TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
FROM GREATER COORDINATION

Testimony Presented by Dr. Clare A. Gunn, Professor Emeritus
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Before the Texas House of Representatives
Committee on Environmental Affairs
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I appreciate this opportunity to present testimony on the issue of "increased tourism through coordination of public and private parks and recreation facilities throughout the state," as stated in your letter of September 20, 1988.

Although this is a very broad and comprehensive topic, I'd like to focus on just three points—the rationale for coordination, barriers that prevent coordination, and some suggested opportunities.

RATIONALE FOR COORDINATION

To start, I am sure we all agree that recreation and tourism depend greatly on protected resources. While some travel is targeted toward convention centers, sports arenas, and theme parks, a larger amount depends on natural and cultural resources.

As evidence, I turn to a Texas Parks & Wildlife study of 1983. This study shows that Texas travelers spent over $5 billion in 1983 on recreation trips within the state, largely to areas provided and protected by public agencies. Out of the 20 activities surveyed, over half of all expenditures (55 percent) were spent on only the top four activities.

$2,022,658,000 was spent on sightseeing and pleasure driving
1,170,933,000 was spent on fishing
1,002,636,000 was spent on golf . . . and
909,435,000 was spent on horseback riding
In other words, on only four outdoor recreation activities related to travel, Texans spent over $5 billion in 1983. This spending included transportation, lodging, restaurants, groceries, equipment rental, parking fees, entrance fees, instruction and guide fees, licenses and permits, leases, and spending in Texas on out-of-state trips.

Both outdoor recreation and tourism depend very heavily upon natural resources, such as:

— interesting and varied vegetation for scenic appreciation and game habitat,
— recreational waters including rivers, lakes, and the Gulf Coast,
— an abundance and variety of wildlife, for photography and nature appreciation as well as game,
— clean air and pleasant atmosphere,
— and a varied topography for scenic vistas and for hiking and horseback riding.

To these must be added many cultural resources because a new segment of the travel market is showing great interest in history, archeology, and ethnic customs and roots. Texas already is developing new cultural attractions in addition to those already in place, such as the Alamo, the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation, and the San Jose Mission.

No one can argue that there are not strong relationships between resources and tourism.

BARRIERS AGAINST COORDINATION

Why is it that in spite of the logical close functional
relationship between resources owned and managed by the public and private sectors there is so much antagonism and misunderstanding? In my work, not only in Texas but other states and even abroad, this standoff continues to prevail. I have observed many reasons for this but let me highlight just four.

For one thing, there are some very strong philosophical differences. Generally, public agencies have mixed roles of conservation and recreation that they believe, and rightly so, are good for society. Therefore, they tend to ignore the private sector or look upon it as exploitative and of low social value. Many park managers deny that their visitors are tourists or that they are involved in tourism. On the other hand, businesses look upon government agencies as overly restricting their activities and in some states, such as Kentucky and Oklahoma, as actually engaging in unfair competition. State-built hotels, campgrounds and marinas offer their services at reduced prices because these government investments are exempt from mortgage payments. These images, right or wrong, tend to keep public and private sectors apart.

Another barrier is jurisdictional turf. Today is such an age of specialization that we have isolated functions into separate organizations. The many bureaus and departments of government have their own mandates and traditional roles that are narrowly prescribed. Generally all staff members must be preoccupied with internal operations and be loyal to all agency policies. This makes it difficult for an agency of wildlife, for example, to reach beyond its jurisdiction and communicate with a
highway department. This organizational isolation is even more true in the private sector of tourism. Hotel, restaurant, and airline organizations concentrate on internal matters and seldom ever communicate with each other even though all are involved in tourism. It seems that the protection of organizational turf for both public and private sectors takes precedence over communication and cooperation on tourism and conservation issues.

I am afraid that those of us in education and training tend to foster the narrow perspective to the sacrifice of understanding broader relationships. Programs of education have become overly specialized in fields such as hotel management, park management, and recreation. While I understand the need for filling a curriculum with important technical information, students are denied any understanding of how their specialization relates to many others. The shock comes when they are thrown into a real world. The park manager, trained in wildlife management, has great difficulty in managing hordes of visitors. The hotel manager has difficulty in understanding how dependent he is on the many protected resource areas that bring visitors to his hotel in the first place. Fortunately, across the country there is a trend to integrate tourism with recreation and park university programs.

