

# **Eight Recommendations for 2006: Piscataquis County Tourism Implementation Plan**

**Presented to:**

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**And,**

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## **PISCATAQUIS TOURISM TASK FORCE**

**“Eight Recommendations for a County Tourism Implementation Plan for 2006”  
(Final Draft: December 5, 2005)**

**I. Preface:** At year end 2004, the charge given to the Piscataquis Tourism Task Force (PTTF) from the County Commissioners and the Piscataquis County Economic Development Council (PCEDC), was to craft a county tourism implementation plan, informed by tourism research, including key recommendations from the Fermata Nature Tourism Assessment and Strategy.

Research findings also prompted this county initiative, particularly the “EMDC-LDR Tourism Study” (2000), and UMaine “Piscataquis Tourism Attitudes Research Project” (2004).

- 1. “The region has an abundance of natural resources to support tourism, however, the region does not have an abundance of developed tourism products...There have been studies and recommended projects to enhance tourism...which have not been implemented. An important focus needs to be on creating organizational and leadership capacity to develop and market tourism.” (LDR-00’)*
- 2. “Residents and business owners are open to new niche tourism opportunities, however be this done in a way that does not sacrifice our rural quality of life. A planned approach through a county tourism management plan seems advisable”. (UM-04’)*

**II. Tourism Research:** Five research documents represent the tourism database which informed the Piscataquis Tourism Task Force for incorporation into the Piscataquis County Tourism Plan.

1. *Fermata Nature Tourism Assessment and Strategic Plan:* Fermata, Inc., the Governors Office and Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. (2005)
2. *Tourism Attitudes: Four Rural Communities in Piscataquis County, Maine:* University of Maine Margaret Chase Smith Center, Department of Resource Economics and Policy, and University of Maine Cooperative Extension. (2004)
3. *LDR-Tourism Marketing Strategy for Piscataquis and Penobscot Counties:* LDR International and Eastern Maine Development Corporation. (2000)
4. *Southern Piscataquis Region Tourism Inventory & Marketing Strategy:* Donna Fichtner, Total Quality Maine for the Southern Piscataquis Chamber of Commerce. (1997)
5. *Moosehead Lake Region Tourism Marketing Study,* Land Use Inc. for Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce. (1991)

Over 2005, during the work pursued by the Piscataquis County Tourism Task Force, additional tourism research documents surfaced, but have not been incorporated into this plan.

1. *Potential for Expanded Dog-Powered Activities in Piscataquis County, Maine:* University of Maine Dept. of Resource Economics and Policy, Staff Paper #552. (2005)
2. *Procedures for Evaluating the Potential Regional Economic Impacts of Conservation Lands in the 100 Mile Wilderness Region:* University of Maine Dept. of Resource Economics and Policy for Maine Department of Conservation. (2005)
3. *Opportunity Assessment for Increased Nature-Based Tourism and Maine Sporting Camps and Guides:* Gore Flynn Enterprise Resources Corporation for Eastern Maine Development Corporation. (2005)
4. *Katahdin Area Tourism Plan:* Eastern Maine Development Corporation. (2003)

**III. Some of Key Ingredients for Success in Tourism:** Tourism is a complex system with many parts: attractions, information, services, retail, lodging, transportation, communication, markets. All these parts linked together as a whole define the “tourism industry” and need to be considered when developing new niche tourism product opportunities and visitor experiences.

Success can mean many things; is subject to much interpretation. A review of the literature on community tourism development offers some guidance about the key ingredients for success.

**A. Readiness:** Leadership needs to assess “community readiness” *before* investing human, social and economic resources in tourism planning and development activity.

1. Does our community understand its’ values and attitudes towards tourism?
2. Does our community recognize that tourism products have community linkages?
3. Does our community understand its’ base of asset-attractions?
4. Does community leadership embrace the complexities of tourism?
5. Are we willing to address and manage the costs and the benefits of tourism?
6. Are we committed to working in cooperative partnerships, county-region-state?
7. Are we committed to ongoing tourism organization and investment?

**B. Commitment to Organization and Planning:** The planned, organized work a community, cluster of communities or a county has to go through to get to a publicly supported sustainable tourism economic development strategy includes these steps-actions:

organize a planning group... develop planning timelines... identify community values... assess-discuss attitudes towards tourism...inventory-evaluate attractions and services... conduct a strengths and weaknesses/ opportunities and threats analysis... evaluate niche markets and customers... identify business opportunities and assistance ... access funding for investment... manage-monitor-evaluate tourism on an ongoing basis...work hard, have fun and celebrate accomplishments...

(Minnesota Extension Tourism Center & Texas Department of Commerce)

**C. Planning + Action + Progress = People:** Plans without action wind up sitting on the shelf. Actions without guidance from a plan go in any old direction. Striking a balance between enough planning to inform needed actions is indeed challenging. David Darling from Kansas State University, Research and Extension frames *Sustaining Progress* this way:

$$\text{Progress} = f(A, V, P, R, B)$$

A = a set of attitudes, values, and principals

V = a vision that is worth pursuing

P = a plan designed to bring about the vision

R = a set of resources needed to implement the plan

B = a set of outcomes that benefit the stakeholders.

A.F. Epelle defines project management as “the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques in order to meet or exceed stakeholder expectations from a project.” Epelle’s *Ten Critical Success Factors* for project management include:

*Leadership + Planning + Project Definition + Cost and Budget + Milestones  
and Time Management + Quality Management + Project Monitoring and  
Control + Teamwork + Risk Identification + Agreement on Project Scope*

**IV. Piscataquis Tourism Task Force-Eight Recommendations for 2006:** The PTTF recognizes that the following recommendations for 2006 are but the tip of the iceberg for ongoing niche tourism development activities needing implementation, in order to diversify and benefit businesses and communities. The recommendations build upon our traditional tourism bases, our outdoors sporting heritage through hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, whitewater rafting, camping.

*PTTF proposes that these eight priority actions for 2006 support building a solid, planned foundation for county tourism development actions.*

***Tourism Capacity Building:***

1. Secure formal authorization for tourism development activities from the County Commissioners. Formally locate this under the organizational umbrella of the Piscataquis County Economic Development Council (PCEDC).
2. Establish a standing *PCEDC-Tourism Development Task Force* whose purpose is to advise, guide and direct countywide tourism development activities. Engage the task force in organizational and leadership development activities around task force purpose, their role as tourism developers, governance and communications, stakeholder partners, marketing linkages, as well as detailing and directing a plan of work over 2006. The composition of this task force will be determined from public and private sectors.
3. Work with county-regional-state partners to secure financial resources for an appropriate level of county staff capacity that adequately supports tourism implementation activities as directed by *PCEDC-Tourism Development Task Force*.

***Tourism Business Assistance:***

4. In concert with University of Maine Cooperative Extension, conduct a rapid assessment of issues and opportunities facing tourism-based businesses in Piscataquis County. These findings will inform a revised framework for enhancing their access to appropriate small business information and assistance.

***Tourism Product Development:***

5. Over 2006, in concert with appropriate partners, *clarify the scope of specific marketable soft adventure tourism products* that can be expanded and provided for from the base of natural resource and tourism business assets in Piscataquis County.

6. In concert with appropriate internal-external partners, implement Fermata Recommended Action #4: “*Finalize the thematic itinerary and publish an itinerary guide-map for Piscataquis County-Maine Highlands*”.
7. In concert with appropriate internal-external partners, implement Fermata Recommended Action #9: “*Develop consistent highway directional signs that support the thematic itinerary for Piscataquis County-Maine Highlands*”.

***Tourism Marketing Linkages:***

8. The role of the *PCEDC-Tourism Development Task Force* is uniquely “development” focused. Their tourism product development output is complimentary to and needs to be linked with the appropriate marketing entities, Chambers of Commerce, Maine Highlands Corp., Maine Office of Tourism.

**V. Tourism Implementation Actions Beyond 2006:** For businesses and communities to benefit from tourism economic development activity, plans and actions need to build upon the foundation as outlined in recommendations for 2006. From their research review, the Piscataquis Tourism Task Force also anticipated the next set of tourism priorities that need to be considered in ongoing subsequent plans of work for the *PCEDC-Tourism Development Task Force*.

- *Information Centers:* What kinds of information centers and networks, town-county-region, best serve and provide for high quality visitor information about our county?
- *Lodging:* Several studies, including Fermata, have addressed lodging as a component of the tourism industry needing further attention.
- *Other Product Opportunities:* Given the 2004 UM REP study, how might the county best capitalize on dog mushing? What about agritourism? Forestry and Forest Heritage Tourism? Outdoor Leadership & Back Country Safety? Other themes?
- *Moosehead-Katahdin Trails:* Given that both travel corridors disperse visitors to the western and eastern regions of the county, what else do we need to do to increase the visibility and value of these two corridors, both officially recognized by MDOT .
- *Packaging and Marketing Visitor Experiences:* How might we best package a range of visitor opportunities and experiences, options that incorporate lodging with the range of nature and cultural heritage features in our region, ala New Brunswick?

**VI. Piscataquis Tourism Task Force Members (2005):** Roger Merchant, UM Cooperative Extension; Donna Fichtner, Maine Highlands Corporation; Dennis Lyford, Southern Piscataquis Chamber of Commerce; Robert Hamer, Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce; Sophie Wilson, Brownville Town Manager; Jack Clukey, Dover-Foxcroft Town Manager; John Simko, Greenville Town Manager; Patrick Myers, Staff to PCEDC-Cultural Heritage Ecotourism Committee and Center Theatre; Mike Henderson, Piscataquis County Administrator.