

Chapter 1. Introduction

A. Project Goal and Region of Focus

This guide is designed to provide tips and information resources about ways that tourism businesses can become more environmentally friendly and tap into economic/business development resources. The overall goal of the project is to encourage coastal and interior tourism businesses in the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy region, specifically within Hancock and Washington counties, Maine, and Charlotte County, New Brunswick, to become more sustainable, help protect their region's abundant assets, and help distinguish the region as a top global destination for visitors looking for an environmentally friendly, culturally sensitive, and enjoyable experience.

Coastal and inland areas of the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy teem with life. The geographic center of the Gulf of Maine – which spans from Massachusetts to Nova Scotia – lies at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy, along the border region of Down East, Maine and Southwest, New Brunswick, the focus area of this report (see maps pgs 1-2). This is an area of unparalleled beauty and diversity.

People want to come to places where they can enjoy beautiful beaches, rocky coastlines, forests and lakes, unique birds, and land and marine mammals. At day's end, they want to retire to a comfortable bed and a good meal. To serve these visitors, tourism businesses have developed extensively throughout this watershed. Today there are numerous lodgings, restaurants, guides, shops, and other activities dedicated to the natural-resources and cultural tourist.



Beals Island, Maine (J. East)

Tourism has become the most important industry in Maine, with domestic visitors to Maine in 2004 directly and indirectly generating \$13.6 billion in sales, employing 176,000 people, and creating a \$3.8 billion payroll (Source: Maine Office of Tourism, *Tap into Touri\$m, 2006 Resource Guide*, Machias: Sustainable and Experiential Tourism Workshop, March 17, 2006). Tourism is also very important to New Brunswick. The Government of New Brunswick, Department of Tourism and Parks, estimated that in 2005, the province received 1.74 million visitors who spent \$1.2 billion, generating \$558 million in direct, indirect, and induced taxes. The New Brunswick tourism industry also employed 31,000 people full-time and in seasonal positions (*New Brunswick Tourism Development Guidelines*, Parks and Tourism NB report).

With tourism generating such large revenues, employment numbers, and visitation statistics, it is important that the tourism industry preserves and improves the natural and cultural resources that draw people to the Gulf of Maine and Fundy Bay region.

This Document is Available on the Web as a Searchable PDF!

Given the large number of internet-based resources highlighted in this *Resource Guide for Sustainable Tourism*, and that these resources are constantly being updated, you may find it easier to view the document as a searchable PDF on the Web. You can view the document online, download the entire document to your own computer, or download only the chapters that you need.

www.seagrant.umaine.edu/extension/coastcom/sustour.htm



Deer Island, New Brunswick (N. Springuel)

The Vacationland Resources Committee (VRC) of the Down East Resource Conservation and Development Council is a group of business, environmental and planning professionals, extension agents, volunteers, and tourism providers working together on sustainable tourism projects in eastern Maine. One of the lead collaborators on this document, the VRC wrote a sustainable tourism plan, *DESTINY 2010*, for Hancock and Washington counties, Maine, and sponsored workshops and conferences to encourage businesses to incorporate and highlight their sustainable practices. Throughout this work, tourism businesses and destinations identified a need for better access to resources for greening their operations and incorporating

best practices in various aspects of sustainable tourism. Responding to this need, the VRC joined forces with Maine Sea Grant, the Sunrise County Economic Council, DownEast & Acadia Regional Tourism, and the Washington County Council of Governments to write and submit a grant to the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment to prepare this resource guide.

As the Gulf of Maine watershed is enormous, spanning 69,115 square miles (179,008 square kilometers) with coastline and inland watersheds straddling three states (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine) and two provinces (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, though even waters from Québec flow into the Gulf of Maine), this report focuses on a smaller area, the border region between the United States and Canada. Specifically, this report focuses on Hancock and Washington counties in Maine, and Charlotte County, New Brunswick. By emphasizing the border region, the *Resource Guide for Sustainable Tourism* can enhance tourism networks across the international line and serve as a model for the whole Gulf of Maine region.

