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***MEDIA ALERT***

**Latest Tri-Cities Tourism Figures Show Increase in Visitor Spending**

Tri-Cities, Wash. – The Tri-Cities benefited from a thriving tourism industry in 2017 with a continued upward trend of visitor spending, which reached \$491 million, a 10.3 percent increase over the previous year. Spending was up in all categories measured – lodging, food and beverage, transportation, recreation and retail.

“Tourism continues to be a significant economic driver for hotels, restaurants and small businesses all throughout the Tri-Cities region,” said Michael Novakovich, President & CEO of Visit Tri-Cities. “Whether visitors are here for business, a sporting event or a long weekend to enjoy our rivers or wine country, they are spending money at our local businesses.”

Increased visitor spending resulted in \$54.3 million in local and state tourism-generated sales tax revenue. “Visitors to the Tri-Cities region contribute sales tax, reducing the overall tax burden for residents,” added Novakovich.

The impact of tourism goes beyond visitor spending.

“As tourism grows in the Tri-Cities region, it strengthens the local economy, fuels prosperity and generates meaningful employment opportunities,” said Novakovich. “In fact, tourism is one of the region’s largest and strongest economic sectors, contributing more than 6,000 jobs.”

The 2017 statistics are provided to Visit Tri-Cities by national research firm Dean Runyan Associates.

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*Visit Tri-Cities is a non-profit destination marketing organization which provides tourism-related marketing and management services for the cities of Kennewick, Pasco and Richland in southeastern Washington State.*