

2007 Indiana Park and Recreation Association State Conference

Agritourism: What is the Role of Municipal Park Boards in Rural Economic Development?

Indiana Tourism Statistics

- “The tourism industry brings in approximately \$6.7 billion in spending from 58 million leisure visitors” (Destination Indiana, 2006, p. 1).
- Tourism is essential to the economy of Indiana and is growing at a rate of almost 5 percent annually, which is above the nation’s average (Destination Indiana, 2006).

Rural Park Boards Promote Parks as Tourism by:

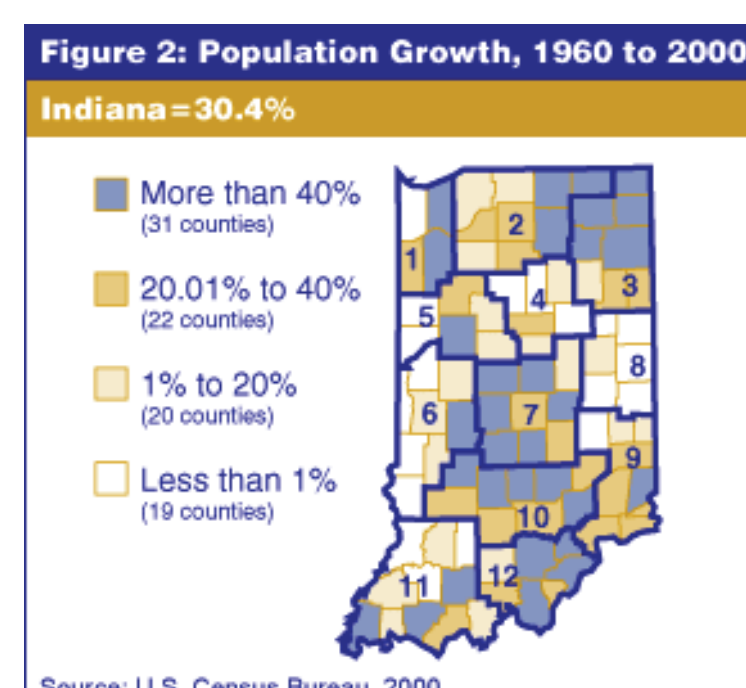
- Holding special events and festivals at park sites to attract tourists
- Using park sites for sports tournaments, which may lead to major sources of tourism and economic benefits
- Attracting visitors to parks with landscape planting and design that are recognized as living works of art can be tourist attractions (Crompton, 2005).

Why Rural Park Boards and Tourism?

- Indiana has 92 counties and only 51 convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs), which causes many rural areas to not have the local-capacity to develop agritourism.
- Rural park boards can serve as a partner for tourism development in rural areas where a CVB is not present.

Indiana’s Rural Trends

- As of 2000, 29.2% of Indiana’s population lives in rural areas, which is a 5.9% decrease since 1990.
- Population decreases are a result of loss of jobs and poor economic health of rural communities.
- Lt. Governor Becky Skillman stated that “with 75% of Indiana counties designated as ‘rural’ we must cater to the needs of these communities and offer any assistance possible to successful and sustainable rural Indiana communities” (Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, 2006, p.1).



To combat population decreases and job loss, local leaders should consider the potential economic impact of agritourism.

Economic Development through Agritourism

- “Agritourism is a hybrid concept that merges elements of two complex industries-agriculture and travel/tourism- to open up new profitable markets for farm products and services and provide travel experience for a large regional market” (Wicks & Merrett, 2003, p. 1).
- Examples of agritourism are:

Wineries	Petting Zoos
Bed and Breakfast	Camping
Farmers’ Markets	Living history farms
Mazes (Corn, Hay)	Scenic byways tours
U-pick it farms	Antique Stores
Tractor Pulls/Hay rides	

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Indiana Office of Tourism Development

Indiana Rural Recreation Development Project (InRRDP)

- To combat the loss of jobs, families, youth and poor economic health, local leaders can develop agritourism opportunities by collaborating with the Indiana Rural Recreation Development Project (InRRDP).
- The InRRDP, by using an ecological framework and through a self-help community development approach, strives to develop sustainable local park, recreation, leisure, and tourism services that achieve individual, community, economic, and environmental benefits in rural Indiana communities through active and representative civic participation, youth development, collaboration, and research.

Goals of the InRRDP

- Enhance the community’s capacity to organize their community and sustain services that target specific rural demographic, social, economic, and political trends.
- Enhance community satisfaction and quality of life.
- Increase participation in community life.
- Develop leadership potential among residents.
- Satisfy the immediate unmet need for recreation programs in rural towns.

Indiana Office of Tourism Development (IOTD)

- Agritourism is a high priority for economic development in Indiana.
- Indiana has a good agritourism product already, but the IOTD needs to better promote, showcase, and enhance what the state has to offer.

Partnerships: InRRDP & IOTD

- The Indiana Office of Tourism Development and Indiana Rural Recreation Development Project are partnering together to help rural communities that do not have a local CVB to develop agritourism.
- Other partners include:
 - Indiana Park and Recreation Association
 - Lt. Governor’s Office of Community and Rural Affairs
 - Indiana Department of Local Government
 - Indiana Association of Cities and Towns.



Rural Park Boards and Agritourism

- To develop tourism without the assistance of a CVB, rural park boards need to:
 1. Contact the InRRDP and the IOTD
 2. Participate in park board member training
 3. Implement community planning for parks, recreation, and tourism

For More Information:

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- Contact Brian Blackford at the Indiana Office of Tourism Development, 317-232-8881 or bblackford@EnjoyIndiana.IN.gov or <http://www.in.gov/enjoyindiana/>



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More. From day one.