

DMO encourages visitors to clean beaches and other green activities

Highway 1 Discovery Route has launched the Stewardship Travel for Good Program, which encourages travelers on the California coast to “make a difference during their vacation.”

This program includes beach cleaning, trail restoration, museums, park tours and other sustainable activities.

“We want our visitors to feel a deeper connection to our area, so the way we do that is whether it takes a few minutes to clean up the trash while they are here, or a number. Educate and inspire them to do good things, whether it’s time or not, to build a trail in Montagna de Oro.”

On a recent Saturday, Travel For Good hosted a beach cleanup at Avila Beach in collaboration with the Central Coast Aquarium. Visitors can get a beach cleanup kit and protect marine life by picking up leftover trash for hours. Each cleanup kit includes a collection bag, gloves, and an Avila Beach Appreciation Stewardship tote bag.

The program provides these cleanup kits daily and no reservations are required. High school family members may also receive volunteer credits during the holidays.

Cleanup kits are available at Central Coast Aquarium, Avila Beach Golf Resort, Avila Lighthouse Suites, Avila Village Inn, Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort, Coastal Vacation Rental and San Luis Bay Inn.

– *californianewstimes.com*



Susquehanna River Valley Visitors Bureau

Tourism official questions impact of solar

Scenic views and landscapes draw tourists to Union County and the Susquehanna Valley’s tourism director shared in concerns expressed by a county commissioner that utility-grade solar farms could spoil the attraction.

Andrew Miller, executive director of the Susquehanna River Valley (Pa.) Visitors Bureau, said the bureau’s market research proves the river, countryside and forests lure visitors to the Valley. These same natural resources keep them here, too, Miller said.

Tourists spent an estimated \$153.6 million in Union County alone in 2019, an increase of \$37.9 million from 2009, Miller told Union County Commissioners during a recent public workshop meeting.

Citing research, Miller said that 7 in 10 visitors to the Valley came to drive through the countryside — a particularly popular activity when fall foliage peaks.

Many who decided to extend their stay locally did so because they wanted to explore more of the area’s natural resources, he said.

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Ohio law gives counties a greater say over wind, solar

The Seneca County (Ohio) Board of Commissioners heard a positive tourism report from staff members of the Seneca Regional Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Services and Destination Seneca County at a recent meeting.

Chamber Executive Director Bryce

Riggs shared encouraging bed tax figures with the board to start the presentation.

The commissioners then discussed the passage of Ohio Senate Bill 52, which gives county commissioners

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Farmer Dennis Spangler of New Berlin talks about his solar panels that he had installed several years ago.



2019 photo / The Daily Item

Commissioners question influence on tourism

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Visitors include the estimated 1,000 cyclists nationwide registered for the 2021 gravel road event, unPAved, an increasingly popular event that begins and ends in Lewisburg. Cycling is a growing attraction locally with visitors looking not only to ride but to stay, eat and shop locally.

The research contacted people within the bureau's own database along with tourists who stayed in Valley hotels, he said. He also explained how photos of local scenic landscapes are commonly used strategically in most tourism guides and advertising materials. "I do think it could have an impact," Miller said of large solar developments. "If the brand is the natural beauty for outdoor recreation I would hate for our brand to change."

After the meeting, Stacy Richards, Union County commissioner, identified proposed utility-grade solar developments in Limestone, Gregg, Kelly and Hartley townships.

One in Limestone Township envisions using 800 acres, she said. Richards said she's reviewed leases signed by local landowners allowing solar development and believes they're potentially riddled with problems for the landowner. She's concerned acres of solar panels planted on undeveloped farmland could ruin the views and dissuade return visitors looking to drive through the country, photograph the area, etc.

During the meeting, Richards said she didn't know quite how valuable local tourism was with respect to outdoor recreation and agriculture.

"The disruptor of utility-scale solar farms isn't just an impact on farmers and agricultural and the local economy. It's a massive hit on tourism, too," Richards said.

Commissioner Jeff Reber noted that Union County is nearing 10,000 acres in its preservation program that preserves farmland from development like solar farms.

— dailyitem.com

Some regions embrace solar, wind as attractive

Arguments over the placement of solar and wind farms will continue as long as developers propose them. But some areas see them as a way to attract visitors.

Benton County, Indiana, promotes tours of "Indiana's first wind farm."

The county website says, "We are just tickled to welcome visitors to our County to see the Wind Turbines that have been making the news all over."

Visit Indiana, the state DMO, also lists the wind farm tour as a Benton County attraction.

Farther afield, the Gullen Solar Farm project in Australia combines solar panels and wind turbines at one site.

"Get up close to a wind turbine and a solar array," says the website.

— bentoncounty.in.gov/about,
gullensolarfarm.com

Ohio law gives counties a greater say over wind, solar

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increased siting authority on large wind and solar projects.

When the bill is enacted on Oct. 11, commissioners have three new options concerning these projects. They can:

- Limit renewable energy construction projects in all or part of the county
- Approve or limit project requests
- Serve on the Ohio Power Siting Board

During the session, each of the commissioners expressed an interest in restricting the entire county from wind and solar development.

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