

SCOMM

83:2

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TOURISM

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX V, JUNEAU 99811
(907) 465-2973



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, House Special Committee
on International Trade and Tourism

FROM: Representative Tom Moyer *TGM*

DATE: January 29, 1992

RE: Tourism Overview committee hearing

I wanted to remind you that we have an ITT committee meeting scheduled for Thursday, January 30, at 5 p.m. in Room C-17. Conn Murray, the new executive director of the Division of Tourism, and Tina Lindgren, executive director of the Alaska Tourism Marketing Council (ATMC), will present overviews of their agencies.

A preliminary report by the McDowell Group on tourism statistics for 1991 should be available within the next week. I'm sure that both Mr. Murray and Ms. Lindgren will speak to the findings of this report.

If you have questions or comments please contact me or Alexis Miller of my staff at 465-2973.

Experts see record year for tourism

By DEAN FOSDICK
The Associated Press

Despite the nationwide recession, tourism in Alaska appears likely to set records again next year, with cruise ships booked solid and the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Highway drawing adventure-minded motorists.

Tourism has been on an upward swing for years in Alaska, which is perceived as a relatively safe area immune from the violence and currency fluctuations of many foreign countries, officials said.

More than 629,000 people toured Alaska during the summer of 1990, a 12.6 percent gain over the 559,300 who toured the state the previous year, according to the McDowell Group, a consulting firm that compiles visitor numbers for the state Division of Tourism.

Visitor totals for 1991 were not yet available, but it appears the trend is up again, said Mary Klugherz, a McDowell

Please see Page B-2, TOURISM

ADN 12-29-91

TOURISM: Visitors expected to bring banner year

Continued from Page B-1

Group consultant in Ketchikan.

"Nothing solid yet, but things are looking good," said Klugherz, who was working on '91 visitation totals Friday.

"We had a lot of things going for us this year despite the (recessed) economic situation in the Lower 48," she said.

"1992 is a good question. I think it's going to be a solid year for Alaska, but I don't think we'll see the dramatic gains we've made in the past few years.

"The recession has affected certain sections of the country — certain socio-economic pockets — but it hasn't affected everybody. Still, it affects consumer confidence.

"Travel is discretionary and many trips or trip decisions are delayed," Klugherz said. "That's not to say people will put off Alaska this year but it could have some effect."

Alaska has a lot of positives that should help stem

concerns about the country's lingering recession, she said.

"It's (Alaska) a domestic destination, safe. And there's a growing move toward eco-tourism, something of a buzz word in the industry now."

There is no official definition of eco-tourism, she said, but it generally consists of at least two basic elements.

"There's the appeal of the outdoors, nature and the wilderness. People appreciating the beauty of untouched land.

"The other aspect of eco-tourism talked about in some circles is environmentally sound tourism. Going into a fragile area and not damaging it.

"Alaska has all that in spades."

Wendy Wolfe, the state's assistant tourism director, said new travel incentives also are helping to boost the number of visitors to Alaska.

"We had 4,000 Japanese go up to Fairbanks last year and see the northern lights," Wolfe said. "We expect more independent travelers on the (Alaska) highway next sum-

mer because of the 50th anniversary year.

What originally was called the Alcan Highway is a 1,522-mile overland route between Dawson Creek, British Columbia, and Delta Junction, where it connects with the Richardson Highway to Fairbanks.

Starting in March 1942, it was carved through rugged, unmapped wilderness by U.S. and Canadian troops and civilians who worked in conditions ranging from insect swarms in summer to 79-degree-below-zero cold in winter.

It was built in just eight months, for the most part to help counter the invasion threat posed by the Japanese occupation of Attu and Kiska in the Aleutians.

"Organizers are hoping they'll get an extra 30,000 visitors in 1992 because of the road promotions," Wolfe said.

And then there's the cruise-ship industry, which continues breaking passenger records on seven- and 10-day Alaska runs.

"Bookings are up," said Julie Benson, public rela-

tions director for Princess Cruises in Vancouver, British Columbia. "We anticipate another sold-out year."

"We're going up to 73 from 69 departures next year," said Richard Skinner, public relations director for Holland America Lines in Seattle. "Last year, we carried 103,500 people in a four-month period, a record.

"Knock on wood, but our early bookings are tracking slightly ahead of last year," Skinner said. "That's surprising, because the cruise industry is having the same (recession-related) troubles as everywhere else.

"But the bright spot is Alaska. That continues to have appeal."

Alaska offers a diverse kind of travel experience that you can't find anywhere else in the world, Skinner said.

"I think what you're looking at is some hangover from weakness of the dollar in Europe. The safety factor is definitely there. Alaskans speak English, use American currency, those kinds of nice things."