

6.0 Community Tourism Development

The preceding sections of this report have analyzed the supply and demand side issues related to the development of outdoor tourism products and activities in the Columbia District. In this section, the analysis shifts away from activities and onto communities. The implications of development are identified, along with possible strategies for the type of change that is capable of fulfilling economic needs while preserving or even enhancing the quality of life for residents.

The market and trend research suggests that tourism will continue to expand its economic profile in the Columbia District, and, in time, comprise a greater share of the economic base than any other BC region outside of Vancouver/Whistler. The tourism industry and outdoor operators will develop more innovative products, match these to increasingly valuable niche markets and attract the financial and human capital necessary to drive development. Jobs and new sources of regional income will be created. In economic terms, the region will be more diversified and wealthier than it is today. But will it be a better region in which to live, socialize, raise a family, recreate and do business? What costs will communities be willing to bear for these ends?

We have closely reviewed the existing research and the results of our community consultation process in preparing the following discussion. The key community challenges are as follows:

- Building a sustainable tourism economy that conforms to overall community social, environmental and economic goals.
- Supporting this with a land use planning and resource management process that has a legitimate element of local input and control.
- Strategic use of community infrastructure and human resources.
- Industry and network development that maximizes local ownership and control of tourism businesses.

Tourism in the study area remains essentially a small business sector with a high degree of resident ownership and management, and as such, remains a valuable target for community development initiatives. Efforts to support and expand small business should be integrated with efforts to foster and attract businesses of all sizes that are compatible with community and tourism visions for development.

6.1 Development Issues

The outdoor adventure sector is an important contributor to the tourism industry and the economic base of the Columbia District. An increasing number of operators are adapting to the growing demand among tourism markets for outdoor activities by utilizing the local land and natural resource base to expand

their operations. Participation rates in most outdoor recreation activities are growing in North America and fueling the demand for more active, educational and learning-oriented outdoor experiences. As a major entry point for Trans Canada Highway traffic, the Columbia District handles a significant amount of total BC visitation in the summer months and is relatively well placed to expand its share of the growing outdoor market. In fact, visitor data for the Rockies region shows a quarter of all visitors have come to participate in outdoor and backcountry activities. We also know that many of the natural features in the area (e.g. mountains, scenery, parks, etc.) have a very strong appeal for the outdoor market, and indeed, for the average traveller.

In spite of the positive trends, travellers tend to spend less time and less money in the region than they do in the rest of the province during their trips. This suggests a close-in, untapped potential for further outdoor adventure tourism development. But the status quo is unlikely to lead communities to a diversified tourism base; otherwise expenditure and length of stay averages would be higher than they are. There are several product, market, service and infrastructure gaps that could be addressed to strengthen tourism and generate the types of economic benefits communities could use. The following list of key issues was identified through research or during the community consultation process for this project, notably workshop and interview program results.

- A. **Target Marketing** - Outdoor adventure tourism is evolving rapidly and becoming increasingly specialized. Governments, communities and operators who wish to cater more to these markets must understand that their motives for travel are fundamentally different from the typical traveller's motives. The existing tourism industry targets highway touring travellers who are socially oriented – outdoor adventure travellers are attraction oriented and there must be a stronger appeal made to their desire for wilderness, wildlife, parks, learning, nature and physical activity. Catering to outdoor adventure markets means incorporating these ideas in the management of natural resources and the provision of tourist services.
- B. **Visitor Information** - As travel markets become more specialized, the importance of having access to accurate visitor profiles grows. Operators, communities and policy-makers all need this information if they are to make informed decisions about tourism development in all its forms. Unfortunately, the quality of information about visitors to BC is typically poor with province-wide entry-exit surveys conducted only twice in the last 15 years. Visitor data from travel info centres tends to be passively gathered, biased and unrepresentative of the average traveller. Parks Canada visitor information is generally of high quality but accounts only for park visitors. This leaves a major gap in market intelligence and effectively leaves local areas guessing about their tourism customers.

- C. **Industry Training** - Communities and industry often underestimate the importance of good tourist reception and overall hospitality skills to the visitor experience. Whether by hotel, park, or guiding staff, consistent standards of service and excellence will payoff tenfold through positive word-of-mouth and travel industry coverage. Getting small business operators to commit to ongoing skill upgrading and training standards will be important for the Columbia District.
- D. **Operator Accreditation** - At present, many outdoor adventure operators are reluctant to engage in industry certification programs because they do not see a payoff. But outdoor adventurers and ecotourists are facing a growing variety of destination choices and tour companies have limited ability to check on product quality. Unlike most consumer products, which can be directly viewed, the tourism product is often purchased without the usual direct sources of information. As outdoor adventurers have been shown to distrust typical advertising and consumer information provided by the industry, they often search for other signs of value, such as word-of-mouth reputation or environmental group accreditation. Accreditation schemes provide a higher level of consumer assurance of quality and, therefore, a higher level of consumer satisfaction.
- E. **Market and Product Development** – The demand for the outdoor products that the Columbia District either has or could develop already exists and it is growing quickly. Local success in catering to these markets depends largely on the market and product development skills of local operators. Since the bulk of the adventure travel and ecotourism sector are very small operations, this represents a significant challenge.
- F. **Infrastructure** - Further infrastructure will be required as a support base for tourism product development. This will come in many forms, from private sector hospitality and supply services to public sector infrastructure (e.g. municipal services, entertainment services/night-life, beautification of town streets, non-motorized shopping areas, etc.) and Crown land access, and it will differ by community. With new public infrastructure, it will be much easier to control backcountry development and to leverage private sector spending.
- G. **Highways** - The highway system in the Columbia, despite its stature as a major point of entry into BC of the Trans Canada Highway, is poor and a liability to economic development in general and tourism development in particular. With no major commercially scheduled air services, the highways are the sole means of entry and departure for travellers in the summer and the winter (when road conditions are often risky). With frequent road closures during the winter and several high profile traffic accidents in the recent past, any significant expansion in the number of travellers through the region will create logistical problems for tourism operators along with heightened safety concerns.

