

Chouteau County CTAP: Visitor Profile and Resident Attitudes

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Executive Summary

This report addresses two aspects of the Community Tourism Assessment Process for Fort Benton and Chouteau County Montana. The first section provides a profile of visitors to Montana traveling through Chouteau County as part of their trip during the summer of 1996. The second section addresses Chouteau County and Fort Benton resident opinions about the tourism industry in their community and state. The resident opinions were assessed through a survey questionnaire mailed out to 500 local households during February and March of 1998.

Visitors

- In 1996 over 3.5 million nonresident groups traveled through Montana. Of those, 65,000 or about 2% of the groups passed through Chouteau County.
- Almost \$1.5 billion was spent statewide in 1996 by nonresident travelers. Chouteau County received about \$1 from every group passing through, for a total expenditure in the county of about \$70,000.
- The travelers through Chouteau County spent less per day in Montana on their trip, but stayed a little longer than other travelers to Montana. Overall, they spent a little less per trip in Montana than other travelers.
- Travelers through Chouteau County were more likely to spend money in the area on gas and groceries, but not as likely to spend money on lodging or retail as in other areas of the state.
- Groups were most likely to be traveling as a couple, to have visited Montana before, and to stay in motels or hotels while in Montana.
- Chouteau County's guests were most likely to be from Alberta, followed by Washington, California and Oregon. In general, Canada was the largest home region for the travelers, followed by the Northwest.

Resident Views on Tourism

- Both the Chouteau County and Fort Benton respondents felt that overall, the benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts; though the Fort Benton residents were decidedly more in agreement with that statement.
- On the combined tourism support index, both samples generated positive scores, indicating more support than opposition, but the Fort Benton sample was much more supportive of tourism than the county sample.
- Both samples also felt that tourism's influence on their quality of life was slightly positive - more so for the Fort Benton sample.
- Tourism's effect on roads and infrastructure were the biggest concerns for both groups, while economic and cultural/historic preservation were viewed as the most positive influences of tourism.
- Residents felt the greatest strength of the area is the History of the community and the river itself. The biggest roadblock to tourism development in the area was thought to be a lack of adequate infrastructure - both travel related and more basic.

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Introduction

This report is intended to provide an overview of nonresident travel in Chouteau County along with Chouteau County resident views on the tourism industry in their state and communities. The report represents results gathered as part of the Montana Community Tourism Assessment Process (CTAP) conducted in Chouteau County during the Winter and Spring of 1998. CTAP is facilitated by Travel Montana and the Montana State University Extension Service.

At the conclusion of the assessment process, members of the Chouteau County CTAP committee will decide whether further tourism development would benefit the local area. If sufficient resources and support exist, suitable projects are identified and pursued. The decisions about how to proceed are based on consideration of a variety of information, including present visitor characteristics, existing travel-related infrastructure and attractions, the area's need for economic development, and residents' opinions about tourism. The CTAP committee is encouraged to continue the process beyond the initial study period relying on the groundwork that was established through this effort.

The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana (ITRR) supports CTAP by providing technical assistance to the community through this visitor and resident profile report. Funding for this research came from the Lodging Facility Use Tax.

This report is divided into two sections representing the two different profiles. First, the current visitor profile for Chouteau County is presented based on research conducted by ITRR during the summer of 1996. At that time, a four-month survey was conducted of nonresident summer travelers in Montana. A profile of Chouteau County visitors was developed from a subset of surveys that represented nonresidents traveling through the county as part of their Montana trip. Second, the assessment of resident opinions was developed based on mail-back questionnaires obtained from sampled households during February and March of 1998. The resident results were divided and reported as two distinct groups: the first group including those respondents whose mailing address included the 59442 zip code (assumed to live in the town of Fort Benton), and the second group representing respondents with all other zip codes in Chouteau County. A third sample is provided in the tables for comparison purposes representing statewide resident opinions collected in a similar study during the fall of 1996.

Section I: The Travelers

Data used to compile this section of the report came from the ITRR 1996 Nonresident Summer Travel Study. The profiles represent travelers passing through Chouteau County as part of their Montana trip. In general, the profiles do not present information specifically about the Chouteau County part of the trip, but rather the entire Montana trip of those travelers through Chouteau County and Fort Benton.

The Nonresident Travel Study Methodology

A sample of travelers to Montana during the summer of 1996 (June 1st through September 30th) were intercepted for the Nonresident Travel Study. The traveler population was defined as those persons who entered Montana by private vehicle or commercial air carrier during the study period and whose primary residence was not in Montana at that time. Specifically excluded from the study were those persons traveling in a plainly marked commercial vehicle such as a scheduled or charter bus or semi truck. Also excluded were those travelers entering Montana by train. Other than the exclusions mentioned above, the

study attempted to assess all types of travel to the state including travel for pleasure, business, passing through, or any other reason.

Data were obtained through a mail-back diary questionnaire that was administered to a sample of intercepted travelers who entered the state. During the four months, 12,941 groups were contacted. Usable questionnaires were returned by 5,800 groups for a response rate of 45%. For a complete discussion of the methodology and results of the 1996 Nonresident Summer Travelers to Montana Study, please refer to ITRR Reports 51¹ and 52². To apply this data to Chouteau County, visitors were identified by travel routes indicated on the questionnaire map. A sample of 85 surveys were identified as representing travel groups that traveled through Chouteau County. That sample represents a little more than 1 percent of all surveys collected. Because the study represented nonresident travel, none of the data include Montana residents visiting Chouteau County. Table 1 shows the sizes of the nonresident travel samples.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics, Nonresident Travel Study, Chouteau County CTAP, 1998.

| 1996 Nonresident Travel Survey, ITRR | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|--|-----------|--------------------|---------------|
| Nonresident groups contacted: | 12,941 | | |
| Usable nonresident travel questionnaires returned: | 5,800 | | |
| Nonresident Travel Study response rate: | 45% | | |
| Sample of travel groups through Chouteau County: | | Combined: | <i>n</i> = 85 |

Findings: A Profile of Current Visitors

According to the ITRR visitor estimation model, there were 3,550,000 visitor groups (averaging 2.6 people per group) to Montana during 1996.³ During the entire year (1996), it is estimated that 65,000 or those groups passed through Chouteau County. While it cannot be estimated from the data, it is likely that the majority of the groups passing through the area did not stop. The profile represents all nonresidents traveling through - even if they did not stop in the county.

Group Characteristics

¹ Parrish, J., Nickerson, N., and McMahan, K. (1997). Nonresident Summer Travel to Montana: Profiles and Characteristics. Research Report 51, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, School of Forestry, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 113 pp.

² Parrish, J., Nickerson, N., and McMahan, K. (1997). Nonresident Summer Travel to Montana: All Visitors, Cultural Visitors, Canadian Visitors, Highway and Air Traveler Characteristics. Research Report 52, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, School of Forestry, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 106 pp.

³ The total number of travelers is estimated each year, while the profile of visitors is only re-evaluated every few years. Therefore, this report represents traveler characteristics that were estimated from data collected in the summer of 1996, while the estimated number of travelers and their total economic impacts have been adjusted to represent the entire year of 1996.

Table 2 shows travel group characteristics. There were some differences between travelers through Chouteau County and all travelers to Montana (see footnote 1 for statewide results). The sample respondents were more likely to stay with friends and relatives and to camp, while they were less likely to stay in a motel, hotel or resort than all travelers to Montana. Respondents tended to stay longer in Montana on their trip, and they were more likely to have visited Montana previously than were all respondents statewide. The Chouteau County Sample were much more likely to be traveling as a couple and less likely to be traveling as a family or alone than other travelers to Montana.

Table 2: Characteristics of Nonresident Travelers to Montana - Summer, 1996, Chouteau County Sample

| 1996 Nonresident Travel Survey, ITRR | Chouteau County Travelers |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Group Type | |
| Couple | 60% |
| Family | 18% |
| Alone | 13% |
| Friends | 3% |
| Family and Friends | 3% |
| Business Associates | 1% |
| Group or Club | 1% |
| Group Size | 2.5 |
| Males | 1.3 |
| Females | 1.3 |
| Have Visited Montana Before | 85% |
| Total Days Spent in Montana | 5.5 days |
| % of Respondents that Stayed in Hotel, Motel* | 55% |
| % Stayed at Private Campground* | 33% |
| % Stayed in Home of Friend, Relative* | 30% |
| % Stayed at Public Campground* | 23% |
| % Stayed at Undeveloped Camp* | 6% |
| % Using Other* | 4% |
| % Stayed at Condominium* | 3% |
| % Stayed at Resort, Guest Ranch* | 1% |

Source: 1996 Summer Nonresident Travel Study, ITRR

* Percents total more than 100% because visitors could stay at more than one type of accommodation.

