

Pinellas County Ecotourism Position Draft: Extension Specialist I

Sample Position Description

Ecotourism Specialist I

Category:

Classified Pay Grade: C21

Job Code: 14922

Job Summary: Ecotourism Specialist I performs specialized work providing education and support for nature-based tourism activities in Pinellas County within the County Extension Division of the Parks and Conservation Resources to promote sustainable management of nature-based tourism opportunities throughout the county. A successful agent will act as a liaison between residents, tourism operators and tourism professionals within the county to support partnership, collaboration, education, and shared responsibility for managing how tourism impacts our county's natural resources to ensure activities promote sustainable use for future generations.

Essential Job Functions *(examples of what specialist could do, can be reduced for final draft)*

Partnership and Collaboration

- Create partnerships with nature-based tourism stakeholders such as nature-tourism business owners, operators, guides, the Tourism Development Council, Convention Visitors Bureau, the Economic Development Office, Visit St. Pete Clearwater, and public lands managers to support sustainable and responsible tourism initiatives for the county's nature-based tourism opportunities.
- Facilitate meetings between tourism professionals, land managers, nature tourism business owners, operators and guides to promote interdisciplinary collaboration among those associated with the tourism system.
- Act as a liaison between tourism agencies, businesses, land managers, and residents to promote unified initiatives towards ecotourism in the county.
- Develop programs for tourism partners, visitors, and residents to contribute donations to community conservation initiatives and infrastructure relation to tourism.

Outreach and Education

- Organize public seminars for tourism operators and guides on current environmental regulations and best management practices.
- Hold workshops with nature-based tourism operators to develop sustainable tourism and increase ecotourism knowledge on a variety of topics, including best management practices, marketing, management plans, etc.)
- Develop county-wide nature-based tourism industry standards and criteria for an ecotourism business certification in collaboration with tourism partners. Follow Guide and Outfitter Recognize Professional, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, and Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism standards as a guide.
- Coordinate trainings and professional development courses for nature-based tourism guides and operators.

- Integrate ecotourism principles into 4-H youth entrepreneurship clubs and camps, using ecotourism operators as a model.
- Develop recreation and environmental stewardship programs focused on natural history, responsible use of natural areas, current threats, etc. that are appealing to both residents and visitors.
- Participate in local community events to promote understanding of responsible tourism and ecotourism.
- Working with tourism partners, develop a walking tour of Pinellas' natural areas, or a cleanup of popular parks to promote voluntourism and local participation.
- Work with nature-based tourism operators, guides, and residents to develop citizen science initiatives relating to tourism.

Research and Monitoring

- Coordinate with natural resource managers to conduct ecological impact assessments from nature-based tourism activities within the county to reduce impact at the site level.
- Research residents and visitors willingness to pay for recreational ecosystem services to assess the direct and indirect benefits of nature-based tourism activities in the county.
- Work with the Economic Development Office to collect and report on nature-tourism related employment data
- Inventory Pinellas County's existing nature-based tourism areas (both public and private), and identify areas with the lowest and highest visitation.
- Develop a system to monitor and publically report outdoor tourism and recreation use, and report visitor satisfaction. Work with appropriate agencies to take action to improve visitor satisfaction in natural areas.
- Analyze best management practices for nature-based tourism businesses (guides).
- Assess current and emerging nature-based tourism markets to share with operators.

Marketing and Communication

- Facilitate and assist in the development of shared marketing initiatives for nature-based tourism destination within the county, ensuring those messages promote responsible use and best practices for tourists.
- Develop interpretive information about ecotourism in Pinellas County available to visitors in tourist offices and at natural resource sites.
- Develop a marketing program to highlight businesses inland with low levels of visitor use to diversify tourism opportunities for visitors and residents.
- Hold events for residents in the off season to promote local tourism (local deals for less visited sites, citizen science)
- Work with partners to facilitate the promotion of events for certified ecotourism businesses to promote local investment in the off-season.
- Create and manage a public database for ecotourism resources and businesses within the county.
- Market extension events that are applicable to visitors to Pinellas Events Calendar (visitstpeteclearwater/events), and the Tourism Development Council, such as natural-area tours, kayaking tours, etc. so the information can be shared with incoming tourists.
- Recommend tips for tourism websites (Visit St. Pete Clearwater) on how to be a responsible ecotourist in Pinellas County. Under the FAQ for the page, you could include "How do I know I'm supporting a responsible ecotourism business?" and include a link to certified ecotourism operators.