- H. **Resource Management** - The limits of acceptable change to the natural environment was questioned by several survey respondents and interview contacts in both Golden and Revelstoke. All human actions in natural areas cause some impact, either positive or negative. The scale can vary quite a bit depending on visitor volumes and frequency, and the nature (type) of the activity. The question that some areas in BC are now facing is how much impact is acceptable? The amount of environmental and social impact allowed is a land management decision, involving the legal and policy environment of the land base, the existing use levels, the desires of the tourists and the larger political environment. Many have expressed concerns that the determination of impact, the assessment of the acceptability of the impact, the management of the impact and the monitoring of the impact are not being done. Given the complexity of these decisions, an open decision structure that allows for input from all interested parties is essential.
- I. **Conflict Management** - High levels of use, varying recreation goals and finite resources lead to conflict amongst local recreational groups and tourism operators. Competition for access to resources, dispute over activities at a site, and use densities are pivotal issues. It is essential that such conflict be kept to a minimum, so as to avoid tourist dissatisfaction, physical interactions and loss of community support for tourism development. Managers typically use temporal and spatial separation to eliminate conflict. However, some uses are ruled to be totally unacceptable, with access denied. Other activities are allowed within a narrow range of behaviours. The critical management issue is the process used to decide who gets access and when access occurs. Land managers need to understand the diversity of visitors' motives, the outcomes necessary to attain the tourists' goals and the consequences of people interacting with others with different agendas. The community can bridge an intelligence gap between the tourism industry and Crown land managers by supplying locally-based solutions to resource user conflicts.
- J. **Enforcement and Monitoring** - Policies and programs designed to control backcountry tourism will be ineffective if an enforcement and monitoring system is not in place. It is possible for a small percentage of the visitor population or a small number of operators to have a large and negative impact on the natural and social environment. While this is not a major issue in the Columbia District currently, there are some signs that problems may arise down the road, which could be averted by proposing effective local solutions now.
- K. **Financial Resources** - Tourism is considered to be an export industry because of its ability to earn foreign currency. It is this feature that makes the industry so attractive. However, the flow of economic benefits from tourism does not necessarily benefit the ecosystems on which the tourism depends. This can lead to under-funding, insufficient visitor management and destructive practices such as trail erosion, road damage, wildlife harassment,

sewage runoff, and poaching. The erosion of money from government for park management over the last decade is an example of what can happen when budget allocations do not keep pace with management needs. There are numerous instances in Canada, the US and Australia with little or no infrastructure in established parks, much of it in poor repair, some facilities closed due to safety risk and insufficient resources for enforcement. In BC the situation is mirrored across the Crown land base – major land managers such as the BC Ministry of Forests have no mandate for tourism and therefore direct no specific public funds for tourism management. Yet, the outdoor adventure industry is critically dependent upon the long-term viability of the management of the natural environment by government agencies. The inadequate resources for management results in overuse, environmental damage and ultimately the compromising of outdoor adventure tourism potential. It is critical that government recognize that tax-based budgets should fund tourism resource management.

6.2 Development Recommendations

- A. **Implementation** – One of the risks in preparing development strategies is that issues involving implementation are not given the same attention to detail that went into the planning. Without a commitment to action even the most insightful analyses will be unable to generate the concrete results communities seek in diversifying their economies. There may be a number of underlying causes, from a shortage of resources for implementation to a lack of ownership for strategy recommendations by the community. While this project is funded by provincial agencies, efforts have been made to involve communities at all levels of discussion since it is assumed that the successful development of sustainable outdoor adventure tourism is in many ways driven by local stakeholders. There is reasonably good implementation capacity in the region, with well-established and active economic development offices, chambers of commerce, tourism operators and recreation groups.

Affected organizations should meet with the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture and Ministry of Forests - to discuss future use of project output, including map products, strategic recommendations and possible areas of assistance for project development. Individual organizations could also identify priority opportunities and areas of potential collaboration within their existing mandates and operating frameworks.

- B. **Tourism Vision** – There are several economic development and land use planning processes either recently completed or underway in both Golden and Revelstoke that directly or indirectly affect outdoor adventure tourism in the region. These are noted in Chapter 4. Revelstoke included a Tourism Vision Statement in its 1997 Tourism Development Strategy, however, what has not occurred to date at a district level is the preparation of a cohesive

vision or plan that clearly charts a future state for tourism as articulated and agreed upon by the communities themselves. Without that vision, it is impossible to recommend initiatives that may or may not have community support. This report sorts through many of the issues facing outdoor adventure tourism in the Columbia region, and makes some basic recommendations, at a broad, strategic level. It does not purport to be a detailed plan for community action, only a guidepost for future development. Outdoor adventure tourism, which has considerable potential in the study area, is a concept that embodies community-centred planning and control. Golden and Revelstoke should build upon this project, the recreation planning recently completed by the Ministry of Forests and land use planning efforts such as the Golden Recreation Access Plan and the Revelstoke Area Recreation Inventory, by bringing together as many community stakeholders as possible and producing a tourism vision for the region. Areas of action could include:

- Review value and vision-related statements made over the last 10 years from previous community planning exercises. From these can be identified common themes that relate to how tourism development affects the communities and the region. Tourism values can be cross-referenced with areas experiencing development and use pressures.
- Investigate case study profiles from tourism development impacts in other communities and regions to stimulate local discussions about desired tourism impacts, values and visions.
- Use a combination of interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and community forums to determine whether there are common community values and visions for tourism development.

Case: Dubois, Wyoming

When a local sawmill closed its doors in 1988, residents of frontier-town Dubois quickly organized a public workshop to determine how they could rebound from the loss of their largest employer. The group decided that rather than try to attract a new industry, Dubois needed to diversify its economy in a way that leveraged its most abundant assets – wildlife and wild lands. Today, the Dubois economy is a healthy mix of ranchers, hunting and fishing guides, wilderness outfitters, tourism-oriented businesses, and entrepreneurs who have relocated to the area because of its scenery and recreational lands.

The mill's closure may have actually helped Dubois by forcing residents to prepare for the future. In 1993, the community received a significant economic boost with the opening of the National Bighorn Sheep Centre, a cooperative project financed by Dubois residents, federal and state agencies, conservation organizations and local economic development groups.

Despite its successes, Dubois was not without its problems. There has been an influx of newcomers in search of small-town values and beautiful scenery and along with it has come new investment in the city's downtown. Some citizens began to worry that growth would lead Dubois down the path of its upscale neighbour, Jackson Hole. After a widely attended community workshop a series of citizens' committees were formed to work towards the goals that were established. Initiatives included a downtown revitalization,

land use planning, architectural guidelines for homes and businesses, affordable housing and a mapping exercise focusing on the most important wildlife habitat in the region.

The key to Dubois's success may lie in its refusal to follow the traditional economic development textbook for rural communities and instead trying to find economic opportunities that allow it to build on its existing assets.

Source: Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Jim Howe et al, 1997.