Visitors to Chouteau County were very likely to be from one of the Canadian Provinces - 25% of all the travelers, or the Northwest region - 23%. The most likely home locations for the visitors were Alberta, Washington, California and Oregon, respectively. Compared to statewide statistics, Chouteau County is much more reliant on the Canadian travel market.

Table 3: Residence of Visitors to Montana and Chouteau County during the Summer of 1996.

| State or Province | | Region | |
|-------------------|-----|-----------|-----|
| Alberta | 15% | Canada | 25% |
| Washington | 12% | Northwest | 23% |
| California | 8% | Southwest | 18% |
| Oregon | 7% | West | 16% |
| Saskatchewan | 6% | Midwest | 9% |
| Arizona | 4% | Northeast | 6% |
| Texas | 4% | Southeast | 3% |
| Manitoba | 4% | | |

Source: 1996 Summer Nonresident Travel Study, ITRR

Information Sources

During the sampling process, nonresident travel parties indicated which information sources were used to gather the information for their trip prior to arriving in Montana as well as while they were in Montana. Also, respondents indicated which of those sources were most useful to them. A list of 11 information sources was used in the questionnaire.

The Chouteau County sample of travelers relied heavily on AAA as an information source prior to their trip to Montana. The Montana Travel Planner was used more by this group of travelers prior to their trip than by other travelers to Montana. While here this group of travelers was much more likely than the average to rely on highway information signs and visitor center information. Brochure racks were also a popular information source for this group. Tables 4 through 7 detail the information sources used by Chouteau County travelers.

Table 4: Sources of Information Used by Chouteau County Visitors for Trip Prior to Visit to Montana. Summer Nonresident Travel Survey. ITRR.

| Source | Percent* |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| None of the Sources | 41% |
| AAA | 27% |
| Montana Travel Planner | 26% |
| National Park Brochures | 20% |
| Travel Guide Book | 18% |
| Chamber or Visitor Bureau | 11% |
| Information From Private Businesses | 9% |
| State Park Brochures | 9% |
| 1-800 State Travel Number | 7% |
| Internet Travel Information | 7% |
| Regional Travel Number | 1% |
| Attend a Travel Trade Show | <1% |

*Column totals more than 100% because visitors could choose more than one source.

Table 5: Most Useful Source of Information by Chouteau County Visitors Prior to Visit to Montana, 1996 Summer Nonresident Travel Study, ITRR

| Primary Source | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| AAA | 33% |
| Montana Travel Planner | 19% |
| Travel Guide Book | 12% |
| Information From Private Businesses | 10% |
| National Park Brochures | 6% |
| Chamber or Visitor Bureau | 6% |
| None of These | 6% |
| Internet Travel Information | 4% |
| 1-800 State Travel Number | 3% |
| State Park Brochures | 2% |
| Regional Travel Number | <1% |
| Attend a Travel Trade Show | <1% |
| Total* | 100% |

*Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 6: Sources of Information Used While Chouteau County Visitors were in Montana, 1996 Summer Nonresident Travel Survey, ITRR

| Source | Percent* |
|--|----------|
| Brochure Rack | 48% |
| Highway Information Signs | 42% |
| Person in Visitor Information Center | 40% |
| Person in Motel, Restaurant, Gas Station, Etc. | 38% |
| Other | 25% |
| None of the Sources Used | 12% |
| Business Billboards | 8% |
| Computer Touch Screen Info Center | <1% |

*Column totals more than 100% because visitors could choose more than one source.

Table 7: Primary Source of Information Used by Chouteau County Visitors while In Montana, 1996 Summer Nonresident Travel Survey, ITRR

| Primary Source | Percent |
|--|---------|
| Person in Visitor Information Center | 29% |
| Person in Motel, Restaurant, Gas Station, Etc. | 21% |
| Other | 18% |
| Brochure Rack | 18% |
| Highway Information Signs | 12% |
| Business Billboards | 2% |
| Computer Touch Screen Info Center | <1% |
| Total* | 100% |

*Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Types of Trips

Nonresident travel parties were asked all reasons for traveling to Montana. Many visitors had more than one reason (Table 8). Travelers were also asked to identify their one primary reason for traveling to Montana (Table 9). Nonresident travelers through Chouteau County were more likely to be in Montana on vacation (83%) or visiting friends or relatives (45%) than any other reason. They were also more likely to be here for those reasons than other nonresident travelers were.

Travelers indicating vacation as one trip purpose (83% of the Chouteau County sample) were asked what attracted them to Montana as a vacation destination. Visitors were asked to check all things that attracted them to Montana (Table 10) and then to choose the one thing that was the primary attraction of Montana for them (Table 11). The visitors were especially attracted to Montana by the mountains, rivers and open spaces. The greatest primary attractions for these travelers were Glacier and Yellowstone Parks, though those attractions were less important to the Chouteau County sample than to other travelers to Montana. As a primary attraction, Montana history was much more important to these travelers than all travelers to the state.

Table 8: Reasons for Trip to Montana by Chouteau County Visitors, 1996
Summer Nonresident Travel Study, ITRR.

| All Reasons for Trip to Montana | Percent* |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Vacation/ Recreation/ Pleasure | 83% |
| Visit Friends or Relatives | 45% |
| Just Passing Through | 18% |
| Recreational Shopping | 18% |
| Business | 16% |
| Necessity Shopping | 3% |
| Other Reasons | 3% |
| Attending a Convention or Meeting | 1% |
| Medical | 1% |

*Column totals more than 100% because visitors could have more than 1 purpose of trip.

Table 9: Primary Purpose of Trip to Montana by Chouteau County Visitors, 1996 Summer Nonresident Travel Study. ITRR

| Primary Reason for Trip to Montana | Percent |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Vacation/ Recreation/ Pleasure | 52% |
| Visit Friends or Relatives | 21% |
| Just Passing Through | 14% |
| Business | 9% |
| Other Reasons | 3% |
| Attending a Convention or Meeting | 1% |
| Total* | 100% |

*Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 10: Types of Attractions to Montana for Chouteau County Visitors, 1996 Nonresident Summer Travel Study, ITRR.

| All Types of Attractions to Montana | Percent* |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Mountains | 57% |
| Open Space | 39% |
| Rivers | 36% |
| Yellowstone National Park | 30% |
| Montana History | 29% |
| Friendly People | 27% |
| Glacier National Park | 26% |
| Camping | 26% |
| Visiting Historic Sites | 26% |
| Lakes | 24% |
| Uncrowded Areas | 24% |
| Wildlife | 21% |
| Northern Great Plains | 16% |
| Fishing | 13% |
| Hiking | 10% |
| National Forest Area | 9% |
| Other Specific Attraction | 9% |
| Badlands | 9% |
| Native American Culture | 7% |
| Other Special Event | 6% |
| Designated Wilderness Area | 5% |
| State Park | 5% |

*Column totals more than 100% because visitors could choose more than one attraction.

Table 11: Primary Attraction to Montana for Travelers Through Chouteau County, 1996 summer Nonresident Travel Study, ITRR

| Primary Attraction to Montana | Percent |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Glacier National Park | 16% |
| Yellowstone National Park | 16% |
| Mountains | 12% |
| Other Specific Attraction | 12% |
| Uncrowded Areas | 8% |
| Montana History | 8% |
| Other Special Event | 5% |
| Friendly People | 5% |
| Visiting Historic Sites | 5% |
| Open Space | 4% |
| Rivers | 4% |
| Fishing | 3% |
| Wildlife | 2% |
| Camping | 2% |
| Lakes | 1% |
| Badlands | 1% |
| Native American Culture | 1% |
| Designated Wilderness Area | 1% |
| National Forest Area | 1% |
| Hiking | 1% |
| State Park | <1% |
| Northern Great Plains | <1% |
| Total* | 100% |

*Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Respondents to the travel questionnaire were asked to indicate from a selected list of activities, the ones that their group did on their trip in Montana. Table 12 lists activity participation rates by the Chouteau County sample of Montana visitors. Visiting friends, viewing wildlife, viewing historic sites, and recreation shopping were the most popular activities among this group. Historic sites were more important to these travelers than to other travelers to Montana.

