



Appendix B

Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Related Tourism Grant Investments 2005-2017

Year(s)	Recipient	Use/Project	# of Grants	Amount
2006	Tompkins County Chamber Foundation	Hike and Bike Brochure & Digital Map	1	\$ 2,750
2010	Floating Classroom	Floating Classroom Tourism Related Projects	3	\$ 11,500
2012	Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway	Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Geocache Trail	1	\$ 2,000
2014	Natural Heritage Trust	Ice Climbing Tourism Development	1	\$ 13,800
2015	City of Ithaca	Lake Street Public Park Enhancement Project	1	\$ 20,000
2015	Finger Lakes Land Trust	Gofingerlakes.org Website	1	\$ 6,000
2015	Town of Ulysses	IthacaTrails.org Website	1	\$ 14,500
2017	Finger Lakes Land Trust	Lick Brook Trail Enhancements	1	\$ 10,000
2017	Paleontological Research Institution	Smith Woods Enhancements	1	\$ 5,000
2005-2012	Tompkins County Chamber Foundation	Cayuga Waterfront Trail Enhancements	3	\$ 29,000
2005-2014	Ithaca Triathlon Club	Cayuga Lake Triathlon	9	\$ 29,045
2008-2016	Friends of Stewart Park	Various Stewart Park Studies and Improvements	6	\$155,500
2009-2017	Ithaca Children's Garden	Various Children's Garden Improvements	6	\$ 61,350
2012-2013	Finger Lakes Land Trust	Roy H. Park Preserve Access Enhancement Project	1	\$ 20,000
2012-2016	Cayuga Lake Watershed Network	Can You Canoe Cayuga? Paddling Event	7	\$ 15,200
2013-2014	The History Center in Tompkins County	Cayuga Trails 50 Trail Running Race	4	\$ 29,700
2014-2016	Cayuga Lake Watershed Network	Cayuga Lake SUP Cup	6	\$ 13,324
2015-2016	Tompkins County Planning Department	Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail	2	\$ 43,480
2015-2017	Ithaca Youth Bureau	Ithaca Bike Rental	5	\$ 22,000
2015-2016	Social Ventures - Dragon Boat	Finger Lakes International Dragon Boat Festival	11	\$105,317
2016-2017	Cornell Cooperative Extension of TC	Regional Marketing for Primitive Pursuits Camp	2	\$ 6,000
		Totals 2005-2017	73	\$615,466

APPENDIX C – SWOT Analysis Report: Outdoor Recreation Tourism

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and is a brainstorming method for situational analysis. This SWOT was conducted on April 18th, 2016 with community experts to discuss outdoor recreation tourism (ORT) in Tompkins County, NY.

Strengths:

The brainstorming session proved that Tompkins County possesses many strengths, which can be categorized into five aspects: labor, natural resources, facilities, sport activities, and local community.

The brainstorming began with discussions of labor. One of the strengths of Tompkins County is the young, enthusiastic, and educated labor force that the region possesses, thanks to its three educational institutions - Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). Workers tend to have love for and connections to Tompkins County, as well as more training than your average seasonal worker. In addition, local business operators have found success hiring among the local retired population, who can act as mentors to young workers, contributing to good relationships within the community.

Next, the discussion cited our beautiful natural resources as a major asset. Tompkins County has a rich landscape highlighted by the lake and gorges, and enables tourists to enjoy wildlife by providing fishing, hunting, and bird watching opportunities. Because people highly value beautiful scenery, pictures of landscapes shared by tourists would increase attractiveness of Tompkins County. Nature in Tompkins County has an interesting, long history as a Cayuga Indian settlement as well.

In addition, Tompkins County has many developed facilities such as the colleges, eating and drinking establishments, tour guide operations and public transportation. Educational institutions lead prospective students to travel to Tompkins County to do campus visits in the summer. Graduates of the education institutions also visit Tompkins County as alumni. Tompkins County is also part of local food trails, such as a wine trail and cheese trail, which attract tourists as well. Paths in our local state parks are also well-developed. TCAT, the public transit service, also helps increase the accessibility of tourists without cars.

