

Good afternoon, my name is Jean Ruhf and I am the Executive Director for the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau. We cover 4 counties here in northeastern Pennsylvania – Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna and Wyoming counties. I am here today to testify for the tourism benefits that the wine and now the brewing industry have created in our area.

I began working for the bureau in 2006 just when many of the wineries were also beginning. The bureau worked hard on getting all of the wineries to join our organization and we created the first wine brochure in 2008 calling it the Grape Escape. At that time the wineries were too busy getting their businesses started to spend their time and energy on creating their own wine trail so we were more than happy to step in and at least begin the marketing for them as a whole. To date we have distributed over 100,000 brochures promoting the wineries in addition to having their information in our annual guide. The wineries have since formed the Endless Mountains Wine Trail and are hosting their inaugural event, Wine & Treat, on October 20th & 21st. Wine festivals in our region have really taken off and are a huge fundraiser for many of our non-profit organizations. From fire companies, Rotary Clubs, American Legions to museums it's hard to find a month when there isn't at least one wine festival if not many more. One of the first festivals in our area was the Wyalusing Valley Wine Festival which started in

2004 with just 3 wineries present. That first year they had between 2-3 hundred in attendance and at their last festival in 2010 they had over 2,000 in attendance and 13 wineries. Their profit rose from \$11,800 in 2004 to over \$53,000 two years ago. All the monies raised at their event go back into the community helping out the Wyalusing Museum, and the Lion, Lioness and Leo Clubs with their many projects. Last year's festival had to be cancelled due to the flood -- it was to be held on September 10th and the flood was September 8th. The food that was purchased for the festival was used to feed the volunteers who helped with the flood clean-up and to feed 45 flood victims who were housed at the Wyalusing Fire hall. I am happy to report that this year's wine festival will be held on September 8th. The wine festivals that are held in our area create overnight stays in our hotels, people eating in our local restaurants and shopping in our local shops.

I was very fortunate to be involved in the Northern Tier Stronger Economies Together – Strategies for Building New Economic Opportunities sponsored by USDA Rural Development and the Regional Rural Development Centers, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences and Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission. We were broken into different topical groups and I chose Agriculture. The result of our group was a pilot program being offered in

Bradford County and hopefully in each of our other counties in the future:

“The Many Voices of Bradford County’s Agricultural Future”. As you are aware the Natural Gas Industry has (excuse the pun) Exploded here in the Endless Mountains. Many of our farmers are now receiving royalties and deciding that they no longer have to actively farm their land to survive – yet their love for farming is still there. This program is going to begin the discussion and hopefully give alternatives to the farmers. One area that I will be involved in is Agro-tourism. What a great opportunity to combine the state’s number 1 & 2 industries – Agriculture and Tourism. Gary Tosco of Nimble Hill Winery has done just that. Not only is he growing his own grapes but is now also growing hops for his new brewery. He has been approached by at least 5 different farmers who are interested in growing hops, and this area has many different farmers who are now venturing into growing grapes.

The Endless Mountains Wineries are winning wine competitions throughout the state and the country. Our wines are now being served in local restaurants and in establishments outside of our area. People are recognizing the Endless Mountains as a new wine region and are coming here to experience it themselves.

As the wine and brewery industries grow in our area so too does the tourism industry.