

Cycle Southwest Wisconsin

www.cyclesouthwestwisconsin.com

Cycle Southwest Wisconsin - is a three county (Grant, Iowa and Lafayette) project intended to boost shoulder season tourism in southwest Wisconsin from April - October. Bicycling vacations are growing in popularity across the country, making this an ideal time for regional partnerships designed to capture more of this market segment. Many tourist-dependant businesses are having a difficult time in the current economic downturn. It is of major concern to us that we find ways to increase tourist traffic, especially during slower times of the year.

About this Resource:

In 2008 a multi-county committee initiated a project to encourage bicyclists to explore the communities of the southwestern-most corner of Wisconsin. The project was supported by the Iowa, Grant and Lafayette County Boards, the UW Extension offices in Iowa, Grant and Lafayette Counties, the Mineral Point Chamber of Commerce, the Dodgeville Chamber of Commerce, the City of Shullsburg, the Mineral Point Tourism Commission, Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development, the Grant County Tourism Commission and a number of bicycling enthusiasts. Together, these partners contributed more than \$6,000 to produce a map with twenty-eight bike loops that circle through the back roads of southwest Wisconsin. To our knowledge, this is the first three-county map of this area that has been designed with no county lines. All total, thirty-nine communities in Southwest Wisconsin are included in at least one loop of this map project and can share in the economic impact, making this a testament to regional cooperation.

This project will concentrate on promoting bicycle trips from April through October of 2009. In addition to adding onto the front and back end of the traditional season, we will promote more midweek travel to enhance the slower days of summer travel. All the lodging establishments within the three county's (Iowa, Grant & Lafayette) are being contacted and some have already agreed to offer discounts to bicycle travelers who reserve rooms Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the weakest days for overnight stays.

One of the purposes of this project is to capture more of the economic impact that bicycling can deliver. The Department of Tourism recognizes that it is not possible to estimate what percentage of that revenue comes from bicyclists, but it is agreed that the contribution is significant. To address this deficiency, we will collect data to develop a baseline that we, along with the Department of Tourism can use for future bicycling promotions. The group applied for and received a Destination Marketing grant from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. This grant enabled the group to develop a website, provided targeted advertising dollars, print additional maps and provide widespread distribution of the maps.

Our goals for the project are to:

- Develop a new, interactive website that will attract at least 5,000 hits per month;
www.cyclesouthwestwisconsin.com
- Distribute 45,000 additional Southwest Wisconsin Bicycle Maps
- Place full color ads in bicycle magazines;
- Collect data from bicyclists to use as a baseline for future development of project

The primary target markets for this project are bicyclists from Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota and Iowa. The majority of tourists to southwest Wisconsin come from these geographic areas. Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, Minneapolis-St Paul, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and the Quad Cities are all within a five-hour drive. Considering the total population of these markets, there is ample opportunity for increasing the number of tourists.

In order to track the effectiveness of our marketing plan, we will:

- Survey phone callers requesting the map as to where they heard about the map and will log the responses with zip code information;
- Track hits to the website;
- Develop a survey to be used in lodging establishments for bicycling guests

Total Project Budget JEM \$39,996.34; in-kind \$53,232.00; total project costs \$93,228.34

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