



Tourism Futures: A Sustainable Growth Plan for Wyoming

Why We Need a Tourism Master Plan

Successful tourism doesn't just happen. And it's not the result of simply running good ads. It's the result of detailed planning that incorporates branding, product development, and marketing. Tourism master planning needs to focus on the necessary **marketing foundation** to sustain and grow visitation, on **product development** and must include all partners – private and public – to build a **blueprint for the future**. And, it needs to be done on a regional as well as state-wide level.

The purpose of a master plan is to present a **comprehensive view** of Wyoming's collective tourism products and projects, including state, federal, local, private and/or non-profit initiatives. It also provides a **regional and state-wide perspective** of existing and planned projects. It creates awareness among destinations, allowing them to **build on synergies while capitalizing on what sets each apart**. And, most importantly, the resources required to market the collective tourism assets in Wyoming. Successful tourism development does not solely rely on the "build it and they will come" philosophy but rather on an intertwined approach that includes strategic marketing and thoughtful product development.

In short, a master plan will help to:

- Identify the toughest challenges and growth opportunities shared by tourism stakeholders.
- Offer targeted, flexible strategies for tourism growth based on economic research and data that builds on Wyoming's natural strengths and tourism as a target industry with strong future growth potential.
- Identify tourism advancement initiatives with objectives shared by the majority of tourism stakeholders.
- Mobilize tourism stakeholders to take action that will enhance the growth and sustainability of the industry.

The current national and international economies make strategic planning based on economic research and data more vital now than ever.

Our Desired Outcomes

A tourism growth map which offers alternative action based on changes in the marketplace that effect people's ability or willingness to travel but remain out of our control, i.e. terrorist activities, rising gas prices or declining workforce.

A legislatively funded mechanism for enhanced destination development at the local/regional level that encourages tourism-based development and expansion, i.e. Business Ready Communities.

Targeted industry advocacy for the growth and sustainability of our product.

A prioritized plan for investing in our state-owned assets.

An objective guideline for future project development outside the purview of state agencies.

Proposed Partners in the Process

Wyoming Travel & Tourism (WTT)
Industry Services Program – Certified Tourism Communities
State Parks & Cultural Resources (SPCR)
Game & Fish (GF)
Department of Transportation (DOT)
UW WyGIS
Wyoming Lodging & Restaurant Association (WLRA)
Wyoming Travel Industry Coalition (WTIC)
Wyoming Business Council (WBC)
Agribusiness Division
Main Street Program
Investment Ready Communities Program
Wyoming communities, cities and towns
Local Lodging Tax/Promotions Boards
Chambers of Commerce
Federal Partners
National Park Service
US Forest Service
Bureau of Land Management
US Bureau of Reclamation

Work To-Date

April, 2007: WTT introduced Project Front Door, the initial task of information gathering, at the annual Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism. Data was gathered from the tourism industry on existing, proposed and dream projects and provide an initial spatial example of the development landscape. WTT also strongly encouraged local destinations to conduct market research for planning purposes, product development efforts, and to effectively market their destinations.

Late 2007: WTT began an extensive project with the University of Wyoming GIS (WyGIS) Center to build a master database of all tourism attractions - private and public, federal and state – and to provide a spatial relationship tool. The information gathered and held in the database serves as an internal asset management tool as we asses the geographic relationships among regional attractions, attraction clusters, services, access routes and gateways. Secondly, an enhanced interactive mapping feature has been added to the wyomingtourism.org website.

Early spring/summer of 2008: WTT explored the idea of conducting a Tourism Think Tank, which would engage Wyoming's tourism stakeholders and some of the "big brains" in the national tourism economy (Michigan State University, Texas A&M, US Travel Association) to assess the current potential of our industry and to help define the vision for growth.

July 2008: Boards of both the Wyoming Lodging & Restaurant Association and the Wyoming Travel Industry Coalition signed on as endorsing partners of a Think Tank and ultimate Master Plan process.

Fall 2008: Due to a declining national economy, all efforts for the Master Plan were put on hold, allowing any unobligated funds to be re-focused to the core mission of direct to consumer marketing.

January 2009: Joint Appropriations Committee recommends \$955,000 in one-time emergency marketing funds for 2009. WTT staff recommends, and Wyoming Tourism Board agrees, to pursue the Master Plan, as the results may prove to be more essential now than ever before.

February 2009: State Parks & Cultural Resources and Game & Fish both enthusiastically agree with the Master Plan project and sign off as agency partners.

Next Steps

February 2009: Meet with both House and Senate Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Committees to share information and planning process.

February-March 2009: Define the scope of work for the RFP with the purpose being to contract with a qualified vendor to conduct the Master Plan process and to provide defined deliverables to assist in achieving the desired outcomes.

Mid-April 2009: RFP issued in the early spring, with contract negotiations complete by April 15th.

May- August 2009: Successful contractor implements scope of work.

September 1, 2009: Contractor presents preliminary findings and results.

October 2009: Report to Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife & Cultural Resources Committee the findings and results of the Tourism Master Plan.

October 2009 and forward:

- Stakeholders review, prioritize and implement.
- Legislative action developed.
- Communities utilize/review for individual development plans.
- Explore ties with Main Street and Certified Tourism Community Program and Wyoming Business Council Investment Ready Communities Division.

This is about a commitment to the future of tourism in Wyoming. It is about looking to the future with a firm understanding of the present and where we want to be in the short and long term.