

White Paper on Eco-Tourism Policy (Draft)

April 2006



Center for Conservation Governance and Policy
Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

White Paper on Eco-Tourism Policy (Draft)

April 2006

Center for Conservation Governance and Policy
Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

Contents:

I	Characteristics of ecotourism
II	The Process of policy restructuring
III	Ecotourism: as practiced and institutionalized in other countries
IV	ET as it is practiced in India
V	Proposed institutions
VI	Ecotourism co-ordination and enforcement
VII	Criteria and indicators for assessment and monitoring
VIII	Concluding Recommendations
	Bibliography

Annexures: *(available in complete report)*

1. Definitions
2. Documents on polices in other countries
3. Related policies in India, HP, MP, Sikkim, Kerala and Karnataka
4. Case studies from two hotspots



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

White Paper on Eco-Tourism Policy (Draft)

Center for Conservation Governance and Policy,
Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

Summary

Ecotourism in the Indian context has significant implications for nature and culture conservation, rural livelihoods and conservation education. Existing documents on ecotourism policy are briefly reviewed in the paper to draw insights for the Indian context. Experiences from within the country and outside, and consultations over the past seven months highlight the need for an appropriate institutional mechanism to streamline ecotourism policy. The proposed National Ecotourism Directorate under the Ministry of Tourism can provide strategic direction and engage stakeholders in dialogues related to multilateral agreements and local self-governance in the context of ecotourism. The constitution and mandate of the National and State Ecotourism Directorate are discussed. A systematic process for assessment and monitoring of ecotourism ventures is also demonstrated. The paper suggests ways of linking indicators of impacts and incentives.

White Paper on Eco-Tourism Policy (Draft)

Center for Conservation Governance and Policy,
Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bangalore

Any policy is to be perceived differently from policy goals, and contains both a strategic statement and a settled course of action to be followed by an institution (Brewer and de Leon 1983; Patten and Sawicki 1993; Heinz Eulau and Kenneth Prewitt, 1973). The objective of a tourism policy is to provide tools for containing growth of tourism beyond viable, acceptable and sustainable natural, social and economic thresholds. Tourism policy should enable identification and mitigation of impacts. It should cater to all aspects of the tourism production function: primary inputs (resources), intermediate inputs (facilities and services) and the final output (experiences). As far as Ecotourism sub sector is concerned, clear planning and control of the sector is a globally identified need (e.g. Martin and Uysal, 1990; Rodriguez, 1998). This white paper intends to outline the policy needs of the Ecotourism sector in India. It is targeted at the policy planners, makers and implementers concerned with the sector at the center and in the states.

There seems to be only a thin line of difference between tourism and eco tourism. Often, the difference is more in what you call it than in what you do. This ambiguity is dangerous as tourism involves rare and pristine landscapes and being 'eco-friendly' is a business opportunity. Policies could take leverage of this perception for the sake of sustainable development at grass roots level. General tourism policies are not congenial for ET sub sector and as of now legislations in ET are rare. The objective of a policy here is to prevent ET from following the now well known 'resort cycle' (Butler, 1980) avoiding the phase of rapid decline due to environmental degradation.

Any effort in policy formulation face the following questions: who should be involved in policy making, what are the guiding principles, why do we pursue ecotourism, where should it take place and what are the expected outcomes. Expected outcomes of ecotourism depend on government's priorities: it could be conservation, poverty alleviation or generation of foreign exchange. Viewing ecotourism merely as an exclusive foreign exchange earner will end up in missing this route towards sustainability and discount its value as a conservation and livelihoods tool. Broad acceptance of certain essential constituents of ecotourism facilitates clear answers to the above policy questions. The definition adopted by the society at large and the government should have a shared vision and should reflect in integrated and cohesive ecotourism policies. A definition-based model of ET will also help in developing indicators for monitoring and a possible certification process. Hence, the concept of Ecotourism is unveiled in the first section. Section II talks in general about the process of policy changes and section III draws lessons from Ecotourism policies of different countries.

This is followed by a section that presents a review of existing guidelines and policies in India. Subsequent two sections (V and VI) narrate the recommendations that will be most suited for India's Ecotourism sector and the paper concludes with a set of criteria and indicators to assess impacts of the sector.

