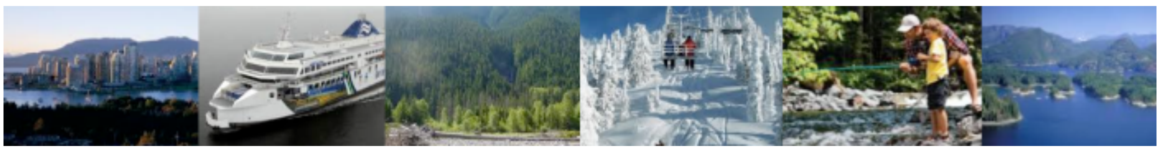
WEDDING TOURISM in the PEMBERTON VALLEY
-- ECONOMIC IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY ANALYSIS --

July 2015



Larose Research & Strategy

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Pemberton & District Chamber of Commerce

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This report was developed with significant input and support from numerous stakeholders in the Pemberton Valley and beyond.

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This report would not have been possible without the financial support of Community Futures Howe Sound.

We would also like to thank the dozens of individuals who participated in interviews, provided written comments, and/or completed the stakeholder survey.

Also a thank-you to the staff of the Squamish Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) for providing background information on the policy and regulatory context for the analysis.

Statistics Canada and Destination BC also reviewed and provided comments on the report's methodology.

Disclaimer

This is a preliminary analysis designed to establish reasonable estimates of the value of destination (tourist) weddings in the Pemberton region. The results in this report are initial estimates only, and are developed in order to provide high-level assessments and guidance with respect to the economic impact, composition, and strategic context of the Pemberton Valley wedding tourism sector. While all efforts were made to ensure the accuracy of information presented in the report, this work should be considered an initial analysis and used for general guidance.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2015 Larose Research & Strategy was commissioned by the Pemberton & District Chamber of Commerce (PCC) to undertake an analysis of the Pemberton Valley's destination wedding sector.

Destination weddings in the region (also called "wedding tourism") have grown substantially in recent years, and are a major contributor to the region's economy. At the same time, with rapid growth of the sector, alongside the development of other large-scale events in the region, some negative impacts have occurred, such as noise and congestion. These impacts have resulted in the community and region exploring ways to sustainably maintain this economic activity while addressing the negative impacts.

In order to assess the economic impacts and ongoing sustainability of this important sector, dozens of local businesses were consulted, a stakeholder survey administered, economic impact estimates developed, a literature review conducted, and a high-level sustainability analysis produced.

Economic Impact Estimates

Based on an evaluation of the administrative records of businesses providing services to weddings in the region, it is estimated that there were **80 destination weddings** in Pemberton in 2014, with an **average of 95 attendees**.

Of these estimated 7,600 wedding attendees, 88% (6,688) were estimated to reside outside the Pemberton Valley region.

Expenditures of wedding tourists to the region accounted for approximately $3.4 million in direct annual expenditures, in businesses such as accommodation/F&B, transportation, retail, and other services.

Table A: Wedding Tourist Expenditures

Visitor Expenditures – Tourism Industries	Percentage	Amount
Accommodation / F&B	33.6%	$976,000
Transportation	31.3%	$909,000
Retail	27.2%	$790,000
Other Services	7.9%	$229,000
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**$2.9 million**

In addition, the actual wedding events generate expenditures on items such as wedding venues, catering, photography, and other areas. With an average cost of approximately $27,000 per wedding, this amounted to $2.2 million in total expenditures in 2014.

Table B: Destination Wedding Event Expenditures

Wedding (Event) Expenditure Categories	**Percentage of Total Wedding Expenses**	**Single Event Amount**	**Total (All Events)**
Venue	37.2%	$10,000	$800,000
Food/Liquor/Catering	21.6%	$5,800	$464,000
Photography	8.6%	$2,300	$184,000
Event Planning	6.6%	$1,800	$144,000
Music/DJ	3.7%	$990	$79,000
Floral/Arrangement	7.0%	$1900	$152,000
Videographer	6.0%	$1,600	$128,000
Cake	1.9%	$500	$40,000
Transportation	2.6%	$690	$55,000
Favours	0.9%	$250	$20,000
Rehearsal Dinner	4.0%	$1,100	$88,000
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**$26,930**	**$2.2 million**

The sum of visitor spending and event spending is approximately $5.1 million in direct annual expenditures on Pemberton's destination weddings each year. This generated approximately $8.5 million in total economic output, and $5.0 million in GDP.

The $5.0 million in GDP represents approximately 4% of the Pemberton Valley's total GDP.

Table C: Total Direct Expenditures:

	Direct Expenditures	**Total Economic Output**	**Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**
Visitor Spending	$2.9 million	$4.8 million	$3.0 million
Event Spending	$2.2 million	$3.7 million	$2.0 million
TOTAL	**$5.1 million**	**$8.5 million**	**$5.0 million**

At $8.5 million in total annual output, **each wedding results in more than $100,000 in economic activity**; the majority of which remains in the region.

Tax Revenues and Jobs

Destination weddings accounted for approximately **$1.9 million in total tax revenues**, to local, provincial, and federal governments.

The 80 destination weddings in the region accounted for an estimated **77 jobs** in 2014.

Stakeholder Survey and Consultation Summary

Approximately 100 business and community stakeholders were interviewed and/or surveyed as part of this analysis. Prominent findings include:

- The region's wedding tourism sector is strategically aligned with the community's "slow food," rural / agrarian lifestyle brand.
- Enhanced management efforts should be put in place to address resident concerns, particularly regarding noise and traffic.
- Due to uncertainty regarding venues, some of the region's wedding planners have begun to curtail Pemberton bookings.
- Wedding-related food and beverage benefit local agricultural production, with the majority of venues and caterers serving local agricultural products, particularly beef, in-season fruits and vegetables, and floral arrangements.
- Lessons can be drawn from other regions and sectors that have overcome similar challenges with growth in unsanctioned commercial activity, such as BC's Commercial Recreation Tenure Incentive Program, the Okanagan's wine tourism industry, Vancouver's North Shore trail designation process, and others.
- The demand for wedding tourism in the region exceeds supply, with many venues indicating they turn down bookings well in excess of those they accept; however, many venues are also presently under capacity, which suggests that a centralized tracking and referral system could help maximize revenues and distribute benefits throughout the region.
- Many tools exist to address resident concerns, and many are being used presently by venues, including event management plans, curfews, parking/transportation management, voluntary Codes of Conduct, neighbour engagement, and others.
- To ensure the ongoing viability of the destination wedding sector, the most common recommendations of business survey respondents were:
  - Enable weddings on the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) through a streamlined permitting process.
  - Provide a transition (grace) period for businesses presently operating without the required zoning and permits.
- To minimize the negative impacts of weddings on local residents, the most common recommendations of business survey respondents were:
  - Establish noise bylaws for Area C.
  - Establish a "Minimum Distance from Neighbours" requirement for venues.
  - Limit the frequency / number of events per year.
  - Require a "Net Benefit to Agriculture" from weddings.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Report Purpose and Scope of Analysis

This report estimates the economic impact of wedding tourism in the Pemberton region, including multiplier impacts (indirect and induced impacts) in the regional economy. The report also summarizes and evaluates the perspectives of local business stakeholders impacted both positively and negatively by the growth in wedding tourism.

In addition, contextual information is evaluated regarding the overall situation of wedding tourism in the Pemberton region, including but not limited to the sector's "internal" strengths and weaknesses, as well as "external" opportunities and threats. This is followed by a high-level sustainability analysis.

1.2 Research Questions:

This report addresses the following questions:

1. What was the estimated total economic impact of wedding tourism in the Pemberton Valley region, from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014.
2. What types of businesses are impacted by wedding tourism, and to what extent are they impacted?
3. What are the perspectives of business stakeholders regarding the region's wedding tourism sector?
4. What are the perspectives of stakeholders regarding potential measures that could be taken to sustainably grow the sector while mitigating some of the negative impacts of wedding tourism in the region?

