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Poll encouraging, but work needed to get word out that 'the Shore is open'

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By Mary Ann Bourbeau

While a recent Rutgers-Eagleton poll is upbeat about New Jersey residents planning to return to the Shore this summer, a tourism expert pointed out that only about one in five Shore visitors hails from the Garden State.

The poll found more than three-quarters of regular Jersey Shore visitors plan to return this summer despite the destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy. In a typical year, the poll found, nearly 60 percent of New Jersey residents typically visit the Shore during the summer, most staying a week or less.

"In-state tourism might decline, but not as much as might be expected after Sandy," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton poll and professor of political science at Rutgers. "The lure of the Jersey Shore is strong, and most respondents do not plan to let the storm interfere with their regular summer vacation beach routines."



A Sea Bright beach club following Hurricane Sandy's damage.

Brian J. Tyrrell, associate professor of hospitality and tourism management at Richard Stockton College, said 20 percent of shore visitors hail from New Jersey and 25 percent come from New York, which was also greatly affected by the storm. He hopes for the passage of a bill that would increase funding by \$20 million for marketing the Jersey Shore this season to those outside the region, many of whom saw widespread destruction in news coverage following Sandy.

"We need to get the word out that the Shore is open," Tyrrell said. "That money would go a long way in reducing the perception that it is not open."

On a high note, the New Jersey hotel industry posted its [highest figures on record in the fourth quarter of 2012](#), mainly because rooms were filled by FEMA officials, construction workers, Red Cross volunteers and displaced residents. Tyrrell is pleased by those figures, but worried at the same time.

"I'm a little concerned that if the room demand continues into the summer season, it could displace tourists," he said.

Tyrrell noted that while those people may go out to eat or take in some entertainment, they likely would not spend

as much as tourists would.

The poll of 796 adult New Jersey residents revealed 64 percent plan to spend as much time at the Shore as in past summers, and 13 percent plan to stay longer. Of the 20 percent who will make shorter visits, more than half cited Sandy as the reason.

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