

Hello, this is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.

In the last twelve months, I have traveled around the Western United States playing in cribbage tournaments, as well as being a tourist. I was able to visit places that I've always wanted to see, but never had the time visit. This last year I've been to the Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks and was very impressed with the beauty nature has to offer. These National Landmarks are magnificent. The number of visitors really caught my attention. There are so many foreigners visiting these places that it seemed like I heard more Japanese, Chinese, Spanish and European languages than English. It is amazing how many tourists from other countries spend their money in places like The Grand Canyon and Yosemite. Humboldt County has plenty to offer these same tourists. We are surrounded by so much natural beauty that it is easy for us to take it for granted. I always assumed that our astronomical fuel prices, expensive motels and isolation were major deterrents to attracting tourists to our area. Now I'm not so sure, because fuel prices in these parks are a good fifty cents per gallon higher than ours. The fully booked hotel we stayed at in Yosemite was \$240 per night, so our \$100 rooms are not out of line compared to other touristy locations. These parks are very isolated and their road systems are no better than Humboldt County's. The major problem is that we are unknown. Our tourist industry can flourish with the right marketing approach, such as advertising in foreign countries. Using the internet, this can be done for a fraction of the price compared to traditional advertising. The development of Humboldt Bay is the key to our future economic strength. We've survived on timber and fishing in the past, and now our economy centers around the marijuana industry. Marijuana will eventually be legalized and those dollars tied to it will

go up in smoke. When this happens Humboldt County needs to be prepared or suffer major financial problems. Let's embrace the future by setting our sights on what Humboldt Bay has to offer. One way is to make our port a destination for cruise ships. With so much natural beauty, from Crescent City to Shelter Cove, the shore excursion possibilities could keep a cruise ship in port for several days. This translates to cruisers shopping in Ferndale and Old Town, guided salmon and bottom fishing, dining at our many delicious restaurants, visiting Fern Canyon, Sequoia Park and the Trees of Mystery, touring Trinidad and the list could go on and on. The fact that our port is the closest port to China is a major asset. If we developed our port, perhaps Walmart, which imports a large percentage of their products from China, could unload some of their container ships here. Our port development and the proposed railroad to the I-5 corridor could even be financed by China and Walmart. Their bottom line can be significantly improved by bringing their ships to Humboldt Bay; these savings are our ace in the hole. These issues are being seriously discussed by our elected officials and great strides have been made toward these goals. The problem we will face is that the ANTI-CROWD, so dominate in Humboldt County, will rear up and start protesting every effort to develop our port. When this happens, and it will, it is our job to be prepared for this environmental onslaught and fight tooth and nail to keep these protestors from being what investors see when they look into the huge potential of port development in Humboldt County. If there is a public meeting, we need to have five people present for every hardcore environmentalist who attends. If we develop our bay, perhaps we'll become known for our natural beauty, instead of the marijuana that is grown here.

This has been Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.