1.3 Guiding Principles:

Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, an appreciative inquiry methodology was utilized in developing this report. Accordingly, the following guiding principles were developed and utilized:

- *Transparency* – the project purpose, research questions, processes, and methodology were made available to stakeholders.
- *Objectivity & Impartiality* – all evidence was assessed and included in the report.
- *Inclusivity* – diverse perspectives were sought of all stakeholders in the region.
- *Privacy and confidentiality* – all consultations, survey responses, and other information were held in the strictest of confidence.

2.0 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Region

The principal focus of this study is the Pemberton Valley region, extending from Nairn Falls Provincial Park in the southwest of the region to Mt. Currie and Lillooet Lake in the southeast. It extends north Pemberton Meadows in the northwest and Birken in the northeast.

Figure 1 – Study Region

Source: Google Maps

Expenditures related to Pemberton destination weddings, however will occur not only in the study region but also extending to other regions of British Columbia. Where possible, a breakdown of the economic impacts will indicate the impacted region. While the majority of expenditures will accrue to the Pemberton region, some will accrue to other areas of the province. The economic impact calculations and multipliers excluded any impacts beyond British Columbia.

2.2 Methodology Summary

The economic impact estimates in this report are guided by accepted best practices in tourism and special event economic impact analysis.[1] Data inputs are from a variety of sources, including primary data sources (business financial records), secondary sources (random sampling of visitors to the region via the International Travel Survey (ITS) and Travel Survey of Residents of Canada (TSRC)), and Statistics Canada's Input-Output Model (2010) for economic impact multipliers.

This type of approach is a flexible and efficient way to develop quick yet reliable preliminary estimates.

The report uses a "mixed methods" approach that incorporates the following components:

- "Snowball sampling" - subject matter experts are identified through a cascading series of interviews with informants, who identify further subject matter experts to be consulted (25 total consultations, primarily business owners and local stakeholders (e.g., Museum, VIC, etc.)
- Semi-structured interviews, via face-to-face meetings, telephone interviews, and email exchanges with business owners (11 face-to-face interviews, ten telephone interviews, 30+ email exchanges).
- An online stakeholder survey of local businesses (46 responses)
- Economic impact analysis, using business financial record data, business estimates, visitor surveys, and input-output (I/O) modelling via Statistics Canada's I/O Model.

The overall approach to the analysis is guided by sustainable destination development research in the peer-reviewed tourism literature, particularly David Weaver (2006; 2012), Jennifer Laing and Warwick Frost (2010), Brent Ritchie and Geoffrey Crouch (2003), and Richard Butler (1980).

2.2.1 Economic Impact Estimate Methodology

The economic impact estimates benefitted from a variety of information sources, which were used to cross-validate and mutually reinforce one-another.

Economic impact estimates utilized the following data inputs:

1. Total number of "destination" weddings in the Pemberton region in 2014.

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[1] For a description of methodologies for tourism economic impact estimates similar to this study, see Daniel J. Stynes, "Approaches to Estimating the Economic Impact of Tourism," Michigan State University, 1999. http://www.onestopmba.com/mba-download/upload/economic%20impacts%20of%20tourism.pdf. This study utilizes varying "levels" of approaches but primarily "Level 4" data sources and calculations.

2. Average cost per wedding (venue, catering, equipment rentals, other services).
3. Total number of attendees (overall) and average attendees per wedding.
4. Wedding attendee origins.
5. Average trip duration of wedding attendees.
6. Average daily expenditures of wedding attendees.
    a. Estimates using data from the International Travel Survey (ITS) and Travel Survey of Residents of Canada (TSRC) for the Vancouver, Coast and Mountains region.
    b. Estimates using typical itineraries provided by wedding planners and industry suppliers (accommodations, F&B, others).

2.2.2 Data Sources

Data for inputs #1-4 above were tracked in the financial and administrative systems of businesses in four main categories: wedding planners, equipment rental agencies, accommodation providers, and wedding venues. This information was provided directly and confidentially to Larose Research & Strategy for the exclusive purposes of this report.

These data were then cross-validated with one-another and with other existing research to establish the overall economic impact estimates.

3.0 ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

This section estimates the economic impacts of wedding tourism in the study region.

3.1 Economic Impact Analysis

Economic impact analysis measures or estimates the change in socioeconomic indicators – expenditures, employment, tax revenues, others – of a policy, project, organization, or region.

With regard to measuring economic impacts of tourism, the following components are typically included:

- Direct economic impacts – visitor expenditures in tourism-related industries (e.g., accommodations, F&B, entertainment, others).
- Indirect and induced economic impacts – economic activity of businesses that serve tourism businesses (e.g., finance, insurance, manufacturing, etc.) and incomes of individuals employed in tourism businesses, which are recirculated throughout the economy.
- Employment – the total number of people employed in tourism-related industries
- Taxation – the total tax revenues accruing to all three levels of government (federal, provincial, local) from all tourism-related expenditures

3.2 Estimating Visitor Spending in the Pemberton Valley Region

Economic impact estimates are established with the following formula:

Economic Impact = (Total Event Expenditures) + (Total Wedding Guest Travel Expenditures)

Total Event Expenditures = (# Destination Weddings) x (Avg Wedding Expenditure)

Total Visitor Expenditures = (# Visitors) x (Avg Trip Duration) x (Avg Daily Expenditures)

3.3 Number of Pemberton Area Weddings (2014)

The first step in estimating the economic impact of destination weddings in Pemberton was to estimate the number of weddings held in the region in 2014. This estimate was produced using tracked data from the administrative systems of wedding venues, wedding planners, equipment rental agencies, and other stakeholders in the region.

The process of determining the total number of weddings, as well as the total and average number of wedding guests was as follows:

1. Establish number of unique contracts of equipment rental agencies for weddings within the study areas

2. Identify destination wedding venues and establish total number of weddings held at venues
3. Establish total number of weddings planned by local wedding/event planners
4. Cross-validate figures for 1-3, above
5. Discount weddings of Pemberton area residents (10%)[2]

Due to business privacy and data confidentiality issues, detailed breakdowns of these figures cannot be provided here.

> Based on the above inputs, it is estimated that **there were 80 destination weddings** in the study area between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014.

3.4 Average Destination Wedding Size

Reviewing administrative data of venues, wedding planners, and rental agencies, the average number of attendees at weddings, including wedding parties, and excluding any paid attendees, is 95.

> The average destination wedding in Pemberton in 2014 had **95 total attendees** on average.

In terms of validation, it is noteworthy that the 37 respondents to this question in the business stakeholder survey estimated the average wedding size to be 96 attendees.

> It is estimated that **7,600 people attended destination weddings** in the region in 2014.

3.5 Wedding Guest Origins

In order to develop estimates of visitor spending, we must first establish their origins. This was undertaken by reviewing administrative data provided by wedding planners and accommodation providers in particular, which often track guest origins.

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[2] Note that a proportion of Pemberton resident weddings would still involve visitation to the region by non-residents, with the associated visitor spending. In order to ensure the report's overall figures are conservative, these visitor expenditures for resident weddings have been excluded entirely.

Table 1: Pemberton Wedding Attendee Origins

Origins	Percentage	Number
Lower Mainland	53.0%	4,026
Pemberton Valley[3]	12.7%	966
Other British Columbia	13.3%	1,012
U.S.	11.4%	867
Other International	9.6%	729
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**7,600**

3.6 Visitor Expenditure Model

Table 2: Expenditure Model – Pemberton Wedding Attendees

	Visitors	Avg. Daily Expend.	Avg. Duration In Region	Avg Party Size	Total Expenditures
Lower Mainland	4,026	$155	3.4	1.6	$1,330,000
Pemberton Valley[4]	966	$50	2	1	$97,000
Other B.C.	1,012	$155	3.4	1.6	$333,000
U.S.	867	$236	3.6	2.0	$368,000
Other International	729	$126	13.6	1.6	$780,000
				Total	**$2.9 million**

These estimates indicate that the total expenditures of wedding guests attending destination weddings in the Pemberton Valley were $2.9 million in 2014.

