

annikin

BEYOND TRAVEL & TOURISM

Beaver Valley Sustainable Tourism Strategy



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Foreword

In early 2023, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, the Town of The Blue Mountains, the County of Grey, and Regional Tourism Organization 7: BruceGreySimcoe came together with a shared purpose—to envision and implement a sustainable future for Beaver Valley's tourism landscape. We recognized the escalating interest in this unique Ontario gem, especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as visitors flocked to experience the offerings of Beaver Valley for the first time.

Our collaboration culminated in the joint effort to develop a 5-Year Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for Beaver Valley, acknowledging that the growth of interest in this region demanded a comprehensive approach to steer its future sustainably. Our vision for Beaver Valley is clear, a place that provides a world-class experience for visitors and locals alike, all of whom value the spectacular geography of the region and respect the need to create a long-term legacy of economic and social vibrancy and environmental sustainability.

This document lays out our collective commitment to shaping the future of Destination Beaver Valley. It presents our strategic approach rooted in two key areas of opportunity: Stakeholder Alignment and Collaboration and Tourism Development. We recognize that to achieve a truly sustainable tourism sector in Beaver Valley, we must address challenges arising from disparate initiatives by passionate stakeholders. The strategy we outline provides a necessary and welcome tool to coordinate our efforts, fostering unity, communication, collaboration, mutual responsibility, and respect.

Collectively, our pursuit of these strategies aims to enhance collaboration, inform our approach, and create a sustainable tourism sector in Beaver Valley that thrives economically, socially, and environmentally. We invite all stakeholders to join us on this transformative journey, united by a shared vision and a collective responsibility to preserve and enrich this beautiful and distinctive destination—Beaver Valley.

Bill Sullivan

CEO, Regional Tourism Organization 7

Acknowledgements

The land that forms what we know today as Beaver Valley is part of the traditional territory of the Ojibway as well as the Ottawa (Odawa), who traditionally wintered in the area, and while modern First Nations communities are established elsewhere in the area, the land continues to be tied to Indigenous cultures and is part of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation's traditional territories. We encourage all our destination stakeholders to continue to learn about the First Nations Peoples in our region, their communities, and their major contributions to our society, including within tourism.

Beaver Valley's 5-Year Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan is the result of a stakeholder-driven and community-based participatory research approach that strived to engage a diversity of stakeholders in the Municipality of Grey Highlands, the Town of The Blue Mountains, and the County of Grey. We thank all those residents, business owners and operators, organizational representatives, and tourism partners who participated in the tourism community survey, key informant interviews, industry table talks, future exploration session, and the tourism partners' focus group. This strategy and action plan would not have been possible without your input, perspectives, and feedback. We would like to give a big thank you to all our staff, with a special thank you to the project team - Michele Harris from the Municipality of Grey Highlands, Tim Hendry from the Town of The Blue Mountains, Savanna Myers from Grey County, and Alex Hogan from RTO7: BruceGreySimcoe - for their leadership and support throughout the development of this strategy.

Finally, we would like to thank the Province of Ontario for the funding provided through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport, and Regional Tourism Organization 7, which made this project possible.



Development of Beaver Valley's 5-Year Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan was facilitated by Bannikin team members Camilo Montoya-Guevara, James Arteaga, Annie Bird, and Trevor Jonas Benson, with the support of local lead Bryan Plumstead.



Language and its Use

The “tourism sector” is made up of several sectors, including arts, entertainment, and recreation; transportation and warehousing; and accommodation and food services. Each of the sectors that make up the tourism industry has its own subsectors and industries, some of which are relevant to tourism. As a result, tourism is a complex sector that is connected to many aspects of our lives, including our societies, cultures, economies, and environments.

Not surprisingly, there are many terms associated with tourism, but very few of these are universally defined. This means that the usage of these terms is often context specific. It also means that some terms may be understood and defined differently depending on whom you speak with, and we recognize this difference and flexibility.

Important conversations have and will continue to take place around specific terms, such as sustainable tourism or destination stewardship, and we look forward to participating in these conversations. Additionally, understandings and usage of other terms, like regenerative tourism, are still taking shape and require more time for people to develop shared understandings and feel comfortable using them, including us. The below glossary includes our definition of terms that we associate with sustainable tourism in Beaver Valley. These terms can be found across this report. Since these terms are highly related to each other, we have organized them to be read from top to bottom rather than alphabetically. This is a working list, with definitions that are expected to evolve over time. For now, we are sharing our understanding and perspective.

Glossary

1. **Travel:** the activity of moving from one geographical place to another.
2. **Visitor:** someone who has decided to travel to a destination that is outside their usual environment, including locals travelling to places within a broader or regional destination.
3. **Tourist:** visitors who are staying overnight or travelling beyond 40 kilometers for a same-day trip.
4. **Tourism:** the activities associated with and enjoyed by visitors. Structurally, tourism is complex. It is made up of industries from several sectors, each with its own subsectors. It is connected to many aspects of our lives, including our societies, cultures, economies, and environments.
5. **Sustainable tourism:** tourism that is responsive to the needs of destination stakeholders now and in the future, creating a net positive impact for the local economy, society, and environment.
6. **Demand generator:** the activities and attractions that act as primary reasons for visitors to come to a place. Demand generators include both tangible or physical

places such as a business or landmark as well as intangible or psychological attractions such as rural hospitality, family connections, etc.

7. **Destination:** the place that visitors intentionally travel to or the place on a trip where a visitor spends the most time. Where Destination Marketing/Management Organizations (DMMO) exist, a destination can also be understood by the boundaries used by the DMMO.
8. **Destination stakeholder:** anyone or anything that has a vested interest in a destination and can have some of their needs met by collaborating with other stakeholders in the destination. These include individuals, businesses, and organizations within the local community, public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.
9. **Destination management:** the process of overseeing the delivery of activities associated with tourism in a place.
10. **Destination marketing:** the strategic communication of information about a destination and its tourism product.
11. **Tourism product:** the tangible and intangible value that can be enjoyed by visitors within a destination; for example, attractions and accommodations, and services and experiences, respectively.
12. **Tourism development:** the process of creating and/or maintaining the tourism industry and tourism product within a destination.
13. **Visitor economy:** the economic impact visitors have on local economies goes beyond their direct spend on solely tourism-related products and services. "Visitor economy" is a term used to position and begin to understand the variety of visitor impacts and contributions to local economies that go beyond just tourism. It accounts not just for direct tourism spend on goods and services (e.g., purchase of a meal while on a trip) but also visitors' indirect consumption and impact on other parts of the economy such as agricultural production, supply chains, employment, and communications, among others.
14. **Destination stewardship:** the collaborative pursuit and implementation of activities that facilitate the enjoyment of a place by locals and visitors alike. Destination stewardship is a collective effort and process of maximizing the potential of all stakeholders in a place to contribute to its beauty, integrity, and character.

Links to useful resources and organizations:

["Sustainable Tourism", Regional Tourism Organization 7](#)

[Tourism Industry Association of Ontario \(TIAO\)](#)

[Tourism Industry Association of Canada \(TIAC\)](#)

["Tourism in Canada", Destination Canada](#)

["The Canadian Tourism Sector", Innovation, Science and
Economic Development Canada](#)

[Tourism for Sustainable Development Goals](#)

["Responsible Travel, Centre for Responsible Travel \(CREST\)](#)

Executive Summary

In early 2023 the Municipality of Grey Highlands, the Town of The Blue Mountains, the County of Grey, and Regional Tourism Organization 7: BruceGreySimcoe, came together to develop a 5-Year Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for Beaver Valley. From the beginning, we, the project partners, set a goal to develop this Sustainable Tourism Strategy that is grounded on a long-term vision for the area and is accompanied by an action plan to guide our work over the next 5 years. This Strategy is intended to support and enhance other initiatives that are already underway across the region and is not intended to supplant or take precedence over any current or future plans undertaken by any of the project partners.

As stated by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), “tourism refers to the activity of visitors.”¹ As became abundantly clear during the Covid-19 global pandemic, visitors are increasing tourism activity in the iconic Beaver Valley area of the province, and a do-nothing approach to tourism management and development puts the area and residents at risk of potential negative impacts of unchecked tourism activity.

As project partners, we recognize that good tourism development takes years and involves a long-term commitment from all players in this complex marketplace. Respecting the goals and objectives of all stakeholders, organizations, and stewards of the Beaver Valley, and balancing the needs of the community and visitors, will help us collectively build a strong visitor economy that aligns with the core values and principles of the multitude of players in this space.

We acknowledge the Beaver Valley as a significant natural treasure while recognizing that development is permitted by legislation to take place in designated zones. As such, any investment attraction strategy for the Beaver Valley area will encompass clear messaging on the shared vision for the region and will seek to attract businesses and development that align with the vision outlined in this strategy.

We used a stakeholder-driven and community-based participatory research approach to develop this 5-year Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. As part of this, we conducted a variety of primary and secondary research to engage a breadth and diversity of destination stakeholders, as well as to understand the context surrounding tourism in Beaver Valley and beyond.

Beaver Valley is an ecologically unique and significant corridor that is home to approximately 10,000 people, with a continued population growth of permanent and seasonal residents, and a diversity of wildlife. It stretches from its northern tip at Thornbury along the southern shores of Georgian Bay, through Kimberley and Eugenia along the Niagara Escarpment and eventually ending in Flesherton at its southern tip. The broader area is recognized as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and forms part of the Niagara Escarpment. Importantly, the study area was confirmed to correspond to the municipal boundaries of the Municipality of Grey Highlands and the Town of The Blue Mountains, as well as to include the variety of assets and scenic locations that are largely connected and understood to be part of Beaver Valley by the community.

