

Community Focus Statement C: Build human capital and promote enterprise, with a focus on environmentally friendly businesses, to strengthen the local economy and provide opportunities for residents and families to be self-reliant.

Action Statement C.5: Identify barriers to and implement solutions for building environmentally sensitive recreational businesses (including mountain biking, rock climbing, model plane and drone flying, and high-altitude field training) on publicly owned land.

C5

Benchmark: Achieve prosperity for environmentally sensitive recreational businesses in the Bear Valley area.

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

Estimated Cost: \$15,000–\$50,000



The Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition is a major advocate for the establishment and growth of ecotourism businesses in the Bear Valley communities. Photo source: [Big Bear Ecotourism](#)

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 Bear Valley communities offer numerous opportunities to explore the relatively untouched natural environment and take advantage of various seasonal recreational opportunities. Currently, ecotourism efforts in the area are facilitated by Big Bear Valley Ecotourism, a group of organizations, agencies, and local citizens which formed the Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition. The coalition highlights verified businesses that have met a set of criteria for responsible practices.

A critical component of expanding existing and attracting new ecotourism-related businesses oriented toward guiding, training, and outfitting obstacles is to overcome challenges. Entrepreneurs in Bear Valley contend with problems related to permitting, environmental clearances, funding, the labor force, and other start-up challenges. The Ecotourism Coalition and the Big Bear Lake Tourism Business Improvement District are examples of local organizations that could work to address those issues. They could work with the USFS San Bernardino National Forest to develop a strategy to alleviate such barriers in the national forest. They could work with local schools to develop educational programs for potential employees. They could also work with local banks and investors to fund promising business concepts.

Another important part of attracting new ecotourism-related businesses is having resources available to promote the area as a tourism hot spot. Similar to the process for attracting any type of business, the more information that can be provided for potential investors, the greater the likelihood of consideration during the site selection process.



Marketing strategies must show that the tourism industry is strong enough in the Bear Valley 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 material for businesses, they set strategies and objectives to enhance the services available within the area. Important steps in assessing and growing tourism-related businesses to create an increase in tourist activity include:

- Conducting a market analysis of existing conditions.
- Organizing community stakeholders, including residents, nonprofit leaders, and decision-makers.
- Easing requirements and supplying 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. Bring local businesses together to form a Team | Champion | Month 1 | Ecotourism Handbook, Center for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development http://www.ecotourism.org/sites/ecotourism.org/files/document/Certification/Ecotourism%20Handbook%20III%20-%20Practical%20steps%20for%20Marketing%20Tourism%20Certification.pdf Big Bear Valley Ecotourism http://bigbearcotourism.org/ Ecotourism.org https://www.ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism Big Bear Chamber of Commerce http://www.bigbearchamber.com/ San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency http://www.sbcountyadvantage.com/home.aspx |
| 2. Expand the function of the Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition. | Team with Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition, local businesses | Month 1, on-going | |
| 3. Convene stakeholders, with an emphasis on locals who have interest in establishing or expanding business. Identify barriers and develop resources to support new and expanded ecotourism businesses. | Team with Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition, local businesses | Months 1 – 3 | |
| 4. Conduct a market analysis of existing conditions to identify and describe opportunities to expand existing or develop new types of sustainable recreation. | Team with Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition, Big Bear Chamber of Commerce in consultation with the San Bernardino Economic Development Agency | Months 4 – 12 | |
| 5. Partner with groups conducting economic development activities to support an increase in recreational business activities. | Team with Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition, Big Bear Chamber of Commerce | Month 4, on-going | |
| 6. Create a marketing plan to attract new ecotourism businesses to Bear Valley. | Team with Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition, Big Bear Chamber of Commerce in consultation with the San Bernardino Economic Development Agency | Months 13 – 17 | |
| 7. Revise resources as appropriate. | Team with Big Bear Valley Ecotourism Coalition, local businesses | Month 13, on-going | |