

Developing Ecotourism in Dane County

Conceived by Sustain Dane in collaboration with The Greater Madison Visitors' Bureau



Presented to:

Bryant Moroder of Sustain Dane
December 2004

Presented by:

Al Johnson
Lindsay Perlen
Matt Simo
Blare Skinner

Table of Contents

Sustain Dane and Ecotourism.....	1
Developing Ecotourism in Dane County.....	1
Recommendations.....	2
Additional Recommendations for Future Development.....	7
Conclusion.....	8

Sustain Dane and Ecotourism

Sustain Dane is non-profit organization dedicated to transforming Dane County into a more sustainable community. Conceived in 1998, the group gained official non-profit status in February 2003. The founders of Sustain Dane were inspired by eco-municipalities in Sweden, a network of communities with the shared goal of creating a sustainable society, to work towards creating a similar system in Dane County. Sustain Dane takes a practical approach to sustainable development by creating awareness and promoting community-driven change. The ultimate goal of the organization is to empower the Dane County community to function as the Midwest's first eco-municipality.

In order to achieve this goal, Sustain Dane takes a holistic approach by targeting not only Dane County residents, but also visitors to the community. In order to present the principles of sustainability to area visitors, Sustain Dane is working to develop a framework for ecotourism in Dane County. The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." This includes finding ways for visitors to:

- Minimize impact
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate
- Support international human rights and labor agreements

The significant environmental and social impact of tourists on the local community makes ecotourism a relevant concern for this organization. Creative and active promotion of sustainable alternatives for visitors to Dane County will positively impact sustainable business development and encourage tourists to make positive changes both here and at home.

Developing Ecotourism in Dane County

Sustain Dane requested a detailed list of the components that define the actions of a good eco-tourist in order to develop a system of ecotourism in Dane County. Sustain Dane wanted to present the ideas of sustainability in a way that would be accessible to visitors of Dane County, as well as to a general community of travelers. To do so, Sustain Dane asked that we develop a comprehensive list of general behavioral recommendations and easy ways to implement them in Dane County. It is Sustain Dane's belief that this list would be presented in the form of a brochure: an accessible and easily distributed means of communication. The brochure would include tips for visitors to easily minimize their environmental impacts while maximizing their social contributions to the community.

Given Sustain Dane's vision for reducing the ecological impact of tourist activities, we began the design process for the brochure. We initially identified the major needs of a visitor to the Madison area. These needs included things to do, things to see, places to eat, places to stay and how to get around. Taking these requirements into consideration, relevant Dane county businesses and services were listed in conjunction with one of the previously identified needs. Additionally, tips and suggestions that would both educate and motivate an average traveler to try sustainable activities were described in an appealing way.

Recommendations

We submitted the following to Sustain Dane and the Greater Madison Visitors' Bureau for review to be included in the brochure, along with a letter of welcome from Mayor Dave Cieslewicz:

Be Good to the Earth While Exploring Madison and Dane County!

In this brochure, you will find many great ways to spend your time in Madison while minimizing your ecological footprint (your personal impact on the environment). At the same time, the tips offered below will make your trip to Madison an educational one. You can experience all that Madison has to offer while contributing to the conservation of water, energy and best of all, the planet. We hope you enjoy your stay in Madison.

Conserve resources at your hotel:

Making a considerate choice of where you stay is an easy way to decrease your impact on the environment.

Request an environmentally friendly room. Many hotel rooms now offer special features such as low-flow showers and toilets, energy-efficient lights, and recycling bins. Some offer soap and lotion dispensers rather than individual bottles, creating less waste. If your hotel does not currently offer these options, encourage the manager to consider them.

Hang on to your linens and hit the light. Ask the housekeeping staff to leave the same linens in your room throughout your stay. Many hotels provide this option in order to save water and

energy. Also, be sure to turn off the lights and television whenever you leave your hotel room. This is an easy way to decrease the hotel's total energy consumption.

