

Love Your Community, Love Your Trails



Building and Supporting an Active Trail Economy

Riverside Albert Shepody Trail Corridor & surrounding area

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Introduction

A workshop about the “Trail Economy” was held on November 26th in Riverside-Albert at the Broadleaf Guest Ranch and remotely via Zoom. A total of 16 people participated in the workshop from the region and consisted of local business owners, tourism operators and interested residents. The agenda for the day was:

- Overview of the Shore Line Trail
- Provincial Signature Trail Initiative
- Enriching the Shepody Trail through Trail Tourism
 - The Value of Trails
 - Trail Towns
 - Partnerships and Business Diversification
- Let’s Brainstorm!
- Signage
 - Why is signage important?
 - What is Trailhead Signage and what is included on it?
 - What do YOU want to feature on the trailhead?
- Next Steps
- Closing Remarks

The intended outcomes for the day were:

- Provide an overview and understanding of the value of trail tourism
- Engage key stakeholders about the potential the Shepody Trail can provide the region
- What kind of content should be included in the two new trailhead to be developed by Plan 360

The following is a summary of the presentation and discussions that took place at the workshop. The presentation content has been modified to provide additional context to the content on the slides.

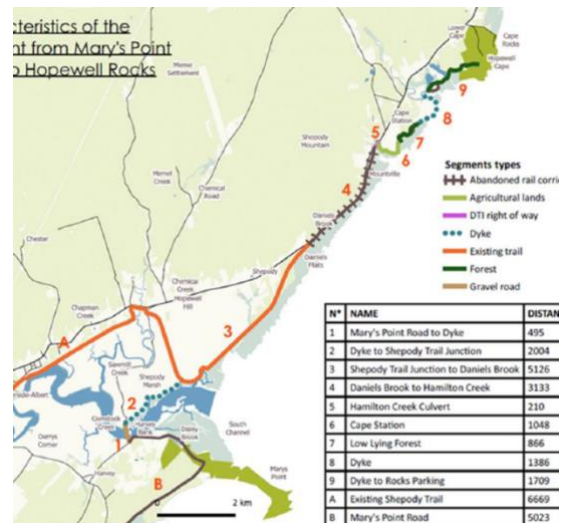
Shore Line Trail: The Shepody Trail Experience

Shore Line Trail

- 170 km Alma to Cap-Pele
- Connects 3 of the most popular tourist attractions in NB and 9 municipalities.
- Aims to keep visitors in the region longer
- Showcases natural beauty of 2 coastlines in additions to the history and culture of the southeast.
- Has been identified as a Signature Trail by the Department of Tourism, Heritage of Culture

Shepody Trail:

- 1 of 8 segments of the Shore Line Trail. It will eventually be connected to Hopewell Rocks and Mary's Point
- Travels along an old rail bed and dykes across the reclaimed marshes, now farmland.
- Offers spectacular scenery; on one side the Shepody Bay and on the other the Fundy Escarpment.
- Offers opportunities for human history interpretation; First Nations, Acadian, British and Irish.
- Offers opportunities for world class bird watching.
- Cycling, walking and horseback riding.



What is the Trail Economy?

The Trail Economy is revenue directly and indirectly generated by trail users. This means that businesses will benefit from increased sales of merchandise, food and beverage and heads in beds. This also means that more jobs will be created, there may be an increase in property assessments and sales tax revenue as well as more public and private investments.

Additional benefits of the trail economy:

- Leverage targeted funding for trail related projects and for new and existing businesses for Federal/Provincial and non-governmental sources
- Improved community aesthetics & atmosphere
- Capitalize on the economic potential of the Shore Line Trail and community trails
- Attract new residents
- Proven method of revitalizing small communities
- Helps build a strong sense of community and pride
- Trail Towns working together multiplies the value and spreads opportunity throughout Fundy Region
- Increased awareness by locals of what the region has to offer in activities, eating experiences, sightseeing and accommodations
- Stability for existing businesses
- Growth opportunities for existing businesses
- Increased entrepreneurial opportunities

For more information on the economic impact of greenway trails and demographics of the anticipated trail user please refer to Appendices B and C.

Trail Town Overview

The following elements are taken directly from the document “Trail Towns-Capturing Trail Based Tourism: A Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania”. This was published by the Allegheny Trail Alliance in 2005. As a group begins to form around the development of a trail economy these can be modified to fit the preferred model for Riverside-Albert.

