



**DAVID
THOMPSON
COUNTRY**
CHALLENGE YOUR
INNER EXPLORER

David Thompson Country
Regional Tourism Strategy

Vision

Where the adventurous can renew their spirit through experiencing the challenge of water, wildlife, and wilderness unique to the David Thompson Country.

Mission

Through cooperation of businesses, residents, and governments, the tourism industry will develop, promote, and care for our great outdoors.

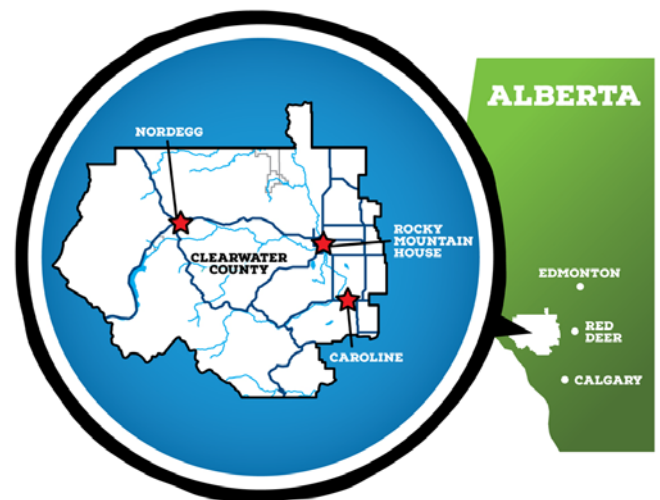
David Thompson Country will do this through:

Maintaining:

- Entrepreneurship;
- Partnerships;
- Hospitable and friendly people;
- Environmental stewardship;
- Current Tourism base (users);
- Current Outdoor activities unique to our area.

Obtaining:

- Customer service focus;
- Communication (signage, b/w operators/ governments/ mapping);
- Investment in tourism products, activities;
- Retention of economic value from Tourism in local region;
- The creation of opportunities for Tourism expansion;
- More infrastructure to support Tourism;
- A focused regional marketing campaign.



Objectives

Objective #1- Create a Regional Brand / Logo:

A Regional Brand has been identified as a need to ensure that the image of the Region is concentrated on the targeted Tourist market and limit existing mixed marketing messages. This brand will be created through the use of existing resources (2016 budget resources).

Strategies

1. Hire an Agency by August, 2016 to complete the work for a Branding/ Logo by September, 2016
2. Engage and consult stakeholders in a process to confirm the Branding/ Logo starting September 5 to be completed by September 25, 2016.
3. Announce and roll out confirmed Brand/ Logo to all stakeholders in regional community by October 31, 2016.

Objective #2 – Develop Marketing Campaign to build on Brand/ Logo

This Marketing Campaign will enhance existing marketing platforms to tourists & vendors including web-based & traditional print/ radio platforms to increase tourism and business opportunities.

Strategies

1. Identify initial focus of marketing efforts to reach our target market by October 1, 2016.
2. The Regional partners will encourage vendor participation in regional marketing efforts through involving the tourism operators and achieving buy-in on the marketing vision. This will be done in conjunction with the Brand / Logo roll-out in later Fall, 2016.
3. Create a Regional Tourism website and associated social media platforms that supports the new Brand / Logo and also the existing tourism industry by December 31, 2016.
4. Getting video content of Outdoor activities in the Clearwater Region from tourism users and operators to post on website/ social media sites. This is to be initiated by December 31, 2016.
5. Better informational materials (i.e. maps) are to be created for posting on the new website and for print material. This is to be initiated in early 2017.
6. Re-visit the process to develop Visitor Guides for the region. This will include partnering with the local newspaper (Mountaineer) to make changes. The demand for Visitor Guide information is changing with technology, and the Guide should be the face of the new Brand / Logo. This is to be initiated by Fall, 2016 to be completed prior to roll-out of the new Visitor Guide planned for Spring, 2017.

