

# Assistance for rural tourism ventures

Rural entrepreneurs and lodge owners can now avail themselves of the expertise of rural tourism specialists. Since March, Jim Stevens, President of the TAN Investment Group, has been offering consultation services to village corporations venturing into tourism. Stevens reports that inquiries are remaining brisk, with five major clients anchoring their business.

Services provided by the TAN Investment Group include project planning, financial management and project development. They begin their new business relationships by determining the client's

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self-image and identifying goals and aspirations: "Where exactly do you want to go, what do you expect to achieve?" This strategy planning phase then makes way for implementation, the actual birth of a viable tourism business.

Because marketing can often pose expensive financial demands on those in the rural tourism industry, this aspect is emphasized by Stevens' consulting company. This is accomplished largely through cooperative marketing efforts, where for example, TAN Investment Group representatives travel to sport fishing shows marketing a host of Alaskan destinations and giving prospective visitors an array of Alaskan experiences to consider.

Additionally, Stevens provides operations support for his clients. One of the central aspects of this assistance is consolidated purchasing for food, boats and motors. The economies of scale realized by

bulk purchases can increase a lodge operator's profit margin to a sustainable level.

Operational support also means meeting travelers at the Anchorage International Airport and transporting them to the air taxi operator. If a layover in Anchorage is involved, local tours and side trips will be provided.

Essentially all business management expertise is offered to the rural tour and lodge operator. Clients can pick and choose whatever services suit their needs. Because fledgling companies often have difficulty managing their books, a full array of accounting services are available, including the identification of alternative resources for capitalizing a new business.

Jim learned his knowledge of rural lodge operations by starting his own lodge five years ago on his mother-in-law's Native allotment. Lake Clark Resorts continues to enjoy a regular clientele of sport fishing parties and eco-tourists looking for adventure in a pristine setting.

The TAN Investment Group is Alaska Native owned and operated. Jim Stevens prides himself on his commitment to seeing rural businesses succeed. For further information call (907) 561-0549 or fax 563-6789. ■