I Characteristics of Ecotourism (ET)

The tragedy of mass tourist-spots digging their own graves and the emerging global market for ethnic and unique experience gave rise to enterprises under the banner of ecotourism (ET) in various parts of the world. In spite of its increasing importance as a business opportunity and its phenomenal growth within the larger tourism industry, the concept of Ecotourism is not well defined. Used as a tool to harvest consumer's surplus in the context of economic growth and environmental degradation, ET practices vary from wildlife and heritage to health and adventure. ET is generally perceived as 'high value low volume enterprise' depending on a few interested tourists with high willingness to pay. Developing countries are gradually realizing that ET can be a livelihood tool for rural communities and can also result in sustainable management of natural resources. The educational and cultural attributes attached to ecotourism adds value to the business and also make us think that it may not be the quantity of tourists but the quality, that we need to address first. It is also known that in natural environments, tourist satisfaction is inversely related to the user intensity and well-known ecotourism destinations (eg: Galapagos islands) face threat due to over visitation. The challenge lies in reconciling conservation, community benefits and business proposition and this calls for careful planning, implementation, monitoring and regulations.

ET enterprises often highlight some conservation activities like energy saving gadgets or restricted use of plastics, but tend to ignore the overall impact on the natural and cultural integrity of the destination. There are instances where this has either led to eventual degradation of the marketed tourism products themselves or to social unrest. Distinguishing the components of Ecotourism enterprises can clarify the ambiguity in the concept and practice of ET in the country. In many countries, 'home grown' definitions are in vogue (Edwards *et al* (1998)), groomed to meet specific needs of the context. Based on various definitions of ET (see Annexure 1), we can distinguish ET for our context by the following four essential characteristics.

1. Nature based
2. Eco-cultural sustainability
3. Conservation Education (for tour operator and the tourist) as major components
4. Significant involvement of and benefits to local people

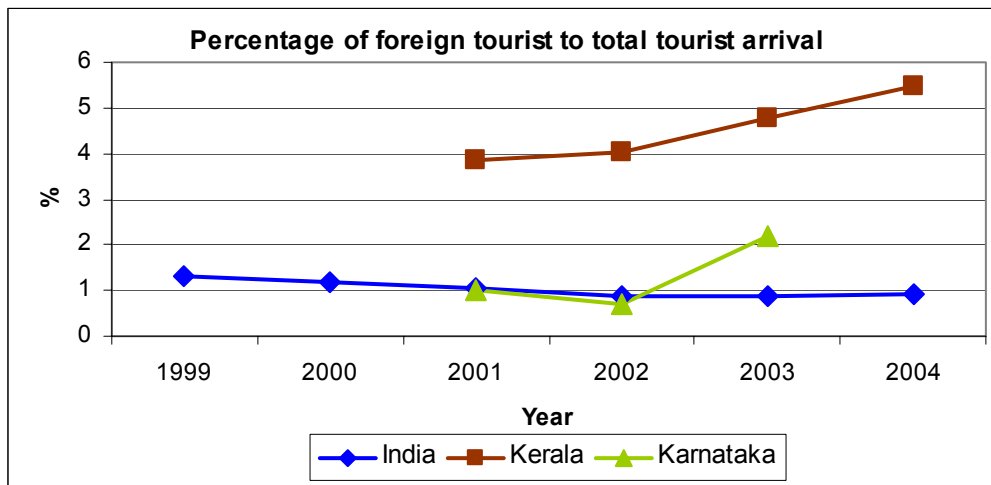
Mainstream tourism is geared towards tourist satisfaction and ET on the other hand, has conservation (of nature and culture) and livelihoods (economic and educational benefits) as essential constituents. While it is obvious that tourism should at least be harmless to nature and society, ET needs to be pro-active towards all the four components mentioned above. Mass tourism could be based on pleasure, relaxation, religion or carnivals. ET enterprises



need to be based on the natural environment. A resort near seashore or inside a protected forest could meet all the four characteristics of ET while the regular mass visitation to a beach or to a forest temple can only be made eco-friendly. Last two components of ET do not prevail as dominant in these as in other ventures located in the same destination. In fact it is often considered desirable to keep mass tourism away from local communities to retain the cultural uniqueness un-invaded.

While cultural nuances evolve in the natural uniqueness of any region, both these together need to be sustained for continued tourist attraction. Natural and cultural sovereignty is crucial in projecting the handicrafts and culinary traditions as vibrant economic products. It is also worth mentioning that tourism in developing economies emerged as an industry in the post-war era due to the adverse terms of trade in agricultural commodities and the major contribution of the sector was perceived as improving the balance of payments situation. Hence there has been a conventional focus on international tourists, in spite of the environmental costs in long distance travel, leakage of benefits from the destinations and greater uncertainty. In any case, the number of foreign tourists is not a large proportion of the total visitors (Figure 1). ET, led by objectives of nature and culture conservation, livelihoods and education, needs to be different.