Additionally, Tompkins County is a great place to enjoy sport activities, like biking and skateboarding. There are many mountain biking trails, and many spots suitable for skateboarding which attract young skateboarders to come all the way to Ithaca.

The final strength mentioned in the discussion is cooperative local community. Ties within the community are very strong, and local people are active in local, communal activities (e.g. events and festivals). Local events would encourage more tourists to come to Tompkins County.

Weaknesses:

During the brainstorming session, several weaknesses of Tompkins County's outdoor recreation tourism industry were identified. The beginning of the weakness discussion was dominated by a conversation on the labor needs of outdoor recreational activities. The seasonal nature of outdoor recreation businesses makes it difficult to offer consistent work. Private operators and parks both have plenty of work to offer during peak seasons, but cannot continue to offer full employment during the winter. For recreational activities that need warm weather, employers are forced to rehire workers every year and then let them go for a 3- to 6-month winter period. It can be difficult to find people who are willing to work a 9-month schedule, and

then fill the 3 off months with either a winter seasonal position, or through leisure/travel activities. Additionally, college students dominate the available labor pool. These residents are transient workers in nature; they enter the community for some period of time – typically 4 years, but some may stay on for several years more – and then leave as they finish their education. As trained employees leave, new ones have to be found and trained. While there should be a strong pool of potential new employees, the need for continual job training means businesses have ongoing training costs that other businesses do not have. This cost is especially significant for the park system in Tompkins County, where many of the positions require costly state mandated work training. A final point of concern expressed about the existing labor supply was the perceived lack of work ethic among college students. While it may be possible to fulfill staff requirements every year, their labor may not be of a high enough quality to effectively deliver outdoor recreation.

Beyond labor, the group identified several weaknesses in the facilities and infrastructure of Tompkins County. While Tompkins County has an incredible wealth of outdoor recreation assets to offer to tourists, there is no consolidated inventory. It can be difficult for people traveling to the area to gather information on available assets and how to access them. Outdoor recreation as an industry is presented in fractured segments, instead of a coordinated, holistic manner. The fragmented nature results from several factors. First, there is not a history of a coordinated outdoor recreation tourism effort. This extends beyond just marketing and promotion, but to inter-business relationships, sharing of best practices, and ability to coordinate efforts. Another contributing factor is the insulated nature of the college communities. While the college campuses and their student populations offer an incredible and underutilized resource, it can be hard to engage students beyond campus boundaries. Another important missing piece of the infrastructure puzzle is the issue of accessibility. While many of the individual sites and offerings are relatively accessible (for example, Taughannock Falls offers incredible natural beauty without requiring high fitness levels to access), there is no “Connective Circle” between the many assets of Tompkins County. Finally, the group posited that Tompkins County lacks entertainment options to compliment outdoor recreational trips. My experience here is that Ithaca offers a host of theatrical, musical, and other performing arts options. However, there is no coordination or linkage between the performing arts sector and the outdoor recreation industry. Building relationships between these two areas would turn a weakness into a valuable strength.

The final weakness identified was Tompkins County’s location. While Ithaca offers incredible assets not found anywhere else, visitors have to make an intentional decision to travel to Ithaca. Ithaca is not on the way to anywhere. While the county cannot be picked up and dropped somewhere convenient, a larger effort can be made to entice visitors traveling near the region to stop in Tompkins County. This would predominantly be accomplished by offering and developing numerous and diversified attractions. Tour bus excursions originating in New York City and traveling to the Syracuse/Buffalo/Rochester region was one potential area of expansion that was identified by stakeholders.