<u>Visitor Expenditure Categories</u>

The above-noted travel surveys (ITS and TSRC) itemize expenditures of visitors to BC by industry group. Using these same breakdowns for Pemberton destination wedding guests, the $2.9 million in expenditures would accrue to the following categories:

[3] Note: weddings of Pemberton Valley residents (10% of total) were already removed from the calculations. It is therefore expected that an estimate of 12.7% of attendees being Pemberton residents is likely high.

[4] Wedding planners indicated that the majority of local wedding attendees would still participate in wedding-related dinners, excursions and other activities that would result in incremental spending in the community. A conservative estimate of $50/day was used for these purposes.

Table 3: Visitor Expenditure Categories

Visitor Expenditures – Tourism Industries	**Percentage**	**Amount**
Accommodation / F&B	33.6%	$976,000
Transportation	31.3%	$909,000
Retail	27.2%	$790,000
Other Services	7.9%	$229,000
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**$2.9 million**

3.7 Average Wedding (Event) Expenditures

In order to calculate the total economic impact of destination weddings, the expenditures on actual wedding events must be added to visitor spending.

The average expenditure on a Pemberton destination wedding in 2014 was $27,000 according to data received from wedding planners in the region. This includes items such as the ceremony and reception venue (typically the same location), catering, entertainment (band and/or DJ), photography/videography, hair/makeup, decorations, floral arrangements, equipment rentals, licenses, and other incidental expenditures. This does not include expenditures on items such as wedding rings and outfits, which would not typically accrue to the destination.

This amount is lower than for the average wedding cost in Canada in 2014, which was $31,685 according to the weddingbells.ca annual survey of over 1,000 Canadian brides who married in 2014.[5]

Using $27,000 as the average Pemberton destination wedding cost, the total expenditures of weddings can be calculated as follows:

Total Wedding (Event) Expenditures =
(80 destination weddings) x ($27,000 per wedding)
= $2.2 million

3.8 Wedding (Event) Expenditure Components – Component Industries

Direct spending on weddings (events) will accrue to specific types of businesses, such as venues, food and beverage / catering, entertainment, equipment rentals, and others.

Due to privacy and confidentiality issues, these cost components cannot be broken down based on reported income data provided by businesses as part of this study. However, in

[5] Weddingbells.ca, "Average Wedding Costs in Canada, 2014."
http://www.weddingbells.ca/planning/wedding-trends-in-canada-2014/

order to provide a "directional" estimate of the expenditure categories, wedding expenditure components are taken from the XO Group, Inc.'s detailed survey[6] of 17,000 North American brides and grooms on average wedding cost components,[7] with the following breakdown:

Table 4: Wedding (Event) Expenditure Breakdown

Wedding (Event) Expenditure Categories	Percentage of Total Wedding Expenses	Single Event Amount	Total (All Events)
Venue	37.2%	$10,000	$800,000
Food/Liquor/Catering	21.6%	$5,800	$464,000
Photography	8.6%	$2,300	$184,000
Event Planning	6.6%	$1,800	$144,000
Music/DJ	3.7%	$990	$79,000
Floral/Arrangement	7.0%	$1900	$152,000
Videographer	6.0%	$1,600	$128,000
Cake	1.9%	$500	$40,000
Transportation	2.6%	$690	$55,000
Favours	0.9%	$250	$20,000
Rehearsal Dinner	4.0%	$1,100	$88,000
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**$26,930**	**$2,154,000**

3.9 Total Wedding Related Expenditures

Total wedding related expenditures can thus be calculated by combining expenditures of wedding visitors in the region ($2.9 million) with direct wedding event expenditures ($2.2 million).

Table 5: Direct Wedding Tourism Expenditures:

	Total Expenditures
Visitor Spending	$2.9 million
Event Spending	$2.2 million
TOTAL	**$5.1 million**

[6] XO Group, Inc., "2014 Real Weddings Study Statistics," March 12, 2015. http://www.xogroupinc.com/press-releases-home/2015-press-releases/2015-03-12-the-knot-2014-real-weddings-study.aspx

[7] Expenditure category amounts were adjusted to better align, generally, with information from wedding planners, and to exclude expenditures that would not accrue to the destination in most cases. Notably, XO Group's average venue costs were adjusted down by approximately 25%. Specific items were excluded from cost categories, including ceremony site and musicians (most Pemberton venues host ceremonies and receptions at a single general business location), rings, groom attire, invitations, and wedding dress. The figures were then adjusted to correspond with the overall average expenditure of weddings in the region.

3.10 Total Economic Impacts – (Indirect and Induced Impacts – "Spinoffs")

The economic impacts, including indirect impacts (service/supplier revenues) and induced impacts (recirculated employee income) can now be calculated.

First, consumer tax expenditures must be removed from the total expenditures to convert the expenditures to economic output:

Table 6: Economic Output (removing consumer taxes)

Expenditure Area*		Expenditures	Tax Amount	Output
Visitor Spending	Accommodation / F&B	$976,000	14%	$856,000
	Transportation	$909,000	5%	$866,000
	Retail	$790,000	12%	$705,000
	Other Services	$229,000	5%	$219,000
Event Spending	Venue	$800,000	5%	$762,000
	F&B/Catering (excl. liquor)	$309,000	5%	$295,000
	Liquor**	$155,000	15%	$135,000
	All Other Services	$890,000	5%	$848,000
	Total	**$5.1 million**	-	**$4.7 million**

* Notes to Table: For the Accommodation / F&B Industry Group we use a combined GST/PST rate of 14% even though tax on food is only 5%. Most regional accommodations will charge 14% (7% PST; 5% GST; 2% MRDT). Liquor sales are charged at 15% tax. For the aggregated retail and transportation services we used a flat 12% tax rate, even though many PST-exempt services may only charge 5% GST, such as domestic air transportation. Ferries have no consumer taxes. This preliminary analysis will assume they all pay 12% as we have no data from which to disaggregate these expenditure components. ** Liquor is estimated to be 33% of total F&B/catering costs.

Removing consumer taxes, the 80 destination weddings resulted in **direct economic output of $4.7 million** in 2014.

Using this economic output value, we can now estimate total economic impacts, using standard Input/Output (I/O) multiplier tables from Statistics Canada.

Table 7: Total Economic Impacts (Direct, Indirect, Induced)

Expenditure Area		**Direct Output**	**Output Multiplier**	**GDP Multiplier**	**Total Output**	**GDP**
Visitor Spending	Accommodation / F&B	$856,000	1.77	0.94	$1,515,120	$805,000
	Transportation	$866,000	1.94	1.37	$1,680,040	$1,190,000
	Retail*	$705,000	1.76	1.12	$1,587,760	$790,000
	Other Services*	$219,000	1.83	1.01	$473,970	$221,000
Event Spending	Venue	$762,000	1.77	0.94	$1,584,150	$716,000
	F&B/Catering (excl. liquor)	$295,000	1.77	0.94	$612,420	$277,000
	Liquor	$135,000	1.77	0.94	$279,660	$127,000
	All Other Services	$848,000	1.83	1.01	$1,736,670	$856,000
				TOTALS:	**$8.5 million**	**$5.0 million**

* The multiplier for Retail was for general retail sales, and is the same multiplier used in the Pemberton Music Festival Event Planning and Monitoring Report (2014).

At $5.0 million in annual GDP, **wedding tourism represents approximately 4% of the GDP of Pemberton**, which is estimated to be approximately $130 million per year.[8]

3.11 Employment Impact

Using the Statistics Canada Provincial Input-Output multipliers, we can also estimate the number of jobs resulting from wedding tourism in the Pemberton region each year.

As the following data table shows, the $4.7 million per year in direct output results in **approximately 77 jobs per year** in the Pemberton region.

[8] According to BC Stats, the GDP per capita of British Columbia is $53,870. Assuming that Pemberton has the similar GDP per capita level, with 2,436 residents this equates to approximately $130 million in total GDP. See BC Stats, Economic Accounts: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Economy/EconomicAccounts.aspx.

