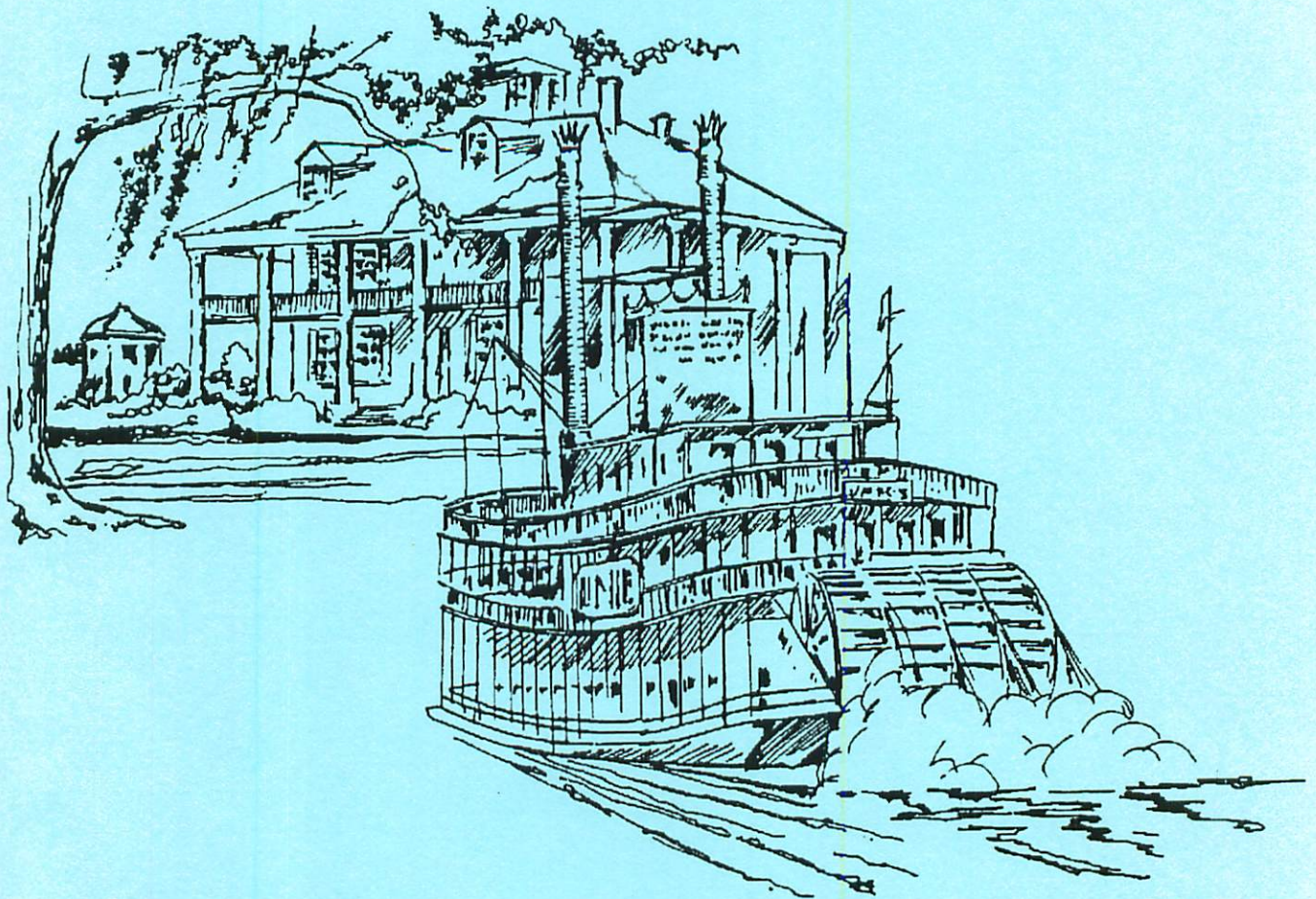


# WEST FELICIANA PARISH

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## RAPID TOURISM ASSESSMENT REPORT



JANUARY 2000

Louisiana Sea Grant College Program



**WEST FELICIANA PARISH**  
**RAPID TOURISM ASSESSMENT**

Louisiana Sea Grant College Program  
Sea Grant Building  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

January 2000



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# WEST FELICIANA PARISH RAPID TOURISM ASSESSMENT

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1. "Low Power Radio, A New Communication Method for Reaching Target Audiences"
2. "Introducing the Position of Tourist Commissioner"
3. "For Tourism Development...Setting Goals and Objectives"



# WEST FELICIANA PARISH RAPID TOURISM ASSESSMENT

## I. BACKGROUND

This report contains the observations and recommendations made by the seven-member West Feliciana Parish Study Team (Study Team), following an intensive tourism assessment of the parish conducted September 7-10, 1999. The Study Team was organized and coordinated by the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program at LSU (Sea Grant), with the assistance of the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (DCRT). The study was conducted at the request of the West Feliciana Community Development Foundation (WFCDF), the West Feliciana Tourist Commission (WFTC), and St. Francisville Overnight, an organization of several area bed and breakfasts.

The assessment had as its primary objectives to (1) determine the use of tourism and recreation resources; (2) recommend actions designed to capitalize on the potential of these resources; and, (3) make community leaders and the general public aware of these resources and their potential role in helping the area's economy.

### *A. Study Team Approach*

The assessment was performed using a rapid rural appraisal (RRA) technique that differs considerably from the more traditional, time consuming, and expensive methods of collecting information and reporting. Louisiana Sea Grant defines RRA as "an intensive, qualitative survey technique that uses a multidisciplinary team approach to help communities identify challenges and opportunities and formulate sustainable solutions to the same." The technique is one adapted from work done in the 1980s by Dr. Frederick Smith of Oregon Sea Grant who used a similar method to assess opportunities for coastal and marine development in Oregon, and from rapid rural appraisals conducted by British and Australian scientists.

In this definition, the word "qualitative" refers to the descriptive nature of the information collected and the quality of the observations and ideas. It may well involve an assembly of insights rather than facts and figures. This in effect is a challenge to the conventional view that everything can be measured, and a confirmation that the expertise gained over the years by the Study Team members is knowledge and, thus, valid for the purposes of the assessment. The term "survey" is used loosely in the sense that the information collected is gathered primarily from sources in the field and filtered through the perceptions of the Study Team and other collaborators. The intent of surveys is to deliberately go about collecting abundant detail and insight. The notion of "sampling" is also loosely applied in that information is gathered until patterns and understanding emerge, but not necessarily in a statistical or representative sense. The "method" does not require that each step be precisely followed, but rather an understanding

that each Study Team member needs to apply his/her knowledge and skills to the particular project. It invites the team to modify and adapt to fit the project situation. The number of multidisciplinary team members varies from project to project, but the team's makeup always reflects diverse disciplines and backgrounds that provide a range of perspectives through which the information can be analyzed and interpreted. Members are encouraged to keep open minds about challenges, opportunities, and sources of solutions.

Louisiana Sea Grant's rapid appraisals entail several steps. The first one involves the Study Team's Coordinator making one or more reconnaissance visits to the study area and meeting with local leaders to establish the context of the proposed project while beginning to identify major challenges and perceived opportunities. Specific issues and objectives are then defined, which in turn help identify the needed disciplines and backgrounds. The Study Team is then assembled and a blueprint is prepared that provides Study Team members and local collaborators with further guidance on the study process, anticipated outcomes, and logistical details. The study is then conducted over a three- to five-day period, at the end of which local collaborators are invited to hear an oral presentation of the team's findings. A written report is issued six months after completing the field study. Louisiana Sea Grant began using this method in 1987 when it was looking for a means to interact more effectively with rural, coastal development leaders and to stimulate strategic thinking concerning sustainable economic development, notably coastal recreation and tourism. The intent was to enable communities to think strategically and provide pointers and ideas on how to improve planning by considering strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities. Prior to this study, similar assessments had been conducted in Plaquemines, Cameron, St. Mary, and St. Bernard parishes, the three Mississippi Delta parishes of East and West Carroll and Madison, and the town of Grand Isle.

### *B. Study Team*

The West Feliciana team was assembled by Sea Grant's Study Team Coordinator, Michael Liffmann.

**Philip Alexander**, Community Development Specialist, Michigan State University-Extension

**Kathy Barnett**, President, Michigan Bed and Breakfast Association

**Elinor Craven**, Director, Division of Outdoor Recreation, Office of State Parks

**Michael Liffmann**, Study Team Coordinator and Assistant Executive Director, Louisiana Sea Grant College Program

**Will Mangham**, Marketing Director, LSU Rural Life Museum

**Mark Northington**, Research Director, Office of Tourism

**Ardyn Thriffiley**, Research Manager, Economic Development, Entergy Corporation

**Jason Droddy**, Research Associate, Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, assisted with a review of the area's presence on the Internet and in compiling this report.

**William B. Little**, the WFCDF's Chief Executive Officer, and his staff served as the local liaison.

### ***C. West Feliciana's Vision***

Earlier in 1999, West Feliciana's residents articulated the following economic vision statement as part of "A Strategic Plan for the Economic Development of West Feliciana Parish":

**"In the year 2010, West Feliciana Parish: continues to attract people to it as a desirable place to live, to work, and to do business. Quality through planning has been the watchword that has guided elected officials, citizens, and businesses to preserve the natural beauty, the historical character, and the distinct amenities enjoyed by the parish's residents. Public/private teamwork and investments in infrastructure have enhanced St. Francisville and West Feliciana's positions as a tourist and business center. The commitment to quality education and workforce training has enabled all citizens to achieve their full potential."**

The aforementioned plan and the accompanying report, "A Marketing Plan for the Economic Development of West Feliciana Parish" (both prepared by The Cornerstone Group), give clear indications that tourism is an economic development priority for the parish. The parish wishes to "...create attractive job opportunities and to diversify the parish's tax base...by encouraging visitors" and noted that a (marketing) game plan was needed that included "...intensifying tourist and visitor promotion activities."

## **II. WEST FELICIANA TOURISM INDUSTRY, 1990 TO PRESENT**

West Feliciana Parish is rich in history and culture and has outstanding geographical attributes. It is truly one of Louisiana's jewels, which relatively few non residents get to enjoy. Thousands of visitors travel to and through the parish annually, but only a few actually leave money. Less than one percent of the money spent annually by travelers in Louisiana is captured by West Feliciana Parish. There are a number of reasons for this situation and they are discussed in greater detail below.

The Study Team believes that the parish has many tourism assets and strengths. But, in order to capitalize on them it must first overcome many challenges facing its hospitality industry and tourism organization.

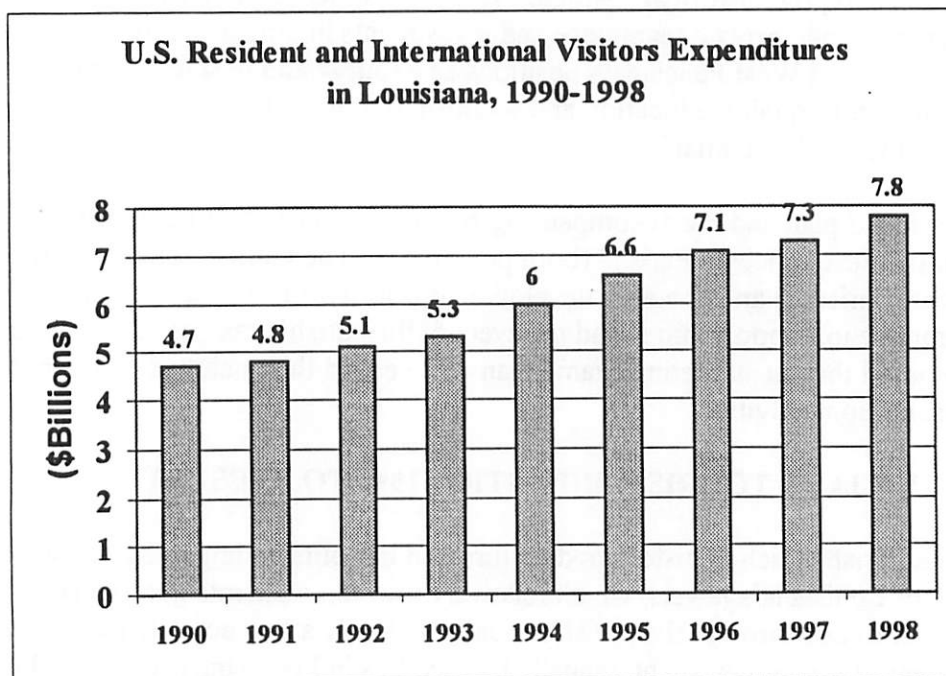
### ***A. Statistics***

West Feliciana Parish has been unable to keep up with the state's tourism growth in the 1990s. Expenditures by travelers to Louisiana grew from \$4.7 billion in 1990 to \$7.8 billion in 1998 (see Figure 1). This represented an unadjusted (for inflation) growth rate of 65 percent. Statewide, approximately 86,400 people were employed in the travel industry in 1990. By 1998, it had grown 30 percent, or 112,100 jobs.



During 1990, travelers expended an estimated \$11.43 million in West Feliciana. In 1998, travel expenditures in West Feliciana remained at the 1990 level (see Figure 2). An additional negative indication for the period is that there was no growth in the number of tourism-related jobs in the industry. West Feliciana still employs approximately 140 people in the travel industry although this number actually fluctuated downward several times during the last ten years. Parish payroll estimates attributed to travel appear in Figure 3 and tax receipts in Figure 4.

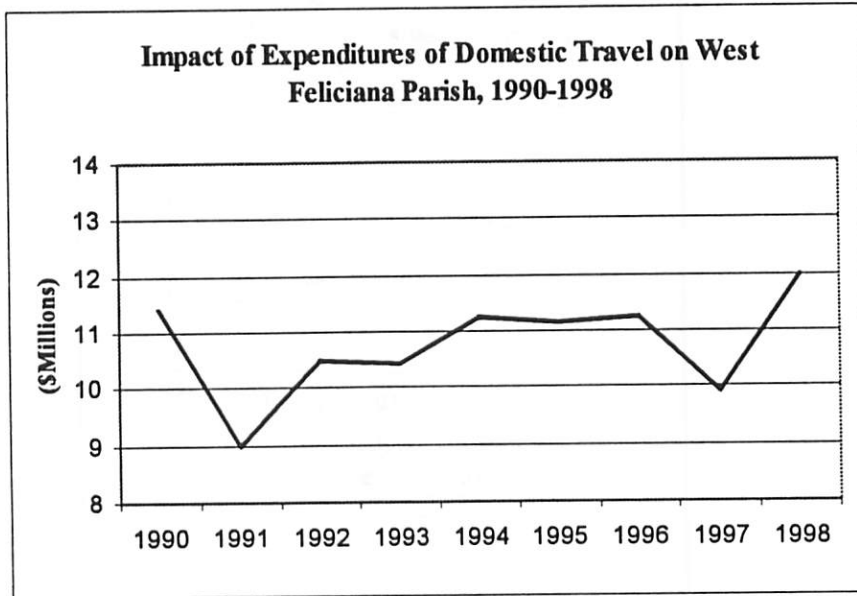
Figure 1



Source: U.S. Travel Data Center

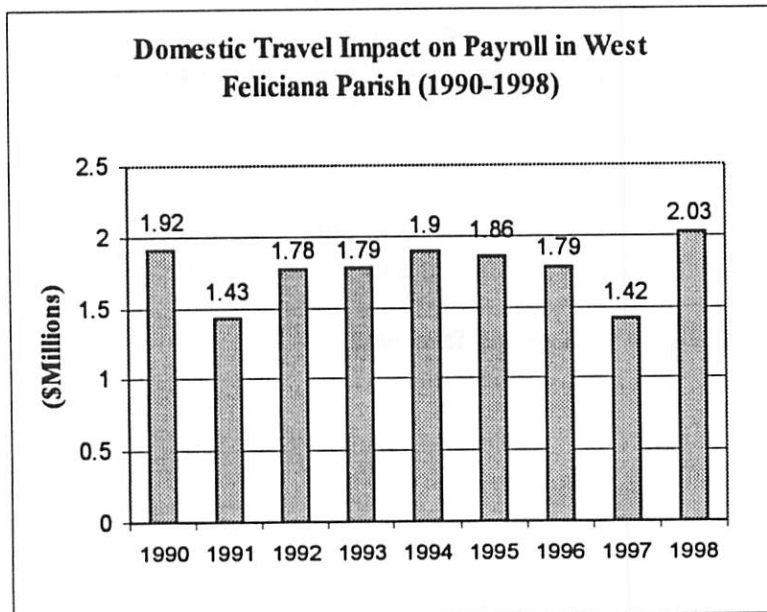
State sales tax collections from area lodging and eating establishments have changed very little in the last five years. Table 1 indicates that some growth was experienced by restaurants and cafes during the last five years. Hotel-motel state sales tax receipts are only now returning to 1994 levels. This situation is probably attributable to the deterioration of the parish's only large motel. Collections should increase considerably after this year, now that this establishment has been refurbished and reopened as the Best Western-St. Francis on the Lake.

