



Rich Knox

Increasingly, Maine's coastal communities recognize the need to preserve natural assets that can attract visitors and foster economic vitality. Monhegan Island has benefited from having extensive natural lands (more than half the island) that are managed by the conservation organization Monhegan Associates.

Conserving Lands that Enrich Your Local Economy

"[We need to] develop and follow wise policies that protect and enhance the natural qualities that have always drawn people to this state. We should work at continuing to be as most visitors basically see us: a safe, family-friendly destination with great outdoor activities... We want to be loved for what we are, but we must also continue to be what we are loved for."

– Jim Brunelle, commentary
Portland Press Herald

The United Nations Environmental Programme and Conservation International report that tourism around the globe is expanding most rapidly in and around natural areas.

Millions of visitors come to the Maine coast each year to experience its wild beauty and unspoiled character. What draws people, and keeps them coming back, is the sense of authenticity that our coast offers: the stunning natural vistas; the picturesque villages and working waterfronts; and the unspoiled character of place.

Nature-based tourism, if managed well, can enhance economic and ecological health in Maine's coastal communities. Tourism generates nearly 7 percent of Maine's gross state product and more than 10 percent of its jobs, making it the state's largest industry. Roughly 70 percent of tourism expenditures are along Maine's coast. Visitors to Maine who have memorable outdoor experiences often return repeatedly and enrich the vitality of coastal communities.



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“If anyone wants to know why it matters and why it’s worth it, just come out here and take a look. This is a great working community where conservation is fundamental to the winter and summer communities and economies.”

– Doug Boynton, Monhegan Island Sustainable Communities Association

“Low-impact outdoor activities like watching wildlife are drawing more visitors to Maine and generating significant revenues for many communities.”

– Judy Walker, Maine Audubon naturalist

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

- ✓ **Consider infrastructure needs.** Inventory your community’s natural areas and determine which are most appropriate for public use. Make sure there is adequate infrastructure (parking, signage, trails) to accommodate visitors.
- ✓ **Encourage visitors to practice a “Leave No Trace” ethic.** Inform people at every opportunity (on maps, brochures, trail signs and in the media) about the sensitivity of the places they visit and the importance of being good stewards.
- ✓ **Invite tourism businesses to collaborate on ways to both market and protect the resource.** On Maine’s public islands, for example, kayak outfitters worked with the State and the Maine Island Trail Association to schedule group visits and set voluntary “capacity limits” for each island.
- ✓ **Find ways to capitalize on natural resources without diminishing them.** Sensitive nesting habitats like Eastern Egg Rock near Monhegan can’t sustain many island visitors, but educational boat tours by the island have raised awareness of and funds for seabird restoration without displacing the birds.
- ✓ **Work with local businesses to educate visitors.** One Monhegan ferry service narrates every boat trip, informing visitors about local seabird restoration efforts and island environmental concerns.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *Strategic Plan for Implementing the Maine Nature Tourism Initiative*, Fermata, Inc/ State of Maine, 2005 (www.fermatainc.com/maine/index.html).
- The International Ecotourism Society (www.ecotourism.org) has guidelines and resources on responsible travel that benefits the environment and communities.
- Leave No Trace (www.lnt.org) seeks to promote low-impact practices outdoors. The Maine Island Trail Association (www.mita.org) has similar information targeted to coastal Maine.
- Maine’s Green Lodging Certification Program helps tourism businesses adopt environmentally sound practices. See their guidelines at <http://www.maine.gov/dep/oia/p2/hotels.htm>.

More information about this project and the Maine Coast Protection Initiative can be found at www.protectcoastmaine.org.



Nature and adventure travel are tourism’s fastest-growing sectors. In the US alone, tourists spend \$115 billion annually on nature and adventure travel.

