



Branding a Better Hudson

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May 23, 2007, KINGSTON, NY It has spectacular river views and increasingly attracts more visitors wanting to learn about its unique history and enjoy its majesty through boating, fishing and kayaking. But what *is* the true character of the Hudson Valley? In a newly-funded New York Sea Grant (NYSG) project, investigators **Rudy Schuster** and **Diane Kuehn** will determine the best ways to promote tourism in the Hudson River Valley (HRV) by analyzing the attributes and values of residents and visitors in several of its communities. Both researchers are at the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry and will be assisted by Penn State University's **Duarte Morais**.

Results from the study with its \$126,800 in federal funds and another \$75,300 in matching funds from municipalities and industries will hopefully balance the needs and desires of local residents in Kingston, Beacon and Cold Spring with the need to develop tourism for long term stability. Researchers will, in part, seek a means to preserve the Hudson River's ecological integrity and social character that combine to create a unique nature-based tourism experience.

"With nature-based and heritage tourism both increasing in popularity in the Hudson Valley, many coastal communities face challenges in retaining stable local economies," says Schuster.

"Our aim with this research is to help create for these communities a distinct image that represents their unique social, cultural and environmental qualities in sustainable tourism development."

This destination image will be designed to provide usable information concerning the attributes of the natural environment, nature tourism opportunities, and community that (1) identifies the destination as similar or unique in relation to other HRV destinations and that tourists find attractive and (2) supports sustainability of the local character in the eyes of local residents.

"Understanding which attributes of the nature and heritage tourism experience are attractive and valued by tourists will facilitate marketing efforts, increase visitation and enable market positioning among these communities," says Morais.

Most importantly, though, Shuster, Kuehn and Morais indicate that the study will include the voice of the local communities in the effort to generate recommendations that take into consideration and serve the interests of host populations. Also, the

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engagement of host communities such as Beacon, Kingston and Cold Spring may act as a catalyst for further image branding triumphs in nearby communities, thereby further bolstering long term sustainability for the Hudson Valley's tourism industry.

"As Hudson River communities are revitalized through increased public access and recreation opportunities" says NYSG's Hudson Estuary Specialist **Nordica Holochuck**, "these cities, towns and villages need information that can guide tourism planning and also preserve the scenic beauty, open spaces and relative tranquility valued by residents and visitors alike. This research project can help."

In addition to this project, NYSG is funding research in the upper Hudson River, using locales there as examples to improve what we know about particles and sediments in this environmentally-sensitive part of the River. Investigators **Nicole Riemer**, **Dong-Ping Wang** and **Roger Flood** from the Marine Sciences Research Center at Stony Brook University have found current sediment models to be insufficient in quantitatively predicting the fate of suspended particles from activities such as dredging. Agency and regulatory personnel such as those at the NYSDEC and EPA can use this modeling tool to predict deposition and guide future contaminated sediment clean up. Also, emergency managers could use the information to help model storm related watershed erosion and dredge materials. The research includes nearly \$149,000 in federal funds and another \$84,900 in matching funds.

New York Sea Grant is a partnership between the State University of New York and Cornell University. NOAA Sea Grant is a nationwide network of 30 university-based programs that partner with coastal communities. Sea Grant provides a stable national infrastructure of programs located at universities in every coastal and Great Lakes state, and Puerto Rico, as well as projects in the Pacific region.