- C. **Community Cooperation** – There are a number of organizations actively engaged in community economic development and tourism development in the Columbia District, but only a limited amount of joint planning takes place, even though there are some issues that could be effectively dealt with at a regional level. This is particularly true of outdoor adventure tourism, where activity is dispersed over the regional land base, and where there tends to be a lot of common land use, resource management, infrastructure and market issues. Collaborating and identifying initiatives of mutual benefit could improve the planning environment and save resources. Possible areas of cooperation include:
- Shared research on sustainable tourism concepts, land use planning, community involvement and market information.
 - Themed product development
 - Trail and tourism infrastructure coordination
 - Operator and industry networks.
 - Design and delivery of training programs.
- D. **Gateway Development** – Golden is currently one of three communities in BC approved for MSBTC's Park and Backcountry Gateways Program. Program funding is available for one year and is usually targeted at specific project developments and labour assistance (e.g. a tourism coordinator). Budgeted expenditures are set forth in a business plan prepared by the community. Competition for the program funding is understandably intense, and although Revelstoke's potential for true gateway development would seemingly qualify it for support, the likelihood of funding is poor because it is so close to Golden. Therefore, collaboration between the two communities regarding gateway initiatives would be beneficial.
- E. **Community Support** – Gaining community support for outdoor adventure tourism is important to minimizing the negative aspects of growth, one of the cornerstones of sustainability. In Golden and Revelstoke the planning literature over the last 10 years makes frequent reference to the lack of support for tourism among community leaders and stakeholders. This may be attributable to any number of factors including:

- Residents are often against tourism fearing an influx of tourists and their interests, and the possibility of being exploited by the larger tourism interests and their concerns.
- Competing resource users and land managers often see any increase in recreation and tourism as a threat to their own interests and livelihood.
- Tourism is frequently categorized as a creator of low-paying seasonal jobs that somehow cannot contribute to a community's economic base.

All tourism needs local support, but particularly nature-based tourism, as it is so often linked to community involvement. Considering that the attractions and the features most valued by tourists are also prized by the community, tourism operators must strive to involve the community in project planning, and vice versa, the community must work with the tourism industry to ensure community values and interests are incorporated in the development process. Areas of action could include:

- Working with councillors and other elected officials to understand the growing importance of tourism to the local economy. According to the Ministry of Finance, tourism is the second-most important private sector contributor to the local economic base in both Golden and Revelstoke; of the 63 communities studied in the province, only four had a higher degree of dependence on tourism than the Columbia District. An annual report card on the progress of tourism development in the region, identifying and tracking project developments and communicating these to media contacts and stakeholders could be prepared.
- Alternatively, a "tourist in your own town program" program could be launched. In Golden, this could be an extension of the "Golden Welcome" program and its local marketing component.
- Establishing a community consultation network consisting of community groups with an interest in outdoor adventure tourism development. Ideas on projects and policies can be fed into the community through the network, tapping into the skills and expertise of committed individuals. The objective would be to determine outcomes and not generate "talk-fests".
- Identifying opportunities where major industry (e.g. forest companies) can collaborate with tourism operators on tourism projects.

Case: Traversee de Charlevoix

Traversee de Charlevoix is a Saint-Urbaine, Quebec-based company which provides cottages for hut-to-hut hiking, and these have suffered vandalism, in part because of other users (hunters, ATV and snowmobile users) feeling their own activities are threatened. Their approach has been patient, and diplomatic, involving discussions around the fact that all users should be able to co-exist. They offer other user groups the use of their log cottages (which previously suffered from vandalism and destruction). This encourages all users to share a sense of ownership. The company knows that this is a long-term challenge for them, with a number of problems to overcome. For example, in order that hunters not feel a sense

of conflict, and vandalise company property, they have agreed to refrain from using the area in autumn, and leave it to hunters. They hope that in the future, the rights of all users at all times will be respected. To assist in mutual understanding, they are trying to recruit staff that come from the areas with the most vandalism, to create alliances, and to promote regional pride. They feel that when the entire population understands the benefits that tourism brings, as well as understands the costs of vandalism, that significant progress will have been made toward this.

Source: Catalogue of Exemplary Practices in Adventure Travel and Ecotourism, Pam Wight and Associates, 1999.

F. **Visitor Information** – Understanding visitors and their motivations for travel is the most important subsystem of any community tourism marketing program. Successful tourism programs require a strong market orientation. The needs and wants of the tourists the community wants to attract and serve must be the focus of much of the marketing and development activity. Therefore, it is important to clearly understand which tourism market segments are to be attracted and served. Tourists in general, and even outdoor adventure visitors, fall into a very diverse set of categories with quite distinct needs and wants. Presently, the quality of visitor information available to marketers in the Columbia District is quite poor, as indeed it is for the province in general. A priority should be placed on improving identification of the different types of tourists, or market segments that Golden and Revelstoke presently serve or would like to serve. Neither Tourism BC's Visitor 97 profile information nor Travel Info Centre visitation statistics are suitable datasets for structuring a local marketing program. Communities in the Columbia District have only a loose understanding of the customers of their second largest industry.

Parks Canada's treatment of visitor data may be a model for communities to follow. At one time, Parks in the Rockies collected very little visitor data. In the 1990s anecdotal databases were constructed and gradually transformed with a succession of surveys focusing on highway and backcountry visitors. Today, their visitor profile has a strong empirical base and is far superior to anything available on non-park visitors.

One or more data collection approaches might be considered:

- A visitor survey which would identify the size and nature of the existing market and asks basic questions about primary market segments, origin of visitors, use of local businesses and facilities, reasons for visiting, their source of information about the community and their level of satisfaction with their trip. Such a survey was conducted by summer students in Golden in the summer of 1992 and generated very useful market information. While a variety of methodologies could be used (mail, self-administered, telephone) personal interviews may be most practical, though not inexpensive. Visitors can be interviewed as they are leaving attractions or accommodations. The literature offers numerous visitor survey guides.

- A simple database on customers and survey results can be built and used to target marketing programs.
- A market survey (e.g. by telephone) also could be conducted among households in a regional target such as Calgary.

Case: Wilcox Arizona

The Willcox, Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture knew that they had to take some positive, aggressive steps to stimulate business in the Willcox area. Their final decision turned out to be not only creative, but also successful.

Using a simple visitor questionnaire, the Willcox Chamber discovered that many of the tourists visiting and staying in Willcox were from rural areas in the Midwest. Such visitors felt Willcox was unique because it so closely resembled a Midwestern farming town, but was located in Arizona's mild climate. According to Chamber manager Ellen Clark, "We found that over half the visitors stopping at the Chamber office for information have a rural farm interest or background. They are the ones the area really seems to appeal to."

In response to this information, the Chamber decided to concentrate its limited tourism budget on promoting Willcox to rural residents of the Midwest. Chamber tourism chairman Dick Seidel proposed a "Spend a Fun 'Farmer's Holiday' in Sunny Arizona" ad that was run in a Midwestern farm magazine. The ad was jointly sponsored by the Willcox Chamber of Commerce and the Arizona State Department of Tourism.

