

From: <info@machiaschamber.org>
Date: Wed, Mar 23, 2022 at 10:43 AM
Subject: Memo on Tourism Economy
To:

Dear members,

Here is a quick memo regarding your Chamber's efforts to help build the tourism economy in the greater Machias area. There are two more sessions and I'll report back to you when they are held in April and May.

Machias was well represented last week at The Community Destination Academy, a 3-part series held in-person at Cobscook Institute in Lubec. The Chamber was tasked with inviting 12-15 people who are leaders in business, government, and community to help create a vision for the future tourism economy in Washington County. Three other areas were also represented: Calais, Eastport and Lubec.

The workshop was led by David Beurle of Future IQ, an international expert on economic and tourism trends. Also attending were Steve Lyons of the Maine Department of Tourism, representatives from the Maine Tourism Association, representatives from Downeast Acadia Regional Tourism, local and community government.

I, Selectman James Jackson, Sarah Dedmon, Maria Lamb, Jacqueline Leonard of UMM, and County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald represented Machias. Unfortunately, 8 people that were invited and confirmed did not show up.

It was a very full day of discussions, brainstorming and small working groups focused on looking forward and assessing what is working now for our tourism economy and how we can balance growth with the natural environment already here. It was stated that tourism is like a fire: It can warm your house but it can also burn it down. There is a great need for balance in looking forward. A common theme was: We do not want to be Bar Harbor.

I wanted to share with you some of the statistics that state officials presented. Washington and Hancock Counties are linked when data is collected which skews the numbers because of Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park. To get a more accurate picture of Washington County, we can use one quarter of the results as ours.

TRENDS: It is no surprise the trends are towards outdoor recreation and the use of public spaces. According to the 2021 Economic Impact and Visitor Tracking study, conducted by the state of Maine, Way Downeast

visitors are different from those in the rest of the state. They are more inquisitive and enjoy the outdoors more.

In 2021, Tourism brought in \$1.5 billion dollars, which is 57% over the previous year.

Two million visitors were unique (first time), an increase of 33%, and 1.5 million room nights were up by 40%.

This created 16,400 jobs which paid \$544 million in wages. For every 127 visitors, a tourism-based job is created. Tourism dollars saves \$3,500 in taxes per household.

Why are people pouring into Way Downeast? They are coming for sightseeing, relaxation, bird watching and nature, in number higher than the rest of the state. They are coming from all over the mid-Atlantic states.

They have an average of 2.9 in their party, 1 in 5 are with children, average age is 49 years old, 53% are female, 88% are Caucasian, 78% are married, \$100,000 is their median income, 81% are college graduates, and 2 out of 5 said it was their first trip to Maine, 4 in 5 stayed overnight for an average of six nights.

There is a second visioning session set for April which will likely expand on how to use these numbers to promote our areas and help our businesses survive and thrive.

Sharon Mack, Executive Director
MBACC, 207.255.4402
2 Kilton Lane, PO Box 606
Machias, ME 04654