What is a Trail Town?

- A Trail Town is a **destination** along a long-distance trail,
- Regardless of trail type, trail users can venture off the trail and **enjoy the scenery, services, and heritage**
- It embraces the **character and charm** of the community,
- It is a **safe place** where both residents and trail users can walk, find the goods and services they need,
- The trail and town can **easily be accessed** by foot, bicycle or vehicle,
- It is a **friendly place** that encourages trail users to visit and welcomes them with **warm hospitality**,
- They are not stand-alone communities; they are **linked by the trail corridor**,
- Trail users may be passing through a town on a **day trip, long distance trek**, or may be **driving** to a community and park to access a river or a trail.

Key Factors to consider when developing a Trail Town Program

- Your town can grow & thrive in new ways because of a nearby trail
- The more Trail Towns there are along the corridor, offering hospitality and services, the more attractive the region will be for tourism. Your neighbouring town’s success is important to your town’s success
- Leadership and initiative from within the community will be necessary to turn your town into a Trail Town
- A safe and well-maintained trail is the centrepiece
- A core bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly philosophy should be adopted by your town
- A work plan, should be developed, and then chipped away at as funding and energy is available
- Trail users should be accommodated both physically and socially within the town
- Goods and services for trail users will be appealing to other types of tourists and residents
- High profile residents can be important ambassadors in your town and along the trail.

7 Practices of Healthy Trail Towns

These 7 practices were developed by Amy Camp and can be found in her recent book: *Deciding on Trails: 7 Practices of Healthy Trail Towns*. Amy is a consultant who has been working in the trail industry for over 10 years and was the first Trail Town Coordinator for The Great Allegheny Passage through the Progress Fund. The program has evolved over the years and Amy has worked with a variety of trail towns over the years and has seen successful and unsuccessful examples. Through her experience she

has identified the following 7 practices that communities should consider when they are thinking about transforming their community into a Trail Town.

- *Adopt a Shared Vision*: everyone needs to come together to adopt one shared vision and work collectively to make it happen.
- *Physically Connect Trail to Town*: there are some instances where the trail does not directly connect to the community. You need to make it easy for people to get into your community by developing a safe route to connect the trail to the town.
- *Extend the Invitation*: Shout it from the rooftops! You can't keep it a secret- you need to develop a marketing plan and work with your local destination marketing organization to ensure that you are reaching the right people.
- *Cultivate a Trail Culture*: it's been said before- the community is what will sustain the trail and the residents is its best ambassadors. Ensure that there are programs that will engage residents to use the trail.
- *Know your Market*: Understand who the trail users are and what kinds of services and amenities they expect.
- *Share Your Story*: What makes your community unique? People are genuinely interested in learning about the region.
- *Commit to Quality Trails*: It is not simply a matter of building the trail, it is also a matter of maintaining the trail. People who travel to use trails expect that they are in good quality.

The Importance of Community

- The community is the most important beneficiary of the trail- they sustain it throughout the year
- Trail becomes the "heart" of the community
- The community sees the trail as an opportunity to showcase their assets
- Can become key active transportation corridors for rural areas
- The residents become "ambassadors" for the region

A New Way of Doing Things

Tourism is continually evolving however, and we are at a point in its evolution where it finally is putting the community first. There is currently a focus on highlighting the values of the community and the capitalizing on the assets that can be found within them to create meaningful and authentic experiences for residents and tourists alike. The region is well positioned to benefit from the concepts of *transformative placemaking* and *regenerative tourism* through the development of the Shepody Trail and Trail Towns in the region. Both these initiatives provide the opportunity to showcase the region, its history, and its people.

Transformative Placemaking

Transformative placemaking is an aspirational endeavour to transform spaces into meaningful places through a process of deliberate and thoughtful engagement – as such transformative placemaking is fundamentally connected to **sense of place**".

Regenerative Tourism

"Regenerative tourism is a commitment to tourism as a tool to create thriving destination communities and to regenerate and heal damaged resources".

For more information about Transformative Placemaking and Regenerative Tourism check out this blog post: <https://www.trailresearchhub.com/post/transformative-placemaking-regenerative-tourism-and-trails>

What are Trail Users Looking For?