**Figure 2**



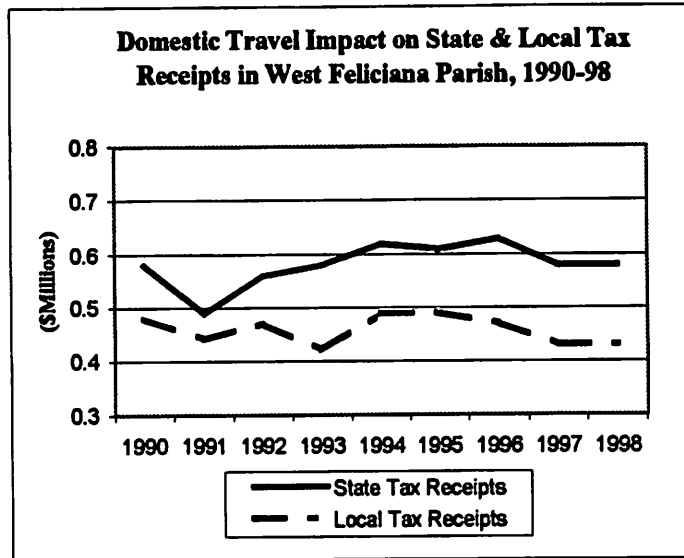
Note: Numbers adjusted to 1997 dollars using CPI.  
Source: U. S. Travel Data Center, 1990-1997

**Figure 3**



Note: Numbers adjusted to 1997 dollars using CPI.  
Source: U.S. Travel Data Center, 1990-1997

**Figure 4**



Note: Numbers adjusted to 1997 dollars using CPI  
 Source: U.S. Travel Data Center, 1990-1997

**Table 1**  
**State Sales Tax Collections**  
**For Tourism Related Businesses, 1994-1998**

<u>Business Category</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>
Hotels-Motels	\$99,961	\$96,780	\$81,254	\$57,235	\$101,687
Restaurants and Cafes	\$31,339	\$35,925	\$35,017	\$32,168	\$47,898

Source: Louisiana Department of Revenue and Taxation



## ***B. Assets***

Although tourism in the parish underwent some difficult times in the early and mid 1990s, there are indications that tourism's future in West Feliciana looks much brighter. The Study Team noted many attributes.

**Natural resources** - The Mississippi River is an attraction for all visitors, particularly those from other states and countries. In addition, the hilly terrain associated with the Tunica Hills is appealing to Louisiana residents. The variety of vegetation, abundant wildlife, and the very comfortable weather associated with the state's spring and fall seasons are attributes that many out-of-state visitors seek when they travel to the South.

**Historic resources** - The parish's antebellum history and English heritage provide a setting that cannot be found in many other Louisiana communities. Very few places across the country offer the concentration, quality, and variety of plantation homes that are open to the public on a regular basis. Most of downtown St. Francisville has been preserved as a quaint historical town. Many of its historic structures either remain intact or have been carefully restored. These are outstanding resources that, if properly managed and marketed, can make tourism development truly sustainable.

**People resources and pride** - Closely associated with the above observations concerning historic resources are the people of the parish. Their pride, education, and preservation ethic are very special attributes and a key ingredient toward furthering heritage tourism.

**Quality and variety of small shops** - Shopping is a major activity for tourists and some very nice small stores can be found in the area. Opportunities are likely to grow in the town center and along U. S. Highway 61 as population in the area increases and more visitors arrive in the area. The Study Team identified additional entrepreneurial opportunities (see section VI, Retail/Tourism Gap Analysis).

**Location** - The parish is extremely well-located in proximity to several major metropolitan areas. It is traversed by a major north-south U.S. highway that connects several historic cities on the Mississippi River. It is also 30 minutes from Interstate 10, a major east-west interstate highway that connects California and Florida. West Feliciana Parish is within minutes of Baton Rouge Regional Airport, and riverboat cruises dock at a public facility near St. Francisville.

**Special events** - Community leaders in St. Francisville and Angola created and manage very successful, annual special events. The Audubon Pilgrimage and Christmas in the Country, in particular, have succeeded in building community pride, as well as attracting substantial numbers of visitors. The Angola Rodeo, and more recently the Jeep Jamboree, are well-attended events that take place elsewhere in the parish. In addition, Hemingbough, for a number of years, has been the home of the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra's Summerfest Series.

**Audubon connection** - John James Audubon's presence in the parish is commemorated during the Audubon Pilgrimage at the Audubon SHS, and, in the near future, will be presented at Hemingbough. This presents a niche marketing opportunity to be considered in all tourism planning efforts. The parish might also pursue recognition as an international center for viewing Audubon's life and times.

**Creativity** - The Study Team had the opportunity to meet with many creative and action-oriented individuals whose ideas have been resulted in many successful projects. The Bluffs on Thompson Creek, the Angola Penitentiary Museum, Hemingbough, and Grandmother's Buttons are a few. This creative and entrepreneurial spirit points to a very bright future for tourism in West Feliciana Parish.

**Entertainment venues** - While few night time activities appeal to visitors, there are several locations that could be used to develop evening and weekend entertainment. The team found Hemingbough, Jackson Hall, and West Feliciana High School as possible locations for more live music performances and theatrical presentations.

**Retreat centers** - The Bluffs and Hemingbough attract groups seeking a getaway location for meetings and reunions. Themed meetings present a possibility for these centers. Such meetings are much like themed cruises where the public is invited to listen and interact with well-known authors, historians, musicians, researchers, et al. Hemingbough already conducts a successful annual symposium featuring lecturers and presentations around the theme of southern gardens. Other themes appropriate to West Feliciana Parish could be the Civil War on the lower Mississippi River, antebellum plantation life, John James Audubon, etc.

**State Welcome Center** - Louisiana has ten welcome centers strategically located around the state to entice visitors to stay longer in the state. One is located within the parish. The center provides a unique opportunity to promote the parish as the first place visitors should stop before going any farther into Louisiana.

### *C. Challenges*

Several factors have contributed to West Feliciana's relative decline in the state's tourism picture. Competition is a major factor, and its significance cannot be discounted. But certain issues within the community's control need to be addressed in a forthright manner. These challenges appear below, in no particular order.

**Fragmented organizations** - Over the years, a number of town and parish agencies, and private organizations have been involved in tourism-related activities, often working at cross-purposes and competing. Now, through the arrangement between the Community Development Foundation and the Tourist Commission, a distinct attempt is being made to coordinate these efforts. A great amount of work, on the part of all parties, still remains to be done.

**Overcoming the loss of Rosedown Plantation** - Rosedown was the parish's "crown jewel" in terms of attractions and a real marketing leader for the area. In recent years its role has diminished, and as a consequence, there have been fewer visitors to the area. This loss has resulted in reduced local expenditures at restaurants, shops, and lodging.

It is time to move on with the post-Rosedown era. West Feliciana has many other attractions and the notion of returning to the way things were in the 1980s is simply unrealistic.

**Inefficient marketing** - The loss of Rosedown as a major marketing force and significant tourism attraction left a serious void that has not been filled. Marketing, in particular, became an ad hoc, splintered effort that lacked direction. As a consequence, tourism marketing has not been very effective. For instance, the Study Team saw examples of printed advertisements of the parish's attractions that were duplicated within the same publication.

A joint tourism-marketing plan involving all the key players is a West Feliciana priority (see Section V, Tourism Marketing).

**Development of added events.** Many of the parish's attractions need off-season support and greater community involvement. For example, the Pilgrimage, with the Audubon State Historical Site (ASHS) as the centerpiece, is held in March, and Christmas in the Country in December. Audubon could be added to the Christmas in the Country event. Similar examples are applicable to Hemingbough and The Bluffs. For instance, the months of December, January, and February are very slow for The Bluffs. Efforts could be directed at developing activities that involve lodging at The Bluffs during those particular months.

**Greater economic impact** - Recently, many visitors have been arriving in St. Francisville aboard the "Delta Queen," "Mississippi Queen," and "American Queen" riverboats. Area shops have expressed satisfaction with the volume of sales generated by these travelers. The challenge, however, is to increase the amount spent in the area by these visitors and thus maximize their economic impact. A typical visit is very brief and usually involves motorcoach excursions to area attractions. By their very nature these visits do not result in overnight stays or multiple meals at local restaurants.

**Signage and information** - Improved signage is needed on U. S. Hwy. 61 to welcome visitors to St. Francisville. Visitors could potentially drive through the town and not know they passed it. Consideration should be given to a new lower power radio system (see Section V, Tourism Marketing). Also, there is great potential for information kiosks within the town that would provide directions to the various attractions in the area.

**Public restrooms** - St. Francisville is a charming, inviting, and visitor-friendly community. Yet, it lacks restroom facilities readily available to the general public. The only restroom facilities are within the Town Hall, which is closed on weekends when many travelers visit the area.

**Skilled service workers** - This challenge is one affecting the entire industry, but must be dealt with on a local basis. Those areas with employees who are trained in providing signature,



hospitality services always grade higher in visitors' minds. This is especially important in an area that relies heavily on repeat visitations. The need for such training should be brought up with West Feliciana School Board leaders, as well as vocational-technical organizations in the area.

**Consistent customer service** - Good customer service is a key ingredient in the hospitality industry. Consistent service and information at all attractions, restaurants, and lodging should be a community goal. Hospitality training programs for frontline staff members at key tourism locations should be considered.

**Lodging** - The amount and quality of the lodging available in the area, particularly available hotel rooms and campsites, have been inadequate. The Best Western should be a vast improvement, but close attention will have to be paid to the effect of more overnight accommodations in nearby Baton Rouge and Natchez on visitor expenditures in West Feliciana.

**Evening activities** - Few after-dark entertainment venues are available to visitors. Responding to this challenge could aid in keeping more overnight visitors. Some smaller communities are addressing this issue by capitalizing on local talent for events such as dinner plays, little theaters, and evening community concerts. These kinds of activities seem to fit perfectly with St. Francisville's atmosphere.

### **III. WEST FELICIANA'S ATTRACTIONS BASE**

The parish's attractions base is discussed in terms of cultural and historical resources and outdoor recreation and nature-based resources.

#### ***A. Cultural and Historical Resources***

The following is a brief overview of the parish's most notable cultural and historical resources. All are assets for tourism development.

**St. Francisville** is a small town of 1,800 residents with well-preserved cultural and historical assets, and serves as the parish's commercial and tourism center. Its historical district provides a setting where visitors can park, stroll, visit, and shop in a typical morning or afternoon. The historical blend of the older well-preserved homes and churches cannot be found in any regional small town in such a concentration. There may be larger historical districts in cities such as New Orleans, Charleston and Natchez, but none has the small-town, relaxed atmosphere that St. Francisville possesses.

St. Francisville is the **gateway to the Mississippi River**. Its dock area serves riverboats and the ferry. The river also offers other interpretive opportunities that depict the past and current way of life, not only in the Felicianas, but in any typical small river town. Few rivertowns have the historical and cultural assets still present in St. Francisville.

**West Feliciana has a high concentration of historically accurate plantation homes and gardens.** While some require advance appointments, most are open to the public year-round, and are easily accessible from U.S. Highway 61. A significant number also offer bed and breakfast lodging. Inconsistent operating dates and times can be a deterrent to tourism development. This type of information must be constantly updated, and other attractions, the state welcome center, and the WFTC need to be notified of changes.

Rosedown, once labeled as "Louisiana's Most Important Museum House," remains in the parish's attractions mix even though its tourism significance to the area has declined over the years. It should only be considered as one more ingredient in an otherwise rich recipe of antebellum history in West Feliciana Parish.

**Hemingbough** is unique by Louisiana standards and the complex is being marketed for many different types of functions. Receptions, business meetings, concerts, plays, and many other activities are held there. There is also a bed and breakfast operation on the premises. Hemingbough is undergoing an expansion program designed to make it more of a year-round attraction. Construction is underway for a large John James Audubon-themed museum that is scheduled to be opened in 2000.

There are **two historical museums** in West Feliciana Parish. The St. Francisville Historical Museum, located in the historical district, also serves as a visitor center. It is perfectly suited for its role although parking may be a problem during certain times of the year. The interpretive exhibits are adequate and provide a glimpse of what can be found around town. The Angola Penitentiary Museum is a new facility dedicated to interpreting the penitentiary's history. Unfortunately, it has some tourism development limitations. It is located too far off U.S. Highway 61 for most visitors and the facility has some distinct space constraints. It cannot accommodate a bus load of visitors and, through the current exhibits are excellent, there are too few of them.

The Angola museum should experiment with programs that would keep visitors longer and show more of the actual facility. Perhaps regularly scheduled van tours of secure parts of the prison could be arranged in order to better interpret the old quarters, the cemetery, the Mississippi River, and other aspects of prison life. An interpretive specialist/ranger/story teller could make this a fascinating experience.

There are **other cultural and historical opportunities.** West Feliciana is located in the heart of a corridor that has some of the best examples of antebellum architecture, history, and charm. The Mississippi River corridor includes Vicksburg, Port Gibson, Natchez, St. Francisville, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans. It has been marketed to motorcoach tours for many years and will continue to be popular with all age groups. New initiatives, led by the National Parks Service and the Baton Rouge Convention and Visitors Commission, are seeking to further capitalize on the corridor's historic and cultural assets.

The corridor also includes many different Civil War sites that were significant to the lower Mississippi River campaign. Sites such as the Port Hudson State Historic Site, physically located in East Baton Rouge Parish near the West Feliciana line, are very valuable for attracting military history enthusiasts from all over the world.

The Zachary Taylor Parkway is a proposed 210-mile scenic route that would stretch from Interstate 49 near Alexandria on the west to Interstate 59 near Poplarville, Miss., on the east. The four-lane parkway includes the proposed Mississippi River bridge that would connect St. Francisville and New Roads. The parkway is envisioned as a means of increasing tourism and economic development in the eight-parish area. Careful planning is needed to insure that the parish's cultural and historical assets are not jeopardized.

### ***B. Outdoor Recreation and Nature-Based Resources***

Not too many years ago, it was difficult to convey to outdoor recreation interests and tourism leaders that recreation was a significant component of a rural community's tourism industry. Now, terms such as ecotourism, nature-based tourism, and cultural tourism have all been popularized and become commonly known as "heritage tourism".

**Outdoor Attractions** - West Feliciana is a natural for year-round, heritage tourism featuring nonconsumptive recreational activities. Biking is a popular activity along the picturesque backroads and small communities. Hiking in the Tunica Wildlife Management Area and Mary Ann Brown Preserve are now available. In the near future, hiking and interpretive programs will be available at the Tunica Hills State Preservation Area operated by the Louisiana Office of State Parks. Birding is also a favorite activity and can be done along the back roads, in the natural areas mentioned above, and even at historic attractions such as the Audubon SHS. Driving for pleasure opportunities are abundant along the many scenic backroads, at the ferry landing on the Mississippi River, and at the many historic attractions. In addition, West Feliciana has a premier golfing facility at The Bluffs. Its location on Thompson Creek, the scenic overlooks along the course, and the quality of the course combine to make golfing a cornerstone of recreational and tourism offerings in the parish.

It is worth noting that many of the outdoor attractions that visitors usually associate with St. Francisville and the Tunica Hills are actually located elsewhere. This points to the need to market with other parishes and Mississippi counties. Cyclists, for instance, also tour East Feliciana Parish and patronize stores in Jackson and Clinton. Tourists traveling to the Clark Creek Natural Area in the Tunica Hills of southwest Mississippi, often stay overnight and shop in St. Francisville.

The following are proposed actions concerning outdoor recreation resource development opportunities. The Study Team proposes that the parish look at these opportunities as **immediate actions** (to be undertaken as soon as possible and completed within a year), **near-term actions** (to be addressed in the next two years), or **longer term actions**, to be completed within two to five years.

