

The National Forest System Sustainable Tourism Strategies

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National Forests



FOREST SERVICE Office of the Chief



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graph TD; A[FOREST SERVICE  
Office of the Chief] --- B[Research & Development]; A --- C[National Forest System]; A --- D[State & Private Forestry]; A --- E[International Programs];
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The diagram is an organizational chart for the Forest Service Office of the Chief. At the top is a dark blue rounded rectangle containing the text 'FOREST SERVICE' and 'Office of the Chief' in yellow. A vertical line descends from this box. A horizontal line branches off to the right, labeled 'International Programs' in brown italicized text. The main vertical line continues down to a horizontal line that branches into three vertical lines. These lines lead to three boxes: 'Research & Development' (purple rounded rectangle with white text) on the left, 'National Forest System' (green rounded rectangle with white text) in the center, and 'State & Private Forestry' (dark red rounded rectangle with white text) on the right. The entire chart is set against a white background with a yellow border.

International Programs

**Research &
Development**

**National Forest
System**

**State & Private
Forestry**

The market is there—

National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE)

- Surveys shows growth in participation for trails and nature viewing—fits the National Forest System niche
- Public supports protection of public lands, and values the amenity values, not just the commodity values.
- Need to balance: protection of unique areas—marketing opportunities within land capacity; designated trail systems, motorized activities, developed recreation areas, heritage sites, wildlife viewing and forest byways.

Forest Supply & Market Niche

- **Adventure Eco-Travel:** 380,000 mi roads & 143,000 mi trails, and unique cave resources
- **Cultural Heritage:** 250,000 recorded sites
- **Learning Travel:** 57 Visitor Centers, 100 + info sites
- **Geo-tourism:** 63% of wilderness, 4,385 miles of wild & scenic rivers,
- **Group Tours:** 60 + Congressional Special Areas



FS Agency and Tourism Roles

- Forest Service can use ongoing Forest Land Management planning and travel management as catalysts for working with local communities to develop sustainable tourism in local plans.
- Gateway communities have expressed strong interest in partnerships around tourism.
- Multiple use includes recreation. USFS mission includes “helping states and communities to wisely use the forests to promote rural economic development” that includes tourism.



Forest Service Agency Roles: Community Based Recreation/Tourism

- Agencies can and do play several roles in tourism :
 - **Provider of tourism activities** –Resources managed by Forest Service provide the key aesthetic and “activity settings” for tourism: hiking, OHV, birding; www.recreation.gov
 - **Catalyst** –USFS can provide leadership that catalyzes activity within and between private and public entities: partnerships with industry; www.lnt.org , www.tl.org, etc.
 - **Marketing** – Agency and other entities (e.g. <http://www.byways.org> and <http://www.recreation.gov> can leverage marketing by online reservations, trip planning, etc.
 - **Interpretation and education** –Overlaps with marketing, yet unique in raising awareness, instilling stewardship ethics amongst visitors; www.plia.org

Agency Roles: Community based (continued)

- Planning and funding – agencies directly fund tourism-related projects and are involved in various committees that affect local planning development (e.g., Scenic Byways program and Heritage Areas)
- Monitoring and Share Data (NVUM) – USFS tracks visitor satisfaction, economic impacts, ecological impacts, and other relevant data