- Assist in the development, promotion and evaluation of tourism related trails, both land and marine based.

Decision Package

Decision Package Name	Ecotourism Specialist I
Strategic Goal Area (Primary)	<p>This position addresses strategic goal area 5, Deliver First Class Service to the Public and our Customers, and strategic goal area 3, Practice Superior Environmental Stewardship, and strategic goal area 4, Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality. Specifically, activities correlate with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SP 5.1 Maximize partner relationships and public outreach • SP 5.2 Be responsible stewards of the public's resources • SP 3.2 Preserve and manage environmental lands, beaches, parks, and historical assets • SP 3.3 Protect and improve the quality of our water, air, and other natural resources • SP 4.1 Proactively attract and retain businesses with targeted jobs to the county and the region • SP 4.6 Support a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors
Strategy	
Criteria	
Department/Agency	Parks and Conservation Resources
Fund Name	
Program name	PM1380:PCR
OMB Analyst	
Department contact	JP Gellerman, Lara Milligan, Libby Carnahan
Recurring/Non-recurring	
Requested Funding	\$59,016.48 (32 hr position)
Recurring Cost	
For recurring, explain financial sustainability	<i>This request would require \$59,016.48 annually to bring on an Ecotourism Specialist I position for part-time (32 hr.) with benefits. This cost was</i>

	<p>calculated using the Account Detail/Position Calculator tool made available through SharePoint. Current budget line items could be adjusted to help with the cost of this expenditure. <i>[Lara - I saw a large budget for FY19 for visitor services through the Parks and Conservation Department, would this be a good place to pull funds from for the initial funding?]</i>. The Ecotourism Specialist I will support sustainable nature-based tourism practices in Pinellas County through education, research, and building partnerships with tourism stakeholders. Future financial support for this position could be shared between partners, (i.e. Tourism Development Council). The Ecotourism Specialist I intends to promote quality and responsible nature-based tourism in Pinellas County, and can support sustained-use of our natural resources to ensure they continue to provide pristine habitat visitors, residents, and wildlife for years to come.</p>
FTE	
Description	<p>Establishing an Ecotourism Specialist I position within Pinellas County Extension would promote sustainable management of nature-based tourism activities throughout the county by building partnerships among tourism stakeholders, providing ecotourism workshops, professional development trainings and certifications to nature-based tourism business owners, operators, and guides, and ensuring marketing of Pinellas' many nature-based tourism opportunities are being effectively marketed among stakeholders with a unified message of sustainability and responsible tourism. This position supports SP 5.2 by promoting responsible stewardship of the public's natural resources, and SP 5.1, maximizing partner relationships and public outreach. Activities will reinforce the message that Pinellas County is committed to promoting authentic and sustainable tourism, and offers a unique combination of diverse natural areas, pristine beaches, and a lively cultural scene, which correlates to SP 4.6. Finally, the Ecotourism Specialist I's activities will maximize the social, environmental, and economic benefits to the county from tourism, and minimize impacts to ensure tourism activities are sustainable and continue to provide world-class experiences.</p>
Justification	<p>Tourism contributes greatly to the economy and quality of life in Pinellas County. According to the Tourism Development Council, the county sees an</p>