We recognize the need to frame tourism development and management in a way that balances the economic, social/cultural, and environmental needs and opportunities for tourism, while responding to and recognizing visitor needs. With this context in mind, we gathered community input and drafted a vision for the future of sustainable tourism in our emerging destination:

The Beaver Valley provides a world-class experience for visitors and locals alike, all of whom value the spectacular geography of the region and respect the need to create a long-term legacy of economic and social vibrancy and environmental sustainability.

This vision is an ambitious description that reflects the importance of the interconnectedness of visitor needs and community values and speaks to the potential we see and plan to act upon through the implementation of the strategies and corresponding actions included in this strategy.

Given the emergence of a number of related initiatives, including the community-led Beaver Valley Destination Stewardship steering committee and emerging council, the strategies and actions identified in this plan are focused on recommendations that can be undertaken by the project partners to move forward collaboratively on a larger shared vision for sustainable tourism development in Beaver Valley. This document and the recommendations contained herein are the start of the journey and we look forward to continuing to evolve our work as a group and working to complement other initiatives taking place across this great region, all in support of a shared vision for the long-term legacy of Beaver Valley.

The project partners look forward to developing a formal Memorandum of Understanding that outlines our commitment to achieving these goals and allocating and/or securing resources to achieve the desired outcomes outlined in this strategy.

We have identified the following areas of opportunity and goals, each with their own objectives, and corresponding strategies and actions. Full descriptions of the areas of opportunity and an overview of actions are included in the “Future of Destination Beaver Valley” section.

Stakeholder Alignment and Collaboration	Destination stakeholders are working efficiently and effectively together to shape and deliver tourism sustainably.
Tourism Development	Tourism assets and infrastructure are being responsibly and successfully used to attract visitors to the Beaver Valley.

Background and Context

The beautiful area we know today as Beaver Valley is an ecologically unique and significant corridor that is home to approximately 10,000 people with a continued population growth of permanent and seasonal residents. It stretches from its northern tip at Thornbury along the southern shores of Georgian Bay, through Kimberley and Eugenia along the Niagara Escarpment and eventually ending in Flesherton at its southern tip.

The area is recognized as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and is part of the traditional territory of the Ojibway and Ottawa (Odawa), who traditionally wintered in the area; and while today First Nations communities are established elsewhere in Saugeen territory, the land continues to be tied to Indigenous cultures and is part of Saugeen Ojibway Nation's traditional territories.

Project and Methodology

Project Background and Description

We knew interest in Beaver Valley would only grow as visitors learned about this beautifully unique gem in Ontario. This was further confirmed during the COVID-19 pandemic when we saw a significant increase in visitation from many visitors experiencing Beaver Valley's tourism offerings for the first time. For this reason, we, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, the Town of The Blue Mountains, the County of Grey, and Regional Tourism Organization 7: BruceGreySimcoe, came together in early 2023 to develop a 5-Year Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for Beaver Valley.

From the beginning, we set ourselves a goal to co-develop this Sustainable Tourism Strategy that is grounded on a long-term vision for the area and is accompanied by an action plan to guide our work over the next 5 years. Related to our goal, we identified five key objectives for the development of the strategy and action plan:

1. To understand the background and context surrounding tourism in Beaver Valley.
2. To gather insight, input, and feedback from a breadth and diversity of stakeholders.
3. To identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for tourism in the Beaver Valley (incl. product development considerations).
4. To co-create a tourism strategy that aligns with the Beaver Valley corridor vision and confirm what actions to take in the next few years.
5. To establish a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and resources required for implementing the actions identified.

Methodology

We used a stakeholder-driven and community-based participatory research approach to inform our 5-year Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. As part of this, we conducted a variety of primary and secondary research activities to engage a breadth and diversity of destination stakeholders, as well as to understand the context surrounding tourism in Beaver Valley, and to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for tourism in Beaver Valley. The research methods and engagement methods across the process include:

- Reviewing over 50 documents for background and context.
- Conducting 2 two-day in-person field research trips (summer and winter).
- Conducting a tourism community survey with responses from over 180 residents, 30 visitor-facing businesses, 20 tourism organizations, and 25 other interest groups.
- Conducting 18 telephone and virtual interviews with key informants.
- Hosting 2 in-person and 1 virtual industry table talks with 16 industry member attendees.
- Reviewing 18 visitor-facing organizational websites as part of the tourism asset scan and demand generation review.
- Conducting good practice and trends research on 3 comparator destinations.
- Hosting a future exploration session with 18 attendees representing a variety of destination stakeholders including different government bodies, community development organizations, and community groups.
- Hosting a virtual tourism partners' focus group with 11 organizational representatives.

The integrated analysis of the results from the above-mentioned research and engagement activities all informed the development of this strategy and drafting of this report. To further showcase the variety of perspectives shared directly with the project team, we have decided to feature several direct quotes across the report to further shape the context and perspectives about tourism in Beaver Valley. Additionally, as project partners we were directly involved in the review of research and identification of the strategies and actions presented in this report. From the development of a vision for sustainable tourism to the areas of opportunity identified, we collaborated with Bannikin on the drafting of this report. Through this approach, we have co-developed an ambitious sustainable tourism strategy that is directly informed by the perspectives shared with us by destination stakeholders and aligned with our capacities and priorities as Grey County, RTO 7: BruceGreySimcoe, Town of The Blue Mountains, and Municipality of Grey Highlands.

Project Boundaries

We collectively defined the project boundaries and study area to include the south-to-north travel corridor that runs along Grey Road 13 and the Beaver River, as well as a larger area that is, at times, not immediately understood by those living within and around it as Beaver Valley. However, we set the study area to correspond to the municipal boundaries of the Municipality of Grey Highlands and the Town of The Blue Mountains, as well as to include the variety of assets and scenic locations that are largely connected to and understood to be part of Beaver Valley by the community. Refer to Figure 1 below to see the project boundary map.

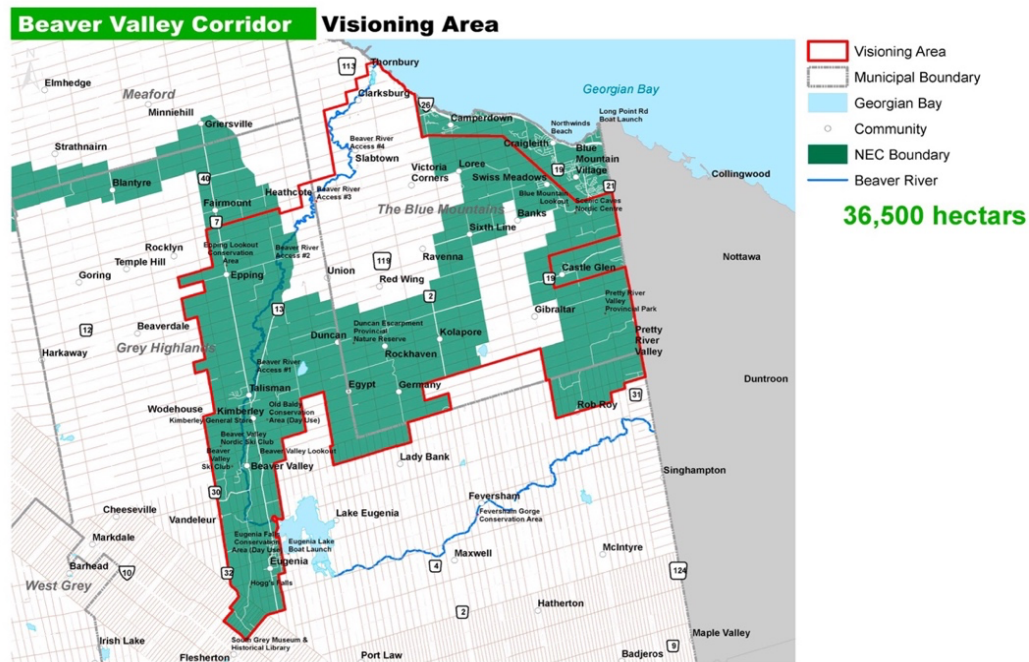


Figure 1: Geographic boundaries as identified for this project

Importantly, land-use planning in Beaver Valley is managed by multiple municipal governments and governing bodies. Primarily these include the Town of The Blue Mountains, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, Grey County, and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Specifically, a significant portion of the land in the area is zoned under the Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017) which informs how Grey County and subsequently the Town of The Blue Mountains, and the Municipality of Grey Highlands plan for their respective lands in their Official Plans or Zoning By-laws.

It is important to note these layers of planning documents (i.e., the Niagara Escarpment Plan, County/Municipal Official Plans, and Zoning By-laws) because they identify what land uses and developments are permissible and appropriate in specific areas of Beaver Valley and the surrounding area. As an example, lands under the Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017) within the Beaver Valley may be designated as Escarpment Natural Area, Escarpment Protection Area, Escarpment Recreation Area, or Escarpment Rural Area. Some of these designations are permissive of new development, while others are more restrictive. Where development is permitted by the planning documents, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, Grey County, Municipality of Grey Highlands, and Town of The Blue Mountains identify appropriate types of development, some of which are relevant to tourism including: bed and breakfasts, residential (including individual homes or

subdivisions or condominiums), infrastructure (e.g., roads, water/sewer, hydro lines, etc.), home occupations, the Bruce Trail corridor or other trails, resorts, ski lifts or gondolas, etc. In some cases, additional technical studies and reports are needed before lands can be developed, and in other cases lands can be developed with no further studies/reports. Additionally, these layers of zoning and planning policy and regulation will continue to inform, and at times determine, how tourism and development can grow in a way that is sustainable for the economic, social, and environmental contexts of Beaver Valley. For more information on zoning and planning please see Appendix A.