B. What is Sustainable Tourism?

Before tourism businesses can become “sustainable,” business owners must understand what this term means. The United Nation’s World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism by describing its fundamental concepts. Specifically, sustainable tourism should:

1) Make optimal use of environmental resources...maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity. 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance. 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation. (Source: www.unwto.org/sustainable/concepts.htm)

The World Tourism Organization’s conceptual definition also includes the ideas that all stakeholders must be informed and involved, there must be strong political leadership, tourists must be highly satisfied with their experiences, and negative tourism impacts must be continuously monitored, prevented, or addressed whenever unavoidable (www.unwto.org/sustainable/concepts.htm).

Parks Canada and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada have a more succinct definition of sustainable tourism:

Sustainable tourism actively fosters appreciation and stewardship of the natural, cultural and historic resources and special places by local residents, the tourism industry, governments and visitors. It is tourism which is viable over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place.

Canada's Code of Ethics & Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism – Parks Canada and Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

At the local level, the VRC adapted definitions of sustainable tourism to make them more meaningful to this specific region. In *DESTINY 2010, the Down East Sustainable Tourism Initiative Year 2010*, the VRC adopted the following vision statement for all its work, including this document:

With respect for our abundant natural resources and rich cultural heritage, the communities of Hancock and Washington counties seek appropriate, responsible, and sustainable development of cultural and nature-based tourism opportunities for regional economic prosperity. (Source: www.downeastrcd.com/DESTINY%202010%20Final.pdf)

As one can see, the definitions and visions may vary slightly, and the words selected may be complex, but the basic tenets of sustainable tourism are that the environment should be protected, economic benefits should be distributed widely, and the culture of a region should be preserved.

C. Is Sustainable Tourism an Economic Benefit or Burden?

It is said sometimes that becoming sustainable – selecting products and implementing practices that are environmentally beneficial and preserve local communities and culture – is an economic burden. This may appear to be the case because many of the environmental or social costs associated with running a tourism business are secondary and not reflected in present day market prices. For instance, if the secondary environmental costs of heating one's business with fuel oil (an irreplaceable fossil fuel that contributes to global warming) were included in the price of that fuel, then a tourism business might quickly look for a better environmental and economic alternative.

Because these secondary costs are not included in the market prices for many items, quite often it takes a conscious decision by a business owner to implement a sustainable action. However, the market for responsible travel in the world is growing and tourists are increasingly looking for businesses and destinations that distinguish themselves as leaders in the environmental and cultural fields.

Cadillac Mountain Sports: A Model Sustainable Retailer

Retail in the Gulf of Maine region can be economically and environmentally sustainable and have a positive impact on our local communities. Outdoor retailers Matt and Cheryl Curtis of Cadillac Mountain Sports in Bar Harbor and Ellsworth offer a good example. The Curtises have five core beliefs by which they operate their stores (summarized from www.cadillacmountain.com and interview with Matt Curtis): 1) offer quality outdoor products; 2) recognize the dual bottom line of economic profits and environmental/social responsibility; 3) develop mutually beneficial partnerships among employees, customers, and suppliers; 4) continually learn and improve all areas of the company; and 5) have their product purchasers also work the sales floor so there is a natural connection to the customer.

The Curtises have made many choices that have not only improved the environment, but also contributed to their economic gains, increased employee satisfaction, and developed customer loyalty. The Curtises have committed to opening their stores only in downtown areas and keeping them open year-round. This helps prevent sprawl, keep local people employed, and bring economic development to downtown areas even in the slower tourism months.

Within the stores themselves, the Curtises have implemented several actions that have saved money while benefiting the environment. Cadillac Mountain Sports offers a monthly drawing for a fleece jacket, open to any customer who refuses to take a bag. Cadillac Mountain Sports was also an early participant in the Efficiency Maine program, which helped the company install energy efficient lighting and thermostats, resulting in significant cost savings.

On the socially responsible side of the equation, the Curtises pay their employees for two hours of volunteer time each week at any organization of the employee's

choice. They have implemented an employee stock ownership plan, helping employees to become more financially stable and giving them a stake in the company's future. They grant 10% of their stores' profits to non-profit organizations. Mr. Curtis is also an active board member for the Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility, a membership-supported non-profit organization established to educate and encourage profitable and sustainable businesses in Maine.

