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Custer Country celebrates 25 years

Custer Country, Montana, the tourism region that includes 13 counties and two Indian Nations in southeast Montana, will celebrate its 25th anniversary during its 2008 Annual Membership meeting on Thursday, September 18, at the Forsyth Country Club in Forsyth. The 215 members of Custer Country will convene at 10:30 a.m. to elect board members and officers and to hear an update of the past year's accomplishments.

Incorporated in 1984, Custer Country is one of six tourism regions in the state whose funding comes from the 4 percent Accommodations Tax (also known as the Bed Tax) collections in the region. These taxes are collected by hotels, motels, Bed and Breakfasts and campgrounds in the region and are then distributed on a pro rata basis in accordance with state law to the Montana Department of Commerce, Travel Montana, Custer Country and the two Convention and Visitor Bureaus in Custer Country, which are in Billings and Miles City. In addition, portions of each region's Bed Tax collections go to support such entities as the Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Montana Historical Society and the Montana Heritage Foundation. An additional tax of 3 percent levied on all rooms and campsites goes directly to Montana's General Revenue Fund and is not used for tourism promotion.

The 4 percent allocated to tourism promotion is used to place consumer ads in national publications, place television spots in other states and to enable Montana to have a presence at travel shows, meetings and convention shows and ski shows around the country. These shows lead to visits by vacationers, conventions and meetings of up to several thousands in Montana.

The 10,000,000 visits that were generated by these promotion activities in 2008 generated \$4.3 billion in revenue to the state, which supports 44,800 jobs and provided \$500 million in local, state and federal taxes.

Custer Country produces and distributes several publications each year, including the Custer Country Loop Tour map, the Southeast Montana Birding Trail guide and the Custer Country Vacation Guide. The Vacation Guide, at 128 pages, is the largest regional guide in the state. Over 140,000 copies of the Custer Country guide are distributed locally, regionally, nationally and

internationally through hotels, motels, gas stations and restaurants, as well as by mail to individuals in every state and several foreign countries.

In addition, Custer Country maintains a website, www.CusterCountry.com that includes news, information and a calendar of events in the region. To learn more about the attractions and activities in Custer Country, visit the website. If you'd like to order a copy of the guide, please go to the website or call 1-800-346-1876.