Our Understanding of Tourism

We understand that tourism is not a uniform sector. Globally, there are many ways that tourism development and destination management are designed, organized, and managed. We know that, when not properly planned for and managed, tourism runs the risk of negatively impacting the environment and communities that host tourism products. That said, we also know that with proper planning and coordinated management, tourism can bring significant benefits that support the well-being of local economy, communities, and the environment. Specifically, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in its *2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development* (2017) highlights five areas where tourism has the potential to support the Sustainable Development Goals:

1. Inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
2. Social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction.
3. Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change.
4. Cultural values, diversity, and heritage.
5. Mutual understanding, peace, and security.

Tourism

The activities associated with and enjoyed by visitors. Structurally, tourism is complex. It is made up of industries from several sectors, each with its own subsectors. It is connected to many aspects of our lives, including our societies, cultures, economies, and environments.

Similarly, we understand that sustainable tourism is tourism that balances the needs of destination stakeholders, including those within the local community, economy, government, and not-for-profit sector, while maintaining the beauty, integrity, and character that defines the place. We also understand that the collaborative pursuit of sustainable tourism by stakeholders in a destination, including the local community, businesses, government, and not-for-profit sector is crucial to destination stewardship.

"If tourism is underutilized as a primary driver of the economy, your existing businesses will not be sustainable which will impact employment. If it's overdeveloped, it will lose a big part of the reason people come here which is to not feel like you're in the city."

– Key Informant

With the above in mind, we know that our region is unique and beautiful not just because of the abundance of landscapes and natural areas that we're lucky to see each day across the four seasons, but also because of the passionate people that make up the communities across Beaver Valley. We understand and appreciate that our destination stakeholders, particularly residents and industry, have a strong interest in contributing to how tourism takes shape in Beaver Valley. We recognize the

"Somehow, we need to control the number of tourists inundating us, as it severely interferes with residents' quality of life. A balance between excessive tourism and minimal tourism is needed."

– Survey Respondent

value of citizen-led initiatives that are currently taking shape in the tourism space like the Aspiring Georgian Bay Geopark or the Destination Stewardship Council, among others, and look forward to continuing to explore how these initiatives and this Sustainable Tourism Strategy can be aligned and support each other.

As already acknowledged, tourism is a complex sector. It is rich in connections and has important implications for our economies, societies, and environments. Before exploring the context of tourism and our plan to develop and manage tourism sustainably in Beaver Valley, we know it's

important to first frame the context of tourism more generally across the three spheres of economy, society, and environment.

Tourism and the Economy

Tourism is one of the top global export sectors. Since 2000, it has grown 3-4 times faster than the global population and 1.5 times faster than global GDP.² In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.4 billion people travelled across borders, spending USD 1.7 trillion.³ In 2022, the industry contributed 7.6% to global GDP; 22% more than in 2021, and just 23% below 2019 levels.⁴

The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report (2019), published by the World Economic Forum, ranks Canada ninth out of 140 countries for having the most enabling environment for the sustainable development of tourism.⁵ In sub-categories such as safety and security, environmental sustainability and air transport infrastructure, Canada is ranked first. International visitation to Canada is concentrated in urban centres and is noticeably seasonal, peaking in the summer. According to the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Canada's pre-pandemic tourism industry was worth \$105 billion and responsible for 1.8 million jobs.⁶ From 2016-2019, tourism made up 2.1% of Canada's GDP. This dropped after the pandemic to 1% in 2021.⁷ In 2019, Canada welcomed 22.1 million international overnight arrivals, the vast majority (67.7%) coming from the United States.⁸ Studies by Destination Canada show strong potential for Canada to increase its international arrivals.⁹ Domestic tourism makes up the bulk of economic revenues bringing in almost 4 times more dollars than international tourism in 2019.¹⁰

The economic contributions of tourism are recognized by all levels of government, which work with partners on product development and marketing to drive visitation. Destination Canada is the federal Crown corporation responsible for national tourism marketing. Between 2008 and 2020, the federal government invested around \$1 billion in the tourism industry, with \$1 billion more in funding announced in 2021, including the Tourism Relief Fund.¹¹ Importantly, tourism investment does not just happen at the national level, with local investment and planned developments being key to addressing the needs of a healthy sector for destination stakeholders. For instance, the City of Victoria and Destination Greater Victoria, along with the Greater Victoria Housing Society, recently announced a plan to build a 40-unit affordable housing apartment complex for hospitality workers in Victoria using the funds collected through the city's housing reserve funds collected through levies on short-

"Tourism contributes to growing the service industry in the area. Supports our local businesses, it all goes hand-in-hand."

– Key Informant

term accommodations.¹² The plans go to show the needed partnerships and creative investments that are needed to make tourism viable for communities and a continued contributor to the economy.

Tourism and Society

Due to the host-guest relationship, tourism brings the potential for impacts, both positive and negative on local society. Positive impacts are plentiful including opportunities for preserving local culture and heritage, the provision of new social services, and the development of local pride in place when it comes to culture. Tourism also provides a platform for meaningful cultural exchange between visitors and residents. That said, there are examples from around the world where tourism has had a negative effect on society through the homogenizing effects of globalization or the impacts of over-tourism on resident quality of life.

Interest on the part of visitors to connect with local cultures through diverse avenues is strong. Cultural tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization as “a type of tourism activity in which the visitor’s essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination.”¹³ In fact, there are several different kinds of cultural tourism. Some visitors are looking to interact with local musical traditions, while others may be interested in diving into culinary tourism or architectural tourism. In Canada, Indigenous tourism is increasing in popularity. Before the pandemic it was the fastest growing tourism sector in Canada.¹⁴

As a matter of fact, recent developments in the Indigenous tourism context within Canada demonstrate the cross-connections between tourism’s implications for the economy and society. The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) recently announced the establishment of the Indigenous Tourism Destination Fund (ITDF) as a funding program with flexible contribution models for tourism sector business to contribute to supporting the Indigenous tourism sector and the process of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada. The ITDF demonstrates the crossover between tourism’s role in the economy and society as “an innovative way for Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses to partner with ITAC to grow the Indigenous tourism industry from coast to coast to coast. With a fund goal of \$2.6 billion, the ITDF will facilitate investments in infrastructure, human resources, and transportation as well as business development and marketing.”¹⁵

Tourism and the Environment

It is indisputable that tourism can have big impacts on the environment. Many times, these can be destructive, such as ripping up mangroves for beach development or carbon emissions associated with air travel. However, tourism can also be an important source of funds to help protect the local environment and pay for infrastructure and maintenance of natural resource areas. Ecotourism and agritourism for example are two types of tourism that make the economic value of rural and natural spaces clear by allowing for jobs and livelihoods to be built around these. Moreover, when visitors and residents have access to these important natural spaces, they become more likely to protect them.

Within this context, tourism can play important educational and economic roles to support environmental health and sustainability within destinations. In fact, knowing that our economies are nested within our societies, which are all in turn hosted by the environments around us, makes the indisputable connections between these clear. There are several initiatives around the world working to strengthen the positive connections between tourism and the environment. For instance, "Tourism for the SDGs" (Sustainable Development Goals), developed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), outlines key goals for tourism and the environment; particularly, goals 13 Climate Action, 14 Life Below Water, and 15 Life on Land.¹⁶ Within this framework, the context for each goal is outlined and initiatives supporting it are presented so that others working or engaged in tourism can learn from efforts around the world to have tourism contribute to healthy environments.

We do not solely need to look at the international sphere to appreciate the connections between tourism and the environment. Our own backyards speak to this. Beaver Valley is a place rich in natural resources, home to a diversity of land and aquatic animals, all hosted and appreciated within breathtaking landscapes. A large part of why visitors are interested in visiting the region we call home is so that they can access tourism products that are directly connected to, and at times draw from, the environment. Whether it is a multi-day hiker traversing the Bruce Trail or a family of four coming for a cottage weekend, our environments are a large part of what shapes our emerging destination image and provide the possibility for tourism products within Beaver Valley.

"Beaver valley is an environmental corridor, we need to think about what assets are being highlighted, how and why vs. just how they are being protected."

- Table Talk Participant

Beginnings of Destination Beaver Valley

We know Beaver Valley is an emerging destination where people come to see the beauty of the landscape, feel the small-town charm of our communities, and engage with the different tourism products available in the area, such as the Bruce Trail, Hogg's Falls, Old Baldy, the variety of accommodations, restaurants, shops, galleries, and other visitor-facing businesses and experiences to name a few. We also know that tourism to Beaver Valley is highly influenced and impacted by the established destinations around us, for instance the Blue Mountains Village attracts upwards of 2.5 million visitors per year, some of whom choose to venture throughout the Beaver Valley and beyond. It is critical to understand the context for how tourism currently takes shape, to know how it informs the aspirations for the future of tourism. The sections that follow are a synthesis of the research we conducted to inform the development of our Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Envisioning the Future of Tourism in Beaver Valley

Destination stakeholders were engaged to provide feedback on the connection between tourism and the future of tourism in Beaver Valley, as well as their perspectives on what a vision for the destination should include. Encouragingly, but not surprisingly, we heard that community members saw a strong connection between tourism and the future of our area. Across the community engagements conducted, we heard that the following themes should be part of a long-term vision for tourism:

- ❑ Resident quality of life, safety, and security, including affordable housing, and different modes of transportation,
- ❑ Conservation and climate action, including healthy and accessible land and waterways,
- ❑ Prioritizing infrastructure to support responsible recreation and community needs, including cycling infrastructure,
- ❑ Support for local businesses and attraction of new businesses, entrepreneurs, and quality jobs, and
- ❑ Visitor satisfaction.

Accordingly, we have developed the following vision to guide and inspire our collective work towards creating a prosperous and inspiring future for our emerging destination. Our vision for the future of tourism speaks to an ambitious future that is far off, but one that we can work toward. It is not a definitive state but a North Star for the journey toward shaping tourism in Beaver Valley as a sustainable sector:

"Unmanaged tourism has the potential to ruin some of what is so special and beautiful about our area through too much development (second homes and tourism accommodation) and lack of public transit to the area from outside destinations will result in traffic, crowding, pollution and bigger parking lots replacing nature."

