

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Marlyn Chisholm & Associates in association with Geoscape Environmental Planners, Catherine Berris Associates and Sunderman and Associates, has been commissioned by the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture to identify opportunities for sustainable community-based tourism development in the Mid Coast Forest District. The Mid Coast Tourism Opportunity Strategy is intended to do the following:

- provide a regional evaluation of the Mid Coast's most promising tourism products;
- map the tourism products;
- identify the linkages between the communities of the Mid Coast and the opportunities;
- develop a tourism action strategy and make recommendations for future implementation; and,
- carry out pre-feasibility assessments of selected opportunities to evaluate their potential from a business perspective, and to provide a template for other, similar evaluations.

The Mid Coast Tourism Opportunity Strategy is one of several being carried out in BC. Many BC communities have identified tourism as a key sector to focus on for future economic growth and diversification. As part of the provincial government's Green Economy initiative, the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture (MSBTC) conducts Tourism Opportunity Strategies to assist rural communities, First Nations and entrepreneurs to identify new tourism development opportunities. The focus of the Tourism Opportunity Strategies is ecotourism, adventure travel, and heritage and culturally-based tourism development.

2.2 Purpose

The findings of this report are intended for a wide readership, ranging from government agencies to entrepreneurs and investors. They should provide a tool for government to support the efforts of individuals, municipal and regional governments, First Nations, tourism operators and economic development commissions to:

- diversify local economies,
- maintain access to recreational resources for local residents, and
- minimize conflicts among resource users.

This study should contribute to integrated resource and community planning targeted towards economic, social and environmental sustainability. In addition to identifying key opportunities for tourism, this report provides a strategy for tourism development on the Mid Coast and documents the principle issues and constraints facing tourism today.

The analysis is not meant to be either exclusive or exhaustive. Its objective is to identify and evaluate the product groups that appear to be most promising, and to present a framework for assessing their feasibility at a general level.

The ultimate value of this project is in identifying key opportunities and actions required to assist in the priority-setting of key players in tourism planning, and providing further direction to communities, business people and organizations involved in tourism development on the Mid Coast.

2.3 Scope and Methodology

The key tasks in carrying out this assignment are described as follows.

1. Profile the region and the communities of the Mid Coast to provide a context for the product development. This profile includes a description of the physical setting, transportation and communication infrastructure, the tourism infrastructure of the communities of the Mid Coast, and any relevant planning initiatives underway.
2. Evaluate trends in the tourism industry at the North American/global level, in BC and on the Mid Coast.
3. Select the most promising tourism development products, based on preliminary resource assessment and consultation with Advisory Committee.
4. Assess and map each product with a framework that includes resource, market, economic and social criteria.
5. Match communities with products.
6. Formulate tourism action strategy, and make recommendations for implementation.
7. Carry out brief pre-feasibility assessments of a select number of opportunities. This provides a first cut at assessing some of the more interesting or promising products, and a framework for future assessments on other products.

Community consultation was an integral component of this tourism opportunity strategy. A two-part Advisory Committee was struck early in the project to provide the consultants with input and direction and feedback. We also drew much of our information from local experts, including local tourism operators, community representatives, First Nations, government agencies.

The work plan for this project involved the following key steps that were undertaken concurrently:

- Initiation Meeting in Vancouver with Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture.

- Form Advisory Committee – to properly represent all interests, the Committee has two components – Bella Bella (outer Mid Coast) and Bella Coola (inner Mid Coast) (refer to Appendix A for contact list).
- Initial Meeting with Advisory Committee October 2000.
- Telephone Interviews with tourism operators outside of the study area for information on key success factors and best practices in product development.
- Review Literature of related tourism and land use planning reports, studies and initiatives (refer to Appendix B for sources).
- Carry out product assessment, and feasibility analyses, and document results in draft report.
- Submission of draft to Advisory Committee, and meeting #2 with Advisory Committee February 2001.
- Revisions to draft, and completion in April 2001.
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2.4 Report Structure

The remainder of this report is summarized as follows.

- **Chapter 3** provides a regional context for this study.
- **Chapter 4** identifies important trends in the tourism industry – worldwide and in BC.
- **Chapter 5** describes the resources and key tourism features of the Mid Coast, explains geographic units, and describes methodology and community/product matching.
- **Chapter 6** provides product assessments and maps for the key identified tourism products.
- **Chapter 7** outlines a tourism action strategy.
- **Chapter 8** provides pre-feasibility assessments for three specific products.

Appendices are as follows:

- A contact list, and list of Steering Committee members, are found in **Appendix A**.
- **Appendix B** is our bibliography.
- Finally, **Appendix C** provides some useful resources for researching and starting up locally based businesses. These are not intended to be exhaustive, but provide a good starting point.