Hood Canal Coordinating Council
Tourism/Recreation Survey Responses

What do you need to be successful in tourism and/or recreation endeavors in Hood Canal with respect to:

- Open space and public access?
- Environmental quality?
- Aesthetics?
- Marketing/public awareness?
- Other?

Ron Ault, Hood Sport N' Dive in Hoodsport, WA
Cindy Sund, boat captain and marina manager in Union, WA
Mark & Linda Woytowich, Woytowich Design in Hoodsport, WA

Open Space and Public Access . . .

Keeping the state parks open is a high priority, with the Canal's limited public beach and public boat launch capacity. Summer picnic opportunities are important for families to "wind down" from road trips and to socialize. Many people need to walk their dogs, and the parks provide the place to do this. In the winter, Potlatch State Park can provide scuba diving access.

We would like to see greater promotion and awareness of any kayak water trails . . . does the Cascadia Marine Trail (and other water trails) have brochures available? Weekend kayakers would love to know where they can beach-camp overnight.

Underwater scuba diving spots are few on the Canal, with safe parking a high premium. What can be done to better develop the few we have, with better signage, safer parking, etc.

Serious study should be done of "sunken wreck" underwater parks in British Columbia, and an underwater parks matrix drawn up to determine the feasibility of anything like that in Hood Canal or Puget Sound. If this is impossible, an Underwater Trails Park ought to have consideration, with a similar matrix.

In the winter, a busy season for scuba divers (with anywhere from 100 to 200 dives happening during a weekend), there are not enough activities or stores open for "non-diving spouses or partners," and that has negatively impacted the total number of recreation enthusiasts coming to the Hood Canal area.

With respect to environmental quality . . .

A clean and fully functioning ecosystem is a necessity for us to do business in Hood Canal. Without clean water and the life it provides, we would have no one coming here to enjoy our recreation, seafood or beauty.

Diving and kayaking are “green economy” businesses. Both kayakers and divers are very conscious about littering and pollution, with most in these categories “picking up” trash left by others. Divers also report on local undersea life conditions, alerting local dive shop owners to sea life patterns or anomalies.

Bicyclists are another “green” and very welcome group to businesses in Hood Canal. More ought to be done through brochures and other literature, as well as signage, to set aside “bicycle-friendly” camping or rest stops for them.

With regards to personal ethics and awareness of what constitutes pollution, fishermen and fisherwomen could be better stewards of the Canal. Signage, windshield handouts, and other means ought to be employed to help this segment of our recreation users become more “green aware” of their role in the health of our ecosystem.

Mason County and southeast Jefferson County have some of the most pristine fresh waterways spilling into the Canal. The Skokomish, Hamma Hamma, Duckabush, Dosewallips and Quilcene Rivers are world-class rivers for fishing, swimming, exploring and photography. These water ribbons are the corridors of life linking Hood Canal to the snowfields of the Olympic peaks. They are the flood, drainage and regulatory system of the Olympic Mountains, and all their many creeks and tributaries form a web of wildlife corridors where nature can be viewed in its glory. These fragile riparian zones are where our most beautiful springs and waterfalls can be found.

EVERY TOURISM BROCHURE, WEBSITE BLOG, OR TELEVISION COMMERCIAL INVITES THE PUBLIC TO SEE OUR REGION IN THIS NATURAL STATE. A healthy, pristine watershed is absolutely necessary for us to deliver on this promise.

With regards to aesthetics . . .

Essentially, people from high-population areas such as Tacoma and Seattle are looking for wilderness places that DO NOT remind them of their own cityscapes. In the Hood Canal area, we have come to appreciate that visitors view us as “authentic” and “unspoiled.” To this end, the lack of national chain restaurants and shopping malls contributes to our wilderness aesthetic.

On the other hand, buildings, monuments and other indicators of our HISTORICAL PAST are not publicly available in any great measure. (The Lilliwaup School and Union’s Mcreavey House are two notable exceptions.) What can be done to heighten the visitor’s awareness of our region’s pioneering past?

Likewise, are we doing enough to re-establish our connections with the culture and history of the Skokomish Tribe and other tribes that once inhabited the Hood Canal?

For many visitors, the Olympic Peninsula is characterized by its rain forests and snow-fed streams. Nature and landscape photographers require intact view corridors that correspond to stream and river riparian zones. Hikers and backpackers appreciate when a recommended trail delivers on its promise of a “pristine natural setting”. Likewise, it is greatly appreciated by both visitors and owners of recreation-based businesses when logging practices in national forests take aesthetics into consideration.

Regarding marketing and public awareness . . .