– Survey Respondent

"Tourism provides people with jobs and creates livelihoods, younger farmers are coming and buying up properties to practice organic and regenerative farming."

– Key Informant

The Beaver Valley provides a world-class experience for visitors and locals alike, all of whom value the spectacular geography of the region and respect the need to create a long-term legacy of economic and social vibrancy and environmental sustainability.

We are excited by this vision for the future of tourism in Beaver Valley and this strategy represents the first steps toward slowly and intentionally bringing it to fruition. We recognize that as a place where people live, businesses get established, and communities take shape, there are also potentially a multitude of visions for the future of tourism in Beaver Valley. We also recognize that by virtue of our geography, Beaver Valley is a place where people come to visit, that tourism visitation will continue to be part of our future, and that we need to be prepared for it. So, it is with appreciation for the variety of inputs we have received to inform our vision that we are prepared to begin our coordinated efforts, of which identifying and articulating a vision is an important first step.

Tourism Actors and Stakeholders

We are fortunate to have many residents, businesses, organizations, government agencies, landowners, and volunteer and community groups interested and directly or indirectly focused on tourism in Beaver Valley. Many of these groups reflect strong grassroots mobilization and highly connected networks that contribute to and have a strong interest in the future of tourism in the area. For this reason, we know how important it is to engage them in the process, understand their perspectives, and identify the roles they may play in the future of tourism in Beaver Valley.

We know a key group of tourism actors and destination stakeholders are the landowners in the area. These include local governments such as the County of Grey, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, and the Town of The Blue Mountains. It also includes organizations such as the Bruce Trail Conservancy, Grey Sauble Conservation, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), the Niagara Escarpment Commission, and Ontario Parks, among others.

We also know civic agencies are another key group for the future of tourism in Beaver Valley. These include BruceGreySimcoe (RTO7), Community Futures South Georgian Bay, the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network, and South Georgian Bay Tourism. Additionally, volunteer organizations and community groups and initiatives have a lot to offer in the future of tourism in Beaver Valley including the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Association, Friends of Kimberley Forest, the Kolapore Wilderness Trail Association, the Beaver Valley Destination Stewardship Council, the Aspiring Georgian Bay Geopark, just to name a few.

Moving forward, we know these groups need to continue to be part of discussions related to the future of sustainable tourism in Beaver Valley. To learn more about these tourism actors and destination stakeholders, see Appendix B.

Destination stakeholder

Anyone or anything that has a vested interest in a destination and can have their needs met by co-creating value with other stakeholders in the destination, includes individuals, businesses, and organizations with the local community, public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.

Tourism Assets, Attractors and Amenities

To better understand tourism in Beaver Valley, we conducted an assessment and categorization of the places and amenities that currently exist in the area that are related to tourism. This includes things like businesses and organizations that supply goods, services, and experiences to visitors, but also to the places that they visit and enjoy. To complement this process, we spoke to a variety of destination stakeholders asking them to describe the places and things that make Beaver Valley unique to confirm our understanding of what people value and are attracted to in the area.

People across Beaver Valley appreciate and value the outdoor assets such as trails, conservation areas, parks, waterfalls, landscapes, and the recreation opportunities attached to this, including hiking, cycling, skiing, and paddling. We also heard that our destination stakeholders see these as primary motivations for visitors to come to Beaver Valley.

In terms of tourism assets identified by destination stakeholders through the research, outdoor assets and local food & beverage producers and providers stood out as significant asset types in the Valley. This includes our trails, conservation areas, and parks, as well as our local restaurants, cafes, breweries, cideries, and other agritourism businesses like food producers with farm gate sales and on-farm attractions.

Of course, the communities that are part of Beaver Valley are crucial in the discussion of what makes this a good place to be. Stakeholders highlighted Clarksburg, Flesherton, and Thornbury as places in Beaver Valley that people know to visit because of their current offerings. Particularly, Thornbury was mentioned for its food and beverage offerings, while Clarksburg (or 'artsburg', as it's known) was noted for its arts and culture. Notably, we saw that destination stakeholders emphasized communities in northern Beaver Valley as places to visit more often than communities in the south.

In addition to all the amazing things we have to offer, our research identified gaps in what is currently available for visitors here. Most notably, we heard about the lack of appropriate infrastructure to support visitation generally. This includes foundational infrastructure like appropriate parking, signage, wayfinding, and amenities such as bike racks or water stations throughout the area and at specific locations, like trailheads. We also heard the need for larger or more industry-specific needs and gaps like affordable housing for workers, and local businesses that provide experiences and products for visitors and residents.

Despite a significant number of tourism assets identified, we noted that some assets were rarely mentioned, signalling gaps in what we can offer visitors. These included transportation options including taxis, public transit, and bike rentals. We also identified gaps around larger accommodation providers that are open year-round, and community events or local festivals that celebrate the unique culture, heritage, and character of Beaver Valley.

Tourism product

The tangible and intangible value that can be enjoyed by visitors within a destination, for example, attractions and accommodations, and services and experiences, respectively.

Finally, a significant gap is the lack of information about Beaver Valley as a specific or branded place to visit. In other words, Beaver Valley as a recognizable destination. Visitor-facing websites that do include Beaver Valley often had out-of-date or incomplete information which featured broken links and inconsistent formatting of visitor-facing material, or a lack of information altogether. This makes it difficult for visitors to understand our unique character, and our voice, and plan their visits effectively. This corresponds to the reality that Beaver Valley is a collection of localized destinations that people choose to visit but that are not yet connected or understood to be part of a destination, or “Destination Beaver Valley”. This points to an initial need and opportunity to foster an image and narrative for Beaver Valley, which could eventually lead to the development of a brand, that destination stakeholders can use and share so that we are telling a consistent story with up-to-date information that visitors can embrace and understand.

We know that Beaver Valley is surrounded by established destinations whose visitors represent existing and potential future visitors to Beaver Valley. For instance, Blue Mountain Resort is a “true four-season destination” that attracts 2.5 million visitors annually and has an established and packaged experience.¹⁷ It is an established destination with developed infrastructure that also corresponds to the interests of visitors to Beaver Valley, including summer and winter gondolas for hill access, and as such informs the type of visitors that venture out to our area and other neighbouring communities. A bit further away, the Bruce Peninsula is home to several individual destinations including Bruce Peninsula National Park and Sauble Beach, which draw many visitors, particularly across the summer. The Bruce Peninsula is currently working to better manage visitation with the Northern Bruce Peninsula Sustainable Tourism Management Plan. These established destinations, as well as the population centres to the south of Beaver Valley, represent both existing and future visitors at our doorstep. It is up to us to leverage this opportunity and attract visitors who can contribute to the economic and social vibrancy as well as environmental sustainability of our region.

Visitors and Markets

Although there have not been any studies specifically and solely focused on visitation to and across Beaver Valley as we understand it, there has been work led by different organizations to better understand the types of visitors to specific tourism assets or products in Beaver Valley. As part of the research for this strategy, we asked destination stakeholders, specifically visitor-facing businesses, about the visitor types and demographics of visitors to the region. We also compiled and analyzed previous Environics research on visitors to Grey County to provide initial and important information on who is visiting the area.

Business owners and operators shared that their primary customers are visitors coming from the Greater Toronto Area and broader Southern Ontario region, followed by residents from Grey Highlands and the Town of The Blue Mountains. Few businesses mentioned their primary customers being from outside of Ontario, which points to Beaver Valley as a place currently visited primarily by local and regional travellers. When in Beaver Valley, visitors are interested in activities that include:

1. Shopping at local stores and markets
2. Participating in self-led outdoor activities
3. Purchasing and learning about local food and beverage

4. Staying overnight at a local accommodation
5. Participating in outdoor activities offered by a local business

Additionally, business owners and operators highlighted visiting a farm open to the public and attending a community festival or event as types of tourism experiences their customers were interested in doing in Beaver Valley.

In addition to information about visitors gathered from destination stakeholders engaged in the project's research, we also used mobile data collected through Environics Analytics and used by Grey County and RTO7 to provide insights and trends on visitors. Several Beaver Valley natural attractions and communities were geofenced and their profiles were compared to Grey County visitors. Using 2019 as a baseline year and 2022 as the most recent year, visitation to Beaver Valley was up an average of 14%. However, some spots saw declines, notably Eugenia Falls and Kolapore while Hogg's Falls saw the greatest increase at 150% followed by Pretty River Provincial Park at 100%. Breaking total visits down into locals and visitors, an average of 58% of total visits to the assets measured are made by visitors.

Environics mobile data also provides insights into "who" is coming, based on postal codes of visitors linked to demographic and behavioural segmentation. Grey County has created profiles of key visitor segments that are grouped into a series of Target Groups according to demographics and inclination to visit different areas of Grey County. Based on this data, visitation across Beaver Valley is broadly consistent with overall visitation across Grey County, with some local variations as follows:

- The largest target group is Rural Enthusiast Mature Families (about 20% of visitors) which comprises a mix of younger, middle-aged, and older couples and families, which skews slightly towards older families living in surrounding rural areas and who enjoy outdoor activities.
- Exploring Suburban Families (about 16% of visitors) are a mix of younger and middle-aged families with children and teens from the suburban ring around the GTA.
- Younger Urban Families (about 12% of visitors) are higher-income, diverse young families with children and teens from major urban centres.

Perspectives on Tourism and Stewardship

We all have a role to play in stewardship and, although our roles take different shapes, we heard how important collaboration is to ensure that Beaver Valley is a place where stewardship is practiced by all of us as residents, business owners, organizations, community groups, and government.