Figure 1



Source: Data from Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Kerala and Karnataka

Role of participatory tourism initiatives is well laid out in Reid (2005). This is envisaged as most important feature of ET, because it is only a sub sector under the vast tourism arena, focusing on the willingness to pay for certain unique experiences with minimum eco-cultural footprint. Any tourism venture with a potentially large impact or dependence on local ecology and/or culture could be regarded as Eco-tourism. It need not be confined to forests



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

and could include home stays, houseboats, or beach tourism. This realization is based on the understanding that there is increasing willingness to pay for eco-tourism activities and the sector is expanding fast with increasing number and variety of players. Also there are increasing volume of visitors to natural reserves (Li and Han, 2005) that needs to be spread across a wide variety and number of locations.

II The process of restructuring policy

Policies are dynamic in nature reflecting the evolving understanding of the society. Policies may need periodic revisions based on emerging perspectives and techniques. Hence policy formulation benefits from guidelines brought out at different times, at different governance levels and by different agencies. The policy being recommended here, also finds its origin in existing practices, policies and guidelines both within and outside the country. Nevertheless it is realized that eco-tourism is a vast business domain having wide repercussions on the socio-ecological fabric of an economy. Therefore, it is time to develop the guidelines into clearer regulations, strategies and action plans. While guidelines can be national, policies need to reflect state-specific needs and imperatives of ET. Hence these recommendations provide space for regions and communities to innovate and to retain their ecological and cultural integrity. In terms of the process of policy formulation, there has to be dialogue, consensus, bottom-up approach, decentralized governance and redressal mechanisms. The Quebec declaration (2002) says:

“formulate national, regional and local ecotourism policies and development strategies that are consistent with the overall objectives of sustainable development, and to do so through a wide consultation process with those who are likely to become involved in, affect, or be affected by ecotourism activities;”

Following this process, we propose national and state level institutions and mechanisms to promote and sustain ET in the country as a tool for conservation, livelihood and development.

This whitepaper is the culmination of state level consultations and assessment of ET enterprises in four regions: two in the Western Ghats (Kerala and Karnataka) and two in the Eastern Himalayas (Darjeeling and Sikkim). The biodiversity hotspots were chosen because of prevailing linkages between ET practices and sensitive ecosystems in these regions. Consultations involved formal and informal exchanges with identified stakeholders and review of literature.

III ET as practiced and institutionalized in other countries

ET polices in selected countries are reviewed to draw insights for a suitable institutional structure, incentive mechanisms and monitoring process for our socio-political context.



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

Comprehensive guidelines for planning and monitoring community based ET with case studies can be found in WWF, 2001. ET related policies in five countries and one region are briefly reviewed here. (for full documents see Annexure 2).

1. Bhutan: With its mighty mountain ranges and relatively undisturbed ethnicity, Bhutan is a natural destination for ET. Bhutan's new long term ET policy (previous ET policy was formulated in 2001) from Tourism Ministry continues its emphasis on '**high value low impact**' tourism and tries to enhance community participation and conservation capacities. For a large functional democracy as India, high value low impact may not be an ideal slogan because of its trade-off with local economic and educational benefits.

2. Nepal: Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (**MoCTCA**) is responsible for policy, planning, licensing, regulations and overall monitoring of the tourism industry. Nepal Tourism Board (**NTB**) conducts planning, research and product development. Country's National Ecotourism strategy and marketing programme of 2004 emphasizes cross-sectoral cooperation at national planning level, more private participation, poverty alleviation through promotion of village tourism and a full-fledged marketing programme. Other government agencies in Nepal's ET sector include National Planning Commission and Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation. Nepal plans to set up a new body under NTB to coordinate ecotourism development, stressing on community participation in decision-making, planning and participatory techniques.

Insights for India from Nepal's ET sector include involvement of the departments of Culture and Civil Aviation and the need for a supporting research and training establishment. A designated ET Board at the center may not be useful in our context due to large-scale cultural and political diversity in India. But India could have a smaller cell at the center, for facilitate state level institutions, bringing out policy guidelines and providing inputs to international agreements.

3. Thailand: Thailand used well-marketed, open, mass-tourism for economic recovery from the Asian crisis of the last century. This resulted in large-scale interference with local ecology and Thai culture. Thus from 1995-96, Thailand started focusing on sustainability and in 1997 set up National **Ecotourism Councils** comprising of representatives of the public, academic, private, and NGO sectors. The purpose of these councils was to oversee the development of **National Ecotourism Policy and Action Plan** as well as to appoint sub-committees on various aspects of ecotourism management. National Ecotourism Action Plan is a five-year implementation plan for the period 2002 to 2006 with details of the projects needed to be implemented. Thrust areas include Tourism resources and environment management, Education and awareness building among the public, Co-operation among local people, Marketing promotion and tour guide, Basic infrastructure and ecotourism services development and Ecotourism investment support and promotion.



