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## **MEDA Tourism & Recreation Working Group**

February 9, 2012

10:00am – 11:00am

**On the Call:** Mike Strang, Chair; Mary Paoli, Tracy McIntyre, Victor Bjornberg, Sam Korsmoe, and Gloria O'Rourke.

### **Welcome and Agenda Items**

Victor Bjornberg reported on the following:

#### **1. Coming Together to Expand Montana's Tourism Story Workshops**

- a. Feb 3: Hamilton/Bitterroot Valley. Over 80 attendees. Presentation provided info about MTOT programs, staff and funding; MT Brand Initiative; Bitterroot Valley Visitor Profile – Why, What, From Where, How Informed, Visitor Expenditures. Break-out Brainstorming sessions on #1 what Valleys Strongest Assets Are; Breathtaking Experiences; Relaxing Hospitality; How Visitors Experience Those Assets; What can be done to improve the visitors experience; and #2 What can be done to get visitors to get more visitors to come to the Valley & Stay Longer? Will return on Feb 23 to share with group MTOT and MercuryCSC thoughts & recommendations for Valley's next steps forward.
- b. Next workshops:
  - i. Great Falls – March 8
  - ii. Gold West Country – April 26
  - iii. Havre – May 23
- c. To set up a workshop for your community, contact Pam Gosink, [pgosink@mt.gov](mailto:pgosink@mt.gov), 841-2894

#### **2. 2012 MT Tourism Conference, April 11-13, 2012, Great Falls Best Western Plus Heritage Inn.** All Conference info at [www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/](http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/). Few highlights:

- a. Feature Presenters – Dr. Suzanne Cook, U.S. Travel Association on national and global travel trends; Bill Baker of BBandCo on Strategic Storytelling – Building Your Brand One Story at a Time; Diane Shoer, Director, WY Office of Tourism and board member of Brand USA, the nation's new International Tourism Promotion Program.
- b. Break Out Session Topics: TripAdvisor, Social Media, MT Travel Trends and ITRR's Report Builder, Sustainable Tourism, RMI Update on MT's International Tourism Efforts, Expanding MT's Tourism Story Workshops Overview
- c. Wed, April 11, is registration day with the afternoon hosting a number of tourism association meetings (MLHA Hospitality Council & MT TBID reps), TIIP Grant Application Training, MT VIC Managers Meeting and a number of touring and movie opportunities offered by Great Falls Hosts.

#### **3. Be A Champion for MT Tourism** – Mary Paoli, Public Relations Director, Voices of MT Tourism, [mary@marypaoli.com](mailto:mary@marypaoli.com), 406-551-4655, cell: 775-813-6926. Workshops for communities on importance of tourism, economic & social benefits for state, champions needed to build respect for tourism around the state.

**Note:** The MEDA Interim Legislative Committee reviewed the information provided by Mary and thought that it was a true initiative and would not follow the usual legislative process. The MEDA Legislative Committee said they are supportive of tourism and would support this effort via promoting the topic on the MEDA listserve and testifying at hearings. Mary explained that the word "initiative" is misleading and does indeed follow the usual legislative process. Gloria will again bring this "initiative" to the attention of the committee.

#### **4. Multi-State Regional Tourism Planning Project:**

- The US Commerce Dept's Economic Development Administration has awarded MT, WY and the Dakotas a Planning Grant to look at ways to strengthen tourism and develop tourism business development opportunities in SE MT, NE WY and western North & South Dakota.
- MTOT and its counterparts in the other states are funding partners for this project. Custer Country, the Billings & Miles City CVB and various economic development organizations in the regions are providing technical assistance and guidance for the project.
- The hired consultants are in Montana now (Feb 6-10) for a week-long site visit and interviews with stakeholders. They met with a number of TAC & SE MT Tourism Region Board members on Mon, Feb. 6.
- Planning Project should have its recommendations in place by Sept. 2012.

#### **5. Butte-Anaconda Regional Historic Preservation Plan Update Project:**

- a) MTOT is assisting the consultants and local project coordinators involved with updating the historic preservation plan for Butte & Anaconda. The plan includes heritage tourism development.
- b) Update should be completed and recommendations in place by Sept. 2012.
- c) Headwaters RC&D has recently hired Katie Weaver who is very interested in tourism and will serve with this working group.

#### **6. Crown of the Continent Sustainable Tourism Workshops & Program Development**

- a) The Crown Geotourism Council is working with the Yellowstone Business Partnership to offer Sustainable Tourism Business training webinars and workshops in the region in March and April of this year. Initial introduction webinar will be offered on Wed, Feb. 29, followed by 10 half-day workshops in 4 communities NW MT, 2 along RM Front, 2 in Alberta.
- b) Crown council is looking at developing an ongoing training program for the region with assistance from the Partnership's UnCommon Sense Program.
- c) This effort is being supported by MTOT, MT DEQ, Whitefish and Kalispell CVBs, Glacier Country, SW Alberta, GPI, Whitefish Mountain with other partners being approached.

#### **MISC.**

- The Rural Community Conference will be held in May. The agenda does include several tourism workshops.
- MEDA's Annual Meeting and Conference will be held February 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> in Helena.
- Several on the call attended a 2012 Outlook Seminar and appreciated the information on tourism provided.
- Mary will check with Webb to determine if the Regional Tourism Summit purpose is being filled by her outreach activities.