

## Mission Programs

Center for Sustainable Destinations

### **Geotourism Grows in Vermont National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations Moving Ahead with MapGuide Projects**

By Laurel Kellner



In his keynote address at the Northeast Kingdom Tourism Conference, Jonathan Tourtellot cited Vermont's high score—tops in the U.S.—in National Geographic *Traveler's* Destination Scorecard, a survey of places rated by stewardship travel experts.

Jonathan Tourtellot, of National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations (CSD), put geotourism center stage in Vermont as the keynote speaker for the Northeast Kingdom Tourism Conference, titled "Geotourism and the National Geographic Society in the Northeast Kingdom." Held June 5<sup>th</sup> in Lyndon, Vermont, the conference focused on building sustainable tourism in northeastern Vermont for the benefit of local communities.

CSD seeks to protect the world's distinctive places through wisely managed tourism and enlightened destination stewardship. It promotes *geotourism*, defined as *tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—it's environment, culture, aesthetics heritage, and the well-being of its residents.*

The geotourism program in "the Kingdom" launched this March with a Geotourism

MapGuide project in collaboration with CSD and NG Maps. Over 150 site nominations for the map have been collected, highlighting cultural, natural, and historic attractions distinctive to the three Northeast Kingdom counties of Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans.



Local input is essential to the geotourism approach. CSD's Director, Jonathan Tourtellot, engages community members during a conference workshop.

To collaborate with NGS, a permanent geotourism alliance has formed to serve the region involving local partners, led by the Nulhegan Gateway Association. The project is funded in part by a Rural Business Enterprise Grant from the USDA.

With these efforts, Vermont's NEK joins Norway, Romania, Honduras, the Cook Islands, Appalachia, and the Sonoran Desert region in adopting the geotourism approach. For more information see CSD's website:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/>