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Norma P. Nickerson

The University of Montana-Missoula

Christine Oschell

The University of Montana-Missoula

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College of Forestry
and Conservation
32 Campus Dr. #1234
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Phone (406) 243-5686
Fax (406) 243-4845
www.itrr.umt.edu

City Council and County Commissioners: Views Regarding Montana Tourism

Norma P. Nickerson, Ph.D.

Christine Oschell, Ph.D.

Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research
College of Forestry and Conservation
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812
www.itrr.umt.edu

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Executive Summary

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Introduction

In 2007 the Montana Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) created and adopted the Montana Tourism and Recreation Charter. Since that time, the management and promotion of tourism in Montana has been guided by geotourism principles. Geotourism provides an authentic travel experience while at the same time sustaining and even enhancing the geographical character of the destination. Five aspects of a travel destination which must be supported and conserved in order for this type of travel experience to be sustained over time are: the local environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and well-being of its residents.

Although geotourism is still a relatively new concept, the MT Tourism and Recreation Charter (based upon the geotourism charter provided by The National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations), highlights principles by which the industry and others should conduct itself for a sustainable industry. When businesses, communities, politicians and travel organizations adopt the Charter as their own, the guiding principles of geotourism will help maintain and sustain the uniqueness of Montana.

The Charter has eight main principles, each followed by more specific details and suggestions. The full charter can be accessed through: <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/charter>.

Montana Tourism and Recreation Charter – Eight Guiding Principles

1. Maintain integrity of place and destination appeal.
 2. Promote and highlight the businesses, services, and opportunities that are unique to Montana.
 3. Promote sustainable resource conservation, including conservation of energy, water, and wildlife.
 4. Participate in and help lead community stewardship partnerships to maintain Montana assets.
 5. Identify and appeal to markets that value and seek to help sustain Montana's distinct character.
 6. Foster a diversity of products and services that meet the demand of a demographic cross-section of the "geotourist market."
 7. Ensure visitor satisfaction and an enduring market demand through education of Montana residents about the benefits of sustainable tourism
 8. Work with the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, Travel Montana, and other tourism organizations throughout the state to evaluate effective implementation of the Tourism Charter.
-

The state Office of Tourism and numerous entities around the state (CVB's, chambers, commissions, councils, NGO's and others) have endorsed the Montana Tourism and Recreation Charter. However, since the charter reaches beyond tourism promotion and includes criteria for development, politicians, especially at the local level, have substantial influence on the "integrity of place and destination appeal." Therefore, it is important to understand the attitudes of local elected officials in regards to this charter. If locally elected officials are not in agreement with principles of the charter, it will be difficult to achieve the goals for which it was written. Agreement of local officials with the tourism charter principles would make the charter a stronger, more effective document.

Purpose

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to gauge the level of agreement local Montana elected officials have with the Montana Tourism and Recreation Charter and to understand where tourism fits in their decision making process when voting on issues as a county commissioner or a city council member. At this level of government, development decisions are made weekly if not daily and can affect the reasons why nonresidents are attracted to Montana. How these decisions are made, and, to what degree nonresident travel is considered in these decisions, could affect the Montana brand and the effectiveness of promoting and maintaining the Montana Tourism and Recreation Charter concepts.

Methods

A questionnaire was developed to assess agreement with the charter principles and to evaluate decision making priorities by elected officials. Twenty-two survey items were designed to reflect the charter principles. Nine survey items were developed to assess decision making priorities. The questionnaire was tested and refined before dissemination.

Two methods of survey distribution were used for this study. First, all city council and county commissioners who had publicly available email addresses were sent the survey by email. The remaining elected officials without available email addresses were sent a paper survey. Web surveys were sent to 270 elected officials while the paper survey was mailed to 213 elected officials.

Analysis of the data is presented in frequencies, mean scores by type of elected official, and finally by geographic region.

