

CenTRO Newsletter and Updates

Issue 1

January 2008

A Message from the Director

Dr. Harold Daniel

At this time of year, it is common to look back and take stock. I hope many of you would agree that it has been a challenging and a rewarding year for CenTRO as we continue to build the center.

Before I speak about the Center, let me thank Bonnie Pothier for arranging two opportunities for me to introduce CenTRO. This month, I am grateful to have the opportunity to share the story of CenTRO with the Rotary Club in Old Orchard Beach and also at the York County Community College “Eggs and Issues” breakfast in February. I have a colleague in the business school here in Orono to thank for the opportunity to address the Rotary Club in Bangor in December. I continue to believe it is important to share the story of this center and meet the people who are involved in delivering Maine’s tourist experiences.

Now to the Center, there have been successes this year. CenTRO stands to benefit from a new cooperative agreement between the University of Maine System and DECD that will double the state’s financial commitment to CenTRO, yielding an increase in our budget compared to the last two years. The work plan is also more aggressive, featuring efforts to support the state’s tourism regions and its municipalities that seek to capitalize on tourism.

We are fresh from our second successful Maine Tourism Outlook Conference in November that featured Gary Green, the Director of the National Survey of Recreation and the Environment as keynote speaker. We have seen the initiation of a successful Tourism Fellows Grant Program. As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, the first

round of grants is already stimulating faculty research across the system campuses and a second round of proposals is due at month’s end. The funding for the current round of grants has increased to support more ambitious research and outreach projects. You will also see here about the additional analyses of the Overnight Visitor’s Survey data that are planned.



We continue to pursue grant opportunities and partnerships with organizations like the Mountain Heritage Foundation and the Maine Lobster Institute. With the Mountain Heritage Foundation, we are seeking funding for a project that would estimate the economic impact of the completed Maine Huts and Trails project. With the Lobster Institute, we are seeking financing for a research project aimed at identifying the value of the lobster fishery and culture for Maine’s coastal tourist experience. This project will have the added benefit of identifying the value of other key features of coastal tourism. With the American

Folk Festival, we are seeking funding for research that would yield a research package to be offered in support of other local festivals. We have also supported the Downeast Rail Heritage Preservation Trust and the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens this year with advice and counsel that may lead to future research and/or outreach projects.

In the spring, CentTRO will lead a major event around travel and tourism education. Charlie Colgan will lead the development of a system wide tourism educational summit. It will bring together faculty who teach in tourism and recreation related fields from the University of Maine System and Community Colleges to explore the programs currently available in Maine, what needs to be added, and how we might work together to expand educational offerings around the state. We will be seeking an industry perspective regarding what is needed, so we will be asking for help from the Maine Tourism Advisory Committee with this program by appearing on a panel at the meeting. You will be hearing more about this soon.

Challenges this year have included replacing important personnel like Tom Allen, Amy Hudnor and Lisa Bragg. Tom provided major service to CentTRO in helping develop and run the Overnight Visitors Survey and helping to develop the customer satisfaction research methods that were pioneered last summer in the campgrounds. Lisa joined CentTRO as Tom's replacement last summer and her leadership was immediately apparent. She helped us by taking the lead on continuing analysis of the Overnight Visitor's Survey data, leading the development of several grant applications including proposals for the Maine Tourism Marketing Partnership Program grant evaluations, the Maine Huts & Trails, the American Folk Festival and the Lobster impact study mentioned above. Amy continued with us part-time after completing her degree in May. She provided critical support for CentTRO through the

summer, helping Lisa prepare and deliver research proposals. She also supported Lisa with the development of the Maine Tourism Commission's Resource and Product Development Committee database of statewide tourism and development resources. Amy has taken a position with the Land Use Regulation Commission. Lisa, after much thought, will leave us to assume the role of instructor in the School of Economics in the Spring semester. We wish all of them the very best.

I hope that you will read about the other happenings among CentTRO faculty and staff contained in this brief newsletter. These are very positive reports on our progress.

On behalf of everyone at CentTRO, let me wish you all a new year full of good fortune.

