

## **Jackson Hole Travel And Tourism Board**

### **Sustainable Destination Management Plan**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Background**

Since its inception in 2011, the Jackson Hole Travel & Tourism Joint Powers Board has played an integral role in building a strong tourism economy for Jackson and Teton County. The board recognizes the need to prioritize destination stewardship with a renewed focus on protecting the environment, enhancing residents' quality of life, and maintaining a sustainable local economy.

In December 2021, the Jackson Hole Travel & Tourism Board (JHTTB) announced an evolution of commitments to Jackson and Teton County as destinations with an increased focus on the long-term function and prosperity of the wider community. To steer and support this process, the JHTTB has contracted with a consulting team from the George Washington University's International Institute of Tourism Studies working with Confluence Sustainability to spearhead a sustainable destination management plan (SDMP), which will deliver an operational management road map focused on the future of tourism for these destinations, their communities, and the wider region.

#### **What is destination management?**

Destination management “consists of the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a tourism destination. Destination management takes a strategic approach to link-up these sometimes very separate elements for the better management of the destination.”<sup>1</sup>

Destination management focuses on places that are shaped by the people who live there, and it evolves over time. It recognizes that great destinations are great places to live, work, and visit. It also balances the needs and expectations of visitors with the needs of local residents, businesses, and the environment. Destination management includes the planning, development, marketing, and monitoring of destinations as well as how they are managed physically, operationally, and financially.

#### **What is sustainable tourism?**

Sustainable tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.”<sup>2</sup> Sustainable tourism “refers to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.”<sup>2</sup>

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council defines sustainable tourism as sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry: “It is an aspiration to acknowledge all impacts of tourism, both positive and negative. It aims to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones.”<sup>3</sup>

## **What are SDMPs and why are tourism organizations using them?**

Often driven by the pressures from over-tourism, destination marketing organizations in the U.S. are increasingly evolving their missions to focus on tourism management. This marks a shift away from a singular focus on promotion to building a broader plan that coordinates the management of tourism growth, visitor flows, and environment and community impacts.

SDMPs are a relatively new tool and are designed to take a holistic approach to the overall assessment and strategic planning of a road map that supports the long-term health of destinations and the well-being of host communities. SDMPs involve a highly participatory development process that includes key stakeholder groups and members of the community, public, and tourism business sectors. This strategic road map identifies, amplifies, and aligns shared community values in ecosystem stewardship, economic vibrancy, growth management, and quality of life enhancement for residents.

## **How long will the process to create the SDMP take?**

The SDMP is slated for completion in September 2022 but is designed to focus on continuous improvement and community engagement within and beyond that timeframe.

## **Who is involved in the process of developing the SDMP for Jackson Hole and Teton County?**

Led by the JHTTB and contracted industry experts, the SDMP development process aims to foster greater collaboration with and alignment between local governments, tourism industry stakeholders, enterprise leaders, nonprofit and social services managers, public land managers, residents, and the diverse county and neighboring community workforce.

The steering committee provides oversight of the year-long planning process as well as approval of project outcomes, deliverables, data collection, and communication plans. A key responsibility for this group of stakeholders is to implement the SDMP upon its completion.

To assist in the development and execution of the final SDMP, the JHTTB has contracted the nationally recognized and locally based Riverwind Foundation to serve as the project's sustainability coordinator. The Riverwind team coordinates the JHTTB team, steering committee, consulting team, and community at large. Riverwind's innovative work promoting environmentally and socially conscious business practices has galvanized Teton County to achieve international certification of Jackson Hole as a sustainable destination according to accredited destination sustainability standards.

The contracted consulting team from the George Washington University's International Institute of Tourism Studies and Confluence Sustainability, which is providing the overarching framework for the SDMP and facilitating the participatory planning process, has developed destination management plans for many global destinations, including mountain resort and gateway communities, and has been at the forefront of shaping global destination certification standards.

The JHTTB and its executive director provide input throughout the process and oversee the final SDMP. A key outcome of the plan will be a definition of an assembly of stakeholders, such as a destination steering committee, who will oversee and monitor the implementation of the plan. This group of leaders will not be

an authority or governing body. Its main purpose will be to monitor the progress of those entities that do have the authority to implement changes, such as federal, state, and local governments, and land managers.

### **How does the JHTTB's approach to creating a destination management plan differ from other approaches?**

The central focus of this process and a key pillar of destination management is community stakeholder and member engagement to establish clear action plans that guide the apportionment of resources. The process is designed to build communitywide engagement, transparency, and trust. Jackson, Teton County, and neighboring communities will be invited to participate by providing input that will shape the future of tourism for the destination.

### **How is tourism measured?**

To date, tourism has been measured by economic performance indicators, including business revenue generated, volume of tax revenues collected, and number of jobs created. Future success indicators can potentially include economic equity, community integration, resident quality of life, and environmental stewardship.