Continue to educate those who live beside the canal on issues of nitrogen, fertilizers and home septic quality.

Make a better distinction between "low oxygen" incidents and POLLUTION. The Canal is NOT polluted; there are no heavy industries or industrial waste discharges. Soon, three key areas will be served by public sewer systems—and this, too, needs plenty of positive media attention.

In essence, the waters of the Hood Canal are some of the most clean and pristine anywhere in the United States. Case in point: Hamma Hamma oysters are some of the most prized in America's top seafood restaurants.

To the outsider, "canal," infers man-made waterway, such as a system of locks, etc. associated with such places as the Panama Canal.

Hood's Channel, as it originally was called, is the ONLY TRUE fjord in the lower 48 United States.

This fjord's shape, deep and narrow, is primarily responsible for its dramatic beauty, it's clear, cold waters, its abundant deep-sea life such as shrimp and the world's largest octopus.

The Canal's narrow, deep topography is also partially responsible for its low-dissolved oxygen.

Finally, in regards to other issues . . .

First, it would be beneficial to organize a "Working Stewards of Hood Canal" business group to publicize the connections between a clean environment and a healthy economy. The key focus of the group could be education of the Hood Canal/Olympic Peninsula visitor that (A) this is our "business backyard" and here's what we're willing to do or pay for to keep it clean; and (B) here are Best Practices for visitor behavior to the Canal. (Beach hygiene, camping and hiking etiquette, highway littering, campfire safety, etc.)

In essence, both parties—Canal business owners and visitors—make a mutual pact with the environment.

Second, existing public events and festivals (such as "Celebrate Hoodsport" "Taste of Hood Canal" and "PumpkinFest") might possibly do more to promote the local ecology/economy connection at their events. Besides the old tried-and-true (perhaps a bit <u>tired</u> and true?) education booth at the fair, the events could broaden their scope and message to include beach and wildlife tours, shellfish and wild mushroom cooking demonstrations, as well as themes and tag lines that support greater awareness of the man/nature/sustainability link.

Deepening an event never diminishes an event; it opens it to a wider audience and expands the experience for all.

OUR LAST ITEM TOUCHES ON ALL THE ABOVE TOPICS, ESPECIALLY PUBLIC ACCESS, ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND AESTHETICS.

Lastly, wildlife, forestry, agriculture, tourism and parks and rec officials at the state and county government levels ought to further explore the benefits of collaboration with land trust organizations.

In particular, the successful conservation models of such groups as the Capitol Land Trust and Cascade Land Conservancy have brought forth a new method of environmental sustainability to our region. (Mason County's Oakland Bay Park is a prime example.)

Utilizing partnerships between private businesses, landholders, governmental agencies and environmental groups, a land trust can provide both strategic direction and the legal framework for conserving large tracts of key habitat in the Hood Canal watershed—often more quickly and efficiently than government channels alone.

Much of the private land bordering Hood Canal is passing through third, fourth and later generations . . . often these later generations do not hold the same connection to the land. Waterfront property need not be valued in terms of dollars alone. Instead, the tax benefits of conservation easements and other forms of family gifting ought to be made more widely known to land owners in our region.

Christina Pivarnik, marketing guru in Port Townsend, WA

Open space and public access?

Visitors traveling along the Hood Canal are enchanted with its natural beauty, with many people desiring to get out and explore areas by hiking, biking, boating and scuba diving. Easy access to the water and forests is important for eco- and geo-tourism, so open space and public access is essential.

Environmental quality?

Obviously, we all want a healthy Hood Canal. Info for visitors that helps them understand how they can contribute to the overall health of the Canal is a great goal, especially if specific suggestions are offered for how they can personally make a difference to that end.

Aesthetics?

The area is already so breathtakingly beautiful, all we need to do as tourism marketers is to communicate that. Yes, of course aesthetics are important!

Marketing/public awareness?

As mentioned above, it's our job as tourism marketers to build awareness for this stunning region, encouraging responsible enjoyment of the area, i.e. "leave the campsite better than you found it." We all promote the outdoor adventures to be enjoyed around the Hood Canal, along with the culinary delights to be found--oysters, clams, geoducks, mushrooms and so much more! The area is rich in bounty for both visitors and residents alike.