Viewing this issue from the individual tourist business or park manager, there seem to be no incentives for coordination. The immediate tasks at hand take precedence: maintaining buildings and grounds, keeping the staff productive and satisfied, taking care of customers and visitors, and balancing the books. Texas has a great number of experienced and competent park,
recreation and business people catering to travelers. But, because the tasks at hand have top priority, no individual has either responsibility nor the opportunity to collaborate with others outside the organization.

And so, we have a dilemma. On the one hand, the intimate relationship between resources protection and tourism development suggests close collaboration between the many public and private organizations. On the other hand, there are many very real barriers preventing this from happening.

SOME OPPORTUNITIES

Fortunately, today, in spite of these problems we are seeing some beginnings of barrier breakdown. Here and there throughout the country and in Texas innovative steps of cooperation and collaboration for a better world of tourism are taking place.

If you'll pardon a personal reference, one of my ambitions many years ago was to try to stimulate, through teaching and writing, better coordination between public and private development of tourism—especially to emphasize the need for environmental protection. In 1970 it took over two years to find a publisher who was interested in such a revolutionary topic. In the last 2 years, I was able to revise 2 of my books on this and related tourism planning issues. In the first month alone, the second edition of VACATIONSCAPE sold 1000 copies. The climate has changed—people are seeking ways of reaching above the conflicts of the past.

I would like to identify a few opportunities that now appear
to be feasible.

1. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

In many instances, I have observed antagonisms fade away merely because a meeting provided neutral ground for discussion. Several years ago, the Discover Texas Association held a seminar between public and private representatives of tourism. Within only a few hours, new and constructive ideas were emerging for greater collaboration between these sectors. In recent years, I have been increasingly called upon to present seminars on tourism and the environment. Just this summer, the government tourism agency of South Africa invited me to present seminars in five of their principal regions. Those in attendance, even with different occupations, were surprised to learn how much they had in common.

A milestone was reached this last Spring when, for the first time in the history of the United States, a conference on tourism and national parks was held. I heard many testimonials to the great value of communication between the public and private sectors—and the discovery that each one could gain in the process.

When given the opportunity to sit down together, the public and private sectors of tourism can do much to resolve their own problems of resource use and protection.

2. CATALYSTS

However, such meetings, seminars, and conferences do not take place unless someone assumes the responsibility. We are finding that it really doesn’t matter who performs this catalytic
role. It could be someone from the tourist industry, a local mayor, a governmental agency, or a nonprofit organization.

An excellent example of new collaboration is taking place in the Lyndon B. Johnson area. Superintendent Harry O'Bryant of the LBJ National Historical Monument has demonstrated outstanding leadership in starting new working relationships with tourism interests in the surrounding counties and towns of Johnson City, Blanco, and Stonewall. As a result, people in the area are cooperating in reviewing their resources and setting up new plans for tourism. To do this they have formed a nonprofit organization called the LBJ Heartland Council. Those in the public and private sectors are learning how much they can gain by working together.

Another example of the function of a catalyst is the dramatic progress that has taken place in Comal county. Just two years ago, environmentalists and private recreation developers in and around New Braunfels were at each others' throats. Now, through a new organization and many meetings of discussion and compromise, riverside litter has been eliminated, erosion of the river banks has been curtailed, new patrol rangers have greatly reduced vandalism and conflict, and several organizations and agencies are cooperating as never before. This all started when the adversarial parties appealed to the Parks and Wildlife Department for help. This department tapped the little-known arm of community service of the National Park Service. And, they appealed to Texas A&M for leadership which we supplied through our Extension service.

Somehow, we need to stimulate local and regional leadership
to perform this catalytic role.

3. PLANNING

I am convinced that public and private sectors could profitably do some joint planning. Public park and recreation areas are often planned with rather narrow objectives and usually more for residents than visitors. Seldom are they planned in concert with the private sector, which could aid greatly in providing needed visitor services.

Problems of overuse of some park areas deserves better planning. More and better interpretive visitor centers can eliminate much pressure on fragile resources. By means of lectures, videos, and exhibits, many visitors are satisfied to learn about the resources without actually walking or camping within them. By planning major services, such as lodging, food service, and retail sales at the edge of the park, resources are protected.

