



NATIONAL EXTENSION TOURISM

Strategic Plan

2020-2025

**Sustainable tourism research, education and outreach
within Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant in collaboration
with Land Grant Universities, federal agencies and other partners**

Prepared by:

National Extension Tourism Design Team

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BACKGROUND

Extension's Role in Tourism

For more than 50 years the Cooperative Extension Service has been engaged in research, educational programming and outreach to support communities engaged in tourism efforts. At the National Workshop on Cooperative Extension's Role in Outdoor Recreation in 1967, R.P. Davison, Director of the Vermont Extension Service, explicitly identified a need for "recreation and tourism programming...to become an integral part of Extension programs." This call for sound programming that could assist local leaders and governing officials in making informed decisions about recreation and tourism as a component of total community development was reiterated a decade later in the CES Recreation and Tourism Task Force report, RECREATION AND TOURISM, Challenges and Opportunities for Cooperative Extension (1978).

In 1993, the National Extension Travel and Tourism Advisory Committee (NETTAC) drafted a document entitled *Tourism Development: A Suggested Approach for the Cooperative Extension Service*, outlining the need for Extension education in tourism and actions for "Cooperative Extension Service (CES) to change its program priorities, organizational structure and external relationships to meet the shifting needs and priorities of society."

The document set out a plan with five action items.

Action 1 To articulate the education and research roles of CES and tourism to external and internal stakeholders. To establish tourism and travel as a recognized, supported program with the Cooperative Extension System. To develop partnerships for programming in tourism and travel.

Action 2 Establish educational initiatives in tourism and travel for clientele and for Extension faculty and staff.

Action 3 Establish a nationwide library of tourism and travel information, data and reports. Suggested name: Tourism Information Resource System(TIRS)

Action 4 Build a national research base and a comprehensive research agenda for travel and tourism. If the CES is to become more effective in its traditional role of disseminating research findings to communities and to individual needs, it is especially important that CES assign a higher priority to tourism development research.

Action 5 Hold another National Cooperative Extension Workshop on tourism and travel within the next two years.

Subsequent efforts to move the plan forward by the original volunteer task force led to the creation of the National Extension Tourism Design Team (NETDT). Established to provide leadership to National Extension Tourism (NET) work collectively across the U.S., the design team is a loosely structured group geographically aligned with the four Regional Rural Development Centers. Historically, two tourism-focused Extension or Sea Grant representatives from each region, plus a representative from USDA in Washington served on the Design Team to provide leadership toward the five stated actions. These individuals are volunteers and the Design Team has operated without a budget. Over the years, NET has received financial and administrative support from the Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC). Land Grant Universities and federal partners have supported this work.

Over the years, NET has succeeded in addressing each of the five actions. However, without a mandate, funding and formal structure, the Design Team has struggled to maintain consistent positioning of tourism as a recognized and supported program area within Cooperative Extension System nationally. NET has achieved a number of successes including tourism and outdoor recreation programming and research regionally.

NET provides strategies to collaborate and share including a website, regular calls, and joint programming around topics such as agritourism, community or rural tourism development, and coastal tourism. An example of successfully shared programming is the Northeast Regional Center supported multi-state training on the First Impressions program that led to three additional states adopting the program and adapting it to local needs. NET members also collaborate on research and scholarship as evidenced by the recently published online volume of case studies entitled *Innovative and Promising Practices in Sustainable Tourism: Case Studies*. (<https://extensiontourism.net/innovative-and-promising-practices-in-sustainable-tourism-case-studies/>)

The NETDT also coordinates a national conference approximately every two years as a primary vehicle for sharing and networking. NET has hosted 11 conferences. (See Appendix A)

The most recent conference was in October 2019 with a theme of “Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation.” Attendees included Extension and Sea Grant professionals from more than 20 states, and multiple federal partner agencies including USDA, Forest Service and National Park Service. Also attending were tourism researchers and professionals from Canada, U.S. Travel and the Conservation Fund. During the final session, participants discussed their expanding work in tourism and outdoor recreation, and supported re-establishing NET as the preeminent network within CES for sustainable tourism research and education. Encouraged, the NETDT agreed on the need for a new strategic plan.

