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OREGON TOURISM LISTENING SESSION SUMMARY June 2018

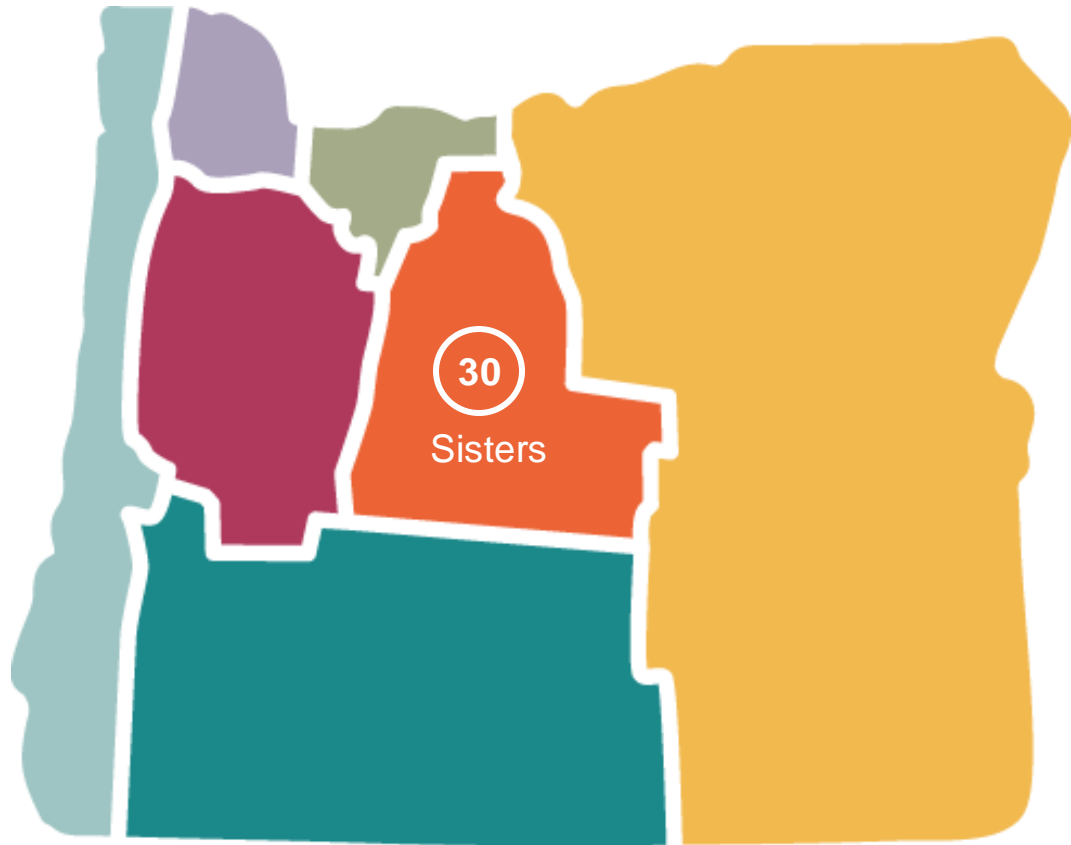
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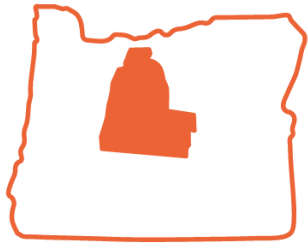


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CENTRAL OREGON TOURISM LISTENING SESSION OVERVIEW

- Travel Oregon, in partnership with the Central Oregon Visitors Association, hosted an Oregon Tourism Listening Session in the Central Oregon region on May 16, 2018 in Sisters, Oregon
- Anyone who touches the tourism industry, including business owners, land managers, volunteers, nonprofits, policymakers and more, was invited to attend
- 30 regional stakeholders attended
- Stakeholders input was gathered on a host of topics ranging from tourism challenges to asset opportunities
- Listening sessions' findings will help shape the future of tourism in Oregon through Travel Oregon's statewide strategic plan, as well as Central Oregon's regional tourism plan





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Organizations, Agencies, Etc. Represented

- Big Mountain Heli Tours
- Bureau of Land Management
- Central Oregon Community College
- Central Oregon Visitors Association
- City of Redmond
- Redmond Municipal Airport
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Discover Your Forest
- High Desert Museum
- Hop in the Spa
- Old Mill District
- Oregon Natural Desert Association
- Outriders Northwest
- Redmond Chamber of Commerce
- Redmond Municipal Airport
- Sister City Council
- Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce
- SmithRock.com
- The Bend Tour Company
- US Forest Service, Deschutes National Forest
- Visit Bend
- Wall Street Suites

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Engagement in Tourism Industry Structure