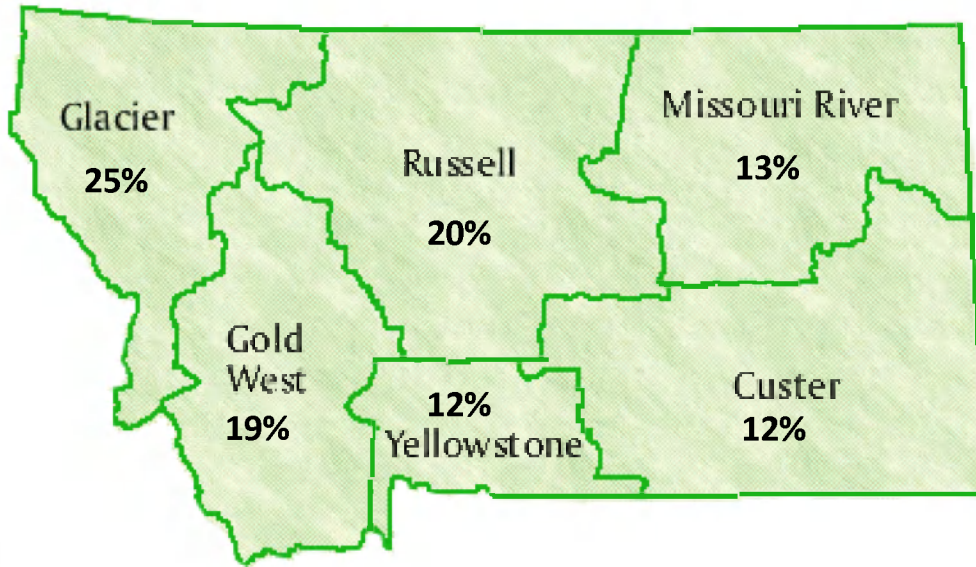
Results

Fifty-two County Commissioners and 89 city council members responded to the survey for a 31 percent response rate resulting in 145 completed surveys. Four individuals did not indicate if they were county commissioners or city council members. Table 1 shows the breakdown of respondents by travel region and elected office held. Overall responses by travel region are depicted in Figure 1.

Table 1: Response Rate by Travel Region

Travel Region	# of County Commissioners responded	# of City Council Members responded	Total
Glacier Country	13	19	32
Gold West Country	13	15	28
Russell Country	10	12	22
Yellowstone Country	4	16	20
Custer Country	6	8	14
Missouri River Country	6	19	25
TOTAL	52	89	141

Figure 1: Overall Percent of Response by Travel Region



Importance of Montana Tourism & Recreation Charter Principles

Elected officials were asked a series of questions about the importance the tourism industry should place on various geotourism related items. The scale for these items was from 1-5 with 1 being “Strongly disagree” and 5 being “Strongly agree.” A response of 3 was considered “neutral.” The frequency of the combined group of elected officials for each agreement scale is provided in Table 2. The mean response, separated by county commissioners and city council members is also provided in Table 2.

Most responses were in the neutral, agree, and strongly agree categories showing an agreement to the charter principles. There were a few elected officials who disagreed to some extent with some of these charter principles, but these officials were in the minority.

Both county commissioners and city council members rated “use local workforce” as the item they agreed with most. This was followed by “use local products, supplies, and services” for county commissioners and “support local culture” for city council members.

T-test for significant differences between county commissioner responses and city council member responses were conducted. No significant differences between the two types of elected officials on any of the charter statements were found. While the overall order of the means from highest to lowest were not quite the same between the county and city elected officials, the mean totals showed very little overall difference (County commissioners = 89.2; City Councils = 88.8). This indicates an agreement on the geotourism principles stated in the charter by both sets of elected officials.

