



2024 Maritime Washington Responsible Tourism Workshop

This document summarizes key points and ideas shared at a Maritime Washington workshop about sustainable tourism in July 2024. For a deeper look, [watch the full recording of the workshop here](#).

Tourism can boost local economies, increase appreciation for history and nature, and offer important cross-cultural education. However, it can also harm natural and cultural resources, cause overcrowding, disrupt wildlife, and exclude marginalized groups. The sustainable tourism movement aims to improve the benefits of tourism for local people and places, while minimizing harm to the environment, community, and culture.

Key Takeaways

- Utilize messaging across platforms/locations to encourage your visitors to practice responsible behaviors and minimize their negative impacts on sites and communities.
- Don't reinvent the wheel! Seek partnerships with other organizations and Tribes to learn what messaging/initiatives have worked and adapt them for your location.
- Small actions can snowball into big change. Think about how you can meet your audience(s) where they are and engage with them in small but significant ways in more responsible visitation.

Challenges of Responsible Tourism and Mitigation Best Practices

Challenge	Best Practice
Overuse	Encourage visitors to acknowledge their impact on spaces and provide tips/information about how they can minimize negative impacts of their visit. Promote visitation to less popular sites to diffuse impacts of overcrowding.
Erasure of native stories	Non-Tribal entities should actively seek out Tribal input when interpreting or promoting a space. Utilize resources already created by Tribes, which can often be found on Tribal websites and/or social media.
Visitors get their information from many sources	Consistent messaging in a variety of places. Meet your audience where they're at, whether that's online on social media, in hotel rooms and lodging, or on their way to your site. Utilize partnerships to amplify and coordinate messaging.
Lack of resources and knowledge about responsible tourism	Create space for partnerships and learning by prioritizing your staff's understanding and participation in responsible tourism efforts. Utilize existing resources provided by organizations like the Snoqualmie Tribe, Maritime Washington and the Recreate Responsibly Coalition.

What can your organization/department do to promote responsible tourism?

- Low-lift partnerships with government, non-governmental organizations, community groups, and creatives to amplify responsible tourism messages.
- Share information about the varied impacts of visiting and how visitors can mitigate their own impacts.
- Use on-site communication and interpretation to encourage visitors to embrace a sense of stewardship.
- Solicit commitments of continuing support from visitors.
- Dedicate staff time to proactively promote and encourage responsible tourism.
- Build relationships with decision makers to encourage adoption of policies and programs that promote responsible tourism.



WORKSHOP PANELIST PRESENTATION SUMMARIES

Sarah Ballew, Outreach Program Manager for Governmental Affairs & Special Projects at Snoqualmie Indian Tribe

Presentation Summary: Visitor education can change mindsets of our audience(s). Organizations interested in promoting responsible tourism should engage with existing Tribal resources for the lands on which their site exists.

Key Takeaways:

- Sustainable tourism includes promoting understanding of Tribal history.
- Engage with Tribes to determine how tourism is most impacting them, their heritage sites, and treaty rights.
- Encourage Tribal consultation as a proactive choice rather than a reactive afterthought.

Content Examples:

- [Valley of the Snoqualmie Map](#): “cək’wɔdʌp ʔətiit sduk’albix”
- [Executive Order 21-02 Training](#)
- [Run With Respect](#): Partnership with Brooks Running

Amy Nesler, Stewardship and Communications Manager at San Juan Islands Visitor Bureau

Presentation Summary: Islands need more care. By consistently messaging in a variety of places, a wider audience and community can engage with more ways to responsibly visit the San Juan Islands.

Key Takeaways:

- Community dialogue is critical. Find the needs by asking the users.
- Use consistent messaging in different places. Meet your audience where they’re at.
- Don’t reinvent the wheel. Learn from what has worked for others and reuse it.

Content Examples:

- [The San Juan Islands Pledge](#)
- [Island Kids Explain](#): Fire Safety, Being Prepared to Visit, Respecting Wildlife
- [Stewardship in the San Juan Islands](#)

Marie Shimada, Whidbey Island Community Organizer and Maritime Washington Advisory Board member

Presentation Summary: Regeneration is about making sure that what we do now feeds back into the system from which we benefit. It’s about being proactive and intentional.

Key Takeaways:

- Partnerships with DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations) can be very rewarding.
- Promotional materials can help spread the impacts of tourism from over-loved places.
- Investment doesn’t need to be huge. Micro-funding opportunities can amplify consistent messaging.

Content Examples:

- [24 Trails Off the Beaten Path](#): Encourages exploration away from commonly used trails to mitigate overuse.
- [Culture and Heritage Guide](#): Easy to read field guide to sites around the island.

Caroline Villanova, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust National Heritage Area Coordination Manager and co-lead of Washington’s Recreate Responsibly Coalition

Presentation Summary: Organizations can foster a responsible and holistic outdoor experience by encouraging behaviors that ensure safety for individuals, communities, and natural spaces, promote the essential benefits of nature, and create an inclusive environment for all.

Key Takeaways:

- Organizations can join Washington’s Recreate Responsibly Coalition to participate in shared learning opportunities about responsible recreation and join in consistent messaging efforts.

Content Examples:

- [Recreate Responsibly messaging toolkits](#)
- [Inclusive Outdoors resource hub](#)