Plan ahead. For your next visit, consider planning ahead to find environmentally friendly lodging. One option is the Arbor House Environmental Inn, an award-winning model of sustainable tourism. Visit their website at www.arbor-house.com, or call 608.238.2981 for more information.

Explore environmentally friendly dining options:

You will likely be eating many meals in restaurants or at your hotel. There are many ways to meet your dining needs and maintain a minimal ecological footprint at the same time.

Use it again and lighten up. Whenever it is possible, opt for reusable dishes and utensils. If a hotel or restaurant serves meals on paper, plastic, or Styrofoam, request non-disposable dishes to prevent sending additional waste to landfills. Likewise, eliminate excess packaging waste by choosing to dine out rather than taking food back to your hotel or having it delivered. If you do carry out, lighten up—take only the napkins and utensils you need, pass on straws, and put condiments on your food before leaving the restaurant.

Eat smart, eat local. Madison has many excellent restaurants, several of which serve fresh Wisconsin meats, cheeses and produce. When you support local restaurants and farmers, more of your dollar stays in the community. Not only will you be helping the environment, you will also get to enjoy the Madison cultural experience and perhaps make some new friends. We recommend the following restaurants, all of which use local produce in their menu offerings:

Harvest Restaurant (608.255.6075, 21 N. Pinkney St.) features fine dining inspired by French and American cuisines and prepared with locally grown, organic ingredients. Offerings include fresh fish, naturally raised beef and lamb, and seasonal produce.

Peacemeal Restaurant (608.251.7687, 115 State St.) is a cooperatively owned vegetarian restaurant that is committed to serving exquisite meals produced in a socially responsible manner. The menu features locally grown organic produce, and all items on the menu can be prepared for a vegan diet.

L'Etoile (608.251.0500, 27 N. Pinkney St.) is a fine dining restaurant with seasonal menus inspired by the Midwest region and rendered with a French influence. The culinary options remain creative, delicious and regionally reliant, even in the coldest months.

Nature's Bakery (608.262.9036, 1019 Williamson St.) specializes in organic whole grain baked goods. Stop in for healthy, whole-grain breads, granola, cookies, calzones, and vegetarian burgers.

Magic Mill (608.238.2630, 2862 University Ave.) is a natural foods store featuring a 100% vegetarian deli, including soup, sandwiches and a salad bar.

For more suggestions on other independently owned restaurants working to preserve Madison's unique local flavor, refer to Madison Originals <http://www.madisonoriginals.org/>.

Local cafes offer coffee with a conscience:

Madison is an exciting city with lots to see, including many great local coffee shops. Be sure to try their delicious organic and fair-trade options.

Caffeinate with a conscience. If you need a break or just a quick pick-me-up, we recommend the following cafes:

Catacombs Coffee Shop (608.257.3025, 731 State St.)
Mother Fools' Coffee House (608.259.1301, 1101 Williamson St.)
Electric Earth (608.255.2310, 546 W. Washington Ave.)
Fair Trade Coffee House (608.268.0477, 418 State St.)
Michelangelo's Coffee House (608.251.5299, 114 State St.)

Lug your mug. Another way to reduce your ecological footprint is to bring your own mug to coffee shops. Not only is this a great way to reduce waste, many Madison-area cafes offer a \$.10—\$.25 discount when you bring our own mug.

Shopping for local, sustainable products:

Buying goods that are produced locally cuts down on the amount of energy and other resources used in shipping, while keeping a larger percentage of each dollar circulating within the Madison area.

Pack your sack. While shopping for souvenirs and other items, you may quickly acquire an excess of plastic bags. Avoid plastic shopping bag dilemmas by bringing your own reusable bag. Forget yours at home? Pick up a canvas bag in a local shop and bring it back as a souvenir!

Keep it in the community. Purchase locally produced or fair trade goods and services whenever possible. Locally owned and operated businesses are more likely to donate to local causes and organizations. For more information on the benefits of buying locally, visit Sustainable Table's website (www.sustainabletable.org/issues/buylocal).