## 1. Immediate Actions

•**Locate and identify the great birding places in the area**, enlisting the Audubon Society and other birding enthusiasts in the process. Put together a color map, birding list, and/or brochure to distribute to the area's tourist information centers and the state welcome center on U.S. Hwy. 61. Audubon SHS already has a birding checklist which could be used in preparing an area list. The SHS is also developing more birding programs, and will soon begin a \$1.3 million investment in a visitor center/museum and additional outbuildings. The state is promoting the West Feliciana area in its "Birds of Louisiana Guide".

This is a great opportunity to undertake cooperative marketing where birding opportunities are packaged with B&Bs and shopping.

•**Update and expand the prototype Feliciana bicycle map** developed by the Governor's Advisory Committee on Bicycling and the Division of Outdoor Recreation in the early 1990s. Bicycling is big business. Many people go on bicycle vacations and spend \$1,500 to \$2,000+ dollars on out-of-state bicycling vacations. West Feliciana and neighboring East Feliciana have attracted some of these bicycle tours and in-state bicycle clubs already frequent the area.

West Feliciana has long been regarded as extremely attractive to cyclists but more needs to be done to attract and retain these visitors. Better signage in the area, promotional visits to bicycle clubs outside the area, or a bicycle awareness day are some of the immediate actions that can be taken.

•**Locate and map hiking trails in West Feliciana** with references to nearby areas. The Tunica Wildlife Management Area and the Mary Ann Brown Preserve already have hiking trails. In the near future the Tunica Hills State Preservation Area and Cat Island will also be available to hikers. Hikers need to also be referred to the Clark Creek Natural Area right across the Mississippi line near Pond.

•**Cross-market with other attractions.** Visitors to bed and breakfasts, historic attractions, and recreational sites would be well served if they encouraged visitors to visit other nearby attractions. For instance, guests at The Bluffs may stay longer if induced to visit the Feliciana Winery in nearby Jackson, fish for a day on False River, or take a lengthy hike at the Clark Creek Natural Area. Hikers, picnickers, and birders could use information about the Tunica WMA and Mary Ann Brown Preserve in West Feliciana Parish, Port Hudson trails in East Baton Rouge Parish, Bluebonnet Swamp in Baton Rouge, and the Clark Creek Natural Area in Mississippi. Attractions with web sites should also cross market with nearby attractions. For example, the Audubon SHS brochure and the Office of State Parks Internet site already list nearby attractions.

•**Fishing and West Feliciana** - Many outdoor enthusiasts are fishermen. While West Feliciana does not have many fishing opportunities, nearby Pointe Coupee Parish has False River and many accessible fishing sites. By inviting visitors to fish False River and stay in St. Francisville with its many and varied attractions, the number of visitors can be expanded.

•**Packaging of garden attractions of West Feliciana** - Beautiful complexes such as Afton Villa, Audubon SHS, and Hemingbough with its annual Garden Symposium need to be packaged as a tour of gardens and other attractions.

## **2. Near-Term Actions**

•**Overlooks** need to be completed and others developed. An overlook at the ferry landing is needed, and the area should be cleaned up to make it more attractive to visitors. There are very few places for visitors to view the Mississippi River, one of the greatest natural attractions of the area. In the future, the Tunica Hills State Preservation Area will offer an overlook possibility.

•**Actively investigate** the possibility of the Audubon Society's locating a regional office at Audubon SHS. West Feliciana is a natural location for such an office, and the Society is in the process of planning and designing a visitor center and museum space as part of its new project.

•**Other trails should be studied.** Consideration should be given to developing the old cart road from the river to Hemingbough into a birding/hiking trail that would eventually connect Hemingbough and Audubon SHS. Also, there is an old railroad bed that runs from St. Francisville to the Georgia Pacific (Cat Island) property and beyond. If the roadbed were made available, it would be a natural hiking, biking, and birding trail for outdoor enthusiasts.

## **3. Longer-Term Actions**

•**Assist The Bluffs with the development of a second golf course and conference center.** With the growing popularity of golf as a healthful, relaxing sport, and by virtue of its location near Baton Rouge and its major airport, The Bluffs is in a position to fully establish itself as a first-class retreat/business/conference center with the added facilities. Retreat/conference centers are excellent business opportunities, and The Bluffs needs the support of the community to bring this concept to fruition. The Bluffs is also the area's cornerstone attraction for the growing retirement industry.

•**Nature-based tourists as future retirees, and community recreation.** Many nature-based tourists and other visitors to the area could be viewed as future retirees, and potential future residents of the area. They visit and are attracted to the area, and marketing efforts should be directed at trying to convert these into future area residents.

There are few community recreation facilities available to residents and visitors. There is a city park and a deteriorated parish park. The area needs more ballfields, a public swimming pool, and a multipurpose agricultural arena, to name a few. The current recreation commission, established by the West Feliciana Parish Police Jury, is studying and planning for further recreation opportunities, and should be supported by the community and parish in its efforts.

The provision of recreation facilities and services is essential, and, in fact, a quality-of-life issue. If St. Francisville and West Feliciana want to become an area that retains residents, attracts new ones, and is appealing to outside businesses and clean industries seeking to relocate, then this

issue becomes paramount. Also, the area's youth is in need of positive things to do and wholesome entertainment.

•**Tunica Hills State Preservation Area (SPA).** The state anticipates spending at least \$280,000 planning for the development at Tunica SPA. The preliminary plans call for an investment of \$2.8 million to include a visitor/nature center, extensive hiking trails, and a river overlook. It may be feasible to provide a cable car down to the river and a tram to the Tunica Wildlife Management Area trails.

•**Cycle Main Street 2000,** is a five-day bicycle ride around Louisiana. In May of 2000, main street communities in Acadiana will host the ride. There is a great opportunity for St. Francisville to be the hub of this event in May of 2001. One of the reasons for not scheduling St. Francisville in 2000 was the lack of understanding on the part of the planning committee that bicyclers would enjoy the Mississippi River ferry crossing, and would be amenable to traveling from New Roads or other areas across the river to St. Francisville. Through the Main Street coordinator in St. Francisville, this situation can be remedied and the ride hosted by the community in 2001.

•**Study the potential for mountain bike and jeep trails in the area.** These are growing sports and a recreational public will spend a lot of money engaging in them. The annual Jeep Jamboree is a good example. Does West Feliciana want to include this type of recreation activity as a tourist attraction in its future planning? If so, a dialogue about possibilities should begin with these enthusiasts.

### *C. Tourism and Community Development Opportunities*

Does the community understand the tourism industry, both benefits and costs? Does the community see its role in tourism development? Does the tourism industry see its role in community and economic development? Do the two see how they are connected and how they affect each other, directly and indirectly?

Many individual businesses and special events in the parish cater to visitors. The people serving guests on the front line must have **excellent customer relations skills**. They must be friendly and knowledgeable about their product and/or service. They must also be aware of and willing to share information about other tourist attractions and services that visitors may need while in the St. Francisville area. We cannot expect employees to automatically have these skills and behavior. Ongoing training beyond the "Smile School" must be offered, and should include customer service workshops, familiarization tours for employees, and resource materials such as books and videos for self-study. Employees that show improvement as well as those who continuously go the extra mile must be rewarded.

Business operators need to **review their store hours** to make sure they are open when the tourists are ready to spend money namely evenings and weekends, especially during the peak season(s).



**The Mississippi riverfront needs to be connected to St. Francisville.** This is literally a two-way street. As one drives from St. Francisville to the River it becomes obvious how the community's existence, history, and potential are inextricably linked to the Mississippi River. Yet the river is not a focal point, and it is apparent that it has been taken for granted. The out-of-state Study Team members observed that it was not obvious to them that they were in St. Francisville, a community located on the left-descending bank of one of the most famous rivers in the world! They do not recall having seen directional signs pointing travelers to the Mississippi River ferryboat dock, which incidentally, is the only readily accessible location for visitors to view the river. A riverfront park or green area connecting town and river and designed to withstand regular flooding ought to be considered for the enjoyment of visitors and residents alike. Sidewalks would be a welcome addition for those wanting to stroll to and from the area, particularly in the area close to the "Welcome to St. Francisville" sign.

St. Francisville would greatly benefit from **setting downtown apart** through additional landscaping. Consider, for instance, adding flowers along the sidewalk, banners (seasonal), street lamps, benches for shoppers and walkers to sit and relax, and perhaps a few more little parks with gazebos or fountains. These need to be somewhat concentrated and not spread out. Signs interpreting historic homes and other buildings are nice, but inconvenient to pedestrians using the sidewalk. Could the information seen from the street be duplicated and mounted on the backs of existing signs? Under any circumstances, St. Francisville's landscape plan should be revisited.

**Signage and landscaping** are of great importance for enhancing a community's appeal to visitors and stimulating local pride. Welcome signs should be erected at the main access points to the parish and St. Francisville. The signs should be uniform (color, style, size, etc.) and thematically consistent with other marketing efforts. They, and the area around them, need to be well-maintained as they give a visitor the important first impression of the community. Landscaping and attractive lighting can increase the attractiveness and function.

There is a great deal of information available on these topics. Many relevant resources are available on-line, in full text, by accessing the "Tourism Educational Materials" section of the Michigan State University Extension tourism web page at <http://www.tourism.msu.edu>.

Note, in particular, the following Extension bulletins:

- "Tourism and Its Significance in Local Development" (Michigan E-1937),
- "Community Development Strategies for Tourism: An Assessment Tool" (Wisconsin G3645),
- "Tourism: An Effective Tool for Economic Development" (Alabama CRD-55).

Many communities the size of St. Francisville have benefitted from a program called "Be A Tourist In Your Own Town". Residents are able to see their community through the eyes of a visitor. Much of the tour should be walking. Questions that must be answered are: "Are there public restrooms?" "Are the sidewalk curbs handicap-accessible?" "What's missing?" Downtown businesses might also consider initiating a "mystery shopper" program to identify employees and residents treating customers/visitors well. For out-of-town shoppers who cannot

carry their purchases, signs should be prominently placed offering "to ship anything anywhere". Riverboat guests, in particular, could be welcomed with complimentary cups of the state's famous coffee and unusual food products.

#### **IV. WEST FELICIANA LODGING INDUSTRY AND B&B ASSESSMENT**

Bed and breakfast accommodations (B&Bs) are a fast growing and rapidly maturing industry. Nationally, according to the consulting firm DDM, A Communications Agency, Inc. (DDM), a B&B has 6.5 rooms, the occupancy rate averages 48 percent, 38 percent of the guests are obtained from the Internet, and 52 percent have a World Wide Web (Web) site.

This growth and maturation has prompted a great deal of attention within the industry for **Quality Assurance (QA)**. Consumers demand it, and it is in the industry's best interest (considering the number of hotels and motels referring to themselves as "inns") to pursue such a program. In West Feliciana, as well as the rest of the state, QA must be the innkeepers' first priority.

An assessment of the area's lodging situation, with an emphasis on the B&Bs, was conducted by Study Team member, Kathy Barnett, a Michigan innkeeper and current President of the Michigan Bed and Breakfast Association. She toured the following establishments during the three-day study period: Barrow House, Butler-Greenwood, The Cottage Plantation, Hemingbough Guesthouse, Lake Rosemound Inn, The Myrtles, Shadtree, St. Francisville Inn, Green Springs, The Lodge at the Bluffs on Thompson Creek, and the St. Francis on the Lake Motel. Ms. Barnett was impressed that all the visited inns and motel had implemented wonderful, creative ideas for their businesses. Most B&Bs, she concluded, fall short on promoting the community as a whole. Most do not have a guest-friendly area with information on local restaurants, activities, special events, and information about neighboring B&Bs.

The Best Western-St. Francis on the Lake will provide competition, although its primary clientele will be business travelers. The Best Western will help attract overnight stays in the area, and overflows will be referred to the area's B&Bs. Its competitiveness will stem from its membership in the worldwide franchise, and the fact that the facilities are fresh, clean, and tastefully appointed. Pricing will also be very competitive.

A top-notch, quality-filled experience is the single most important criterion for attracting repeat guests to B&Bs. Historic significance, local attractions, and the locale might intrigue travelers to stay at least once, but their return is likely to be predicated on two determinants: hospitality and cleanliness, both of which can be controlled by the individual innkeepers. Ms. Barnett was very impressed with the hospitality side, but was concerned over issues of overall cleanliness and the quality of the furniture, fixtures, carpets, linens, and towels. Several inns could use refreshing with new paint, paper, and carpeting. Other items worth investing in would be battery-backed clock radios, night lights for bathrooms, and emergency lighting (some can be used up to six hours in case of a power outage).

The one item that defines most inns around the country as a B&B is the availability of common social space for guest use. Several West Feliciana inns lack such a common space, and they would best serve the community and themselves by marketing themselves as “lodging” instead of as a “bed and breakfast”. Not only do they lack the aforementioned common space that is needed to create the B&B ambiance, but also do not appear to fulfill the typical inngoer’s expectation. For several establishments, it appeared that innkeeping was an afterthought, and not the primary interest of the innkeeper.

Pricing at the area’s B&Bs is by and large about the same. Most demand and receive the going market price. Innkeepers need to remain very sensitive to their pricing policies and charge based on seasonality, as well as the amenities and services that they provide.

Mentoring programs possibly involving innkeeper-advisers from outside the area, the Louisiana Bed and Breakfast Association, or PAII (Professional Association of Innkeeping International) may prove helpful to a number of these businesses. It is also recommended that the state association review its Quality Assurance guidelines.

Most recent marketing attention has focused on the Internet. Several area B&Bs have tracked the source of their business and they noted that approximately 70 percent of the bookings are now obtained via the Internet. In spite of this high success rate, existing sites need to be better promoted by registering with search engines and lodging-sensitive promotional sites.

As is discussed in the “Tourism Marketing” section below, the CDF/WFTC needs to take a very proactive role in Web development matters. The area’s B&Bs would be major beneficiaries from such a move. The St. (and Saint) Francisville, “A Treasure to Discover” web site needs to be updated, upgraded, expanded, and maintained to include many other tourism-related attractions, community functions, map of the area, calendar of events, etc. Mr. Jason Droddy was asked to make observations and comments regarding the area B&Bs Internet presence. His thoughts appear below.

In the latter part of December 1999, Mr. Droddy conducted an Internet search to determine the West Feliciana and St. Francisville’s presence on the World Wide Web. The primary focus was on the bed and breakfast industry.

In 1999, there were 45 million American households connected to the Internet, which accounted for 45 percent of all households. By 2002, the estimated number of households will climb to 59 million (62 percent) and in 2003, 62 million households (68 percent) will be online. Another intriguing fact is that last year, Americans spent 65 million hours per day on the Internet. The Internet has become so popular among Americans that wired households on average spend 13 percent less time watching television.

No other group has benefitted more from the Internet than the travel industry. Whereas, lodging and travel interests account for only 10 percent of all advertisements on the Internet, the travel industry ranks at the top of actual online sales (\$3.9 billion), and is predicted to stay on top through the year 2002 (\$11.7 billion). It appears as though the industry is getting optimal return on minimal investment.

To research St. Francisville's Internet presence, Mr. Droddy used the Internet portal call "Yahoo!™". In November 1999, Yahoo!™ had 35.3 million visitors, placing it atop all web sites in terms of unique visitors. He portrayed an average Internet user researching for overnight accommodations in St. Francisville. He used combinations of the following phrases during the search: "st. francisville", "saint francisville", "bed and breakfast", "plantation", and "louisiana". He also visited the Louisiana Office of Tourism web site ([www.crt.state.la.us/crt/tourism.htm](http://www.crt.state.la.us/crt/tourism.htm)), which is prominently linked from the official state web site, InfoLouisiana ([www.state.la.us](http://www.state.la.us)). The Professional Association of Innkeepers International (PAII) maintains a web site with a directory of B&B directories ([www.paii.com/directories.html](http://www.paii.com/directories.html)), and that site was used to search several national and regional directories.

Three sites consistently topped the Yahoo!™ search results. The official site of the West Feliciana Parish Tourism Commission ([www.saint-francisville.la.us](http://www.saint-francisville.la.us)), Navigate St. Francisville ([www.n-sf.net](http://www.n-sf.net)), and Feliciana Guide Post ([www.where2guide.com](http://www.where2guide.com)) appeared most during the searches. Each site offered a listing of accommodations, along with shopping and nearby attractions. These types of "umbrella" sites offer visitors an opportunity to view an entire community instead of one business.