- Central Oregon tourism stakeholders are very engaged with their RDMO
- Engagement at the DMO and chamber level varies by area, but has grown over the past few years
- Travel Oregon is engaged with some stakeholders more than others, with some acknowledging Travel Oregon's support in marketing and communications. Others have yet to work with Travel Oregon, but are excited about the opportunity



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Tourism Challenges and Regional Plan Gaps

Destination Development & Management

- Demand on natural assets is outpacing the capacity required to maintain those assets
- A lack of awareness about conservation and its impact on natural resources
- Certain outdoor destinations (Smith Rock) are over saturated
- The need for regional planning to sustain outdoor recreational experiences
- Conflicting opinions on the value of tourism create an anti-visitor sentiment
- Need for development outside of outdoor recreation space (more arts & culture)
- More collaboration with tribal entities

Stakeholder Engagement & Collaboration

- Distance, capacity and time commitment can impact stakeholder ability to effectively collaborate with RDMOs and Travel Oregon
- Tribes and smaller communities have a difficult time connecting with the proper networks and organizations
- Small businesses and tourism agencies need support in marketing and creating strong visitor bases
- Capacity constraints limit stakeholders ability to participate in tourism growth initiatives

Marketing & Promotion

- Promotion of non-saturated attractions to help in dispersion of alternative experiences
- Marketing local arts and culture is believed to be a gap
- The promotion of shoulder season activities
- Need for marketing outside of outdoor recreation (more arts & culture)

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Tourism Challenges and Regional Plan Gaps (Cont'd)

Infrastructure & Transportation

- A limited awareness of the areas airport capacity and ability to bring in large flights
- Better wayfinding to help disperse visitors away from oversaturated areas
- Infrastructures inability to absorb any growth in visitation

Workforce & Training

- Lack of affordable housing for the hospitality workforce
- Businesses have a hard time finding quality employees and retaining them
- Capacity constraints limit the ability of certain businesses to participate in tourism growth initiatives

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Tourism Challenges and Regional Plan Gaps

“[We need] less word of mouth recommendations to disperse density.”

“Address the infrastructure issues that come with increased tourism and transportation planning.”

“Tribal engagement [is missing]. Cohesive plans needs to connect with the right people.”

“Increasing demand for recreation exceeds our ability to plan, build and manage new and existing opportunities.”

“Human capacity in rural communities is not in alignment with growth in regional tourism.”

“While Central Oregon is known for its outdoor beauty, we would like to invigorate its reputation for arts and culture.”

“Employee housing. Businesses are having a hard enough time finding employees.”





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Excitement for Tourism

Stakeholder Engagement & Collaboration

- Creating a bigger regional voice
- More partners and connections
- Community engagement

Increased Visitation

- Showing people the beauty of our region
- Meeting people around the world

Economic Impact

- Tourism provides a greater quality of life for citizens
- Sustainable economy
- Community growth

Outdoor Advocacy

- Conservation awareness
- Support of public lands

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Desired Tourism Assets to Promote or Develop

Sisters

- Outside of summer and Bend

Shoulder Season Assets

Smaller, Rural Communities

- La Pine
- Prineville
- Madras

Outdoor Recreation

Arts and Heritage

- Warms Springs
- Arts
- History



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Desired Strategic Tourism Priorities & Areas of Focus

Stakeholder Engagement & Collaboration

- Connect smaller communities to Travel Oregon
- Partner with public land agencies to address increased use
- Assist local communities in developing strategic plans

Destination Development & Management

- Develop long-term visioning plan for sustainable tourism
- More time to prepare for growth ahead of marketing campaigns
- Create wildfire and snow emergency response plans
- Develop the tribal experience
- Identify dispersion strategies
- Evaluate opportunities for new product development (arts and culture, tribal tourism)

Marketing & Promotion

- Expand beyond the outdoors and promote local arts and culture
- Help establish a regional brand and a story inclusive of smaller, more rural communities
- Regional co-op marketing campaigns, including assisting more rural locations
- Promote shoulder season activities
- Implement “kicker” concept of businesses passing on visitor to next business/experience

Infrastructure & Transportation

- Secure and expand commercial air service
- Address infrastructure needs in the face of increased demand
- Regional transportation options that connect Central Oregon communities

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Desired Strategic Tourism Priorities & Areas of Focus

“ Define a brand for Central Oregon.”

“[Consider] the ‘Love it to Death’ effect.”

“ Disperse tourists away from ‘hot spots’ that are overcrowded.”

“ Assist communities with planning and visioning initiatives for tourism recreation.”

“ Connect smaller businesses with available programs.”

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Desired Stakeholders to Engage

Rural DMOs
Commercial Developers
RARE Placements
Outlying Communities
Maupin
State Parks Arts DMOs
Small Businesses
Residents
Smaller Communities
Rural Communities
Raft/River Guides