To aid the visitors when they arrive, the chamber developed a self-guided tour of area farms and ranches and a brief fact sheet on the economics of local agriculture. According to Seidel, "We've decided to target our advertising rather than use the shotgun approach."

To supplement this advertising, the Chamber developed a "Stay a Day in Willcox" packet that tourists can pick up at various locations around town. It is actually a folder with pockets containing single-page descriptions of historical sites and scenic areas, along with good directions to help newcomers visit these areas of interest. The packet also includes biographic sketches on the area's Chiricahua Apaches, Apache Chief Cochise, and Indian agent Tom Jeffords who lived near Willcox in his days of glory. A biographic sketch of favorite son Rex Allen is included, along with directions to the Rex Allen Museum. The packet contains maps of Willcox and the surrounding area, and self-guided tours of the Willcox area that tourists staying in Willcox can complete in one day.

Expensive, you say? The packet is financed entirely by advertising on the folder.

"We have found that the packet is less expensive than a color brochure and is much more effective," explained Chamber manager Clark. "It gives much more information on the area, and individual sheets can be pulled or added in tailoring the packet to the individual tourist's needs. The packet has gotten much greater response than our prior brochure."

By identifying its differential advantage and the needs of its customers, Willcox, Arizona, has now begun to benefit from its marketing efforts. These activities take time, effort, and money, but they can result in better efficiency and a greater economic reward for the entire community.

Source: Marketing the Uniqueness of Small Towns, WREP 57, Michigan State University Extension.

- G. **Human Resources** – There are a variety of human resource development issues that affect outdoor adventure tourism development, from basic

hospitality training, to guide training, to language skill development, to management skill development programs. Communities can increase the local benefits of tourism development if operators are able to obtain their staffing and training needs locally. Personnel trained locally are more likely to be aware about local environmental, social and economic issues and be advocates for the region rather than just the business itself. Other issues include:

- Access to affordable, flexible training is often a major problem for small operators and their employees. While there is a reasonable capacity for training through the college system and the Revelstoke Skills Centre, programs sometimes do not suit the needs of target clients.
- Use of widely available SuperHost tourism training and SuperHost community programs could be increased.
- Promotion of tourism career opportunities to youth and new labour force entrants could be expanded. Young entrepreneur programs (e.g. You BET, Junior Achievement) could have a role, as could training partnerships with operators for innovative approaches like a guide mentoring program.

Case: Esprit Rafting

At Esprit Rafting of Pembroke, Ontario most staff are paid by the days they work. Usually training courses are done during days off. The company reschedules to ensure staff are not missing their share of workdays. They provide free food and accommodation for staff during training courses plus a discounted rate for their course. They pay tuition fees in advance for staff to be deducted from their "staff book". Salaried employees get their regular salary whether they are working or training.

Source: Catalogue of Exemplary Practices in Adventure Travel and Ecotourism, Pam Wight and Associates, 1999.

H. ***Industry Networking*** – Building business networks and linkages can generate significant economic development opportunities as well as cost savings for outdoor adventure businesses. As tourism is a people-oriented industry, most operators are fairly social and appreciate the opportunity to get involved in the community and meet their peers. The more vigorous the network, the more likely operators are to be competitive and generate positive economic benefits for the community. Better workforce training linkages, the establishment of mutual infrastructure (e.g. trail systems), the development of a local supplier network, and cooperative marketing are some of the achievements possible through network development. The sharing of strategic planning information, from outlining key business objectives to explaining the obstacles in building critical social and economic ties to the community can especially benefit operators with limited business development capacity.

Operators could be organized in both official and unofficial networks. Official ones include the chamber of commerce, land use committees, economic

development committees, conservation groups and other community organizations. Unofficial networks can be loosely organized coalitions of operators and suppliers who together can cooperate on building products and packages. The operator database compiled for this project could be used to prepare a tourism product guide for the Columbia District.

Case: Niagara Nature Tours

Niagara Nature Tours operates on the Niagara Peninsula offering a wide range of art, science and nature based tours from hiking and walking excursions to motor coach and van tours. The company maintains files of all the local events and always asks guests if they would be interested in attending that event. Whenever possible, they try and keep their tours to areas off the beaten path. Their invitation is *Come and explore Niagara's outdoors, Discover its secret places*. Therefore the places they try and go to are places, restaurants, fruit stands etc. that only local people generally know about – and sometimes not many of them are even aware of certain special places. Their cultural programming tries to include as many local artists as the client will be willing to pay for.

Source: Catalogue of Exemplary Practices in Adventure Travel and Ecotourism, Pam Wight and Associates, 1999.

- I. **Quality Control** – The last 20 years have seen a dramatic rise in consumer awareness of the concept of product quality. The private sector has found that high-quality products are demanded by consumers and are an important component of market advantage. A widespread problem in outdoor adventures tourism is the assurance of information accuracy, of quality interpretation, of levels of safety, of operational integrity and of adherence to impact rules. Consumers look for such assurance, and any deficiency in these areas may inhibit use.

There is no rating system in place for informing tourists about the quality of experience provided by operators. The 1997 Visitor Study showed a significant number of travellers to the Rockies were less than highly satisfied with the value for money they were getting on their trips. Many visitor markets do not mind spending more money if they can be assured that they will receive quality services and experiences in return. The accommodation industry has a basic system in place through the BC Accommodation Guide program, but no such system exists for outdoor tourism operators. Those operators who provide a poor quality experience to travellers hurt the reputation of the entire tourism industry. Peer standards can be defined by local tourism operators as the minimum required standards for a quality experience.

At present there are few standards regarding guide qualifications or insurance for many types of guided activities. Some industry segments, such as rafting, are self-regulating, but most others are not. Even in a self-regulating system there is nothing to prevent an operator from outside the industry to “open shop” and not follow the existing guidelines. The lack of standards is of particular concern for higher risk activities like backcountry hiking and skiing.

The October 1997 edition of *Backpacker Magazine* recommended a guide to participant ratio of one guide for every five participants for activities in remote locations or involving high risk.

Although it is not widespread in Canada or BC, accreditation of eco-certified tourism operators and lodgings will become more than a passing phenomenon as the industry and travel markets mature. The certification trend is sweeping through the forest industry and similar events will occur in tourism as the availability of travel options increase and travellers find it more difficult to ascertain whether or not their purchases conform to their own notions of sustainability. There are a handful of programs available and some jurisdictions like Australia (considered the world leader in ecotourism planning and accreditation) have formalized nation-wide industry standards and programs. However, many of the programs have overlooked one of the key issues supposedly addressed by ecotourism, that being local control and operation. The very notion of certification should be scrutinized as much as the operations themselves because if it is not implemented wisely, it could jeopardize the ecotourism it intends to foster. Another criticism of the certification process is that "certifiers" sometimes lack certification themselves. Communities may be able to assist in accreditation research and encourage their tourism operators to develop and maintain sustainability programs.