An example of a step toward better environmental planning was the East Texas Tourism 2000 Project, initiated by the East Texas Tourism Association. Over thirty experienced experts in important parts of tourism in Texas were asked to present their best views of trends toward the future. Nine different facets of tourism were covered: attractions, resources, transportation, markets, information/advertising, urban change, education, and reseach. This report has stimulated greater interaction between tourism businesses and agencies responsible for resource protection throughout East Texas.

Only recently have state tourism offices taken an interest
in developing state tourism plans. In the last two years, I have been involved with Price Waterhouse in the preparation of three state tourism development plans—New York, Oklahoma, and Washington. Without doubt the process we used was as important as the final report. In each case, area workshops were held throughout the state to obtain local input. Environmentalists and park agencies as well as tourism businesses and chambers of commerce were invited to attend. In addition, each plan included an assessment of the resource potential, identifying zones with greatest development assets. In each of these states, the several sectors responsible for conservation, parks, recreation, and tourism are now much more aware of their roles in tourism and how coordination is vital to their programs.

4. POLICY

This leads me to my final statement. I am convinced that each state needs to establish a joint public-private tourism development policy. Such a policy would be directed toward four goals: (1) better provision of visitor satisfactions throughout the state, (2) enhanced opportunity for business and economic development through tourism, (3) greater protection of the environment and (4) better integration of tourism into a community’s social and economic activity. While I am not advocating stronger intervention by government, I believe government can have a more constructive role for tourism.

For example, the success of the Main Street Program may suggest a tourism opportunity. This state and federal program, because it has cultural as well as economic objectives, has not
only brought Texas communities back to life but also has actually stimulated tourism because it enhanced their attractiveness for visitors. Perhaps a new program needs to be created to provide similar expert assistance to communities to develop tourism.

Maybe a new state policy on tourism could modify the mandates of state agencies to allow better cross-communication and collaboration. In this way, the promotional side would be more aware of the environmental side of tourism. Agencies would consider tourism matters in all their policies and practices.

In Texas, the original enabling act that created the Texas Tourist Development Agency stated specifically that its main purpose was tourism promotion and development. Thus far, only the promotional objectives have been implemented—yet to come is state concern over development, especially how it interfaces with the social, economic and environmental quality of the state.

CONCLUSIONS

Texas has tremendous resource assets for even greater tourism growth but these assets are now in danger. Without better coordination between the several stakeholders, neither the public agencies or businesses can continue to reach their goals. Fortunately, Texas has the experience and the expertise to avoid further resource degradation. By setting the stage for greater networking between the sectors, by providing leadership catalysts, by following better planning principles, and by establishing new tourism policy, resources can be given even better protection at the same time new tourism horizons can be reached.

I hope these comments will be of some help to you in your deliberations.
SEMINAR

3:00 - 4:00

"Tourism - A Blessing for Conservation"

A. Recreation - Conservation - Tourism Ideologies
   (Use 6 points in Unit 2)

B. Rationale for Public - Private Coordination
   (Use p. 1-2 Testimony)

C. Barriers against Coordination
   (Use p. 2-5 Testimony)

D. Some Opportunities
   (Use p. 5-10 Testimony)

E. Special Case: National Parks

Conclusion:

When the truth is known about travelers and developers, they can become a powerful force for environmental protection.

This is the challenge for education.
C. Community Tourism Development

1. Process

2. Mineral Wells Example
   Show publicity.

Conclusion:
A. Tourism, Redefined
1. Total Travel
2. Differs from Mfg.

B. The Tourism System
1. Demand-Supply
2. Influences on System
3. Impacts
4. Regional Planning
   Urban-Rural

OVERHEAD

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each one as we go along:

1. Give it leadership
2. Evaluate your assets and liabilities
3. Identify opportunities
4. Establish and action program
5. Evaluate progress regularly

STEP ONE is to GIVE TOURISM SOME ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP. Such leadership can come from any one or an organization—but some one must be identified as a catalyst. Such a leader will need support from all sectors of the community—and the surrounding area as well.

Needed is a community tourism committee. All facets of the community must be represented. In addition to the existing primary business people, such as promoters and managers of lodging and transportation, all other facets of the community must be represented. All groups who may benefit from tourism as well as those impacted by it must be included. When representatives of the entire community begin to work together, they learn how to get the most out of tourism development and, at the same time avoid common mistakes.

