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Michigan State University

News Release

From: Travel, Tourism, and Recreation Resource Center

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Sunshine Means Dollars for Michigan's Tourism Industry

EAST LANSING—While rising gasoline prices are dominating the news and Michigan's peak travel season is approaching, researchers at Michigan State University (MSU) are discovering that weather conditions are the key to understanding variations in tourism activity in Michigan. A team of climate and industry experts at MSU, supported by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), have been studying the influence of climate change and weather variability on Michigan's agriculture and tourism industries, with the goal of developing tools to guide current management and long range planning in these industries.

These tools are based on historical records of weather variability across the state and Michigan-specific long term climate change models tied to widely used global climate change models. Examples of the decision support tools that the research team is developing include: one to provide easy access to historical weather data and another that allows users to develop estimates of tourism traffic volumes under varying weather condition scenarios. The MSU research team has been working with industry representatives to develop and test their weather variability/climate change tools, during the past two years.

On May 9, 2005, the research team will be hosting a workshop, open to the public, to report key findings for the tourism industry and to demonstrate prototypes of the decision support tools under development. Workshop coordinator Lori Martin notes that: "We have been developing these tools for just over two years now on computers at our campus, so it is time to evaluate their 'real world' applicability. We have designed this event as a workshop where information can be exchanged between the research team and the users of our research, with the goal of refining the tools we are building and making them more 'user friendly'."

The Climate Change, Weather Variability and Tourism Workshop will be held at the Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan on May 9th, 2005 between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Details about the program and registration information are available at www.tourismcenter.msu.edu or by writing to marti362@msu.edu. A registration fee of \$30.00 is being charged to cover meal and refreshment costs.