

SUSTAINING ALASKA'S TOURISM FUTURE



Long Range Planning Strategies for the Visitor Industry

Adopted By The ATIA Board of Directors On March 27, 2008

Introduction

This document provides a planning framework for the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) for addressing policies and procedures to assist development of Alaska's resources as they pertain to the visitor industry. The inspiration for ATIA's long range planning efforts comes from its Vision and Mission statements

Vision Statement

ATIA will be the leading industry organization promoting Alaska as a top visitor destination, communicating and promoting the Alaskan tourism industry as one of the state's major economic forces, and will be the respected voice of the industry for the growth of the industry, while remaining attentive to care for the environment, recognition of cultures and Alaska's unique quality of life.

Mission Statement

As we strive to attain our vision for the Alaska visitor industry, AlaskaTIA will undertake the following Mission:

- **Promote and facilitate** travel to and throughout the State of Alaska.
- **Provide** a broad-based association of individuals and companies with an interest in the visitor industry in Alaska.
- **Encourage** the increase and improvement of quality visitor facilities, services and attractions throughout Alaska.
- **Increase awareness** of the economic importance of the visitor industry.
- **Develop and implement** programs beneficial to the travel supplier and consumer, which no other single industry component or organization would be expected to carry out on its own.
- **Initiate and cooperate** with local, state and federal entities in developing and implementing programs, policies and legislation that are responsive to the needs of the industry and to intervene in those issues and initiatives that would directly affect the facilitation and promotion of travel to and within Alaska.
- **Work cooperatively** with the state on tourism development and long-range planning.

ATIA desires that tourism resources be developed in a prudent manner to assure long-term sustainability of the wide diversity of tourism businesses, small and large. In addition, its aim is to spread positive economic benefits throughout the full spectrum of Alaska communities that desire such benefits, from the most remote to the easiest to access.

An instrumental component in the development of tourism resources is a continued focus on providing travel experiences of the highest level of quality. It is ATIA's intention to maintain and enhance Alaska's position in the marketplace as a "world class" nature and cultural travel destination. Anything less will bring economic and environmental consequences that could severely hamper destination marketing efforts and will negatively impact Alaska's residents, communities, and businesses.

The industry recognizes that tourism development changes communities, providing both positive benefits (employment, economic opportunities, tax base, a sense of pride and purpose, etc.), as well as potential negative impacts to resident lifestyles if changes are not incorporated purposefully and collaboratively. Part and parcel to Alaska's value as a tourism destination is the unique character of communities where residents are often passionate about their Alaska setting and appreciative of their quality of life attributes. ATIA is sensitive to resident concerns, and it desires to preserve those values that attract residents to their Alaska lifestyle. ATIA's goal is to shape a future where both people and nature flourish in a wildly successful manner.

The Vision

Our vision for the future, if we are successful, can be summed up as follows:

1. Alaska will be increasingly recognized as a world-class visitor destination that:
 - a) Deeply cares about the quality of all aspects of the visitor experience, and
 - b) Is recognized as a leader in advocating and demonstrating stewardship of its natural environment.The image resulting from these pursuits will positively compliment ATIA's destination marketing efforts.
2. ATIA will play a leading role in facilitating the future development of Alaska's visitor industry.
3. Tourism will be treated as an important and sustainable opportunity for economic and resource development.
4. Public and private lands will become more accessible to visitors as ATIA works with land managers to identify added opportunities for accessing lands entrusted to them.
5. The benefits of tourism will extend throughout all of Alaska wherever tourism resources are optimized and wherever communities are welcoming of its benefits.
6. Native cultures and unique Alaska lifestyles will be protected and even enhanced, and communities will work to actively identify and retain the character and qualities they most treasure.
7. Wildlife viewing opportunities will be preserved and enhanced where prudent.
8. Year around tourism opportunities will grow and develop
9. Congestion and overcrowding as well as conflicts between tourism segments will be avoided; visitors will be dispersed throughout Alaska at a sustainable level.
10. The wide spectrum of tourism businesses, large and small, will thrive as opportunities for all will be protected and enhanced when possible.
11. A spirit of collaboration will permeate all segments of the travel industry, communities, and land management organizations.