Care for the community. Say "yes" to CHIP! Community CHIP is a fundraising program that supports groups committed to making Madison and greater Dane County a better place to live and visit. CHIP is a voluntary 1% donation of your total bill...a small amount that goes a long way.

Fresh from the farm. The season's best bounty of organic vegetables, flowers, and specialty products from approximately 300 vendors can be found at Dane County Farmers' Market every Saturday from early morning to mid afternoon. The market is held on Capital Square from May to November, moving inside to Monona Terrace during the winter months. Call 608.455.1999 for details.

Shop co-op. Grocery cooperatives offer an extensive collection of organic, free range and fair trade food options. The Williamson Street Cooperative (608.251.6776, 1221 Williamson St.) is Madison's largest co-op and has been in business since 1973. Dedicated to supporting sustainable food initiatives through community reinvestment grants, the Willy Street, Regent Street (608.233.4329, 2136 Regent) and Mifflin Street Co-ops (608.215.5899, 32 N. Bassett) are a must-see for visitors to Madison.

One man's trash... Visit the Full Circle Galleria (608.250.4787, 920 East Johnson St.) to see art and collectables made from recycled materials.

Travel green:

Making thoughtful choices of how you get around is also an easy way to decrease your impact on the environment.

How about a hybrid? If you need to rent a car, ask for a hybrid or fuel-efficient vehicle. Choose the vehicle that meets your needs but has the lowest emissions.

Travel by bus. An economic and efficient way to travel, Madison's Metro system has a reach that stretches both east and west from the Capital. Taking the bus is a great way to cut down on parking hassles, the stress of trying to navigate a new city, and greenhouse gas emissions. Schedules and maps can be found at most bus shelters, check online at <http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/metro/metro.html> or call 608.266.4466.

Rent a bicycle. Madison's easy to travel and well-kept bike paths are a great way to get around the city and see places that you may otherwise miss. Bike racks are plentiful, just don't forget to rent a lock so you can stop to explore. Bike can easily be rented at several locations in the city, listed below. Be sure to pick up a complimentary bike map, or get one online at <http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/transp/Bicycle/BikeMap/BikeMap.html>.

Budget Bicycle Center (608.251.1663, 930 Regent St.) features the Red Bikes Project which allows you to put down a deposit and borrow a bicycle for as long as you need.

Williamson Bicycle Works & Fitness (608.255.5292, 640 W. Washington Ave.) offers brand new bikes for \$12/day.

Yellow Jersey (608.257.4737, 419 State Street) rents durable mountain bikes for half days, overnight or full weekend excursions.

Share a ride. If you need to catch a cab, you can get around while meeting locals using the share ride services of Badger Cab (608.256.5566), which guarantees low prices and great service in their propane-powered taxis. For more info, go to <http://www.badgercab.com/>.

Get help when you need it. Better World Club (866.304.7540) offers an alternative roadside assistance service comparable to AAA, and they offer the only bicycle roadside assistance

program. They also donate 1% of annual revenues to environmental causes. Visit www.betterworldclub.com for more details.

Enjoy activities with low environmental impact:

Madison offers a variety of outdoor activities, from hiking and biking to paddling and skiing. No matter what time of year you visit, there is always something to do outside.

Get out and about. University of Wisconsin Arboretum is a short distance from downtown Madison. Whether you are looking for an educational tour or just want to wander the beautiful outdoors, the 1,280-acre arboretum offers free walking tours lead by expert naturalists. For trail maps and tour schedules, call 608.262.7888 or visit <http://wiscinfo.doit.wisc.edu/arboretum>.

Take pleasure from plants. Olbrich Botanical Gardens is a local treasure that celebrates the importance of plants in a sustainable world. The gardens showcase the Bolz Conservatory and an ornate Thai Pavilion that is the only one of its kind in the continental United States. The Bolz Conservatory is home to exotic plants from around the world, a rushing waterfall, free-flying birds, and for one month of the year, thousands of colorful butterflies. Visit www.olbrich.org or call 608.246.4550 for more information.

