

TAC MEMBER ROUNDTABLE NOTES & UPDATES

RACHEL GREGG, TAC Chair—Glacier Country / Missoula Area

- The new MSO Missoula International Airport is open! Great opening day, new terminal is rocking and rolling. Now that the new side is open, old terminal will be knocked down and mirror image of new terminal will be built on the old site. Evolving conversation about how to keep working on service grants or flight guarantees to increase flight options now that capacity is increasing.
- Watching declining entries at Glacier and Yellowstone – curious if people are actually taking advantage of trip alternatives or if something else is going on. Watching rising gas prices to understand the impact on the typical destination traveler coming for leisure outside of event travel.
- The Wren boutique hotel opens in August (hopefully!) in downtown Missoula. New local restaurant group taking over the old Café Dolce location (hooray). Woodbridge hotel looking to open very soon.
- Stewardship Plan will begin in late summer for Missoula area.
- PRIDE in Missoula was phenomenal, parade was fantastic, block parties a hit, the city really got behind it. Joyful, beautiful, productive event.
- AA Tennis and Softball tournaments both went super well. Missoula Marathon returns this year! June 24-26, looking for volunteers.
- Lots of film activity here, Yellowstone shooting in town and some small indie films also hitting the ground in June.
- Big Sky Business Insight Summit in May tackled childcare, workforce & housing issues in Missoula. Exciting results, creative people, innovative solutions are out there. Missoula housing inventory is incredibly low, labor shortages still a challenge.
- Rivers are blown, having some flooding issues, long/cool/wet spring has made for a lush environment, snowpack is healthier than we thought it would be during the winter!

GLENNISS INDRELAND—Yellowstone Country / Bozeman

- Belgrade: new hotel under construction
- Gardiner: urban camping continues to be a problem; new/remodeled Roosevelt Hotel and cabins; May horse drive through town; 150 anniversary events; June rodeos; July Brew Fest
- Livingston: running preserve and protect campaign; May Testicle Festival; many events including Roundup July 2-3-4
- Red Lodge: basking in the Tourism Destination of the Year award; sporadic opening of the Beartooth Highway due to weather.
- West Yellowstone: two new restaurants, one hotel; no day care available in the whole town is a serious issue for workers; events fully returned.

KATIE GRICE – Big Sky

- FY23 Resort tax allocations were recently completed, concerns for over tourism continue to grow in the Big Sky Community. Brad Niva did a fantastic job conveying the destination management narrative and secured sustainability marketing and tourism research dollars.
 - Resort tax dollars have become increasingly difficult for Visit Big Sky to collect, and support is needed from the state to help convey the management message and provide additional grant opportunities to help fund the entity.
- Lone Mountain Land Company completed a recent land acquisition of the Town Center land in the meadow village. The plans include additional lodging.
- Employee Housing/Affordable Housing continues to its crisis status in Big Sky, with over 80% of workforce commuting in daily.
 - Labor shortages continue, one local long-standing business has recently closed due to labor shortages and the inability to find housing.
 - Business are still requesting support for foreign worker visas

- The scheduled Foo Fighters concert in August was cancelled, but a new festival lineup was recently announced that attracts a regional audience.
- Big Sky Resort finished a strong season in skier visitation and bed tax collections. Groundbreaking is complete for the installation of a new tram, estimated to take two years to complete. The resort anticipates strong visitation this summer.

LINDZY ROTH—Glacier Country / Kalispell

- Glacier National Park – Summer 2022 logistics: vehicle reservation, road construction. Dylan and Diane partner with park management on a regular basis to provide input on park messaging from a visitor perspective. Looking forward into the shoulders seasons of 2022-2023 (fall, winter, spring), there will be significant impacts to the visitor experience on the west side of Glacier National Park, with the [Lake McDonald Utility Project](#) scheduled to have a hard closure on the GTTSR from October 1 - end of May 2023 with no recreational access past Apgar Village.
- Airport – Pilot shortages and fuel price increase in the face of high demand for flights are creating a challenging environment for airlines. Fortunately, we are in a highly desirable market, so we are only seeing minimal decreases this summer. Terminal expansion construction continues. Summer of 2022 will see 27% decrease in seat capacity. Lost two cities (ATL and SAN) and one carrier (Jet Blue). But based on load factor of summer 2021 it's anticipated that the airport will be as busy as last year.
 - Enplanements for 2022 YOY – January 47% increase, February 39% increase, March 36% increase, April 28% increase.
 - Glacier AERO focuses on securing winter and year-round service. EW and DK are contributors and involved with the board.
- Medical Tourism - Is back in full swing and hitting pre pandemic numbers. May had 26 patients with 18 being procedures and June has 21 patients scheduled 13 being procedures so far. (Procedures require a week stay in the valley at least generally for a patient and caregiver) Currently they are receiving 4-6 new patient inquiries a day. Patients are now being told it will be 3-4 years from the referral from the primary care to surgery. The surgeons, once they see them, are telling them at least 18-24 months more. This is the wait time for something like knee or hips surgery however spine evaluations can be even longer.
 - One of the issues the medical tourism office has experienced since the border reopened is that some unvaccinated folks want to come down and they don't like the answer that there is no longer the medical exemption that will allow them to bypass being vaccinated. Housing is still a concern as we enter the summer peak season, anything from VRBO to hotels.

RHONDA FITZGERALD—Glacier Country / Whitefish

- The first topic on everyone's mind is HOUSING, HOUSING, HOUSING. And Short-Term Rentals are a big part of the issue. Many homes are being converted to STRs and much of new construction is also for STRs. The situation is drastic throughout NW Montana, for residents of all economic levels.
 - In Whitefish: During each month of ski season, short term rentals (City Limits and Zip Code) outperformed standard lodging in Whitefish for the second year in a row. While this has happened during ski season during the last few years, for the first time ever short-term rentals within the City Limits outperformed standard lodging outside of ski season, during April. As of April 2022, there are currently 1,246 short term rental listings within the Whitefish Zip Code. When the average number of bedrooms (2.3) is taken into consideration, this accounts for over 2,800 guest rooms- or double the number of guest rooms available in traditional lodging in Whitefish.

- Kalispell city limits: between January and April STR's averaged a 46% increase in inventory per month (YOY). In July 2021 Flathead County had approximately 5,400 short term rental listings.
- Whitefish Mountain Resort is open for summer activities daily June 11 - September 5th. WMR will also be working this summer on the new Chair 4 (Snow Ghost Express) which will be the first lift to stretch from the Base Lodge to the summit area. It is anticipated that this chair will open in time for the 2022-23 ski season.
- Averill Hospitality (the Whitefish based company that owns The Lodge at Whitefish Lake, and Firebrand Hotel) has plans for two new boutique hotels located in the downtown core. A third downtown boutique hotel is also in development by a west coast group.
- Explore Whitefish is now running our warm season on-the-ground visitor education campaign (Friend of the Fish) from May - end of September this year. This is one of our longest running campaigns this year outside of winter.
- Glacier National Park has seen lower visitation numbers for May and June- due in part to a late June anticipated opening of the Sun Road along with the vehicle reservation requirement for Going to the Sun Road. Limited availability of Rental Cars, higher Air Fares, and High Gas prices are all combining to put a damper on non-resident visitation. Hotels and Activity providers report decreases over 2021.
- Looking forward into the shoulders seasons of 2022-2023 (fall, winter, spring), there will be significant impacts to the visitor experience on the west side of Glacier National Park, with the [Lake McDonald Utility Project](#) scheduled to have a hard closure on the GTTSR from October 1 - end of May 2023 with no recreational access past Apgar Village.