STEP TWO is to EVALUATE ASSETS AND LIABILITIES. If a community seeks tourism, it must first make a serious evaluation of the present obstacles as well as the advantages it has for further tourism development.
Professionals may be hired or local groups can be formed for important tasks. Perhaps the best approach is team effort between local interest groups and experts. The following eight topics need to be evaluated in order to understand your community's potential.

--Evaluate market situation
--Evaluate attraction potential
--Evaluate transportation
--Evaluate tourist-oriented businesses
--Evaluate information
--Evaluate promotion
--Evaluate infrastructure
--Evaluate regulation/policy

Let's talk a bit about each of these important topics.

a. EVALUATE MARKET SITUATION. If a community cannot obtain adequate travel market information from the region or state, it must develop its own.

What do we know about the travelers now coming?
Is your community within 200 miles of population centers?

What changes are taking place in travel preferences, business and personal?

Several locations within your community are suited to interviewing visitors. Even without a sophisticated market survey, you can gain considerable insight regarding your present visitors. Talk to them at
motels, the bus depot, parks, museums and manufacturing plants. Some of the questions to ask:

--Are you here for personal or business reasons?
--Do you come often?
--What do you like about this community?
--What would you recommend to make it better for visitors?

Remember, how well you can develop tourism depends greatly on whether there are markets for your tourism products.

b. EVALUATE ATTRACTION POTENTIAL. Even if there are abundant tourist markets for your community, they won't come unless you have attractions of their interest. Take stock of what visitors can see and do in your community. Then, ask yourself, is this enough? Are these all that we can offer? Here are some pertinent questions to ask yourselves:

--Is the downtown attractive and fun to visit?
--Is there shade in daytime, lights at night?
--Are shops oriented to visitors?
--Are historic sites developed?
--Adequate evening entertainment & food?
--Could miniparks replace dilapidated buildings?
--Are there adequate amenities for visitors?
--Sufficient meeting, conference space?
--Tours of manufacturing, processing plants?
--Are handicapped visitors welcome?
--Potential in surrounding region?

c. EVALUATE TRANSPORTATION. Some questions to ask:
--Is downtown readily accessible?
--Ample parking near attractions?
--Public transportation available? Good?
--Do major highways cause congestion, danger?
--Entrances to town attractive?
--Is an intermodal travel center provided?

d. EVALUATE TOURIST-ORIENTED BUSINESS. Considering that most service businesses for tourists also cater to residents, how good are the visitor services? Some questions:
--Is there adequate lodging—for all markets?
--Food services appropriate to visitor markets?
--Traveler goods and services available?
--Auto repair convenient, well priced?
--All services well located?
--Health, communication services available?
--Employees properly trained for hospitality?
--What new services are needed for travelers?

e. EVALUATE INFORMATION. An important part of taking stock is to determine how much information about your community is readily available to visitors. The sophisticated traveler of today seeks more and better guidance—guide books, maps, atlases, and descriptions
of attractions. Some items to check:

--What is now available; how good is it?

--Can visitors readily find attractions and businesses?

--Are visitor and information centers available; open when needed most?

f. EVALUATE PROMOTION. The purpose of promotion is to attract new business. Today, the four popular forms of promotion for tourism are: advertising, publicity, public relations and incentives. Some questions:

--What promotion is now in place?

--Is it doing the job intended, especially for all market segments?

--What new promotion would produce the best results at the least cost?

--Would your promotion be strengthened by collaborating with others?

g. EVALUATE INFRASTRUCTURE. An evaluation should be made of highways and airports, water supply, waste disposal, fire protection, police and other utilities. It is possible that these systems can accept more tourism development without the need for new investment. Or, the needed expansion may be justified on the promise of new economic impact from tourism.

tourism.

h. EVALUATE REGULATION/POLICY. Many communities and their surrounding jurisdictions have accumulated laws
and regulations based on a past economy and society—such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, manufacturing. All anticipated tourism development should be checked against these controls to determine which rules need to be modified, or even removed. And, for tourism development new regulations may be needed in order to protect important environmental assets—archeological sites (on land, under water), scenic landscapes, waterfronts, rivers and lakes, wildlife, historic sites.

Now, these steps of evaluation may seem complicated—but that's only because tourism does include all these factors. Unless you have a full understanding of how well your community is suited to tourism, your efforts may be disappointing.