Using all possible means of Internet research, Mr. Droddy concluded that there were 20 businesses that provided overnight accommodations in the St. Francisville area. Eleven of the 20 had some type of web site containing information about the business. In 1999, only 20 percent of small businesses nationwide had a web site, so St. Francisville B&Bs, hotels, and others were above average with 55 percent representation.

There are basically two types of sites. Those that are "independent" and those that are part of a "family". Independent sites are those that are provided by a business and not restricted in content. Family sites are those sites that are pre-formatted by another company, and where information is placed according to a template. Six St. Francisville businesses had independent sites and five businesses used a family site provided by Virtual Cities Inc., for their primary Internet presence. Some businesses with independent sites also used family sites including those available from Virtual Cities Inc. The advantage of the family site is that they allow for quick comparisons because the information for each site is located at the same place in the template. The disadvantage is that it only allows for limited marketing and promotions efforts.

When visiting each site, Mr. Droddy searched for 20 elements which he grouped into five categories. The first category was "contact information," which included address, telephone number, facsimile (fax) number, toll free number, active e-mail links, and name of host. The second category was loosely named "allure" because it included description of grounds and environs, photographs, description of accommodations, and listing of amenities. "Area tourism"

was the third grouping, and sought descriptions of the area, nearby attractions, nearest metro areas, directions/map, and any mention of an airport. The fourth category was "arrangements," and it related to rates and policies pertaining to cancellation, children, pets, and smoking. The last group was "comparison" and it consisted of any ratings or comments offered by newspaper/magazine reviewers or someone's opinion with credible community standing.

### **Contact**

Using the businesses' home pages, Mr. Droddy was able to obtain the name of the host and the address of almost all of the eleven online businesses. Three provided a toll free telephone number and five listed an e-mail address with an active link. Contact information was almost always found on the front page of the web site. Unfortunately, four businesses posted telephone and fax numbers using the 504 area code that expired in the Town in April 1999. For some businesses, e-mail was used to make reservations online (more on this in "arrangements" section).

### **Allure**

Most businesses provided a description of the grounds and the surrounding area along with photographs. Also, the rooms or cottages were described on most web sites. Some of the businesses listed available amenities, such as a spa and free tours.

### **Area Tourism**

Tourists are attracted to places that offer a variety of attractions or activities. Most web sites listed nearby attractions and activities in the area, such as hiking, birding, bicycling, and antiquing. Most sites also described the geographical attributes and history of the West Feliciana area. Many of the sites offered directions and/or maps. These sites listed distances from New Orleans, Natchez, and Baton Rouge. None of the sites mentioned the Baton Rouge Airport. One site gave directions from Baton Rouge, but never mentioned the starting point as Baton Rouge. In every instance but one, the city of Baton Rouge was only mentioned in reference to directions. New Orleans and Natchez were listed as often as Baton Rouge.

### **Arrangements**

Rate and policy information were not difficult to find in most instances. In fact, B&B policies were very specific about children, pets, and smoking. Of special interest to this search was the online booking capability of the B&Bs. No business offered online booking in the sense that a room is reserved by submitting a credit card account number over a secured system. An online purchase/booking would be something akin to Amazon.com, where a buyer performs a total business transaction using only a computer. Such secured online systems require a surcharge per transaction in addition to set-up fees. Although some B&Bs encouraged booking through e-mail, they should know that customers may be reluctant to use credit card account numbers over unsecured lines.

### **Comparison**

Many shoppers are comparison shoppers. The Internet makes comparison shopping very simple, because people do not have to leave home to compare prices. However, being online places the buyer at a disadvantage in that he/she are not able to preview the product, which in this case is a

room at a far away B&B. Ratings or comments that would help a tourist choose one place over another were sought. Several businesses offered comments from previous guests, but lacked last names or business affiliations. A couple of B&Bs in Natchez posted reviews complete with full name and media association.

Ratings or quality assessment designations were also a concern. Only one web site, Rave Reviews ([www.rave-reviews.com/lodge/la.html](http://www.rave-reviews.com/lodge/la.html)), offered any type of rating system or commentary, but it only listed three New Orleans establishments. None of the B&B sites offered any ratings. There is no designation to attest to the quality of the B&Bs. Even the Louisiana Bed & Breakfast Association (LBBA) web site lacked any information on the subject.

#### **Other Comments:**

- Mentioning of the Baton Rouge Airport and distance in the “directions/map” section of web sites may help attract people traveling by plane.
- A toll free number is seen by many travelers as a way to reduce costs.
- The West Feliciana Parish Tourism Commission web address uses the spelled out version of “saint”, however, the abbreviated version, “st.”, is used throughout the web site. This may be confusing and could lead to missed Internet visits.
- Some businesses maintained independent and family sites. On numerous occasions, the names of the businesses were spelled differently. Butler-Greenwood was spelled with and without the dash, and Green Springs Inn was spelled as one and two words on different sites.
- In searching for B&Bs in Baton Rouge, Mr. Drodgy received no listings. In the Baton Rouge area, there was only one site in Grosse Tete and one in a more distant location. St. Francisville B&Bs should realize that Baton Rouge is open territory as far as the Internet is concerned. This may be an opportunity for enhancing clientele.
- In a couple of searches using the term “plantation”, St. Francisville was second only to the New Orleans area in terms of plantation listings.
- None of the web sites linked to the West Feliciana Parish Tourism Commission web site. There are many reasons for and against linking off of a web page, but promotion of the Town may result in promotion of a B&B.
- Of the three “umbrella” sites, Navigate St. Francisville appeared to be the only site generated outside of the Felicianas. This site is one of a family of sites offered to give towns and cities a presence on the Internet. The family association may be an advantage for the Town, because it is high on the search listings and people familiar with the Navigate system may prefer it. Virtual Cities Inc., provides the same advantages.

#### **PAII**

The PAII Home Page ([www.paii.com](http://www.paii.com)) is a useful source of information for innkeepers and potential visitors. People experienced with B&Bs may consult this megasite for information. The B&B directory page listed 28 directories of B&Bs in the United States, most of which focused on particular regions, themes, or common characteristics. Businesses in St. Francisville interested in posting a new web site or enhancing a current one should visit this site to view what others are doing.



## **V. TOURISM MARKETING**

The Study Team agrees with The Cornerstone Group's overall suggestions regarding economic development and marketing, but feels that there is an urgent need to develop a more focused and aggressive tourism marketing campaign and communications program. West Feliciana's relative decline in the last few years can be directly attributed to intense competition from many sources, coupled with the lack of an organized West Feliciana tourism-marketing strategy designed to counter the competition and develop new markets. It is a well-known fact that for too long, the parish relied on the marketing efforts of Rosedown Plantation. After Rosedown scaled back its marketing efforts, the community was unable to pick up the slack. The unfortunate consequences are well-known and have been discussed at length elsewhere in this report.

The Study Team sensed, however, that despite this situation there is a will to move on and that leadership is in place to make this happen. There is widespread recognition among the community's tourism leaders that efforts to market need to be at least coordinated, at best united. Fragmented and often redundant efforts--and we specifically refer to those in the recent past on the part of the WFTC, Town of St. Francisville, and B&B owners--are not only wasteful of scarce money and people resources, but are also counterproductive in that they send the wrong signals that the community does not have its act together. Cooperative marketing, with an entity such as the CDF/WFTC at the helm, is the way to go.

### ***A. Primary Markets***

West Feliciana's tourism markets can be identified geographically, demographically, and by behavior. Detailed research should be conducted to more carefully identify potential audiences, but certain general characteristics are apparent. Travel time and positive impressions regarding an area and its attractions are perhaps the biggest geographic determinants of where visitors choose to go and what they choose to see and do.

The metropolitan areas of New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Jackson are within a 100-mile radius of West Feliciana and St. Francisville, and are the largest population centers supplying visitors to the area. When combined, these metropolitan areas have a target population of nearly two million. Transportation and access also play a role in geographic markets. The area benefits greatly from U.S. Hwy. 61 and nearby I-10, as well as the Mississippi riverboat cruise traffic that docks at the outskirts of St. Francisville. The 100-mile radius also furnishes most of the hunting and non-consumptive recreational enthusiasts. These groups have been making their way to the wildlife management area, private camps, and the backroads of West Feliciana Parish for a number of years. Hunters practice their sport for eight months out of the year. Hikers, bikers, sightseers, birders, and golfers utilize the area year-round. Soon, hunters will be able to hunt an additional 2,000 acres leased to Wildlife and Fisheries by the state and adjacent to Angola State Prison.

A second major market is those traveling through on U.S. Hwy. 61 and can potentially be attracted to spend some time and dollars in the community. Through traffic has resulted in the establishment of several tourism-related businesses, notably service stations and restaurants. Not many rural communities in Louisiana are fortunate enough to have such a major thoroughfare.

Controversial plans call for the widening of U.S. Hwy. 61 near St. Francisville to four lanes and the construction of a bridge connecting the east and west banks of the Mississippi River.

West Feliciana should also seek to further capitalize on visitors to Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Convention and visitor bureaus in both cities are making substantial marketing investments and are looking for day-trip attractions to add to their portfolios. West Feliciana would be an ideal short trip for visitors, thus benefitting restaurants, shops, and the historic attractions.

Demographically, the area's cultural and historical tourism attractions have traditionally appealed to "mature" (ages 53 through 67) and "older mature" (ages 68+) travelers. In recent years, however, the area has attracted recreationists to outdoor activities associated with the Tunica Hills (cycling, hiking, nature-watching, etc.) and golfing at The Bluffs. All have considerable appeal to "baby boomers" (ages 35-54), particularly the leading edge of this group, those in their late forties and fifties, and Generation X-ers (those born in the late 1960s and 1970s).

In terms of behavioral patterns, out-of-state and international travelers to the area are attracted to its history and culture, particularly the plantations and other historical attractions. Those residents from within the 100-mile radius enjoy these attractions, along with the Feliciana's "getaway" atmosphere and services (B&Bs, shops, restaurants, etc.), as well as the scenic outdoors, particularly the hilly terrain.

Judging from information gleaned from several recent Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) reports, the area appears well positioned for the future.

- America is aging and the number of people ages 55-64 will almost double in the next 20 years. In the year 2000, there will be 24 million persons aged 55-64. That number will rise to 30 million by 2005 and 35 million in 2010. It will peak in 2020 at about 42 million.

- America is traveling more than ever before, and the mature tourists that favor visiting communities such as West Feliciana have accounted for an increasing share of leisure travel as can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Population and Travel Growth**

<b>Ages</b>	<b><u>1990-1998 Population</u></b>	<b><u>1990-1998 Person-Trips</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of 1998 Travelers</u></b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>18-34</b>	<b>-8%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>35-54</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>55+</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>21%</b>

Source: Travel Industry Association of America and U.S. Department of Commerce

•There is increasing affluence. By the year 2016, “empty-nesters” who are mortgage and kid-free will make up nearly a third of family households. In addition, baby boomers stand to inherit as much as a trillion dollars in the next 20 years.

•According to TIA’s *Travelscope*, in 1998 the following were the top 10 activities among those 55 years and older:

- |                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Shopping, 41%                  | 6. Sports events, 12%        |
| 2. Historical places/museums, 20% | 7. National/state parks, 10% |
| 3. Gambling, 15%                  | 8. Beaches, 10%              |
| 4. Cultural events, 15%           | 9. Nightlife/dancing, 7%     |
| 5. Outdoor recreation, 15%        | 10. Golf/tennis/skiing, 5%   |

### ***B. Marketing Opportunities***

West Feliciana is very fortunate to be endowed with so many cultural, historical, and natural attractions. The Study Team is **cautiously optimistic** that the declining situation will be reversed, and that the area’s competitiveness will be fully restored in the next few years. There are several reasons for this hopeful situation. **New attractions are scheduled to come on-line** in the near future, and more special events are being planned to help attract more visitors to the area. **The lodging situation is also improving** with the restoration of the Best Western motel, an excellent complement to the area’s bed and breakfast establishments. Hotel-motel tax revenues will increase with the reopening of this motel.

The Team is impressed with the **community’s resolve to consolidate its economic development, including marketing, efforts under the CDF umbrella**. The community has articulated a desire to restore the area’s tourism presence at state and national levels. This will be reaffirmed at the tourism town meeting that took place as part of this study. Over 30 leaders overwhelmingly answered in the affirmative to the question posed by the Study Team, “Is there community support for tourism development?”

In order to succeed, West Feliciana and St. Francisville will need to present a **united front, and an appropriate start would be for the CDF, Town and WFTC to jointly develop a multiyear tourism marketing plan**. The plan should address common goals, objectives, strategies and identify specific action items for implementation during the first year. It simply makes sense. Combined, the WFTC and the Town of St. Francisville annually have at their disposal the relatively small sum of \$90,000 for marketing purposes.

The joint plan should include an element that addresses the area’s urgent need to become **active with in-state networks**, notably those of the LTPA, Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureaus, and the Office of Tourism. The CDF/WFTC Tourism Coordinator needs to travel and gather information, network with other tourism groups, promote the area, and, in general, remain highly visible.

In addition to recommending the development and implementation of a joint marketing plan, the Study Team also urges that **more cooperative marketing** take place. The CDF/WFTC should redouble its efforts to get parish attractions, accommodations, businesses, and services to offer package deals to potential visitors. **Such packaging should not be limited to West Feliciana.** Efforts are needed to work with tourism interests in the neighboring parishes—East Feliciana, East Baton Rouge, and Pointe Coupee—as well as southwestern Mississippi counties. Tourists are oblivious to local, geopolitical boundaries! They simply do not know, nor do they care, about the name of the parish or county where an attraction or B&B is located. St. Francisville, because of its strengths in accommodations, services, and attractions, can position itself as a hub with multiple spokes to outlying communities. Such a marketing strategy would be particularly effective for group tour operators looking to offer their clients more variety in tour programs and independent packages.

It is also recommended that the CDF/WFTC be informed about new attractions and special events so that a **calendar of events** and other forms of publicity can be organized. Too, the team favored an information kiosk in downtown St. Francisville to serve visitors and residents alike.

### *C. Web Development*

West Feliciana and St. Francisville should have a stronger marketing presence on the Internet and efforts to accomplish this should be reflected in the joint marketing plan. **There is a distinct match between the U.S. adult population with access to the Internet and the profile of the typical visitor to the area's attractions and accommodations.** At a recent LTPA workshop, information was shared that clearly demonstrated not only the medium's meteoric growth, but the fact that e-commerce is very much the wave of the future.

Travel, for example, is projected to be the single largest e-commerce sector on the Web by the year 2002. In 1999, TIA reports, nearly 45 percent of U.S. adults (up from 16 percent in 1996) use the Internet. The percentage of U.S. travelers using the Internet is even higher, 53 percent in 1999 compared with 19 percent in 1996. Sixty-four percent of frequent travelers use the Internet, a figure that has almost tripled since 1996.

The CDF/WFTC should lead such efforts. A vastly improved Web presence would be particularly beneficial to the area's 13 B&Bs. Bed and breakfast innkeepers, responding to a 1999 national survey conducted by the public relations firm DDM, Inc., reported that the Web accounted for 38 percent of their guests—almost as many guests as the next three most important sources combined (39 percent). Some St. Francisville area innkeepers estimated that 70 percent of their guests had used the Web for B&B research and contact purposes. Furthermore, there is a demographic fit with the typical area guests. A third of the B&B guests who use the Internet for reservations is under 35 years of age, a third is between 50 and 60 years old, 57 percent are female, 95 percent personally conducted the research, and 89 percent personally or jointly participated in the decision-making.

Nationally, innkeepers have reported that the Web has become the most important source of new guests. Nearly 67 percent of the guests who visit a specific B&B for the first time report that they found and researched the B&B on-line. There is a distinct trend known as "look-to-book".

B&Bs are finding the medium to be cost-effective; as it levels the playing field and generates new business. Consumers, in turn, appreciate the medium's convenience to do research, initiate contact, check availability, and make a booking (DDM, A Communications Agency, Inc.).