Table 8: Job Impacts

Expenditure Area		Direct Output	I/O Multipliers (Jobs)	Total Jobs
Visitor Spending	Accomm. / F&B	$856,000	17.26	14.8
	Transport	$866,000	14.95	13.0
	Retail	$705,000	16.49	11.6
	Other Services*	$219,000	16.47	3.6
Event	Venue	$762,000	17.26	13.2
	F&B/Catering (excl. liquor)	$295,000	17.26	5.1
	Liquor	$135,000	17.26	2.3
	All Other Services	$848,000	16.47	14.0
			TOTAL	**77.6**

3.12 Taxation Impacts

Estimating the taxation impact of destination weddings is challenged by varying tax rates for different business types and sizes, attribution of the wedding-related revenues relative to other business revenues, and varying tax rates / exemptions. Accordingly, these figures should be treated with caution and considered to be directional in nature.

In order to simplify the analysis, it is assumed that all businesses providing travel-related services as well as event services are small businesses and pay the lower provincial income tax rate on all revenue (2.5%). Local taxes are estimated using the ratio of total income taxes-to-local taxes provided in the business stakeholder survey (the avg ratio was 15.7%). The federal income tax rate is held constant at 28%, which assumes that businesses qualify for the 10% tax abatement.

Table 9: Tax Impacts

Expenditure Area		Direct Output	Consum. Tax	Prov. Income Tax	Federal Income Tax	Local Tax*	Tax Total
Visitor Spending	Accomm / F&B*	$856,000	14.0%	2.5%	28%	2.59%	$403,000
	Transportation *	$866,000	5.0%	2.5%	28%	1.18%	$318,000
	Retail*	$705,000	12.0%	2.5%	28%	2.28%	$316,000
	Other Services*	$219,000	5.0%	2.5%	28%	1.18%	$80,000
Event Spending	Venue	$762,000	5.0%	2.5%	28%	1.18%	$279,000
	F&B/Catering (excl. liquor)	$295,000	5.0%	2.5%	28%	1.18%	$108,000
	Liquor	$135,000	15.0%	2.5%	28%	2.75%	$65,000
	All Other Services	$848,000	5.0%	2.5%	28%	1.18%	$311,000
	TOTALS:	**$4.7 M**	**$374 K**	**$117 K**	**$1.3 M**	**$77 K**	**$1.9 million**

* The individual local tax rates of industry groups are not reflective of actual rates for those industries, but the sum of these industry rates approximates the total local taxes paid relative to income taxes (15.7%). This data should be considered directional only.

According to these preliminary estimates, wedding tourism in the Pemberton Valley generates approximately $1.9 million in annual taxes to all three levels of government.

4.0 WEDDING TOURISM SECTOR OVERVIEW and LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a summary of wedding tourism in general, and in the study area.

4.1 Destination Weddings in North America

Wedding tourism is a relatively recent development in the mainstream travel and tourism sector. Many "sun and sand" destinations such as Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Mexico have attracted honeymooners since the advent of mass tourism in the 1940s and 1950s, but have become common wedding destinations more recently.

While data for other regions (including BC) are not available, in the United States, it is estimated that 24% of all weddings are now destination weddings.[9]

4.2 Weddings and Special Events in British Columbia

In British Columbia in 2014, there were 23,019 marriages registered in the province.[10] Of these, 56 were registered in Pemberton and Mt. Currie, or 0.24% of the total. This, however is only wedding registrations, which may have occurred in areas other than the actual location of the wedding ceremony and/or reception.

No data exist on the number of destination weddings in BC, nor their economic impact. However, in British Columbia, numerous communities have identified the development and hosting of special events as strategic opportunities through Destination BC's Community Tourism Foundations planning process. As an emerging tourism destination, Pemberton has capitalized on event tourism by promoting numerous ticketed and non-ticketed events, including the Pemberton Music Festival, Ironman Canada race, Pemberton Slow Food Cycle, and others.

4.3 Destination Wedding Characteristics - General

Weddings tend to be popular tourism development opportunities because they are high yield (high average visitor spending), have few "economic leakages" (spending remains in the destination), they possess relatively small ecological footprints in-destination, and *typically* result in few negative impacts on host communities.

4.3.1 Local Production and Benefit

The wedding tourism sector has few financial "leakages" from the local economy, meaning that the majority of expenditures directly benefit the local economy.[11] Most wedding-related products are perishable, such as food and beverage, as well as decorative items

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[9] XO Group, Inc., op. cit.

[10] BC Vital Statistics Agency, "Marriages by Location – British Columbia, 2014," http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/DownloadAsset?assetId=940B06021C8D40C5828A67134C0EB5A8&filename=marriages-by-locn-2014.pdf

[11] Major, B., McLeay, F., & Waine, D., "Perfect Weddings Abroad," *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 16 (3), 2010, pp. 249-262.

such as plants and flowers. These are most frequently purchased in the local destination rather than imported lengthy distances. Most non-perishable goods, such as rental equipment (tables, chairs, etc.) are also procured locally in most cases, due to the relatively low rental costs relative to transport costs. Many of the products and services are also consumed *in-situ* (on location), such as the guest accommodations and venues, meals, and other expenditures, further reducing economic leakages from the community.

For destination weddings, the majority of professional services are also procured locally, because the nature of the service requires local expertise, and/or because the service providers would be unwilling or unable to travel significant distances to attend the events. This includes nearly all types of service providers, such as event planners, photographers, caterers, and other entertainers (bands, DJs, etc.).

This "theoretical" understanding of wedding tourism from the academic literature is supported by local wedding planners, caterers, and other service providers in the region, who indicate that, on average, approximately 90% of Pemberton wedding related goods and services and procured locally in the Pemberton region.

4.3.2 Product Quality and Security

Weddings are major life events for couples, which makes these consumers highly risk intolerant. With the quality of the event being of paramount importance, consumers are less concerned with the cost of these services,[12] resulting in high consumer yields (average expenditure levels) relative to other products and services.

Venue stability is also critically important to marrying couples, and "lead booking times for this niche market tend to be longer than for regular vacationers, up to three years ahead of the wedding itself."[13] Accordingly, there is little tolerance and flexibility regarding destination and venue stability, as well as other location risks.

4.3.3 Wedding Guest Travel Characteristics

Wedding guests tend to remain in the region and use the wedding as a platform for undertaking further leisure travel in the region. Consultations with accommodation providers and wedding planners suggest that the majority of Pemberton wedding guests whose origins are from outside British Columbia will spend an average of eight-to-ten days in the region, including Whistler and the Lower Mainland. BC residents are estimated to spend 3-5 days in the region according to local businesses that track visitor itineraries. These data align generally with data from travel surveys used in this report (ITS and TSRC).

"Green weddings" – which have a strong social and environmental sustainability element – are a notable emerging segment, with an estimated value of $4.7 billion annually in the United States (Conroy, Wolfgramm, & Coleman, 2012, in Breg, p. 7). According to

[12] Kim, S., & Agrusa, J., "The Positioning of Overseas Honeymoon Destinations," *Annals of Tourism Research* 32(4), 2005, pp. 887-904.
[13] Major et al., op. cit., p. 257.

Pemberton wedding planners, this is of particular interest to clients seeking to marry in Pemberton, due to the region's association with Slow Food, local produce / agriculture, and sustainable rural lifestyles.

