



## **Quarterly Report October - December, 2009**

While the anticipation of new events for 2010 is really exciting, a rear-view look at the end of 2009 saw plenty of challenges. Overall, the local economy was down over 12%, hotel revenues were down and sports tourism was down as well. According to estimates on statistics collected by the Wenatchee Valley Sports Council, sports impact numbers for the final three months of 2009 were down 3.6% compared to the same period in 2008. And, for the year, the final 6-months saw a decline of 4.7%. Thankfully for the Town Toyota Center and Wenatchee Wild Hockey, the huge upswing in the first-half of 2009 was anticipated again in the first quarter of 2010. So while the foreground may be dark, there's a light on the horizon.

### **NASC Membership Pay Dividends**

The Wenatchee Valley Sports Council saw its two year relationship with the National Association of Sports Commissions pay dividends this year. At the NASC conference in Denver last April, WVSC met with representatives from Triple Crown Sports about locating a new baseball tournament in the Wenatchee Valley. WVSC secured a site visit guarantee for the following August. Triple Crown Sports Regional Director Drew Reiners visited August 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> to meet with area baseball organizers and facility managers. By the end of September, Triple Crown announced it would be hosting a boy's baseball tournament in Wenatchee as a kickoff, early-spring event April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

The anticipated economic impact of this one tournament will be over \$130,000. Not a bad return on a two-year, \$3,600 investment by the Wenatchee Valley Sports Council to have a presence at NASC events in Omaha in 2008 and Denver in 2009. The WVSC will again travel to the NASC Convention in 2010 at Columbus, Ohio.

## Fewer Events, Numbers Down in 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

The lack of Wenatchee FiRE FC and Wenatchee Wild Games put a hole in the overall 4<sup>th</sup> quarter impacts for sports tourism in 2009 over 2008. Overall, the final quarter of this year saw 12 fewer events than in 2008, or a 38.7% reduction. As a result, the overall economic impact for the fourth quarter dropped from \$790,119 in 2008 to \$761,112 in 2009 (see chart A).

<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Impact Numbers (chart A)</b>					
	Visiting Participants	Visiting Coaches	Visiting Fans	Room Night Factor	Economic Impact
October	1,509	198	1,974	1,716	\$534,278
November	380	8	506	394	\$127,512
December	281	33	441	248	\$99,322
4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. Impacts	2,170	239	2,921	2,358	\$761,112

For those reading a Sports Council report for the first time, it bares mentioning how these numbers are derived. Sports Tourism Impacts are estimated dollars spent by visitors to "Sports Events" which result in an overnight stay. For example, the Wenatchee Wild hosts a three-game series with Fairbanks. For those three nights, the Fairbanks players, coaches and staff stay in area hotels, eat out and pay for entertainment. On the average, a "Sports Tourist" spends \$99 per day on accommodations, food and entertainment. The Room Night Factor multiplies the number of nights for an event, which is added to the overall total. So, Visiting Participants + Visiting Coaches + Visiting Fans + Room Night Factor X \$99 = Estimated Economic Impact.

## Budgeting for 2010

Despite cutting back on advertising, travel and full-time staffers taking furlough days, the downward spiral of income versus spending caught up to the Convention and Visitors Bureau and, in turn, the Sports Council by the end of the year. Even though expenses were down significantly, the 11.3% loss in hotel revenues meant a severe tightening of the belt as we planned for 2010.

By December's meeting of the CVB Board of Directors, the Sports Council advertising and marketing budget had been cut by over \$19,000. This effectively cut out four promotional packages that had traditionally been purchased and placed in the first month of the following year, including three full-page ads in sports events guides.

It is hoped that by mid-year 2010, the economy and hotel revenues will have rebounded enough to allow us to re-examine the budget and allow for more marketing and

advertising. Despite the cuts in magazine advertising, the Sports Council still has some lofty goals for 2010, including a redesign of its website. And thanks to the Tourism Promotion Assessment Fund, the Sports Council will still be able to go ahead with advertising plans in various guides and outdoor publications to promote the Wenatchee Valley as a “Base Camp” for outdoor enthusiasts.