Case: Manitou Sand Hills

Although Saskatchewan has no province-wide regulations for ecotourism outfitters, there were guidelines created by the residents of the Manitou Sand Hills area (about 150 miles from Saskatoon), which set a fairly high standard for other areas to consider as a base. These guidelines have been developed as part of a Land Use Plan for an area of about 110,000 acres of crown land. The approach essentially combines resource, visitor, and impact management, through tourism operator guidelines. The area has a range of activities related to agriculture, recreation and oil exploration and development. The guidelines were developed by a mixed group representing government, farmers, and local agencies. They consulted with affected parties during this process. The applicants must turn some revenues over to a local authority to spend on "the environment" and must be accredited with the Saskatchewan Watchable Wildlife Association, which reviews ecotourism operations to ensure responsible practices and conduct. Their guidelines relate to:

- Code of ethics
- Educational responsibility
- Environmental impact
- Measures to protect flora and fauna
- Cultural sensitivity
- Other considerations

Source: Planning For Success In Sustainable Tourism, Pamela A. Wight, 1996

- J. **Product and Market Development** – As the outdoor adventure market grows and matures, it will become less homogeneous and more specialized,

forming niches with distinct travel characteristics. As this occurs, community and small business operators will be forced to streamline and specialize their marketing approach, making it easier for visitors to obtain the value-for-money experience they seek. A visitor's tourism experience while in the region is essentially determined by the product or activity being delivered by the operator. A quality product is synonymous with a positive visitor experience. There are measures a community can take to influence product and market development by working with stakeholder groups, government agencies and tourism operators.

Communities can contribute to overall tourism development by establishing their own market position. A clear statement of their position within the competitive tourism market place can guide marketing and other development programs. Marketing resources tend to be scarce so conventional community advertising should always be closely examined to determine what is working and missing, and how marketing could be improved. It is important that the community fully understand what it has to offer, how it stacks up against other communities, what the targeted customer is really looking for, and how to reach and meet those needs.

The presence of national and provincial parks is a catalyst for tourism regionally, affecting both marketing and product development. The tourism industry can leverage park features into their own advertising even if they do not actually do business there. On the product side, the parks motivate business relocation and expansion, as they are often perceived by operators to have good recreation features and high marketability. Any operator contemplating non-motorized backcountry products in the Columbia District should be aware of the parks' role in regional tourism. **See [Appendix 5](#) for information on Parks Canada Business Parameters.**

The literature is full of best practice information and case studies of successful, community-oriented ecotourism development. Communities can fulfill a service by making these information sources available to the community at large and tourism operators. A "Best Practices" manual for distribution to new operators, particularly those from outside the community may also be of interest. It could outline the benefits to the community and the operator of good practice fundamentals and techniques for changing, designing and testing new products.

Some products such as river rafting and heli-skiing may be nearing their commercial and capacity limitations in the district. Communities can work with government agencies and operators to direct new investment into products and areas with more growth potential.

Innovation and change are bywords of tourism product development. Rather than simply reproducing products that can be purchased elsewhere, the emphasis should be on developing unique combinations of activities and experiences that define the region's market presence. One way to enhance product development is by piggy-backing on major developments such as the Kicking Horse resort.

Packaging assistance can improve product marketability and distribution for smaller operators who might not normally have the capacity to engage in sophisticated distribution practices, for example through tour wholesalers and travel agents. Through packaging, operators can create innovative products by pooling their ideas and resources, while visitors have a simplified purchase decision and the chance to experience a unique holiday. The challenge for the community is to create a cooperative environment in which operators see a payoff for participating. The more who participate, the better the opportunities for package development. Areas of need include:

- Operator training in package design, perhaps through a local workshop.
- A pilot project involving several operators for a package promotion into a nearby market such as Calgary.
- An inbound tour operator capable of multi-activity packaging and marketing.

Some survey respondents suggested more cooperative marketing could be undertaken in the Columbia District. A cooperative marketing group, utilizing programs from the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) might be feasible. Several CTC programs (e.g. Regional Tourism Marketing Initiative and the Adventure Program) could be utilized locally, providing a consortium of interested stakeholders was formed.

Case: The Conservation Lands of Ontario

Significant provincial funding cutbacks led to the birth in 1997 of The Conservation Lands of Ontario (TCLo), an alliance of five Conservation Authority partners (Halton Region, Hamilton Region, Grand River, Long Point Region, Niagara Peninsula Region and soon Toronto Region). With limited funds available, ancillary services (such as nature interpretation and education) had to become self-sustaining, and were to operate on a cost recovery basis. As a result, most of the province's Conservation Authorities commenced to explore non-traditional and innovative means to make their ancillary service programs sustainable. During this adjustment period, several of the Conservation Authorities recognized that, if they pooled their resources, they could create a more forceful presence in the market place. Capitalizing on the Canadian Tourism Commission's (CTC) innovative Product Club Program, the Conservation Authorities combined their resources with those of compatible private sector partners and formed TCLo Product Club in 1997.

Since its inception, TCLo Product Club program has developed partnerships with about 50 organizations (primarily private sector partners) to create and promote a range of new adventure, culture and nature tourism products and services. The overriding goal of the Product Club is to become a model for the cooperative development and marketing of

sustainable tourism products in urban fringe areas. In this context, TCLO seeks to deliver new, "soft" adventure packages that promote quality experiences and lifelong learning with respect for the environment.

TCLO has positioned itself within the Product Club organization as a focal point for distributing information to the public. It also acts as a liaison between visitors, tourism associations, accommodation providers, travel outfitters and other suppliers interested in using Conservation Authority (i.e. Crown) lands for environmentally friendly tourism pursuits.

Since its inception, TCLO has received much praise from both the media and the travel industry for environmental initiatives it has undertaken with its members. This exposure can only serve to increase the leverage the organization has in influencing the long-term environmental practices of its partners. TCLO eventually hopes to implement a recognized accreditation program to certify the sustainable practices of its members.

To reinforce the importance of sound environmental practice, TCLO has developed an agreement for tour operator partners that wish to use Conservation Authority lands for their trips. The agreement outlines TCLO's sustainable tourism policies, to which tour operators must adhere. The policies include a requirement that tour operators abide by certain etiquette (e.g., remain on marked trails, abide by conservation area regulations); monitor and report to TCLO any environmental problems or damage encountered during their visit; submit five percent of their gross tour income to TCLO when using non-gated conservation lands; and respect other groups using the lands (The Conservation Lands of Ontario Tour Operators Agreement 1998). The agreement also compels tour operators to educate themselves and their customers about the rules and regulations associated with proper resource use and appropriate behavior on TCLO lands.