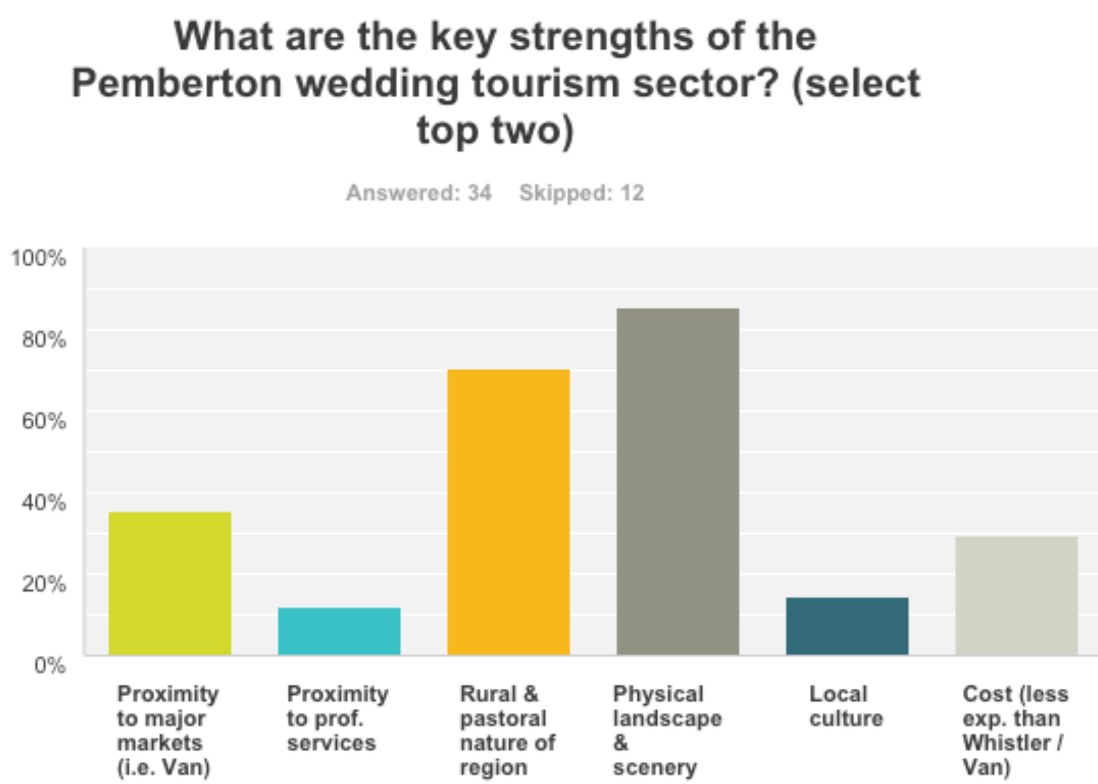
4.4 Competitive Analysis

To understand the competitive position of the Pemberton destination wedding sector, we must identify the key attributes that make the destination desirable and unique. In tourism destination planning these attributes are used to establish the core identify of the destination in order to differentiate itself with competitors, and form the basis of the "brand pillars" used to market the destination.

4.4.1 Key Strengths and Competitive Advantages

For Pemberton, there are a number of key strengths that differentiate the destination from other regions. The most notable, according to local stakeholders is the area's "physical landscape and scenery," followed closely by the "rural & pastoral nature of the region." These two elements combine immediate surroundings – fields, barns, low-rise development – with the majestic backdrop of Mt. Currie and the surrounding mountain peaks. The "Rural & pastoral nature" of the region also emphasizes the importance of the community's more intangible "feel," which is due in large part to the agricultural heritage of the region.

Figure 2: Strengths of Pemberton Wedding Tourism Sector



Factors such as "cost," "local culture," and "proximity" to both markets and services scored relatively lower than the actual physical characteristics of the region – both natural and built. However, many stakeholders still considered these to be important features of wedding tourism development in the region.

Written comments on this question also highlighted the "authenticity" of the region and the availability of local service providers to meet the needs of destination weddings, particularly for culinary, entertainment, photography, and other professional services.

Wedding planners who operate throughout BC were also asked to describe in their own words "What are the main competitive advantages of the Pemberton Valley's wedding tourism product?" The responses were as follows (verbatim):

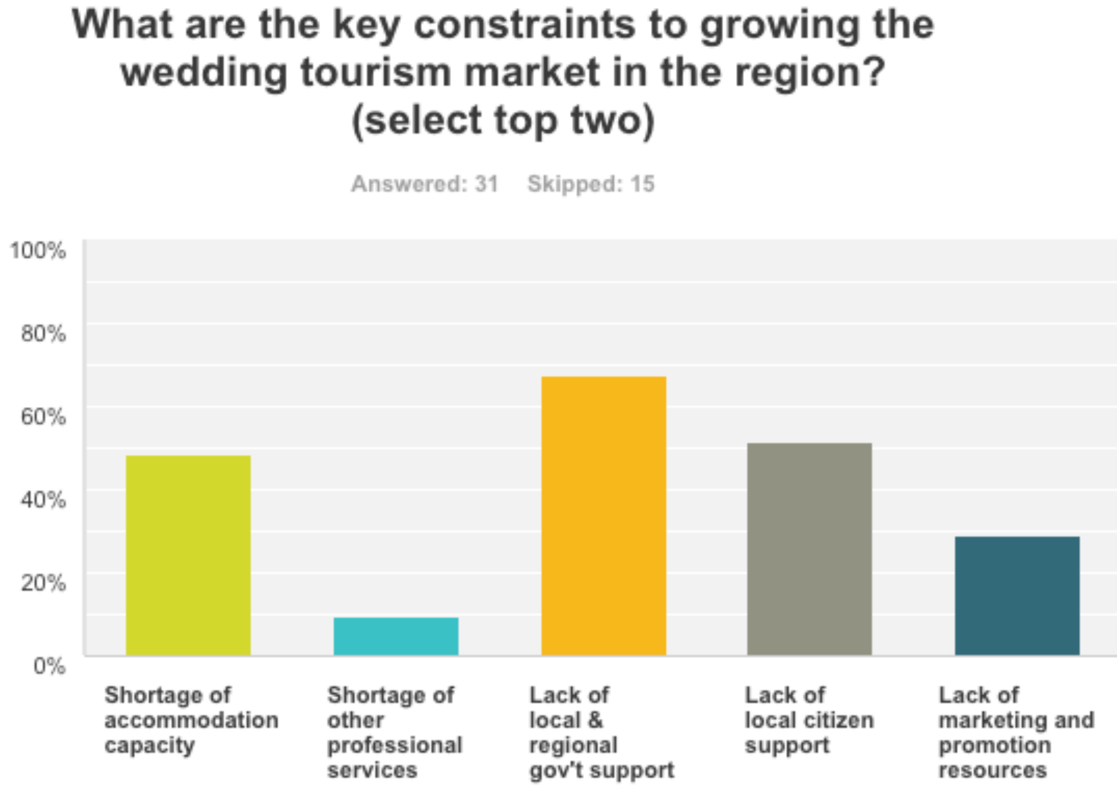
- "Pemberton is pretty unique – if you are looking for rural, rustic, and majestic weddings Pemberton is probably the best location [in BC]. Other regions, like Okanagan wineries and orchards have their own unique look and feel but Pemberton really stands out."
- "Pemberton is the only region close to the Lower Mainland, with snow-capped mountains, awesome local suppliers, and a bit of a bohemian look and feel that my clients are looking for."
- "My [wedding] couples are often thinking about Pemberton because want the scenery of the Lower Mainland and Sea to Sky area but don't want to be in Vancouver or Whistler… they want to get away from things."

4.4.2 Barriers and Constraints to Growth

Business stakeholders view the top constraint to future growth in wedding tourism as being "lack of local and regional government support." Stakeholder consultations and written responses to this question highlighted concerns that local governments – whether the Village of Pemberton or the Squamish Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) – will take a more active role in enforcing regulations and bylaws for properties that do not possess the appropriate zoning and/or permits to operate commercial events such as weddings.

Some stakeholders also highlighted the overall lack of resources of local governments to actively plan for and enforce regulations that would support sustainable development of this sector in the future.

Figure 3: Constraints to Growth of Wedding Tourism



The next most common constraint was viewed as "lack of local citizen support," which is related to, but separate from local government support. Multiple stakeholders suggested that there is a demographic and cultural division within the community, with many long-term residents, retirees, and farmers desiring the community to retain its quiet, charming, primarily agrarian nature. These residents may generally view increased tourism and special events as potentially unwelcome, particularly due to noise and traffic impacts. On the other hand are younger, often newer residents of the community, who are more flexible to development and growth, and who typically derive their livelihoods from the service sector, including but not limited to tourism.