**STEP 3. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES.** Following the evaluation of assets and liabilities, you should be ready to identify the opportunities for improvement and expansion of tourism. These should be listed under every one of the topics just described—attractions, transportation, businesses, information, promotion, infrastructure, regulations and policies. List all opportunities—long and short range, costly and inexpensive—even though at the moment they may seem too dreamy. Then, group them according to the most logical sector to make the improvements—commercial enterprise, governments, or nonprofit organizations.
STFP 4. ESTABLISH AN ACTION PROGRAM. By now, one can readily see that tourism is made up of a great many developments, owned and managed by a great number of diverse action agents. It is not simple. But, by dividing up the responsibilities among those best able to carry them out is very important.

* Long-range action should be separated from short-range. It is important that the first action, perhaps a festival, be simple and conspicuous and that its success is guaranteed. For example, holding a festival has the advantage of widespread community involvement with relatively low capital investment. From this experience, other projects will become obvious, suggesting opportunities of highest priority.

* Most likely, top priority will need to be given to improvement of existing attractions and the creation of new ones. The attractions best for your tourism and least likely to suffer from competition are those based on the uniqueness of the area—the settings for traveler experiences least likely to be obtained elsewhere.

* What action is needed by the city—for streets, lighting, cleanup, parks, water supply, waste disposal, fire protection, police, recreation programs? Do city and county regulations need to be revised—strengthened where needed and removed or reduced where necessary?
* What are the opportunities for new business? What new information on markets and supply suggests changes in business? Do present businesses need to be upgraded?

* What new roles can the many nonprofit organizations take on and yet meet their individual goals? Can they initiate new festivals, events, historic restoration, and interpretation?

* Certainly part of this step of an action program is to generously publicize the opportunities for expanding tourism in the community. Educational seminars, public meetings, press releases, and brochures will be needed to stimulate new action throughout the area, both inside and around the community. Civic, professional and fraternal organizations can be effective in taking on specific tasks for a better informed public.

* But, a word of caution. Before any tourism expansion takes place, important resource protection must be considered. The very foundations for tourism growth can be destroyed by premature and poorly planned action.

STEP 5. EVALUATE PROGRESS. A final step—and really one that will continue—is to regularly evaluate progress of all tourism development. A community must learn from its successes and mistakes. This step should be made on a continuing basis so the public can always know of progress.
What can we conclude from this brief discussion? First of all, tourism is proving to be a stable form of economic development—not capricious as we once thought. It continues to grow because more and more people are seeking the values that can be derived from travel.

But, let’s not be fooled about tourism. Communities may be able to benefit from expanded tourism. But, such rewards will come only from careful planning and full community commitment. Let me leave with you just a few conclusions that highlight this discussion of community tourism development.

PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY TOURISM SHOULD CAPITALIZE ON LOCAL ASSETS. Most local residents are much surprised at their own tourism potential when they discover their many assets. Everyday life tends to dull our understanding of the visitor’s perspective. Local tours and educational seminars help greatly in improving local understanding of potential.

PLANNING MUST INCLUDE THE SURROUNDING AREA AS WELL AS THE CITY. The city may be the focal point—and the place where most tourist dollars are spent—but it is greatly dependent upon the surrounding resources. The natural and cultural resources outside the city often provide the foundation for much travel to the community. Therefore, city and county residents and
governments must cooperate and even collaborate if tourism is to be developed.

* COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT DEMANDS COMMITMENT AND LEADERSHIP. Total commitment is necessary because every facet of the community is involved. Volunteers, nonprofit groups, governments and businesses must have total public support. But, to coordinate all these interests, strong and competent leadership is essential.

* AN ORDERLY STRATEGY MUST BE USED. Haphazard, sporadic, and uncoordinated tourism efforts create chaos and actually may set back tourism growth for many years. All negative impacts must be anticipated and dealt with at the start. The step-by-step strategy suggested here must center on the concept of market-product match—does the community have the potential to meet the needs of the several market segments?

* COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT MUST ENHANCE TOTAL COMMUNITY LIFE. A cosmetic approach to tourism must be avoided. Nor should the entire economy depend only on tourism—economic diversity is still a rule. Only when tourism is integrated into total social and economic life will it provide the hoped-for rewards.

* And so, tourism may have great opportunities in your community. In order to do the very best job of development, we are suggesting that you: