6th MASSACHUSETTS Green Careers Conference

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Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
Sustainable Tourism Laboratory

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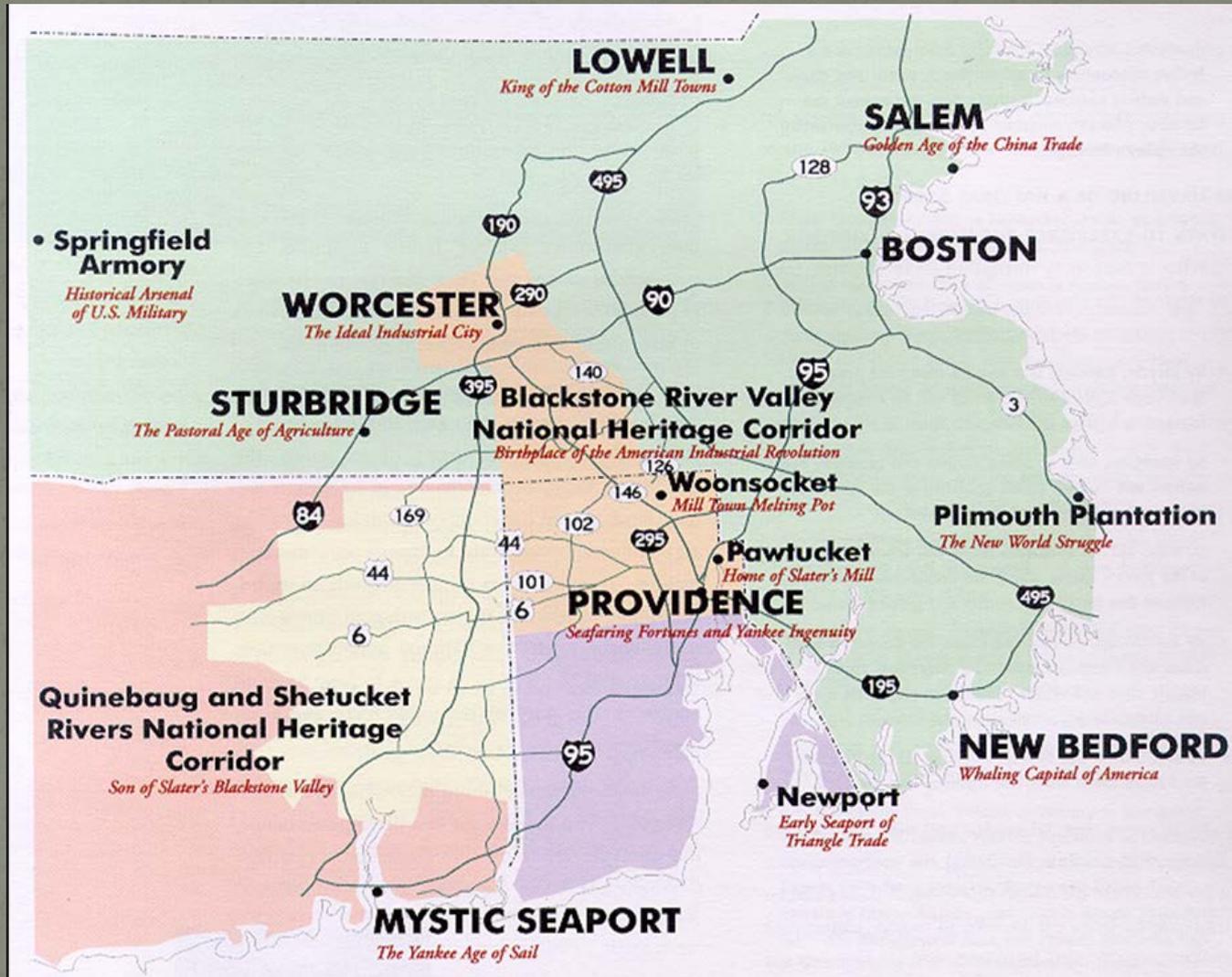
Blackstone River Valley

Stakeholder Involvement

To achieve our mission we work with:

- Federal, State and local governments
- Community Groups
- City and town planners
- Inter-regional and intra-regional groups
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local and national news media
- Public relations staff
- Watershed Councils
- US National Park Service
- RIDEM and MADCR
- Every tourism resource – private & public

- US EPA
- USCG
- Local and state-wide businesses
- Higher education
- Civic groups ie: Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis
- Historians and Historic Societies
- Libraries
- Transportation
- Architects and Landscape Architects

The Blackstone River…carried enormous waves of prosperity, hope and dreams of generations. It has also seen disappointment and despair as its waters carried away the textile industry to other shores.