### **What is the EarthCheck Sustainable Destinations Program certification and what does it mean to be a certified destination?**

Jackson Hole is the second destination in the U.S. to receive sustainable destination certification through EarthCheck, setting the community apart as an early adopter and pioneer of sustainability. EarthCheck is a global business advisory group specializing in sustainability and destination management for the travel and tourism industry. Its holistic and rigorous approach to responsible tourism and world-leading science enables destinations and operators to benchmark and certify their performance through an independent and objective third party. More information on the Jackson Hole and Teton County certification can be found in the following case study: [earthcheck.org/media/50772/teton-county-earthcheck-case-study-aug2020.pdf](https://earthcheck.org/media/50772/teton-county-earthcheck-case-study-aug2020.pdf).

### **What is the history of sustainability and what other sustainability initiatives support tourism in Jackson Hole?**

To obtain the 2020 EarthCheck Sustainable Destinations Program certification, a number of communitywide sustainability initiatives have been implemented in partnership with the Riverwind Foundation. Many of these initiatives have been funded by the JHTTB and the Teton County lodging tax. These include:

- A town-county resolution for Jackson Hole to be “a world-leading sustainable community and destination”<sup>4</sup>
- Inclusion of sustainability principles, policies, and strategies in the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan (2020 update)
- A goal to divert 60% of the county’s waste by 2030 as part of its zero-waste target
- Training and assistance for over 400 businesses and organizations in sustainability planning and practices

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- Doubling the RRR Business Leaders to 200 and creating the Business Emerald Sustainability Tier certification and recognition program for higher levels of sustainable business performance
- Publishing and distributing the Jackson Hole Sustainable Business Guide to 5,000
- Creating and distributing Green Matters to over 8,000 per issue in Jackson Hole
- Creating and distributing the first annual Jackson Hole Sustainability Report Card to 7,800+
- Obtaining international recognition for Jackson Hole's and Teton County's sustainable tourism activities and achievements, including from:
  - The World Travel & Tourism Council as a 2018 Tourism for Tomorrow Award finalist
  - National Geographic as a 2017 World Legacy Award finalist
  - Green Destinations as a Top 100 sustainable destination in 2016, 2017, and 2018
  - A variety of international sustainability standards organizations (e.g., ISO 14001 for environment management, 18001 for health and safety, 9001 for quality management) certifying major tourism attraction and hospitality providers, reflecting their considerable depth in sustainability commitments and successes

### **Why is tourism important for Jackson Hole and Teton County?**

In 2019, Teton County welcomed nearly 1.9 million domestic and international visitors who spent \$1.28 billion and generated \$34.4 million in state and local taxes. This tax revenue supports public infrastructure, such as streets and roads, fire and police protection, and many other public services. It is estimated that households would have to pay \$7,103 more in taxes for existing government services without taxes generated by the tourism industry. The industry also created 8,860 jobs, which represent 26.7% of Teton County's total private industry employment. The tourism industry supports a sustainable and prosperous local economy through visitor spending and increased tax revenues, economic opportunities, and sustainable employment for residents, enhancing their quality of life, including access to world-class outdoor recreation and cultural experiences, natural environmental assets, and infrastructure such as transportation and quality of life services. With the right mechanisms in place, tourism can support environmental, community, and cultural sustainability initiatives too.

### **How can Jackson Hole and Teton County community members play a role in the future of tourism?**

This project is designed to be participatory to give all community members a voice and a role to play in the future of tourism. The community is invited to learn more as the project progresses by visiting [VisitJacksonHole.com/Locals](http://VisitJacksonHole.com/Locals); attending community events, workshops, and planning meetings; and giving input through several resident and tourism stakeholder surveys, which will launch in early 2022. Announcements on all these opportunities are coming soon.

### **What is the mission of the JHTTB and how is it funded?**

The Jackson Hole Travel & Tourism Joint Powers Board is dedicated to developing a healthy economy that preserves Jackson Hole's natural capital, provides a quality visitor experience, and enhances the well-being of the community. The JHTTB is a seven-member volunteer board appointed by elected officials from the town of Jackson and Teton County.

In the state of Wyoming, a 5% lodging tax is collected on every visitor's hotel, motel, or rental property stay; 3% is managed by the Wyoming Office of Tourism, and 2% stays in Teton County. 60% of these funds are managed by the JHTTB for destination marketing, tourist education, events, and other tourism-related initiatives as outlined in the Wyoming Statutes. The 40% balance is managed by the town of Jackson and Teton County, primarily to mitigate the impacts of tourism on infrastructure and services.

*1. United Nations World Tourism Organization.*

*2. United Nations World Tourism Organization. Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers. 2005: 11-12.*

*3. Global Sustainable Tourism Council 2017*