Table 2: Tourism Industry Priorities Related to the Charter - Overall Frequencies; Elected Officials Mean Scores

It is important for the tourism industry to...	% Strongly disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	County Comm. Mean N=52	City Council Mean N=89
Use local workforce.	1%	1%	3%	34%	61%	4.56	4.54
Use local products, supplies, and services.	1%	1%	8%	42%	48%	4.43	4.32
Support local culture.	1%	1%	6%	49%	43%	4.33	4.33
Create a linkage between locally grown agricultural products and tourism businesses.	2%	1%	12%	47%	40%	4.28	4.22
Disseminate information to visitors about the distinctive assets of my community/county.	1%	--	9%	58%	32%	4.28	4.16
Measure traveler spending on local products and services.	6%	2%	12%	50%	28%	4.28	3.76
Support developments and improvements that are distinctive to our local traditions.	3%	--	11%	48%	39%	4.20	4.21
Build partnerships with MT groups to promote community-based economic development.	1%	4%	11%	52%	31%	4.20	4.19
Promote the unique qualities of my community/county in order to appeal to visitors who will help maximize our economic resiliency.	1%	1%	10%	53%	36%	4.15	4.31
Maintain the aesthetic appeal of my community/county.	3%	1%	9%	52%	36%	4.13	4.22
Encourage growth in tourism market segments most likely to appreciate and respect the distinctive assets of my community/county.	1%	1%	16%	51%	30%	4.11	4.06
Promote economic development that sustains the geographical character of my community/county.	2%	1%	12%	56%	29%	4.04	4.14
Perform ongoing research to identify travel markets.	2%	2%	16%	60%	20%	4.02	3.90
Measure trends in the number of locally owned tourism businesses.	2%	5%	23%	52%	18%	3.92	3.73
Test market advertising campaigns for effectiveness in reaching target markets who value what we value.	3%	4%	26%	51%	13%	3.87	3.57

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

Table 2 Con't.

It is important for the tourism industry to...	% Strongly disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	County Comm. Mean N=52	City Council Mean N=89
Build partnerships with MT groups to sustain the special character of MT.	1%	4%	11%	52%	31%	3.85	4.24
Encourage businesses to sustain and respect natural habitats.	3%	3%	16%	44%	35%	3.85	4.17
Perform ongoing research to gauge expectations of visitors to MT.	4%	6%	24%	47%	18%	3.85	3.62
Perform ongoing research to gauge attitudes of visitors to MT.	3%	6%	23%	51%	16%	3.83	3.65
Inform my community and schools how to nurture the natural history, culinary attractions, artisans, and performing arts in my area.	3%	3%	22%	46%	26%	3.83	3.95
Measure trends in development that sustains & enhances the geographical character of downtown/uptowns.	6%	3%	26%	45%	21%	3.75	3.72
Measure trends in MT's investment in rehabilitation and preservation.	3%	6%	28%	45%	17%	3.70	3.68
Encourage culturally appropriate businesses owned by American Indians.	2%	4%	33%	42%	18%	3.59	3.73

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

Decision Making

Elected officials were asked to reply to a series of questions regarding their decision making when voting on issues. Specifically, the question was, "When making decisions for your community/county, to what extent do you think about how your vote will..." Nine different statements completed the questions. Responses were on a scale where '1 = not at all,' "to "5 = all the time." Table 3 shows that when making decisions, both county commissioners and city council members consider economics and the quality of life of residents most often when making decisions. They think least about assisting the growth of local artisans but with a mean score of 3.17 and 3.15 respectively they still consider it to some extent.

In regards to tourism, both groups indicated that seven other statements were higher in their decision making compared to how it affects the tourism industry in their area. This result should be noticed by tourism entities. The tourism industry is being considered less frequently when these local elected officials are casting their votes. While the "consideration of the tourism industry" was low on the list, none of the mean scores were below 3 indicating that elected officials consider all of these items to some degree when they vote.

Table 3: What Elected Officials think about when Voting – Frequency and Means

When making decisions for your community/county, to what extent do you think about how your vote will...	% Not at all	% Very Little	% Sometimes	% Many times	% All the time	County Comm. Mean	City Council Mean
Help the economics of your area	--	3%	18%	33%	46%	4.33	4.16
Affect residents' quality of life	1%	4%	13%	33%	49%	4.24	4.28
Encourage development that works with the values held by your constituents	3%	6%	21%	38%	34%	4.04	3.91
Assist local farmers and producers	1%	13%	30%	31%	26%	3.93	3.53
Affect the character of your area	1%	10%	22%	20%	28%	3.76	3.93
Affect the natural habitat in your area	1%	11%	34%	32%	22%	3.67	3.65
Change the visual aspects of your community/county	2%	9%	32%	36%	21%	3.53	3.76
Affect the tourism industry in your community/county	3%	12%	44%	27%	14%	3.52	3.32
Assist the growth of local artisans	5%	19%	40%	26%	10%	3.17	3.15