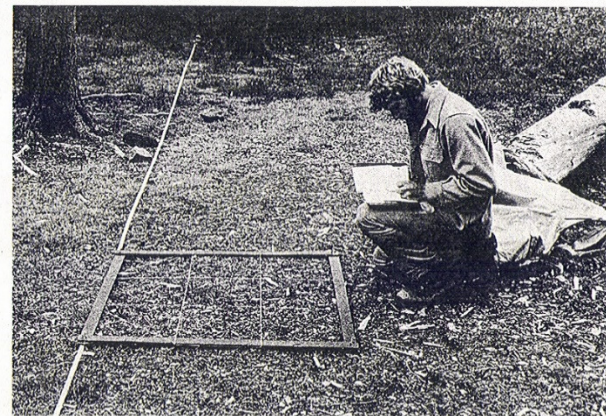


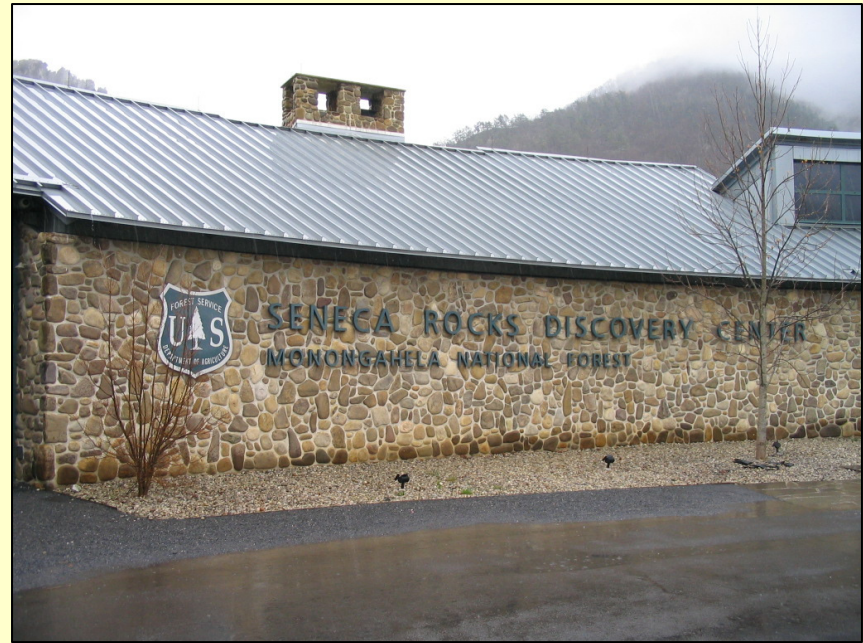
FIGURE 8. Estimates of the percent coverage of vegetation and other ground cover parameters are often made with the aid of a quadrat. (Photo: D. N. Cole.)

Tourism as Community based Conservation

- Great partnership Tools for Communities:
<http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/>
- Forest Service Open Space Strategy;
<http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace>
- The Community Tourism Connection:
<http://www.civictourism.org>
- Geo-Tourism Connection; place-based stewardship;
www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable
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Best Practices

- National Forests are big supplier of nature based and heritage tourism in many regions of USA .
- Urban residents and retirees are attracted here as well--social assessment findings in Forest Plans.



Forest Communities Infrastructure; “Readiness/gap analysis”



- View tourism as economic diversification strategy
- Infrastructure gaps in access, restaurants, etc.
- Limited visitor services
- Concern for a sustainable approach: setting capacity.
- **Community readiness to receive tourists (key factor)**

How Can Forest Service help

- **Large capital asset development (trails...,)**
- **Collaboration in federal/state planning with local communities.**
- **Private investments in program enhancements (concessions, O&G, Ski)**
- **Restore heritage through tourism market development (cabin rentals, designations)**

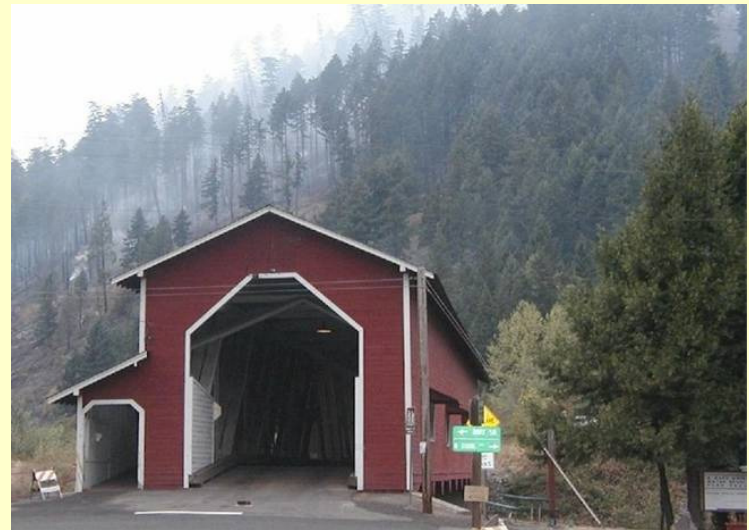
Wildlife Viewing Sites



- Birding market and bear viewing has grown fastest among nature based activities. Viewing and trail development are good investments.
- Forest Lands provide excellent supply: develop birding trails and festivals for this has shown economic return (OR cascades, CA Kern Valley), others .

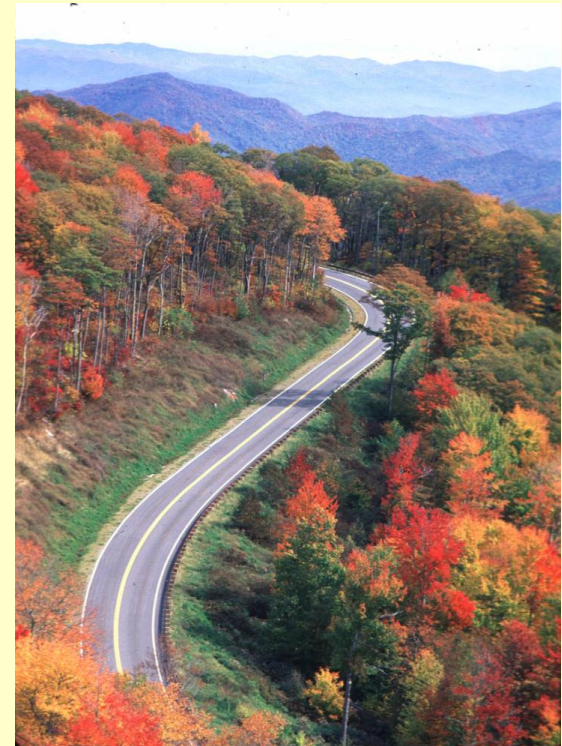
Develop Heritage Investments

- Lookout Rentals and Historic Cabins reservations online: \$ invested back into site
- Historic Bridges—themes for byways and attractors.
- Special Volun-tourism programs: Passport-in-Time (PIT)



Special Designations

- National Recreation Areas;
Land Between the Lakes,
Demo Lab on Recreation,
(FS)
- Nat'l Byways: America's
Resource Center (DOT)
www.bywaysonline.org
- Nat'l Recreation Trails,
NPS/FS;
www.americantrails.org



Byways Investments—Tourism

- Byways investments generate economic benefit: CO, NM—Cordova study
- Marketing destinations; model for economic development: CA, NH, [GA-Russell-Brasstown Byway](#)
- Grassroots Driven: helps support conservation of healthy view-sheds and local culture: CO



Visitor Centers as Recreation Attractions: Trail & Byway links

- Hubs for Tours, Merchandize, & Craft sales
- Delivery Point for Conservation and Education messages
- Need Community Buy-in & multi-uses of asset
- Locate for Local Business Economic Benefit—concession, restaurant, chamber site, crafts, etc.
- Reduce High Cost for O&M with partnerships

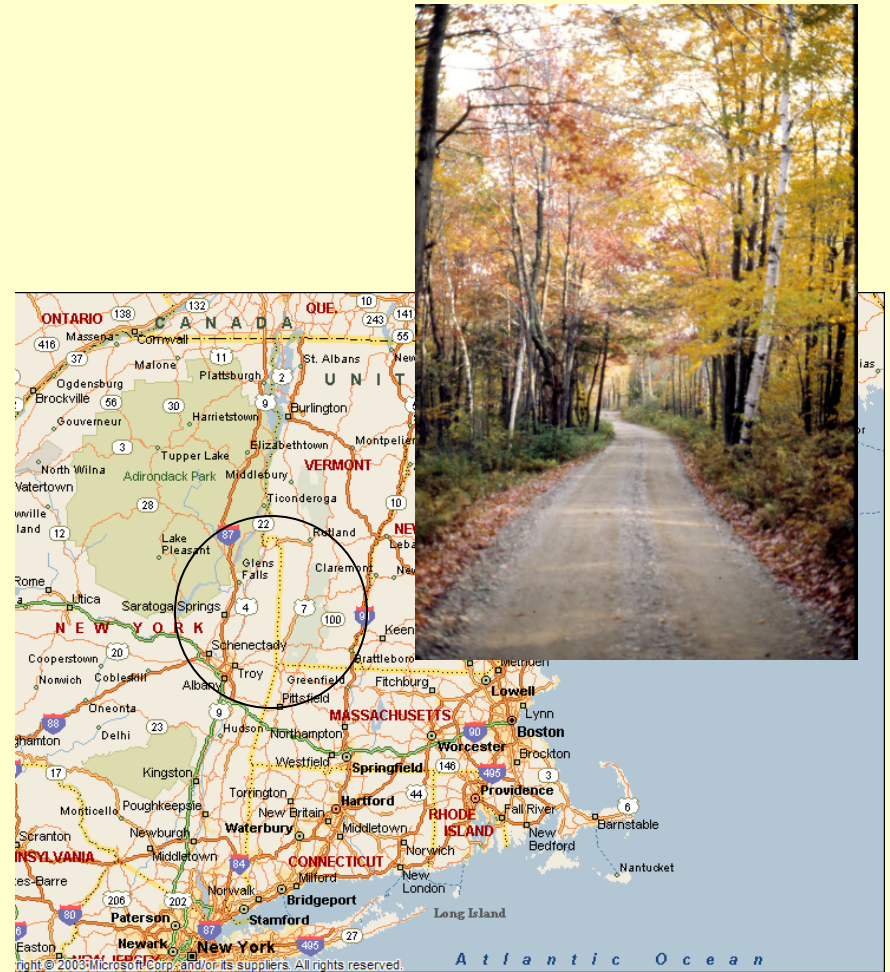


Long term goals---Take the less traveled way

Demonstrate the unique capabilities of public and private partners working together.

Strengthen partnerships at local level in cooperative projects: such as trails, wildlife habitat improvement, and roadside enhancements.

Practice Community Based Public Private Stewardship of the land for sustainable economic growth



Festivals on U.S. National Forests

9th Annual Yakutat Tern Festival, May 2019



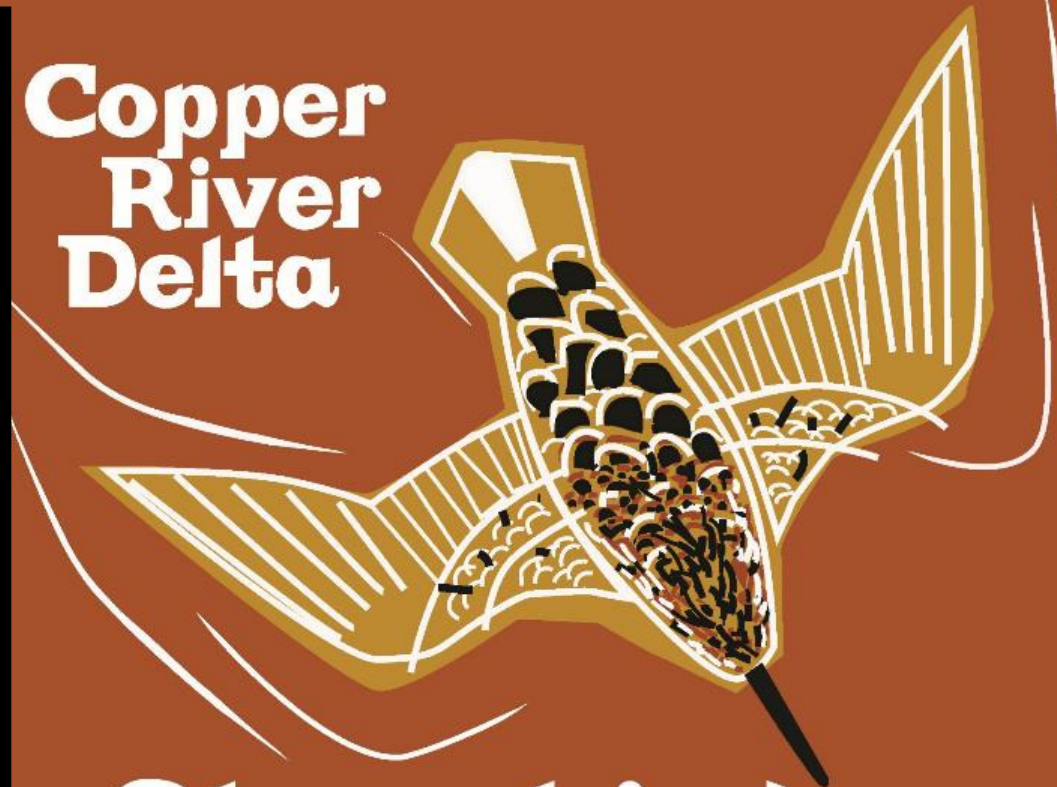
- Initiated in 2011
- Non-profit, multiple partners, community based
- Aleutian Tern as our focal species, but broad-based theme
- “Celebrating the Natural and Cultural Resources of Yakutat, Alaska”
- Population is 40% native American
- Protection of local natural resources
- Ecotourism
- Family friendly

Yakutat Tern Festival



- Bird banding
- Speakers/seminars
- Art displays
- Photo contest
- Art workshops
- Field trips
- Youth programs
- Cultural programs

**Copper
River
Delta**



**Shorebird
Festival**

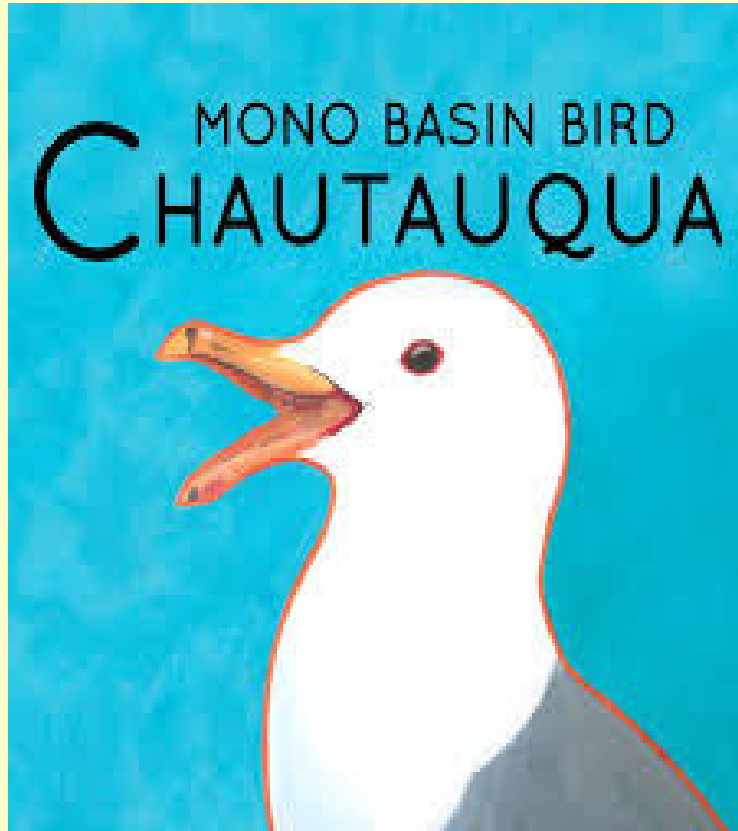
Cordova, Alaska

Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival



- Cordova is a commercial fishing town
- Fishing starts mid-May
- Exxon Valdez Oil Spill had negative impacts to Economy
- The festival brings in tourism dollars before the fishing season
- Started in 1990
- Locals were skeptical that you could promote tourism based on birds
- The first year, every bed in town was full
- The community supports it and sees the benefits of birding
- Festival organizers have to continue to keep up advertising and branding

Mono Lake – Inyo National Forest



Final Thoughts

- A community must understand the value of their resource
- Tourism can bring added economic value to a community
- Establishing a tourism program takes time, so set realistic goals
 - Marketing for tourism is very important

Its About Building “Bridges” Together

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