Table 12: Recreation Activity Participation in Montana by Visitors Through Chouteau County, 1996 Nonresident Travel Study, ITRR.

| Type of Recreation Activity | Percent* |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Visiting Family/Friends | 42% |
| Wildlife Watching | 40% |
| Visiting Historic/Interpretive Sites | 41% |
| Recreational Shopping | 35% |
| Camping in Developed Areas | 29% |
| Visiting Museums | 29% |
| Picnicking | 26% |
| Nature Photography | 23% |
| Day Hiking | 19% |
| Camping in Primitive Areas | 15% |
| Fishing | 14% |
| Gambling | 13% |
| Swimming in pools | 12% |
| Visiting Native American Sites | 12% |
| Attend Special Events/Festivals | 11% |
| Nature Study | 8% |
| Swimming in Natural Areas | 7% |
| Mountain Biking | 6% |
| River Rafting/Floating | 3% |
| Golfing | 3% |
| ATV Driving | 2% |

*Column totals more than 100% because visitors could participate in more than one activity.

Economic Characteristics

Information about the number of visitors to an area and how much they spend is very useful for planning purposes. Table 13 summarizes visitation and expenditures in Montana and Chouteau County. Statewide, nonresidents spent about \$1.4 billion in 1996, while Chouteau County received only about \$70,000 of this. The most common types of expenditures in Chouteau County were for Gasoline, groceries and snacks. Chouteau County received about 65,000 nonresident travel groups during 1996, with each group averaging a little over \$1 of expenditures in the county, for a total direct expenditure of almost \$70,000 or about \$13 per resident of the county. These travelers spent slightly less statewide than the average for all travelers to the state (\$83 per day and \$375 per trip to Montana), but stayed in Montana slightly longer than the overall average (4.5 nights). On a per capita basis, Chouteau County residents receive quite a bit less visitor expenditures per resident than the overall average for Montanans statewide (\$13 versus \$1,740 expenditure per resident statewide).

Table 13: Visitation and Expenditures of Nonresident Travelers to Montana and Chouteau County during 1996, ITRR.

| Distribution of Expenditures in Sample Area: | Statewide | Chouteau County |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Hotel, Lodge, B&B % | 19% | 7% |
| Campground, R.V. Park % | 1% | 0% |
| Auto Rental % | 3% | 0% |
| Transportation % | <1% | 0% |
| Gasoline, Oil % | 21% | 35% |
| Restaurant, Bar % | 17% | 8% |
| Groceries, Snacks | 8% | 44% |
| Retail Sales % | 24% | 0% |
| Miscellaneous Services % | 6% | 5% |
| Average Daily Travel Group Expenditures in Montana (1996\$) | \$97 | \$83 |
| Total Travel Group Expenditures in Montana (1996\$) | \$418 | \$373 |
| Total Travel Group Exp. in Sample Area (1996\$) | \$418 | \$1 |
| Lenght of Stay in Montana | 4.3 | 4.5 |
| Total Travel Groups to Sample Area in 1996 | 3,550,000 | 65,000 |
| Total Expenditures in Sample Area in 1996 | \$1,490,000,000 | \$70,000 |
| Expenditures in Area - Per Capita of Residents (1990 US Census) | \$1,740 | \$13 |

Section II: Chouteau County and Fort Benton Resident Views

Data collection for this section of the report came from the ITRR Resident Opinion Study conducted in Chouteau County during February and March of 1998. Responses were split between Chouteau County and the town of Fort Benton.

Resident Survey Methods

A mail-back questionnaire was administered to a sample of residents in Chouteau County and Fort Benton. That mail-out was followed one week later by a reminder postcard and two weeks after that by a replacement questionnaire to those residents that had not yet responded. For comparison, data from an identical survey conducted statewide in 1996 are presented along with the Chouteau County and Fort Benton Results. It should be noted that these results represent the opinions from about 45% of those residents polled. A slightly higher response rate was obtained from the Fort Benton sample than from the Chouteau County sample. In interpreting the results in this report, it must be assumed that respondents did not differ from nonrespondents in their opinions. Table 14 summarizes sample sizes and response rates for the Resident Opinion Study.

Table 14: Sample Sizes and Response Rates for the Survey Samples used in This Report.

| | Statewide 1996 | Chouteau County 1998 | Fort Benton 1998 |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Resident questionnaires sent out: | 1,000 | 250 | 250 |
| Resident questionnaires delivered: | 914 | 246 | 247 |
| Resident questionnaires returned: | 413 | 93 | 121 |
| Resident Opinion Study response rate: | 45% | 38% | 49% |
| Percentage of respondents who were male | 68% | 45% | 47% |

Source: The Montana Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998), ITRR

Results of the Questionnaire: Residents' Opinions about Montana, Their Community and Tourism

Residents of an area may hold a variety of opinions about tourism and other economic development. They may have perceptions of the specific impacts of tourism, both positive and negative. Opinions are a good measure of support for community and industry actions. As a community pursues tourism as a development strategy, the goals of that effort generally include an improved economy, more jobs for local people, community stability, and ultimately, a protected or improved quality of life for the community's residents. Understanding residents' perceptions of the conditions of their surroundings and tourism's influence on those conditions can provide guidance toward appropriate development decisions.

The resident opinion questionnaire addressed topics that create a picture of perceived current conditions and tourism's role in the community. The following general areas are covered in this section: a profile of the respondents; general support for tourism; influences of tourism on the state, community, and personal

well-being; the degree of personal attachment to the community and views on community change; the current conditions of the state, community, and personal well-being; and community-specific tourism questions.

To summarize results, several indices were developed through a principal components factor analysis on the items within each index as outlined in De La Vina *et al.* (1994)⁴. This method statistically identifies the relative importance of each item's contribution toward the summary index, so that a weighted average can be computed for the combined items. Indexes were derived that summarize average 'support for tourism,' 'perceived influence of tourism,' 'community attachment,' and 'perceived condition of well-being.' The indexes are presented in Tables 18, 21, 23, and 28 respectively. Analysis are presented to help identify differences between the county and Fort Benton respondent groups on their perceptions of influence and support of tourism development in Chouteau County and Fort Benton. Differences between the groups are compared using the summary indexes for 'support for tourism ' and 'perceived influence of tourism.'

Respondent Characteristics

A person's employment status, type of job, and economic work sector can all have an influence on personal well-being and on support for tourism. The more dependent a person is financially on the tourism industry, the higher the support tends to be. Table 15 shows employment status of the respondents. Table 16 lists the economic sector that the respondents worked in and Table 17 indicates the respondent's job title or type. The respondents from both samples were much more likely than statewide averages to be employed in the agricultural sector, and to be either a manager or farm worker rather than a professional, service or retail worker. Respondents were more likely to be self-employed and less likely to be unemployed than other workers statewide.

Table 15: Employment Status of Resident Respondents

| Employment Status: (could be more than one) | Statewide % | Chouteau County % | Fort Benton % |
|---|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Employed | 49 | 32 | 39 |
| Retired | 33 | 26 | 26 |
| Self-Employed | 22 | 45 | 29 |
| Homemaker | 10 | 12 | 20 |
| Unemployed | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Student | 2 | 1 | 2 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

⁴ De La Vina, L. Y., D. Hollas, J. Merrifield, and J. Ford (1994), "A principal components-based tourism activity index," *Journal of Travel Research*, Spring, pp. 37-40.

Table 16: Employment Sector of Resident Respondents

| Employment Sector: | Statewide % | Chouteau County % | Fort Benton % |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Services | 20 | 12 | 18 |
| Agriculture | 13 | 62 | 38 |
| Retail | 11 | 3 | 5 |
| Construction, Repair, Maintenance | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| Health Care, Medical Services | 7 | 5 | 9 |
| Education | 7 | 8 | 3 |
| Professional Services | 7 | 2 | 8 |
| Government | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| Transportation Services | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| Media, Communications | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| Logging, Forestry, Wood Products | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Mining | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Food Service, Restaurant | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Automotive Services | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Public Utilities | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Oil and Gas | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Visitor Services, Art, Entertainment | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Manufacturing | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Wholesale | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

Table 17: Employment Type for Resident Respondents

| Job Title: | Statewide % | Chouteau County % | Fort Benton % |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Professional | 30 | 11 | 15 |
| Manager | 20 | 14 | 29 |
| Service Workers | 12 | 8 | 6 |
| Laborers | 8 | 0 | 5 |
| Clerical | 7 | 9 | 9 |
| Farmers | 6 | 49 | 23 |
| Craftsman | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Sales | 5 | 3 | 11 |
| Transport | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Farm labor | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Armed Services | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Operatives | 0 | 0 | 2 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

Support for Tourism Development

Respondents were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or indicate they didn't know for a number of tourism related questions. The responses were then coded on a scale from -1 for strongly disagree to +1 for strongly agree. Results with a score of 0 would indicate neutral or balanced opinions, while negative scores would indicate disagreement with statements and positive scores would indicate agreement.