TCLO's marketing strategy has evolved as the Product Club has matured. Initially, it focused on very generalized communications with consumers and the travel trade. However, as it has gained a better understanding of market demand, it has established more specific marketing goals and priorities. The marketing strategy presents TCLO as a product brand that promotes reconnection with nature and spirituality, escape from the urban landscape, and the opportunity to experience "a sense of place" (Bruno 1998). Associated with this product brand are experiences and messages emphasizing environmental and cultural awareness. For instance, TCLO has developed its own bottled water product. It is labeled with the TCLO logo and an environmental message. A percentage of all bottled water sales is reinvested in environmental projects associated with such activities as tree planting and wetland preservation. Similarly, TCLO has developed and published "44 Country Trails", a popular hiking trail guide of the Conservation Authority Lands. This guide promotes recreational activity in the conservation lands, educates the community and tourists about the natural and cultural history of the area, and provides advertising for sponsors and product club members. Currently, TCLO is working on its second trail guide book, which will promote the Country Trails of Gray and Bruce Country.

Finally, TCLO seeks to stimulate economic diversity in surrounding communities through product development with local private sector partners. These partnerships help to increase the quality and range of products that local entrepreneurs can offer in the marketplace, thereby enhancing their chances of long-term viability. Indirectly, the partnerships will also increase the economic and social benefits flowing into local communities.

Source: "The Conservation Lands of Ontario and The Henry of Pelham Family Estate Winery", Elisa Martin, in a Protected Area in On Route To Sustainability: Best Practices In Canadian Tourism, 1999.

- K. **Land Development** – Outdoor adventure business development can be stimulated by providing timely and accurate information to entrepreneurs and

investors about the availability of land resources. This may be serviced municipal land and buildings needed as a base of business, or it could be Crown tenure for a backcountry area in which to conduct tours. In either case, helping operators navigate through local and senior government red tape will stimulate new investment and reflect positively on the community's business climate. Initiatives could include:

- An inventory of municipal sites suitable for conversion or new development.
- A tourism investor's handbook, which would provide a step-by-step guide for dealing with the regulatory process, but particularly land, use issues. Tourism BC is currently preparing a manual, which could be easily adapted for local use.
- A backcountry site guide that identifies the highest value tourism activity areas, using map resources generated by this study as well as the Golden Recreation Access Zoning Plan and Revelstoke Area Recreation Inventory. The maps could be modified and printed in such a way as to direct visitors and operators to those areas deemed most acceptable for use.

L. **Service Development** – There is growing potential for services and rentals targeted at unguided users and commercial operators who may choose to lease rather than purchase their equipment needs. These intermediary opportunities are a result of rising demand by recreation consumers as well as more sophisticated clustering of tourism service businesses. Community action could include:

- Promoting retail and service opportunities and gaps to local businesses and entrepreneurs. An opportunity listing of retail enterprises that do not currently exist in the community but for which there might be enough visitor demand to support a business could be compiled and promoted to facilitate opportunity development. Population thresholds needed to support various small tourism businesses could be prepared. Such an assessment would help local entrepreneurs identify development opportunities that could be supported by resident and travel markets, as well as make them aware of areas or markets where there may be too much development and competition.
- Identifying rental and shuttling opportunities in support of product development. Examples of equipment that could be covered include mountain bikes, motorboats, kayaks, canoes, fishing gear, snowmobiles, skiing equipment and possibly climbing equipment. Expansion of rental equipment would benefit both local residents who wish to try an activity on a limited basis and visitors to the area who are unable or do not wish to bring recreation equipment to the area.

In response to concerns about vandalism of old Haida village sites, the Haida Nation and Skidegate Band Council initiated the Watchmen Program in the early 1980s for the Gwaii Haanas/South Moresby region of Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). Today, the Watchmen Program is an integral part of the Strategic Management Plan of Gwaii Haanas, a National Park Reserve. This program protects the Haida's culturally significant sites and the sensitive environment of the National Park Reserve, gives benefits to neighboring communities and provides a unique experience for visitors to the area.

Guidelines have been developed for the Watchmen, for visitors and for commercial users of Gwaii Haanas. Those developed for the Watchmen deal primarily with setting an appropriate example for visitors, including behaviour in regards to the use of drugs and alcohol at the sites and hunting and fishing. With input from the Watchmen, Parks Canada developed a handbook for visitors. Much of the information is similar to that provided verbally to visitors by the Watchmen and is given to visitors at a mandatory pre-trip visitor orientation. The handbook provides a code of conduct for those visiting sensitive sites, including the Watchmen base camps; appropriate behaviour and guidelines concerning animal species such as seals, sea lions and whales as well as seabird colonies; etiquette to follow while in Haida Gwaii with regards to camping, garbage and human wastes; and information on hazards and personal safety.

The number of visitors allowed into the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve has been limited by establishing visitation quotas. Presently, all tour operators must pay an annual fee of \$60 to obtain a license from the AMB before entering the park reserve. A voluntary Code of Conduct was developed in 1989 between commercial tour operators, charter boat owners, professional resource guides and the Haida Watchmen. This document includes guidelines on general etiquette; behaviour towards wildlife and at archaeological, cultural and historic sites; visitor safety; and practices regarding food gathering, garbage and camping. The Code of Conduct also emphasizes local involvement by hiring local people, buying supplies and material from local businesses and participating in local events. At present, 26 commercial operators are licensed by Parks Canada, which grants the licenses for one season. Enforcement of the licensees is based on an honor system and is therefore very informal. Watchmen encourage tour operators to obtain a license before entering a site. Generally, there have been no problems. However, a few commercial operators, who were repeatedly but unsuccessfully told to acquire a license, were eventually prohibited from accessing the sites. The AMB can revoke a license if the regulations set out by the Code of Conduct, National Parks Board and/or the AMB are not followed. The widespread spirit of cooperation and support for the Code of Conduct among the commercial tour operators has been the source of its continued success. If tour operators do not comply with the Code, they are identified and shunned by other operators or excluded from a network of information.

Source: "The Gwaii Haanas Watchmen Program Sustainable Tourism Development", Karen Hoese, in a Protected Area in On Route To Sustainability: Best Practices In Canadian Tourism, 1999.

- M. **Infrastructure** – The design and placement of infrastructure is a powerful community tool for controlling and directing tourism development. Tourism is a small business-oriented industry and requires extensive investments in infrastructure – this applies even to wilderness operators who might be relatively self-sufficient but still require key transportation and supply networks to support their tourism products. The community can influence backcountry use directly through public infrastructure placement and indirectly by encouraging and shaping private infrastructure (e.g. hospitality services).

