



2010 Annual Report

In the four years I've been Director of Marketing for the Wenatchee Valley Sports Council, I can honestly say 2010 was both the most trying and most successful I've experienced. Achievements include the development of a new website, landing a huge baseball tournament and preserving a piece of sports history for the Wenatchee Valley. The challenges include a threat to our very existence. It caused us to reevaluate our priorities, look at ways to improve, and work ever-more diligently on continuing the plight of sports tourism for the area. In the end, even though the direct future of the organization remained cloudy, the achievements of 2010 should provide a springboard into a prosperous new year in 2011.

Sports Tourism & Economic Impacts

Three events in the spring of 2010 nearly singlehandedly saved our year when it came to the economic impact of sports tourism. The Western Elite Spring Ski Series at Mission Ridge April 8th-13th; Triple Crown Sports Wenatchee Valley Season Opener Baseball Tournament April 10th-11th; and the NAHL Robertson Cup Championship May 4th-9th injected a huge shot in the arm for the spring quarter, helping it outpace 2009 numbers by over 15%. The three events meant an estimated economic impact of nearly \$650,000 (\$195K-ski; \$308K-baseball; \$139K-hockey). These were brand new events to the Wenatchee Valley and were the result of hard work and dedication on the behalf of the Sports Council, Mission Ridge Ski Team and Wenatchee Wild. The best news following these events was that the Western Elite Ski Series and Triple Crown would be back again in 2011.

Overall, 2010 was down only 1.46% from 2009 figures in estimated economic impact of sports tourism. 153 sports events brought in an estimated \$6.9-million. That compares to \$7-million in 2009. A big drop was seen in the number of softball events held in the Wenatchee Valley, with five fewer events in 2010 compared to the previous year. The Sports Council worked with the Chelan County PUD, the proprietor of the majority of the valley's softball

diamonds, and local softball interests on a rate structure and planning to hopefully include more tournaments in 2011. At the recommendation of the Sports Council, the PUD developed a field-deposit program to encourage tournament directors to follow through with planned events. In addition, the fee to tournaments for field use would be based on how many teams participated in the event.

Town Toyota Center continued to be a major player in sports tourism in 2010. It's estimated that events such as Wenatchee Wild Hockey, Wenatchee Valley Venom indoor football brought nearly \$800,000 of sports tourism impact to the community. Add in local spending, and the Town Toyota Center and its sports events totaled \$6.5-million in economic impact.

2010 Wenatchee Valley Sports Tourism Economic Impact													
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	YTD
Visiting Athlet	1,084	1,297	2,259	2,507	3,010	3,337	1,742	826	740	1,130	338	408	18,678
Accompanime	1,636	2,235	2,296	3,523	4,181	4,740	2,689	1,099	1,087	1,693	499	472	26,150
Total	2,720	3,532	4,555	6,028	7,231	8,117	4,431	1,925	1,827	2,823	837	880	44,906
Room Night Fa	1,243	1,357	3,508	4,431	4,334	3,844	2,516	907	886	1,297	346	381	25,050
Economic Impa	\$392,312	\$484,036	\$798,188	\$1,035,404	\$1,144,960	\$1,184,090	\$687,741	\$280,368	\$268,587	\$407,880	\$117,191	\$124,814	\$6,925,571
Impact by Qual			\$1,674,536	-16%		\$3,364,454	15%		\$1,236,696	-7%			-1%
Number of Eve	10	10	10	15	21	28	27	9	6	6	6	5	153

Major Achievements



It took three years to get Triple Crown Sports to come look at the Wenatchee Valley for a baseball tournament. I talked with representatives of the organization at the National Association of Sports Commissions Conference in Omaha, Nebraska in 2008 and in Denver, Colorado in 2009. Finally, in August of 2009, Drew Reiners of Triple Crown agreed to fly out (Triple Crown is based in Fort Collins, Colorado) and tour our facilities. The day he arrived also coincided with a Wenatchee AppleSox baseball playoff game. After introducing him to Wenatchee Mayor Dennis Johnson and informing Drew that he's a season ticket holder, I had

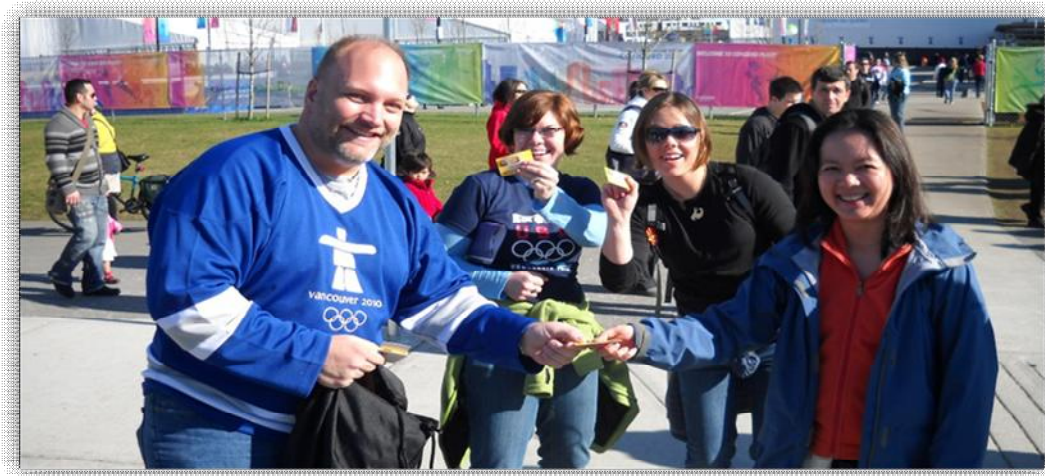
him convinced the Wenatchee Valley is a good home for baseball. In October of 2009, Triple Crown Sports announced it was holding its first tournament in Wenatchee in April, 2010. FINALLY!