Associate Researcher Update

Lisa Bragg

Overnight Visitor Survey

Over the course of this past year, CentTRO conducted a study of overnight visitors to Maine. The study involved the participation of approximately fifty lodging establishments across the state. Each agreed to distribute anywhere between one and 60 surveys to their overnight visitors each month over the whole year. Thank you! Our goal was to compliment and expand upon the information available from Longwoods International as well as to provide information for marketing efforts to Maine's tourism regions. Preliminary analysis of the data was presented at the fall Maine TAC meeting in Portland. The presentation fostered some insightful discussion and provided us with pathways to best serve the tourism industry with future analysis. Those results are available in PowerPoint form on our website:

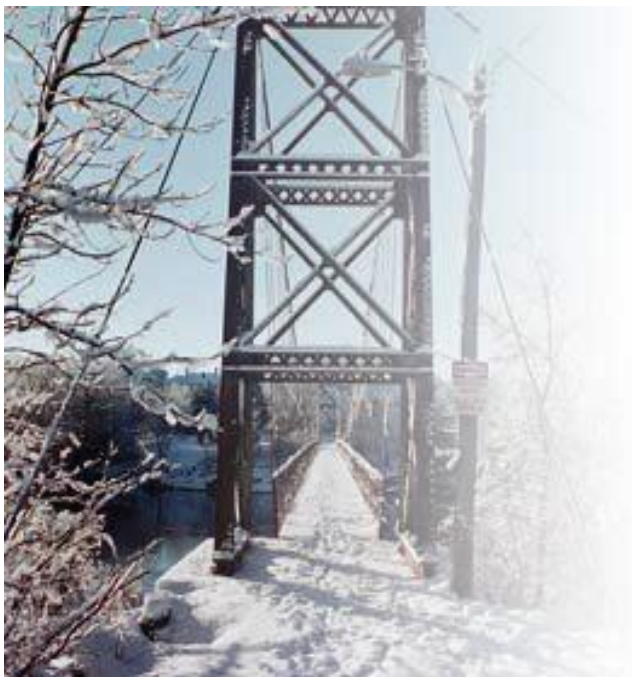
(<http://www.umaine.edu/centro/news/mainetac%20meetings.html>). Analysis is currently ongoing

and we will be providing a written report after the first of the year.

Tourism Fellows Grant Program

A new year for Fellows grants is right around the corner. Last year, the program awarded grants to Todd Gabe for his research about Maine's tourism trade areas and Kevin Athearn for his research related to marine recreational fishing in the Cobscook Bay region. To learn more about their projects, keep reading!!

I would like to take the time to thank our four Maine TAC members who have agreed to sit on the grant review committee this year. We look forward to another successful year with the program.



CenTRO Fellows – Grant Update

Todd Gabe

First, I would like to thank the Maine Tourism Advisory Committee for the support provided by the CenTRO Fellows grant program. My project focuses on the economic impact of tourists in Maine. Unlike previous studies that focus on visitor expenditures, my approach utilizes a

statistical method called “demand-threshold analysis”. In a nutshell, this method estimates the number of local residents required to support a business in a given industry. My analysis incorporates the effects of overnight tourists, along with population size, on the number of establishments by industry in a large sample of Maine municipalities.

Preliminary results show that overnight tourists support an estimated 2,298 Maine businesses, which is 21 percent of the establishments in the retail and service sectors considered in the analysis. Sectors that rely particularly heavily on tourists include, but are not limited to, art dealers (69 percent of businesses supported by tourists); men's clothing stores (68 percent); gift, novelty and souvenir stores (58 percent); confectionery and nut stores (46 percent); and full-service restaurants (45 percent). Tourists are responsible for over 50 percent of the businesses in the selected retail and services sectors in 15 Maine municipalities, and over 30 percent of all businesses in five municipalities.

I plan to continue my work on this project throughout the spring of 2008. I hope to present this research at a conference in March, and at an upcoming MaineTAC meeting.

Thank you for your support this past year.

CenTRO Staff