Today, that has all changed thanks to the restoration and reclamation projects.

Jack Reed, US Senator
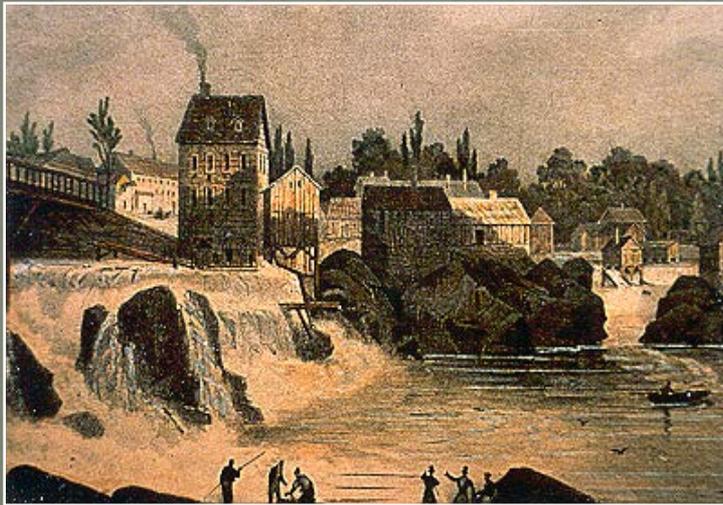
About the Blackstone River Valley

- Rev Wm. Blackstone, founded Boston, became first settler in RI 1635

- 450,000 residents, 24 communities, 2 states, 454sq mi watershed

- Birthplace of America's Industrial Revolution

- First industrialized, polluted and river to "die" in North America

- Millions of immigrants came in search of the American dream

- 46-mile long

English immigrant Samuel Slater, at 18 years old, reproduced what he had learned as an apprentice in England, giving birth to the America's Industrial Revolution in 1790.
He became known as the Father of American Manufacturing
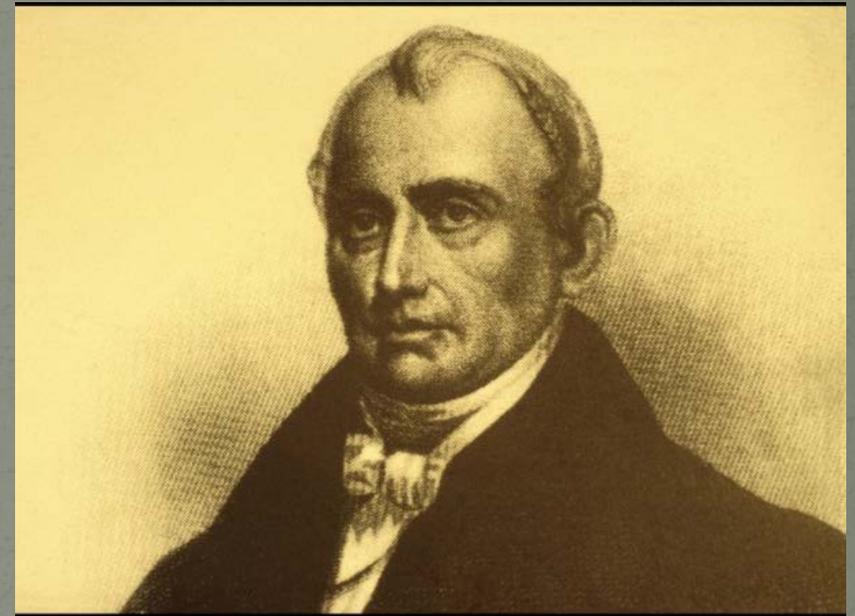
- Industrialists constructed 45 dams along the Blackstone eliminating spawning fish passage - further killing the river

- While creating economic growth, the textile industry had severe damaging impacts on the environment

- There was a lack of respect for the cultural, historical, environmental resources of the Blackstone Valley

- The Valley grew to over 1,000 textile operations

- Saw 150 years of economic growth

- 1930's began the dis-investment and de-industrialization

- Lost industry to the South

- Empty factories

- A heavily polluted river

- Heavy immigration

- 1980's: high unemployment – 14%

- In the 1970's - sustainable thinking began to emerge

- The creation of Earth Day, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and the US Clean Water Act, Save the Bay

