



December 13, 2013

The Honorable Samuel L. Neal, Jr.
Nueces County Judge
Nueces County Courthouse
901 Leopard Street, Room 303
Corpus Christi, TX. 78401

*FY 12/13
outside
Agency
Report*

Re: Port Aransas Economic Development Grant Expenditure

Dear Judge Neal and Commissioners:

The Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce is pleased to share with you the results of our year-long Visitor Survey conducted by Texas AgriLife Extension Service of Texas A&M University/College Station. This study was conducted over the course of an entire year, utilizing in part the funds appropriated to us by Nueces County. We are extremely excited to share these results with you, and hope that you will find them as interesting as we did.

Attached is the News Release on the project as well as the Executive Summary. Should you be interested in the full report and/or a presentation, please let me know. We sincerely appreciate the \$1,000 grant from the County to assist in this project.

Thank you for all that you do for Port Aransas in support of our very popular community. Please contact me at 361-749-5919 if you have any questions.

Tax ID: 1-74-18555060

*Commissioner
Oct 1*

Respectfully,

Ann B. Vaughan
President/CEO

/abv
Enclosure

Cc: The Honorable Joe McComb
The Honorable Mike Pusley

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Commissioners Court
Administration

EXECUTIVE
Summary

Port Aransas Visitor Study: Travel Behavior and Economic Impact for FY2012



Report prepared for the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce by:

Department of Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences and
Department of Agricultural Economics
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas 77843



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Acknowledgements

Port Aransas is something special. It is a one-of-a-kind island along our Texas Coastal Bend that is unique and eclectic with something for everyone—the beaches, natural and cultural amenities, boutiques, craft and artisan shops, and plenty of activities to keep the whole family engaged. We would sincerely like to thank the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce for inviting us into their little slice of heaven to undertake this year-long project in an effort to understand more about who is visiting the island, what they are doing, and of course, what they are spending while on-island. Their kind hospitality in taking care of members of the research team while visiting for data collection were unlike any other destination that we have ever experienced. Such care is a common theme running throughout the whole island among its people. For numerous reasons this project would not have been possible without the Chamber. It is our hope that this report will be helpful in future decisions concerning the management and planning for tourists to this wonderful island.

Executive Summary

It is hard to consider the coast of Texas without picturing the beautiful destination of Port Aransas. Showing the value of tourism to the area is something that will be helpful in making future decisions on how to best plan and manage for tourism. The purpose of the current report is to provide results of the year-long study of visitors to Port Aransas—both in terms of their visitor behavior and spending.

Six data collection trips were conducted on weekends between October 2012 and July 2013. Data were collected from visitors at numerous sites throughout Port Aransas, including: the beach (between markers 1 and 22), the jetty, Dennis Dryer Municipal Harbor Marina, Island Moorings Marina, Port Aransas Nature Preserve, Joan and Scott Paradise Pond, Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, Roberts Point Park, Port Aransas Civic Center, aboard the Wharf Cat Fishing Boat, fishing piers, as well as stationed outside numerous eating establishments on-island and fishing headquarters such as Woody's, Fisherman's Wharf, the Dolphin Dock and Deep Sea, and other locations throughout Port Aransas.

Throughout the year, 1123 visitors at the various sites were contacted and asked to participate. Of those, 28 were repeat visitors (leaving us with 1095 individuals), meaning they were contacted prior at other attractions and asked to participate, while another 210 declined to participate. From the remaining 885 individuals, 48 agreed to receive the questionnaire via email. This meant that 837 completed the on-site questionnaire, for a response rate of 79.9%. Of the 48 email addresses provided, 10 were considered 'bad' as emails bounced back given the email was incorrect or filters were placed on the email accounts. Of the potential 38 individuals that received the email with the survey link embedded, 28 individuals completed the questionnaire, for a response rate of 73.7%. Overall, 865 individuals completed the questionnaire, for an effective response rate of 79.7%. However, 11 were completed by locals (i.e., residents of Port Aransas or Rockport) and were not included in any of the subsequent analyses; 854 were completed by non-locals (i.e., individuals residing outside of Port Aransas or Rockport).

The average age of visitors was between the range of 40-49; however the largest percentage of visitors (33.5%) were between the ages of 50 and 64. The sample was nearly split down the middle with 50.2% being female and the rest male. Nearly two in three visitors had at least an undergraduate degree with nearly the same percentage having an annual household income of at least \$75,000.

The top information sources utilized by visitors in planning their trip to Port Aransas were personal knowledge/previous experience, family or friends/word of mouth, and searching the internet. It just so happened that visitors also claimed such sources were the most useful. Most visitors (75.8%) did not consult the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce website prior to visiting, however of those that did ($n = 166$), nearly three out of four claimed it to be either useful or very useful.

A majority of visitors (80.6%) were from within Texas. The largest percentage of in-state visitors came from San Antonio, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and surrounding areas around those cities. Nearly 20% of visitors originated from either another state or country. Top

states travellers came from were Oklahoma, Colorado, Minnesota, Illinois and Kansas. Canada provided the most out-of-country visitors to Port Aransas based on the sample.

