heritage
- Native Plants
- Birding

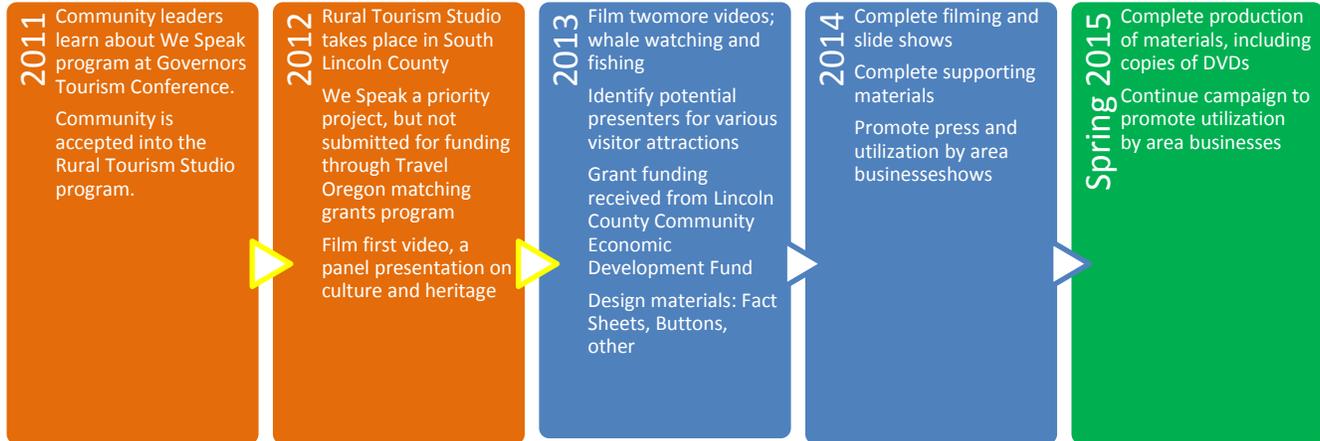
Due to budget limitations, only nine videos were made: the other three topics are presented in slide form. Topics include:

- Annual Events
- Rainy Day Fun

- Visual and Performing Arts

Multiple copies of the DVDs will be available for circulation.

TIMELINE



LESSONS LEARNED:

- This project has been a great vehicle for increasing collaboration among organizations that have an interest in tourism. Many different people and types of knowledge are needed, and it is fun for people to talk about what they love.
- The Chamber of Commerce has played the coordinating role well.
- Recording local expertise helps to sustain its sharing over time, making for a very cost-effective yet authentically local resource for promotion and visitor services, as well as for building a stronger sense of community and local pride.

BUDGET:

Cash Revenue:	Cash	In Kind
Lincoln County Community Economic Development Fund	\$3,500	
Speakers and presenters	\$	\$1,500
Project Coordination	\$	\$1,500
Refreshments for workshops		\$ 125
We Speak Oregon graphics and production support	\$	\$1,000*
Total	\$3,500	

Expenses

Speaker Fees, Recording and editing presentations	\$1,638
Layout and design of materials*	\$ 804
Printing and duplication (CDs, written materials, button, etc)	\$ 958
Refreshments for meetings	\$ 87
Total	\$3,487

* Travel Oregon continues to provide graphic design and production assistance for We Speak collateral material, including “We Speak” buttons, decals and “Frequently asked questions” fact sheet templates.

TOOLS/RESOURCES:

- [Style guide](#) from Travel Oregon, which includes button and decal templates
- Sample DVDs

CONTACTS:

Beverly Wilson, Yachats Visitors Center 541 547 3530: info@yachats.org

Maggie Rivers, Port of Alsea, 541- 563-3872: portofalsea@casco.net (She led the water trails training)

Guy DiTorrice aka “The Fossil Guy”, 720-326-3573: Oregonfossilguy@hotmail.com (he did fossil training)