Opportunities:

The SWOT session touched on several external opportunities for County outdoor recreation leaders to seize to their advantage. Many opportunities derive from particular demographic groups; demographic trends have significant potential to impact consumer demand in Tompkins County. Both families and couples were identified by leaders as being benefactors of current outdoor recreation offerings. Leaders specifically noted success in imitating the National Park Service’s “Every Kid in a Park” program in which 4th grade students and their family are exempt

from paying park entrance fees. Fee exemption may incentivize families to return to Ithaca to visit other outdoor sites, leaders suggested. Also identified by leaders was an interest in outdoor offerings from corporate groups and higher-dollar spenders. Corporations often seek locations in which to host team-building events, while glamping and fully-supported bike tours were activities of interest to visitors willing to pay a greater dollar amount for outdoor experiences. Many opportunities may derive, too, from facility improvements made within the region. Canal system repairs and stormwater remediation work in adjacent communities could benefit Tompkins County's outdoor offerings. Administrative opportunities were also discussed. Outdoor recreation leaders may profit from collaborating with the academic communities of Ithaca College, TC3, and Cornell University and increased use of social media platforms in marketing initiatives. As visitors increasingly turn to technology for information on community tourism assets, greater use of technology in the outdoor recreation field would not only minimize the amount an organization spends on paper brochures and other physical marketing materials but also extend its marketing reach.

Threats:

In pursuing Outdoor Recreation Tourism (ORT), Ithaca and Tompkins County face a number of substantial, external challenges. ORT stakeholders identified such threats in the economic, environmental and social realm. The group saw overall cost as an issue. Leisure travel is a discretionary expense, and one many cease to make in difficult economic times. Environmental factors mentioned by stakeholders were numerous, and stemmed both from changes to the natural environment and legal impositions from the state and national level. In the former category, the unpredictability of the region's weather is a serious challenge for those conducting weather-dependent outdoor recreation activities like boating or cycling. Longer term, threats like the Emerald Ash Borer and climate change-caused extreme weather events will change our landscape and present a new set of challenges for operators. In the latter, legal category, increasingly strict water quality regulations have forced local state parks to close swimming sites for more days each year, damaging those sites' reliability as tourist attractions. ORT is also hampered by the legal incertitude surrounding emerging activities like ice climbing. Finally, outdoor recreation comes with an element of risk, and an ORT-related accident could negatively impact the regional ORT market, and theoretically, the image of Ithaca itself. Acceptance of such risk by the wider community is a factor in ORT's success.

Conclusions:

It is clear that Outdoor Recreation Tourism is an industry with high potential for growth in Tompkins County. While stakeholders have already independently begun work on many of the challenges laid out in the SWOT, a stronger centralized framework could benefit all. Possible priorities moving forward include: inventorying assets; identifying and cultivating potential financial resources; improving technological capacity; concerted marketing and product development efforts aimed at certain demographics (mainly families); marketing within the community (especially to students); and promotion of weekday and offseason events and activities. These and other inputs from the ORT experts at the SWOT analysis session will be key for the Outdoor Recreation Tourism Task Force moving forward.

Attendees:

Jim Brophy, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Laura Winter Falk, Experience! the Finger Lakes
Bobby Frisch, Firelight Camps
Jodi LaPierre, Visitor Services Manager, CVB
Lynnette Scofield, William Henry Miller Inn
Kelli Cartmill, Hilton Garden Inn
Marc S Magnus-Sharpe, Cornell Outdoor Education
Bruce Stoff, former CVB Director
Fred Bonn, Regional Director, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Cara Nichols, Ithaca College
Rodney Fleming, Integrated Marketing Manager, CVB
Hannah Volpi

Observers:

Andrew Zepp
Brad Treat
Ian Golden

Student Facilitators:

Ben Sandberg
Mariko Hashizume
Papa Kojo Botsio
Paige Barnum
Dylan Tuttle

Table Talk - Brainstorm

- What should we do to enhance our outdoor recreation tourism assets and create new ones?
- What should we do to better market and leverage local outdoor recreation tourism?
- What support do we need to increase revenue and overall visitation associated with outdoor recreation tourism?
- What collaborative partnerships could be developed to help grow local outdoor recreation tourism?

Group Report Outs

- Shops/bathroom access on inlet
- Leverage: interactive maps, app/touchscreen at visitors centers
- Also college students off hill!
- Outdoor expo / festival (ie trail run, SUP class, yoga class) – display what we have to the public in nonthreatening atmosphere
 - Tap into neighboring areas (college students / faculty / staff) so when parents / relatives come, they know where to go and what to do
- Partnerships: Need more of this (to have these partnership conversations)

Group Report Outs

- Information sharing
- “Clearinghouse of info”
- Challenges: Unpredictable climate / need for insider info
 - What’s the best thing to do in Ithaca the next day / two days / weekend
- Connecting lodging partners to outdoor activity businesses/recreation
- Get one-day special events folks to stay a night or two
- Hunting/fishing – can happen in bad/foul weather
- Water quality – good partnerships with DOT, farmers, etc.