- Project ZAP - 10,000 residents, corporate and government leaders, to clean-up the Blackstone River

- The Blackstone Valley needed a way out of high unemployment, abandoned mills, and a deteriorating quality-of-life

- Rhode Island tourism promotions at that time did not include the Blackstone Valley as a destination

- Policy-makers were indifferent to the difficulties of the Valley

- Social responsibility was emerging from within the community

- From a need to survive, emerged leadership and a vision that tourism could help regenerate the Blackstone Valley

- In 1985, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was formed with $300 donation

- Its mission would be to encourage preservation, protection and promotion of what was left of the Valley's authentic resources and to help it tell its story

- 1986, Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in 1986 to support protect and celebrate the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution

- The Heritage Corridor Commission provided a management framework

- It gave local leaders a way to assist in preservation and protection of the lands and to encourage economic development, while maintaining and enhancing the character of the Valley: its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of residents

- The Blackstone Valley's works to become a destination through the use of whole place-making, and sustainable tourism techniques

- Rhode Island began to create a linear park along the Blackstone's banks in the 1980's

- Rhode Island and Massachusetts would collaborate to clean the river before developing public recreational land

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council created a tourism planning strategy that built on the story of the Valley and its historic, natural, cultural and economic resources

- Rhode Island designated the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council as the tourism development agency for the Blackstone Valley

- The Council initiated a vision and plan for tourism development

- The Council articulated an area of responsibility based on the watershed of the River and became responsible for tourism development for 9 communities

- The Valley used the watershed-based framework to encourage and promote socially responsible and sustainable practices among corporations, residents and communities

- The Blackstone River Valley Heritage Corridor Commission encouraged residents and businesses to act responsibly and to prioritize a long-term return on investment

- Building a sense of responsibility among residents was essential in order to regenerate the Valley

- In 1992 the Tourism Council created the Blackstone Valley Regional Comprehensive Tourism Plan

The Tourism Council built and maintains widespread support for its vision from every constituent and stakeholder of the community including residents, regulators, politicians, the National Park Service, environmental organizations, colleges and universities, as well as the business community.

My real estate development firm was drawn to the Valley because of the abundance of magnificently crafted mill buildings poised for adaptive reuse. We stayed to work in the Blackstone Valley largely because of the Tourism Council.

David Stein, Principal Re-Investments

- Place-making leverages resources to create communities that are prosperous and sustainable

- Place-making energizes the power public and private capabilities of design, finance, science and story telling, to create places that are not cookie cutter subdivision, strip malls and office parks - the generic, default of most of America, but rather places that are whole

- We are working to help the Blackstone Valley become a "whole" place that is full of life; diverse and distinctive in its built form, natural environment and social networks; empowers people, a community that is transit and digitally connected; water and energy efficient and disaster resilient

Kip Bergstrom, RI Economic Policy Council

The challenge today is: how can a community deliberately sustain and expand diversity of people, buildings uses, business, habitats and species in the face of natural economic forces that tend to diminish diversity….in other words, how can a visitor destination, or place, become economically successful without losing it's soul?

The Blackstone Valley Today

- Several of the Blackstone's mills and mill villages are being restored and converted into housing or sophisticated office and retail space.

- The city of Woonsocket led the effort to preserve its history and the culture of the Valley by developing a museum to give tribute to the immigrant groups who shaped the lifestyle of the Valley

- The Council operates 2 river tour boats and manages 10 dragon boats

- The corporate sector plays a key role in financing the innovative place making initiatives

- In1993, the Council raised the funds to build the M/V *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. It has carried nearly 350,000 people

- In 2000, the Council raised funds to build a British canal boat the *Samuel Slater,* and was imported to serve as a floating Bed & Breakfast

- In 2001, raised funds to import a British a Double Decker bus to the Valley through corporate donations

- Events like the Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat Race and Taiwan Day Festival collaborate with city and state governments, private developers, local residents to develop an impressive riverfront event with international involvement

- The Nation of Taiwan built 6 Dragon Boats and gifted them to the Blackstone Valley

- Regional educational institutions, such as Johnson & Wales University, Holy Cross College, Clark University, Brown University, Bryant University and University of Rhode Island include the Blackstone Valley as part of their teaching curriculum

- Over $450 million has been invested by private businesses in authentic factory restoration

