

**2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan
Resources and Environment (RE) Committee Meeting
Traverse City, 10am – 4pm, August 14 2013**

Agenda

1. Welcome – Sarah Nicholls, Betty Workman and Maia Stephens
2. Introductions – All
3. Review of Plan Process, Update from Other Implementation Committees and RE Goal/Objectives – Sarah Nicholls
4. Review of RE Suggested Strategies and Identification of Additional Strategies – All
 - a. Identification of Existing Inventories
 - b. Identification of Issues/Threats
5. Preliminary Identification of Funding and Research Needs – All
 - a. Forthcoming Request for Research Needs from RTA Committee
 - b. Forthcoming Request for Budgets from Funding Committee
6. Discussion of Metrics for the RE Objectives – All
7. Consideration of Prioritization of the RE Objectives – All
8. Consideration of Formation of RE Subcommittees – All
9. Next Steps and Next Meeting – Sarah Nicholls

**2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan
Resources and Environment (RE) Committee Meeting
Traverse City, 10am – 3pm, August 14 2013**

Meeting Notes

In attendance: Betty Workman (Co-Chair), Maia Stephens Turek (Co-Chair), Bill Anderson, Marci Cisneros, Dennis Eade, Sarah Nicholls, Louise Smith.

Absent: Paul Beachnau, Harry Burkholder, Frank Ettawageshik, Christine Rector.

Welcome – Provided by Sarah Nicholls, Betty Workman and Maia Stephens Turek.

Introductions – Made by all. Maia described the increasing recognition of the role of the state parks as tourism destinations and economic drivers, as well as their ties to fitness/physical health. Marci mentioned the relatively limited emergence of ecotourism in the state, and her desire for more accommodations and attractions to become more aware and respectful of the environment and the concept of sustainability. Bill reminded the group of the former Dept. of HAL’s mission of “Keeping the story alive.” This could apply to all aspects of resources within the tourism industry.

Review of Plan Process and RE Goal/Objectives – Provided by Sarah Nicholls. Noted that the term ‘resources’ is meant to be broad and inclusive, to include not just Michigan’s natural resources but also its many cultural, heritage, historic, agricultural, architectural, etc. resources. The ultimate ambition of the goal is to encourage access and use of these resources via more/better promotion while at the same time maintaining the quality and integrity of the resources.

- *Objective One: Support and expand efforts to inventory resources critical to Michigan tourism and communicate results to relevant entities.* Many inventories of various types of resources are underway around the state, at various scales and by various entities. The intent of this objective is to identify and attempt to unite those inventories in some consistent and central manner.
- *Objective Two: Identify key issues facing and threats to the integrity of Michigan’s tourism resources and raise awareness of and support for these issues.* This is a two-step process: (i) identify the issues/threats and (ii) raise awareness/support. This objective will be best addressed in concert with the Public Policy and Government Support (PPGS) committee.
- *Objective Three: Raise the profile of Michigan’s tourism industry as a national leader in resource quality and stewardship.* Michigan is already a leader in many areas, yet in many cases these achievements are unknown/not well promoted. E.g., Lake St. Clair

was recently ranked the #1 bass lake in the nation by *Bassmaster Magazine*, Michigan has the strictest ballast discharge laws in the Great Lakes. Question is how/where/to whom to disseminate these achievements in a consistent and effective manner. Stewardship in this case is intended to apply to all kinds of resources, not just natural. Could also use the word preservation.

Discussion of the meaning of the 'Pure' in Pure Michigan and how that relates to resources/ the environment. Authentic, untouched. Critical to this goal and especially to objective three in terms of delivering on the brand promise.

Consideration of Prioritization of the RE Objectives – Majority of group agreed that committee should begin by focusing on objective two. A preliminary focus on this objective will allow the group to keep abreast of emerging issues and to react in a timely manner to them, e.g., potential threat to DIA, Asian carp. Objectives one and three will be ongoing. Prioritization as a place to start and to identify/complete some early actions.

Review of RE Suggested Strategies and Identification of Additional Strategies – A subset of suggested strategies as published in the plan document were reviewed. A multitude of other ideas were put forward during the summer meetings; those could still be reviewed and discussed at a future meeting.

- *Objective One: Support and expand efforts to inventory resources critical to Michigan tourism and communicate results to relevant entities.*
 - Since there are so many different types of resources that are relevant to tourism, need to identify a subset to be included in the inventory. Which are the most critical? Could do this by resource type and/or by location.
 - Identify existing inventories – could do this by resource type, by location and/or by agency.
 - Encourage posting of results on michigan.org and on CVB websites, as a way of raising awareness among both the industry and consumers.

- *Objective Two: Identify key issues facing and threats to the integrity of Michigan's tourism resources and raise awareness of and support for these issues.*
 - Identify critical issues/threats. Some committee members had identified some issues/threats prior to the meeting. These and other suggestions were discussed (see separate document). Proposed that a full listing of current issues/threats be identified and shared with the industry in the form of a survey that asks individuals to identify or rank their top 5-10 concerns based on the given list. This will give the RE committee a starting place for further action.
 - Develop position statements with regards to issues and share with the industry; work with the PPGS committee to achieve this.
 - Partner with entities/advocacy groups with similar concerns.