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

The broad-base structure of ET councils may be suited to Indian context. This could help the state institutions of varied nature in timely revisions and provide space for consultations on international agreements and other national policies impacting the sector. Among the new thrust areas of Thailand, public awareness to provide quality Ecotourists and stress on co-operation among and within communities are India's concerns too. An implication to be drawn from this constitutional monarchy is the dependence on international tourists leaving conspicuous cultural footprints.

4. Sri Lanka: Heavy dependence on highly fluctuating flow of international tourists and the absence of national ecotourism policy leave the ET sector in Sri Lanka unable to grow beyond the occasional eco-tours and ecolodges organized by mass-tour operators. The Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation (SLEF) is planning to establish a 'National Secretariat' to guide ecotourism in Sri Lanka, broadly representing all stakeholders. Spice/plantation walks (agroforestry/ botanical tours) are becoming popular eco-tourism activity, helps save many indebted planters of this island economy.

Lessons for India from Sri Lankan experience include the scope of farm tourism and risks associated with putting too many eggs in an industry far too sensitive to insecurity and instability. Leakages in terms of proportion of receipts from tourism flowing out of the economy (for Sri Lanka, leakages are around 27% (Batta, 2000) makes the over dependence on international tourists a not so viable proposition. Experience of Thailand and Sri Lanka implies that **quality domestic tourists** would be more valuable to ET because of low cultural impact, higher domestic educational value and more predictable demand.

5. Australia: 'Ecotourism Australia' (1991) is an incorporated not-for-profit association of lead industries with diverse members. It develops certification Program along with Co-operative Research Center for Sustainable Tourism. Australian certification is accepted as 'International Eco-tourism Standards' in 2001. 'Green Globe 21' (a global Affiliation, Benchmarking and Certification program for sustainable travel and tourism) has exclusive license for the distribution and management of the International Ecotourism Standard.

An important insight from Australian policy is the freedom for aborigines to choose the way they wanted to be involved: as employees, investors, or participants in preventing negative impacts.

6. Africa: Wildlife tourism generates almost one third of Kenya's foreign exchange earnings. In South Africa there has been spectacular increase in number of visitors to game and nature reserves. The integrated policy on cultural or village tourism of the African region was formulated in the line of policy on Community National Parks Management. This provides an example for the South Asian Region, with comparable context of culture and history. African policy recognizes that 'Low-volume' need not be 'low-impact' if quality tourism is not ensured by regulations and awareness. African policy sets the precedence of participatory



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

identification of criteria and indicators. Involving stakeholder communities, they have adopted a broad set of criteria and a complementary set of model-specific indicators from WTO.

Many developing nations including India have made commitments under the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The scope of GATS extends to all member governments, which includes national and local governments. There is a realized need to strengthen discussions on revising Article VI of GATS (Working Party on Domestic Regulations), which has repercussions on ET and on the government's ability to privilege certain issues in certain contexts. Regional associations for specific sectors like ET can strengthen these arguments in the GATS negotiations.

IV ET as it is practiced in India

Table 1 provides an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of existing policy documents related to ET in the country at national and state levels. The only document available with regard to ecotourism policy at national level is the Ecotourism Policy and Guidelines 1998 (Annexure 3 provides full document of policies discussed in this section) which identifies key players in Ecotourism as: Government, Developers/operators & suppliers, Visitors, Host community, NGOs & Research Institutions. It also prescribes operational guidelines for these key players. The policy defines and hence approaches ET with a clear conservation bias. It lays out cardinal principles suggesting the importance of involvement of local communities, minimizing the conflicts between livelihoods and tourism, environmental and socio-cultural carrying capacities. It also perceives that ET should be part of integrated development of the area. It emphasizes the role of careful planning in infrastructure development and a detailed benefit cost analysis prior to implementation. It talks about standards, continuous monitoring and codes of conduct for visitors. The way to go ahead is to develop these guidelines into action plans, incorporating the missing components: institutional support, monitoring criteria, incentives and regulations.