The Council's work plan involves:

- Creating sustainable communities

- Implementing Geotourism Principles

- Environmental protection

- Heritage development

- Social improvement

- Infrastructure development

- Education of visitors and the community

- Cultural integration

- Economic development
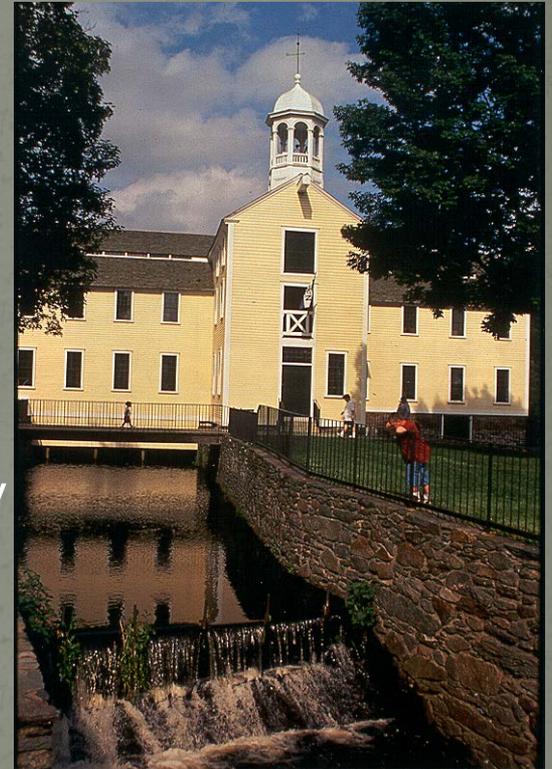
- Economic impacts of tourism are of interest to practitioners

- A study for 2004 by the Travel Industry Association of America showed:

  - ✓ 12% of our visitation is business visitation

  - ✓ 48% of our visitors stayed overnight

 - ✓ $474.4 million was spent on transportation, lodging, food, entertainment and recreation, and incidentals

UNWTO Ulysses Prize 2006
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

"The Valley has come back to life, with new generations living along its banks and a river that is cleaner and more usable everyday. It is certainly a destination and hopefully becoming one of growing international recognition"

Senator Jack Reed

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY

- There is a need to design thoughtful tourism planning and development strategies

- Effective, sustainable tourism planning in a community eludes many

- In the interest of being socially responsible, the Council has created the Sustainable Tourism Planning Laboratory

The Sustainable Tourism Laboratory bases it's work on:

•Geotourism principles developed by the National Geographic Society,

•Foundational work by the Business Enterprises for Sustainable Tourism Educational Network ,

•Sustainable tourism guidelines established by the United Nations World Tourism

• The work of the Global Sustainable Research Center

Is there really an public interest in sustainable destinations?

According to National Geographic Traveler's Geotourism Study:

Over half the American traveling public thinks it's harder to find unspoiled places than it used to be.

Almost ¾ don't want their visits to harm the environment at their destinations.

65 million American households are predisposed to support the principles of Geotourism.

Indications of Unsustainability:
Global Warming, Soil Degradation, Deforestation, Species Extinction, Declining Fisheries and Economic Inequity

Contributing to Unsustainability:
Over-consumption, population growth. Dependence upon Non-renewable resources, Pollution, Destructive Development Patterns, Inequities in Resource Distribution, Limited public Participation and the failure to recognize the fundamental limits to the Earth's ability to withstand alterations to its natural systems.

Are these indications of Unsustainability in your community?
Suburban Sprawl, Segregation and Unequal Opportunity, Loss of Open Space & Agricultural Land, Degradation of Water Resources, Loss of Wetlands, Traffic Congestion & Air Pollution and Exposure to Environmental Hazards – Especially by low-income people

Sustainable development maintains the delicate balance between the human need to improve our lifestyle and feeling of well-being on one hand, with preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we and future generations depend on the other hand.

Sustainability: Being able to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the needs for future generations. Achieving a balance among extraction, renewal and environmental inputs and outputs, as to cause no overall net environmental burden or deficit. To be sustainable, a human community must not decrease bio diversity, must not consume resources faster than they are renewed, must recycle and reuse virtually all materials, and must rely primarily on resources of its own region.

According to the American Planning Association:

Planning for sustainability requires a systematic, integrated approach that brings together environmental, economic and social goals and actions directed toward 4 sustainability objectives for a community.

1. Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, underground metals, and minerals.

2. Reduce dependence upon synthetic chemicals and other unnatural substances.

3. Reduce encroachment upon nature.

4. Meet human needs fairly & efficiently.

Sustainability characteristics

- Capacities to understand and analyze problems,
- Partnering with different resources/organizations to find solutions,
- Using local resources for local solutions,
- Involving the whole community and all stakeholders with comprehensive participation,
- Negotiation and consensus-building from within,
- Ability to incorporate and adopt external resources within local contexts,
- Respect of historical and cultural issues.

The Global Research Development Center

- Tourism should be initiated with the help of broad-based community-inputs and the community should maintain control of tourism development.

- Tourism should provide quality employment to its residents and a linkage between the local businesses and tourism should be established.

- A code-of-practice should be established for tourism at all levels – based on internationally accepted standards.

The Global Sustainable Research Center

- Guidelines for tourism operations, impact assessment, monitoring of cumulative impacts, and limits to acceptable change should be established.

- Education and training programs to improve and manage heritage and natural resources should be established.

- Tourism planning in the context of overall land use planning provides the basis for achieving integrated, controlled and sustainable tourism development.

- Planning is carried out according to a systematic process

- Sustainable tourism development can fulfill economic, social, and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity and ecological processes. It can provide for today's hosts and guests while protecting and enhancing the same opportunity for the future.

United Nations World Tourism Organization

•Good information, research and communication on the nature of tourism and its effects on the human and cultural environment should be available prior to and during development, especially, for the local people, so that they can participate in and influence the direction of development and its effects as much as possible, in the individual and the collective interest.

•Integrated environmental, social and economic planning analysis should be undertaken prior to the commencement of any major projects, with careful consideration given to different types of tourism development and the ways in which they might link with existing uses, ways of life and environmental considerations.

United Nations World Tourism Organization

•Throughout all stages of tourism development and operation, a careful assessment, monitoring and mediation program should be conducted in order to allow local people and others to take advantage of opportunities of to respond to changes.

•Tourism Planning, development and operations should be part of conservations or sustainable development strategies for a community.

•Tourism should be planned and managed in a sustainable manner, with a due regard for protection and appropriate economic.

•Agencies and individuals should follow ethical principles with respect to the culture and environment of the host area.

United Nations World Tourism Organization

•Local people should be encouraged and expected to undertake leadership roles in planning and development with the assistance of government, business, financial and other interests.

•Tourism should be undertaken with equity in mind to distribute fairly benefits and costs among tourism promoters and host peoples and areas.

•Sustainable tourism development involves making hard political choices based on complex social, economic and environmental trade-offs. It requires a vision which encompasses a larger time and space context than that traditionally used in community planning and decision making.

United Nations World Tourism Organization

The UN World Tourism Organization has a certification system for destinations seeking to follow their sustainability principles

The .Sbest Certification system is earned by organizations that support sustainability initiatives

An organization must meet performance standards in 240 areas, in six topic areas to detect strengths and weaknesses in the organisation's destination management process.

•Destination and Society at large
•Principle Stakeholders
•Strategic Corporate management
•Program Development and Implementation
•Human Resources
•Other Resources, Financial and Infrastructure

UNWTO .Sbest Certification provides:

- Enhanced tourism policy and destination management procedures
- International recognition through the UNWTO

Tools to make the destination more competitive

- Ability to share best practices with other destinations
- Time to collaborate with UNWTO in the design and implementation of specific actions and programmes for the achievement of excellence at tourism destinations
- Tools to monitor and improve visitor satisfaction levels
- Protocols to become immersed in a process of continual improvement

Many community's are carrying out sustainable development projects such as green buildings, affordable housing, smart growth or climate change initiatives but these are largely are occurring on a project by project basis.

It is recommended to use a systems approach to sustainable development by using widespread community awareness-raising and integrated municipal involvement, and using a common language to identify what sustainability means.

American Planning Association

Sustainable Tourism Development Lab

Eco-municipalities

An Eco-municipality is one that has adopted a particular set
Of sustainability principles as guiding municipal policy and has
committed to a bottom up, participatory approach for implementing
this.

25% of all communities in Sweden are Eco-municipalities
In 2005, the Wisconsin communities of Ashland, Washburn and
Madison became the first eco-municipalities in the US when they
adopted the APA sustainability objectives of the original Swedish
sustainability framework on which these are based.

