

Combined Recommendations for Piscataquis County Marketing Strategy From Moosehead Marketing Study (1991) and Southern Piscataquis Marketing Strategy (1997)

A. Image recommendation (works for entire County)

- An image of nostalgia, natural beauty, easy access to wildlife, people in partnership with the *natural landscape*, small town hospitality and good values.
- Competitive advantages: lack of crowds, access to the great Maine woods, a rewarding vacation/travel experience that is affordable.
- Trend to return to past values, nature, the past and reasonable prices.
 - The Maine You Remember.
 - Childhood Nostalgia/Family Image
 - We're the Same and that's Different!
 - Traditional Maine
 - Adventure, Unique Travel Experience
 - Return to Maine's Wild Side

Moosehead area specific (also applicable to other areas as appropriate):

- Build on positives: lake & rustic experience by bringing into sharper focus
- An image of nostalgia, natural beauty, easy access to wildlife, people in partnership with *the woods*, small town hospitality and good values.

So. Piscataquis specific:

- Quintessence of rural Maine agrarian lifestyle, reflective of inland Maine, the way life used to be. People represent the essence of the Maine and New England work ethic, a simpler lifestyle, appreciative of the natural landscape from which they sustain life and to which they give back.
- Vestiges of the former manufacturing economy that were based upon natural resources still dot the local landscape.

B. Marketing Strategy

a. Concepts Driving the Marketing Strategy (applicable to entire County)

- Recognizes limited financial, structural & organizational capacity. Must be practical & affordable.
- Existing facilities are the limits for the near future.
- Must be implementable by a small number of professional and a large group of volunteers.
- Addresses the needs of the slow seasons, not peak seasons.
- Work on easily implementable actions that will address the critical issues which are:
 - Need to improve current regional promotional strategy & materials with a better image;
 - The lack of activities for children;
 - The lack of bad weather activities;
 - Improving the physical appearance of the commercial area.

- Making basic repairs to the region's deteriorating accommodations.
- If the above issues are not addressed, the summer season may begin to erode. (particularly Moosehead, but also the rest of the county)
- All former regional target markets have problems; therefore the region must broaden its visitor profile.
- A key ingredient to success with new markets will be high quality service.
- Develop a community education/activity center focused on culture, history and future of the forest products industry.
- Recognize the shared role of individual businesses and the Chamber of Commerce in achieving ultimate success.

b. Work on Essentials (applicable to County; PTTF doing some of this; TMH has done some of this)

1. Create a Vision for Tourism Development:

By carefully managing tourist traffic through the region, by dispersing visitors throughout the region, by planning around events in the tourist destination areas, the region can encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more money. *(EMDC/CVB/TMH doing)*

2. Improve the region's image & promotional and marketing efforts; Develop and build upon an Image: The area can build positively on the nostalgia for the slower paced, more relaxed way of life that people remember in their past.

3. Provide activities for children.

4. Provide bad weather activities & attractions.

5. Improve physical appearance of the downtown business area and better signage. *(Municipalities have done some of this ongoing work.)*

6. Make basic repairs to deteriorating accommodations.

7. Develop an organizational framework for Long Term Tourism

Development: The region needs a Tourism Development Committee to oversee long term tourism development. Key stakeholders need to be represented. This committee requires strong, capable and determined leadership to manage individual interests for the common good. *(EMDC/CVB/CHET/PCEDC/PTTF)*

8. Create a Regional Information system: Kiosks, Brochures, signs and Guides: Need a system of information delivery that is easily accessible to visitors no matter what their point of entry. Contracts with visible local businesses which are identified by logo signing are mentioned as one way inexpensive way to accomplish this goal in the short-term. A visitor's guide is required to fully respond to visitor's needs; but ultimately a regional network of electronic kiosks that offer "real-time" visitor information assistance would be ideal.**

9. Launch a Regional Tourism Public Relations Program: The Chamber of Commerce(s) needs to launch a campaign to build consensus for tourism as one economic tool to be used in the overall economic development mix. *(TMH/CVB is doing some of this)*

6. Collect tourism data through a consistent, on-going survey process: Consistent data collection through surveys should be used to determine if the region is progressing toward the goals established. *(TMH)*

7. Create an evaluation process to act as foundation for future tourism development efforts: The committee will evaluate on a regular basis and make adjustments to the tourism development plan as necessary.

c. Four Part Marketing Strategy

General Marketing Guidelines (applicable to entire County)

- Think in terms of general vs targeted promotion.

- Market strategically by activity type.
- Market strategically by geographic area.
- Package Activities.
- Collect information on marketing activities & visitors.
- Re-evaluate the role of the Chambers.
- Explore local investment & capital to upgrade accommodations and start new profit-making ventures.
- Work to reduce the distance perception problem.
- Improve coordination between all those involved in tourism.

➤ **1. Strengthen the Slow Seasons.**

- **Work with similar coastal regions/communities to cross promote and to sell similar compatible experiences.**
 - Waldo County – So Piscataquis
 - Camden-Rockport-Lincolntonville – So Piscataquis
 - Bar Harbor – Moosehead
- **Winter (January-March) Objectives**
 - Strongly promote snowmobiling.
 - Build the cross country ski & *snowshoe* markets.
 - Support Moose Mountain with events and packages. (?)
 - Market to Bangor, Portland & New Brunswick markets.
 - Nostalgic old-fashioned Christmas Celebration theme
- **Fall (October-November) Objectives**
 - Attract non-hunter outdoor markets.
 - Build the small group market.
 - Oktoberfest or Harvest Festival to celebrate the conclusion of the fall harvest and close of the Farmer’s Market.
 - Work to attract the biking market - south
- **Spring (May-June) Objectives**
 - Market aggressively to the fishing market.
 - Strongly market nature observation (especially moose watching) in spring.
 - Spring Fling celebration that officially opens the Farmers Market.
 - Work to attract the biking market - south
- Summer
 - Develop an Arts & Cultural Festival in So. Piscataquis
 - Maintain summer market in northern Piscataquis

➤ **2. Strengthen the Product.**

- *Promote Unique Characteristics:* Develop unique and special characteristics to develop a legitimate “sense of place”.
- As much as possible, *develop tourism experiences around unique, natural and man-made linkages* that tie the region together; i.e., rivers, roads, agriculture, forests, railroad, shared experiences, history, etc.

1. *Facilitate Self-guided Tours:* Tours focusing on areas of special interest should be developed on maps for easy

distribution to visitors. Some interest areas are: historic sites, historic architecture, cultural diversity, hiking trails, biking trails, farm tours, cross-country ski tours, etc.

2. Encourage Guided Backcountry Experiences: Guided backcountry tours should be readily available and encouraged for visitors who want an in depth wilderness experience. A guide helps to insure the quality of the experience, competent interpretation of the history, culture and natural resources, in addition to providing for a high level of comfort and safety for the visitors. Examples: portions of the Appalachian Trail; combination adventures, i.e., hiking, biking, canoeing; woodland tours interpreting forest practices and lumbering history; waterfall tours, etc.**

3. The Roads: The network of primary and secondary roads can offer auto touring routes and mountain biking opportunities, but need to be outlined for the ease of the visitors. Packages can and should be developed and promoted for all outdoor and recreational activities.

4. Rivers & Lakes: Emphasize water activities. Expanded river walks with connections between communities open up new non-motorized travel opportunities year round. Two major rivers in Maine find their headwaters in Piscataquis. This is an experiential, historic and cultural opportunity upon which to capitalize.

5. The Railroad: Work to develop a passenger train trip to celebrate the history of the railroad in the development of the north woods. Such a trip opens up spectacular scenery otherwise unseen and could be entertaining and educational in nature. At the same time, the people are managed through the beautiful backcountry. Connect Jackman, Greenville Jct. and Brownville Jct. via rail and allow them each to tell their unique historic stories. Railroad communities should consider restoration of their historically significant buildings.

6. The Agriculture: There is an opportunity for a large, consistent farmer's market highlighting locally grown products. Quality crafts and products should also be highlighted. A different farms tour could be highlighted each week. Visitors would be directed to that farm through the farmer's market.