1=Not at all; 2=Very little; 3=Sometimes; 4=Many times; 5=All the time

Priority Levels Assigned to the Tourism Industry by Elected Officials

Finally, elected officials were asked to give priority levels to a select number of tourism industry actions (Table 4). Striving to hire local people had the highest frequency of “very high priority” responses (48%) followed by “maintaining the character of Montana” (47% very high priority). These elected officials placed the lowest number of priority responses on the promotion of open space.

Table 4: Priority level of Six Select Tourism Industry Actions

Tourism Industry Actions	% Very Low priority	% Low priority	% Neutral	% High priority	% Very high priority	County Comm. Mean	City Council Mean
Strive to hire local people	--	--	5%	47%	48%	4.45	4.45
Maintain the character of MT	--	3%	11%	39%	47%	4.15	4.42
Help maintain MT's destination appeal	--	3%	10%	59%	29%	4.10	4.19
Strive to reduce energy consumption						3.52	4.00
Help prevent overdevelopment if against community values	6%	10%	15%	40%	28%	3.35	3.99
Encourage all types of tourism development	5%	11%	24%	42%	19%	3.74	3.50
Promote preservation of open space	10%	11%	21%	37%	21%	3.00	3.83

Geographic Analysis: Higher vs Lower Tourism Activity Level

An analysis of elected officials responses by geographic regions representing higher tourism areas compared to less visited tourism areas in Montana was conducted. According to expenditure data (ITRR 2011), nonresidents traveling in Montana spend the majority of their dollars in the western half of the state. In fact 71.2 percent of all dollars dropped in Montana by nonresidents occurs in the west (Glacier, Gold West, and Yellowstone Travel Regions). Figure 2 depicts the division created for this analysis. For this analysis, the high tourism area (west) represents 55 percent of all elected official responses while the east (lower tourism expenditure area) represents 45 percent of total elected official responses.

Figure 2: Geographic Split: West region/high tourism traffic; East region/lower tourism traffic



Geographic Comparisons: Importance of Charter Principles

Like the results seen previously in this report, none of the mean responses to the charter principles in Table 5 fell below the neutral level (3 points) which indicates an overall agreement on the importance of the charter principles by elected officials in high tourism areas as well as lower level tourism areas. However, some interesting results did emerge when comparing responses based on level of tourism activity geographically. Only one statement, “It is important for the tourism industry to use local workforce,” received the highest mean by both west and east elected officials. All other statements received differing responses (Table 5).

Elected officials in the west (higher tourism areas) responded with a higher agreement to every statement except one (“use local products, supplies, and services”). In addition, looking at the ratings from the highest mean to the lowest mean there is considerable difference in what was rated high by the west compared to the east (Table 5). It appears that the west is in more agreement with what the tourism industry should do regarding the charter statements than elected officials in the east.

