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National Marketing and Tourism Development Experts to Highlight the 2007 Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation

Governor Brian Schweitzer to Speak at Conference

(HELENA) – Four national tourism experts will headline the 2007 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation, April 2nd and 3rd at Helena's Red Lion Colonial Hotel.

Governor Brian Schweitzer and Montana Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite are encouraging participation from the tourism and recreation industry and the media.

"Tourism and recreation is big business for Big Sky Country," said Governor Schweitzer. "People from all over the globe spend billions of dollars to enjoy Montana's unparalleled scenery, rich history and unique character. I'm proud to say there's no place like it in the world, and I'm proud to call it home."

"Montana is the premier vacation destination for millions of people every year," said Commerce Director Anthony Preite. "The Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation is a showcase for the future of promotions and marketing. It helps Montana stay ahead of the curve."

- **Monday, April 2 at 8:30 AM**, Roger Brooks of Destination Development, Inc., opens the conference with "**Branding and the New Age of Tourism.**" Roger has worked with Libby, Big Sky, Great Falls, Helena and other Montana communities on tourism development. His session will highlight the importance of branding today and how to create a brand that works.

****Governor Brian Schweitzer will address the conference during the luncheon****

- **Tuesday, April 3 at 8:30 AM**, Susan Sweeney of the @-experts brings everyone up to date (and into the future) on what an effective tourism marketing website needs. "**The Past, Present & Future of Online Tourism Internet Marketing**" general session is

followed by a 10:30 AM morning breakout session with Susan offering “**60 Tips in 60 Minutes.**”

- **Tuesday afternoon at 1:30 PM**, Dan Shilling and Mark McDermott share with us “**Civic Tourism – Tourism as a Tool to Develop Healthy Communities.**” Civic Tourism is more than “just tourism”. It is about involving the arts, heritage, culture, main street and other community members in creating an appealing, dynamic and distinctive identity.

Other conference sessions will cover recent Montana visitor travel trends, look at public lands projects and programs relating to tourism, discuss National Geographic’s Crown of the Continent Geotourism MapGuide Project in the Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park area of northwestern Montana, offer work sessions on creating brands and updating the current statewide strategic plan, highlight tourism promotions in Scandinavia, explore the tourism value of wolves and learn the basics of public relations.

The conference agenda also offers a series of field trips around Helena visiting the State Capitol Building, Montana Historical Society Museum, Spring Meadow Lake State Park, the Westside Mansion District and the Great Northern Town Center/ExplorationWorks facility.

The full agenda, registration materials, exhibitor and sponsor opportunities and more are available at www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference. The \$120 conference registration fee is offered through March 16. It goes to \$140 through March 31 and \$160 at the door. Sponsorships and exhibitor space are available.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana’s largest industries. In 2005, 10.1 million people visited Montana spending \$2.76 billion during their stay. Over 45,900 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$953 million in total personal income for Montana residents.

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