Some of the questions addressed general support for tourism or more specific aspects of tourism's benefits. Table 18 presents opinion scores for tourism support questions. Responses to all six tourism support questions were generally more favorable in Fort Benton than in Chouteau County or the state, while responses from the county tended to be equivalent to, or less favorable than the statewide opinions. The statement 'The overall benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts' is a good indication of the overall support for tourism. Responses to this statement tended to be favorable from the Fort Benton sample, but somewhat more neutral from the county sample.

The summary index score of tourism support developed from these items is also presented in the table. The index score represents a weighted average score of the six items in the table. The average tourism support index varied by sample. While both samples produced positive scores, the county score was near the neutral point with a similar score to the statewide sample, while the Fort Benton sample had an index much more supportive than neutral at 0.26.

Table 18: Statements of Agreement with Various Aspects of Tourism Development

| | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|--|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Tourism promotion by the State of Montana benefits my community economically | .33 | .34 | .49 |
| To be competitive with other states, I support continued tourism promotion by the State of Montana | .28 | .32 | .55 |
| The overall benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts | .14 | .06 | .36 |
| Increased tourism would help my community grow in the right direction | -.09 | -.02 | .34 |
| If tourism increases in Montana, the overall quality of life for Montana residents will improve | -.27 | -.37 | .08 |
| I will benefit financially if tourism increases in my community | -.31 | -.39 | -.11 |
| Tourism Support Index | .02 | .01 | .26 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Strongly Agree) to -1 (Strongly Disagree)

Perceived Influence of Tourism on Well-Being

Another indication of support for tourism is the perceived influence of tourism on various aspects of well-being. Respondents were asked to indicate whether tourism influenced a particular aspect of well-being positively, negatively, or equally positive and negative. Responses were scaled from -1 to +1 with a score of 0 being equally positive and negative. Respondents were asked to evaluate tourism's influence at three scales including: the state of Montana, the respondent's community, and the individual respondent. Tables 19 through 21 present these evaluations by order of scale.

All three samples felt that tourism had a positive influence on Montana's economy and on cultural and historic preservation. All samples also felt that tourism had a negative influence on Montana's highways and roads - though much less negative for Fort Benton respondents. The Fort Benton sample expressed the most positive views about tourism's influence on Montana.

The most positive aspects of tourism's influence on communities were evaluated to be the areas of museums and cultural centers (especially for the Fort Benton sample), parks and recreation areas, and job opportunities. The areas of emergency services and education system received mixed but tending toward neutral responses. Tourism's influence was perceived as negative in terms of cost of living, safety from crime, community roads, and community infrastructure. In response to overall community livability the Chouteau County and Fort Benton Responses gave tourism influence a slightly positive rating.

In terms of personal well-being, the most positive aspects of tourism were evaluated as being its influence on the respondents' employment and financial situation - though the Chouteau County sample did not evaluate any of the personal impacts as positive.

A summary index of tourism's influence on well-being was developed from the individual items in Tables 19 through 21. The index score represents a weighted average score of the 20 items in the tables. The index scores were all positive, though the county score was near neutral and the Fort Benton perceived influence score was substantially more positive than the county or statewide sample scores.

Table 19: Tourism's Perceived Influence on Montana

| Tourism's Influence on Montana's: | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Economy | .47 | .45 | .42 |
| Cultural and historic preservation | .20 | .37 | .45 |
| Parks and recreation areas | .02 | .16 | .17 |
| Natural environment | -.10 | -.04 | .03 |
| Highways and roads | -.33 | -.24 | -.07 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Positive) to -1 (Negative)

Table 20: Tourism's Perceived Influence on the Community

| Tourism's influence on the community's: | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|---|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Museums and cultural centers | .42 | .67 | .73 |
| Parks and recreation areas | .14 | .28 | .37 |
| Job opportunities | .14 | .10 | .22 |
| Education system | -.03 | .01 | .01 |
| Emergency services | -.05 | .10 | .03 |
| Overall livability | -.08 | .03 | .04 |
| Infrastructure (water, sewer etc.) | -.22 | -.36 | -.19 |
| Safety from crime | -.29 | -.33 | -.18 |
| Cost of living | -.31 | -.11 | -.13 |
| Roads | -.43 | -.44 | -.21 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Positive) to -1 (Negative)

Table 21: Tourism's Perceived Influence on the Individual

| Tourism's Influence on personal: | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Employment situation | .05 | -.04 | .13 |
| Financial situation | .01 | -.04 | .09 |
| Overall happiness | -.07 | -.09 | .09 |
| Present housing | -.10 | -.09 | -.04 |
| Leisure time and activities | -.26 | -.09 | -.01 |
| Tourism Influence Index | -.04 | .02 | .08 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Positive) to -1 (Negative)

Community Attachment and Change

One of the outcomes of tourism or other types of economic development is community change. Changing communities can impact residents in a number of ways. Growing communities may provide more opportunities for well-paying jobs, while at the same time new workers may experience a shortage of housing. In general, larger communities are better able to absorb or buffer change than are smaller, more rural areas. Also, slow steady change is easier to adapt to than rapid unpredictable change. Changing communities force long-time residents to either adapt or leave. Community attachment may indicate the desire to stay in a community and either adapt to or resist the changing situation. The following tables will help identify community attachment and concerns about change.

One measure of attachment is the length of time and percentage of life spent in a community or area. Table 22 lists years in Montana and the present community and how much of the respondent's lifetime that represented. Respondents from all samples averaged the same age. Respondents from the county sample had lived the longest and greatest percentage of their lives in their community and in Montana. Fort Benton respondents also tended to have live in the community and Montana substantially longer than the statewide average.

Table 22: Respondents' Residency Characteristics

| Residency: | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Years lived in community | 25 | 36 | 30 |
| Years lived in Montana | 38 | 45 | 43 |
| Age (Mean Years) | 53 | 53 | 53 |
| Percentage of life spent in community | 46% | 68% | 56% |
| Percentage of life spent in Montana | 72% | 86% | 81% |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

Community attachment is also measured by opinions about the community. Table 23 presents agreement or disagreement to several statements about tourism and community attachment. All of the samples generated positive community attachment scores regarding the desire to stay in the community. Scores were fairly uniform across the three samples, with the statewide attachment score slightly higher than the Chouteau County or Fort Benton scores.

Table 23: Community Attachment Statements

| | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|---|-----------|--------------------|-------------|
| It is important that the residents of my community (Chouteau County) be involved in decisions about | .67 | .69 | .73 |
| If I had to move away from my community (Chouteau County), I would be very sorry to leave | .56 | .54 | .60 |
| Id rather live in my community (Chouteau County) than anywhere else | .42 | .38 | .36 |
| I think the future of my community (Chouteau County) looks bright | .19 | .12 | .18 |
| Index of Community Attachment | .39 | .32 | .35 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Strongly Agree) to -1 (Strongly Disagree)

Community growth, one of the fundamental aspects of tourism development, must be addressed in planning. Respondents were asked if their community was changing, and if so, at what pace. Table 24 shows perceptions of growth in the community for each of the samples and table 25 lists results of agree/disagree statements about tourism's role in community growth and change.

Opinions from the county and Fort Benton sample were spread out as to whether or not the community was growing, with the majority who felt it was changing, feeling that it was changing at about the right pace. Very few people from those samples felt that the area roads were too congested. Respondent from Chouteau County and Fort Benton did not believe that tourism contributed to crowding or congestion. Respondents - especially from the county sample did believe that tourism causes people to move to Montana.

Table 24: Perceptions of Community Growth

| | Statewide % | Chouteau County % | Fort Benton % |
|--|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| How is the population changing in your community (Chouteau County)? | | | |
| Growing | 76 | 25 | 34 |
| Decreasing | 8 | 32 | 34 |
| Not Changing | 16 | 43 | 33 |
| If changing, is your community (Chouteau County) changing.. | | | |
| Too Fast? | 53 | 37 | 15 |
| About Right? | 38 | 49 | 63 |
| Too Slow? | 9 | 15 | 22 |
| Overall, are the roads in your area too congested? | | | |
| % Yes | 50 | 14 | 3 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

Table 25: Statements of Agreement about Tourism's Influence on Community Growth

| | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|---|-----------|--------------------|-------------|
| Taking a vacation to Montana influences too many people to move to Montana | .26 | .26 | .07 |
| In recent years, the state is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists | .06 | -.01 | -.09 |
| Tourism is the major contributor to traffic congestion in my community | -.05 | -.28 | -.13 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Strongly Agree) to -1 (Strongly Disagree)

Perceived Conditions of State, Community, and Personal Well-Being

When evaluating opinions about the benefits and costs of tourism development, it is helpful to have a perspective on the perceived conditions of various aspects of well-being. If a particular resource is in poor condition, any negative influence on it by tourism development would be serious, while tourism's mitigating influences would be very desirable. Respondents were asked to rate the condition of various aspects of well-being on a scale of very good to very poor. Responses were scaled from -1 to +1 with a score of 0 being neither good nor poor.⁵ Respondents were asked to evaluate conditions of well-being at three geographic scales including: the state of Montana, the respondent's community, and the individual respondent. Tables 26 - 28 present these evaluations by order of scale.

