State Tourism Summit Announced

Local News

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The Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) will host its second, statewide Tourism Summit in Seattle on April 5 to present its accomplishments and to engage the tourism industry in its future direction. Industry stakeholders are encouraged to register for the summit.One year after Governor Gregoire’s announcement that the state tourism office would close, the WTA will convene tourism professionals from all corners of the state. Attendees will represent destination marketing organizations, hotels, visitor attractions, tour and transportation companies, restaurants, retail establishments, meeting venues and other private and public sector organizations.The summit will feature a presentation by the WTA of its first-year destination marketing activities and a first-phase plan for long-term sustainable funding. A keynote address will be given by Roger Dow, President and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, and representatives of Brand USA, the recently inaugurated U.S. corporation dedicated to travel promotion. In January, President Obama announced an executive order that will establish a first-ever national strategy for travel and tourism.

Tourism promotion is at a critical juncture in Washington, D.C. and here in Washington State, we’re encouraged by long-overdue progress at the national level, but here at home we have an incredible amount of work to do. Washington is the only state in the U.S. without a state-supported tourism program, so WTA’s success is inextricably bound by the combined commitment of our private sector industry, ports, cities and corporate sponsors. - Suzanne Fletcher, WTA Executive DirectorWashington’s primary competing states all boast dramatically larger tourism marketing budgets, ranging between $10 and $60 million. WTA began work with a budget of some $300,000 last July when the state tourism office closed, and has since been working to raise funds through membership and corporate sponsorships.Washington State tourism leaders understand how quickly Washington State could be out-paced. “We know from national examples that tourism market share declines very quickly with the loss of tourism marketing programs,” said Suzanne Fletcher, WTA Executive Director. “Colorado closed its tourism office in the 1990s and suffered immediate declines in tourism market share that did not rebound for nearly a decade.”Much is at stake. Tourism is the state’s fourth-largest industry according to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced, following software, aerospace and agriculture and food. Figures released last month by WTA indicate that visitors to Washington State spent $16.4 billion and generated nearly $1 billion in local and state tax revenues in 2011. Travel and tourism supported more than 150,000, jobs and generated earnings (payroll) of $4.5 million.The tourism summit will be held at the Hilton Seattle Airport & Conference Center Emerald Room) in SeaTac on April 5. Registration opens at 7 a.m. and the program runs from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registration fees include a continental breakfast and lunch and are $75 for WTA members and $100 non-members prior to March 29. Beginning March 30, registration fees are $95 for WTA members and $120 for non-members. Register online at: https://events.r20.constantcontact.com ... oeidk=a07e5js2grw9d5c73a4The Hilton Seattle Airport & Conference Center offers a special WTA rate of $119 available for the nights of April 3-6. And, early arrivals are invited to attend the Summit Opening Reception from 6-8 p.m. on April 4 at the Museum of Flight. The cost to attend is $15 per person. Complimentary transportation between the reception and the Hilton Seattle Airport &

Conference Center will be provided.**About the Washington Tourism Alliance**The Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) is a 501[c]6 organization established by industry stakeholders with the sole mission of sustaining Washington State destination tourism marketing. The WTA procures and administers funds for state destination tourism marketing activities and creates and implements a strategic statewide destination marketing plan. www.watourismalliance.com