## **Sports Council Activities & Events**

### **October 13<sup>th</sup> - Sports Council Monthly Meeting - Baseball Themed**

Wenatchee AppleSox Owner Jim Corcoran was a guest of the Wenatchee Valley Sports Council in October. He updated the SC Board on the process of upgrading Recreation Park for an eventual home for the AppleSox and the land swap process between the City of Wenatchee and Wenatchee School District. In addition, Corcoran announced that Wenatchee’s current field at Wenatchee Valley College would be the site for a Division One baseball game April 13<sup>th</sup> when Seattle University takes on Washington State.

The SC learned that would decidedly be a baseball-themed week when Dan White announced Eastmont High’s baseball team would face Mercer Island at Safeco Field April 10<sup>th</sup>. Of course, Triple Crown will be hosting a kickoff baseball tournament featuring 60 teams April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> all over the Wenatchee Valley.

### **November 17<sup>th</sup> - NWAACC Volleyball Bid a No Go**

Despite attempts to align the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges volleyball tournament with the Town Toyota Center, it was not to be. Wenatchee Valley College Athletic Director Marco Azurdia told the SC Board in November that conflicts with the multi-purpose center’s schedule would not allow a local bid to host the NWAACC tournament in 2010.

### **November 20-22 - Ski Fever Show in Seattle**

The Wenatchee Valley Sports Council teamed with Mission Ridge and the Leavenworth Chamber to promote the area ski hills at the 2009 Ski Fever Show in Seattle in November. For the first time, the event was held at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center and, despite its late-season timing, turnout was good. The Sports Council offered free photos on a Mission Ridge chair lift (see photo) as well as a chance to win a ski weekend getaway. We received 449 entries over the three days of the event, with 22-year old Seattleite Tyler Frisbee winning the trip.



### **December 9-11 - US Bank NCW High School Basketball Showcase**

The Sports Council turned out in strength to volunteer usher and take tickets at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual NCW Basketball Showcase at Town Toyota Center. Also, in conjunction with the Wenatchee Valley Sports Foundation, the WVSC helped run the NCW Scholarship Shootout. \$2,000 in scholarships was handed out to Chelan, Entiat and Cashmere High Schools. Nearly 4,000 people attended the 11-games over three days.

### **December 10-11 - WIAA Takes a Peak at Town Toyota Center**

For the first time since it opened in October of 2008, representatives from the WIAA (Washington Interscholastic Activities Association) came to tour the Town Toyota Center in December. WIAA Assistant Executive Director Cindy Adsit toured the building December 10<sup>th</sup> and talked at length with new General Manager Mark Miller. In addition, WIAA Executive Board Member Michelle Webb of Ephrata toured the facility on Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup>. Both came away impressed with the building's potential to host state events such as volleyball and basketball.

## **Triple Crown Highlights RFP's**

It was late in the third quarter when Triple Crown announced it would host a regional boy's baseball tournament in Wenatchee in 2010. As the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter began, area hotels were searching databases for 180 rooms in the original request. But by December, the number of teams requesting rooms initiated another RFP, adding an additional 90 rooms to the block request.

The local contingent for the Washington High School Equestrians came to the Sports Council to whip together a quick bid to land the State Meet in May. Following a quick

turnaround (2-days) of helping to put together a bid package, the State WAHSET announced it had selected Wenatchee to host the May event. An RFP quickly followed for 300 room nights over three days in May.

Date	Event	Dates for Event	Rooms Requested
Sept. 30, 2009	Triple Crown Baseball Tournament	April 10-11, 2010	180
Oct. 27, 2009	WAHSET State Meet at Appleatchee Arena	May 13-15, 2010	300
Dec. 10, 2009	Triple Crown Baseball Tournament Update	April 10-11, 2010	+90 more rooms
	Total Room Requests for 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr.		570

## Northwest Magazines Focus on Wenatchee Valley

Paid-for or not, the push to promote North Central Washington and the Wenatchee Valley as an outdoor enthusiast's dream shifted into high gear at the end of 2009.