When we asked specifically what acting as a steward of Beaver Valley looks like, community members commonly mentioned the prioritization of conservation and building awareness of the inherent value and unique character of Beaver Valley's land, water, and landscapes. In addition to environmental action, we heard that stewards should prioritize making our communities healthy, welcoming, and inclusive, ensuring

that information is available to help different stakeholder groups understand their role in stewardship. You also told us that stewardship includes supporting a healthy economy through support for local businesses and products, as well as being considerate about which assets are being highlighted, including how and why they are being positioned as tourism products.

We also asked destination stakeholders what being an ambassador for sustainable tourism meant to them. In response to this question, we identified the following core themes:

1. Taking responsibility for individual and collective actions and protecting the environment,
2. Being respectful of people, places, and the environment, and
3. Sharing Beaver Valley with others.

There were slight differences between how different destination stakeholder groups prioritized these top three factors, but all groups were aligned on the fact that these were the top 3 key components of ambassadorship for sustainable tourism. Themes also mentioned, though less often, included educating visitors and other destination stakeholders on appropriate and safe visitor behaviour and being a good role model for our home.

Destination stewardship

The collaborative pursuit and implementation of activities that facilitate the realization and enjoyment of a place by locals and visitors alike. Destination stewardship is collective effort and process of maximizing the potential of all stakeholders in a place to contribute to its beauty, integrity, and character.

"First off, the way I look at it is do your part. Volunteer in the community, be active in the community, take care of the land, pursue opportunities to protect the land and make the place better."

– Key Informant

Learnings From Others

As part of our research, we studied destinations known for their innovative approaches to tourism management and collaboration to learn and identify key takeaways to inform our work in Beaver Valley. Key learnings from this process are presented below and have informed our strategy for the next five years.

Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Industry Association (TOTA) is the leading organization managing and stewarding the Thompson Okanagan region of British Columbia from a tourism perspective. As an industry-led organization, they manage a multi-jurisdictional area along with multiple partners in a collaborative fashion using a stakeholder model, where all tourism industry participants are considered stakeholders without a requirement to pay membership fees.

The organization is guided by a 10-year Tourism Strategy which focuses on increasing value, extending the season, and maximizing the spread of tourism throughout the region. Ongoing stakeholder engagement activities include surveys targeted towards different stakeholder groups including a [Tourism Sentiment Index Survey](#) that runs two times per year and measures online sentiment towards tourism-related indicators over time, an industry communications survey, and a TOTA [Community wellbeing survey](#). These efforts, in particular the community wellbeing survey, are meant to strengthen understanding of tourism's impact on the region and develop a positive relationship between the tourism industry and residents of the region. TOTA is also a certified Biosphere Gold destination and understands sustainability through this program. Specifically, being certified means it meets the criteria set out by the [Responsible Tourism Institute](#) to ensure the organization has policies aligned with the United Nations SDGs and the Paris COP21 Accord to Fight Climate Change through an action of continuous improvement.

Takeaways

- Partnership development: work with organizations that are experts in specific fields to develop and deliver programming and resources in an efficient way and work through projects that benefit the destination.
- Using a framework to understand sustainability: develop a holistic understanding of how all aspects of the organization are aligned to the goal of sustainability by using or developing a framework that provides long-term structure and guidance.
- Understanding the destination as a whole: recognize and support all stakeholders within the destination and limit the exclusion of certain stakeholders by eliminating a membership-based model.

Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance

A collaborative network model, the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance is a partnership network comprised of stakeholders who pay to be part of the network and work towards their [15-year vision for sustainable tourism](#). Partners come from a variety of backgrounds, and some include local DMOs, Visitor-facing businesses, Municipalities, civic agencies, conservation groups, and other interest groups. The Alliance works on six (6) specific “[action teams](#)” dedicated to initiatives including car-free visitor transportation, culinary + agritourism, culture, outdoor recreation, “welcomability”, and visitor dispersal.

The Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance is committed to developing the region as a world-class sustainable tourism economy. This includes protecting and enhancing the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Columbia River Gorge and neighbouring Cascades while highlighting local communities. Particularly, they want to focus on communities and areas of the Gorge that are “off the beaten path.” To do this, they focus on addressing the seasonality of visitation, reducing congestion during peak season and in high-use areas, spreading the benefits and increasing the economic impact of tourism throughout the Gorge, integrating cultural heritage into the visitor experience, connecting resources to optimize destination marketing, and supporting the continued development of unique and compatible product offerings. The alliance itself does not undertake its own destination marketing to consumers, instead focusing on the core elements of its mandate while directing visitors to the websites of local DMOs (some of whom are partners in the network).

Specifically, some recent “wins” for the Alliance include the development of the [East Gorge Food Trail](#), the creation of a [podcast](#) to highlight the human and natural history of the area, the production of materials highlighting Gorge projects to increase support for the Alliance, delivering training workshops for local front-line staff to provide consistent messaging to visitors, coordination of a new shuttle service between Portland, the Gorge, and Mt. Hood, and the creation of a one-page “[cheat-sheet](#)” for anyone who works with visitors in the area to help them provide consistent messaging, disperse, and educate visitors to the region.

Takeaways

- A unique approach to multi-jurisdictional tourism management: CGTA is a unique partnership/collaboration model for tourism management in a multi-jurisdictional area.
- Stakeholder collaboration: CGTA brings together stakeholders working towards the same goals and has different involvement levels for different stakeholder needs.
- Focusing on what they’re good at: breaking the partnership into action teams comprised of the stakeholders who are well suited to tackle specific pillars of action is an efficient way to share resources and work through projects that support their vision.

Jackson Hole

Tourism in Jackson Hole is managed by The Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board (JHTTB), which has the consumer-facing brand “Visit Jackson Hole.” The JHTTB is funded primarily through lodging tax funds generated by overnight stays in the valley. Established in 2011, the all-volunteer board is comprised of seven (7) representatives from the local business community, arts and culture industries, and conservation authorities.

The JHTTB envisions itself as a leader in responsible tourism, dedicated to developing a healthy and vibrant fall, winter, and spring economy that preserves its natural capital and enhances the well-being of the community. JHTTB has shifted from a more traditional destination marketing mandate to destination management in response to growing demands in the area for tourism products and services and resident dissatisfaction. Their philosophy towards destination management is about setting limits and boundaries for how, when, and where tourism takes place. Particularly, sustainability is positioned within the concepts of environmental and economic stewardship which are understood as “...our economic future depends on the protection of our natural environment – wildlife, waters, wildlands, and ecological processes – and [we] believe that environmental and economic sustainability go hand-in-hand”. JHTTB has recently undertaken the development of a sustainable destination management plan (SDMP) that will guide their activities over the next 10 years.

In support of their sustainable destination management plan, Jackson Hole works on initiatives to increase communication between tourism and other kinds of stakeholders. They focus on communicating with residents by having dedicated communications like their [locals page](#) on their website that provides calls to action and education for residents interested in collaborating towards stewardship. On this page, there are videos from locals who support tourism management and urge residents to get involved with the sustainable development management plan process. In addition to this, they have developed and conducted a [resident sentiment survey](#) (RSS) which provides residents with information and a forum to provide their feedback and input on tourism.

Destination marketing

The strategic communication of information about a destination and its tourism product.

Destination management

The process of overseeing the delivery of activities associated with tourism in a place.

Takeaways

- Recognition of the value and inherent link between economic and environmental stewardship (i.e., recognition that one does not exist without the other).
- Recognition of the value of collaborative action: the sustainable destination management plan recognizes this by focusing on a collaborative effort to work on the eight (8) core pillars identified as priorities for sustainable destination management.
- Communication with locals: concerted efforts to connect and align with locals, providing dedicated communications and opportunities to gather their feedback (i.e., RSS)

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Beaver Valley is a place known and valued by a well-connected network of residents and other stakeholders who are in the “know” and highly prioritize retaining the landscapes and natural assets of the area. Simultaneously, we are experiencing increasing visitation from new visitors who learned about and may have first visited the area during the Covid-19 pandemic, looking to access the outdoors and enjoy recreation available here. The result is an area that is highly prized as is but is faced with inevitable change as the urban centres to the south continue growing, and as such fuel increased visitation. It is also a place where specific areas run the risk of being overwhelmed by the number of visitors while other areas could benefit from further attention so that visitors and the social and economic potential benefits they bring are being spread evenly across the area.

“Beaver Valley is amazing. It is such a unique place in Ontario. It’s almost like being in the mountains and people don’t always appreciate it for how unique it is.”

– Key Informant

Beyond this context, it is important to note that unlike the comparator destinations presented in the previous section, Beaver Valley does not have one tourism organization or destination marketing/management organization that is responsible for coordinating and planning tourism activities and supporting tourism product. Instead, and at this stage, Beaver Valley is a geographic area with the potential to grow into a destination in its own right.

The below table outlines key challenges and opportunities for tourism in Beaver Valley based on input we received across the research. This does not represent an exhaustive list of challenges and opportunities for tourism in the area, but rather a summary of those that stood out the most. For the full table with strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities, please see Appendix C.

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Connecting Beaver Valley to major destinations nearby □ Develop tourism infrastructure that addresses the current needs in outdoor tourism □ Developing new and enhance existing tourism products and experiences, in outdoor tourism, cultural tourism, including culinary tourism □ Further integrating and growing retail, food and beverage, and accommodation assets □ Ensure valuable and consistent information is shared with visitors by compiling and aligning visitor-facing materials □ Growing local understanding and appreciation for tourism and its potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Broken links and outdated materials of visitor-facing websites □ Reduced environmental quality and limited sustainability efforts □ Impacts of climate change, and extreme weather forecasting □ Limited capacity and funding from major environmental conservation stakeholders □ Labour shortage across sector □ Lack of destination brand and recognition, both within the area and potentially among visitor markets

The Future of Destination Beaver Valley

We understand that for our approach to sustainable tourism development in Beaver Valley, we must have a clear map to guide us on our journey to reach our destination vision.