They want to feel like they are part of the place they are visiting. That is the reason why transformative placemaking and regenerative tourism are going to be key to creating an experience that the trail tourist will never forget. Not all trail users expect the same things, however as noted in the snapshots of the birder and cyclists we have a pretty good understanding of their expectations.

- Good Food and Gastronomic Experiences
- Authentic artisan experiences
- Craft Beer and Cider & ICE CREAM!
- A sense of WHIMSY- “Instagrammable Opportunities”
- A wide variety of accommodations- not necessarily “chain hotels”
- Outdoor activities such as paddling, fishing and golfing
- Learn about the unique character of your region, cultural heritage and natural features
- Authentic Experiences- what is the region known for?

Partnership Opportunities and Business Diversification

Partnership Opportunities

Partnerships are important to develop, particularly in smaller regions. Oftentimes communities will look at what they DON'T have rather than what they DO have. This means that communities will often sell themselves short before they ever get started because they may not have a full compliment of services and amenities to offer. This does not need to be a deficiency, rather think about how the different businesses and services within the region could partner together to fill in the gaps in the offerings. This may require some thinking outside of the box, but once you start considering your assets you may be surprised to find out what unique experiences you can create. Keep these things in mind when you are thinking about potential opportunities:

Theming and Experiences: Identify themes that can be carried throughout the entire trail experience and region

Think beyond the Trail: NOT everything has to be “trail based”

Community Partnerships to engage residents: Residents are your best ambassadors

Connecting Attractions, Cultivating Assets (non-traditional): Farm tours, gastro-tours, local festivals

Casual/Experience-based: Lobster dinners, kitchen parties, etc

Business Diversification

Often there are small things that existing businesses can do in order to make their businesses more appealing for the trail tourist. It doesn't take much for a person to feel special and welcome. Think about those hotels that leave a chocolate on the pillow or the restaurant that provides free refills. Going that extra mile means a lot and makes the trip that much more memorable. It is however important to understand the consumer- reviewing the profiles of the bicycle and eco-tourist and doing a bit more research on your own will be a good way to ensure that your changes will have an impact. There are also larger diversifications that can be made, but they will likely cost additional funds. These funds may well

be worth it if the business can see a return on its investment, but it may be a project that happens once the trail is further established.

Breakout Group Discussion- Let's Brainstorm!

It's important to get engaged from the beginning. Using the information and scenarios provided in the presentation the following questions were posed to the group. (Note: The participants were divided into breakout groups at Broadleaf and there was an online Zoom group working on Mural)

- What does the region excel in that could be an asset to develop a strong and sustainable trail economy?
- What kinds of partnerships could be developed that would be unique to the region and would create a lasting memory for the trail tourist? (Think Compelling Experiences)
- What kind of resources would you need if you were interested in developing a partnership with another business/association or service?

Some people may question why this is a valuable exercise in the development of a trail. If the trail aspires to become a successful tourism product, there needs to be consideration of the opportunities to generate a "trail economy". It's great to develop a trail, however if you want the community to benefit from it, we need to get people off the trail and into the community. *Remember:* There aren't cash registers on the trail. If you want trail users to boost your local economy, you have to tap your town into that opportunity- actively. Move your whole community forward by transforming into a trail-friendly destination where people want to stay, explore, and spend.



There was a significant amount of discussion generated in the room and it resulted in many number of excellent ideas. Below is the start of a list of ideas that can act as a starting point for further discussions.

- Wine tasting
- Trailhead pop-up stuff: music, artisans
- Shuttle Service (Forestdale Seniors Home Bus)
- Bike Lock-up
- Bike Shuttle
- GeoCaching x2
- Map- distance, accommodations, food, washrooms
- Story telling