Whether it is “The Place to Hike”, “The Place to Fish”, or “The Place to Have a Meeting”, the Wenatchee Valley received some great press in the final quarter of 2009. Northwest Sportsman included the Wenatchee Valley in its October issue regarding deer hunting and again for steelhead fishing in its November issue. Adventures Northwest’s fall issue

included a great article by Craig Romano on hiking the Wenatchee Foothills Trails. Northwest Meetings and Events Fall Issue included an article from Crai Bower on using Wenatchee's outdoor opportunities to entice meeting groups to the valley and another from Annika Hipple on the marketing of North Central Washington to Vancouver, B.C. during the Olympics. Wenatchee's Town Toyota Center was featured as a "Place to Go" in Sports Events Magazine's article on new and renovated arenas across the country. And, we paid for and received an advertorial in Sports Destination Management Magazine in their December CVB/Sports Council's Directory.

## **Sports Council Markets the Region**

The Wenatchee Valley Sports Council took its involvement in a regional marketing committee to a new level in the fourth quarter of 2009. Since January of 2006, the group known as "E3NCW" or Escape, Explore, Enjoy North Central Washington has been working on marketing the region to Vancouver, B.C. and the upcoming Winter Olympic Games.

The concept was developed this year to use guerilla-marketing techniques during the Winter Games, including eliciting volunteers to help promote North Central Washington. Quickly dubbed the "E3 Army", the goal was to find residents from North Central Washington who already had plans to go to the Olympics in February of 2010 to video blog for the E3NCW website about their experience. In addition, those volunteers would help promote the area by handing out 10,000 trading pins with the E3 logo and an invitation to win a trip to NCW.

Plans continued until it was realized that someone was needed to coordinate the effort in Vancouver. The committee took a vote and elected the Director of Marketing for the Wenatchee Valley Sports Council (me) as the "General" for the job. The E3 group would reimburse the Visitors Bureau for my salary for the time I would be in Canada as well as pick up my expenses. I would work to coordinate the video bloggers in B.C. and edit their footage and upload it to the E3 website, as well as You Tube and the Wenatchee World. It is anticipated to be a great tool to drive people to the website and discover the region through E3NCW. I'll be in Vancouver from February 11-28.

## **Web & Electronic Media**

**Newsletter** - As our reach continues to expand, so does the amount of people receiving the Sports Council newsletter and weekend reminders. Nearly 20,000 people received the electronic messages from the Sports Council between October and December, 2009. In all, 13,649 recipients got the weekly reminder via email in the fourth quarter. In addition, a smaller-version of the reminder was sent out direct mail and via fax. The

monthly newsletter went out to a total of 5,905 in the fourth quarter. That's up 35% from the year before when 3,832 emails received the newsletter.

**Website** - The timing is good to redevelop the website in 2010. Charting the trend of visitors to the current site, the decline continued in the fourth quarter. According to Google Analytics, Visits (↓13.5%), Page Views (↓23.9%) and Average Time on the Site (↓20.9%) were down considerably over the final three months of last year. For the year, Total Visits were up slightly (↑3.3%) to 10,556. The "Events" page was added in 2009 and saw the biggest increase in activity, becoming the Number 1 viewed page at year's end.

Adding something new to the site and its popularity is a good indication that the site as a whole needs to be refreshed. Budgeting for the new year has afforded this opportunity. Brad Fitzgerald of apt Design has been contacted about working on a new site. The plan is to maintain similar pages with new looks so that we may continue to compare visits to the data from the past.

## Summary

Thank God for the Town Toyota Center and the Wenatchee Wild. Without them, sports tourism numbers in 2009 would not be nearly as good as they are. The final quarter of the year saw another downward trend in Economic Impacts of Sports Tourism, down over 3-percent. New events at the arena and with the Wenatchee Wild helped the first half of 2009 to an 18.5% increase over the previous year, and that buoyed the area through the downturn of the second half. At year's end, things were looking up, especially with many new, large events planned for 2010. Here's hoping hotel/motel revenue follows suit.