Reiners said he hoped for 25-teams in the first-year event in Wenatchee. We had 72-teams in the Wenatchee Valley for two days this April, 62 of which travelling in from all around the Northwest. We held an opening ceremony on Friday night, April 9th at Town Toyota Center where over 500 players and 120 coaches attended to watch a baseball movie on the big screen and be treated to hot dogs, chips and a soda. Several local businesses donated sporting goods and merchandise to give away to the kids attending. It was a huge success and meant an estimated economic impact to the Wenatchee Valley of \$308,051. Reiners and the rest of his Triple Crown representatives who were in the area for the tournament were incredibly impressed by the facilities, hospitality and general enthusiasm for baseball in the Wenatchee Valley. All were looking forward to another great tournament in 2011.



In May of 2010, we received news from the City of Wenatchee that Columbia Colstor was planning to repaint their warehouse along Wenatchee Riverfront Park. The concern was the murals on the side of the building depicting the now-defunct Ridge to River Relay Race, a 34-year tradition in the Wenatchee Valley. The City asked if the Sports Council could work with Colstor and local businesses to preserve the pictorial legacy. At its June meeting, the Sports Council Board recommended that I do what I could to help find sponsors for the 9-panels along the eastside of the warehouse at \$1,000 each (the estimated cost to repaint the murals).

Thanks to Mission Ridge Ski & Board Resort; Biosports Physical Therapy; Sangster Motors; Coca-Cola; Wenatchee Wild; Columbia River Media Group; Asplund's Sporting Goods; and Columbia Paint & Coatings, the murals were saved and building repainted by October.



As a member of an effort to promote North Central Washington, including the Wenatchee Valley, to the Winter Olympics, I was honored with the opportunity to represent E3NCW in Vancouver, B.C. My presence in Vancouver during the Olympics was the culmination of a three-year effort to market Chelan, Douglas and Okanogan Counties. “E3NCW” stood for “Escape, Explore, Enjoy North Central Washington.” The Sports Council and Visitors Bureau were part of a group that included the City of Wenatchee, City of East Wenatchee, Mission Ridge, Town Toyota Center, Wenatchee Valley Chamber of Commerce, North Central Washington Economic Development District, and Via 97.

With funding from Chelan and Douglas Counties, the Ports of Chelan and Douglas, the Cities of Wenatchee and East Wenatchee and the Visitors Bureau, we set out a three-year strategy to market the area. We produced a website and brochure with distribution throughout the Vancouver, B.C. area as well as up and down the Interstate-5 corridor in Washington State and in Washington Ferries and at Sea-Tac Airport. We put together a contest through the website inviting visitors to North Central Washington with a trip throughout the area. Finally, we printed 10,000 business cards and trading pins to distribute throughout the Winter Games. The cards included the invitation to the website. Overall, the website had 2,714 visits and 4,672 page views. Videos posted on You Tube regarding the E3 effort received 7,721 views.



In early 2010, the Visitors Bureau and Sports Council were approached by the United States Sprint Boat Racing Association about locating a sprint boat racing track in the Wenatchee Valley. Their interest was to have one or possibly two races in the Wenatchee Valley during the summer. Our office sent out a press release to find interested parties and the City of East Wenatchee stepped up. In short order, land was located, designs were made and political red tape was cut and a sprint boat track began to appear amidst the wheat near Pangborn Memorial Airport. The Sports Council and Visitors Bureau made countless appearances before City and County officials in support of the proposal and became race committee members once it was official. The inaugural race was held on September 4th, 2010 with approximately 2,000 people attending. I provided my time to develop and maintain the website at www.thunderswamp.com and continue to work in support of the races with two planned for 2011.



A main emphasis beginning with the new year for the Sports Council was to redesign its website. Working with Brad Fitzgerald of APT Design, the Sports Council Board of Directors

provided insight and opinions on what the new site should include. The overall emphasis was to make it relevant, easy, informative, and timely. Loaded with guidelines, Brad and I worked together on developing the site. Following two reviews with the Board of Directors, the site finally rolled out on June 3rd. What really helped in the website development was to separate domains with the Visitors Bureau. In the past, www.wenatcheevalleysports.com was just pages under the Visitors Bureau site at www.wenatcheevalley.org. But with Brad's help and design of the new site, a completely separate website was developed under www.wenatcheevalleysports.com. It didn't take long to see the results.