Strategies and Action Plans

Strategy One: Seek to be the respected voice of the travel industry in Alaska, balancing economic, environmental and long-term sustainability of the Alaskan experience.

Integrate concepts of sustainability and environmental responsibility into the development of the Alaskan tourism industry, remaining attentive to the recognition of cultures and Alaska's unique quality of life.

- Address environmental and planning documents as they are made available and comment
- Seek opportunities to integrate tourism opportunities on state and federal lands in Alaska
- Participate in activities sponsored by environmental and resource management groups and prepare issue papers for board consideration prior to implementation of new or modified environmental regulations
- Monitor the oversight of tourism by federal and state regulators on an overall industry perspective and represent member opinions before those regulatory bodies as directed by the ATIA Board of Directors
- Work proactively to anticipate challenges and conflicts and guide actions as necessary to achieve vision and goals.

Strategy Two: Maintain a Leadership Role in Industry Development and the Planning of Public Land Projects

Maintain and expand its leading role in facilitation of future development of the Alaskan visitor industry by leading collaborative, public-private planning efforts aimed at accommodating the needs and concerns of the visitor industry, special interest groups, public land managers and local residents with interests in Alaskan tourism development. Enhance Alaska as a worldwide recreation attraction and vacation destination by providing a broad spectrum of visitor opportunities.

- Attend meetings, forums and workshops and be an active participant in development of new or modified efforts that affect tourism services in Alaska
- Maintain liaisons with federal, state, regional and local agencies to foster business relationships that promote responsible tourism activities
- Participate in the Alaska Land Managers Forum (ALMF), TRAAK, and/or any equivalent organization that emerges; if none exist, then advocate for creation of appropriate organizations that promote interagency cooperation.
- Monitor statewide activities of regional and local importance to members and provide input into the process to enhance, protect or improve tourism provider opportunities
- Take a leadership role in developing forums, workshops and public events that promote tourism in a positive and constructive light
- Work to define and refine a forum and planning process where divergent interests can come together to collaborate on major land use initiatives, public and/or private, to work toward mutual benefit and avoid conflict.
- Incorporate a citizen's advisory role into the industry planning process

Strategy Three: Shape Transportation Initiatives that Enhance and Support Tourism Opportunities and Improve Access for the Wide Spectrum of the Visitor Industry.

Continue to participate in and actively influence high priority transportation projects which enhance Alaska as a worldwide recreation attraction and vacation destination by providing a broad spectrum of visitor opportunities and appropriate access.

- Participate in public forums
- Review environmental and planning documents as available and prepare issue papers for board action
- Address transportation improvement and access issues through Trails and Recreation Access For Alaska Citizens (TRAAK), the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and other opportunities where comment and input may serve to improve direct and indirect transportation funding benefits to the tourism industry and visitors to Alaska

Strategy Four: Promote and Support the Development of Wildlife Viewing Opportunities

Work with wildlife enthusiasts, managers, and members of the tourism industry to protect and enhance wildlife viewing opportunities, through cooperative asset management and maintenance of healthy wildlife communities, while acknowledging the important role played by consumptive wildlife resources in Alaska's Economy and culture both past and present.

- Work to develop statewide planning with state and federal agencies that administer programs related to resource management where wildlife species are involved, ultimately developing standardized wildlife viewing guidelines
- Comment on specific planning efforts and provide member input into those efforts on a timely basis
- Advocate for non consumptive wildlife viewing as a valid, sustainable, and economically important use of wildlife resources in specific cases supported by the membership
- Encourage development of wildlife viewing sites around Alaska
- Work with state departments on pamphlets that identify wildlife viewing locations by season
- Work to develop standardized wildlife viewing guidelines that can be adapted to all levels of the tourism industry in Alaska making the traveling public informed on safe and practical wildlife viewing opportunities, assuring that industry representatives are active participants in making informed choices as to where and when to view wildlife.
- Actively work to mitigate conflicts between user groups when the tourism industry is involved.
- Work with wildlife enthusiasts, managers and members of the tourism industry to protect and enhance wildlife viewing opportunities in cooperation with wildlife managers and maintenance of wildlife communities, while acknowledging the important role played by the use of consumptive wildlife resources in Alaska's economy and culture both past and present.

Strategy Five: Lead in Conflict Resolution.

When conflicts between tourism segments develop, or when unexpectedly too many visitors come to any area in a visitor season, creating unwanted impacts, work to provide leadership as needed for the involved parties to work toward an agreeable solution. Facilitate working groups that include land management agencies, user groups, and/or tourism segments or companies as necessary.

- Organize meetings and forums to bring sides together in non-confrontational environment
- Help fund a facilitator or mediator if necessary.
- Actively work to mitigate conflicts between user groups when the tourism industry is involved
- Monitor conclusions and commitments developed at meetings and forums
- Work to identify potential problems before severe conflicts develop

Strategy Six: Promote Quality of All Aspects of the Visitor Experience

In recognition that exceeding overall visitor expectations is the most efficient and effective form of destination marketing, develop processes and programs to inspire tourism businesses to individually and collectively excel in every aspect of their operations.

- Offer seminars and sharing sessions at annual convention and develop other special programs at other times of the year
- Support and possibly endorse accreditation programs that seek to reward practitioners of best practices
- Recognize businesses that exemplify high quality visitor services

Strategy Seven: Support Winter Tourism Development

Continue to pursue expansion of winter tourism in collaboration with other organizations and private companies committed to long-term development of this tourism season.

- Work with winter tourism providers, businesses, Convention and Visitor Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce and interested public members to improve the environment for winter tourism development
- Establish a statewide program that collectively markets, advertises and promotes winter tourism activities in Alaska through all available advertising means to both Alaskans and non-Alaskans in the domestic and international marketplace
- Monitor economic expansion possibilities with air carriers to increase international visitor numbers during the winter months

Strategy 8: Provide Long Term Funding Solution for Effective State Marketing and Planning Efforts

Put a program in place to effectively promote Alaska as a high value destination nationally and internationally as well as to fully fund the long range tourism planning vision. Craft a funding program that is sustainable and that receives strong bipartisan political support. Continue to leverage visitor funding component to the funding plan.

Implementation Process – How Business Will Get Done

The process of analyzing tourism issues and subsequent action by the Board of Directors can be a time consuming process. An issue must be identified, run through the appropriate ATIA committee or workgroup; issue statements must be drafted and reviewed by the Board of Directors, and ultimately a final implementation process, letter, or statement is made. This process must be completed in light of varying timelines established by the proposing federal, state, local or regional agency or institution. Occasionally, the ATIA process timeline and issue completion timeline create challenges.

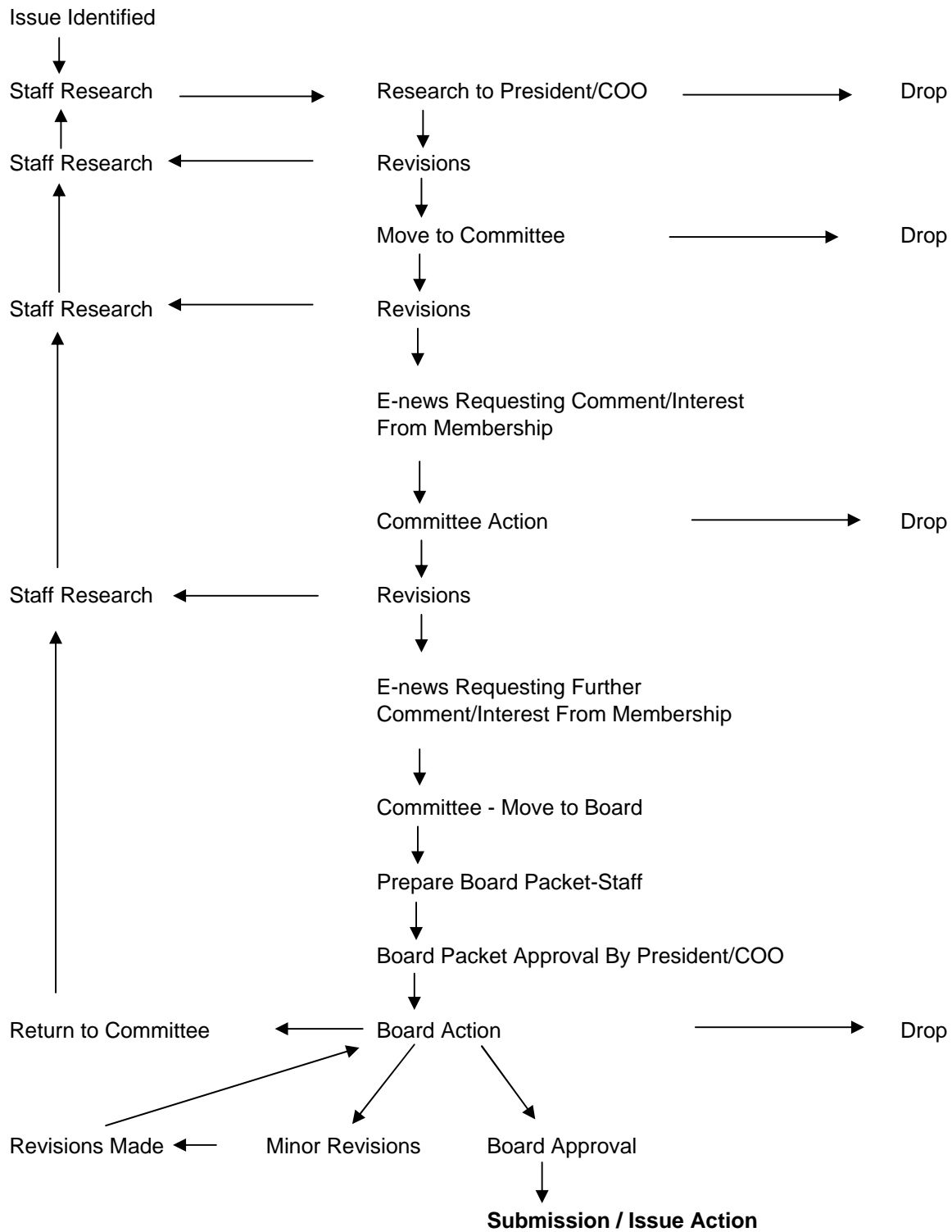
This section briefly outlines a process whereby ATIA may participate in the public process in light of short or long comment timelines provided by agencies and organizations yet allow full participation by Board members. The processes are diagrammed in the two flow-diagram graphics showing a normal and fast track issue resolution program to be followed.

Process

- 1. Issue identification:** ATIA staff, Board member or someone from the membership raises an issue of importance to the tourism industry. Staff provides research and comments from appropriate sources and consolidates this information into issue papers to be reviewed by the appropriate committee or workgroup. Issue papers are to include clear identification of the issue, the possible outcomes if the issue is implemented, and make recommendations, presented as options, for review.
- 2. Committee or Workgroup Action:** Issue papers are discussed at a committee or workgroup meeting where a quorum is present. Group directs staff to reject, modify, or pass on with approval the issue paper.
 - If rejected, staff will prepare a memo to the initial source of inquiry explaining the reasons for rejection
 - If modifications are needed, the group can recommend staff make the changes with no further work by the group or to return the modified issue paper to the group for further consideration
 - If approved in total or with minor modification, staff will prepare a Board packet item for consideration at the next Board of Director's meeting
 - If on a short time line, committee actions can be forwarded to an Executive Committee teleconference for review and tentative approval that must be confirmed by the full Board of Directors at their next available meeting
- 3. Board of Directors Action:** Final approved issue paper and appropriate draft recommended result, such as a letter of comment, will be forwarded to the full Board of Directors for review and comment. Notice of action will be placed in e-news for member information and comment. The Board of Directors can approve in total, approve with comment, or direct the issue comment to be modified or rejected for further consideration.
 - If approved, the appropriate action with signature of the President or Chair, as directed by the Board of Directors, will be completed and sent prior to the final comment deadline, if one exists. Copy of the action will be provided to originator of the issue resolution request.
 - Fast tracked issue action will be confirmed by Board of Directors or modified
 - If rejected, the issue can be returned to the group for further work or rejected summarily and no further ATIA effort to be placed resolving the issue as stated. ATIA staff will inform the originator of the Board of Director's final opinion in this case with reasons for rejection. If returned for further work, ATIA staff will work with group chair to make the appropriate modifications for further group discussion and approval and forwarding back to the Board of Directors for reconsideration.
 - Final action will be noticed in e-news for membership information

ATIA

Normal Procedures For Issue Action



ATIA

Fast-Track Procedures For Issue Action