Table 5: Tourism Industry Priorities – Western vs Eastern MT Comparison

It is important for the tourism industry to...	Western MT N=80	West Rating	Eastern MT N=61	East Rating
Use local workforce.	4.56	1	4.46	1
Support local culture.	4.41	2	4.23	3
Support developments and improvements that are distinctive to our local traditions.	4.38	3	3.98	9
Create a linkage between locally grown agricultural products and tourism businesses.	4.35	4	4.07	6
Use local products, supplies, and services.*	4.31	5	4.35	2
Maintain the aesthetic appeal of my community/county.	4.29	6	4.05	7
Promote the unique qualities of my community/county in order to appeal to visitors who will help maximize our economic resiliency.	4.29	6	4.15	4
Disseminate info to visitors about the distinctive assets of my community/county.	4.24	7	4.08	5
Measure traveler spending on local products and services.	4.19	8	3.64	
Promote economic development that sustains the geographical character of my community/county.	4.18	9	3.98	9
Encourage businesses to sustain and respect natural habitats.	4.16	10	3.92	10
Encourage growth in tourism market segments most likely to appreciate and respect the distinctive assets of my community/county.	4.13	11	4.02	8
Build partnerships with MT groups to sustain the special character of MT.	4.12	12	4.05	7
Build partnerships with MT groups to promote community-based economic development.	4.12	12	4.08	5
Perform ongoing research to identify travel markets.	4.03	13	3.82	11
Inform my community and schools how to nurture the natural history, culinary attractions, artisans, and performing arts in my area.	4.01	14	3.78	12
Perform ongoing research to gauge expectations of visitors to MT.	4.00	15	3.33	19
Perform ongoing research to gauge attitudes of visitors to MT.	3.96	16	3.40	18
Measure trends in development that sustains & enhances the geographical character of downtown/uptowns.	3.95	17	3.45	16
Measure trends in the number of locally owned tourism businesses.	3.87	18	3.69	13
Measure trends in MT's investment in rehabilitation and preservation.	3.86	19	3.42	17
Test market advertising campaigns for effectiveness in reaching target markets who value what we value.	3.83	20	3.52	15
Encourage culturally appropriate businesses owned by American Indians.	3.77	21	3.55	14

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

*The only statement where Eastern responses had a higher mean value than western responses

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to see if there were any significant differences in importance levels assigned to the charter principles between the two geographic regions because it appeared there were some differences. Six of the 23 statements showed significant differences between the east and west regions on the tourism charter principles. In all cases, the western travel region elected officials agreed more strongly with the tourism charter principles than did the eastern travel region elected officials. The six statements showing significant differences were.

1. Support developments and improvements that are distinctive to our local traditions.
2. Perform ongoing research to gauge expectations of visitors to MT.
3. Perform ongoing research to gauge attitudes of visitors to MT.
4. Measure trends in MT’s investment in rehabilitation and preservation.
5. Measure trends in development that sustains & enhances the geographical character of downtown/uptowns.
6. Measure traveler spending on local products and services.

Geographic Comparisons: Decision Making

An analysis of questions regarding elected official’s decision making when voting on issues by geographic region showed means that mostly followed in the same order from highest to lowest. However, elected officials in the western portion of the state were more likely to think of these issues than their eastern counterparts except in the statement of how their vote will affect local farmers and producers. Both groups consider the economy and the quality of life of residents very often in their decision making. However, thinking of tourism during their decision process ranked eight out of nine, indicating that both geographic regions have elected officials where tourism is not ‘top-of-mind.’ Nonetheless, these elected officials indicated that they do think about how their vote will affect the tourism industry a little more frequently than ‘sometimes’.

Table 6: What Elected Officials think about when Voting – Geographic Comparisons

When making decisions for your community/county, to what extent do you think about how your vote will...	Western MT	Eastern MT
Affect residents’ quality of life	4.30	4.17
Help the economics of your area	4.23	4.20
Encourage development that works with the values held by your constituents	4.09	3.77
Affect the character of your area	3.94	3.74
Affect the natural habitat in your area	3.73	3.57
Change the visual aspects of your community/county	3.67	3.67
Assist local farmers and producers	3.59	3.77
Affect the tourism industry in your community/county	3.51	3.20
Assist the growth of local artisans	3.20	3.09

1=Not at all; 2=Very little; 3=Sometimes; 4=Many times; 5=All the time

Geographic Comparisons: Priority Levels Assigned to the Tourism Industry by Elected Officials

Finally, comparing responses to the list of priority actions between the two geographic segments did not reveal any differences in rating and very little difference in mean scores. This indicates that the priorities overall are the same by elected officials across the entire state.

Table 7: Priority level of Six Select Tourism Industry Actions

Tourism Industry Actions	Western MT	Eastern MT
Strive to hire local people	4.43	4.42
Maintain the character of MT	4.42	4.14
Help maintain MT's destination appeal	4.29	3.94
Strive to reduce energy consumption	3.83	3.83
Help prevent overdevelopment if against community values	3.74	3.75
Encourage all types of tourism development	3.64	3.52
Promote preservation of open space	3.60	3.40

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gauge the level of agreement local Montana elected officials have with the Montana Tourism and Recreation Charter and to understand where tourism fits in their decision making process when voting on issues as a county commissioner or a city council member.