Group Report Outs

- Outdoor rec radio show (ie Lee Rayburn)
- Collaboration – more networking events
 - Bringing lodging and dining folks in too!
- Workshops and training (ie social media) to share knowledge

Group Report Outs

- Capitalize on people's passion in the community for their interests – build local rec resource that could turn to tourist (ie mountain biking, disc golf) / building on what is here
- Instant return in visitation may not be possible immediately
- Work with state / partners with land to make accessible to tourism
- Connect with neighbors (ie outside Tompkins County)
 - Birding trail – partner with Lab of O / Montezuma
 - Biking – partner with national forest

Group Report Outs

- Exposure and collaboration to things that aren't "pay to play"
 - Running / biking / hiking aren't pay to play
 - How can we exchange info to better serve smaller entities that create tourism?

Group Report Outs

- Networking option for us so we know a bit more about one another
- Interactive map that encompasses entire county
 - Birding/biking/hiking/etc – everything pops up; build itinerary?
- Provide health benefits of activities (elevation / calories burned / etc.)
- Cayuga Blueway Airbnb type thing – have camping areas on these properties?
- Promote firmly as “The Best X” and push it

Group Report Outs

- “Beginning area” for mountain biking development for kids specifically (newbies, elders)
- Cayuga Lake hard to access – paddling distance access points; model off Finger Lakes trail where people would allow use of their land for temp stops along the Blueway
- Lodging – summer season booked; how to get folks to come mid-week?
 - Partnering with organizations for edu-tourism; people come and have guided tours (hiking, biking, etc.)

Comments / Suggestions

- Find all small niche events (birding, ice climbing, horseback, etc.) and take ownership of them in the area
- If we don't know about standing events / ad hoc events, how are tourists supposed to?
 - We're not capturing this stuff (unless we're part of that group) for visitors / anyone else to enjoy the product
- Full time people to be recipients / librarians of the info to pull from every source (and know how to find them)
- Listserv / FB secret page where us locals can tell each other what's happening to spread the word
- Be flexible! Make infrastructure adaptable to allow options for visitors to enjoy our area in any weather / situation

APPENDIX E - Summary of Public Comments

The diverse perspectives of people throughout the community helped inform this plan. Tompkins County Department of Planning & Sustainability advertised a public comment period for the Outdoor Recreation Tourism Plan. The County issued a press release announcing the public comment period on March 14, 2018. Comments were accepted until April 9, 2018. In total 25 people submitted comments. The types of comments were categorized as shown in the following table:

Comment Type	
General Support	13%
Editorial	8%
Improve Lake Access	8%
Enhance Trail Network	23%
Pickleball Facilities	15%
Implementation Ideas	18%
Other	15%

Many of the comments proposed changes that are reflected in the final version of the plan.

Several individuals provided comments regarding Pickleball. We understand that many people in the community enjoy this sport, however we do not believe it is a priority for our county's outdoor recreation tourism plan. There are four primary reasons for this decision. 1) Pickleball is considered a sport or active recreation activity, and thus outside the scope of this plan. 2) Nearby destinations could quickly provide facilities of similar quality and cause our community to lose its competitive advantage as a destination for this sport. 3) This activity can occur indoors or outdoors and use existing facilities. 4) It is unclear whether visitors would travel long distances to access these facilities.

Additionally, multiple comments addressed the lack of access to Cayuga Lake. The implementation of the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail aims to address the demand by enhancing launch sites for paddle craft along the lake. This grant funded effort is listed as a key action in the Water Recreation section of the plan.

Some comments raised site specific management concerns including: invasive species and off-leash dog walking. While these issues are of important to the stewardship of public lands, their impact on local tourism is unclear. This plan states the essential role of maintenance and operational plans in any capital investment that enhances outdoor recreation.