

Community Focus Statement A: Provide economic development opportunities that capitalize on the natural environment, attract visitors, and provide entertainment for residents.

Action Statement A.1: Establish a marketing strategy to promote the natural environment and associated activities to encourage the eco-tourism businesses (e.g. snow-related, parasailing, off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails, hiking, etc.).

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Benchmark: Run an effective marketing strategy centered on local ecotourism.

Champion: Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

Estimated Cost: \$20,000 and up



recreational opportunities.

Eco-tourism opportunities in the Hilltop communities. Photo source: Mitch Barrie

Ecotourism is defined by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.” Mountain areas such as the Hilltop communities provide numerous opportunities to explore the relatively untouched natural environment and take advantage of various summer- and winter-based recreational opportunities. Currently the Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce produces a list of all businesses that are registered with the Chamber. There is little information regarding businesses with a focus on environmental preservation or

Part of attracting businesses to an area for ecotourism-related activities is having the resources available to promote the area as a tourism hotspot. Similar to the process for attracting any type of business, the more information that can be provided for potential investors, the higher the likelihood of consideration during the site selection process. One issue is that tourism-related businesses must also be versatile so as to not negatively impact the economy during the off-season. Marketing strategies must show that the tourism industry is strong enough in the Hilltop communities to support permanent establishments, as opposed to seasonal ones.

Outside resources, such as the Practical Steps for Marketing Tourism Certification handbook from TIES, are available to help areas foster, legitimize, and promote environmentally friendly businesses. These certifications not only provide advertising materials for businesses, they set strategies and objectives to enhance the amenities of the area. Important steps in assessing and growing tourism-related businesses to create an increase in tourist activity include the following:

- Conducting a market analysis of existing conditions
- Organizing stakeholders from the community, from residents to nonprofit leaders and decision-makers

- Easing requirements and providing resources to guide business owners through regulatory difficulties, including how to acquire benefits and use permits
- Establishing a clear marketing plan to pursue companies or recreational areas that are deemed to have the most potential benefit for the community
- Focusing on creating effective and informational policies and procedures

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Hold a meeting and create a committee.	Champion		Practical Steps for Marketing Tourism Certification, Center for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development
2. Conduct a market analysis of existing ecotourism conditions, including a study of opportunities for local growth in ecotourism and marketing potential for local ecotourism activities.	Committee with Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Months 1 – 6	http://www.ecotourism.org/sites/ecotourism.org/files/document/Certification/Ecotourism%20Handbook%20III%20-%20Practical%20steps%20for%20Marketing%20Tourism%20Certification.pdf
3. Create resources to assist new and expanding local businesses in growing local ecotourism.	Committee Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Months 1 – 6	Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce http://www.runningspringschamber.com/
4. Gather community input on areas to designate as ecotourism hotspots and compile information.	Committee with Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Month 7 – On-going	Green Valley Lake http://www.green-valley-lake.com/
5. Monitor the effectiveness of local marketing and ecotourism growth in the Hilltop communities, and revise the campaigns as needed.	Committee with Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Month 13 – on-going	Ecotourism – What is Ecotourism https://www.ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism
6. Compile and make available information on existing spaces, tourism statistics (visitors, activities), permitting processes, and a market analysis report if available.	Committee Running Springs Area Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Month 13 – on-going	Handbook for Marketing Tourism http://www.ecotourism.org/sites/ecotourism.org/files/document/Certification/Ecotourism%20Handbook%20III%20-%20Practical%20steps%20for%20Marketing%20Tourism%20Certification.pdf Ecotourism Meetups – Marketing Workshop Information https://cdn-az.allevents.in/banners/c2e9add65b85a199aa4499c705986f3e