First of all, it appears from this data that the principles in the Montana Tourism and Recreation Charter are supported by both county commissioners and city council members throughout Montana. Even the lowest mean score (Table 2) had 60 percent of responses in the “agree” and “strongly agree” categories. This shows high support for the charter principles. A further look at the overall responses, however, does show that anywhere from 3 percent to 33 percent of elected officials indicated neutral on one or more charter statements. This could point to some lack of knowledge or understanding about the role of the travel industry in everyday life in Montana.

The additional analysis of the charter principle statements based on geographic location of elected officials showed the most interesting and significant results. Elected officials in the west (higher tourism area) are in more agreement to the charter statements than elected officials in the east. Therefore, the difference in support is not based on elected office held, rather it is based on the level of tourism activity in their area. Apparently, and not surprisingly, if an elected official is more likely to see and feel tourism where they live, they are more supportive. This is mostly likely due to their knowledge level about the role tourism plays in the economics and quality of life in their community/county. The omnipresence of tourism is not apparent to everyone, especially those in lesser visited areas.

Interestingly, however, when elected officials gave priorities to the seven Geotourism charter statements, the differences between west-east were much less defined. The means of the priority statements were more likely to be different between county commissioners and city council members. For instance, city council members were more likely to make “promote preservation of open space” a priority than commissioners. Open space is one of the top attractions to Montana for nonresidents. County Commissioners have a lot of legal power to change the face of open space in Montana which means there may be a slight disconnect on this issue. Managers and business owners in the tourism industry should use Table 4, “Priority level of six selected tourism industry actions,” to decide which elected officials they feel need further information about tourism.

Finally, a concerning result is the lack of frequent consideration of the tourism industry when county commissioners and city council members vote. This consideration was second to the bottom in mean scores. Although tourism is a large contributor to Montana’s economy, these officials are indicating that they do not consider tourism very often when they are making some of these critical decisions.

References

ITRR (2011). Nonresident Visitor Expenditure by Location. Accessed Nov. 9, 2011:
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Appendix A- ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS

There is much ignored beauty in eastern Montana and plenty to do if one takes time to find our unique places, events, and people. Montana is more than mountains and rivers.

Eastern Montana is not North Dakota or Wyoming. We overlook opportunities to our neighbors to the north. I fear that the Neanderthals that sit at the local coffee shops and have not had an original idea since the fifties will get in the way of anything positive. I remain positive about the love I have for my state.

Montana needs more development of natural resources. It creates jobs and supplements taxes.

Tourism should support the current economic driver of any community. Some places resource development is more important than resource protection. Our county has lots of public ground and hunting and fishing are big industry here so we need to maintain good access to this ground. We hear lots of comments that wilderness areas limit this access to most of our hunting population.

More money needs to be distributed to these little towns to support their festivals. Custer Country's headquarters should be relocated to the new visitor's center at the Big Horn County Historical Museum because it is the point of entry on Interstate 90. We have a unique situation here in Hardin because our Little Big Horn Days is held on the anniversary of the Custer Battle. Yet, Billings always has a "Wild West Soiree" on the same weekend which features similar events. The communities in these "countries" need to work together and coordinate activities. And this is AFTER the Billings Chamber is being paid to house the Custer Country headquarters. The communities also need to have better signage and help with websites. The local employers and employees need to have training on answering visitor's questions, but "SuperHost" doesn't work.

Eastern Montana has a lot to offer to tourists that they do not have the opportunity to see. This is due to the lack of advertising what is here. When Montana is advertised to potential tourists the western part of Montana is mentioned and pictured. For example, I was returning home and stopped at the visitor center east of Medora North Dakota which overlooks the badlands. In talking to a tourist family who visits western Montana every year but always stops at the center and visits Medora because of how beautiful they think the badlands are. I mentioned to them about the Makoshika State Park in Glendive which is just a short drive from Medora. Makoshika Park has much more for the tourists to see and which they are able to observe closer and relate to than Medora. This State Park is never mentioned nor is the beauty of the park portrayed in any advertisement that our State advocates toward tourists. I am very proud of our State but feel we only share half of it.

