

## **Southeast Tourism Society Sponsors National Forum About Gateway Communities**

*Two Cabinet secretaries set to speak at Washington event September 15*

ATLANTA (Sept. 8, 2009) – Atlanta-based Southeast Tourism Society (STS) is one of three groups organizing a policy forum in Washington, D.C., that will examine stimulating the economies of gateway communities and tribal communities nationwide.

Gateway communities are next-door neighbors to federal lands popular for tourism such as national parks, national monuments and national forests. Forum participants are private-sector tourism executives and public-sector policy makers.

Two Cabinet secretaries are on the agenda – Ray LaHood of transportation and Ken Salazar of interior. The forum is Sept. 15 (Tuesday) at the Department of Interior.

The other forum sponsors are the 13-state Western States Tourism Policy Council and the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association, which is headquartered in Albuquerque, N.M. STS promotes tourism in 12 states stretching from West Virginia to Louisiana.

“This forum is taking a broad perspective as we examine two important aspects of tourism in these communities – economic vitality and conservation of the resources that attract visitors in the first place,” said STS President and CEO Bill Hardman.

The format calls for several panel presentations and related discussions featuring representatives of a dozen organizations.

Among the participants are the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the American Planning Association, American Recreation Coalition, the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Gateway Communities, the National Geographic Society, the National Parks Conservation Association, the National Wildlife Federation, Southeast Tourism Policy Council, the USDA Forest Service, the U.S. Travel Association and the Wilderness Society.

Forum leaders want the day’s discussions to lead to policy initiatives the organizations can advocate, Hardman said.

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