

Sustainable Coastal Tourism on Long Island – A Preliminary Study

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The economy of Long Island in the state of New York in the United States has grown from a set of farm and marine based communities into a diverse service based economy. Historically and culturally the marine based fishing industry has been an important part of the Long Island economy. However, as the economic viability of commercial fishing industry declines alternate strategies need to be developed to preserve Long Island's coastal heritage and support economic development.

A potential alternate strategy is the continued development of tourism which is an important industry for Long Island both due to the attractiveness of the many beaches on the Long Island coast and the proximity to New York City. Specifically, a tourism strategy related to the Long Island coast needs to examine the development of recreational fishing and the development of water based tourism related activities such as sport fishing. However, in order to preserve the coastal heritage of Long Island it is also important that strategies involving recreational fishing and water based tourism be sustainable.

This pilot study, part of a two year project funded by the New York Sea Grant identified two coastal cities on Long Island. Based on survey data the study examined the demographic characteristics of tourists and attempted to understand their motivation for visiting Long Island. The survey instrument consisted of twenty questions and the tourists to be surveyed were selected at random at the tourist site in the two cities. The questions measured many variables including the following; tourism attraction preferences, reasons for visiting, communication medium through which the tourist was exposed to the destination, family size and age, the preferences for different types of attractions and activities.

The two cities surveyed were Port Jefferson on the northern shore of Long Island along the bay and Long Beach a town along the Atlantic coast on the south shore of Long Island. Port Jefferson features a major ferry route, a Long Island Railroad terminus, multiple bus lines, and an extensive network of roads. The city of Long Beach is surrounded by Reynolds Channel to the north, east and west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Long Beach has 7 recreation and parks, 5 landmarks and historic districts, and 2 museums and a community center. The very different nature of the two cities provided a strong contrast in terms of both the demographic characteristics of the visiting tourists as well as their motivations for visiting Port Jefferson and Long Beach.

Preliminary analysis indicates that on average tourists visiting Port Jefferson are younger, better educated, have higher levels of income, more likely to be visiting family and friends, more likely to enjoy outdoor recreational activities such as boat-

ing, fishing, bicycling, and hiking, and more likely to be visiting other coastal areas for their next vacation in comparison to tourists visiting Long Beach. The implications of the results for the development of sustainable water related tourism activities need to be examined. For example prior research (Vaughan and Ardoin 2014) shows that tourists and residents have differing perceptions on coastal resource management. Given that Long Beach has more resident tourism in comparison to Port Jefferson the nature of tourism preference is likely to be different between the tourists visiting the two cities.

In developing an appropriate tourism strategy there will be a need to assess tourism carrying capacity and develop an integrated coastal tourism strategy for the entire Long Island region adapting the strategy to variations in local conditions. Past research has suggested that localized intensive tourism may be more helpful to preserve larger natural areas that are not affected by development (Dragulanescu 2014). The identification of appropriate local cities on Long Island that can facilitate such a strategy may be a possible way to preserve the coastal heritage and promote economic development. The development of such an integrated strategy will however need a more detailed study that examines the political economy of different local areas including zoning policies, water quality, transportation, real estate, the role of marine culture, and the extent of coordination that is possible across different cities with varied social, economic, and demographic characteristics.



Dragulanescu, I 2014, "Protection of the Coastal Landscape for Tourism Sustainability", *International Journal of Responsible Tourism*, 3.2 (Autumn 2014), pp. 29-46

Vaughan, MB & Ardoin, NM 2014, "The Implications of Differing Tourist/Resident Perceptions for Community-based Resource Management: A Hawaiian Coastal Resource Study", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp 50-