	<p>economic impact of more than 10.3 billion dollars annually (Visit St. Pete Clearwater). Popular natural areas within the county (i.e. beaches) see a high level of use that is only expected to grow. At the same time, many of the county's natural offerings are being underutilized. As overall nature-based tourism continues to grow, tourism activities may threaten the natural areas on which they rely. This means nature-based tourism activities need to be planned, monitored, and managed collaboratively to ensure activities remain low-impact and sustainable for years to come. In 2018, an Ecotourism Needs Assessment was conducted with the University of Florida, and results showed an interest in Pinellas County Extension taking on a role in the support and expansion of ecotourism opportunities within the County. Pinellas County Extension has the opportunity to extend what it does for county residents to the nature-based tourism sector by providing workshops, conducting research and monitoring, building partnerships. Investing in ecotourism practices through extension is critical to a sustainable Pinellas County, so we can continue to support the county's commitment to preserving and managing environmental lands, beaches, parks, and historical assets (SP 3.2), while supporting a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors (SP 4.6).</p>
Effectiveness Measures	<p>Success will be measured through the development of partnerships, workshop attendance, and monitoring from environmental impact assessments, nature-based tourism economic assessments, and visitor use monitoring for low-use areas. Baseline visitation data for natural areas can be used to determine an increase in visitation for lesser-known areas. In the event that baseline visitation data is unavailable, the Ecotourism Specialist can work to address that issue through nature-based tourism research and monitoring. An evaluation of participant satisfaction and knowledge gain can be conducted prior to and after ecotourism workshops, consultations, and events. The intended outcome is to collaboratively and responsibly manage the county's nature-based tourism opportunities, so they may remain high quality natural areas that benefit the local community and economy, and visitors alike.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop and program attendance - Workshop and program satisfaction and knowledge gained (pre/post evaluation)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitation data and monitoring for natural areas - Number of partnerships with tourism professionals and operators - Participation numbers from meetings, events, etc. - Ecotourism and responsible tourism marketing materials and interpretive information developed
What Alternatives have you previously used?	<i>A Ecotourism Specialist position does not yet exist in Florida, and Pinellas County could serve as a leader in promoting responsible and sustainable tourism to Florida's natural areas. Currently, Extension staff work tirelessly to provide environmental education and support to residents regarding other important topics. The nature of this position requires an agent's full attention in order to be successful. It is possible some of these activities could be adopted by existing agents, however, this approach will not maximize the benefits of this position. The desired outcome of the 2018 Ecotourism Needs Assessment was to have extension play a role in the development of ecotourism opportunities within Pinellas County, with an emphasis on providing support and education for nature-based tourism operators, and building partnerships with stakeholders in the tourism industry.</i>
Department Status	
Attachment included?	Yes, decision package Account Details/Position calculated is attached. <i>While the position requested as a 32 hr. position with benefits, 24 hr. and 40 hr. positions were also calculated.</i>
Department Ranking/Priority	

Decision Packet: Ecotourism Specialist I

Describe, if any, increases in revenue or reductions in expenditures that will help this decision package to be financially sustainable.

This request would require \$59,016.48 annually to bring on an Ecotourism Specialist I position for part-time (32 hr.) with benefits. This cost was calculated using the Account Detail/Position Calculator tool made available through SharePoint. Current budget line items could be adjusted to help with the cost of this expenditure. [Lara - I saw a large budget for FY19 for visitor services through the Parks and Conservation Department, would this be a good place to pull funds from for the initial funding?]. The Ecotourism Specialist I will support sustainable nature-based tourism practices in Pinellas County through education, research, and building partnerships with tourism stakeholders. Future financial support for this position could be shared between partners, (i.e. Tourism Development Council). The Ecotourism Specialist I intends to promote quality and responsible nature-based tourism in Pinellas County, and can

support sustained-use of our natural resources to ensure they continue to provide pristine habitat visitors, residents, and wildlife for years to come.

In 2 to 3 sentences, **provide a brief description in this field**. Also, complete and attach the Decision Package Account Detail / Position Calculator.

Establishing an Ecotourism Specialist I position within Pinellas County Extension would promote sustainable management of nature-based tourism activities throughout the county by building partnerships among tourism stakeholders, providing ecotourism workshops, professional development trainings and certifications to nature-based tourism business owners, operators, and guides, and ensuring marketing of Pinellas' many nature-based tourism opportunities are being effectively marketed among stakeholders with a unified message of sustainability and responsible tourism. This position supports SP 5.2 by promoting responsible stewardship of the public's natural resources, and SP 5.1, maximizing partner relationships and public outreach. Activities will reinforce the message that Pinellas County is committed to promoting authentic and sustainable tourism, and offers a unique combination of diverse natural areas, pristine beaches, and a lively cultural scene, which correlates to SP 4.6. Finally, the Ecotourism Specialist I's activities will maximize the social, environmental, and economic benefits to the county from tourism, and minimize impacts to ensure tourism activities are sustainable and continue to provide world-class experiences.