- Event on trail- food/music- people must walk or bike
- Moonrise event
- Skip the Dishes concept in Albert County- picnic baskets
- #1 tourism destination = excellent marketing already, but a shuttle service could help in connecting the “Big 3”
- Roads 2 Sea- Anna Marie (partnership opportunity)- end of tour meal at a local restaurant on beach with shuttle service back to destination
- \$\$\$
- Seafood supper at a waterfront location after a long ride. Shuttle service back to accommodation
- Lifelong learners
- Dock system along river for kayaking/canoe launch x2
- History of the dykes- interpretive panels along the trail
- Natural scenery- wetlands- birding
- Local metal workers creating bike racks
- Historical connection with trails- picture/monuments with historical photo
- Bass fishing on dikes
- Fish fries on trail
- Buddha Bear contribution
- Tourist centre at bank museum with bike and kayak rentals
- Trail-user washrooms along the trail- composting toilets x2
- Beachcombing
- River access
- Cemetery walks combined with history
- Day hike leader for new hikers who may feel timid about venturing on the trail on their own
- First Nations legends
- Picnic baskets from local restaurants
- Go into community centres and invite locals to come and learn about tides, the fishing industry, geology, history, etc
- Lighted walk along the trail
- Tours: school, old bank, shipyard park
- Benches along the river- local mill Guy Russell
- Signage to direct people to washrooms, food, retail
- Benches along the trail
- Interpretation of agriculture- community pasture
- Interpretive panels- shipbuilding, wharves, school
- Accessible senior tandem bike rentals in partnership with Forestdale Home

Based on the brainstorming session with the participants in the workshop it is clear that there is a tremendous amount of opportunity for partnerships and experiences to encourage people to get off the trail and spend extra in the surrounding communities. Below are a variety of hypothetical scenarios and opportunities that could help to connect some of the diverse ideas that the participants provided.

Possible Scenarios

Think of these as “recipes” to assist you in developing your partnership opportunities. There really is no wrong way to develop your partnership scenarios however have a good mix of experiences to make it well balanced.

- Within the Village of Riverside-Albert
 - Local Restaurant
 - Local Accommodation
 - Local Artisan

= Unique partnership that could keep people in the region for an extra day

- Within the region
 - Local Restaurant
 - Experiential business outside of the town
 - Local shuttle driver

= Unique partnership that allows businesses not directly on the trail to benefit from the trail

Here are some other potential partnership opportunities to consider:

- Food and beverage are a motivating factor for many tourists. Partnering with food producers and local restaurateurs, a seasonal offering can be provided for residents and tourists alike that feature local products and can be eaten at the restaurant or taken as a picnic lunch. One restaurant in each community could be engaged to do this and work together to create unique menu options- this would be a great community building opportunity and unique to the region.
- A unique community partnership to engage local residents might be to work with the various libraries throughout the pilot area to offer a “bike lending program”. If a person has a library card, they could “take out a bike” like they would for a book for specific period of time (2 hours, half a day, etc). This idea was taken from initiative that the Wolfville (NS) Public Library. Bikes could either be donated by businesses or a partnership could be developed with the RCMP. Libraries (or community centres) could also have backpacks available with binoculars, field guides, etc to encourage more families to get out on the trail.
- The Breweries in the region could develop a “themed beer” for the Trail. This has been done in various regions: Saltbox Brewing Company in Mahone Bay (NS) has a beer named “Dynamite Trail Ale” (Dynamite Trail is part of the larger Rum Runner Destination Trail), Port Rexton Brewing in the Bonavista Peninsula (NL) has a beer called the “Skervink Haze” (the Skervink Trail is a hiking trail in the Bonavista Peninsula) and Brasseux D’La Cote in Tracadie has created the “Velorousse” based on the Veloroute de la Peninsule acadienne.
- A local Bed & Breakfast could partner with a restaurant to offer a bagged lunch for their guests to take out on the trail

Here are some potential business diversification ideas:

- An existing Inn or B & B could make their establishment more desirable for the cyclist by adding a bicycle storage locker with a cleaning & repair station. They could also provide a

high carb bagged lunch that guests could order the day before & it would be ready at breakfast for them to take for the day

- Restaurants could offer special meals on the menus for people who are travelling long-distances. Perhaps some high carb options or “gourmet picnic lunches” to take on their hike or bike ride.
- Walking sticks and trail mix could be available in hotels rooms for people to take with them when they are out birding along the trail.
- Tie into local festivals- there could be a unique opportunity to connect community trails to the festivals and create an “on-trail” component

What does all of this mean for the Region?

It is clear that with a bit of creativity and forward-thinking individuals and businesses, the region has makings of a strong Trail Town. Does the region have everything? No, not yet; but through innovative partnerships and diversifying what an existing business offers, the region has the ability to meet the needs of the trail tourists. As more people begin to come to the region to use the trail, the region will be able to improve and expand the offerings. It will, however, be important to have a vision established for the future and not left to react when the region can no longer meet the demand of the trail users. A plan will need to be developed that clearly articulates the way forward and how it integrates other initiatives such as the Regional Destination Development Strategy.