Over the final 6-months of 2010 after the new site rolled out and comparing its traffic with that of the previous site for the same time period in 2009, improvements were remarkable. Visits were up 35%; Page Views up 42%; Time Spent on the Site was up 9%; and New Visitors were up 12%. Exact numbers will be discussed later in this report.

Promotion



While the primary focus of our promotional campaign in 2010 was in redoing the Sports Council's website, we were able to get a couple splashes into the media as well. Thanks to the Tourism Promotion Assessment, we again advertised in the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's annual fishing and hunting pamphlets inviting readers to make the Wenatchee Valley their "Base Camp." The minimal investment allowed us to reach nearly 300,000 readers. In addition, we assisted Run Wentchee; Tri-Wenatchee; and a local contingent of the "Washington High School Equestrian Teams", promote their events in various publications. In August, Sports Events Magazine came out with its guide to the top facilities in the country and listed Town

Toyota Center as 1st in the Northwest including Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. Finally, in the November edition of Northwest Sportsman Magazine, a picture of me and a large steelhead I caught on the Columbia River headlined an article about winter fishing for steelhead in North Central Washington.

As I mentioned earlier, the new website for the Sports Council made a huge difference in reaching sports-minded visitors to the Wenatchee Valley in 2010. Website traffic data was up across the board (see chart) as 13,527 visitors logged onto the site.

Our attempts to reach a broader audience to spread the message of great things in the Wenatchee Valley Sports world continued at an unprecedented pace in 2010. Between the weekly reminders and monthly newsletters, a total of 109,202 people were reached electronically through our Constant Contact emailing service. A total of 41 “Weekend Reminders” were emailed to 89,115 in 2010. That compares to 30 emails in 2009 to a total of 54,132 recipients. The monthly newsletters reached a total of 20,167 readers in 2010, a slight increase over 2009 (20,099) even with missing three months because of obligations in other areas.

Planning for the Future

Long before 2010 drew to a close, plans were underway for 2011. The biggest new event receiving a lot of buzz at year’s end was set for January. The first-ever “Wenatchee Valley Youth Sports Fair,” had already received over 30 interested vendors to provide information on all things youth sports related at the Wenatchee Convention Center. Coca-Cola had jumped on to help promote the event, providing free signs and planned to bring an inflatable toy for kids to play on. In fact, Trinity Inflatables of Cashmere was also planning to bring a few more toys for kids to play on while parents obtained registration information and age requirements from various youth sports groups in the Wenatchee Valley. Cherry Creek Radio had also bought into the idea and was providing tons of free air time to help promote the event.

The sting of economic hardship on the nation and the Northwest came home to roost locally in 2010. As the Sports Council and Visitors Bureau began the process of budget planning in August, winds of change blew the ship off course in the form of the City of Wenatchee. It announced to the Visitors Bureau Board that a portion of the hotel/motel tax intended for the

Visitors Bureau would go toward the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center. In addition, discussion of a long-term contract between the Visitors Bureau and City for convention and tourism marketing came to a halt with the City choosing to only temporarily extend the contract while a committee looked at the best use of the lodging taxes. I was selected to represent a potential recipient on the Lodging Tax Advisory Board, which began meeting toward year's end in December. The 9-member committee was to continue meeting into the new year to make a recommendation to the City Council on spending hotel tax revenues. Over 80-percent of the Visitors Bureau's funding comes from the City of Wenatchee's lodging tax, so without a clear decision on its future, the Visitors Bureau and Sports Council were caught in limbo while a decision was made. We went ahead and confirmed an operational budget for 2011, cutting 10% in addition to the monies siphoned for the Museum. The City of East Wenatchee was awaiting the decision by the City of Wenatchee before offering a contract to the Visitors Bureau for service.

Coincidentally, the Sports Council Board of Directors was deciding its future as a body toward year's end. It became apparent during the Sports Council retreat in September that, due to the merge with the Visitors Bureau in 2004, the Sports Council as a separate organization no longer existed in the eyes of the State of Washington. As a result, the traditional requirement of regular meetings, minutes, etc. was not necessary. The Sports Council is merely a department of the Wenatchee Valley Visitors Bureau. I tried to convince the board that its roll was imperative for our success and urged it to continue in its current structure. Meetings and a decision were to be continued into the new year. Several options were raised including continuing as-is; disbanding the board completely; or moving to more of a committee structure with only quarterly meetings with the entire board. I eagerly await the board's decision, as well as the City of Wenatchee, so that the great work that has gone on by the Visitors Bureau and Sports Council can continue.

Conclusion

No one is impervious to the infectiousness of a bad economy. We learned that tenfold this past year here at the Visitors Bureau and Sports Council. We're also learning that in order to survive and succeed in the years to come, we'll have to change, adapt and be nimble. No longer is the world going to revolve in the way it had. Governments funded by tax dollars are discovering the wells are drying up. And those businesses in the private and public sector that counted on the doll are left to learn a new way. It's a harsh reality but one we're all going to have to get used to. And while that's been a tough pill to swallow, a small tonic of support, understanding and encouragement will go a long way in getting it down.