Most visitors (92.7%) indicated their primary purpose for visiting Port Aransas was for vacation, leisure or a festival. The average group size was slightly less than four individuals. During the current trip for which visitors were taking, they had planned to stay in Port Aransas for a little more than four days compared to the 13 days they had envisioned staying in the area throughout the entire year. An overwhelming percentage (82%) had been to Port Aransas before, having visited 15 times prior. Likely due to such experience in Port Aransas, nearly 87% of visitors indicated they would either “likely” or “highly likely” return to the island on future trips. As far as accommodations were concerned, staying at a hotel/motel or in a condo rental were the most popular among participants.

The top activities visitors participated in while in Port Aransas were being on the beach, fishing, dining out, attending festival/special events, and shopping. Visitors indicated their central focus for coming to Port Aransas was the beach, attending a festival/special event, or fishing. Even though Port Aransas has much to offer visitors, participants were asked to indicate what activities or things they would like to see added. Nearly all of the individuals that responded to the question indicated things were fine the way they were in Port Aransas. For the rest of the individuals, approximately 25% wanted more sports (e.g., basketball courts, volleyball courts, disc golf, etc.) and amusement opportunities (e.g., bowling alley, movie theater, water slide, etc.) as well as a greater diversity of restaurants on Port Aransas.

Data regarding visitors’ perceptions of Port Aransas residents was also collected within the study. Visitors agreed most with the statement that they ‘were proud to be welcomed as a visitor to Port Aransas.’ Participants neither disagreed nor agreed with the other two items pertaining to identifying with residents or feeling close to some of those living in the area.

On average, Port Aransas visitor spending per visitor-day (i.e., party size multiplied by length of stay) was \$99.53. Average spending for respondents staying in hotels, condos, and rented private homes (\$43.02) was divided into Port Aransas gross hotel receipts from the second quarter of 2012 through the first quarter of 2013 (\$56,372,435.77) to estimate 1,310,350 visitor days for those who stayed in hotels, condos, and rented private homes. Additional visitor-days were calculated for people staying in other lodging based on their share relative to respondents staying in hotels, condos, and rented private homes. The total number of visitor days was estimated at 2,073,170. Spending by category was then multiplied by total visitor days to calculate the estimated total annual expenditures by Port Aransas visitors to be \$193,434,600. This \$193.4 million in spending was adjusted to reflect retail costs of goods sold, which is an immediate leakage from the economy, leaving a direct effect of \$162.6 million. Visitor expenditures resulted in a total economic output of \$201.8 million and 2,745 full- and part-time jobs annually in the Port Aransas economy. This total contribution includes a \$110.7 million contribution to gross regional product and a \$57.9 million contribution to labor income across the region. Local taxes generated from the direct effect for FY2012 was \$2,560,300 for city sales tax, \$3,157,300 for city hotel occupancy tax, and \$490,800 for Corpus Christi MTA sales tax.

[press release]

MEDIA CONTACT:

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Port Aransas Tourism and its Economic Impact

Port Aransas, TX., December 2, 2013 – The Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce & Tourist Bureau announced today the findings of a recent **Texas A&M University College Station** study on the economic impact of tourism in Port Aransas. The findings in this report provide an annualized snapshot of the economic impact based on off-peak and peak visitation for 2012/2013.

“The dollars spent by visitors have strengthened the Port Aransas economy by creating jobs, supporting local businesses from gas stations to retail stores and generating tax revenues to support our community,” comments Ann Vaughan, President & CEO of the Chamber.

Vaughan continues, “Tourism is our town’s primary industry and this study estimates its annual economic impact to be \$162.6 million.”

The study also shows that tourism was directly responsible for providing 2,745 full and part-time jobs. These jobs generated more than \$57.9 million in wages for Port Aransans.

For fiscal year 2012, tourism generated \$3.157 million in hotel occupancy tax revenues and continues to increase year after year. The most recent 2013 fiscal year generated an additional 12.6% in tax revenues, confirming again that Port Aransas continues its popularity as a desirable beach destination.

“The Port Aransas tourism industry continues to grow, which is good news for all of us,” Mayor of Port Aransas, Keith McMullin, added. “These figures illustrate the importance of tourism to our economy and to our community. This data will help our planners and officials make informed decisions about planning for tourism in the future.”

The study surveyed 837 visitors between October 2012 and July 2013. The average age of visitors surveyed was between 40 and 49. Nearly two in three visitors had at least an undergraduate degree with nearly the same percentage



having an annual household income of at least \$75,000. 80% of our visitors were from within Texas, coming primarily from San Antonio, Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston. Visitors outside of Texas were predominantly from Oklahoma, Colorado, Minnesota, Illinois and Kansas. Canada provided the most out-of-country visitors to Port Aransas based on the sample.

On average, Port Aransas visitor spending per visitor-day was \$100. This compares to US Average Visitor Spending per day of \$112 and Texas, \$115 per day.

In terms of trip length, the US Average is 2.75 days, Texas is 3.43 days and the average stay of our visitors surveyed was 4.2 days.

A notable take-away from the report, adds Vaughan, "is that our visitors like Port A the way it is. And to affirm why Port A is such a treasured destination, our visitors flock to our shores to enjoy the beach, our great outdoors, friendly community and all aspects of our coastal activities, dining, shopping and events."

Another reflection of Port Aransas charm and hospitality is that nearly 87% of visitors indicated they are either "likely" or "highly likely" return to the island on future trips.

Bill Bauder, Chairman of the Chamber's marketing committee, touted the study; "This is our first study conducted specific to Port Aransas and it will help to strategically direct our marketing efforts and serve as a benchmark as we go forward."

For more information, please contact the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce & Tourist Bureau.

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