All sample groups agreed that the condition of Montana's natural environment was good, while the conditions of the state economy was poor. Most people also felt that Montana's parks and recreation areas, and cultural and historic preservation were in good shape. Respondents from all samples also felt that Montana's roads were in poor condition.

Respondents tended to rate most of the conditions of their community as good. Respondents from the county and community sample both felt that museums and cultural centers were in good condition, while they both also felt that community infrastructure was in poor condition.

When rating personal conditions, all samples had positive average scores - especially in terms of overall personal happiness. Noticeable low in the positive rankings were the employment and personal financial situations of Fort Benton respondents.

An index of conditions of well-being was developed from the combined items found in Tables 26 through 28. The index scores are presented at the bottom of Table 28.

Table 26: The Perceived Condition of Montana

| The Condition of Montana's: | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Natural environment | .61 | .71 | .63 |
| Parks and recreation areas | .30 | .36 | .34 |
| Cultural and historic preservation | .22 | .38 | .48 |
| Highways and roads | -.17 | -.22 | -.13 |
| Economy | -.23 | -.22 | -.24 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Very Good) to -1 (Very Poor)

⁵ Respondents were not given a middle point (0) to choose from. Neutral scores are a result of statistical analysis and reflect the mean.

Table 27: The Perceived Condition of the Community

| The Condition of the Community's: | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|--|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Emergency services (police, fire etc.) | .54 | .48 | .59 |
| Overall livability | .35 | .34 | .42 |
| Education system | .34 | .43 | .29 |
| Safety from crime | .30 | .41 | .52 |
| Parks and recreation areas | .29 | .24 | .35 |
| Museums and cultural centers | .23 | .52 | .62 |
| Infrastructure (water, sewer etc.) | .07 | -.16 | -.06 |
| Cost of living | -.18 | -.05 | -.08 |
| Roads | -.30 | -.20 | -.15 |
| Long-term development planning | -.33 | -.09 | -.13 |
| Job opportunities | -.49 | -.55 | -.57 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Very Good) to -1 (Very Poor)

Table 28: The Perceived Condition of the Individual

| The Condition of your personal: | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Overall happiness | .56 | .51 | .46 |
| Present housing | .44 | .40 | .48 |
| Leisure time and activities | .33 | .13 | .19 |
| Employment situation | .25 | .30 | .06 |
| Financial situation | .15 | .03 | .02 |
| Access to local government | .13 | .24 | .34 |
| Index of Conditions of Well-Being | .15 | .15 | .15 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 1 (Very Good) to -1 (Very Poor)

The Importance of Factors of Well-Being

To better understand what areas of tourism's impacts should be focused on, respondents were asked to rate the importance of various aspects of well-being. If we know that access to local government and the environment are perceived to be in poor condition, but only the environment is rated as an important aspect of well-being, then we have a better idea of where to focus development and planning efforts.

While items such as personal health and family relations are beyond the influence of tourism planning efforts, it is helpful to know the relative importance of those factors in relation to factors that tourism development can influence. Table 29 ranks the importance of various aspects of personal well-being. There were only slight differences in the ratings across samples. All respondents placed the most importance on health, family, and safety, while other items were given slightly less importance.

Table 29: The Perceived Importance of Factors of Well-Being

| The Importance of to your current well-being: | Statewide | Chouteau County | Fort Benton |
|---|-----------|--------------------|-------------|
| Personal health | 3.5 | 3.2 | 3.4 |
| Relations with family and friends | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.2 |
| Safety from crime | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.3 |
| Education system | 3.0 | 3.1 | 2.9 |
| Financial situation | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| Natural environment | 3.0 | 2.8 | 2.9 |
| Crowding and congestion | 2.8 | 2.4 | 2.6 |
| Employment situation | 2.8 | 2.6 | 2.5 |
| Leisure time and activities | 2.7 | 2.3 | 2.4 |
| Housing | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.8 |
| Access to government | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.4 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from 0 (Not at all Important) to 4 (Most Important)

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Chouteau County Area for Attracting Tourism

Respondents were given an opportunity to express opinions about the specific characteristics of the local area that would influence tourism development. All Respondents from the CTAP samples were asked to respond to both Chouteau County and Fort Benton Characteristics. Responses from both groups have been combined in the following four tables.

In general, Fort Benton's river history was seen as the greatest strength for attracting tourism, while the area's lack of a traveler infrastructure and facilities was seen as the biggest weakness to developing a tourism industry.

Table 30: The Greatest Strength of Chouteau County for Attracting Visitors

| What is the Greatest Strength of Chouteau County for Attracting Visitors? | Combined Sample % |
|---|-------------------|
| River | 30 |
| History, Historic Sites | 23 |
| Ft. Benton | 13 |
| Natural Beauty | 10 |
| Museums | 6 |
| Outdoor Activities | 4 |
| Lewis & Clark | 4 |
| Parks | 3 |
| Wheat | 1 |
| Small Town Atmosphere | 1 |
| Quiet, Peaceful | 1 |
| Productive Land | 1 |
| Open Spaces | 1 |
| Golf | 1 |
| Fair | 1 |
| Eye of Needle | 1 |
| Cultural Areas | 1 |
| Clean Air | 1 |
| Bad Weather | 1 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey, Chouteau County, 1998

Table 31: The Greatest Strength of Fort Benton for Attracting Tourism

| What is the Greatest Strength of Fort Benton for Attracting Visitors? | Combined Sample % |
|---|-------------------|
| History of Community | 40 |
| River | 28 |
| Museums | 16 |
| Parks | 4 |
| Natural Attractions, Beauty | 3 |
| Small Town Atmosphere | 2 |
| Lewis & Clark | 2 |
| Friendly People | 2 |
| Old Fort | 1 |
| Bad Weather | 1 |
| Location | 1 |
| Cultural Areas | 1 |
| Fair | 1 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey, Chouteau County, 1998

Table 32: The Greatest Weakness for Chouteau County for Attracting Tourism

| What is the Greatest Weakness/Concern of Chouteau County for Attracting Visitors? | Combined Sample % |
|---|-------------------|
| Lack of Lodging, Camping Facilities | 22 |
| Lack of Traveler Facilities | 21 |
| Road Conditions | 14 |
| Not Enough Promotion, Advertising | 9 |
| Geography has little to Attract | 8 |
| Location | 7 |
| Not enough Community Support | 4 |
| Rudeness of Police | 2 |
| Lack of Organization | 2 |
| Junky Appearance | 2 |
| Lack of Activities for Young People | 2 |
| High Price of Lodging | 1 |
| Sewers and Water | 1 |
| No RV Dump Station | 1 |
| Not Wanting Change | 1 |
| Economic Responsibility | 1 |
| Political Corruption | 1 |
| Lack of Development Funds | 1 |
| Not Enough Emphasis on History | 1 |
| People not Taking Interest | 1 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey, Chouteau County, 1998

Table 33: The Greatest Weakness of Fort Benton for Attracting Tourism

| What is the Greatest Weakness/Concern of Fort Benton for Attracting Visitors? | Combined Sample % |
|---|-------------------|
| Lack of Lodging, Camping Facilities | 31 |
| Lack of Traveler Facilities | 29 |
| Limited Attractions | 7 |
| Not Enough Promotion, Advertising | 5 |
| Location | 4 |
| Not Enough Emphasis on History | 3 |
| Lack of Parking | 3 |
| Attitude of Residents | 2 |
| Traffic Congestion | 2 |
| Not Wanting Change | 2 |
| Poor Planning | 2 |
| Lack of Community Support | 2 |
| Lack of Development Funds | 2 |
| Lack of Organization | 2 |
| High Price of Lodging | 1 |
| One High Priced Grocery Store | 1 |
| Junky Appearance | 1 |
| Sewer and Water Situation | 1 |
| Looking Like Retirement Community | 1 |
| Need more Relaxed Social Structure | 1 |
| No Loop Tours from Amtrak | 1 |
| Better Signage | 1 |
| River | 1 |
| Closing Businesses too Early | 1 |
| Rudeness of Police | 1 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey, Chouteau County, 1998

Tables 34 and 35 provide comparisons of conditions and tourism influences by ranked importance of the items for Chouteau County and Fort Benton respectively. These tables offer a summary of the perceptions of tourism ranked by relative importance of the issues. Understanding which issues are most important and the perceived condition and influence on those issues is helpful to focus planning on the important issues. The areas of Highways, roads and infrastructure are of great concern to both groups, in terms of their condition and tourism's influence on them. While the concerns are greater in the county than in the community, serious consideration must be given to these potential problem areas in any tourism development effort at the county or community level.