The Beaver Valley provides a world-class experience for visitors and locals alike, all of whom value the spectacular geography of the region and respect the need to create a long-term legacy of economic and social vibrancy and environmental sustainability.

For this reason and recognizing this is the foundational strategy for tourism in Beaver Valley, we have identified two main areas of opportunity that will guide our work moving forward. Each area of opportunity includes a goal that articulates where we want to be in our efforts to develop and plan tourism sustainably by 2030.

It should be noted that this plan and the areas of opportunity identified are intended to guide the work of the project partners who have undertaken this strategy. We know we cannot, nor do we want to, work towards Destination Beaver Valley in isolation. We acknowledge the importance of understanding and respecting the role and function of various organizations, destination stakeholders, landowners and visitors. We also fully respect all the great work being done across the region towards building a thoughtful, respectful, and thriving tourism industry. The opportunities and actions in this report are undertakings that as project partners we can commit to and to which we can deliver meaningful outcomes.

Stakeholder Alignment and Collaboration	Destination stakeholders are working efficiently and effectively together to shape and deliver tourism sustainably.
Tourism Development	Tourism assets and infrastructure are being responsibly and successfully used to attract visitors to the Beaver Valley.

Attached to each goal and further explained in the sections that follow, we have identified objectives that outline the key areas of focus to reach our goals for each area of opportunity. With a strong foundation made up by the goal and objectives of each area of opportunity, we have outlined the strategies and corresponding actions that make up the sustainable tourism strategy's action plan. The following strategy is accompanied by an internal action implementation plan framework, which we will use and continue to evolve as we move to joint implementation.

Initial Steps: Partnership Formalization

The first step in our commitment to this vision for tourism in Beaver Valley is to solidify the commitment between the project partners (County of Grey, the Town of Blue Mountains, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, and RTO7: BruceGreySimcoe), and prioritize our efforts. As project and tourism partners, we recommend moving forward with formalizing a Memorandum of Understanding that will establish the structure and

arrangements needed to make key decisions regarding our role in tourism in the Beaver Valley. Furthermore, this Memorandum of Understanding will formalize our commitment to achieving these goals and allocating and/or securing resources to achieve the desired outcomes outlined in the following sections in the report. Approval of this document by our respective governing bodies is the first step of the process, and the establishment of a formal Memorandum of Understanding will ensure that all parties are vested in its success.

Stakeholder Alignment and Collaboration

We know there is interest in and ongoing work to make tourism in Beaver Valley a sustainable contributor to our economy, society, and environment and we look forward to having a space where collaboration can be coordinated with community and industry partners. We know we need destination stakeholders, including our organizations, to work efficiently and effectively together through shared respect and mutual opportunities for exchange. To reach our goal, we understand that we need to leverage current efforts led by destination stakeholders as well as foster shared understanding, support, and cooperation. We are focused on working to align efforts to improve the Beaver Valley as a destination, build a strong and viable visitor economy, and grow interest and capacity amongst stakeholders to participate in and support tourism.

As we understand and have presented throughout this report, sustainable tourism is not something that can be achieved alone or even by a few. It requires the collective effort of destination stakeholders, and we recognize that although there are many parallel initiatives and community groups, we have much work to do to move forward together and in collaboration. Through dedicated work and shared investment into this collaborative approach, we are confident that we will be able to achieve some key outcomes that correspond to the needs of our community and the broader tourism sector. Among these, our strategic pursuits will result in increased clarity and understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and collaboration opportunities for sustainable tourism. Increased understanding and appreciation of stakeholder perceptions of tourism generally and perspectives about its impact and potential will continue to inform our approach to tourism development, while established internal and external communication channels and aligned cross-boundary communications about Beaver Valley will ensure that we are telling a unified story about our emerging destination.

The key strategies and accompanying actions we will adopt to grow and unite our destination stakeholders into a tourism community include standardizing and streamlining communications between destination stakeholders by compiling and sharing collaboration opportunities with industry and partners as well as creating a communications plan and activating a primary regional tourism communications hub. Knowing that this is a long-term endeavour, we will work to cultivate a shared sense of identity by collecting, compiling, and sharing stories from locals that showcase the role and importance of tourism in the Beaver Valley and hosting a Beaver Valley tourism industry forum. We will also work with regional tourism organizations to align tourism efforts to ensure a positive visitor experience. We will do this by exploring options for further alignment with the initial Destination Stewardship Council to ensure community-led efforts inform and can align with strategy implementation as well as by working with the regional Outdoor Management Group to engage destination stakeholders in discussions related to outdoor assets and stewardship.

We will work to align efforts to improve Beaver Valley as a destination by implementing the strategy to support community and industry-led initiatives that benefit the visitor and their experience. We plan to do this by identifying and encouraging tourism-related initiatives that align with this strategy as well as developing and sharing destination protocols that support our sustainable tourism vision, including developing materials to inform visitors of their role and responsibilities in supporting our vision for sustainable tourism. The latter is also an opportunity for all of us to embrace our visitors as important destination stakeholders and work to inform responsible and respectful visitation to our beautiful Valley. We will also implement our strategy to monitor and evaluate tourism initiatives through the creation of an outcomes-based evaluation framework, through which we will gather information on successes and areas of focus and share relevant achievements with stakeholders. We will also move forward with the dissemination of a destination stakeholder sentiment survey through which we will be able to gather destination stakeholder perspectives on tourism, including opportunities and challenges being recognized by industry stakeholders.

Goal: Destination stakeholders are working efficiently and effectively together to shape and deliver tourism sustainably.			
Objectives	Strategies	Actions	Anticipated Timeline
To grow and unite destination stakeholders into a tourism community	A) Standardize and streamline communication between destination stakeholders	1) Create a communications plan and activate a primary regional tourism communications hub/webpage.	Year 1
		2) Compile and share collaboration opportunities/priorities on a regular and ongoing basis with industry and partners.	Year 2
		3) Establish relationships with organizations that can share relevant resources.	4+ Years
	B) Cultivate a shared sense of identity	1) Collect, compile, and share stories from locals that showcase the role and importance of tourism in the Beaver Valley.	Year 3
		2) Host an annual Beaver Valley tourism industry forum.	4+ Years
	C) Work with regional tourism organizations to align tourism efforts to ensure a positive visitor experience	1) Recognize the initiatives of the community-led Destination Stewardship group, and host semi-annual meetings to share information and explore options for further alignment.	Year 1
		2) Work with the regional Outdoor Management Group as a forum for engaging destination	Year 2

		stakeholders in discussions related to outdoor assets and stewardship.	
To align efforts to improve Beaver Valley as a destination	D) Support community and industry-led initiatives that benefit the visitor and their experience	1) Develop, share, and monitor consistent visitor information and messaging across all regional tourism platforms.	Year 2
		2) Identify and support tourism-related initiatives that align with strategic tourism actions.	Year 2
		3) Develop and share destination protocols that support our sustainable tourism vision, including education for stakeholders and visitors.	Year 3
	E) Monitor and evaluate tourism initiatives	1) Create a tourism development tracker and outcomes-based evaluation framework.	4+ Years
		2) Design, develop, and disseminate a destination stakeholder sentiment survey.	Year 2-3

Tourism Development

We will work to ensure tourism assets and infrastructure are responsibly and successfully leveraged to attract visitors and investment to Beaver Valley. To achieve this goal, we need to prioritize the objectives identified to leverage and grow existing and future demand generators, as well as lay the groundwork for tourism investments that will bring long-term sustainable benefits.

To achieve our objective to leverage and grow demand generators, we will activate several strategies with our focus on creating long term benefits for our economies, communities, and environments by shaping and delivering a world-class visitor-experience. Among these, we will support tourism businesses in the Beaver Valley through industry data collection, knowledge sharing, and facilitating connections. Some of the actions we will activate to drive this strategy include establishing a comprehensive tourism asset inventory as an important tool to inform tourism product clustering, development, and management. We will also develop industry-facing resources with information about our target markets, sustainable tourism, and market-readiness standards to ensure we are delivering on a promise that aligns with our vision for sustainable tourism and attracts visitors to respectfully explore and enjoy Beaver Valley.

Focusing on and supporting the development of new tourism assets, products, and experiences that play to our region's unique strength, has an opportunity to bring significant benefit to all stakeholders in Beaver Valley. Activating this strategy will involve several actions, one of which includes researching and sharing information about emerging tourism products that align with the vision of the sustainable tourism strategy, and that have high potential for consumer uptake based on target market characteristics. Additionally, we will research and develop a tourism investment attraction strategy that focuses on attracting business development in areas zoned for development and that align with the vision for tourism in the Beaver Valley. Having an investment strategy means we can be strategic about what we pursue or consider, by ensuring that opportunities fit within our vision. It will complement the County's Investment Attraction Strategy, and the soon to be adopted Economic Development, Tourism & Culture Master Plan. We will also work with existing businesses to facilitate partnerships and focus on business retention and expansion by identifying and supporting new tourism product opportunities that provide potential added revenue generation and product line extension. Importantly, as informed by the already mentioned actions, we will also encourage the development of collaborative tourism products that connect outdoor activities and assets with cultural assets and expressions. Tourism in Beaver Valley is and can be more than the sum of our beautiful landscape and it's important that we showcase our stories, cultures, and histories through tourism products. These actions will lead to the eventual creation and delivery of a values-based soft-adventure experience development program so that tourism product available in Beaver Valley is increased and connected to interesting and existing initiatives around ecosystem education, natural resource management, and agritourism, to name a few.