Patricia Graf-Hoke, Kitsap Peninsula Visitor & Convention Bureau in Kitsap County, WA

The Kitsap Peninsula Visitor & Convention Bureau is the official Washington State Destination Marketing Organization responsible for marketing and promoting the Kitsap Peninsula region. In late 2009, the Bureau launched a branding and marketing strategy with the mission to aggressively promote the region's uniquely abundant and inter-connected natural environment; water, shoreline, forests, wetlands, trails, wildlife; all easily accessible to both residents and visitors.
The messaging theme and statement; *"The Kitsap Peninsula - The Natural Side of Puget Sound"*, was chosen because it immediately conveys a clear geographic relationship to a well-known metropolitan/international region (27th largest in the United States), and positions the Kitsap Peninsula with a clear, yet compatible point-of-difference, vis-à-vis the hustle and bustle of a big city.

During the branding process, it was discovered that many areas of the Kitsap Peninsula enjoy below-the-radar reputation for being one of the most popular adventure sports areas, not only in the state, but also throughout the Northwest and beyond. The Seattle based 13,000-member strong Cascade Bicycle Club some to the Natural Side of Puget Sound for its last ride of the year called the *Kitsap Color Classic*. That is one of many examples. With little fanfare or acknowledgement, the Kitsap Peninsula has become the favorite destination for a wide-range of local and out-of-area users; scuba divers, kayakers, cyclists, road and trail runners, mountain bikers, fishermen/women, adventure sports enthusiasts, as well as birders, beach walkers and watchers, weary urbanites, local, regional, international, leisure and business travelers, all seeking some fresh air on the "Natural Side of Puget Sound".

Economic indicators, travel trends, and intense interest among local leaders to pursue publicly accessible environmental projects, made it clear that promoting "The Natural Side of Puget Sound", was, and is, a logical tourism and marketing strategy.

This eco-recreation model provides local economic diversification that includes the exemplary environmental contributions of military partners. The other important benefit of this model is its ability to build lasting relationships among those who have a vested interest in supporting the restoration and preservation of their personal recreational environment.

- **Open space and public access?**

Oregon is known for making its entire coastline accessible to the public. It's important that if we want the public's financial and personal support to restore and protect our environment; specifically Puget Sound and Hood Canal, we must ensure they have access to those places for economic and recreational use.

With regard to open space, it's important to provide areas that can be utilized for recreational purposes that will attract tourism-related activities, especially those that involve nonmotorized activities such as mountain bikes. If miles of paved roadways can be created for business, convenience, and personal use, often with little compromise, it should be possible to find compromises for those who want to access our natural environments.

- **Environmental quality?**

The economic and marketing strategy adopted by the KVPCB will only succeed if the branding promise implicated in the statement: "The Natural Side of Puget Sound" is fulfilled. Scuba divers won't dive, visit or swim in a dead sea, families will not check into hotels or campsites where they can't swim, fish, splash, beach walk or beach watch. Examples include the recent economic toll the gulf coast suffered as a result of last year's oil spill and, sadly, no one is making a reservation to enjoy a visit to the Love Canal.

• Aesthetics?

As the Clear Creek Trail demonstrates, the aesthetics of the natural environment can give life to a stark, over-paved utilitarian environment. The juxtaposition of black striped parking spaces to sunlit walking trails meandering along bucolic salmon streams is remarkable. Not only does Clear Creek Trail provide an urban sanctuary for office dwellers and visitors, but it also creates greater appreciation for what was lost and needs to be restored and protected.

This realization spawns advocacy among residents and visitors. It says to tourists that the community cares about the appearance of its "home". If we want to attract visitors, we need to provide places they can visit and write home about, and revisit in the future.

• Marketing/public awareness?

The KPVCB believes that the Kitsap Peninsula has the opportunity to position itself as a respected, renowned regional/global environmental-education, eco-recreation and tourism destination that can both generate significant and sustainable revenues to support our communities, and preserve our quality-of-life for generations to come.

To make this a reality will require that everyone involved in all facets of environment restoration, preservation, development and education join together to promote the concept that protecting our environment is good for life and good for business.

The challenge and opportunity will be how to translate scientific findings and action steps into ones that can be easily understood and adopted by lay people. I.e. eel grass where baby crabs incubate so they can be part of the Hood Canal crabbing season. The successful social marketing/public awareness program "The Puget Sound Starts Here" developed by the Puget Sound Partnership is having a positive impact.

We believe working in collaboration with local agencies and governments we can build on this program but also include an eco-recreation marketing strategy that, in effect says…now that you've helped clean up the beach, put on your wetsuit, get in your kayak, cast your line and go have fun.

• Other?

Traditionally, those involved in environmental issues from storm water systems, habitat restoration, shoreline management, etc. have talked largely to each other and preached to the choir of dedicated advocates and political allies.

But times have changed and it seems the general public previously not at all directly involved in any of these activities, is more willing to listen, be concerned and act.