Objective #3 – Improve Communication with Internal Stakeholders / External Customers

- For the internal stakeholders: There is the need to maintain continual communication among all Regional Tourism partners (i.e. local municipal governments, chambers of commerce, and Tourism operators) on a go-forward basis.
- For the external customers (tourists): Develop better communication tools (i.e. signage/ maps/ other information) for our customers and tourists entering the Region.

Strategies

Internal Stakeholders

1. Provide focused statistical & factual reports involving the tourism sector and development initiatives to government & vendors on a quarterly basis that will begin November 1, 2016.
2. Emails and meetings with all Regional Working Group members will continue to occur on an ongoing basis.

External Customers

1. Improved utilization of the existing Tourism-oriented Directional Signage (TODS) Highway program (i.e blue signs) opportunity for tourism attractions. Work with tourism operators to share benefit of program. Highway 11 should be prioritized as primary focus. To be initiated Spring, 2017.
2. Creation of our own area maps with tourism attractions and trail systems that are synced to Google maps for ease of users. Could work with local users to help determine GPS coordinates for trail map use. This is to be initiated September 1, 2016.
3. Informational pamphlets targeted to different audiences to support tours, activities, other attractions in our region. Measurable through distribution of pamphlets to local and provincial Visitor Information Centres. To distribute by March, 2017.

Objective #4 – Inventory of tourism assets and identification of gaps and opportunities

To understand what tourism products and development are needed to meet the needs of our target customer, the Regional partners recognize the need to inventory all the current Tourism products and then target new industry to fill where gaps and opportunities are found.

Strategies

1. Create a classification database of tourism operators and products. This will be measurable by all tourism assets/services populated in the database. This will also include complimentary services to the tourism industry. The gathering of data to be included in the database will be initiated October 1, 2016 and initial submissions November 30, 2016. This information will be included on the new Tourism website.
2. Analyze database for gaps and identify who (i.e. which audience – government, industry) can best fill those gaps. This will be measured through creating a document that can be shared with stakeholder groups to help fill these gaps. Initiated first quarter of 2017.
3. Explore investment opportunities arising from database information that build on the brand and vision for the Clearwater region. These opportunities will be shared through, for example the development of opportunity profiles & trade show attendance, with all potential investors, including local, regional, and global. This will be done by local municipal economic development offices and chambers of commerce. Initiated fall of 2017.

Objective #5 – Fostering a Customer Service-focused Tourism industry

Customer Service has been identified as an area of need to help build the Tourism industry in the Region.

Strategies

1. Complete a Visitor Friendliness assessment that is available as a grant opportunity from Alberta Culture & Tourism. Recent assessments like this have been completed by Blackfalds/Lacombe and Sundre/ Mountain View County. Research the grant opportunity by December 31, 2016 to target the procurement of a consultant to complete assessment in Summer, 2017.
2. Implement a Customer service training program targeted to all types of businesses in the Region that is focused on the tourism attractions and services available in our region. Following the visitor friendliness assessment, this program will be introduced in Fall, 2017.
3. Create a Customer Service business award program. Could include the possibility of a monthly recognition of businesses showing exemplary customer service in the Region and include a visible element to showcase their award. To be completed after the customer service training program in 2017.

Objective #6 – Work with Government partners to open Opportunities for Tourism development

Most of tourism development potential is located on provincial crown land. It has been recognized that the regulatory approval process to develop new tourism ventures on provincial managed land is cumbersome and restrictive.

Strategies

1. Review municipal policies and bylaws to ensure that the local regulations do not unnecessarily restrict the growth of the regional Tourism industry. This will be initiated in early 2017.
2. Utilize partnership within the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance (CATA) and local MLAs to gather support for lobbying the provincial government on improving the regulatory approval process for Tourism opportunities on Crown land. This can be measured through the success of new tourism businesses developing on newly established leases. Ongoing action is required until measurable results are achieved.
3. Forming of strong working relationships with the regulatory divisions of Crown land (AB Environment and Parks, and AB Ag. & Forestry) along with the provincial ministries that will support new business development initiatives on Crown land (AB Economic Development & Trade, AB Culture & Tourism business development). This is a long term goal, but it can be initiated immediately.
4. Renegotiation of existing tourism Development Nodes in the David Thompson Corridor. Discussion needs to include the length of term for Crown leases, stumpage payments for forest loss, potential of Clearwater County leasing. The measure of success will be a concrete decision on the future of the Nodes by provincial government.
5. Gather data on the current use of informal rest areas and trailhead locations off of Highway 11 to advocate for the need of more formalized rest areas to Alberta Transportation. These rest

areas should be situated at trailhead locations and include washrooms, water, and parking. Data collection will be completed by second quarter of 2018.

