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Fox Cities visitor spending for 2019 surpasses milestone, tops half a billion dollars

Increases in lodging and recreation spending were lead contributors to overall growth, record year

FOX CITIES, Wis. (May 4, 2020) – Visitor spending in the Fox Cities increased to \$511 million in 2019, an increase of 3.6% over 2018. This spending directly supported 5,850 jobs in the local tourism industry with employee earnings totaling \$114 million.

“Reaching \$511 million in direct visitor spending is a milestone for the Fox Cities,” said Pam Seidl, executive director of the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau (FCCVB.). “While 2019’s number is an accomplishment and would normally be celebrated, in our current dire times for the tourism industry, this number also illustrates the economic losses our local economy will realize due to the COVID19 pandemic.”

Visitor spending is tracked across five categories, including lodging, food and beverage, retail, recreation and local transportation. Fox Cities visitor spending on lodging activities increased by 6.1% in 2019, leading all categories, followed by spending on recreational activities with an increase of 5.3% over 2019 numbers. Both food and beverage and retail spending increases also contributed to overall spending growth, while a drop in gas prices limited local transportation’s contributions to the overall growth. Additionally, visitor spending in the Fox Cities generated \$62 million in local and state taxes.

The local data covers the 19 communities that make up the Fox Cities – Appleton, Kaukauna, Menasha, Neenah, Combined Locks, Fox Crossing, Harrison, Hortonville, Kimberly, Little Chute, Sherwood, Buchanan, Clayton, Freedom, Grand Chute, Greenville, Vandenbroek, Woodville and (Town of) Neenah.

Wisconsin also posted its best year on record with a tourism economic impact of \$22.2 billion in 2019. Over 113 million people visited Wisconsin in 2019, and traveler spending on recreation activities experienced the fastest growth at 4.6%. Tourism supported 202,217 jobs in the state, as well as generated \$1.6 billion in state and local taxes and \$1.3 billion in federal taxes.

“While our industry currently faces great challenges in light of the COVID19 pandemic, we look to build upon these past successes, the spirit of travel and our diverse, regional and drive-to tourism market in the

Fox Cities to help our industry bounce back and be leaders in the local economic recovery,” FCCVB Marketing Communications Director Beth Knapinski said.

Visitor spending figures are part of the statewide economic impact study conducted by Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics Company.

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The Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau strengthens the local economy by investing in and promoting our community. In the Fox Cities, which includes 19 communities, visitor spending totaled more than \$511 million in 2019. The Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau estimates this direct spending supported more than 5,850 jobs and \$114 million in income for Fox Cities residents.