#### ***D. Low Power Radio (LPR)***

Several years ago, there was an attempt to operate a low-wattage AM radio station to inform travelers on U.S. Hwy. 61 about St. Francisville. The efforts failed, but recently there has been considerable progress in the technology so that customized information can more easily be provided to the traveling public. The medium's new dependability and improved convenience stems from the advent of digital technology. LPR stations can now broadcast with 10 watts of power versus the old 0.1 watt systems that only covered about 0.5 miles from the transmitter. The 10-watt systems can serve a minimum radius of about 2.5 miles from the transmitter. This type of LPR station must be sponsored by a governmental entity and licensed by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Such a station would enable the operators (proposed to be the CDF/WFTC) to record and alter messages from remote locations. The traveling public would be informed about local points of interest, special events, availability of lodging, road conditions, etc. A copy of Oregon State University Extension Service Special Report 890, "Low Power Radio: A New Communication Method for Reaching Target Audiences" appears in Appendix 1.

## **VI. RETAIL/TOURISM GAP ANALYSIS**

### ***A. Observations***

Study Team member Ardynn Thriffley conducted a two-day gap analysis to identify tourism-related business needs and opportunities. A gap analysis involves inventorying existing tourism-related enterprises, establishing what additional services are in demand, and concluding whether the demand is such that it can be converted into a business opportunity. In effect, it is a needs assessment or analysis.

Four different methods were used in the identification of potential tourism-related businesses in West Feliciana Parish. First, Ms. Thriffley conducted a windshield survey of the businesses along U.S. Hwy. 61 and downtown St. Francisville (Commerce and Ferdinand, and other downtown streets). The inventory information was then compared with a list of 120 potential tourism-related businesses identified in the "Louisiana Rural Tourism Development Guide" (see Table 3). This information was complemented with a number of random, personal interviews with merchants and residents. Merchants were asked about their businesses and expansion plans, tourism in general and opportunities for new retail trade and services that could be offered to tourists and/or residents.

Finally, parish residents provided additional input at the tourism town meeting that took place in St. Francisville on September 9, as part of the Study Team's process. At this forum, those in

Table 3

**Encouraging Entrepreneurship**

Most people underestimate the wide range of small businesses that serve the visitor. This list includes over 120 potential businesses that could be started in rural communities. These are ideas to help stimulate community leaders or local entrepreneurs, or you may identify business opportunities not listed in this document. Remember, detailed analysis and business planning are needed before a community can determine if such a business is viable.

**Food Service**

Cafes  
Restaurants  
Food Vendors  
Catering Bakeries  
Pie & Donut Shops  
Farmers Markets  
Farm Fresh Produce  
Fast Foods  
Wineries  
Convenience stores  
Excursion meals  
Taverns & bars  
Restaurant trains  
Candy store  
Delis  
Night Clubs

**Entertainment**

Amusement parks  
Live theaters  
Clubs  
Theme parks  
Festivals  
Zoo  
Bands  
Gambling casino  
Ticket services

**Arts**

Art galleries  
Craft stores  
Art villages

**Transportation**

Taxis  
Limousine service  
Gas stations  
Shuttle service  
Auto rentals  
Airplane rides  
Tour buses  
Ferry Service  
Cruise ships  
Hot air balloons  
Helicopter rides  
Carriage rides  
Hay rides  
Bicycle rentals

**Accommodations**

Resorts  
Campgrounds  
Motels  
Hotels  
House boats  
Bed & breakfasts  
Seasonal homes  
Trailer courts  
condominiums  
Spas  
Retreat centers  
Conference centers  
Inns  
Farm vacations  
RV parks

**Specialty goods**

Antique shops  
Boutiques  
Book stores  
Photography  
Sports shops  
Clothing Jewelry  
Repair shops  
Import shops  
Manufacturing  
Gift shops  
Flea markets  
Auction houses  
Bait farms  
Boat dealers

**General**

Drug store  
Factory outlets  
Grocery stores  
Hardware  
Pharmacies  
Auto repair

**Education**

Arts  
Tours  
Sports  
Specialty  
-Boats  
-Houses  
Archeology

**Recreation**

Outfitters  
Guide services  
Golf courses  
Driving ranges  
Rental services  
-canoes  
-boats  
-jet skis  
-bicycles  
Hiking  
Skies  
Boats  
Water slides  
Marinas  
Charter boats  
Horse ranches  
Wave pools  
Mini golf  
Boat rides  
Game farms  
Travel agents  
Photography  
Fee-based hunting  
Lease hunting  
Fee fishing ponds  
Rafting  
Surf shops  
Scuba diving  
Charter: fishing,  
sailing, diving,  
agricultural tours  
Trail rides  
Naturalists



attendance were asked to help fill in the following blank statement: “ It would be nice if St. Francisville or the rest of the parish had a \_\_\_\_\_.”

Nearly 40 small tourism-related businesses were identified in the parish. Several were not open during the Study Team’s visit, which pointed out the need to post hours and conduct discussions involving the Chamber of Commerce, the Merchants’ Association, etc. regarding times and tourism. On one hand, there is a desire to promote and patronize local shops and services, but on the other is the issue of convenience and costs. Restaurants, clothing stores, and gift and jewelry shops in the parish need to provide residents and visitors with product choices and desirable operating hours, while remaining profitable. It is the quandary of many smaller communities, particularly those in proximity to a city the size of Baton Rouge.

Ms. Thriffiley interviewed owners and employees at eight gift shops, one restaurant, and a furniture designer. Numerous other establishments were also observed for inventories, quality of service, and overall appearance. These businesses reported to be doing very well, and anecdotally estimated that tourism represents about 50-60 percent of their revenues. They did point out, however, a desire to have more local clientele to provide stability to their businesses. The establishments appeared well-managed, and one pointed out the problem of recruiting good people to work. This individual had recently closed a shop due to the lack of qualified labor.

Ms. Thriffiley also observed that there is little or no tourism information available in most establishments. This can easily be remedied by the CDF/WFTC. Parking in downtown St. Francisville was also an issue that should be addressed in the near term.

Marketing was a common theme for the owners of the establishments. They appeared frustrated over “redundant advertising” involving the Merchants’ Association and the WFTC. Apparently the Merchants’ Association was formed to pool funds (\$50 per month) for cooperative marketing, because there was the perception that the WFTC did not want to include shopping in the area as an attraction. In fact, the WFTC’s brochure “St. Francisville, Louisiana: A Treasure to Discover” does not list shopping opportunities.

One point needs to be clarified. The CDF/WFTC, as a public entity, cannot promote one or several businesses and not the others. The CDF/WFTC’s role is to attract people to the PARISH, not to individual establishments. That is not to say, however, that SHOPPING in this area cannot be promoted. In fact, as noted earlier, shopping is a major attraction, and should be promoted by referring potential visitors to ALL area shops. But before this information is included in future literature and web sites, the issue of operating times and dates needs to be resolved. It would be a major error to publish a brochure or post operating hours on a web site with erroneous or misleading information.

Cooperative marketing is strongly encouraged, and the Study Team agrees that the differences involved in this debate can be easily resolved through frank dialogue and collaboration. Area merchants did not express fear of competition from the opening of new establishments. In fact, one restaurateur commented that business had picked up since a new restaurant had opened. They are eager to see tourism grow, and were optimistic that things would change in the near future. All commented that the riverboats and tour buses are good for business, and that they

open early when advised about arrival times. There was skepticism, however, among the merchants over the likelihood of a major retail establishment—clothing, appliance, car dealership, jewelry, movie theater—surviving in the parish due to the ease of going to Baton Rouge. That city is “a quick drive, has better selection, cheaper prices, etc.,” and residents seem to enjoy the day trip.

### ***B. Recommendations***

For the community’s consideration, a list of potential business and service opportunities are presented below. The list is not all-inclusive, nor has it been scrutinized for feasibility purposes. The majority of the establishments/services listed below target both tourists and residents:

- Coffee shop
- Bakery
- Wellness center (associated with the hospital)
- Community Center (multipurpose including theater, movies, educational events, etc.)
- Little Theater
- Night time entertainment
- Establishments providing greater focus on the parish’s history
- Artists’ colony
- Farmers’ Market
- Larger grocery stores
- Sporting goods store
- Children’s and adults’ apparel store
- Youth activities
- General store in downtown St. Francisville
- Rental establishment for bicycles, roller blades, skates, etc.
- Auto rental
- Bookstore
- High quality antique shops
- Thrift store
- Photography services
- New restaurants open for all meals concentrating on Louisiana cuisine
- Repair shops (jewelry/watches, cars, cameras)
- High quality flea market
- Tour guides, public restrooms

## **VII. TOURISM ORGANIZATION**

The WFCDF and WFTC agreed in mid-1999 to a tourism development structure in which the two organizations share responsibilities. The WFTC is the “policy-making” entity, while the WFCDF advises and implements. The Tourism Coordinator (TC) serves as the liaison, and is an employee of the WFCDF. Funds for the position are provided by the WFCDF. Marketing expenses are covered by the WFTC and derived from lodging tax receipts. The TC, in effect, potentially has multiple bosses and the unenviable task of having to coordinate what heretofore had been very fragmented marketing efforts.

The WFCDF/WFTC arrangement is unique in the state. Most parishes rely on tourist commissions and convention and visitor bureaus as their primary tourism organization, although there are several chambers of commerce with tourism responsibilities.

It will take major efforts, on the part of both organizations, to minimize conflict and remain proactive with the mission of promoting tourism for West Feliciana. A unified front is essential, and as Glenn Weaver and others at the University of Missouri-Columbia noted in their publication, *Tourism USA: Guidelines for Tourism Development*, "...the tourism organization is the coordinating, managing, and trouble-shooting function which ensures that tourism will be successful." The tourism organization:

- Promotes the community to a market
- Supplies planning and development leadership
- Provides feedback to the community on how tourism affects their lives
- Insures that tourists are pleased with their visits
- Evaluates performance of individuals and businesses
- Investigates new markets and new attractions
- Collects data on what tourists spend and where, determines visitor profiles
- Coordinates and manages tourism

Coordination of these activities is especially difficult and it is for this reason that the WFCDF/WFTC arrangement needs to be given a chance to develop and succeed. Much needs to be done to overcome the divisiveness that characterized tourism marketing and operations in the parish in the last few years.

In order for this arrangement to succeed, some additional training is recommended for WFTC commissioners, in particular, and perhaps one or two members of the WFCDF that are involved in the tourism industry. Louisiana Sea Grant will conduct a two-day training session in March 2000 designed to equip these decision-makers with sufficient knowledge and skills to enable them to make sound tourism growth decisions.

Sea Grant's recently published primer series, "Introducing...The Position of the Tourist Commissioner" and "For Tourism Development...Setting Goals and Objectives" (Appendix 2 and 3, respectively) should be read by those who will attend the workshop.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Low Power Radio,  
A New Communication Method for Reaching Target Audience**

**Bruce DeYoung  
Oregon State University Extension Sea Grant Program**

**September 1992**



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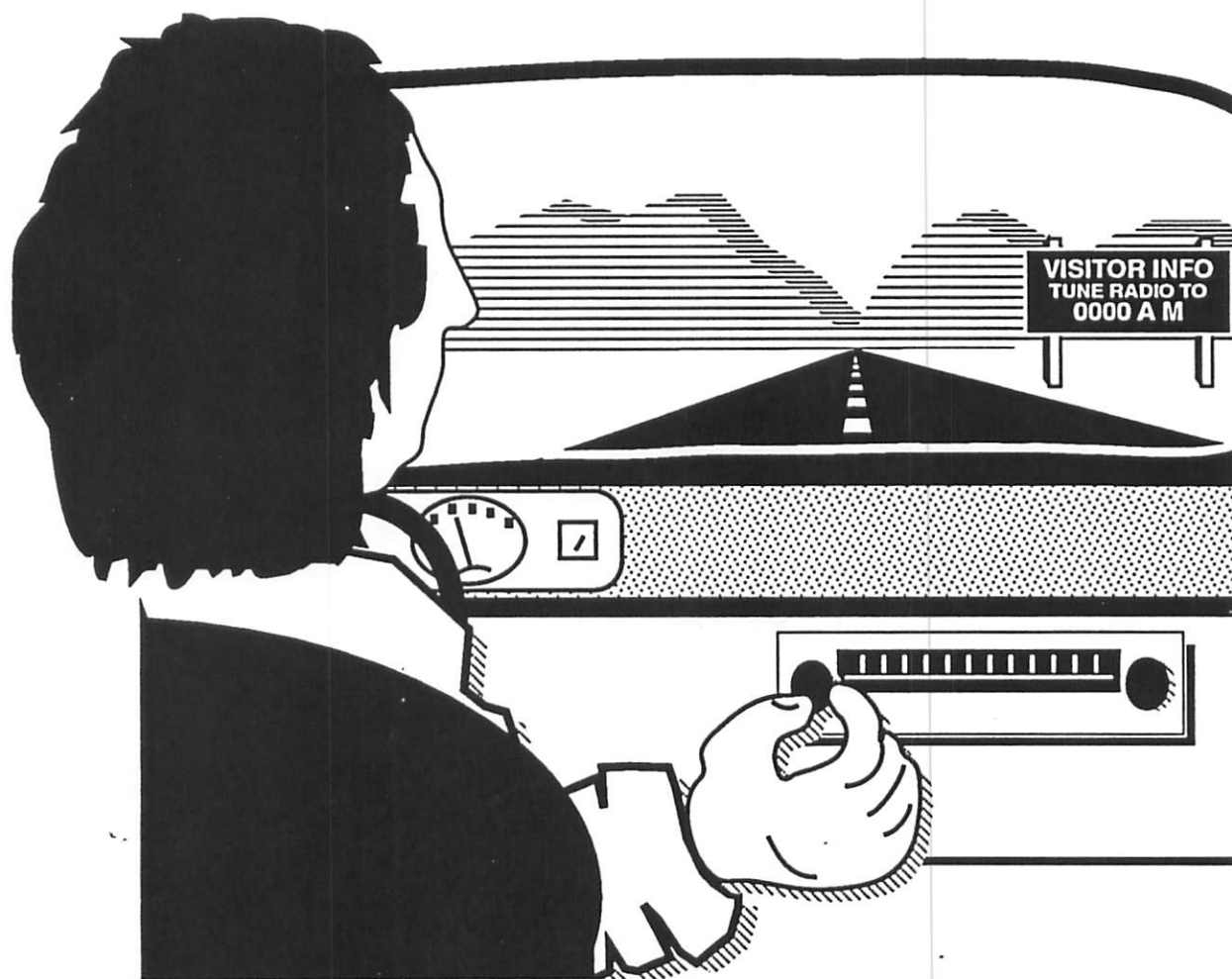
## Special Report 890

Reprinted September 1992

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# Low Power Radio

## A New Communication Method for Reaching Target Audiences



OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

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Additional copies of SR 890, *Low Power Radio*, are available from:

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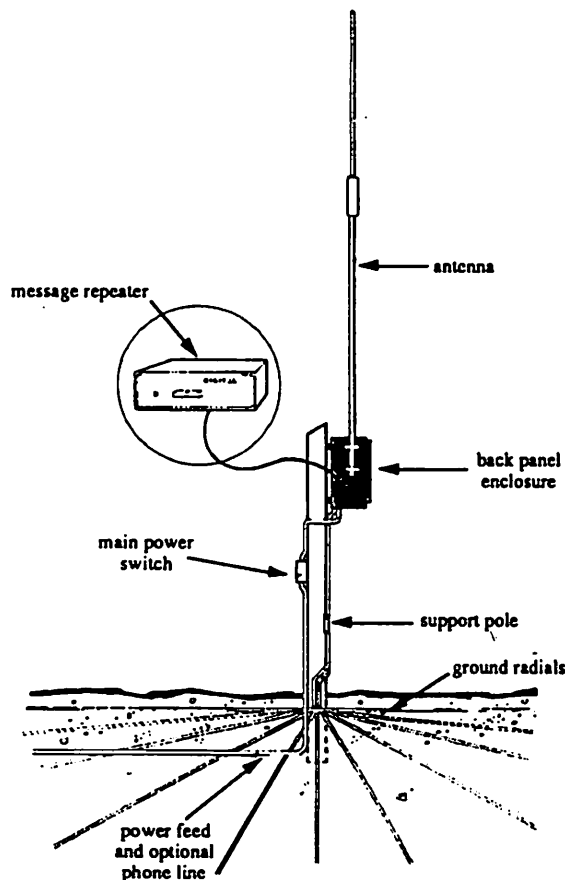


The Extension Sea Grant Program, a component of the OSU Extension Service, provides education, training, and technical assistance to people with ocean-related needs and interests.