The key infrastructure considerations for **Revelstoke** are:

- As with all other aspects of outdoor adventure tourism and ecotourism planning, community infrastructure should be directed within a broader community development planning framework. A vision of a desired future state of backcountry tourism is essential for guiding strategic initiatives such as infrastructure. Without this, the community will never be sure that its decision-making is leading toward and contributing to community goals.
- Boat ramp, fuel service and marina facilities on Upper Arrow and Revelstoke lakes for enhanced fishing and motorized boating access. Although there is some canoe/kayak activity on both waterways, by and large they are not highly suited toward non-motorized markets.
- Services and amenities (e.g. washroom facilities, clean drinking water, garbage disposal, camping and shower facilities, parking, firewood, signage and visitor information) targeted at experienced rock climbers at Shaketown and Blanket Creek and at Begbie Bluffs for lesser-skilled climbers. The coordination of strategic infrastructure with an indoor climbing facility and instructional services right in Revelstoke could create a “critical mass” of features to make the area a climbing centre.
- Access and parking for ski touring areas for longer-term development. This activity has become very popular in the parks in recent years and visitors may be forced, or inclined, to utilize non-park areas once they perceive capacity limitations are being approached.

Case: Columbia River Gorge

In 1986, the Columbia River Gorge was declared a scenic area by the US federal government. A partnership initiative was instituted to protect and support the economy of the Gorge by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development outside these areas if it was compatible with Gorge resources.

One outcome of the multi-stakeholder partnership involving all levels of government and the private sector was the development of the Crate's Point Interpretive Complex. Upon completion, the Crate's Point Interpretive Complex will have created an interpretive center of national stature, serving as a tourism destination, and providing a boost to the local economy. It will include a Historical Museum, which will display the artifacts and heritage of a county which once stretched eastward to the Continental divide, the Oregon Trail Living History Park, created to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Oregon Trail and to depict life in the region during the mid-1800s, and the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, which highlights the geological, ecological and cultural attributes of the Gorge.

An active five-way partnership among the Forest Service, the County, the Historical Museum, the Columbia Gorge Commission, and the Citizens for the Gorge Discovery Center has brought privatization to this venture to an unusual extent among projects utilizing federal funds.

Source: Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area: Interagency Agreements and Regional Marketing, Case Studies of US Forest Service Initiatives with Rural Communities.

The key infrastructure considerations for **Golden** are:

- The opportunities for infrastructure development in Golden are positive because there are several local areas with high quality recreational features that are very close in to town and adjacent to the Trans Canada Highway. It is possible to undertake several hard and soft “backcountry” activities in a single day without having to travel more than 15 minutes between locations. However, the potential is undeveloped or under-utilized because of the lack of infrastructure and services. The challenge will be to coordinate development sensibly and sustainably.
- The Welcome Centre, which is being planned for Golden, will provide numerous opportunities for tourism marketing and product development. The facility could serve as a unique exploration and staging area that brings the natural features, amenities and infrastructure of Golden into a conveniently accessible interpretive setting. The Centre could:
 - Offer interpretive displays illustrating recreational opportunities in the area.
 - Disseminate maps, product/activity guides, rules of acceptable conduct and land use information to self-guided visitors.
 - Direct visitors to those areas where higher use levels can be accommodated (i.e. in accordance with in-place infrastructure and zoning guidelines of the Recreation Access Plan).
 - Distribute operator information and packages for guided backcountry tours.
 - Distribute hospitality information that free independent travellers can use to obtain their lodging, food service and other trip needs.
 - Market downtown services and amenities.
 - A nordic ski centre has potential for development in the West Bench area. Excellent terrain and conditions, proximity to Kicking Horse resort, proximity to core services in Golden, opportunity to cross-market to downhill skiers and opportunity to catch spillover from the neighbouring parks make for a favourable resource and market environment.
- Signage, parking, campsites, trail upgrading and other amenities for non-motorized multiple use on the West Bench could accommodate a variety of day-use activities, including mountain biking, hiking and nature observation/sightseeing. Mount Seven would be a second choice for more extreme adventures as new amenities could be shared by mountain bikers and para-gliders.
- Strategic development of camping, pull-in/take-out sites, trail system, perhaps with suitable hardened sites (e.g. boardwalks and viewing platforms), and interpretive signage at the Columbia wetlands for multi-activity use (e.g. hiking, wildlife viewing, recreational/day paddling, interpretive tours).

Case: Iowa Welcome Center

Faced with an aging rest area along its Minnesota border, Iowa's Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Economic Development's Division of Tourism sought ways to remedy the situation. Tourism is the third largest industry in Iowa, critical to

the local and state economy. It was imperative that the facility in question--expected to serve upwards of 600,000 travelers this year alone--make as strong an impression as possible on tourists entering the state.

The Department of Transportation's initial review determined that it would cost approximately \$4 million to upgrade the current rest area, or \$6.5 million for a new facility--a costly endeavor either way.

That was when the "Top of Iowa Welcome Center," a local nonprofit corporation, stepped in. Its proposal was simple: more and better services for \$2.5 million at a new site with lower annual operating costs.

The group's plan called for the consolidation of the current rest area (which had facilities on both sides of the freeway) and the addition of a welcome center for tourists. By moving the facility off the highway, just off a pre-existing exchange, it was able to greatly reduce costs by avoiding the mandates of the Davis-Bacon Act.

The nonprofit corporation managed the entire project on behalf of the DOT and Division of Tourism. It handled everything from the hiring of architects through the construction, and it manages the facility, which opened in June. The group worked closely with private organizations interested in setting up business in the new center, getting feedback on the overall design and layout of the facility. This resulted in a more attractive and efficient site plan, enhancing the site's commercial appeal.

The agreement between the state agencies and the nonprofit provides for a thirty-year management contract. In addition, the nonprofit retains possession of excess real estate the state had purchased. The nonprofit is allowed to sell or lease this land to help offset its construction and operational costs.

Looking to the future, the nonprofit installed a water/sewer infrastructure for commercial and industrial development, with the hopes that businesses would begin to locate in the vicinity of the new facility. The group projected it would take two years after the site's completion before any business would show interest. There already has been so much interest and demand for the location, however, that one business has already committed to locating near the facility, and several other commitments are pending. A consortium of farmer-owned cooperatives has purchased 19 acres and is creating a farm-theme development around the welcome center.

The county benefits from the project through increased sales and property taxes, and employment opportunities for county residents. The county is also excited about having a greater range of stores and businesses in the community, greatly reducing travel time for many residents seeking shopping opportunities within the county.