ITRR has been a great resource for us in the past. Thank you.

Thank you, ITRR does great work

The tourism industry should be market driven and not a function of government

eureka is a very friendly town, just like all of Montana, we enjoy people visiting our state..

This survey is yet another example of surveying to reach a previously determined answer. Many of the questions address issues that have little to do with the tourism industry, rather, use it as a vehicle to promote the same old restrictions and heavy handed regulations against the development community. A few ask whether or not tourism should be concerned about issues over which they have no input whatsoever. Please attempt, in the future, to ask questions to gather data rather than gathering the information you need to support a particular point of view. Lastly, in the future I will be very suspect of any data or conclusions disseminated by this organization. I would think that credibility is a valuable asset for a group like yours.

All we have in the County is our resources, we need to change the ESA and get back to what we traditionally do!!!!!! Log and Mine

I have owned a tourist related business since 1992. They love Montana! I saw visitors from all over the United States and many European countries after the movie "A river runs through it" was shown at theatres. The tourists all said the same thing: we came to see if it was really that beautiful. Some of the visitors continue to visit Montana, some bought property for retirement and some quit their jobs and moved to Montana. Let's make some more movies that highlight our beautiful State. One thing that is sadly lacking in small communities is some type of entertainment in the evening. They want to have something they can enjoy. I appreciate Montana's outdoor recreation, however, not everyone wants to recreate. We need more focus on Heritage Tourism and live theatre.

You speak of the "character of Montana", but I wonder who defines that value.

Montana's tourism industry is huge and one of the few things we have to promote in our region. I hope everyone will take it seriously and do their part, and I Thank You for your efforts to help us. I am also glad that someone has asked local official and resident, rather than just doing the study with the knowledge they have. It means something to me in Yellowstone County.

Frankly, this survey leaves me with feeling- a negative feeling. Without further ponderance, and I am not going to take any more time, my intuition tells me that this is rigged and the questions are going to come up with the answers that you want, and knew, before this was presented. With that in mind I found myself not really caring what I answered. And I wonder who is presenting this survey and where it will be used- seems kind of official but I now wonder. If you are legit, my guess is that this will be used to validate your existence and get further money for studies. And that being said, I know that tourism is big, and valid, important to our state, and I support wherever I can- it is this survey which seems hokey.

Be certain our MTDOT provides the much need repairs for our highways. Friendly Port of Entry employees at our Border Stations. Funding is available to work with our local Economic Development individuals and not try to regionalize them.

Tourism is a poor way to develop an economy. Low paying jobs and seasonal. very little effort should be put into tourism

Infrastructure like motels and recreational facilities must be invested in and built before we'll ever see any tourism through our area.

Montana needs a sales tax, tourism in a lot of cases use all our services and pay little for it.

I want to encourage the National Park Service to relocate their visitor Center and Museum at the Little Bighorn Battlefield so that they can accommodate their collection and enlarge their parking lot. The best possible site would be at the Reno Battlefield which is where the battle began. It is also probably the site of the most nearly famous and most neglected battlefield in the United States. In the meantime, I think that the collection should be stored at the Big horn County Historical Museum in Hardin. People come to Montana to see three things...the Battlefield, Yellowstone and Glacier Parks. We need to focus.

Montana is a very unique state with very unique area's throughout the state. I believe each Travel Region should allow area's within their Travel Region to promote themselves and not just the Regional approach. (For example everyone that visits The Glacier Region; is coming to Montana to see Glacier Park.) People visit Montana for local events as well as Regional attractions. Allow County's and or City's a little larger piece of the Tourist dollar to promote local events. People staying in the local motels and hotels are not just traveling to the Regional attraction.

