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TOURISM CONTRIBUTES \$421 MILLION TO LOCAL ECONOMY

VANCOUVER, Wash. – According to a study just released by the Washington State Department of Commerce, visitors to Clark County spent a record \$421 million in 2008. This number is up 5.36 percent over 2007 and puts Clark County as the sixth highest in visitor spending of all 39 counties in Washington State.

Clark County's growth in travel spending in 2008 was much better than expected considering the travel industry throughout the nation was experiencing slowed growth due to the decline in business travel and the general recession. Statewide, travel spending was \$15.4 billion in 2008, a 3.5 percent increase over 2007.

"We are thrilled to see that the tourism numbers in Clark County are up," said Kim Bennett, Southwest Washington Convention & Visitors Bureau President & CEO. "Not only did we have increases in visitor spending across all segments of the industry, there were increases in local and state tax receipts, the number of jobs, and job earnings -- all generated by travel to Clark County."

A breakdown of visitors' expenditures shows that in 2008 visitors to Clark County spent:

- \$46.3 million on Lodging
- \$103.1 million on Food and Beverage Services
- \$21.0 million on Food Stores
- \$135.9 million on Ground Transportation & Motor Fuel
- \$50.6 million on Arts, Entertainment & Recreation
- \$57.2 million on Retail Sales

Tourism also helps Clark County's employment picture. Tourism supported 4,040 jobs in 2008, generating \$105 million in salaries up from \$102.5 in 2007. "Tourism is a clean industry pumping new dollars into our local economy. As our tourism industry grows, so will our economy creating new jobs in and around the hospitality industry," said Bennett.

The Washington State County Travel Impacts 1991-2008 study was conducted by Dean Runyan Associates. The full report can be viewed at <http://www.experiencewashington.com/industry>.

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About the SWCVB:

The Southwest Washington Convention & Visitors Bureau is an economic development organization responsible for competitively marketing Vancouver and the surrounding area as a destination for meetings, conventions, and group and leisure travelers. The SWCVB is located at 101 E 8th Street, Suite 240, Vancouver, WA 98660. You can reach the Bureau at 360-750-1553, or via e-mail at info@southwestwashington.com. You can also visit them on their web site at www.SouthwestWashington.com.

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