Table 34: Chouteau County Condition/Influence Comparison

| Item | Relative Importance Rank | Condition Score + | Influence Score # |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Emergency services (police, fire etc.) | 1 | .48 | .10 |
| Safety from crime | 1 | .41 | -.33 |
| Community Education system | 2 | .43 | .01 |
| State Economy | 3 | -.22 | .45 |
| Cost of living | 3 | -.05 | -.11 |
| Personal Financial situation | 3 | .03 | -.04 |
| Natural environment | 4 | .71 | -.04 |
| Overall personal happiness | 5* | .51 | -.09 |
| Overall Community livability | 5* | .34 | .03 |
| State Highways and roads | 5* | -.22 | -.24 |
| Community Roads | 5* | -.20 | -.44 |
| Infrastructure (water, sewer etc.) | 5* | -.16 | -.36 |
| Job opportunities | 6 | -.55 | .10 |
| Personal Employment situation | 6 | .30 | -.04 |
| Present housing | 7 | .40 | -.09 |
| State Parks and recreation areas | 8 | .36 | .16 |
| Community Parks and recreation areas | 8 | .24 | .28 |
| Cultural and historic preservation | 8 | .38 | .37 |
| Museums and cultural centers | 8 | .52 | .67 |
| Personal leisure time and activities | 8 | .13 | -.09 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Those items that were not ranked for importance by respondents were assigned the mean rank

+ Scores represent conditions measured on a scale from 1 (Very Good) to -1 (Very Poor)

Scores represent influences measured on a scale from 1 (Positive) to -1 (Negative)

Table 35: Fort Benton Condition/Influence Comparison

| Item | Relative Importance Rank | Condition Score + | Influence Score # |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Emergency services (police, fire etc.) | 1 | .59 | .03 |
| Safety from crime | 1 | .52 | -.18 |
| Community Education system | 2 | .29 | .01 |
| State Economy | 3 | -.24 | .42 |
| Cost of living | 3 | -.08 | -.13 |
| Personal Financial situation | 3 | .02 | .09 |
| Natural environment | 4 | .63 | .03 |
| Overall personal happiness | 5* | .46 | .09 |
| Overall Community livability | 5* | .42 | .04 |
| State Highways and roads | 5* | -.13 | -.07 |
| Community Roads | 5* | -.15 | -.21 |
| Infrastructure (water, sewer etc.) | 5* | -.06 | -.19 |
| Job opportunities | 6 | -.57 | .22 |
| Personal Employment situation | 6 | .06 | .13 |
| Present housing | 7 | .48 | -.04 |
| State Parks and recreation areas | 8 | .34 | .17 |
| Community Parks and recreation areas | 8 | .35 | .37 |
| Cultural and historic preservation | 8 | .48 | .45 |
| Museums and cultural centers | 8 | .62 | .73 |
| Personal leisure time and activities | 8 | .19 | -.01 |

Source: ITRR Resident Opinion Survey (Statewide = 1996, Chouteau County = 1998)

* Those items that were not ranked for importance by respondents were assigned the mean rank

+ Scores represent conditions measured on a scale from 1 (Very Good) to -1 (Very Poor)

Scores represent influences measured on a scale from 1 (Positive) to -1 (Negative)

Comments

The following comments were received by the respondents in response the questionnaire Question 11e that asked what Chouteau County/Ft. Benton could do to become a bigger player in the state's tourism industry. Further comments were invited on the back cover, and they are also included here.

More advertising.

We offer day rides (horseback) on our ranch - tourism helps our business but it is not a vital ingredient in our operation.

Allot of tourist come during the day but leave to stay overnight elsewhere because there is no activities or stores to browse in the evenings.

Advertising and promotion_I believe Ft. Benton has a great deal going for it. The community needs to pull together and work towards the needs. We need to get the Chamber of Commerce much stronger to work towards the business needs of Ft. Benton. Everyone must get out of the old history and pull together. I believe Ft. Benton is ready to grow. We need some subdivision work to make more homes available. I know Gt. Falls people would love to move here. I've never seen a town that has such a positive image where ever I go. We need to capitalize on that image in a positive way.

Quit tearing down historical monuments, like the old jail and Conrad Mansion, finish old bridge and put another park on other side of river.

Increase all of 11c._I think tourism is destroying our State. Just look at our parks. Real soon we Montana's are going to need to make a reservation to go to the parks . Look at our rivers now, over crowded.

Erect Fort.

Advertisements, RV Parks, more motels.

Have a good RV place to park.

Lodging.

Advertise.

Places for them to stay. There isn't enough places for them to eat. Also I think the summer season is too short to depend on tourism. Also, take and spend money to put up a monument for something that was news in Benton but in Virgille. This money could be put to a lot better use.

Chouteau County/Ft. Benton changes to much, the attraction of a quaint small town will be gone - caution must be used.

Build a great campground. Make use of recreation on the river.

Get rid of old cars and trailers. Oil all the streets (started already)_This was a good idea. Hope it is constructive to a better Fort Benton and Chouteau Co.

Advertising in tourist publication and educate tour groups and travel agents.

Like to see it left as is. Increasing tax base will not cover bad tourism years because of weather, etc._I moved to Montana 4 years ago after living on southern Maine for 33 years. I watched the towns I lived in become overcrowded-crime ridden, overtaxed and ruined because of the promotion of tourism. I believe that there are other ways to promote business and improve the economy.

Recreational faculties for children_People of Fort Benton are very courteous.

Opening of the Grand Union_I feel the motor homes etc that camp free on the levee should stay in an RV Park. The RV Parks are a local business, trying to make a living in Fort Benton, although they should do more to "spruce" their parks up - make the RV's want to stop there.

Have more facilities, better eating places and more room for campers_I think this is a nice questionnaire. I hope the best for Montana and its people. Things are tough and we must all work together to try and increase jobs and keep us in Montana instead of out of states coming in taking over and us having to leave to find jobs to survive. I will help in anyway that I can to promote people to see our beautiful state. I'm so glad to be born raised here and take care of it. Thanks.

We need more to keep them here longer ie, places to stay and some more "fun" things to do for those who don't like just the history - for example waterslides, trail rides. We do have hunting, fishing and golf.

Advertise like it the triple Montana AAA booklet of travel. It lacks our promotion._Of course a person at my age is affected by increases in city projects such as water increases, streets, lights etc. since living on a fixed income - pension. However, I believe with community effort much can be made more beautiful and attractive to our folks and tourists and I like what is being done so far.

Have an organized camp ground and facilities similar to Great Falls KOA campground._I feel very strongly that this community should cater to tourism parking and camp ground with hook ups and all the conveniences of an area similar to KOA. I am sure this could and should be the first thing considered. Once here they (the visitors) will find and enjoy what we already have to offer if they do not have to move on for food and rest. With this in action, then our museums and sight seeing areas could exercise extended hours.

I feel it does a good job of advertising and the people are very accomadating._I don't really think tourism will effect me personally but I know it does help the merchants, river boat people. Most tourists don't live here or plan to so I really think so far anyway, we don't have to worry about the crime, etc.. Because we are in agriculture - cattle, ranching, I think sometimes think they don't realize that we are not hurting the environment and may complain to the government etc.

Build tourist facilities.

Lodging.

Chouteau Co/FAB is moving in the right direction with advertising and increased awareness of historic sites. A man from NYC travel led the river on the same journey as Lewis & Clark. He wrote in the article in the NY Times that of all the places he stopped Fort Benton was by far the best. Keep up the good work!

Because tourism is mostly seasonal and most wages involved from it are minimum I believe it is a mistake to promote it above industry. Our people deserve a very good living wage to keep them from moving to wealthier job opportunities or living off the state. We must keep our schools of high quality for all students so the young people can succeed. Should concentrate on more preparation for jobs when they are finished - that could be included in tourism industry. We love Montana, and hope these opinions help.

Host more activities to attract tourist_I love Montana but it needs to lower taxes on Real Estate and private property and income tax. It needs to encourage more industry to provide jobs for our kids so they can live here when they get out of school - and not have to move out-of-state! Montana is too economically backward. Progress is not a dirty word.

More jobs.

Get Grand Union open.

Come up with idea for people to stay at the town over night.

More advertising.

Develop historical and recreational resources many kinds of activities, year around advertise._I totally believe tourism is one of the few options Chateau Co & Ft. Benton to improve our economic benefits. I believe increased tourism would greatly benefit business, and that the benefit would filter out into the whole community. I believe we need to be continuing to improve our historical assets; fort museums, historical buildings; and the positive asset of being an

interesting and beautiful town. Tourists are coming, and we need to provide all kinds of services for them. We need all kinds of activities to bring in people. We need to make this a "destination".