Objective #7 – Support the Tourism Industry through Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development that supports the Tourism industry is required in order to allow private Tourism operators to build on this infrastructure and grow their operations.

The CATA Destination Management Plan along with the Clearwater Regional Tourism Survey has helped the Regional partners identify some of the infrastructure requirements that area needed to support Tourism growth:

- Appropriate motorized and non-motorized Trail development (including signage, and mapping),
- Accommodations (Development of more campgrounds; hotels; bed & breakfasts)
- Waste disposal amenities (i.e. Sani-dumps; waste receptacles in convenient locations)
- Access to waterways (i.e. boat launches, piers, and docks)
- Rest areas and Off-highway stops required at trailhead locations with washrooms and parking,
- Internet access

Strategies

1. Following the development of the tourism gaps and opportunities database in Objective #4, the Regional partners will identify what infrastructure requirements are needed to fill in these gaps and opportunities, and what organization is best suited to develop this infrastructure. This is expected to be done in Summer, 2017.
2. The partners will continue to advocate for appropriate and designated motorized and non-motorized trail development in collaboration with the provincial government within the region. This is an ongoing goal and will include determination of trail management and enforcement for new trail developments.
3. Review campgrounds currently managed by the partner municipalities to determine if upgrades are required to accommodate modern RV sizes, and if the services provided meet the needs of incoming tourists. This will be completed by Spring, 2017.
4. Identify future infrastructure requirements needed for Visitor Centre rest areas in the region. Visitor Centres are the face of the region for incoming tourists and the infrastructure surrounding these centres (i.e. washrooms, day parks, RV parking) should be maintained. The identification of future infrastructure needs of these areas is to be completed by Fall, 2017.
5. The Town and County will work with the Regional Waste Authority to review if small changes can be made to better serve tourists in our region. As an example, transfer station hours of operation can be focused on long weekends, or larger waste receptacles can be placed in convenient locations for Tourists.
6. Determination of where internet access hotspots are required to support the Tourism industry. This will be initiated through consultation with local Tourism operators at the Tourism forum planned for Fall, 2016.

Objective #8 –Environmental Stewardship of the Region’s natural assets to maintain a sustainable Tourism Industry

This Strategy’s vision is a long-term vision that relies on the natural assets (i.e. the water, wilderness, and wildlife) that are unique to the Region. For this reason, the long term management plans for the sustainability of these natural assets is imperative to maintain a strong and stable Tourism economy.

Strategies

1. Continue to provide an active enforcement presence in the recreation areas that are being used by incoming Tourists. This includes advocating for more enforcement of these recreation areas to the provincial authorities responsible for them.
2. Develop more educational programs that focus on proper land and recreation use to limit environmental damage. This builds on the great program already developed by Clearwater County Land Care. This also includes proper signage and maps. The development of a program is targeted to be initiated in 2019.
3. Encourage Tourism operators to adopt best management practices for environmental conservation through the development of a recognition program that uses badges/stickers/certificates to promote these practices to incoming Tourists. This program is to be developed in late 2018.

Objective #9 – Build a Strong Working Relationship with local First Nation communities

There exists the need to establish a strong working relationship with the three local First Nation communities (Bighorn, O’Chiese, and Sunchild) to explore the feasibility and interest in developing a catalyst Aboriginal Tourism experience in the Region.

Strategies:

1. Continue to build trust and relations through invitation and the participation of local First Nation community representatives at the Regional Tourism stakeholder forums.
2. Request to go on a tour of the local First Nation communities so that the all Regional partners may gain understanding of what plans or opportunities may be in place for Tourism development within their communities.