Table 1. Status of existing policy initiatives in the ET sector, India

	India	Karnataka	Kerala		
	Ecotourism in India: Policy and Guidelines 1998	Wilderness Tourism Policy 2003	Kerala Tourism Eco initiative 2004	Conservation and Preservation of Areas Act 2005	Participatory Ecotourism programme of Forest Dept 2005
Objectives	Same as general tourism; to be a unifying force, preserving natural and cultural heritage	Opening up forest areas for ecotourism	Eco-Certification Scheme to make each sub-sector within the tourism sector to be eco-friendly	Avoid unsustainable tourism	Promotes participatory Ecotourism programme through EDC/VSS
Strengths	Identified key players in Ecotourism	A beginning	One of the first standards issued by a state, intends to cover all sectors of tourism	Regulates unplanned growth of tourism	Inter-departmental cooperation, financial assistance for establishing community ecotourism
Weakness	No institutional set-up, fiscal incentives or community ownership.	Public sector gets priority/Monopolized access to forest areas	Less stress on socio-cultural aspects including local employment, insufficient incentives for achieving the standards	In conflict with the expected powers and rights of 'panchayathi raj' institutions	Difficult procedural formalities involving many sanctioning authorities
		Sikkim	Madhya Pradesh	Himachal Pradesh	
	Sikkim wildlife (Regulation of Trekking) Rules, 2005		Eco & Adventure Tourism Policy 2002	Policy on Development of Ecotourism 2001	
Objectives	To regulate trekking activities in the state		Opening up forest areas for eco/adventure	Opening up of forest areas for community based ecotourism	
Strengths	Details penalties for offences and rewards for reporting offences		A beginning	Community involvement, well detailed institutional set up	
Weakness	Confines only to trekking activities		Stresses on adventure tourism and private sector. Lack of community involvement	Too much stress on trekking and less on other ecotourism activities	

Purpose of this comparative table (Table 1) is to bring out the need for broad comparability of policies across states, even allowing for contexts to determine this to a great extent (mountains, coast, wildlife rich, etc). There is a clear picture of the confusion that surrounds the states' definition of ET and their articulation of what they want to achieve—ET as purely business proposition in MP, privileged access to public sector in Karnataka, to detailed institutional set up in HP and enabling decentralization in Kerala and Sikkim. Identified policy gaps in Indian ET sector are the following:

Policy gaps

- ET policies often conflict with policies of the Tourism sector
Tourism policies promote infrastructure development and recommend simplification of environmental regulations to attract large capital inflows. ET objective is to minimize new infrastructures and comply with all environmental regulations.
- Role of Government and other institutions not specified
Except in Kerala, there has been no attempt to craft a nodal agency for ET, where the roles of different government departments are specified in any policy document.
- Conservation - heavy and local benefits not emphasized
Due to the conceptual ambiguity in defining ET, most of the stakeholders, except forest department have not taken a proactive role. The result is an apparent conservation bias at the cost of local stakes.
- Lack of community involvement
Even in cases where local community is projected as beneficiaries, benefits mostly confine to employment of a few locals as guides and cooks. Other forms of benefit sharing are nearly absent in the sector. Even the employment benefit could be higher if capacity building was considered as a prerequisite for assessing the eligibility of locals for different jobs.
- Lacks clear and measurable indicators to monitor
Except for self imposed regulations in specific activities (e.g.: picking up waste thrown around while trekking, checking the number of plastic articles etc) there are no clear guidelines for monitoring even for environmental impact. Socio-cultural parameters so far remain ignored.
- Absence of links between Monitoring and Regulations or incentives.
Wherever some regulations exist, they are not linked to continuous monitoring. Well-laid out incentives linked to regular monitoring and standards can streamline the connectivity between practices and policy.

Way ahead:

Objectives of eco-tourism cannot be met without a focused and concerted approach. The identified gaps are interconnected and consequence of the absence of a commonly accepted definition of ET. National policies and guidelines should be drawn for the proposed components of ET, within the purview of international environmental treaties and related Indian legislations, incorporating equity and fair Trade principles. State wise regulatory institutions and regulations can be based on these guidelines but should reflect grassroots ecological and cultural integrity. While all environmental legislations apply to these enterprises, the sector cannot sustain without targeted regulations, as it's potentially significant impacts on environment and social fabric.

Extensive decision making powers of Panchayati Raj Institutions under schedule XI of constitution could be made use of to ensure realization of all aspects of ET: nature and culture conservation, generating livelihood opportunities and regular monitoring. These



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

constitutional rights need to be taken into account for negotiations under international agreements.

Existing ET enterprises in India can be categorized into the following:

1. Government
 - a. Government initiated and managed e.g. Thenmala, Kerala
 - b. Public sector corporate; e.g. JLR, Karnataka

2. Private
 - a. Small, e.g. House boats, Kerala, Homestays
 - b. Corporate, e.g. Blue Yonder, Kerala

3. Community
 - a. Self- Initiated and community managed, e.g. