

**Southwest Montana
General Board Retreat and Meeting
March 24, 2022**

Participants: Sarah Bannon (SW Montana Executive Director), Rebecca Schmitz, Mary Johnston, Linda Brown, Andrea Opitz, Jeanette Kopf, Jocelyn Dodge, Maria Porchervina, Mike Mergenthaler, Katya Peterson, Julie Schroeder, Mike Strang, Ross Johnson, Becky DiGiovanna, Susan Ovit, Rebecca Jones, Andie Groa, Milo Root, Steve Hill, Lisa Garcia, Melanie Sanchez, Chiara Schober, Pam Gosnik, Tammy Mattson, Isabelle Bonney and Kerri Kumasaka

Introductions – Attendees introduced themselves.

Accessing ITRR Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research

1. Sarah shared about how to access the research from ITRR. Their website is itr.r.umt.edu. They have a lot of information on nonresidents visiting Montana.

Call Center Report - Rebecca Schmitz from Corporate Cost Control gave a report on the contact/call center.

1. The most requests for information are coming from the Yellowstone Journal.
2. The activities people are most interested in (year-to-date) are History/Ghost Towns, Wildlife Viewing, Lewis & Clark Trail Sites, Hot Springs, and Lodging.
3. The top states we are getting inquiries from (year-to-date) are: Texas, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio.

Website – Adding Events and Photos

1. Katya Peterson showed people how to register events on the SW Montana website events calendar. Photos are required with these listings.

Itineraries

1. Each person filled out a form listing major attractions, places to eat, activities, places to stay, etc. in their communities. Tempest will use this information to create itineraries to put on the website.

Advertising Tips - Megan Richter from Windfall offered some advertising tips

1. Some key points were:
 - a. Know your audience
 - b. Be clear and concise. Don't overwhelm people, engage and inspire them.
 - c. Talk about the benefits – what is in it for your audience.
 - d. Keep it to one message.
 - e. Communicate a clear call to action.
 - f. Show the experience, be authentic, be inspiring.

Videos of SW Montana

1. Katya showed some videos about the breweries in Southwest Montana.

Discussion Items:

1. Gas Prices: In 2008 tipping point was \$4.00 per gallon. This is the point where it started to affect tourism. New tipping point is \$6.00. Montana still has some of the lowest prices in the nation.
2. Employee Shortages: Seems to be country wide problem. Some suggestions: Easter Seals/ Goodwill has some programs where you can hire retirees, scaling back hours, advertising at the colleges.
3. Brand Montana: There was some discussion and sharing about Brand Montana, which was formerly the Office of Tourism.
4. Event Sheet: Sarah offered to send out an event sheet bi-monthly.

Communication

1. There was a discussion about communication and what is the best way to communicate.

Glacier National Park Ticketing

1. The best website for information about the ticketing process in Glacier Park is www.recreation.gov.

SuperHost Training – Pam Gosink presented a workshop on 21st Century Customer Service: A Customer Centric Focus.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be on April 28, 2022.