



Rural Tourism Information Gathering Session

**LA GRANDE
Cook Memorial Library
January 15, 2008**

Participants:

Mary Ann Miesner	City of LaGrande
Alice Trindle	Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA)
Janet Dodson	EOVA/Union County Tourism
Dale DeLong	Island City
Dale Mammen	La Grande Rendezvous RV Resort
Maurizio Valerio	Rural Development Initiatives (RDI)
Patti Kileen	Travel Oregon
Sue Briggs	Union
Judy Loudermilk	Union County Chamber of Commerce
Sandy Sorrels	Union County Tourism

Facilitator

Kristin Dahl	Travel Oregon
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1. What does success look like in your community?

Successful tourism-related efforts:	Factors that contributed to success:
Hosting Cycle Oregon in La Grande twice, and in Union & Elgin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County involvement & support • Passion of volunteers • Great structure helps communities host • Publicity
Hells Canyon Scenic Byway (All American Road)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising/national status brochure at HCSB & SB magazine • Organization support
Rodeos Eastern Oregon Livestock Show Elgin Stampede Chief Joseph Days Catherine Creek Junior Rodeo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long standing • Has a reputation • Faithful supporters/fans • Passion of volunteers
Cycle Oregon events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulled in volunteers • Money returned from Cycle Oregon helped potential business development as a result
Eagle Cap Excursion Train Experience in Elgin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marketing that supports trains • Volunteers • Resource dependencies
East/West Shrine teams' practice in La Grande prior to annual game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedication of families • Leads to EOU student enrollment
Eastern Oregon Agricultural Station seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide organization and Eastern Oregon University • Connection to agricultural roots
Stock Show in Union Elgin Stomp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful connection to agriculture: FFA, 4H, youth and family
Unique Offerings such as elk feeding excursions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off season attractions

1. What does success look like in your community? (continued)

Successful tourism-related efforts:	Factors that contributed to success:
Hells Canyon Scenic Byway (All American Road)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural exposure• Co-op partners• Funding
Union Halloween Harvest Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local effort to put on entire experience—actors, props, settings
Grande Ronde River Greenway	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed for youth

2. What opportunities for tourism development do you currently see in your region/community?

- Agri-tourism, living farms
- Bats
- Birding tours
- Byways
- Combination/packaging history and recreation
- Cycling
- Development of brand/Union County area finding that unique identity that meets and fits niches
- Development of historic/value added tourism
- Development of marketing theme that plays with “get away from it all” slogan
- Development of total cycling package and talking to market
- Dog sled races
- Dude ranches
- Events
- Expand train season
- Expanded parks
- Gondola up Mt. Emily
- Guided bike rides
- Hot springs
- Ladd Marsh—develop
- Living camps—logging, mining, Tribal
- Local packaging of transportation—getting visitors out into the county
- Museum demonstrations
- Natural resources
- Off- & shoulder-seasons
- Optional day car trips
- Oregon Trail—add attractions/facilities
- Packaged travel
- Self-guided tours
- Sightseeing
- Train
- Ways to develop to connect visitors to the Ag Station and develop activities that tie in agri-tourism
- Whitewater parks
- Wineries

3. What resources or assistance do you think your community would need in order to take full advantage of the opportunities you see?

- Money/funding
- Passionate people with expertise and support of community
- Management
- Transportation
- Infrastructure for roads & bridges
- Marketing—connection to staffing
- Convince the new-to-region residents to be part of the region/community—to take ownership and use their expertise to accomplish specific goals—leave a legacy
- Spirit of cooperation between government, private organizations to develop and implement a plan
- Education of political entities
 - Impact of tourism
 - Tourism involves everyone
 - What is in place
- Funding
 - Utilize federal and state money
 - Leverage local funds with grants
 - Public/private partnerships
- Foster idea of working as a unit instead of communities trying to re-invent the wheel or compete with neighbors
- Liability insurance issue

4. Thoughts and/or suggestions to make these programs successful in the community:

- Work through identified partners to encourage attendance, best benefit for entire community
 - Invite key people
 - Taking one project at a time and making it successful
 - Insurance is a major factor—insurance cost—we need a “pool” to make insurance affordable
 - Training mentors to rural areas and the people here who are working on tourism
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