To date, several agencies in several other states have contacted the Iowa DOT about the project. There have been no complaints about moving the rest area off the freeway, and between 75 and 80 percent of the rest area visitors take the time to visit the welcome center/gift shop. In addition to rave reviews from the public, sales in the gift shop are running three to four times their projected levels and many feel that it is the "finest rest area they have ever seen."

Source: "Partnerships in Recreation and Tourism", Intellectual Ammunition, September/October 1998, Heartland Center for Leadership Development.

N. **Infrastructure Funding** – Public and private infrastructure funding should go hand-in-hand, ideally in step with a coordinated plan. But public resources are

difficult to come by and tourism's private sector is generally not that well financed. Possible funding options for new infrastructure include:

- User fees.
- Special taxes (accommodation, equipment, rental, guided services).
- Foundations / trusts (for specific projects).
- Partnerships between public agencies and private corporations.
- Concessions.
- Special event fund raising / donations.
- "Adopt-a-XXX" (trail, event, public feature or facility) for maintenance and upgrade.
- Federal and provincial government programs (e.g. FRBC, CBT, MELP's E-Team).

There are positives and negatives to each funding source – the best option is usually measured in relation to community recreation and tourism development plans.

- O. **Resource Management** – As backcountry use in the Columbia District expands, some stakeholders and operators are saying it is important to determine the carrying capacity of natural areas to appropriately plan, manage and control the direction and consequences of tourism and other activities. The problem, however, is that outside of wildlife management, the concept of carrying capacity has trouble dealing with the complexity and diversity of issues associated with outdoor adventure tourism. Programs are now focusing on managing the resource, the visitors, and the impacts, rather than carrying capacity. Potential methods include:

Site management – hardening sites, channelling use and building facilities to draw traffic away from sensitive or undisturbed areas.

Direct regulation – zoning use either spatially or temporally, increased enforcement, restricting activities and restricting intensity of use.

Indirect regulation – user fees, manipulation of access and infrastructure, and education.

Some of the above strategies are being explored in Golden as part of the Recreation Access Plan, which is contemplating both zoning and access controls to promote tourism, maintain local recreation opportunities, and preserve important wildlife habitat for the future. This process is somewhat unusual in the province and is unique for its community-driven focus. Revelstoke has made a good start by completing a detailed Revelstoke Area Recreation Inventory, but should institute a similar planning process to help with commercial recreation development in its region. If the Golden process is successfully implemented with the support of the community and industry, it will undoubtedly create a better environment for

tourism planning, but it still represents only a first step in moving toward sustainable tourism.

Instances where community action could complement existing resource management initiatives include:

- Coordinating community infrastructure investments around sustainability objectives. A boardwalk system at the Columbia Wetlands, for example, could add significantly to tourism product development by encouraging multi-activity packaging. If done properly, such a development would minimize visitor impacts and protect the ecological integrity of the site.
- Requesting that provincial agencies increase their surveillance and enforce compliance of visitor activity within the existing guidelines. The size of the landscape, extensive number of access and entry points, moderate levels of use and lack of available staff may prevent action at this time, future enforcement measures may be needed as recreation and tourism pressures increase. BCAL has recently hired an enforcement officer to patrol commercial activity in the Sea-to-Sky corridor, where there are significant problems with unlicensed guiding.
- Ensuring that the community is part of the planning process to implement BCAL CR tenures and MoF forest development plans. Having articulated tourism and recreation planning directions and guidelines, communities should be involved in the monitoring process to ensure government agencies are following through in their decision-making. A committee representing stakeholder groups could meet periodically to work with key agencies and review plan compliance and effectiveness.
- Developing visitor education programs including the dissemination of information about use areas (e.g. maps), acceptable codes of conduct, ecological principles and minimum impact practices. Even if zoning controls are implemented in the region, many visitors, especially those on self-guided trips, may be completely unaware of the rules and regulations. The community can play a vital role in communicating to travellers what these are and what forms of behaviour are deemed acceptable on the land base. This will effectively enhance both the visitor experience and tourism business development, as outdoor adventurers and ecotourists increasingly seek out communities enacting sustainability principles.
- Promoting the adoption of local codes of practice by operators and recreation groups. This could begin with an assessment of best practices from other jurisdictions.

Case: Boardwalk in the Valley of the Giants

The Valley of the Giants in south-west western Australia is a forest that contains the unique red tingle tree and Gondwana invertebrate relics. The trees, which are many hundreds of years old, have the biggest diameter trunk of any eucalypt. The popular site, which has over 140,000 visitors in 1991, was suffering from the impact of all these people. A maze of tracks led to the trees, which were trampled around their bases by the visitors, compacting the soil

and damaging the trees' shallow root systems. The level of visitation was also disturbing the leaf litter that is the habitat of some unique Gondwana invertebrates.

A series of boardwalks has been developed, including a Tree Tops walk and the Ancient Empire Boardwalk. The walks are curved to harmonize with the surrounds and enhance the visitor's sense of discovery as they are drawn around each bend. Interpretive signs are included, and contemplative rest points and lookout platforms have been strategically placed, utilizing the natural vegetation.

The boardwalks succeed in keeping visitors off the forest floor and provide additional interpretation and understanding of the site, creating new tourist experiences. Commercial tours may utilize this attraction and help pay for park management through their permit fees.

Source: Ecotourism A Practical Guide for Rural Communities, Sue Beeton, 1998.

- P. **Backcountry Tenures** – Many comments about commercial backcountry recreation policy in BC were submitted by workshop participants and interview respondents contacted over the course of this study. Generally negative, the comments expressed frustration over delays in processing applications for tenure and methods used to award them. As BCAL and the CR policy itself are relatively newly established, a period of learning and adjustment is to be expected as programs and policies are implemented. Similarly, commercial operators who previously dealt with MELP and other tenuring guidelines have had to adapt to this new environment. As the logistics of CR tenure get ironed out, it is becoming apparent that it is not only backcountry tourism operators who are being affected by the new rules, but communities themselves. It is important that community development considerations and criteria be built into the permitting process so residents have a reasonable say in the pace and direction of licensed commercial recreation activities. The following is an area of concern:
- Ensuring community input and values are factored into the approval process for commercial recreation tenure. This could be as simple as participating in the BCAL referral process or devising more direct intervention, for example by incorporating community development criteria into the adjudication process. BCALC could include assessment guidelines similar to those in the Ministry of Forests' Small Business Forest Enterprise Program (SBFEP) assessment guidelines. For Section 21 value-added timber sales, bidders are given higher scores if they will process the timber in the local community. A similar approach for commercial recreation tenure would ensure that prospective operators carefully consider doing more business in communities nearby the operating area.