Get Grand Union open.

We do not want the negative impact on our communities.

Focus tourism on the Missouri River benefits to attract tourists to make a choice to come here. Due to Montana's climate, tourism in this county is limited to a few months each year. Many local businesses suffer financially in the winter months, but enjoy profits in the summer months. Chouteau County is primarily supported by Agriculture. When agriculture suffers, so do the businesses. Tourism can offer businesses a boost - BUT tourism cannot sustain the businesses for 12 months each year. It appears that a few promoters of tourism are solely focusing on self-promotion and not on the best interest of a community effort, which could benefit everyone. Be cautious of this downfall. Many "agricultural" states promote agriculture hand in hand with their promotion of tourism. Hold the hand that fees you and walk with it, not against it. check into the positive cooperation the Chamber of Commerce in North Dakota has with the Agriculture Industry.

Rectify the above. To attract tourist to this area questions 11 c & d must be addressed. Also take advantage of State tourism advertising.

Advertise on TV and radio, have more things to do. Fort Benton is a very fine community but is trying to hard to be like Gt. Falls and has lost a lot of its small town charm. People from out of town or state are looking for this charm not high class or fancy. Fancy does not sell friendly people doer.

Advertise, improve availability of accommodations & encourage business commerce.

This city would have to have 1. more eating places 2. more over-night hotels or motels 3. more parking spaces. There is a beautiful agricultural center, a park, several historic buildings and structures, the river is a drawing point.

Make more info available to locals to spread info to visiting family & friends.

More promotion, adding of new business's and then supporting of those businesses. Fort Benton, doesn't like to change, add and keep new business. We are unable to compete with Gt. Falls and their lower prices. I believe that Ft. Benton home based business's in the store front situation, but those of us that are home based, can't afford to go to a store front due to the fact to many people shop out of town. We have nothing for our kids to do except swim and roam the streets. No place to park RV's, no facilities for them to use. No major industry to support us in the non tourism season. If we can't support our own towns people the tourist won't stay long.

Clean up front street, more motels at better rates with a welcoming attitude.

Get a good hotel/motel for more rooms for visitors to stay and hookups and parking.

Instead of concentrating on tourism I would rather the concentration be on bringing a large business, manufacturing plant, or some industry to bring more people and families to our town for a year round economy boost for the community and schools.

Take care of 11c & Q11d.

As suggested above better accommodations for visitors. Fort Benton is one of the best kept secrets in MT. Coming from a bigger city in the mountains of MT where I lived for about 47 years I truly appreciate the safety I feel here in Fort Benton. The children seem to have a better environment to grow in; their education seems to be a greater concern of all involved. I wished I had known about this wonderful place when my children were still very small. One more thing... the weather compared to other places in MT is great!!! P.S. Maybe you shouldn't tell everyone this secret.

The overall state of Fort Benton is declining because of to much concentration on tourism. Fort Benton and Chouteau County should , in my opinion, concentrate on looking for a more substanced industry and not tourism and retirement. The school systems are starting to suffer because of nothing to keep parents and children in the area!

Get some room rentals and trailer parks.

Paint & Remodel & Restore.

I think Chouteau County/Ft. Benton should be more concerned with businesses and how they can be helped as I don't feel tourism benefits most of the businesses in our area.

We shouldn't have tourist coming in here with-out adequate camping area's. And they shouldn't camp along the river without paying something. Please don't put any more man made clutter in the park and levy - including the "eye of the needle". Instead of all that unusable stuff-why not enclose the swim pool so it could be used all year instead of 2 1/2 months?

They should do nothing.

If Fort Benton could complete reconstruction of the Fort they would have a destination point attraction which would benefit not only the Community but the county too._I think Fort Benton is moving in the right direction to develop an additional economy based on tourism. I would like to see more involvement and support in this endeavor from the business community.

Yes the could advertise more, spend money on being tourist to the area.

Finish old Fort and Grand Union Hotel offer winter activities

Larger motel-better signs on streets-parking._I believe we need a stronger influence from BLM - Rules are in place for water usage for recreation - but they do not enforce them - toward Fred Robinson Bridge - the Lewistown BLM take pride in their area - but less money is used in the areas that need more management as in White Cliff area. Over usage needs to be addressed now before its a problem!

Put in the State Museum that was proposed a few years ago._The town of Fort Benton keeps losing a little bit more each year. The townsfolk do not have much of a Fort Benton. Supportiveness. There is not a pride associated with the population any more to keep Fort Benton strong. Older folks are afraid of increased circulation in town, but the town needs it to keep things alive.

Advertise more. They seem to be making good plans and moving ahead.

Top Priority: Finish reconstruction of old fort and publicize heavily #2 Get the Grand Union open as a quality historic hotel #3 Good RV park and public tank dump #4 Riverboat like the one in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory._1) Need to "clean up" appearance of downtown, with historic motif (like Whitefish downtown area). 2) Increase size (& number of display) of Museum of Upper Missouri with emphasis on Lewis & Clark and for trade themes. 3) Obtain & restore a full-size Upper Missouri Riverboat (contact Parks Canada to fin out how - they have a fully restored Yukon Riverboat at Whitehorse that hosts tours of around 200-300 people a day at \$3.00 a head)

Improve access to the Missouri river and dock facilities, restrooms, and use of levee across old bridge._Fort Benton negatives! greedy down town merchants city council pursues a dictatorial attitude rather than servant of community. Levee has become a dog do-do trail park as bad overpopulated with dogs and irresponsible owners. No RV sanitary dump. King Lepley and sod buster museum is getting redundant! Medical facility has hostile employee environment thus poor work ethic.

We need to enact a sales tax so tourists could bear some of the burden.

More promotion, more services to allow tourists to remain in the area longer, decent accommodations for tourists.

Wish I knew.

We need better boating facilities on the river for hunting, fishing, and recreational use. (ie: better boat ramp, docks etc.). There are starting to be more of these kind of outdoor activities going on in F.B. and on the river.

Open Grand Union - be more open minded towards growth, expand golf course, put in a "real" paddlewheeler on the river w/full facilities, rooms, and full gambling. Put in a really nice restaurant for fine dining, no more pizza places.

None-just stay as you are.

Highlight there town as a stop on the Lewis & Clark trek. (Like the Lewis & Clark Caverns) even though not really found by them it is a very big attraction._I feel when others are coming to view or "play" in your community you want to be sure it looks it's best. Tourism makes us keep our community clean and up to par! It also brings in several

thousands of dollars which help our economy, there isn't a business in the world that couldn't benefit from extra customers and income. It also makes the hometown people appreciate the special abstraction's there town has to offer. We all want a community-city-etc, that we can be proud of! Tourism lets us be proud of what we have.

Restore the Grand Union and things like the Benton Belle is really good.

Build eating places (quick meals), motels or lodging places, handy stores.

No developments, a rest stop would help.

I feel tourism creates lots of minimum wage jobs which doesn't build local or state economies.

Promote train rides. Do not build another museum.

More advertising._Except for low farm prices and high prices for what the farmer needs for his occupation we would not trade this county for any place!! Do not destroy the lovely park we already have in Fort Benton.

Bring tractor pulls back to the fair.

Get residents and landowners to care about their community._Fort Benton keeps all of our (Geraldina) property tax money and wastes it on frivolous stuff like a state of the art Law enforcement center when there is no crime. All of their cops have absolutely nothing to do ever. Chouteau Co. needs to give us our money so we can get things we need in Geraldine.

Friendlier people - people that would go out of their way for others. Too many town people with jobs, don't realize the impact of agriculture on them. If farmers ranchers don't make it, they will not either._Too many decisions in government are left up to too few people. Public building could be fixed up right, if the governing body would ask for help. I don't like closed door policy of the Mt. Dept. of Revenue in the county courthouse. I am a taxpayer! I expect answers to my questions when I ask.

It's great people want to come visit Montana but too often they stay permanently, and because they have more finances and can afford more expensive real estate than the typical Montanan, prices are going so high we can't buy land here and taxes are going high. These people can come visit –but they need to go home and leave Montana to Montanans!!!!!!

Collaboration of all tourist attractions in establishing tourist loops and include uniqueness plus agriculture production techniques (i.e. equipment use and why)_We need to look at our resources and industries according to their value added potential – then collaborate our efforts to establish investment moneys for research and development. If we place too much emphasis on recreation and tourism we become vulnerable to a down turn in the economy. The luxury items fall out first in any major decline in an economy (recreation and tourism). We need to put stronger emphasis on research and development of our primary resources as Alberta, Canada and North Dakota has with it's value-added efforts in fifteen grower owned coops in ND and a \$20 million commercial kitchen and incubator in Leduc, Canada.