What is the need you are trying to address? Include data to demonstrate the need. Include statutory support if applicable.

Tourism contributes greatly to the economy and quality of life in Pinellas County. According to the Tourism Development Council, the county sees an economic impact of more than 10.3 billion dollars annually, and it is estimated that tourism contributes \$328 to the local economy every second of every day (Visit St. Pete Clearwater). While much is known about the economic benefits of overall tourism in Pinellas County, the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism, and specifically nature-based tourism is underdeveloped. Nature-based tourism refers to "travel to unspoiled places to experience and enjoy nature" (Martha Honey 2008), and includes kayaking, nature walks, biking, and going to the beach. Popular natural areas within the county (i.e. beaches) see a high level of use that is only expected to grow. At the same time, many of the county's natural offerings are being underutilized. As overall nature-based tourism continues to grow, tourism activities may threaten the natural areas on which they rely. This means nature-based tourism activities need to be planned, monitored, and managed collaboratively to ensure activities remain low-impact and sustainable for years to come. In 2018, an Ecotourism Needs Assessment was conducted with the University of Florida, and results showed an interest in Pinellas County Extension taking on a role in the support and expansion of ecotourism opportunities within the County. Pinellas County Extension has the opportunity to extend what it does for county residents to the nature-based tourism sector by providing workshops, conducting research and monitoring, building partnerships. Investing in ecotourism practices through extension is critical to a sustainable Pinellas County, so we can continue to support the county's commitment to preserving and managing environmental lands, beaches, parks, and historical assets (SP 3.2), while supporting a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors (SP 4.6).

How will success be measured? What is the intended outcome?

Success will be measured through the development of partnerships, workshop attendance, and monitoring from environmental impact assessments, nature-based tourism economic assessments, and visitor use monitoring for low-use areas. Baseline visitation data for natural areas can be used to determine an increase in visitation for lesser-known areas. In the event that baseline visitation data is unavailable, the Ecotourism Specialist can work to address that issue through nature-based tourism research and monitoring. An evaluation of participant satisfaction and knowledge gain can be conducted prior to and after ecotourism workshops, consultations, and events. The intended outcome is to collaboratively and responsibly manage the county's nature-based tourism opportunities, so they may remain high quality natural areas that benefit the local community and economy, and visitors alike.

How have you tried to achieve this outcome with existing resources?

A Ecotourism Specialist position does not yet exist in Florida, and Pinellas County could serve as a leader in promoting responsible and sustainable tourism to Florida's natural areas. Currently, Extension staff work tirelessly to provide environmental education and support to residents regarding other important topics. The nature of this position requires an agent's full attention in order to be successful. It is possible some of these activities could be adopted by existing agents, however, this approach will not maximize the benefits of this position. The desired outcome of the 2018 Ecotourism Needs Assessment was to have extension play a role in the development of ecotourism opportunities within Pinellas County, with an emphasis on providing support and education for nature-based tourism operators, and building partnerships with stakeholders in the tourism industry.

Resources and References

- <https://partners.visitspeteclearwater.com/resource/value-tourism>
- <https://www.visitspeteclearwater.com/events>
- <https://www.visitspeteclearwater.com/info/faqs-and-traveler-tips>
- <https://www.gstcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Dest- CRITERIA and INDICATORS 6-9-14.pdf>
- <https://extensiontourism.net/state-sea-grant-2/>
- <http://www.pinellascounty.org/budget/19budget/ProposedBudgetFY19/SectionB.FY19Summaries Combined.pdf>
- https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/congressionaldata/FLORIDA/OIA-ConDist-Florida_13.pdf
- <https://partners.visitspeteclearwater.com/reporting/bed-tax>
- <https://partners.visitspeteclearwater.com/sites/default/files/stpeteclearwatervisitorprofile-interimmonthlyreportoffindings-february2019.pdf>