In March 2020, the NETDT, with the support of the Regional Rural Development Centers and USDA, met to draft an updated strategic plan highlighting the important role CES and Sea Grant can, and do, play in assisting communities across the U.S. to benefit from tourism and outdoor recreation. Attending the March 1 and 2 meeting in Savannah: Doug Arbogast, West Virginia University Extension; Lisa Chase, University of Vermont Extension; Cynthia Messer, University of Minnesota Tourism Center; Andy Northrop, Michigan State University Extension; Stacy Tomas, Oklahoma State University; April Turner, South Carolina Sea Grant; and Bryan Fluech, Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant. Design Team members not present but who provided input via survey and review include Miles Phillips, Oregon State University Sea Grant and Extension; Diane Van Wyngarden, Iowa State University Extension; Penny Whitman, University of New Hampshire Extension; and international collaborators Suzanne Ainsley and Nicole Vaugeois.

Cooperative Extension Service and Sea Grant tourism efforts historically, and the foresight of early leaders in these organizations to create this national network around the work, have positioned National Extension Tourism to be seen as experts in tourism research, research-based programming, and outreach now and into the future.

Travel & Tourism 2020

The tourism industry is both dynamic and diverse. Tourism affects almost every aspect of a community. It includes businesses directly involved in visitor services – lodging (including hotels, motels, resorts, B&Bs and campgrounds; and more recently short-term rentals such as Airbnb); attractions, dining, events and transportation; but other sectors as well. Retail businesses, gas stations and convenience stores, and even public sector services such as parks, hospitals, government offices and local infrastructure are involved in meeting the needs and expectations of visitors. Visitors frequent these services, but are rarely differentiated from local users. In fact, travel and tourism is part of a larger service sector in local economies, and the cumulative economic impacts from visitor spending affect businesses, government and residents. (Erkkila, 1998)

Globally, travel and tourism is one of the world's largest economic sectors, supporting one in 10 jobs (319 million) worldwide, and generating 10.4% (US\$8.8 trillion) of global GDP. One in 5 new jobs were created by the industry over the last five years. (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020).

In the United States, one in 10 jobs (15.7 million) depend on travel and tourism, including 8.9 million direct jobs and 6.8 million in other industries. Tourism ranks #7 nationally compared to

other major private industry sectors, and among the top ten industries in 49 states in terms of employment.

U.S. domestic and international traveler spending of \$1.1 trillion dollars generates a total of \$2.5 trillion in economic output that benefits communities across the country. Tourism also generates \$170.9 billion in tax revenue for local, state and federal government. (U.S. Travel, 2020)

Communities and Tourism

Tourism in the United States occurs in communities large and small, urban and rural. The growth and continued role of travel and tourism in local and regional economies across the United States is clear.

Over the past twenty-five years, many communities embraced tourism as an economic development strategy. Educators and faculty in Extension conducting tourism related research and programming have assisted communities to apply the key values identified in the early 90s to build sustainable tourism efforts. Increasingly, however, communities are recognizing tourism is not only an economic development strategy, but can also support the social fabric and environmental resources of the destination.

Travelers today seek experiences that reflect the authenticity of the destination. According to U.S. Travel research (2020), the top leisure activities are:

U.S. Domestic travelers	Overseas visitors
1. Visiting relatives	1. Shopping
2. Shopping	2. Sightseeing
3. Visiting friends	3. Fine dining
4. Fine dining	4. National parks/monuments
5. Rural sightseeing	5. Amusement/theme parks

Recently, the tourism industry has also recognized the importance of tourism as a core community value. U.S. Travel's ["Made in America" report](#), and [Destinations International's New Tourism Lexicon](#) both cite the need for, and benefit of, encouraging tourism in communities using an asset-based approach.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has been particularly devastating on all sectors of the tourism industry globally, nationally and locally. It has also demonstrated the significant role of tourism and recreation on regional and local economies, along with the social and environmental impacts of mass tourism. As communities dependent on tourism and the industry itself recover,

NET is well positioned to provide the expertise, research and education to help this process be more sustainable and resilient.

This strategic plan outlines structure, goals and strategies to generate measurable outcomes that strengthen the NETDT and National Extension Tourism moving forward. This plan is a roadmap for the collective work and collaborative opportunities for CES, Sea Grant and key partners to build regional capacity and support local economies through sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation.

NATIONAL EXTENSION TOURISM 2020 - 2025

MISSION & VISION

National Extension Tourism integrates research, education and outreach within Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant to support sustainable tourism, thus contributing to the long-term economic development, environmental stewardship, and socio-cultural wellbeing of communities and regions.

WHO WE ARE

National Extension Tourism supports the continued development of sustainable tourism research, education and outreach within Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant in collaboration with Land Grant Universities, federal agencies and other partners.

NET works from the UNWTO definition of sustainable tourism*:

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"
<https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

*Sustainable tourism is a comprehensive term that includes many types of tourism and niche activities such as: recreation, coastal, cultural tourism, historic tourism, agritourism and others.