Tourism should be contributing as much or more to the economy of Montana, through taxes or existing revenue, to the same extent as this "legislature" is forcing the energy producing Counties to contribute. Most of the tourism revenue comes from the western part of Montana and it is about time they shared some of their wealth with the Eastern part of this state. This sharing of revenue will greatly enhance the State of Montana and would lessen the pain being inflicted on Eastern Montana.

Tourism is vital to Missoula and the state of Montana if we are to truly be the Treasure State of the 21st century.

We have a great group based in Darby Montana called Bitterroot Valley Business Group - they take in the area from Lost Trail to Lost Horse and Wisdom participates. I think where you folks should be looking is to these folks who have businesses and are working to help keep each other in business - mainly through tourism. I am going to give you the e-mail to the people who head up this BVBG and would hope that you would get a hold of them to get their ideas on what they need!! The ladies name is Adele and the e-mail is mountainspiritinn@hughes.net Might help so efforts are not duplicated!

Because my community is east of Billings, I find that more often than not, we are neglected when it comes to tourism promotion. Contrary to popular belief, there is life in Eastern Montana and Billings is not the only answer.

I think making our cities more safe, convenient, and pleasing for pedestrians will help attract and retain tourists. Preserving historic and scenic assets, public art, small retail business districts, locally-owned restaurants, and more attractive entryway corridors are all important in attracting tourists to our cities. Making our entryway corridors more attractive will take a long time. We need to gradually move to smaller signs, and enforce existing local ordinances by granting variances only where a clear hardship exists for the business. Entry ways are generally commercial strips that are very automobile oriented and need better sidewalks, pedestrian connectivity, and shared parking. Routes to downtowns, historic districts, museums, and other local attractions need to be clearly marked in entryway corridors.

This State has SO MUCH to offer visitors. We all have a responsibility to preserve and promote all our natural and historic treasures, as well as protecting the environment that makes Montana such a special place.

I believe that one of the most critical affects of quality of life and environment is preservation of personal liberty and private property rights. Far too much emphasis is being placed on removing humans from large swaths of the natural environment when it is perceived that property rights run contrary to good stewardship. I think we need less wilderness and public lands mismanagement and more private stewardship.

We are against the federal government land grabs and are for more Natural Resource Development.

Downtown development is a appropriate. Anyone can have a box store. What draws tourists is local color, architecture, and history. Clean invisible industry with good wages and lots of jobs is important too!

Limit development by small rural state parks i.e. Medicine Rocks, Issac Homestead, Pirogue Island

Montana is a very large, very beautiful state. Whatever we need to do to keep it that way should be a no-brainer. Our legislators need to work a little harder to make it easier for new business and industry of any kind to come to Montana and make it work.

Red Lodge has never been promoted as a destination for visitors. We are at the foot of the Beartooth Highway one of the most beautiful drives in the country. I would like to see Red Lodge considered when promoting tourism in Montana.

Really promote the early settlement and mining history of communities within the Gold West Country. Promote the early day of Grant Kohrs Ranch, the old Territorial Prison, the findings of gold an the lawlessness that followed and the rise of Butte and Anaconda as coffee producers. Let the world know that if they want the human development of social and industrial development, Montana is the place to visit.

None at this time

We compete in the World market place with limited dollars without further cuts.

Keep historical buildings available to tour not tear down if at all possible-keep historic grants available to cities/towns/counties. The EDA is coming out with a lot of outreach lately, especially here in Gallatin County, that I believe would really benefit the small municipalities of this very tourism-driven/based area.

Some of your questions are vague--not sure what you are asking. Tourism does not provide the best possible job base for the economy.

The common enemy of humanity is man. In searching for a new enemy to unite us, we came up with the idea that pollution, the threat of global warming, water shortages, famine and the like would fit the bill. The real enemy then is humanity itself. From the Club of Rome's "The First Global Revolutions" p. 71,75 1993. Be careful what you're doing and who you are associating with. This green socialist agenda is not sustainable and not good for America or Montana.

Communicate with communities as what they need/want. Provide accurate information and all inquires.

Focus on uniqueness of each area, don't lump us altogether

We need to push for smart code to make our communities self sustainable.