Within the past few years, the Curtises have grown to expand into additional downtown storefronts with the merchandise in the smaller stores being from one brand (such as Patagonia or North Face). The benefits of this are occupying more year-round retail space in downtown areas, offering a wider variety of merchandise to shoppers, and expanding business without changing historic architecture in downtown areas. All in all, the Curtises have found that operating their businesses sustainably not only increases profits, but helps them develop a positive reputation for being an environmental and community partner. The Gulf of Maine benefits greatly.

The International Ecotourism Society (www.ecotourism.org) reports on their "Ecotourism Fact Sheet" that since 1990, ecotourism (defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people") has been growing at a rate of 20-34% per year. The Society also estimated that 38% of U.S. travelers (58.5 million people) would be willing to pay more for travel experiences that conserve the environment. A majority (61%) said they would pay 5-10% more. Similarly, the Society reports that 70% of British, Australian, and U.S. travelers surveyed would pay up to \$150 more to stay in a responsible hotel for two weeks, more than \$10 per day. Of British travelers, 87% said their vacation should be harmless to the environment, and 39% of those respondents said they would pay an extra 5% for those guarantees. Half of British travelers surveyed said that they would select companies that have written codes of ethics for environmental protection and local charity support.

Such support for environmentally friendly tourism experiences will help drive customers to businesses that highlight their sustainable practices. In order to assist businesses with becoming sustainable, national, state and provincial governments have implemented incentive programs, some highlighted in this report, that can make choosing environmentally friendly products or upgrading to better environmental practices easier. Although some environmentally friendly products on the market today require greater capital or initial investment than less sustainable alternatives, they pay off over the long run with energy savings. Where available, the authors of this document have included calculators and self-assessment tools to help businesses determine what the best environmental choices for their business might be.

D. How to Use this *Resource Guide*

This sustainable tourism resource guide is divided into **six sections** designed to characterize the region and provide information to help tourism businesses become environmentally friendly and economically strong.

- Chapter Two is an introduction to the tourism economy of Down East Maine and Charlotte County, New Brunswick – the focus area of the report.
- Chapter Three, the bulk of the guide, is dedicated to environmental sustainability – conservation tips and resources that will help businesses improve their operations.
- Chapter Four describes Green Purchasing opportunities and offers information on products and suppliers.
- Chapter Five provides information on hotel, restaurant, outfitter and other certification and membership programs.
- Chapter Six is dedicated to business development – the programs, resources, and tools that will help businesses grow and use their improved environmental friendliness to their advantage.

We are fortunate in this region to have many business owners who recognize the value of protecting our natural environment in the Gulf of Maine and have successfully incorporated this into their business plans.

Case studies of businesses in Hancock, Washington, and Charlotte counties that are already successfully implementing at least some of the recommendations of the report are peppered throughout the document. We highlight their successes and encourage networking among readers who wish to learn from their experiences.

This document is a work in progress.

Contributors researched best management practices and helpful websites and programs for businesses to consult in each topic area. We regret if there are programs, websites, or case studies that were missed. Also, the authors strived to cite websites, quotations, and statistics accurately and thoroughly, and we apologize if any citations were inadvertently omitted, misquoted or misrepresented. Programs, resources, and statistics change so frequently, we encourage the reader to explore the web for information beyond what is listed in this document.



Acadia National Park, Maine (Friends of Acadia)

This document is available on the Web as a searchable PDF! Given the large number of internet-based resources highlighted in this *Resource Guide for Sustainable Tourism*, and that these resources are constantly being updated, you may find it easier to view the document as a searchable PDF on the Web at: www.seagrant.umaine.edu/extension/coastcom/sustour.htm. Once there, you can view the document online, download the entire document to your own computer, or download only the chapters that you need.

Finally, we want to thank the readers for seeking out information to make their tourism businesses more sustainable. Our lakes and rivers, bays and ocean are all valuable resources to protect, and the tourism industry is an important partner. We hope this guide is useful, and thank you for everything you do to foster enjoyment of the region while preserving all that it offers for future generations.