# Low Power Radio

## A New Communication Method for Reaching Target Audiences

Bruce DeYoung, Program Leader  
OSU Extension Sea Grant Program



Rapid progress in communication technology is enabling us to deliver customized information to diverse audiences at their convenience. One tool growing in both popularity and use is low power radio.

Low power radio (LPR) is a specialized form of AM radio broadcasting. This technology made its debut in the 1970s to provide reports about traffic and weather conditions to automobile travelers. Since then, hundreds of LPR stations have been successfully dispensing information across the nation. Operators of LPR stations include communities, airports, chambers of commerce, governmental agencies, ports, outdoor recreation areas — even Disney World!

This report describes LPR technology and suggests ways for Extension educators and cities, parks, businesses and other governmental units to provide information and education to audiences they wish to reach. A representative listing of LPR equipment vendors appears in Appendix B.

Components of a low power radio system. (Adapted with permission from Digital Recorders, Inc.)

## **What is Low Power Radio?**

Low power radio is a low-wattage radio station which broadcasts on AM frequencies. It is relatively simple to use and inexpensive to operate. Low power radio typically covers a broadcast area of one to fifteen square miles, depending on signal strength and local terrain.

It has four basic components: an audio recorder to capture and repeatedly play back voice messages; an antenna; an AM radio transmitter; and, roadway signs alerting potential listeners to the radio broadcast. (See diagram on page 1.)

Low power radio transmitters fall into two categories: systems operating with 0.1 watts output or less; and, systems operating between 0.1 watts and 10 watts of power. While both can deliver targeted information to listeners, each has different capabilities and legal requirements.

### *0.1 Watt Station*

The least powerful LPR station broadcasts with 0.1 watts of power, covering a radius of up to 0.5 mile from the transmitter. This station's limited broadcast range is offset by increased flexibility in use. Licensing is not required for this station under U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules.

The broadcast frequency for an 0.1 watt station may be chosen from among the unused AM channels in the local area. No public notification is needed and almost any message contents may be broadcast, including business commercials. This LPR format can also include music and other sound effects to enhance the message.

An example of the message flexibility inherent in using this low power radio format is found in Bend, Oregon. There, a real estate firm uses 0.1 watt LPR transmitters at homes it is seeking to sell. As they drive by a home, prospective buyers can tune in their car radios and hear about its amenities. This imaginative use of information technology potentially saves time for sellers and buyers!

### *10 Watt Station*

The more powerful LPR station broadcasts with 10 watts of power, covering a minimum radius of about 2.5 miles from the transmitter. This LPR station must be sponsored by a governmental entity and licensed by the FCC. This LPR broadcast format can not include commercial promotions, music or other sound effects (see Appendix A).

The primary purpose of this higher wattage station is to provide traveler information. Messages on a 10 watt station typically address weather conditions, local points of interest and activities, road conditions, travel directions, availability of lodging, and traffic hazards or advisories.

This type of LPR station must broadcast on the frequency assigned to the licensee. At present (March 1992), the frequencies 530 kHz, 1610 kHz and 1620 kHz are available for 10 watt LPR broadcasts. Hearings are now taking place to determine if changes in the allocation of LPR frequencies are appropriate as the FCC expands AM radio to 1700 kHz.

The FCC license application process for a 10 watt LPR station generally takes about three months after submission of the paperwork. Manufacturers of LPR equipment will often provide assistance in completing and filing the appropriate forms.

Key information requested on the license application includes the precise unit of local government that is seeking the LPR authorization and the station's proximity to airports, bridges, tunnels, historical sites, interstate highways, and public parks or lands.

A map of the proposed LPR transmitter site must accompany the license application. Topographical maps can be used for this purpose, with the exact location of the transmitter site indicated. In metropolitan areas, a location map showing nearby streets and buildings is often acceptable for this purpose.

## The Nuts and Bolts of LPR

Low power radio functions with four components: an audio recorder to capture and repeatedly play voice messages; an antenna; an AM transmitter; and, roadway signs alerting potential listeners to the broadcast.

During the early days of low power radio, messages were recorded and stored on a cassette tape using analog technology. Tape wear was an inherent problem that required the periodic replacement of the tape cassette. In addition, operators of LPR stations frequently had to travel to the broadcast site to record new messages or rearrange existing ones.

The dependability and convenience of LPR has increased with the advent of digital technology. This technology eliminates the problem of tape wear and enables LPR station operators to record and alter messages from remote locations, such as the office or home base, by telephone. Digital technology also allows the storage and variable sequencing of multiple messages.

A number of LPR manufacturers exist in the United States (see Appendix B). Technicians for these companies can assist you in selecting appropriate antenna and transmitter equipment for your situation. Regardless of the equipment selected, you should also consider electrical surge protection and lightning arresters for the LPR system.

### *Planning for LPR*

In planning for an LPR station, find out if electrical power is available at the prospective site. If remote message control is desired, telephone access to the site is also needed. If these resources are lacking, messages can be directly recorded on-site and alternate power sources such as batteries or solar energy may be employed.

Most LPR stations operate with a vertical antenna. The FCC requires that such antennas not exceed 49.2 feet above the ground. If you intend to use LPR in a metropolitan area, additional planning is necessary for the antenna. One possibility is to mount the antenna on the roof of a building. There is no rooftop height limitation for the 0.5 mile LPR station. But for the 2.5 mile station operating at 530 kHz, the building may not exceed two stories (three stories for other 2.5 mile LPR station frequencies).

Proper grounding is vital to the effectiveness of a low power radio system. An appropriately installed ground system improves antenna efficiency and reduces lightning surge impacts. Space constraints and soil conductivity often determine which ground system is appropriate for the given situation. Again, LPR company personnel can help you select appropriate hardware.

Signs alerting potential listeners to the low power radio broadcast are essential. If they are to be placed along public highway right-of-ways, permits are typically needed before proceeding. Application forms are available through your state transportation department, along with requirements for sign design and construction. Many state transportation departments will design, construct, and install such signs for a fee.

Since local environmental conditions must be accommodated and LPR enterprises have varying equipment options, the cost for each site must be determined with assistance from the manufacturer. Without installation, a 0.1 watt LPR system typically costs \$2,500-\$4,000 while 10 watt systems range from \$4,000-\$6,000.

One way to hold costs down is to comparison shop among various LPR companies. Also, you might consider purchasing previously used components which have warranties in effect.

### *LPR Messages*

The effectiveness of LPR is directly tied to the quality of the broadcast message. If the script is poorly written, listeners will tune out rather than be tortured by audio babble. Likewise, a powerful script which lacks appropriate delivery risks losing the listener.

From the standpoint of quality control, it is often helpful to have others provide feedback on the clarity of LPR messages before unleashing them on the public. A typical error in message construction is to create a single, long communication. Since most digital playback units can broadcast multiple messages, several shorter messages are better than a rambling dialogue. Also, don't overlook the opportunity to broadcast current information alongside prerecorded messages. This can be accomplished by cycling NOAA weather radio broadcasts into the LPR message stream at predetermined intervals.

Some helpful script writing pointers appear in Appendix B. A quality LPR message doesn't require professional narration, but operators sometimes feel this need. A variety of local options exist for acquiring professional narration, including local performing artists or radio station announcers.

Evaluating your LPR message performance requires a strategy for interacting with listeners. The starting point is to clarify the purpose for employing an LPR system. Then, one way to gain feedback is to encourage listeners to request information from a chamber of commerce or other local agency. In the process of fulfilling these requests, listeners can be asked to respond to predetermined questions related to the LPR messages.

If your LPR message seeks to change behavior, its effectiveness can be judged through observations of target audience activity before and after the broadcast. A great way to accomplish this task is to involve students in the process. Often area colleges and universities are looking for real world educational opportunities for students who are studying business management or marketing.

## LPR Uses and Users

Successful LPR applications, digitized equipment, and modest start-up costs are stimulating wider use of this communication technology. Hence, a variety of organizations are employing this tool.

Typical LPR messages	Examples of LPR operators							
	Chambers of Commerce	Campgrounds	Fairs, special events	Governmental agencies	Transportation agencies	Airports, ports	Transportation depts.	Tourism
Weather updates		X	X		X	X	X	X
Safety tips	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Road conditions		X			X		X	X
Traffic advisories		X		X		X	X	X
Operating schedules	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Activity listings	X	X	X	X		X		X
Lodging availability		X		X				X
Rules and regulations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Historic or cultural attractions	X	X			X			X
Ticket or fee requirements	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Parking advisories	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public park resources			X		X		X	X

Examples of LPR operators (chart adapted from Digital Recorders, Inc.).

Newport, a community located on the scenic Oregon coast, recently established a low power radio. More than 1 million visitors travel through Newport each year. Community leaders are challenged with making visitors aware of recreational opportunities without causing traffic bottlenecks. To address the problem, the Newport Chamber of Commerce, OSU Extension Sea Grant and other groups teamed up to initiate a low power radio station. The station broadcasts information on things to see and do in the local area. Special emphasis is placed on encouraging non-consumptive recreational activities. Other messages have a stronger educational component by focusing on coastal resources such as seasonal migrations of gray whales. Information about marine resource interpretive workshops being conducted by Oregon State University and by a new public aquarium are also broadcast over this LPR.

While the effectiveness of the Newport project is now being evaluated, other Extension educators are already planning to use LPR technology. Some examples of creative low power radio applications being planned by Extension staff in the Pacific Northwest include:

- Agricultural agents communicating pest management and other information "real time" to producers in two counties.
- Extension foresters informing motorists in mountain passes of environmental stewardship practices and travel tips.
- Extension Sea Grant staff collaborating with two states to improve recreational boating safety in a dangerous estuary.
- 4-H Youth Extension staff updating daily activity schedules for summer campers in scattered cabin locations.
- Extension Home Economics staff broadcasting customized food and nutrition education to specific radio listeners.
- Community development agents collaborating with small riverfront communities to encourage more visitation by recreational boaters.

### *Coastal Applications*

The use of this technology for natural resource interpretation is an emerging opportunity. Recently, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife began testing low power radio as a tool for resource interpretation at wildlife viewing areas. In New York State, Sea Grant collaborated with a park commission to test low power radio in a variety of coastal settings. An LPR broadcast at a coastal campground informed listeners of marine safety; and LPR at a barrier beach aided tens of thousands of beachgoers seeking vehicle parking in a multitude of paved lots.

The future of LPR as a distance learning tool in ecotourism is promising. For instance, coastal resorts and parks can use LPR to broadcast interpretative information to visitors at nearby tidepools. With inexpensive AM headphones, the visitors would receive a narrated field trip. These guided tours can also teach and encourage use of appropriate stewardship practices to maintain the ecosystems being observed.

During peak tourist seasons, many coastal highways are clogged with sightseer vehicles. Too often interpretive signs placed in small turnout areas cause tourism-related traffic congestion or accidents. Instead of relying on road signs, research would suggest that radio could be a more appropriate informal learning medium for information targeted at travelers using vehicles.

The use of low power radio can revolutionize interpretation in waterfront communities. In these instances, natural or cultural resources interpretation can take the form of a guided car tour. Waterfront topics addressed by LPR could range from identifying various types of vessels at port docks to marine mammal topics, such as whale watching techniques. Here again, general travel information provided by low power radio can be augmented with educational messages encouraging appropriate care and use of coastal resources.

## Interested in More LPR Information?

LPR communication technology holds considerable promise for a variety of community and educational organizations. Technical information and cost data on low power radio equipment can be obtained from LPR enterprises listed in Appendix B.

More information about low power radio and distance learning can be found in the following:

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## Appendix A

### Message Writing Pointers (Courtesy of: Information Station Specialists, Zeeland, Michigan)

Writing a script for a Traveler's Information Radio Station may be a new experience for you. The following are points to keep in mind as you plan your new radio broadcast.

- 1) By law, your station must broadcast its call sign every thirty minutes at a minimum.
- 2) Always identify the organization or agency that is responsible for producing the broadcast.
- 3) Do not mention names of businesses on 10 watt broadcasts. The only exception is airline names, which may be mentioned in arrival and departure messages by airports.
- 4) On 10 watt LPR stations, broadcast voice information only. Music is not allowed.
- 5) When giving driving instructions such as "turn right" or "turn left," consider the direction in which people are approaching as they listen to the broadcast. Different instructions may be required for different traffic directions. Give directions slowly and repeat them if possible. Motorists usually cannot make notes and must commit your instructions to memory. Include street names and compass directions when you can to make your instructions redundant.
- 6) Use visual cues which motorists can watch for. Talk about features of your areas which may be of interest to them, especially those which they can view as they hear the broadcast. This increases interest in the broadcast and a greater likelihood that it will be listened to and acted upon.
- 7) Interest may also be maintained by using more than one voice to read short sections of the broadcast alternately. This "two-voice" approach works especially well with male and female voices.
- 8) Radio listeners are accustomed to information being repeated. Do not hesitate to repeat short pieces of important information periodically during the broadcast.
- 9) If your broadcast is comprised of a "general message" that seldom changes and an "update message" which contains current information, remember to promote the update message within the general message one or more times. General message example: "Welcome to the Airport. Rental car return is located on your right as you enter. Stay tuned for an update on the current parking lot status in 30 seconds. On your left is the Terminal A long-term parking ramp...." In this way you can hold the interest of listeners through the general message who may have heard the message before.
- 10) Remember that listeners will tune in and out of your broadcast at random places and may perceive no beginning or end to the programming because of its circular nature. Arrange broadcasts so that they make sense no matter where the listener begins listening. If one piece of information is critical to understanding the whole broadcast, repeat that information often.
- 11) Time the length of the broadcast cycle so that listeners are likely to hear it in its entirety before they have to make a decision. Example:

The Highway Department placed a radio antenna along the interstate highway. The Department located signs announcing the radio signal and frequency 3 miles north of the radio antenna. Southbound drivers must make a decision on whether to exit 4 miles after they pass the signs (a mile south of the antenna). Subtracting 30 seconds for the time it takes to tune in the station, drivers have about 3.5 miles to listen to the broadcast before they reach the critical exit if they are traveling about 60 miles per hour. The length of the broadcast cycle should be 3.5 minutes or less. To allow listeners to hear the broadcast twice, a 1.75 minute cycle should be used.

## **Appendix B**

### **Low Power Radio Equipment Sources in U.S.A.**

No endorsement of the enterprises or products mentioned below is intended or implied by the National Sea Grant College Program or Oregon State University. This is a sampling of known firms:

Information Station Specialists, P.O. Box 51, Zeeland, Michigan 49464, telephone (616) 772-2300.

Watts Media Services, P.O. Box 152, Big Flats, New York 14814, telephone (607) 562-7522.

Digital Recorders, Inc., P.O. Box 14068, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709-4068, telephone (919) 361-2155.

Radio Systems, 110 High Hill Road, Bridgeport, New Jersey 08014, telephone (800) 521-2123.



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Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, O.E. Smith, director. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.