- Include presentations on these topics at Governor’s Conference and on industry legislative days.
- *Objective Three: Raise the profile of Michigan’s tourism industry as a national leader in resource quality and stewardship.*
 - Develop a “Keep Michigan Pure” campaign. Discussion of by whom and where such a campaign might be developed and housed. MDNR could participate in or lead the effort, but would be more effective with grassroots involvement and if implemented/adopted at the local/community-level.
 - Raise awareness of existing stewardship standards, highlight examples of stewardship excellence. Actively support other agencies’ and organizations’ programs and campaigns focusing on stewardship practices that protect MI’s resources.
 - Develop and distribute a list of MI resource records and (inter)national certifications, designations and awards to all CVBs and industry associations. Examples such as LEED certifications (e.g., City Flats hotel in Holland was the Midwest’s first gold certified hotel), the Green Lodging Michigan (http://michigan.gov/mdcd/0,1607,7-122-25676_25677_37026---,00.html) and the Michigan Clean Marina (<http://www.miseagrant.umich.edu/michigan-clean-marina-program/>) programs were discussed. Could establish benchmarks and/or an awards/recognition program to encourage participation e.g., like the JD Power & Associates awards. The Green Lodging program is not well promoted. Opportunities to encourage greater participation, as well as to encourage the greening of festivals and events.

The video “Anthem A Song Of The Land” was reviewed and discussed in the context of developing a similar piece highlighting the role of a stewardship/preservation ethic with respect to Michigan tourism and the Pure Michigan brand. An opportunity to showcase the beauty of the state and the industry’s and public’s roles as custodians of Michigan’s environment and resources.

Discussion of potential funding mechanism related to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, which is supported by annual revenues from the development of state-owned mineral resources, mostly oil and gas. The following is copied from the MDNR’s site:

“ ... until the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) principal reaches \$500 million, the lesser of \$10 million or 50 percent of mineral revenues is required to be deposited annually into the State Parks Endowment Fund.

When the principal of the NRTF reaches \$500 million, all mineral revenues are required to be deposited into the State Parks Endowment Fund until it reaches an accumulated principal of \$800 million. The accumulated principal limit must be annually adjusted pursuant to the rate of inflation beginning when the Endowment Fund reaches \$800 million.

Until the Endowment Fund reaches an accumulated principal of \$800 million, not more than \$5 million can be appropriated by the Legislature. This \$5 million is required to be adjusted annually to the rate of inflation. Once the accumulated principal reaches \$800 million, only the interest and earnings in excess of the \$800 million (adjusted for inflation) can be made available for expenditure.

The State Parks Endowment Fund can be used for operations, maintenance, and capital improvements (infrastructure) at Michigan state parks. Currently, the Michigan state park system has a backlog of capital improvements that need to be implemented but funding falls short of meeting the needs. Annual funding of approximately \$22 million in combined revenue, including interest, is enough to cover continued operation and maintenance of the parks, but only a small portion of the needed projects may be addressed. Projects currently pending, such as restroom building replacement, road improvements and parking lot repair, total approximately \$340 million.

As of 9/30/2012 the total amount in the Michigan State Parks Endowment Fund was approximately \$171,000,000.”

From: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366_10871-44013--,00.html

When the \$800 million cap is reached, current intention is for monies to revert to the general fund. Industry could lobby to divert some/all of those funds to the promotion of tourism, development/improvement of tourism infrastructure (e.g., roads) and protection of resources/the environment. This would be a good topic to take to Funding and PPGS committees for further discussion.

Preliminary Identification of Funding and Research Needs – Not discussed in detail. With respect to research, there is a difference between small projects or activities that involve data/information collation and/or minor data collection (which Sarah and Louise can handle) and large projects that will involve substantial primary data collection and that should be forwarded to the Research and Technical Assistance (RTA) group. Funding and research = important agenda items for next meeting, especially if the group has any short-term data/research/funding needs. The RTA and Funding committees are in the process of preparing a call for preliminary research/funding needs (coming this fall). Noted that there is no other state funding for plan initiatives; monies allocated to TM are for PM only.

Identification of Metrics for the RE Objectives – Not discussed at this meeting.

Consideration of Formation of RE Subcommittees – Group agreed that formation of subcommittees is premature at this point. Will reconsider this option at a later date as/when appropriate and when more committee members present.

Next Meeting – Preference to meet at least every two or three months. Sarah will work hard to bring entire committee together in person for next meeting. Potential locations: Traverse City, Gaylord, Grand Haven.

Action Items and Their Status –

- Sarah will contact Treenen Sturman with GTCD to ask him to prepare a post about EXP 213 for the forthcoming CCP LinkedIn page.
- Sarah and Louise will develop fuller list of resource issues/threats and forward to committee for review.
- Sarah and Louise will then develop that list into a survey of the industry, to establish the top 5-10 issues/threats. Survey will include questions regarding respondent's sector and location so that responses can be presented for the industry/state as a whole as well as by sector/location.