We appreciate that any work to develop, enhance, and market tourism products needs to be paired with a strong understanding of available infrastructure and capacity for tourism across Beaver Valley. We are aware, through direct experience and destination stakeholder input, that some key tourism products and spaces in Beaver Valley are under much pressure from increased interest and visitation, particularly after 2020 during the

Covid-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions. As a results, there is a risk of multiple different impacts for our communities, businesses, and natural assets, among others, that may cause negative results economically, socially, and environmentally if not managed and developed appropriately. We will then activate our strategy to assess infrastructure and carrying capacity requirements to support the visitor economy. Some actions we've identified include researching tourism infrastructural challenges, opportunities and service needs that will also help us inform industry about tourism service and product gaps, as well as work with our municipal partners to inform infrastructural development and maintenance plans, such as parking and paid access infrastructure, that can support tourism needs.

Goal: Tourism assets and infrastructure are being responsibly and successfully leveraged to attract visitors and investment to the Beaver Valley.			
Objectives	Strategies	Actions	Anticipated Timeline
To leverage and grow demand generators	F) Support tourism businesses in the Beaver Valley through industry data collection, knowledge sharing, and facilitating connections.	1) Establish a comprehensive tourism asset inventory and identify tourism clusters for facilitating partnerships and enhanced experience development.	Year 1
		2) Explore and identify options for theme and node-based packaging and share these experiences through existing tourism marketing channels.	Year 1
		3) Develop industry-facing resources that communicate key information about the target markets and market segments for Beaver Valley.	Year 2
		4) Develop a market-ready and sustainable tourism checklist to support businesses in better embracing the potential of the visitor economy.	Year 3
		5) Create and deliver a values-based soft-adventure tourism experience development program that is focused on maximizing the potential of relevant outdoor assets.	4+ Years
	G) Support the development of new tourism assets,	1) Research and share information about emerging tourism products that align with the vision of the sustainable tourism strategy, and	Year 1-2

	products, and experiences that play to the region's unique strengths and bring significant benefit	that have high potential for consumer uptake based on target market characteristics.	
		2) Research and develop a tourism investment attraction strategy.	Year 1
		3) Work with existing businesses to facilitate partnerships and focus on business retention and expansion.	Year 3-4
		4) Encourage collaborative product development along the main travel corridor focused on bridging outdoor activities/assets with cultural assets and expressions.	Year 3
		5) Attract new and ancillary bookable and guided tourism services and experiences (e.g., trekking tours, guided paddles/hikes)	4+ Years
To lay the groundwork for tourism investments that will bring long-term benefits	H) Assess infrastructure and carrying capacity requirements to support the visitor economy	1) Research tourism infrastructural challenges, opportunities, and service needs.	Year 2
		2) Conduct biannual tourism traffic and impact assessment to guide decisions related to carrying capacities.	Year 3
		3) Build awareness amongst industry of opportunities to fill service gaps and supports available (e.g., business hour gaps, service gaps, collaboration)	Year 3
		4) Explore vehicular and non-vehicular transportation solutions to better connect the region (e.g., transportation shuttle from nearby destinations close to Beaver Valley to the area)	4+ Years
		5) Explore and build the case to establish the Beaver Valley as an operational provincial park	4+ Years

Sustainable Tourism: A Journey Not a Destination

This sustainable tourism strategy presents our plan for the journey ahead. We see, know, and understand that sustainable tourism is not a “destination” but rather the lens needed to properly develop and effectively support the vision of Beaver Valley as a future tourism destination that is respected, thriving, and stimulating. The journey we are mapping is an exciting one, it is a challenging one, it is an ambitious one, it is an achievable one! We are confident that through collaboration, both amongst our organizations, and the variety of existing and potential partners, we can achieve the goals and objectives mapped out.

Moving forward across the identified areas of opportunity to build up tourism in Beaver Valley in a sustainable way, we know that we have important work to lay the foundations for our journey. We also know that we can’t simply wait for the foundations to be poured, but we also need to start acting on how tourism can be grown as a contributor to our economies, communities, cultures, and environments, as mapped out by the area of opportunity “Tourism Development”. Lastly, we know that none of this work can happen in isolation and that despite engaging a breadth and diversity of destination stakeholders across the development of this strategy, continued conversations toward collaboration and shared understanding need to take place. Beyond that, we recognize that specific initiatives need to activate and build up the capacity of our destination stakeholders, as shown in the “Stakeholder Alignment and Collaboration” area of opportunity. We are confident that the opportunities we have identified and the strategies in place to move on them represent a holistic direction and clearly demonstrate how we will move toward our inspiring vision across the next 5 years.

We are encouraged by the initial engagement and feedback from our existing partners, including their identification of strategies and actions that they are particularly well placed to support and collaborate on. We look forward to making this a collaborative effort for the journey ahead as we move to implementation of this strategy from 2024 until 2028.

For further information on the strategy and future updates, please use the following link: <https://www.grey.ca/beaver-valley-tourism>

Appendices

Appendix A: Zoning and Planning

Land-use planning in Beaver Valley is managed by multiple municipal governments and governing bodies. Primarily these include the Town of The Blue Mountains, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, the County of Grey, and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Specifically, a significant portion of the land in the area is designated under the Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017) that informs how the County of Grey and subsequently the Town of The Blue Mountains, and the Municipality of Grey Highlands designate their respective lands in their Official Plans, which can then filter down to individual municipal zoning by-laws. It is important to note these layers of policy and zoning, as they identify what activities and developments are permissible and appropriate in specific areas of Beaver Valley and the surrounding area.

It's also important to note that all planning decisions need to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, which is updated by the province from time-to-time. Official Plans and the Niagara Escarpment Plan also get amended and change over time.

Niagara Escarpment Commission

Under the Niagara Escarpment Commission's Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017), the lands of Beaver Valley are zoned as Escarpment Natural Area, Escarpment Protection Area, Escarpment Recreation Area, and Escarpment Rural Area. These areas restrict some forms of development, while also identifying appropriate types of development or permitted uses, some of which are relevant to tourism in the area including: bed and breakfasts; residential; resort development; recreational uses; infrastructure; home occupations; the Bruce Trail corridor, including pedestrian food path and, where necessary, trail-related construction (e.g., bridges, boardwalks), overnight rest areas and Bruce Trail access points; etc. Please see the Niagara Escarpment Commission's Niagara Escarpment Plan on the [website](#).

The County of Grey

Under the County of Grey's Official Plan (2023), the lands of Beaver Valley are designated as agricultural, special agricultural, rural, primary settlement area, secondary settlement area, recreation resort settlement area, escarpment recreation area, Niagara Escarpment Plan Area, hazard lands, and provincially significant wetlands. Similar to the Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017), the County's Official Plan (2023) restricts some forms of development in certain designations, while allowing for broad development potential in other designations. When thinking about tourism, it is important to note that designations such as recreation resort settlement area and escarpment recreation area permit the development of recreational amenities and infrastructure in so far as it abides by the requirements listed in the Official Plan. The Appendices to the County Plan also map significant environmental features which must be considered prior to new development occurring. To learn more about the specific designations in the Beaver Valley lands in the County of Grey's Official Plan (2023), please see the County Official Plan and associated mapping on the [website](#).

The Town of The Blue Mountains & The Municipality of Grey Highlands

Under the Town of The Blue Mountains' Official Plan (2016), the land in Beaver Valley has multiple designations including residential, commercial, industrial, hazard, open space, and rural to name a few. Similarly, the Municipality of Grey Highlands' Official Plan (2017) also has multiple designations in the Beaver Valley including recreational resort, hazard, residential, among others. Similar to the Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017), and the County of Grey's Official Plan (2023), development is restricted in some areas, but permitted in others in so far as it abides by the requirements listed in the Official Plans. To learn more about the specific designations in the Beaver Valley lands in the Town of The Blue Mountains and the Municipality of Grey Highlands' Official Plans, please see the Official Plans and mapping (insert links). Readers are also encouraged to look at both municipal zoning by-laws for further information on what can be permitted in each individual zone in the zoning by-laws. Please see the Town of the Blue Mountains' Official Plan on the [website](#), and the Municipality of Grey Highlands' Official Plan on the [website](#).

Appendix B: The Organizational Landscape

Despite Beaver Valley being an area with low population density, the area is home to or part of the geographical scope of many organizations, government agencies, landowners, and groups whose official mandate or focus touches on tourism (either directly or indirectly). Importantly, many of the groups identified reflect dynamics of strong grassroots mobilization and highly connected networks that have contributed to and have a strong interest in the future of tourism in the area. As such, these groups need to be understood and accounted for across the engagement process toward understanding the role they may play in the future of sustainable tourism in Beaver Valley. What follows is a list and summary of the organizations whose activity, whether directly connected to tourism or not, has an impact on future thinking of tourism in Beaver Valley.

