



# TTRRC

TRAVEL, TOURISM, AND RECREATION RESOURCE CENTER

Michigan State University

## News Release

**From:** Travel, Tourism, and Recreation Resource Center

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## Michigan Tourism Spending Increases in 2005

EAST LANSING—Bucking a seemingly unending series of negatives news about the business climate in Michigan, researchers at Michigan State University (MSU) are reporting that at least one Michigan industry, tourism, experienced modest growth in 2005. Dr. Don Holecek, the spokesperson for the MSU research team, notes that “When we met a few days ago with representatives from Travel Michigan to review the tourism indicators that we have been tracking for over 20 years, we were all somewhat surprised by just how well the industry fared in 2005.” Despite spiking gasoline prices and negative overall economic conditions, the researchers estimate that tourists spent 4% more in Michigan than they did in 2004. Drawing upon recent research findings relating tourism activity to prevailing weather conditions, the researchers believe that the near ideal weather pattern that Michigan tourists encountered over much of the last year was largely responsible for improved industry performance. Holecek notes that “Our research indicates that good weather conditions can offset a host of negative influences on people’s propensity to travel, and what happened in 2005 has confirmed the results we have seen in our historical models.”

But, was the positive industry performance a fluke or is it the beginning of a sustainable growth trend for Michigan’s tourism industry? The MSU researchers and Travel Michigan officials are assessing current trends and economic forecasts to prepare their annual forecast for Michigan tourism activity. It will be presented at a conference in a few weeks.

George Zimmermann, Vice President of Travel Michigan, will also present an overview of the 2006 Tourism Promotion Program. Recent Travel Michigan efforts have been hampered by an uncompetitive marketing budget. This year’s plan is anticipated to be bolstered by a portion of a special one-time allocation from the 21st Century Jobs package. Details of how that fund may be used are still being negotiated by legislative and administration officials.

Information about what the future may hold for the Michigan tourism industry will be presented at what Holecek is calling the first Michigan Tourism “Mega Conference” to be held on March 28 and 29 at the Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort in Mt. Pleasant.

This new annual “mega” event is being organized by the Michigan Hotel, Motel and Resort Association (MHMRA) in partnership with Travel Michigan and MSU. Conference organizer, Steve Yencich, Executive Director of MHMRA said that “What was once an event exclusively for hotels is now a must-attend event for an entire industry. The Michigan Lodging & Tourism Conference, “Driving Tourism 2006” will bring together all segments of our industry to further strengthen performance for the coming

year. There will be seminars on travel packaging, marketing, disaster preparedness, strategic planning, employee relations, tourism cross marketing, and controlling healthcare costs. It will also feature an expanded trade show, student and employer roundtables, and the chance to network and further strengthen the ties that bind our industry together, all for the express purpose of “Driving Tourism 2006”! “

For more information about the performance of the Michigan tourism industry, please contact Don Holecek at MSU at 517-353-0793.

For more information about the conference, please contact Steve Yencich at MHMRA at 517-267-8989 or visit MHMRA’s web site: <http://www.michiganhotels.org/assoc/meetings.html>.