The NET Design Team reaffirms the core values first laid out in the 1993 document as central to our collective work with communities to support sustainable tourism efforts.

- Basing tourism development on authenticity and a sense of place
- Assessing the true benefits and costs of tourism
- Using tourism as a diversification strategy rather than a substitution strategy.
- Developing and delivering quality services and experiences.
- Sharing the benefits of tourism and developing local control.

CORE COMPETENCIES

The unique strengths of NET are:

- High quality research
- Research-based education
- Engagement and outreach
- Ability to leverage public and private funding support
- Ability to engage with a wide range of faculty and students at land and sea grant universities to deliver applied scholarship to community stakeholders

STRUCTURE

National Extension Tourism is a loosely organized network of educators, researchers and technical experts interested in tourism and recreation, primarily but not exclusively from U.S. land grant institutions. There are no membership requirements as of 2020.

Regional representative positions are open to any Land Grant University and Sea Grant staff engaged in Extension and/or Tourism work. The Executive leadership team is appointed to serve until 2021 (conference), then two-year rotating terms will be selected from regional representation.

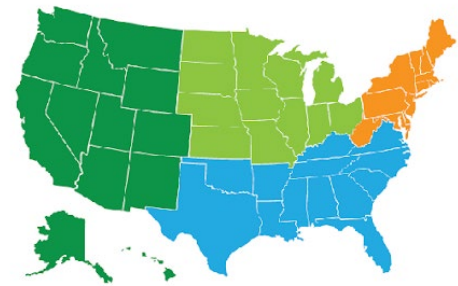
Design Team 2020-2021

The Design Team provides leadership and guidance for running and maintaining the network collaboration. It includes representatives from each of the four regions represented by the Rural Development Centers. (Northeast, North Central, Western, Southern) and an executive committee selected from the regional representatives.

NET Design Team: An Executive Committee, plus 12 regional representatives and ex-officio members

- Executive Committee (4)
 - Chair
 - Vice Chair
 - Secretary
 - Past chair
- Regional Representatives (3 per region, 12 total)
 - Two Extension/Land Grant University representatives from each region
 - One Sea Grant representative from each region
- Ex-Officio members
 - One Regional Rural Development Center representative
 - (Stephan Goetz through 2021)
 - One USDA representative
 - One National Sea Grant representative
- Administrative support provided by the Regional Rural Development Centers

REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTERS



Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development

North Central Regional Center for Rural Development

Southern Rural Development Center

Western Rural Development Center

Regional NETDT regional representatives duties:

- Support the development of the National Extension Tourism network by:
 - o Attending design team meetings (monthly phone calls)
 - o Attending the bi-annual conference
 - o Participating in at least one committee
 - o Promoting the bi-annual conference and webinar series
 - o Striving to connect, strengthen, and expand Extension tourism programs to state and local constituents/stakeholders where and when feasible
 - o NETDT Regional Representatives will be expected to engage with their respective Regional Rural Development Center Directors.
 - o Securing a letter of interest with signature of individual and supervisor

Nomination Process: At the 2019 conference, a call for interest in serving on the NETDT generated several people volunteering to serve. These individuals were given first right of refusal to represent their region. International members are also encouraged to participate, if desired.

Details of the Design Team structure, responsibilities and meetings are found in the National Extension Tourism Design Team Guidelines document on the NETDT Google Drive housed at Penn State. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QwUVkpKIEWB3Q20L3nEp9ttlaL12b1B0/edit>

The DT will establish committees, either Standing or Ad Hoc to assist as needed.

2020-2021 Committee Chairs:

- Conference: Bryan Fluech, Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant
- Webinars: Doug Arbogast, University of West Virginia
- Case Study Volume 2: Nicole Vaugeois, Vancouver Island University, Canada

STAKEHOLDERS

NET Stakeholders are both internal and external to land-grant and Sea Grant institutions.

Internally, key stakeholders are the Deans, Directors, and Program Leaders whose work supports tourism and outdoor recreation work; and faculty conducting research and educational programming or outreach to Extension and Sea Grant audiences.

A stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives."

—R. Edward Freeman, 1984

The Regional Rural Development Centers continue to be vital partners. As of 2020, Stephan Goetz, Director of the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, will be the conduit to communicating with the other RRDC directors and ensuring the federal partners/regional teams are aware of NET programs/services. The individual Design Team representatives will also build relationships with their respective regional office to inform about relevant programs and services.