It is also important to realize that this is not simply for the benefit of the trail tourist. By positioning the community/region as a Trail Town, it also helps to improve the quality of life for the residents of the region. It also becomes appealing to people who are looking for a much more relaxed and laid-back way of living in a region that provides access to the natural environment and cultural experiences, while also providing them with the key amenities that they are looking for.

What’s Next for Community Trail Planning:

- Community Engagement Workshop to review the final draft document and plan "how", "when" and "where" trail activities in the spring/summer and fall roll out
- Reaching to local organizations to invite a partnership to engage specifically with businesses in the area on capacity building opportunities to support leveraging the trail for their benefit
- Draft a long-term plan for future trail development in the area
- Align with the Regional Destination Development Strategy

Trailhead Signage

There was also a need to discuss the trailhead signs that will be installed along the Shepody Trail section of the Shore Line Trail. Just like engaging the community in the development of a strong trail economy, it is also important to engage the community in the development of amenities along the trail.

Trailhead signage is a critical component of any trail. It serves as a source of information for trail users and includes information such as the length of the trail, difficulty, trail surface, authorized users, information about the local community and interpretive information about things along the trail. Trailheads also serve as a meeting place for trail users and are typically located at a key spot along the trail where people can park and set off on their adventure. These sites should also include ample parking to unload gear, washroom facilities and garbage cans. Plan 360 has funding available to fabricate two trailheads for the Shepody Trail and they are looking to the community to assist in identifying the appropriate location of the trailhead and the information that should be included on it.

Potential Locations:

The two identified locations by Plan 360 are the Community Centre and the Covered Bridge. Although these are not the ideal locations, it was decided that they would be placed in these locations this year, however when the opportunity arises to install additional trailheads (or potentially move these) other locations such as: the school, Harvey Dam, the Municipal Park and Broadleaf.

Trailhead Content:

Beyond the general trail information that must be included on the trailhead, there was a discussion regarding the additional content that should be included on the sign. Through quite a bit of discussion it was determined that rather than clutter the signage with information that would need to be updated on a regular basis it was eventually decided that a QR code directing people to a website that is already being populated on a regular basis with community events and has a community service directory that includes businesses and services locations and hours of operation. This ensures that people will have access to up-to-date information, and it does not create another job for somebody.

Timeline for Development and Installation

- Trailhead signage design – Mid-February
- Installation of Trailhead – End of May
- Potential Trailhead Opening Celebration- National Trails Day - June 4th, 2022

Appendix A: Shepody and Surrounding Trails

Riverside Albert has the potential to be transformed into a trail hub for the region. In order to get the group thinking about the potential of the area, they were asked to consider the following questions.

- What are some of the existing trails in the region?
- Who are currently using these trails?
- Do you have plans for additional trails to be developed in the area?
- How do these trails connect and interact with each other?

The group of participants on Zoom were able to do some initial brainstorming with respect to the trails in the region and potential opportunities for the future. It will be important to revisit this conversation in the future and to develop a full inventory on current and future trails in the area.

Shepody Trails & Surrounding Area

What are some of the existing trails in the region?

- Dennis Beach
- Broadleaf Trails
- Trails at Hopewell Rocks Prov. Park
- Shoreline Trail Hillsborough
- Fundy Footpath!
- Snowmobile, ATV trails
- White Rock Recreational Area
- Dobson Trail
- Green Snake
- Greys Brook Hillsborough
- Mary's Point
- Two Rivers

How do these trails connect and interact with each other?