National Geographic Society created the Center for Sustainable Destination and Geotourism

Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place-its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.

GeoTourism Principles:
Integrity of Place,
Enhance geographical character by developing and improving it in
        ways distinctive to the locale, reflective of its natural   and
        cultural heritage, so as to encourage market differentiation
        and cultural pride.
International Codes:
        Adhere to the principles embodied in the WTO's Global Code
        of Ethics for Tourism and the Principles of the Cultural Tourism
        Charter established by the International Council on
Monuments
        and Sites (ICOMOS).

Market Selectivity

    Encourage growth in tourism market segments most likely to appreciate, respect, and disseminate information about the distinctive assets of the locale.

Market Diversity

    Encourage a full range of appropriate food and lodging facilities so as to appeal to the entire demographic spectrum of the geotourism market and so maximize economic resiliency over both the short and long term.

Tourist Satisfaction

    Ensure that satisfied, excited geotourists bring new vacation stories home and send friends off to experience the same thing, thus providing continuing demand for the destination.

Conservation of Resources

Encourage businesses to minimize water pollution, solid waste energy consumption, water usage, landscaping chemicals, and overly bright nighttime lighting. Advertise these measures in a way that attracts the large, environmentally sympathetic tourist market.

Planning

Recognize and respect immediate economic needs without sacrificing long-term character and the geotourism potential of t he destination.

Where tourism attracts in-migration of workers, develop new communities that themselves constitute a destination enhancement.   Strive to diversity the economy and limit population influx to sustainable levels. Adopt public strategies for mitigating practices that are incompatible with geotourism and damaging to the image of the destination.

Interactive interpretation

Engage both visitors and hosts in learning about the place. Encourage residents to show off the natural and cultural heritage of their communities, so that tourists gain a richer experience and residents develop pride in the locales.

Evaluation

Establish an evaluation process to be conducted on a regular basis by an independent panel representing all stakeholder interests, and publicize evaluation results.

Community Involvement

Base tourism on community resources to the extent possible, encourage local small businesses and civic groups to build partnerships to promote and provide a distinctive, honest visitor experience and market their locales effectively.
Help businesses develop approaches to tourism that build on the area's nature, history and culture, including food and drink, artisanry, performance arts etc.

UNWTO suggests core indicators of sustainable tourism

1. Site protection – Category of site protection
2. Stress - visitor numbers per month/annum
3. Use intensity - Intensity of use in peak periods
4. Social impact – Ratio of visitor to locals
5. Development control – Existence of environmental review procedures
6. Waste Management Percentage of sewage from site receiving treatment
7. Water supply – Is there enough water for the future
8. Planning process – Existence of organized regional plan for the visitor destinations
9. Critical eco systems – Number of endangered species
10. Consumer satisfaction – Level of satisfaction by visitors
11. Local satisfaction – Level of satisfaction by locals
12. Tourism contribution to the economy – Economic activity

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council is committed to ensuring that sustainable tourism best practices are adopted and implemented by the industry and the traveling public. The Knowledge, Network, Education, and Training (KNET) Working Group is tasked with developing and identifying the best available tools and resources to facilitate the transition to sustainable practices.

OBJECTIVES:

Provide education and training materials tailored to specific sectors, to help them implement sustainable tourism using the GSTC criteria as the base.

Provide educational resources to certification organizations to assist them in moving towards accreditation.

Ensure the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are integrated into the curricula of universities, training schools and other programs.

Build capacity amongst organizations promoting and selling tourism businesses, products and services, to educate their customers about more sustainable travel options.

Tourism cannot be too resource consumptive in a world of diminishing resources.

Long term tourism must protect the environments on which it depends.

Individual contributions to improving the environment do make a difference.

Core Tourism – Employment

Core Tourism is the 4th largest private sector employer in Rhode Island with more than **39,800 tourism supported jobs** in 2013.

Core Tourism generated **9.7% of private sector employment** in 2013.

Core Tourism jobs provided **$1.3 billion in wages & salaries** in 2013.

Core Tourism's **average annual wage** reached **$32,273** in 2013.

Source: IHS Insights 2013

Job Opportunities

http://careers.gstcouncil.org/jobs/

http://www.ecoemploy.com/jobs/

http://sustainabletravel.org/about/jobs/

How do we develop tourism responsibly and not loose our community's soul?

Responsible tourism development can provide the nurturing of a community but it will mean a change in thinking, acting and doing.

Thank you