Advertise

More advertisement

Impove road conditions and listen to people who have to use them all the time not just the visitors

Advertise

Move further away from Great Falls_Until you can get your own residents to support their community (Fort Benton) socially and economically you will have problems attracting tourists. Tourist find it hard to find decent lodging and open restaurants. The only resources are the river and the Lewis and Clark and most find there is a lack of activities for all people to enjoy. You know a lot of people can't afford float trips.

Promote the history of the area.

Encourage tourism through advertising

We need a good motel that is big and open all the time. We need more restaurants. There is no place to eat or sleep. Tourism is very important for Montana. Chouteau County is a long way from the other tourism attractions in Montana i.e. Yellowstone or Glacier. The only reason to come here is for the history. And if you do come here for that, there is no place to stay and basically, no place to eat.

We don't want to be

Promote more places to park and places to eat in Fort Benton.

Clean up the area.

Gift shops, cafes, motels, and lots of advertising.

Why ask for the additional trouble?

promote tourism

Not sure there's more that can be done. I believe the main problem is that the area is "off the beaten track". The efforts that are being made are commendable but how do you get people here? And when they arrive, where do they stay, eat, and shop? So much of this area is tied to agriculture, and trying to exist on what the income from today's market allows is the all-consuming concern for the people that I know of associate with.

The Internet

Advertise and welcome visitors.

Stay just as we are. Tourism won't make Chouteau County a better place. It's not the answer to a smaller population. It will not help the tax base over the long term. All we have to do is look what's happened to the western side of Montana to see what will happen here. Ask people who lived their lives there and see what they say!! Chouteau County needs to get industry here. Bring some people here with jobs. Families that stay year round that have children that pay taxes here, send their children to schools, that use the medical centers and give back to the county year round not just a few days in the summer as tourists do.

Chouteau County/Fort Benton doesn't need the tourism industry. It would do more harm than good for our beloved state.

More motels and restaurants.

A larger county map on a billboard at county line on major roads- showing all points of interest and how to get there and maps of the area; a large turn out point or rest stop. A lot of history that needs to be brought forth more. Better access for fishing if you don't have a boat.

Local people don't know the area. Many have never been down the river or in the mountains

Festivals, events, art films, music like Sandpoint, Idaho, and other similarly situated low-density towns.

If the family farm stays strong Chouteau County will survive. Tourism will not replace that. Tourism is an economic development strategy that we should pursue **but** so is agriculture.

The Missouri River is a beautiful place to visit and has a lot of history. However the litter and destruction done by "tourists" who float the river is unbelievable. I have picked up litter, put out fires, picked up injured persons, and repaired damage done by people who even tried to throw me off my own land when I was working cows. I don't appreciate the uneducated greenhorns that try to be "Montanans" for a week.

Keep advertising

Use more of the river. Offer more for kids. Offer more fishing and hunting opportunities.

Fort Benton takes too much credit from neighboring towns, like the eye of the needle, which should have been advertised as near Big Sandy.

Some sort of year round recreation (indoor waterslide, etc.)_I checked with local business and found, the three that I asked , tourism had little effect coast to coast. Said they sold some hunting licenses and bullets, barber said she cuts six or seven new heads, mostly for funerals. It seems to me a few people will benefit. Did you know the “cooks” have guiding on the river locked up? Restaurants may hire a waitress, motels may hire a maid- all minimum wage jobs. We need family supporting jobs. What have I realized? Increase in water rates every year. This year a proposed 45% increase. More people using it means more possible street closures because of too much traffic in the park. I say **no** to more tourism.

I think it's doing good and on the right track._With increased tourism, the sheriff's department will have to be more prominent in the outlying areas such as Highwood and Shonkin and others. It's hard enough with the Great Falls people who have no respect for the speed limits in the residential areas. This has become a big problem the last year and we worry for the school children who are about and the animals whose owners are too ignorant to take proper care of them. They can't stop a 50 mph loser who goes racing through.

Fix roads and promote local businesses.

Stop making Fort Benton the only town to benefit.

Don't know- People can and should be more knowledgeable about our area- friendlier_ I have gone to several other towns in the county and various activities and very seldom do you see any Fort Benton people there supporting the town or function. Fort Benton people get angry at Highwood, Big Sandy, or Geraldine if they have something going on the day that Ft. Benton wants a function, yet they do not support the other little towns. They think that we must support their functions though- Summer Celebration, Fair, craft shows, and community activities. Most people in Fort Benton have never been any other direction out of town- unless to go to a ball game. Fort Benton people do not shop at home but expect the smaller towns to support their businesses. I have yet to see very many people shop in the other towns in the county or help them much in their needs.

Recreational vehicle parks

As you may notice from my answers I am not interested in promoting Montana or Fort Benton for tourists. I firmly believe that many out-of-staters visit our once fair state then move here. Then they try to change things to be more like their big city life. I like Fort Benton, ChoCo, and Montana better the way it was- friendlier, personable, and a safer place to live. I think the only ones interested in tourists are the downtown businesses and personally I think their attempt to earn more money will have a huge negative affect on our beautiful countryside.

Promote the area- the settlement and development of the “Golden Triangle” rather than focusing on the Missouri River and Lewis and Clark history to the exclusion of the rest of the county._I am the president and co-chairman of the Big Sandy Chamber of Commerce. We need to work with Havre to develop tourism between Fort Benton and Hilina along the highway enticing tourists to take an extra day or two to get to Glacier or on their way home from Glacier. There is a great deal to see and to do between Great Falls and Havre. Big Sandy is starting to look at ways to promote tourism in our community and surrounding area.

Forget the tourism and put the money towards attracting some type of fulltime industry either in manufacturing or technology. It will have a far better return to the community through increased tax base and added jobs as opposed to the few tourists attracted during the summer. Tourism is a nice bonus but the Montana Plains will never be a full time or constant economic plus.

You need to get people to see that there is more to Montana than glaciers and forests that are beautiful and intriguing.

More advertisement out of state. Update agriculture and parks to make it nice. Also, more entertainment for kids._I think both of the parks could need some fixing- merry-go-rounds, swings, slides, teeter-totters, etc. Need work done on both parks, not just painting for Summer Celebration because town kids would like to play on these things also- but if they are broken, nobody will play on them. So don't just fix it for tourism but for kids in the community.

Bribe Rosicot with money!

Nicer hotels

Large RV park- overnight sleep- motel chain?

Improve roads.

Better facilities_Limited access to river because of tours and private parties floating the river. Tourist's poor traffic manners and not being conscious of traffic flow and speed.

I really question whether this survey is worth the cost to do it.

New motels/hotels and an RV complex.

Be friendlier

Leave the old jail and Shep where it was before torn down! Shep belongs up by the railroad tracks._I think that some of the people in our town should check out where to put Shep and see if they wanted to make another one. Could look into fixing up the old train station and fix up the information center up by the railroad tracks. Why should everything be downtown and around the Missouri River? We have a beautiful golf course, a peaceful and very pretty cemetery, a neat looking old depot, and a nice drive to Loma and through the backroads. Get out of the city limits and enjoy the beautiful ???? or ???? sky of Chouteau County and the other small towns. Okay?

Have more recreational attractions- something for drawing people with young families- no more history._I don't want the "Eye of the Needle" rebuilt in Fort Benton. I think it is a waste of money and a silly idea.

Immediate results could contact bus tours for part day trips.

Get Grand Union Hotel going.

More places to stay, motels, restaurants, RV parks, etc.

Quit bickering, drop petty jealousies, and work together in a positive manner.

Actually, I feel we're doing a good job. Other than that, maybe advertise more.

Have a place to camp. Advertise more about the history of the state beginning there.

They should not!

Redo Main Street, especially the Grand Union. Open up and advertise for two months of the year.

There have been many good improvements in the last decade.

Stay simple and quiet as they are now. We don't want this area looking like western Montana._I feel we should put our efforts into building a strong community that meets the needs of the people who live and work here- 95% which are engaged in producing our nation's/world's food supply. Why are we always trying to "sell" the "Last Best Place"? I am a native Montanan and it breaks my heart to see Montana slipping through our fingers (thanks to the greed of people out to make a buck by selling out our beautiful state to tourism, the film industry, and out of state interests in general).

Open businesses and more things to draw folks in.

Improve roads. Build motels/hotels to entice visitors to stay.

More advertising.

Cater to tourists.

Fix the Grand Union Hotel! Have more hotels!

Appendix - Copy of Resident Opinion Questionnaire