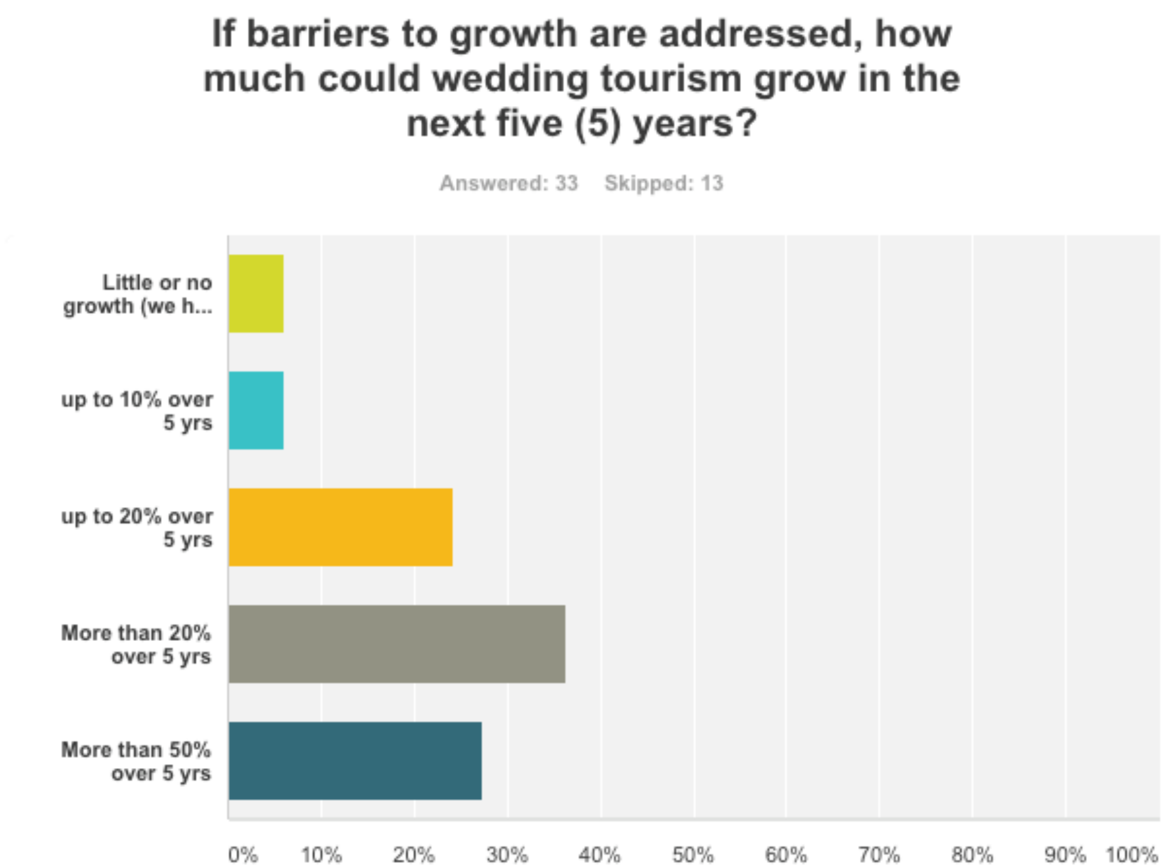
The third key constraint was the "shortage of accommodation capacity," which is most notable during the peak summer tourist season, and coincides with the region's large scale special events as well as numerous smaller events.

The most common written comments indicated that "lack of venue capacity" was the biggest constraint to growth in the region. This is perhaps not surprising in light of the number of venues that indicated they turn down a high volume of business due to their capacity and availability shortfalls.

4.4.3 Growth Opportunities

The majority of businesses view wedding tourism as a significant growth opportunity, with 36% of respondents indicating it could grow by more than 20% in the next five years, and an additional 27% indicating it could grow by more than 50% in the next five years.

Figure 4: Wedding Tourism Growth Potential



5.0 Stakeholder Survey

5.1 Survey Summary

A survey of wedding tourism business stakeholders was conducted from May 22 to June 9 (19 days). The primary purpose of the survey was to gather data to assist in economic impact calculations, as well as to assess the perspectives – both positive and negative – of businesses in the region.

In total, 46 businesses responded in-part to the survey, including accommodations (12), farms/venues (6), wedding/event planners (6), restaurants/caterers (5), retailers (4), and a variety of other service providers such as photographers, musicians, etc. (9).

For most wedding tourism business categories a majority of businesses (>50%) completed the survey, and for some business categories there was a 100% response rate.

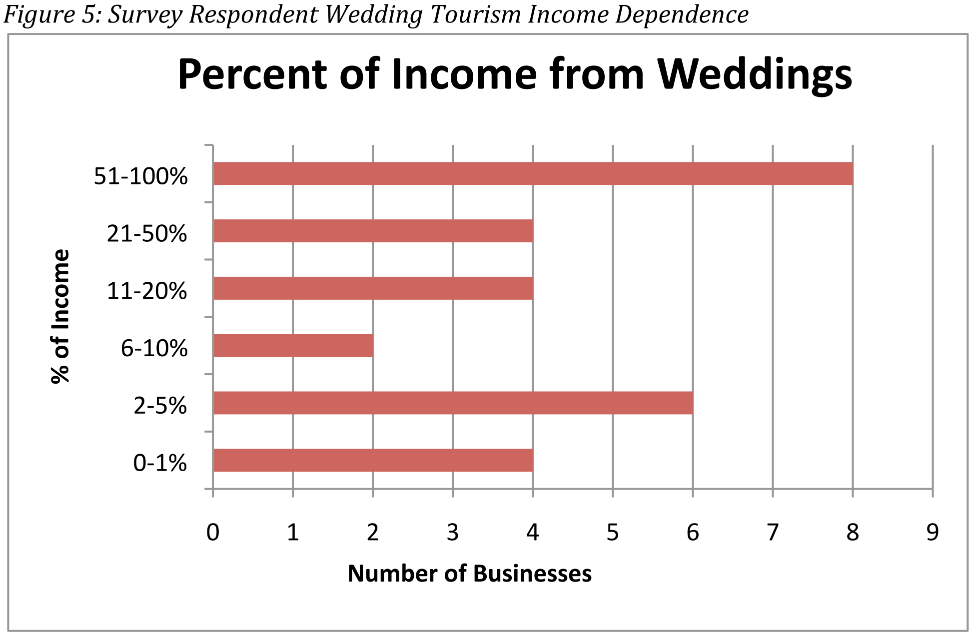
For reasons of privacy and confidentiality, information in this section will be presented in aggregate only (i.e. totals and averages for all respondents).

5.2 Income and Wedding Dependency

The average, direct, wedding-related income of businesses involved in wedding tourism in Pemberton in 2014 was $42,000.

The dependence on wedding-related income varied from 0.4% to 100%. The average wedding-related income dependence was 32%, meaning that on average businesses derived 32% of its income directly from weddings. A significant proportion (29%) of businesses relied on weddings for half or more of their total gross income.

Figure 5: Survey Respondent Wedding Tourism Income Dependence



5.3 Recent Wedding Tourism Growth

The majority (57"%) of respondents indicated that wedding tourism has increased substantially (50% or more) in the past five years, while an additional 38% indicated it has increased moderately (less than 25%). Only 5% of respondents indicated it stayed "about the same."

5.4 Product Capacity Limits

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents indicated that they had to turn down wedding-related business in 2014 due to a capacity shortfall. Written responses indicated factors such as the venue already being booked, lack of accommodation space, limited regional transportation options (to/from venues and accommodations), and businesses that voluntarily choose to limit their operational output.

This suggests that, all things equal, wedding tourism in the region could grow, based on the existing levels of demand.

5.5 Employment

The 31 businesses that provided employment information had a total of 456 employees during the 2014 peak season, and 252 employees year-round. In a region with 2,715 working age residents[14] (aged 18-65), this represents 17% of the eligible workforce during peak season and 9% of the workforce in the off-season (Oct-May). It merits emphasizing that this employment is from <u>only 31 businesses</u> that responded to this question, and this is the total employment, not just employment derived from wedding tourism.

Of the 31 respondents, those that are more heavily dependent on wedding tourism (deriving 20% or more of their income directly from wedding tourism) employed 153 people during peak season and 35 people during the off-season.