Key external stakeholders for NET are federal agency partners such as USDA, U.S. Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, NOAA/National Sea Grant Program, National Travel & Tourism Office, and U.S. Department of Commerce/ International Trade Association, as they most align with Extension and tourism (either via direct reports, funding, research and/or programs). Additional stakeholders may include collaborating academic institutions and faculty, non-profit agencies such as The Conservation Fund, and tourism industry organizations such as U.S. Travel and state tourism offices. Other external stakeholders are the communities, organizations (e.g. Destination Marketing Organizations, Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Authorities), and tourism related businesses we serve.

NATIONAL EXTENSION TOURISM GOALS 2020 - 2025

GOAL: Establish tourism as a recognized, supported program within the Cooperative Extension System and Sea Grant to meet emerging trends and the shifting needs of society.

Objectives:

1. By the end of 2020, create and share key messages with CES and Sea Grant leaders nationally regarding the role of CES/Sea Grant in supporting communities and regional economies through tourism education, research and outreach.
 - a. Messages could include: impact of COVID-19 on tourism and communities, (economic, social and environmental), vital role of tourism in community, CES/Extension expertise.
 - b. Encourage each state to provide core programming in tourism development.
 - c. Share core tourism materials or training to help states provide programming.
2. By end of 2020, expand NET listserv by 10% with potential educators and researchers from each state.
3. Establish a set of measurable impacts across regions.
 - a. Produce an annual summary of regional outcomes and impacts of NET programming, research and outreach

GOAL: Inventory and assess existing Extension and Sea Grant tourism programs

Objectives:

1. Identify a contact in each state that can provide accurate information on current Extension and Sea Grant tourism programs
2. Develop a national database of land grant and sea grant Extension tourism programs organized according to Regional Rural Development Center regions and topical areas.
3. Identify programmatic gaps and seek and secure funding by 2022 for at least one collaborative multi-state research project to address emerging trends or community needs. Example: Post-COVID-19 Recovery

GOAL: Provide professional development opportunities for Extension and Sea Grant staff, and other key stakeholders.

Objectives:

1. Deliver bi-monthly webinars by NET members/collaborators on a variety of topics
2. Host successful biennial conferences resulting in positive outcomes from participants' engagement and participation.

Actions:

- a. Invite educators and researchers on NET listserv to 2021 conference.
- b. Establish conference committee with sub committees (e.g. marketing, program, keynote speakers etc)

- c. Issue call for proposals in Q1 of 2021
- d. Increase conference attendance over 2019 conference by 10%
- e. Post conference abstracts and presentations to the NET website
- f. A Post-conference evaluation (within four weeks) demonstrates the participants' satisfaction and quality of professional development, with a score of 4.5 out of 5.
- g. A Post-conference results survey (within 13 months) determines at least three positive measurable local/regional outcomes for the 2021 and 2023 conferences (in tourism development, management, sustainability, funding, etc.) Continue delivering scheduled webinars by NET members/collaborators on a variety of topics

GOAL: Share applied research, special programs, or other tourism development and outdoor recreation technical expertise with key stakeholders and audiences.

Objectives:

1. Maintain the NET website <https://extensiontourism.net/> with key resources and information (e.g. conference presentations, webinar recordings etc)
2. Continue collecting and analyzing best practices and case studies
3. Create and implement a marketing plan for NET offerings such as webinars, a quarterly newsletter, new research and conferences.
4. Expand recognition of the tourism development expertise of National Extension Tourism, increasing positive publicity and/or awards
 - a. NET DT receives accolades and testimonials for use on organization website, in USDA newsletters, and for grant applications.
5. Collaborate on special projects such as Case Studies volumes.
 - a. Secure funding for special projects to expand distribution of knowledge and expertise to communities across North America.
6. Identify viable tools, models and standards for use by communities interested in sustainable tourism development and outdoor recreation.
 - a. Encourage application of standards in 100+ communities by 2025.
 - b. Produce at least two case studies annually to demonstrate the positive outcomes resulting from community application of national standards.

Suggested name for website, marketing, newsletters: **National Extension Tourism Network**

NETworks

REFERENCES

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World Travel & Tourism Council. (2020). WTTC website accessed 3.6.20
<https://www.wttc.org/economic-impact/>

APPENDIX A: National Extension Tourism conferences

Details and program links are available on the NET website <https://extensiontourism.net/conference/pci/>

1995	New Orleans, LA	First NET Conference
1998	Hershey, PA	
2000	Kailua-Kona, HI	
2002	Traverse City, MI	
2004	Kissimmee, FL	(cancelled due to hurricane)
2006	Burlington, VT	
2009	Park City, UT	
2011	Charleston, SC	
2013	Detroit, MI	
2015	Galveston, TX	
2017	Princeton, NJ	
2019	Astoria, OR	
2021	Savannah, GA	