Landowners (incl. Local Governments):

Bruce Trail Conservancy: The member-driven and volunteer-based organization works to conserve, restore, and manage the land, and more specifically the Bruce Trail, which spans the Niagara Escarpment UNESCO World Biosphere. It is one of Ontario's largest land trusts and works with nine Bruce Trail clubs to protect the lands along the Niagara Escarpment Corridor, including trail infrastructure upkeep and development, and provides resources to make the trail available for enjoyment on foot. (For more information, visit the Bruce Trail Conservancy website)

County of Grey: An upper tier municipal government serving residents within County borders in Southwestern Ontario. County of Grey includes all the Beaver Valley area. In addition to general municipal administration, the County has a tourism office to manage and promote tourism in the area and administer the consumer-facing "Visit Grey" website. (For more information, visit the County of Grey website or Visit Grey)

Grey Sauble Conservation: A Provincial conservation authority that owns and manages land in the Beaver Valley area. Their mission is to "promote and undertake sustainable management of renewable natural resources and to provide responsible leadership to enhance biodiversity and environmental awareness." Particularly focussed on creating the conditions for a healthy watershed environment in balance with the needs of society. In and around Beaver Valley, Grey Sauble Conservation is responsible for maintaining key properties including Epping John Muir Lookout, Old Baldy Conservation Area, Eugenia Falls, and Feversham Gorge. (For more information, visit the Grey Sauble Conservation website)

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry: A provincial ministry responsible for managing Ontario's Crown forests and resource development opportunities in the province. The Ministry is also responsible for managing and regulating recreational opportunities including hunting and fishing, and conservation efforts including invasive species, wildlife rehabilitation, etc. (For more information, visit the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry website)

Municipality of Grey Highlands: A lower-tier municipality located within Grey County serving residents in the communities of Eugenia, Maxwell, Singhampton, Priceville, Kimberley, Feversham, and Flesherton. A significant portion of Beaver Valley is part of

the Municipality of Grey Highlands, and it is also a Beaver Valley landowner and manager. (For more information, visit the Municipality of Grey Highlands website)

Niagara Escarpment Commission: A regulatory civic agency responsible for managing development on the Niagara Escarpment and focussed particularly on land use and planning. Responsible for administering the Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017), a key piece of land-use planning regulations relevant to Beaver Valley that establishes land-use designations, development criteria, related permitted uses, and a framework for the parks and open spaces linked by the Bruce Trail. (For more information, visit the Niagara Escarpment Commission website)

Ontario Parks: A civic agency owning land and managing the provincial park system in Ontario. Parks represent provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural landscape and Ontario Parks' mission is to maintain biodiversity while providing recreation and education opportunities that preserve the ecological integrity of the parks for future generations. In and around Beaver Valley, Ontario Parks owns and manages lands including Pretty River Valley Provincial Park, Wasaga Beach, and Craigeleith Provincial Park. (For more information, visit the Ontario Parks website)

Town of The Blue Mountains: A lower tier municipality located within Grey County serving residents in the community of The Blue Mountains. A smaller portion of Beaver Valley is located within the Municipal boundaries of The Town of The Blue Mountains, and which is also a Beaver Valley landowner and manager. (For more information, visit the Town of The Blue Mountains website)

Westway Capital/ Beaver Valley Development Group (BVDG): The development company and capital management firm from the GTA is the most recent owner of two parcels of land (upper and lower) of the former Talisman Resort lands. The confirmation of the private-land sale, held by the Municipality of Grey Highlands, took place in 2022 with initial conversations around the sale happening in 2021. Although no formal proposal for the development of the land has been confirmed, the BVDG website outlines their vision for development as, "To re-vitalize, re-envision and re-establish the Beaver Valley Lands as an important destination and an economic driver within Grey Highlands while working with the Community to build upon the Municipality's Vision for the Beaver Valley Corridor." (For more information, see Beaver Valley Development Group)

Civic Agencies and Ministries

Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7): One of Ontario's 13 RTOs encompassing the Counties of Bruce, Grey & Simcoe, and including the area of the Bruce Peninsula, Southern Georgian Bay, and Lake Simcoe (including the Beaver Valley area). Industry-facing initiatives/mandates include tourism product and experience development, workforce training & development, marketing, investment attraction and generally enhancing the area as a four-season destination. RTO7 also administers the consumer facing BruceGreySimcoe brand. (For more information, visit the Regional Tourism Organization 7 website, and the Bruce Grey Simcoe website)

Community Futures South Georgian Bay: A not-for-profit Community Futures Development Corporation operating in the South Georgian Bay area and focussed on developing and diversifying the local economy. The organization offers business loans, coaching and mentorship, and counselling for local entrepreneurs and businesses and

generally provides support for community economic development. In collaboration with RTO7, CFSGB is currently running a specific T3 Tourism Accelerator program for established tourism businesses to receive coaching assistance for scaling/growing their business. (For more information, visit the Community Futures South Georgian Bay website)

Institute of Southern Georgian Bay: a volunteer-based network and self-described “think-and-do-tank” focussed on creating discussion around a thriving arts community, sustainable environment, social justice, and a thriving economy for all. The Institute’s Five priority areas are arts and culture, social justice, the environment, business and social innovation, and health and wellbeing. Of particular focus is affordable housing in the Southern Georgian Bay area. (For more information, visit the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay website)

Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network: An organization established to “support the management of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere as a community-led, grassroots organization that will work to meet the criteria and standards required by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).” Based on their website, the Network is the evolved organization now holding the role and responsibilities of the Niagara Escarpment Commission. The transition began in 2019 and was officially established in 2022 following the rationale that it was no longer appropriate to have oversight over the Biosphere nested within a government agency. (For more information, visit the Niagara Biosphere Network website).

South Georgian Bay Tourism: The organization describes itself as an In-Destination Education Organization (IDEO). It serves a similar role to a Destination Marketing Organization and its area includes the northern Beaver Valley, including Town of The Blue Mountains, Thornbury, and Clarksburg. It coordinates regional visitor services, creates content for the destination, and develops products such as routes and packages. (For more information, visit the South Georgian Bay Tourism website)

Volunteer Organizations

Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Association: A volunteer organization dedicated to conserving and caring for the Beaver Valley portion of the Bruce Trail lands, an approximately 155km stretch of main and side trails that cross private and public lands along the Niagara Escarpment. The organization stewards over 2600 acres of land, manages the trail system, including undertaking improvement projects, and provides organized hiking and learning opportunities in the area. (For more information, visit the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Association website)

Friends of the Kimberley Forest: The Kimberley Forest covers almost 1,000 acres of public land in Beaver Valley and the volunteer community group is working “to preserve and restore the environment while developing the educational and recreational opportunities of this land.” (For more information, visit the Friends of the Kimberley Forest website)

Kolapore Wilderness Trails Association: A volunteer and member-based organization managing and maintaining a 50km marked trail network in Beaver Valley. The Kolapore Wilderness Trails are maintained for cross country skiing in winter and biking/hiking in summer. The association is volunteer operated and relies on donations and member

dues to facilitate maintenance of this area. (For more information, visit the Kolapore Wilderness Trails Association website)

Community Groups and Initiatives

Destination Stewardship Steering Committee Beaver Valley: A community-based organization in the process of formalizing as a forum for community-based input and guidance on the direction of tourism in Beaver Valley. The committee plans to adopt an adapted version of the Geotourism approach to tourism, and corresponding Destination Stewardship principles, as defined by National Geographic and further developed by the Destination Stewardship Center in the United States.

Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy: An Ontario-focused, member based charitable land trust focussed on protecting the Niagara Escarpment. The Conservancy currently owns over 23,000 acres of land on 229 nature preserves and focusses their efforts on buying land through this area to create nature preserves. (For more information, visit the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy website)

Escarpment Corridor Alliance: Community-based organization focussed on “protect, conserve, and create”, which includes activism against the development of Talisman lands in Beaver Valley. The ECA prepared and disseminated a community survey focussed on the residential development plans for Castle Glen and Talisman. (For more information, visit the Escarpment Corridor Alliance website)

Georgian Bay Geopark: A grassroots initiative working toward the establishment of a UNESCO Geopark in Georgian Bay. The purpose of UNESCO’s Global Geopark initiative is to highlight and preserve outstanding locations around the planet that illustrate significant chapters or distinct events in Earth’s long history. The group also provides several educational resources specific to Georgian Bay’s unique geological features and history on their website. (For more information, visit the Georgian Bay Geopark website)

Lake Eugenia Cottage Association: An association of local property owners concerned with the health and safety of Lake Eugenia.

Protecting Talisman Lands Association: Volunteer-based organization focussed on advocating against any proposed “large development” on the Talisman lands. The group collects donations for awareness building, commissioning of research, and covering legal planning and professional service fees toward its goal of halting the planned Talisman land development in favour of “low-impact recreational opportunities for the public”. (For more information, visit the Protecting Talisman Lands Association website).

Appendix C: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

Toward better framing the current context in 2023, and identifying the future potential of tourism, an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges was conducted. Importantly, the items in the below table have been drafted as high-level insights pulled from the detail in the landscape assessment report.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Attractive natural landscapes, including a visual season change in the environment ❑ Part of a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve ❑ Significant outdoor recreational assets ❑ Significant food and beverage assets ❑ Presence of tourism assets, including arts and culture, retail, and accommodations ❑ Proximity to key tourism destinations (e.g., Blue Mountain Village, Collingwood, Wasaga) ❑ Lower-tier and upper-tier interested in developing tourism ❑ Highly invested tourism stakeholders and broader community ❑ Visitation from local and regional visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Distrust between stakeholders, including government and community groups ❑ Lack of tourism-related infrastructure and services (e.g., parking, cycling lanes, public transportation, or multi-modal transportation options) ❑ Lack of clarity around destination management and stewardship leadership roles and responsibilities ❑ Limited tourism operators/guides ❑ Limited affordable housing options for tourism staff ❑ Limited number of accommodations and food service businesses available to visitors across the week ❑ Divided understanding and relation to Beaver Valley between north and south Beaver Valley ❑ Lack of collaboration and built understanding among stakeholders, including opposing perspectives on development projects ❑ Lack of visitor-facing socio-cultural assets/experiences

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Connecting Beaver Valley to major destinations nearby (e.g., Blue Mountain Village, Collingwood, Wasaga, etc.) through offering alternative modes of transportation ❑ Develop tourism infrastructure that addresses the current needs in outdoor tourism ❑ Developing new and enhance existing tourism products and experiences, in outdoor tourism, cultural tourism, including culinary tourism ❑ Further integrating and growing retail, food and beverage, and accommodation assets ❑ Ensure valuable and consistent information is shared with visitors by compiling and aligning visitor-facing materials ❑ Growing local understanding and appreciation for tourism and its potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Broken links and outdated materials of visitor-facing websites ❑ Reduced environmental quality and limited sustainability efforts ❑ Impacts of climate change, and extreme weather forecasting ❑ Limited capacity and funding from major environmental conservation stakeholders ❑ Labour shortage across sector ❑ Lack of destination brand and recognition, both within the area and potentially among visitor markets

Table: Highlighting strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities based on the current context of Beaver Valley in 2023.

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