5.6 Potential Future Measures and Sustainability Analysis

In its Information Booklet, "Commercial Assembly Uses and Events"[15] distributed at the Community Consultation & Information Sharing Sessions on May 21, 2015 in Pemberton, the SLRD identified a number of "issues" related to commercial assemblies and events, including but not limited to:

- ALC prohibitions of commercial assemblies and events on ALR lands
- Water and septic system risks
- Washroom facilities
- Parking and traffic impacts
- Building design and public safety

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[14] Statistics Canada, "Census Profile – Pemberton, British Columbia," 2011 and "Census Profile – Mount Currie, British Columbia," 2011.
[15] SLRD, "Commercial Assembly Uses and Events – INFORMATION BOOKLET," Spring 2015.
http://www.slrd.bc.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/planning/Commercial%20Events%20Booklet_FINAL_0.pdf

- Negative impacts on farming and farm productivity
- Noise
- Public safety
- Unfair competition

At the public meeting, stakeholders presented a number of possible measures that could be taken to both retain the present economic activity resulting from wedding tourism in the region, and address the above-noted issues.

The potential measures to address resident concerns that were identified by attendees at the May 21 public meeting were included in this business stakeholder survey, in much the same form as they were articulated at the public meeting. It should be noted that some of the measures are not presently feasible under the existing statutory framework, particularly in light of ALC exclusions of weddings as a permitted agri-tourism activity under the existing Agri-tourism Policy. [16] Without this enabling policy from the ALC, the SLRD is unable to undertake the required re-zoning and issuance of Temporary Use Permits or Special Event Permits.

Notably, the potential solutions identified by public meeting participants align with the most common "sustainability" strategies employed by tourism destinations to maximize benefits and limit negative impacts of tourism on host communities.[17] According to recognized subject matter experts, these include "spatial strategies" for destinations, such as (re)zoning, districting, establishing local/regional carrying capacities (fixed and/or flexible), development standards (particularly density controls and/or setbacks), building controls and landscaping, signage, noise regulations, and government incentives.

Possible measures to address resident interests also include "visitor management strategies," such as setting overall visitation caps / quotas, group size limits, establishing user fees, establishing infrastructure and service limitations, visitor redistribution (concentration and dispersion strategies), traffic management, temporal strategies, host and visitor education, and moral persuasion strategies such as establishing business and visitor "Codes of Conduct."

Figure 6 (below) shows wedding tourism business stakeholder preferences, in response to the following: "A number of local issues have been identified, such as weddings occurring without the proper land designations, permits, and a lack of regulatory mechanisms (i.e. noise bylaws) in place. Some sanctioned venues have also expressed concern that others are not abiding by the rules and paying the required fees. What are some reasonable measures that could be put in place to address these concerns? (select the top three)"

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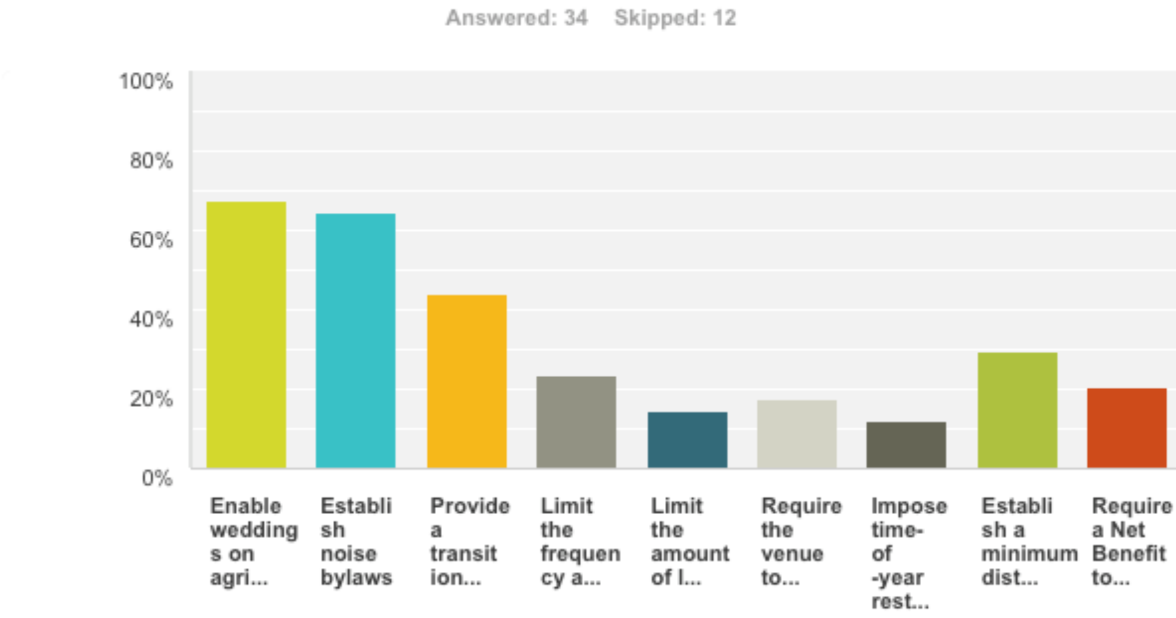
[16] BC Agricultural Land Commission, "Activities Designated as Farm Use: Agri-tourism Activities in the ALR."
[17] For example, see David Weaver, Sustainable Tourism. Jordan Hill, Oxford, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann. 2006.

Figure 6: Potential Sector Management Strategies



Answer Choices	Responses	
Enable weddings on agricultural land (ALR) through a streamlined permit process	**67.65%**	23
Establish noise bylaws	**64.71%**	22
Provide a transition (grace) period for businesses presently operating without the required zoning and permits	**44.12%**	15
Limit the frequency and / or total number of permitted events on the property per year / season	**23.53%**	8
Limit the amount of land on the property to be used for installations (tents, dance floors, etc.)	**14.71%**	5
Require the venue to develop an Impact Mitigation Plan	**17.65%**	6
Impose time-of-year restrictions (e.g., to avoid breeding disruptions)	**11.76%**	4
Establish a minimum distance from neighbours	**29.41%**	10
Require a Net Benefit to Agriculture from the wedding (e.g. minimum local produce requirement for wedding)	**20.59%**	7
Total Respondents: 34		

A description and evaluation of the top-six responses follows, based on written responses to this question and stakeholder interviews conducted in the region.

5.6.1 Enabling Weddings on ALR Land

The most commonly recommended measure was to enable weddings on ALR land with a streamlined permitting process. In consultations and in written comments, numerous stakeholders suggested that weddings complement local agricultural production, and that destination weddings represent a "natural evolution" of the agriculture and agri-tourism sector for this region.

In addition, many stakeholders suggested that the existing process for Temporary Use Permits is onerous to the point of being unattainable, requiring ALC assessment of the property as having farm status, payment of a $2,000 fee, as well as inspections and possible upgrades to buildings, sanitation and sewage, potable water supplies, parking areas, and other possible requirements – all for only a temporary approval. (Note: these are stakeholder perceptions, not the consultant's evaluation.)

Others indicated that other regions of BC have successfully enabled weddings on ALR land, particularly in the Okanagan on vineyards, with few problems.

In addition, the ALC Agri-tourism Policy allows "commercial longtable events" (i.e. dinners) on ALR lands, provided that these events promote or market the agricultural products that are grown on the event holder's farm. Some stakeholders have suggested that the majority of food served at local weddings is produced locally, if not actually on the venue, itself.

Follow-up consultations with caterers in the region confirmed this. All catering companies indicated that most proteins served at weddings (especially beef) are procured from local farms, and the majority of produce (50-60%) is procured locally, depending on the date/season of the event. Most local caterers specialize in farm-to-table culinary preparation, and this is now a primary feature of the region's wedding dinners. All wedding planners indicated that the farm-to-table aspect is a key feature of marketing Pemberton weddings.

5.6.2 Noise Bylaws

The second most commonly supported measure would be for the SLRD to establish a noise bylaw for Area C (encompassing the study region). A number of stakeholders have suggested that this is the primary issue in terms of tangible negative impacts on local residents, and that this measure could address the majority of resident concerns.