7. Create, emphasize and promote niche cultural activities to offset the clear wilderness, undeveloped image that is strongly portrayed by the State and our region. Visitors need to feel a comfort level in coming to the region that comes with the knowledge that there is a level of cultural sophistication despite our distance from urban centers.

8. Create a vision of a place where nature and people will be in balance into the future and where education occurs on how to reach that future vision. That would be a distinct and different market stance found in no other competing area. Place an emphasis on self-sufficiency in concert with the land – historic and future. This requires preparation & planning.

- Build a *unified* calendar of regular events around the scheduled events of the tourism destination communities in close proximity. In this way, capture visitors passing through to or from other destinations.

➤ **3. Develop an Orientation/Interpretation Facility. (Moosehead)**

- **Natural resource, cultural, historic & future Education: Moosehead Lake Region Orientation & Interpretive Facility as gateway into privately owned lands and a different land use paradigm.(DMF)**
 - The MLR needs a better mechanism for orienting visitors to an understanding of the region.
 - Step by step plan for developing an Orientation & Interpretive Center.
 - Provide basic Information on lodging & activities.
 - Provide more in depth information on special experiences.
 - Provide educational experiences on the past, present and future of the region.
 - Show how lumber & recreational industries can co-exist in a sustainable and environmentally sound manner.
 - Entertain the visitor and entice to stay longer.
 - Preserve local history for future generations.
 - Encourage improved relationships between lumber and recreational industries.
 - Provide a clear place and focus for the efforts to strengthen the tourism economy in a manner that will protect the region and its quality of life.
 - Provide a place for bad weather activities and a space for community activities.
 - Provide space that encourages increased cooperation & cost efficiency for various organizations in town that relate to tourism.

➤ **4. Broaden the Visitor Profile. (1991 list)**

Examine current market trends within each of these markets and other emerging niche markets to determine where the best opportunities are currently available. Focus on the strongest niche markets in determining the new and revised marketing plan. Some of the ancillary activities listed may now be primary activities, especially wildlife viewing!

- **Primary Activities:**
 - Boating
 - Camping
 - Hunting (declining market)
 - Fishing
 - Downhill skiing
 - Snowmobiling
- **Ancillary Activities**
 - Cross country skiing
 - Bicycling (mountain biking)

- *Hiking*
- Whitewater rafting
- Bus Tours
- Windsurfing
- Golf
- Nature Observation/Wildlife/Environment

Immediate Action Steps: (Actually PTTF is accomplishing these actions.)

1. Should establish a Tourism Development Committee to carry out tourism development strategies for the region.

Strong leadership must be found for this committee, since the process requires a long term commitment.

2. Should hold regional meetings (or series of meetings) to discuss the local commitment to tourism development.

3. The proposed strategies should be discussed at the meetings to gain feedback, reactions and buy-in from the local region.

4. The proposed theme concept should be discussed in a brainstorming session with a good cross-section of residents, business people, marketing and artistic talent to develop a theme and logo.

5. The committee should prioritize the ideas according to those most easily implemented in the short-term and long-term strategies.

6. Sub-committees should be formed to begin work on the chosen priorities.

Conclusion:

- (Piscataquis County) is an exceptional, spectacular area. Clear targeted marketing strategies, consistent follow-up, and application of resident creativity will achieve the objectives of this strategy. This is do-able if leaders and business people come together, focus on a specific task and follow through step by step. With hard work, openness to changing markets and willingness to put limits on the types of development that will ruin the character of the region, the (County) is in a position to have it all: a stable tourism economy that does not destroy the quality of life.

** This ties directly with Fermata's recommendations. They suggest that guides should work from existing lodging facilities to make the connection with clients more seamless.

Fermata is also recommending that we create a seamless visitor information system that is more readily accessible and more visitor friendly. (See list of Fermata recommendations.)

DMF- my changes, comments, etc. are in italics and/or initialed. This is just a beginning. We can add to/change/refine this considerably. This is just a beginning point.