

# Spreading Prosperity to All of Maine: Protected Lands and Sustainable Tourism

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# Tourism as a Lead Sector in Rural Revitalization

## Four Lead Sector Qualities

- **Critical Mass: Major Source of Income and Jobs**
  - Rim Counties: 9% of GSP & 11% of jobs
  - Caveat: deficient job quality
- **Major Source of Export Revenues**
  - Tourism as a unique export
- **Major Impact on Community Vitality**
  - Don't ignore potential downside
- **Growth Potential**
  - Supply capacity in sync with traveler preferences and demands
- Note: Other promising rural lead sectors – health care, renewable energy, farm-to-table agriculture

# Imperative: Quality-Centered Tourism Strategy

- **Prime Target Market: Experiential Tourists**

*“...travelers who seek out destinations offering ‘the whole package’ of outdoor recreation experiences combined with high quality hospitality services, shopping opportunities and cultural and heritage activities. In other words, quality experiences in quality places.” (Vail 2010: 3)*

- Diverse demographics: Boomers, DINKs, WHOPs etc.
- Downeast/Acadia overnight leisure profile: av. \$118k, 83% ≥ BA, 26% NY

- **Developing Quality Products**

- e.g. *Maine Woods Consortium*: Tourism Training Initiative, MW Discovery, MW Quality Label
- Caveat: “quality” ≠ Five Star

- **Developing Quality Destinations**

- What role for conservation and green infrastructure?

- **Branding & Marketing Quality** (of course)



## Reality #1

# Secular Stagnation or Decline in Several “Traditional” Outdoor Recreation Activities & Destinations

- Camping
- Hunting & Fishing
- Alpine Skiing
- Snowmobiling
- Acadia, Allagash & Baxter  
Visits



(minor qualification: recession, slow recovery & “staycations”)

## Reality #2

# Evidence of a Maine Woods Quality Problem

### Percentage of Overnight Visitors Who Will “Definitely” or “Probably” Recommend Maine Destinations to Others

Four coastal regions	52% to 70%
Lakes and Mountains	42
Highlands	42
Kennebec/Moose River	38
Aroostook	28

Source: Davidson Peterson Associates. Maine Overnight Visitor Tracking Survey – 2008: 107.

## Reality #3

# Evidence of a General Maine Tourism Quality Problem

### Proportion of Respondents Who View Maine Favorably Compared to Alternative New England Destinations

	<u>2008 Maine Visitors</u>	<u>Past Maine Visitors</u>	<u>Prospective Visitors</u>
Customer service quality	68%	41%	23%
Value for the money	62	32	22
Variety of activities	64	41	22
Overall experience quality	80	45	23

Source: Davidson Peterson Associates.2009. Visitor Prospect Survey: 125.

## Reality #4

# How Maine Woods Visitors Spend (Overnight “Leisure Visitor” Parties – 2010)

Lodging	\$170	27% of total
Food	150	23%
Retail expenditure	170	27%
Transportation	100	16%
Recreation activities	<u>51</u>	8%
Total	\$641	

Source: Davidson Peterson Associates, *Maine Office of Tourism – Maine Woods Presentation*. 2012:20.

# Washington County Tourism Strategy: What Role for Conservation and Green Infrastructure?

## Perceived Economic Growth Potential

1. Experiential tourism
2. Wildlife watching
3. Canoeing & kayaking
4. Arts, culture & heritage
- 5 tie. Family vacations (seasonal homes, rentals)
- 5 tie. Conferences & group retreats
7. Boating & sailing
8. Fishing (hunting, trapping)
- 9 tie. ATVing
- 9 tie. Hiking & backpacking
11. XC skiing & snowshoeing
12. Snowmobiling



# Coastal Washington County: Perceived Destination Weaknesses

<u>Overall Ranking (av. score)</u>	<u>% indicating “Major Weakness”</u>
1. Distance, travel time, roads	56%
2. Weak branding and promotion of the region	44
3. Lack of destination resort/conference center	38
4. Condition of town & village centers	33
5 tie. Quality & variety of dining and lodging	20
5 tie. Shopping opportunities	14
<u>7 tie. Quality of customer service</u>	20
7 tie. Green infrastructure (e.g. trails, signage)	14
9. Limited arts, culture & heritage attractions	7
10. Limited access to recreational lands & waters	7
11. Quality & variety of outdoor recreation services	0

Source: Vail. 2010: 62

# Coastal Washington County Destination Investment Priorities

<u>Priority Ranking</u>	% Who Rate Current Investments	
	<u>Excellent/Good</u>	<u>Poor</u>
1. Transport infrastructure within region	7%	50%
2. Develop arts, culture, heritage attractions	38	15
3. Enhance town & village buildings	8	23
4. <u>Enhance town &amp; village roads &amp; parking</u>	15	42
5. <b>Protect lands and waters</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>0</b>
6. Improve customer service - training	25	17
7. <b>Green infrastructure: park facilities</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>9</b>
8. <b>Green infrastructure: trails, signage, etc.</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>
9. <b>Enhance town &amp; village green spaces</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>25</b>

Source: Vail. 2010: 64

An aerial photograph of a river meandering through a dense, green forest. The river is a dark blue-green color, contrasting with the vibrant green of the surrounding trees. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down at the river as it flows through the landscape.

## Conclusion:

# Where Conservation Fits in “Way Downeast” Destination Strategy

- Keep up the good work! (target funds strategically)
- Foster the money-making side of outdoor recreation
  - Guides, outfitters, etc.
- Blend “soft” outdoor adventure opportunities into “the whole experiential package”
- Continue a branding/marketing focus on unique natural assets and nature-based experiences