Additional consultations have pointed to other jurisdictions that regularly host outdoor weddings and which have noise bylaws in place, notably Whistler and parts of the Okanagan.

5.6.3 Provide a Transition (Grace) Period for Businesses Presently Operating without the Required Zoning and Permits

The next most popular measure would be to provide a transition period for businesses that are not presently compliant to become compliant with existing regulations, zoning, and policy. A formal transition / grace period would enable these businesses to determine their requirements, assess possible options, and make decisions regarding the long-term feasibility of remaining engaged in this type of activity. This would also provide wedding planners, wedding parties (couples), and venues with some short-term certainty regarding operations. As mentioned previously, a number of planners have already curtailed promotion of Pemberton as a wedding destination due to venue uncertainty.

In the BC tourism industry, a notable example of a formal transition period was with the Tenure Incentive Program, which was developed in the early 2000s in part to legalize and legitimize a number of untenured nature based tourism operators, while maximizing economic development opportunities and government revenues. Other examples may also exist from which a transition period could be developed.

5.6.4 Establish a Minimum Distance from Neighbours

Neighbour complaints are the clear negative externality imposed on Pemberton residents as a result of the recent growth in destination weddings. One of the possible tools to address this would be to establish a minimum distance requirement – otherwise known as a "setback" in land use planning. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents expressed a top-three preference for this.

5.6.5. Limit the Frequency / Number of Events

Nearly one-quarter (24%) of respondents indicated a top-three preference for setting a limit on the frequency and/or total number of events to be held on a property per year. This would provide another tool to manage growth in the sector, tailored to specific sites to ensure that the sector's growth remains within desired targets, and could address potential concerns of local residents.

Setting site-specific caps on the number of events, based on site-specific characteristics, could also be "netted-up" to the entire region, in order for the sector to operate within pre-defined carrying capacity limits.

It should be noted that the setting of event caps / quotas would, most likely, require some form of permitting and/or tracking process, as well as compliance and enforcement.

5.6.6. Require a "Net Benefit to Agriculture"

One-in-five respondents (21%) expressed a preference for requiring events such as weddings to have a "net benefit to agriculture." Much as the ALC's permitted "commercial longtable" use requires the farm to market or promote its products at commercial events, a "net benefit to agriculture" could similarly promote local / regional agriculture. The main difference here would be some flexibility in selling locally sourced agricultural products, and not just from the event's farm. Guidelines or requirements could be established for serving a minimum quantity of agricultural goods produced within a prescribed proximity of the event.

Numerous wedding planners, caterers, and farm venues indicated that the majority of weddings in the region a significant portion of their products – particularly food and floral arrangements – from local suppliers. Additionally, wedding host couples are requesting or requiring this from caterers, as part of an emerging culinary trend toward sustainable local production. Pemberton is uniquely situated to capitalize on this opportunity, with its existing "Slow Food" festival, and growing reputation for organic / sustainable farming.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The wedding tourism sector has developed rapidly in the Pemberton Valley, resulting in a significant $5.1 million in annual direct expenditures; the vast majority of which is by visitors to the region, and remains in the host region.

By way of comparison, the entire public mountain biking trail network from Vancouver's North Shore to Whistler generates approximately $10 million in direct annual expenditures by tourists. For the North Shore to Squamish region, the public mountain biking trail system generates $3.7 million in direct annual visitor spending.[18]

At present, the Pemberton region is not fully capitalizing on the existing opportunities in this sector, with the majority of wedding venues indicating that they turn away a substantial number of wedding requests each year. This suggests that some form of a centralized referral and tracking system would assist in better utilizing existing capacity to meet the growing consumer demand, while distributing benefits throughout the region.

Wedding tourism is a high yield, luxury activity that requires a high level of service quality and reliability. Accordingly, any compliance and enforcement action will have reverberations throughout the sector and market, and should be taken cautiously. At present there is already widespread confusion and misinformation among service providers, local residents, and other stakeholders regarding the existing legal situation of farm-based weddings and the intentions of regulatory agencies.

The region's business stakeholders have put forward a number of possible solutions to maintain existing economic activity while addressing concerns of local residents. The scope of this analysis precludes a more in-depth evaluation of these options, and others, but provides a starting point for discussion and planning.

Finally, lessons may be drawn from other tourism-related policy areas, such as BC's Commercial Recreation Tenure Incentive Program from the early 2000s, which effectively legitimized a number of non-tenured commercial recreation tourism operations on Crown land, while ensuring the adherence to regulations and safeguarding the public interest.

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[18] Mountain Bike Tourism Association, "Sea to Sky Mountain Biking Economic Impact Study," 2007. http://www.mbta.ca/assets/pdfs/S2S_E_I_Study.pdf

APPENDIX A – BUSINESS SURVEY WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments from the business stakeholder survey are provided verbatim, but edited for spelling. Comments that could potentially identify the individual or business respondent were omitted in whole or in part.

<u>Comments</u>

As a small farm we are looking for ways to supplement our income. We only use the house and yard there is no impact on the surrounding [area]. I would like to continue hosting weddings and welcome the idea of a license whereby everyone follows the same rules. I am only interested in small weddings on our property and this is where I think if guidelines were set for number of events and numbers of guests permitted based on individual properties. Maybe this would be done through an inspection as part of the license

I believe it brings a large amount of revenue into the Pemberton Valley and it would be very sad to see it stopped. I feel we can address the issues at hand without extreme measures but instead better communication.

Just.... please let us continue to have weddings- our jobs depend on it!!!

Weddings are a celebration of the union of two people and their families. They are a celebration of love. And Pemberton is a hot spot right now and can continue to be if a consistent, easy to understand process is put in place.

[Economic] multiplier factors needs to be considered, these are not one time visits and word of mouth sells.

As a wedding [business] servicing Whistler/Pemberton and the Sea to Sky region I feel PEMBERTON is an amazing location for weddings and the industry employs many local businesses that rely on the growth of the Pemberton wedding industry to sustain their business.

We would like to do more there [in Pemberton], as 99% of our weddings are in Whistler

WE NEED TO WORK IT OUT, THANK YOU FOR LISTENING- please let me know if I can help make this happen! PLEASE

We certainly believe that the more weddings in Pemberton there are, the better it is for all businesses. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you want any further information.

All these guests are great for all businesses and our town

There are specific locations that are doing things right and I don't believe that trying to cookie cutter everyone into the same permits or bylaws will work. 95% of the venues do NOT have people onsite until late on Friday and they are out on Monday. There are maybe 2-3 weddings in Pemberton that happen mid week and these are usually under 45 people.

As a business owner in Pemberton, I have seen a very positive impact from the increasing wedding industry in Pemberton. Each summer is getting busier due in part to the wedding industry. I see this as *a very positive way to grow our local economy. Owning a business in a small town, we need this type of economic stimulation to make our businesses sustainable.*

With more tourism it will create more jobs

Leave them in where they are currently zoned - no more

Both the SLRD and Village of Pemberton have been off the mark on this one. It is OK to shut down the valley for Ironman, big business with no financial benefit to the area, or to allow a festival which makes lots of noise, I am OK with this but if we have to put up with these, let the wedding operator develop his or her business. We were fortunate, we had [a] wedding down the valley before all of this foolishness started.

I am in support of wedding business in the Pemberton area, however there needs to be proper rules and guidelines put in place. There are too many vendors who are not properly zoned who operate wedding venue businesses. For businesses that are zoned for commercial activity and pay taxes based on that zoning, they incur additional costs then these other venues. Not only do they pay higher taxes but they must have commercial insurance and follow established health and safety procedures. Those businesses which operate as a farm, do not have to adhere to the same rules. It is not good business practice to allow just anyone to setup a wedding venue business. Guidelines need to be established and regulation in place for those on agricultural zoned land to conduct this type of business. For places zoned either residential or agricultural there needs to be certain restrictions placed on the number of events that can be held to ensure the nature of the zoning remains consistent with how it has been established.

Tourism is a very important driver to the community and one has to think that with close proximity to Whistler that this is the most natural fit.