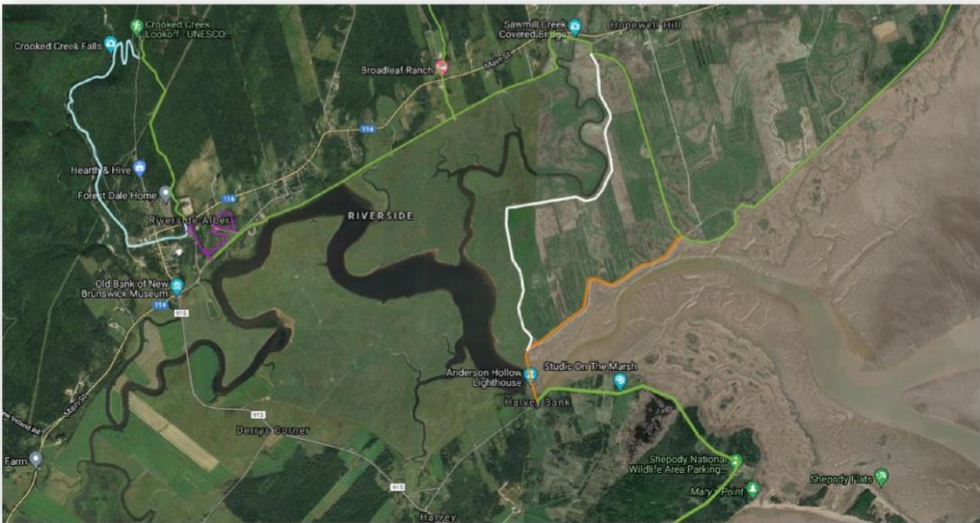
- Fundy Footpath and Dobson Trail thru FNP
- The Great Trail (TCT)
- The White Rock Trail system will connect closely to the Shoreline trail
- Green Snake via School St in Alma
- Increased traffic through the area with the completion of the Fundy Trail Parkway

Do you have plans for additional trails to be developed in the area?

- Old Great Road to Albert Mines Road
- It has been suggested that Hillsborough could develop loop trails in the marsh area that would add to the Shoreline trail
- I understand there is some idea of creating some trails off the new connector road

Who are currently using these trails?

- Hikers, Snowshoers, Mountain Bikers, Dog Walkers, Orienteering groups
- Local Residents!!!
- Some tourists ask us to recommend trails outside FNP
- People from Greater Moncton



Appendix B: A Snapshot of the Economic Impact* of Greenway Trails

Trail Name	Economic Impact	Notes
Niagara Region of Ontario	\$229 average spending by cyclists staying one or more nights (does not include accommodation) in 2012 Source: Stats Canada	Approximately 98,000 cyclists visited Niagara with 97.8% staying overnight
Fredericton Trails, NB	\$6.6M annual spending (2017) Source: Gardner Pinfold	88km trail network- primarily designed as rail-trail/footpath
Veloroute des Bleuets	7.8M estimated tourist spending (2016) Source: Grant Thornton	256km route, spending by individual estimated to be \$281.40
Confederation Trail, PEI	\$2.7 million based on survey data from 3 of 79 access points (2012) Source: Gardner Pinfold	140km linear rail-trail
Rum Runners Trail	\$4.2 million (2016) Source: Gardner Pinfold	119km rail-trail. Average user spending \$780/person
NB Trails Network	\$12.8 million (2016) Source: Gardner Pinfold	Based on a review of 12 trails ranging from wilderness hiking to long distance cycling to cross country skiing

* It is important to note that the measurement tools used to develop economic impacts are not consistent between trails. Therefore, it becomes difficult to compare between each of the trails- some place more emphasis on indirect spending (taxes, job creation) while others focus on direct spending (Food & Beverage sales, hotel nights). All that to be said these numbers, regardless of the data they are measuring, indicate that there is certainly a tremendous economic impact by capitalizing on the trail economy.

Appendix C: Demographics of the Potential Trail User

There will be a wide variety of users on the Shepody Trail, however from a tourism development perspective we have identified 2 user types that will bring the greatest economic impact. It is also important to note that this trail is best suited for these user groups- from the relatively flat grade for cyclists to accessing to some of the best birding sites in the province for birders.

Snapshot of a Bicycle Tourist

- 54% women & 46% men
- 61% between the ages of 45 to 64 years of age
- 41% stayed for 3-4 nights on their visit
- 55% graduated university and 34% had a household salary > \$100,000
- 58% stayed in either a hotel or inn
- 64% travelled specifically to cycle the trail
- Top 3 activities beside cycling: visiting museums, beaches and outdoor activities (paddling, fishing, golf, etc)

Snapshot of an Eco-Tourist (Birder)

- *Age:* 35-54 years old (we feel that this number is not accurate. There is limited data on the “eco-tourist” and much of it is out of date. Based on a general assessment of a variety of data, it is likely broader, meaning reaching into the 70s and younger millennials as well).
- *Gender:* 50% female & 50% male (although varied based on activity)
- *Education:* 82% were college graduates
- *Average Expenditure:* willing to pay up to \$1000-\$1500/trip
- *General:*
 - 60% prefer to travel as a couple