Go for a hike. A great trip for the adventurous is a hike along a 1000-mile scenic footpath on the edge of the most recent continental glaciation. Walk the Ice Age Trail to experience a variety of ecosystems, including ancient Native American effigy mounds and crystal lakes. For more information, check out www.icegetrail.org.

Hit the water. Go paddling in Madison's extensive system of lakes and rivers, which are perfect for spending a few hours (or days!) exploring. Canoes and kayaks can be rented at many area locations. Try Rutabaga (608.223.9300, 220 W. Broadway Rd.), UW Hooper Outdoor Rentals (608.262.1630, Memorial Union), or Watertrail Adventures (608.206.1834, 2158 Atwood Ave.) for reasonably priced rentals.

Play in the powder. Cross-country skis and snowshoes can be rented at Fontana Sports Specialties (608.257.5043, 251 State St.) and used on many trails in the Madison area, including many of the trails in the UW Arboretum.

E-way all the way. The Nine Springs E-Way is a terrific place for hiking or paddling. This seven mile environmental corridor is home to wetlands, restored prairies, farms and parks. Visit www.vicsite.com/Eway/home for more information.

Play with a purpose. The Madison Children's Museum (608.256.6445, 100 State St.) is a great place to take your kids! Not only is it a fun place to learn, the museum is also dedicated to sustainable building practices.

Annual environmental and sustainability events:

Madison offers many annual events featuring sustainability and the environment. Consider coming back for these if you get the chance!

Renewable Energy and Sustainable Living Fair (July 17-19, 2005).
http://www.the-mrea.org/energy_fair

R.E.A.P. (Research, Education, Action and Policy on Food Group) Food For Thought Festival (Mid-September, 2005) <http://www.reapfoodgroup.org/>

Madison Audubon's Prairies Jubilee (Late September, 2005)
<http://www.madisonaudubon.org/audubon/>

Earth Charter Community Summit (Early October, 2005) <http://www.earthchartersummits.org/>

Habitat ReStore's Earth Day Event (Mid-Late April, 2005)
<http://www.restoredane.org>

When you are finished with these and other brochures, please return them to the place where you picked them up, to the Greater Madison's Visitors Bureau, or pass them on to a friend!

For more information, contact Sustain Dane at 608.819.0689 or visit our website at www.sustaindane.org.

Additional Recommendations for Future Development

In order to achieve Sustain Dane's ultimate goal of creating a viable system of ecotourism in Dane County, it is necessary to further develop these ideas and increase their exposure. To do so, we recommend that Sustain Dane explore alternative outlets for increasing community and visitor awareness in Dane County. Recommendations include:

- As an expansion on the brochure, create an online database. This database would provide general information to travelers on waste reduction, resource conservation, low impact activities, means of travel and ways to positively impact the communities that they visit. It would also provide a list of extended recommendations for Dane County-specific businesses, services and activities.
- Create community dialogue on ecotourism by incorporating this topic into the Northwest Earth Institute discussion courses. In the past, the discussion courses have proven to be an effective way for Sustain Dane to increase community awareness and inspire community action.
- Create a recognizable "Sustainability Network" of local businesses and organizations that support the efforts of Sustain Dane to create a viable system of ecotourism. This network would enable tourists to make environmentally and socially responsible decisions with minimal effort, as businesses and organizations within the network would be easily discerned from other options.

- Facilitate a relationship between the Sustainability Network and the greater Dane County community in order to extend support and awareness of sustainability issues and encourage ecotourism support amongst those not already included in the network.

Conclusion

These recommendations provide a first step for Sustain Dane in its quest to develop ecotourism in Madison. By promoting environmentally and socially responsible actions for visitors, Sustain Dane comes one step closer to developing Dane County as the Midwest's first eco-municipality. These recommendations will be provided to the Sustain Dane and the Greater Madison Visitor's Bureau for consideration.