

WHAT IS DESTINATION MANAGEMENT? IT DOES NOT MEAN MORE VISITORS.

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Over the last year, community members, local business owners, emergency responders and county officials have been meeting regularly to identify problems and find solutions to issues in South County, in particular, parking at the Cape Kiwanda area. Plans are now underway to reduce the impact of congestion in peak summer months and new parking fees are in place to pay for traffic and parking management. Many recent articles in this newspaper have referred to these current efforts.

Throughout this planning process, and brought up in many of the working meetings of the Pacific City-Woods Parking Advisory Committee (PAC), the term “destination management” has been used to reference the community work at hand. These words have been used in conjunction and perhaps synonymous with “sustainable tourism.” But what do those terms mean, and how are they related to the many visitors that South County receives, especially in summer.

Sustainable tourism can be defined by three words: people, place and profit. It is tourism that takes full account for its social and environmental impacts, as well as current and future economic benefits. The goal of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development is a positive experience for both local residents and the visitors. For South County locals, this means enjoying a thriving community; jobs for hundreds of people; places to gather and connect with neighbors; and protection of natural resources, all with an emphasis on minimal impact and a call for stewardship.

That’s the ideal, of course, but it requires commitment from municipalities, the tourism industry and the community to make responsible decisions that protect people, place and profit. And it takes an understanding from the visitors that sustainable tourism is important to the community.

Sustainable tourism leads to the definition of **destination management**: it is about coordinating actions with the goal of controlling the economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of a specific tourism region, which is carried out by local authorities and tourism stakeholders in partnership, following principles of good governance. It considers all the elements that make up a tourism destination, including local residents, businesses, attractions, amenities, access and messaging.

Destination management does not mean inviting more visitors – it means effectively managing those who have already arrived.

Achieving sustainable tourism relies on a strategic approach to destination management. And that’s what the Pacific City-Woods Parking Advisory Committee (PAC) has set out to accomplish by asking questions such as:

What are the solutions to heavy traffic and over-crowded parking?

How can we support the needs of emergency responders and patrollers to curb issues and manage calls of distress?

How do we get the message out to our visitors about safety, parking, traffic, over-crowded beaches, and dispersing them to less-crowded areas?

What facilities are needed to accommodate visitors during peak months?



Cape Kiwanda, on July 4, 2020 was overwhelmed with more visitors than usual, as the Oregon Coast was considered by visitors a safe place to enjoy the outdoors. Even the shuttle bus was full that weekend – and operated the entire season at the same capacity as summer of 2019.

What can our tourism-based businesses do to reap the benefits of visitor spending, while simultaneously mitigating community impacts?

How can Visit Tillamook Coast, the county’s destination management organization (DMO), partner with the county commissioners, agencies, businesses and community members to ease tensions and improve livability during peak visitation months?

COVID-19 has amplified the needs for destination management throughout the county, and in particular, South County. It is well known that Pacific City among the most popular places to visit along the Oregon Coast – and with good reason: a beautiful beach, hiking and fishing, good food and beer, scenic views, a place to breathe fresh ocean air, and enjoy family and friends.

But in 2020, South County was overwhelmed by those seeking refuge from the pandemic. With cruises and packaged tours cancelled, Canada and Europe closing doors to visitors from the U.S, places such as Disneyland closed, and Hawaii on a 14-day arrival quarantine, people got in their cars and drove to the Oregon Coast.

South County was not prepared, and the many visitors new to the area— some who are used to being on a type of vacation where they are catered to and picked up after—left us with trash, illegally parked cars, and “outdoor bathrooms.” It caused much more work and expense for the County and community and created tension for local residents.

Fortunately, our community and the core members of the PAC have taken action to help lessen impacts this year, starting with a parking plan, paid visitor parking areas, digital and directional signage, portable restrooms with the intent to build permanent structures, extended shuttle services, and more garbage receptacles. Also in the works is a visitor-facing website with camera views of Cape Kiwanda parking lot and use of social media channels to help disperse crowds to other areas, as well as provide safety messaging.

In the long-term, the Cape Kiwanda Master Plan will be revised to include additional parking areas, strategic use of the Jensen property (if purchased), permanent wayfinding and tsunami signage, and perhaps a visitor center at the Kiawanda Community Center, which can help disperse visitors and provide sustainable tourism messaging.

We will be sharing south county destination management news each month in the Pacific City *Sun*. For updates, visit the website at <https://tillamookcoast.com/southcounty> and our Facebook page: South County Destination Management

Questions? Contact Brook Wyntergreen at brook@tillamookcoast.com

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