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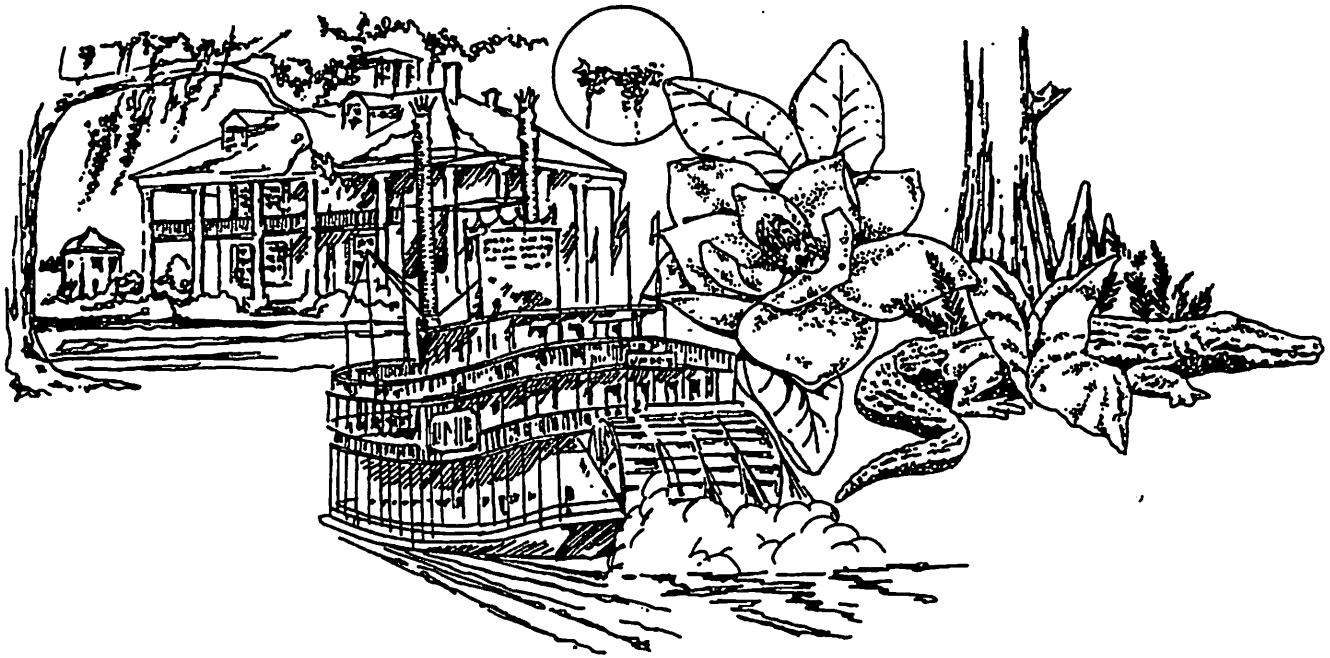
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**APPENDIX 2**

**Introducing the Position of Tourist Commissioner**

**Marilyn Barrett  
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program  
Louisiana State University**



## INTRODUCING . . .

# The Position of Tourist Commissioner

By Marilyn Barrett

An appointment to a tourist commission is a double-edged sword — it's an honor based on your expertise and people's respect for you but it is also an expectation that you will donate much time and effort to bettering the community. Everyone anticipates a 100 percent commitment from you.

Although you may have hesitated before accepting the appointment, you were propelled into the job by your excitement and self-confidence. A month or year from now, some of you will be happy in your new role, others, dissatisfied. Understanding your role as a community leader and your responsibilities as a tourist commissioner can make this appointment rewarding for you and your community.

Each one of you is a member of a team, expected to do everything necessary to help your community accomplish the goals of the commission. What is this team and what exactly are you expected to do?

### The Tourism Team

Your official appointment may be as a tourist commissioner, a Chamber of Commerce board member for tourism, or a member of the board of directors of a Convention and Visitors Bureau. Although your job in all cases is the same — tourism development — the way you do it is related to tourism's strength in your community.

Visualize a continuum of increasing strength. In every community, the initial thrust for tourism development begins when an individual or small special interest group sees that some community improvement — better roads or a more developed park — would initiate or increase tourism business while providing improved services to the community. By lobbying the local government for better roads or a more developed park, this individual or group functions as a tourism team. (This team might actually be a few interested citizens, the historical society, a business association, or a garden club.) Successful completion of the first project leads to more of them, and soon, an ad hoc tourism team emerges — sometimes within a chamber of commerce, or within the local industrial development board, or as an independent group of interested people who meet regularly for one purpose — tourism. The number of projects and importance of them to the community increases as tourism makes an increasing contribution to the local economy. Eventually, a formal tourist commission or convention and visitors bureau is formed. In the most advanced cases, the tourist commission or convention and visitors bureau has a full time, paid executive director and you serve as a member of a board of directors.

Certain characteristics apply to commissioners at every point on the continuum. Each one possesses the characteristics of a community leader, a team player, a volunteer, and a source for ideas and dreams.



## Team Leadership

A superior leader manages a group by assigning tasks for which he pays regularly with recognition, wages or praise. But top quality performance comes from more than commands and rewards. A real leader secures superior performance by interacting and interrelating with people. He or she persuades *others to want to do something* that he or she is convinced should be done (Vance Packard, *The Pyramid Climbers*). A superior leader is a friend and a motivator.

A tourist commissioner is a unique leader. In everything he says and does, he exhibits motivation, passion, caring, and conviction for tourism, stimulating others to act.

Your motivation is probably like that of some St. Tammany Parish Tourist Commissioners: "I feel like you have to give something back to the community. You can't just sit back and leave it for others to do" (Dorothy Calderone). "We have so much to offer here in St. Tammany" (Anne Barnes). "Tourism must and should be promoted if all of the businesses in the parish are to do well" (Jim Williamson).

Your appointment indicates that someone saw your leadership qualities in the passion with which you showed your conviction that tourism is right for your community. You might be the one who organized an annual field day or crab festival. You might be the art association chairman who encourages visiting shows, or the hotel business person who figured out a way to annually host French visitors, or an active citizen who has said often and publicly, "We need tourism; it is the cleanest industry we can bring to our community."

You may also be the manager of a local industry, hotel or motel, agency, or retail outlet whose firm's success demonstrates your ability to stimulate others in a team effort. Each one of you has proven by individual activities that you can lead, encourage, cajole, force, persuade, and stimulate people to work toward a common goal.

But you are not independent. As a member of a commission, you are a team player, working with six or eight other leaders and responsible to many more. You balance the needs and desires of individual citizens, state and local governments, the community at large, the tourism businesses in it, the visitors, your own ideas, and those of your teammates.

In any group, diverse opinions and ideas are normal. Good community leaders are careful to remain focused on the good of the community-at-large in relation to the success of a particular tourism venture, avoiding adversity, petty matters, and negative confrontation by looking from everyone's viewpoint.

Your elected president or chairperson or your executive director is the team leader. The latter is hired in some parishes by the police jury and in others by the commission, town, or chamber of commerce. He or she is a professional with excellent administrative skills and a storehouse of creativity who can give full time attention to the commission's projects. You are the policy maker; he or she is the care taker; leave daily details to your leader. When you provide advice, ideas, assistance, and most of all, support to your leader, you enable him or her to execute the program.

## Appointed Volunteer

Commissioners are appointed volunteers. Louisiana law gives police juries the right and responsibility to establish a tourist commission and select those serving on it. Although you were probably nominated by a non-profit group in the community, you are responsible to the community and often, the police jury that appointed you. This local governing body can create or disband a commission on its own initiative within the boundaries of the parish or it can join with other police juries to form a multi-parish team. Because police jurors appoint you and provide your funds, you must know them and work closely with them.

Although you may have been asked to demonstrate your qualifications, and in some cases, you actually had to compete or lobby for this appointment, you are not a community employee. You volunteer time and effort, sometimes even goods and services, to the committee's work because of your intense commitment to your community and to developing tourism in it. Your primary reward is tourism's success.

Each commission's organization, generally laid out by enabling legislation RS 33:4574, differs from parish to parish, and entity to entity. For instance, on some commissions, the three-year terms of commissioners are deliberately staggered, on others, simultaneous or very informally arranged. The law defines the number on each individual commission (sometimes seven, sometimes more or less), and gives commissioners the authority to elect officers. In some parishes, each commissioner represents a specific entity like the hotel/motel industry, the retail sector, or the arts. In others, the commissioners represent a geographic area, or all represent a general interest in economic development through tourism.

## What's the Job & How Do We Do It?

Collectively, you are promoters, idea sources, and workers — on a limited budget. "My duty is to promote tourism in Pointe Coupee Parish," said Tourist Commissioner Fran Bartee. In fact, Louisiana law defines your job as promoting tourism in your jurisdiction.



Associated with that responsibility, you can collectively accept grants or donations, sue and be sued (although you are protected under state law from suits involving decisions made in the interest of tourism), and make capital improvements as required to obtain federal funds. Your promotion efforts may include advertising, publishing information, operating a booth in a travel trade show, or conducting festivals, tours, or sales. You may help your community secure a grant or a place on the National Register of Historic Places. Both can result in tourist attractions. You may have to sell the citizens in your community on the wisdom of starting a festival or supporting the development of a particular attraction. Your team may manage fund raisers or lobby a legislator or local industry for added funds. In short, your team will do all kinds of things that will promote tourism and community development. Enthusiasm, willingness to work, and persuasion skills are your major tools.

But you sometimes perform on a tightrope. The law also says your promotions may not result in competition with local retail businesses or enterprises. The commission has no governmental power nor is the commission a political subdivision of the state or your sponsoring parish.

If you are in a community with developed tourist businesses like Lafayette or Lake Charles, you will suggest your ideas at regular meetings and, if there is agreement, your commission chairperson or president and/or the paid executive director will carry them out. You will participate in the activities designed to implement these ideas under his or her direction. In a community like Iberville Parish with a budding tourist commission, you will work with existing entities like the Plaquemine mayor's office, the Bayou Plaquemine Task Force, and the Chamber of Commerce to implement a project. Your projects may be few but you'll devote as many hours to stimulating citizen interest as working on a specific event.

To do a good job, commissions need operating funds. The law authorizes a police jury to levy and collect a tax of no more than two percent on the room or occupancy rate of hotel, motel, and overnight camping accommodations within its jurisdiction for tourism promotion. The police jury does not have to ask the people in the community for permission to levy this tax, nor does it have to impose the tax. Because the legislature will consider increasing that rate for established commissions, many existing tourist commissions now operate on budgets based on revenues from a three or even four percent tax on room occupancy rates.

Some police juries appropriate a set sum for tourism promotion from the parish general fund instead of levying a tax because they view taxation as unpopular. Others

provide no funds, encouraging commissioners to conduct fund raisers and suggesting that volunteerism is adequate for the job. (Consult the state law or your parish district attorney for a few additional limitations, and the specific method of appropriation for your parish.) Many tourist commissions supplement local funds with grants and loans from private or public sources and/or institute their own membership programs.

No matter what your source of funds, the commission's annual operating budget must be approved by the police jury and its accounts must be audited. Support from a police jury is almost proportional to the jurors' enthusiasm for tourism. You must keep them excited, informed, and involved.

### **Remain Focused**

Be careful or your enthusiasm may lead you astray! As a team, set priorities together and confine your work to them. Individually assume responsibility for your segment of each project, but no team member should assume total responsibility for an issue or objective.

Know your community inside and out, and regularly keep abreast of changes in it. Develop a personal relationship with the business people that serve tourists; share your enthusiasm with neighbors and friends. But remember, you are responsible for the successful implementation of tourism for the community's benefit.

Success depends upon real, honest communication. It is equally important for you to discuss ideas and projects with your team, and with businessmen, police jurors, city officials, and state agency representatives. Because your monthly meetings are designed to make decisions toward your goals and objectives, you can effectively use informal communication to prepare for them. To broaden your base of ideas, regularly visit with tourist commissioners in other communities, taking every opportunity to learn their solutions to problems, their goals, and their procedures.

### **Ready, Set, Go**

After reading this short introduction to your new position, you are ready to work with your commission counterparts in developing tourism in your area. To help you learn more about leadership, goal setting, fundraising, marketing, developing new attractions, and tourism as a sustainable resource, the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program is developing additional tourism fact sheets. Informal assistance with these topics is available from Sea Grant and the Cooperative Extension Service at present. In addition, the following resources — books, people, and government agencies — should help. From time to time, topics or questions may emerge for which Sea Grant can supply help. Don't hesitate to call us. If we don't have the answer, we will be glad to try to find it.

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## References

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- Arnold, John D., *Problem Solver: A Total System for Competitive Decision Making*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York. 1992. (\$24.95: Professional, Reference, and Trade Group, 605 Third Ave., New York, NY 10158-0012)
- Hirner, Deirdre K., Craig W. Colton, Glen Weaver, Glenn A. Gillespie, and Bruce T. Cox. *Tourism USA-Guidelines for Tourism Development*, University of Missouri, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, University Extension, Columbia MO. 1986 and 1991.
- Kouzes, James M. and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How To Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, San Francisco. 1987. (350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104)
- Liffmann, Michael M., Steven A. Henning and Marilyn Barrett, *Road Map To Success: Marketing Tourism in Coastal Louisiana*. Louisiana State University, Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Baton Rouge, LA. 1993. (\$10 + \$3 Shipping/Handling: Communications Office, Louisiana Sea Grant, Wetland Resources Building, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-7507)
- Moore, Margaret, *A Training Guide for Louisiana Rural Tourism Development*. Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Baton Rouge, LA. 1992. (\$25, LTPA, P.O. Box 4003, Baton Rouge, LA 70821)
- Weaver, Glenn D., *Tourism Development: A Guideline for Rural Communities*, University of Missouri, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism University Extension, Columbia, MO. 1993.

## Contacts

*Many of the publications listed above contain extensive reference and contact sections. Although we have listed a few of the frequently requested tourism-related contacts below, a complete list is too long for this publication. Take advantage of contacts and references in every publication or conference.*

Capital Resource Conservation & Development Council  
2191-B Tower Drive  
Denham Springs, LA 70726  
225/664-5368

Dept. of Natural Resources  
Coastal Management Division  
P.O. Box 94396  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
225/342-7591

Dept. of Economic Development  
P.O. Box 94185  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9185  
225/342-3000

Dept. of Transportation & Development  
P.O. Box 94245  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9245  
225/379-1200; fax 225/379-1851

Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries  
P.O. Box 98000  
Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000  
225/765-2800

Div. of Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 44247  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
225/342-8160; fax 225/342-8173

Division of Archaeology  
P.O. Box 44247  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
225/342-8170; fax 225/342-8173

Folklife Division  
P.O. Box 44247  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
225/342-8178; fax 225/342-8173

Louisiana Assoc. of Museums  
1500 Myrtle Place Blvd.  
Lafayette, LA 70506  
318/261-0308; fax 318/261-0308

Louisiana Municipal Assoc.  
P.O. Box 4327  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
225/344-5001

Louisiana Preservation Alliance  
P.O. Box 1587  
Baton Rouge, LA 70815  
225/344-6001

Louisiana Restaurant Assoc.  
2800 Veterans Blvd. Suite 160  
Metairie, LA 70002-6101  
504/338-1370

Louisiana Travel Promotion Assoc.  
1012 S. Acadian Thruway  
P.O. Box 4003  
Baton Rouge, LA 70821  
225/346-1857; fax 504/336-4154

Office of Litter Reduction & Public Action  
P.O. Box 82178  
Baton Rouge, LA 70884-2178  
225/765-0249; fax 225/765-0299

Office of Rural Development  
P.O. Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
225/342-1618; fax 225/342-1609

Office of State Museums  
751 Chartres St.  
New Orleans, LA 70116  
504/568-6967

Office of Tourism  
P.O. Box 94291  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9291  
225/342-8100 / fax 225/342-8390  
Consumer toll free: 800/677-4082  
Trade toll free: 800/227-4386

Office of State Parks  
P.O. Box 44426  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4426  
225/342-8111; fax 225/342-8107  
Toll free: 888/677-1400

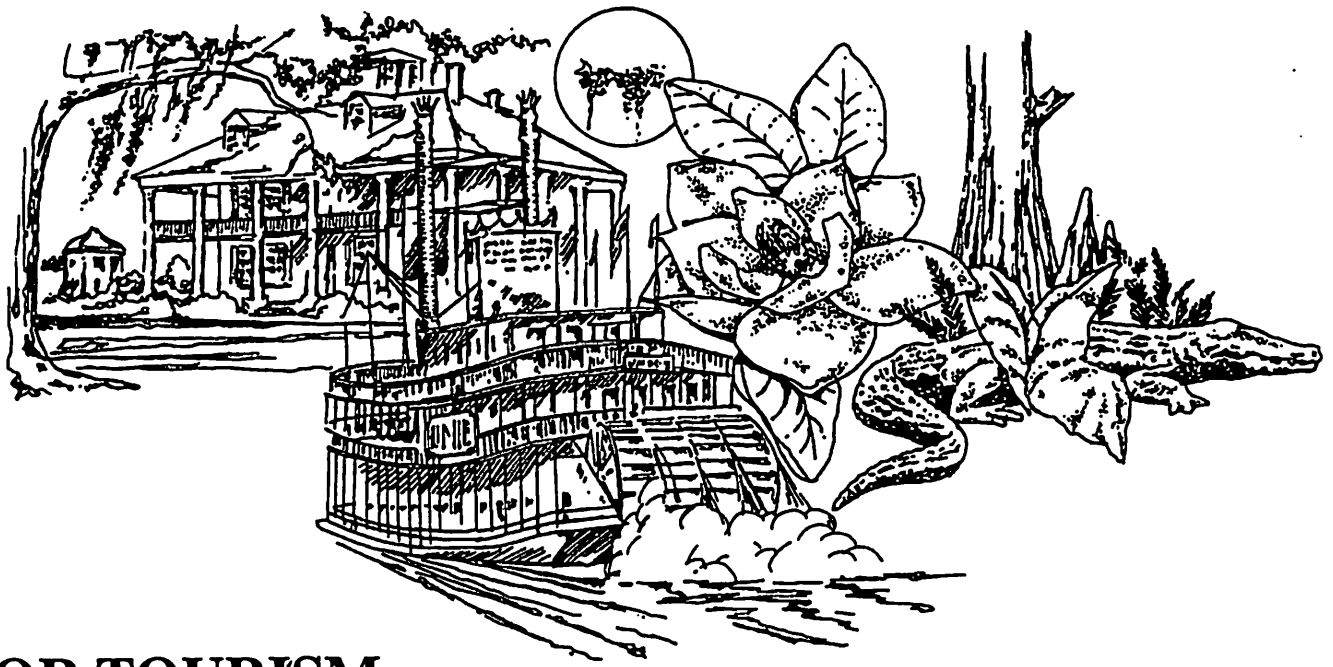
Police Jury Assoc. of Louisiana  
707 N. 7th St.  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5327  
225/343-2835



APPENDIX 3

**For Tourism Development...Setting Goals and Objectives**

Marilyn Barrett  
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program  
Louisiana State University



## FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT . . .

### Setting Goals and Objectives

By Marilyn Barrett

Both new and veteran tourism team members are working for their communities all of the time — formally, on specific projects and informally, promoting the community during other business and personal occasions. To help every team member make all of his or her efforts more effective, each must focus on the team's goals.

Because you already accept and understand the legislative authority and limitations on your job (described in the Sea Grant publication *Introducing...The Position of Tourist Commissioner*), you recognize that your goals and objectives must be set and tackled as a team. Meet with the rest of your tourism team and put your mission statement, in black and white, before you. Use it to set goals and objectives, and success is probable.

#### What's the Difference Between Goal and Objective?

A goal is a broad description of a desired end result. State it vividly and clearly, in detail. Your goal should motivate the whole team. One tourism team's goal might be to develop an annual art festival promoting local artists. Another may set a goal for increasing the recreational use of a local lake. A third might decide that opening an antebellum landmark for tourists is a goal.

Your goal might not involve a specific attraction. It may be to increase attendance at a festival or familiarize

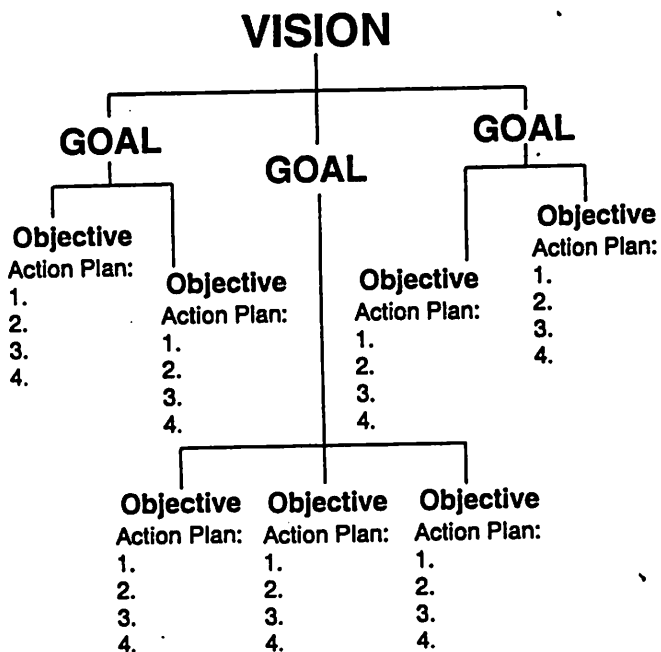
state residents with a community specialty like Cajun food or Indian customs.

By discussing your goal realistically, your team members will all have the same vision so that later disappointments will be reduced. When you achieve a goal you'll say, "This is a dream come true." A failed goal is a fantasy, entertaining but unproductive. Don't set a goal of a three-day art festival with thousands of visitors when the area is actually able to support a one-day show for a couple of hundred in the local fire station.

#### Divide Into Objectives

The best way to achieve a goal is to break it down into objectives — do-able tasks to achieve the goal — and then devise a plan of action to accomplish them (See Figure 1). It may take several steps or projects to complete an objective.

For example, a child's goal may be to get food. He can divide the goal into objectives: 1. to find cookies, 2. to take them and eat them. The child may accomplish the first objective by observing his mother for a while. Once he discovers that his quarry is in a jar on the top shelf of a cupboard, he must add another objective: get to that top cupboard shelf in order to get into the cookie jar. Flexibility is important. You, like the child, may have to add or change objectives before you achieve your goal.



**Figure 1: The relationship of goals to objectives.**

Although there are many ways to achieve an objective, it is important to choose the action plan that is feasible, technically possible, and at a price you are willing to pay. For example, the child could coyly ask a sibling or his mother for a cookie, or howl until someone bribes his silence with a cookie, or drag a chair to the counter, climb up and take a cookie, or snatch a cookie away from a person eating one. If experience has shown the child that he is ignored when he howls, that alternative is not feasible. A child who can't climb will not use a chair to get to the cookie jar, and if the cost of snatching the cookie from another is painful, the child may select a less costly action plan.

### Why Make A Specific Plan?

Why not set a goal and have everyone work on it? Most commissioners are involved in lots of projects, and their tourism efforts are often made while doing other business. A defined focus and specific plans to accomplish your objectives is the best way to succeed because:

- Whole communities and people's livelihoods are at stake.
- Planning allows you to carefully consider each step in the process, anticipating some of the obstacles and setting objectives to overcome them.

- Tasks can be delegated so that some team members can work independently on one objective, others on another, while everyone has a clear idea of how his or her efforts fit into others' projects. You won't step on other people's toes or duplicate efforts.
- Your objectives provide a mechanism to evaluate the process regularly. You can change course as necessary.
- Team members are less likely to become discouraged with a clear focus and a time frame.

### Match Team Members To Objectives

To accomplish your objectives, use each team member as wisely as you would use a particular tool or computer program. Each individual has particular strengths and weaknesses besides the business acumen, social connections, or public spirit that led him or her to become a team member. Try to define each team member by the descriptions below and analyze the objective and the action plan to match particular personalities with certain types of tasks. By using these characteristics in your individual team members, your objectives will be more easily accomplished.

- **Initiators** suggests new ideas, provides a definition of a problem, suggests specific procedures. They are the realistic visionaries, the stimulators or igniters.
- **Elaborators** are skilled in clarifying, giving details. They can envision results, pinpoint alternatives, fine-tune the idea, define every step of a task. They realistically see flaws as well.
- **Communicators** are facilitators. Besides helping team members understand one another's ideas, communicators help the rest of the community understand the team's plan. They are perceptive, objective interpreters of feedback who help the team work together, with a minimum of discord. These "way-smoothers" also handle public relations.
- **Coordinators** ensure that the group activity remains focused on an objective so that unnecessary activity is kept to a minimum. They can condense material so that it is clear, and intuitively connect factors to allow new insights to emerge. They can put together ideas, sense relationships between ideas and suggestions, and suggest cooperation between team members with related ideas or projects.
- **Researchers** seek information — just the facts. These people know where to find resources, who to call, what to ask, and when information is relevant. No detail is too small for these organized, tenacious sleuths. They are excellent record-keepers.



- **Topic Experts** have sufficient experience or topical knowledge to know when more research is needed. They can evaluate the information already on hand and suggest categories for researchers to explore. Many team members are topic experts by vocation in accommodations, transportation, insurance, banking, state agencies etc.
- **Analyzers** logically break the goal down into objectives, and clearly see a detailed plan to achieve each. The best ones can envision a variety of tasks and group conditions in diverse settings.
- **Managers** organize people and tasks. Groups work best with a leader or manager who can guide the group toward completing each objective in a manner acceptable to all. This strong, organized diplomat seldom shows an ego but he or she is acknowledged and respected for leadership. Each objective may have a manager or your team leader may serve as the manager of all projects. (Adapted from task accomplishment skills described in *Leadership Enhancement For the Active Retired*, Edited by Carol Schultz & Philip Olson, Center on Rural Elderly, Kansas City, Missouri, 1991.)

### Go for the Goal

Bringing these individual strengths to the table, your team together will devise each objective's action plan by diagnosing the existing situation in relation to your goal. The diagnosis defines problems and needs that become objectives. Each time you achieve an objective, you will diagnose the situation again, and go on to another objective or set new ones.

#### *Example: A Marketing Goal*

The Cameron 1992 Marketing Action Plan's goal was to increase the number of visitors annually spending at least one day in Cameron Parish to 275,000, an increase of approximately 25,000 from 1991. Their partner, the Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitor's Bureau in Calcasieu Parish, sought increased overnight business for their hotel and restaurant operations. Partnership was possible because Calcasieu had the more developed accommodation facilities and Cameron, the extensive nature attractions. To achieve this goal, the tourism team set four specific objectives for 1992:

1. To boost the number of visitors to Cameron Parish wildlife refuges by 10 percent
2. To attract at least 20,000 new day-visitors to Cameron Parish beaches
3. To persuade at least 1,000 birders to stay overnight in Cameron or neighboring Calcasieu

parishes in conjunction with birding activities in Cameron Parish.

4. To persuade at least 500 RV'ers or campers to stay overnight in Cameron Parish.

To achieve the four objectives, the Cameron team selected seven actions that were feasible, technically possible, and within its budget. During planning, the team decided upon a separate set of actions for each objective, then noticed duplication. The same action could bring results to more than one objective. Follow the Cameron example by planning actions for each objective and then compare them. You may then see ways to combine efforts.

### The Partnership's Actions

- A. Advertisements were placed in regional and national vacation-travel magazines promoting the area and accommodations. These served three objectives 1, 3, and 4.
- B. Promotional brochures focusing on the Creole Nature Trail (a driving tour) and incidentally containing a calendar of the year's festivals were sent to anyone responding to the magazine advertisements. Persons attending trade shows and conventions at a civic center in the area also received one. These served all four objectives.
- C. Cameron joined with other parishes to produce a birding guide. This free booklet described birding opportunities in Cameron, Calcasieu, Beauregard, and Jefferson Davis parishes. One of the ads in a birding magazine offered this guide to ad respondents as a free gift. Many visitors came as a result, fulfilling objectives 1 and 3.
- D. Marketers made direct sales pitches about the beaches, nature areas and festivals to motor coach tour operators, trade show developers, and convention planners, targeting objectives 1 and 2.
- E. The team used the addresses from the refuges' and attractions' registration books to send a direct-mail invitation to come again to all former visitors, contributing to all four objectives.
- F. Cameron hosted the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association's convention. The team members used personal selling and public relations during meal time, conducted tours, supplied brochures, and used all hospitality skills to encourage these writers to select Cameron Parish for a feature. One dinner was hosted on Holly Beach. The articles resulting from this hospitality assisted the completion of all four objectives.



G. Since many of the RV'ers are senior citizens and retirees who travel south during the fall and winter and north during the spring and summer, the team sent representatives to an American Association of Retired Persons convention in San Antonio to promote the area. They used personal selling, distributed the brochure, and contacted senior citizen groups in Louisiana to promote their area. These efforts were dedicated primarily to objective 4, although objectives 1 and 2 benefited also.

The end of 1992 showed a definite increase in the number of visitors to Cameron Parish. Because they put numbers into their marketing objectives and provided a mechanism to track visitors, the Cameron Parish tourism team was able to evaluate their efforts. By comparing the number of persons who registered at the Cameron Parish wildlife refuges in 1991 with the total for 1992, they could easily see whether they had achieved objective 1. Records at the area campgrounds and hotel registrations were similarly helpful in analyzing attendance improvement for objectives 3 and 4. The weak point in the project was achieving and evaluating achievement of objective 2. Beach users are day visitors, often traveling on impulse. They do not read specific magazines to learn about good locations, nor do they register at the beach.

#### ***Example: A Development Goal***

Sue and Harry Hebert in the City of Plaquemine restored an old landmark and then realized that by sharing it with others, they could stimulate historical tourism to Plaquemine and the restoration of other downtown landmarks. Some of their objectives were reused as each building was restored; others apply to elements of the overall project:

1. To secure funds for restoration and renovation.
2. To secure community support for the project.
3. To learn what types of buildings or history draw tourists.
4. To attract history buffs to the community for an overnight stay.

The actions needed to achieve these objectives are varied and the results, much more difficult to evaluate. The Heberts helped the owners of subsequent restoration projects using the lessons they learned in the first.

A. The Heberts looked for the possibilities of private, state, and federal grants as well as a local bank loan to help pay for restoration. Objective 1 was accomplished in part in 1982 because the state was seeking tourist attractions to enhance and lengthen

visits to the '83-84 Worlds Fair in New Orleans. Don't be afraid to use another's goal if it will help your project. In the process, the team learned about the Louisiana Department of Culture and Tourism, a state agency which can help, and about the Louisiana Travel Promotion Association, a trade association of people just like themselves. These contacts helped them with their efforts of objectives 3 and 4.

- B. Skills and particular restoration services were sought from local people on a barter/trade as well as a regular contract basis. By involving people within the community they made progress on objectives 1 and 2.
- C. The tourism team convinced town government to form an historic district, and established a historical commission which works along with the tourism team. Evaluation of achievement of objective 2 has been made in part on the basis of the rate at which membership in this commission has grown and by continued individual interest in developing downtown buildings. Formation of a district like this can bring forward people who might subscribe to historical or historical travel magazines. Their publications are important to objectives 3 and 4.
- D. Visits to historical attractions in other parts of Louisiana provided ideas for restoration, information about the target markets for historical sites, and gave them a networking outlet. As a result, they revised or added actions under all four objectives.

Sometimes a lesson is learned while trying to achieve objectives. The Heberts and their team members learned that the owners of each building also have to make a substantial personal investment — and it might mean debt for several years before profits emerge.

Some of Plaquemine's objectives are not yet accomplished. They may:

- Make direct contact at tour shows with historical tour leaders and major bus tour planners to learn about potential target markets while trying to sell these tour promoters on the Plaquemine site.
- Subscribe to a couple of historical or travel magazines to learn about the types of articles and therefore the type of audience the magazine targets.
- Plan a familiarization tour. Once they have completed a larger portion of their historical district, they can invite historical travel writers or tour operators to spend a weekend in their district.

Because developing a whole town as an attraction is long, expensive, and arduous, continued community support is an important objective requiring continuing



attention. The team might consider some of these actions to keep up community interest:

- To involve the children by presenting a local history unit in appropriate classes at each school
- To encourage the historical commission to sponsor historical programs about state or regional history with a local tie-in
- To establish an adoption program for each historical site or a room or portion of each site. In it a civic group or a club would take maintenance or perhaps even restoration responsibility for one room of a building on contractual basis.

### Your Goal Strategy

Although your team might have the same goal as the Cameron or Plaquemine team, you might set different objectives or plan different actions to accomplish them. No particular plan is ideal. Note, however, that in both cases, the team made a list of objectives which could all contribute to achievement of the goal. They then tried several different strategies, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes separately, to accomplish these. They use team members skills too. In Plaquemine, Sue's analyzing, initiating, and communicating skills have been used while Harry is an excellent coordinator. Select actions that match your team members' strengths.

### Evaluate Regularly

To determine that an objective has been achieved, you must evaluate. The most unbiased way to do this is to compare what you have done with a pre-set standard or with another team's similar accomplishments. Because measurement makes evaluation easier to see, try to set your objectives in a measurable manner, as Cameron did. This is easiest when you are setting attendance or marketing goals. Developmental goals can be evaluated by including a time limit or anticipated calendar of progress. If a time estimate is impossible to make, set a check-up deadline to come together and evaluate the work. Sometimes a goal contains a time frame—for instance "double attendance at the strawberry festival in two years."

Your team is going to experience some failures and some surprises. Marketing goals are the easiest to define and evaluate; developmental strategies are slower and more complicated.

Remember that the team is made up of a wide range of people. It's impossible for everyone to do a perfect job every time. Remind yourselves often that you are volunteers and that you are a team. This means that each of you has made a commitment to donate time, energy, and expertise toward achieving common goals. Uphold your commitment to the team and to the project. Be patient. Set goals, divide them into do-able objectives, and plot strategies to accomplish them. And when you falter, reset your goals, and begin the process again.

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