

# Well-planned tourist program could assist county economy

By John Hart  
Of the Emerald

**Editor's Note:** This is the first in a two-part series on tourism in Lane County. Today's article looks at possible positive and negative effects. The second article will explore what is being done to promote tourist attractions and what some of those attractions are.

Lane County residents are in financial trouble, and "outsiders" might be able to alleviate that trouble.

Tourism can stimulate economic recovery in Lane County and generate additional job opportunities for area residents, according to its local supporters. But promotion efforts can only be effective through community awareness and support, they add.

Hampering the ability for organizations to look to tourism as the much-needed spurt to employment is chronic underfunding. With more funds available to the organizations encouraging tourism, the county's job market would dramatically improve.

Because tourism is a "clean industry," the Eugene-Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau believes an increase will improve the quality of life for residents and as well encourage businesses looking to this area for re-location or expansion, says convention coordinator Jamie Brothers.

The immediate availability of people with service-oriented skills makes tourism the most viable approach to tackling the slumping job market, says Dick Reynolds, executive director of the Performing Arts Center.

Eugene City Councilor Cynthia Wooten says the ramifications of developing "destination point activities" here will have a long range of effects.

The idea of "destination point activities" is to provide travelers with satisfying entertainment to occupy them while visiting this area.

"The city is beautiful and friendly, and tourism is definitely a major part of our economic recovery," Wooten says.

But she says she realizes the area cannot depend on tourism as the single antidote for its economic ills.

Tourism can be used, however, as a means to introduce potential business and industrial firms to Eugene's business climate and quality of life, Wooten says.

No major opposition to promoting local recreation and business opportunities outside the immediate area has surfaced. However, many take a cautious view of tourism.

Tourism must do more than pay for itself, warns Dean Runyan, associate professor in the University's urban and regional planning department.

Speaking as a planner and not an opponent of current efforts, Runyan says the question is not whether or not tourism is good or bad, but rather "under what circumstances is it good."

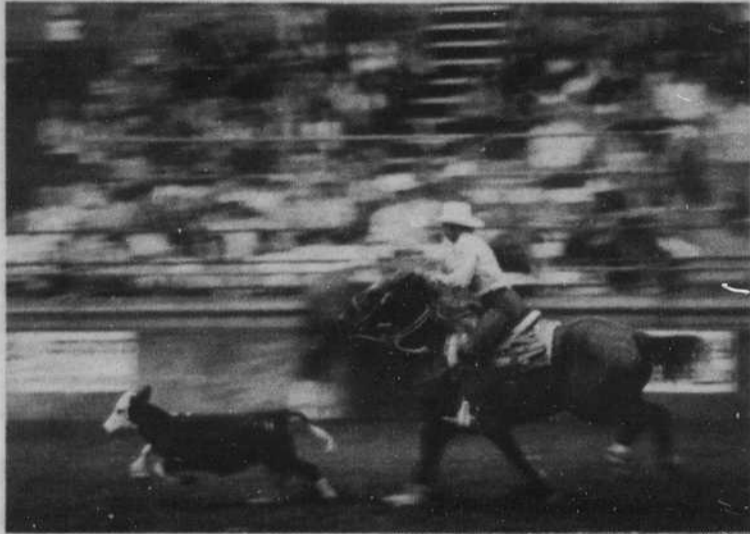
An increase in tourism might incur unforeseen costs to area taxpayers if adequate planning is not implemented, he says. Public service costs he projects include additions to transportation systems, sanitation systems, security

personnel, courts and roads.

The taxpayer could be spared these costs, however, by passing them onto the tourist by taxing tourist-oriented activities, Runyan says.

Last year alone, the visitor's bureau received \$76,000, representing 25 percent of a "room tax" surcharge added to the price of local hotel bills.

Conservationists accept the idea of an influx of visitors to the area, though guardedly.



Rodeo, roses and running are just a few tourist attractions in this area.

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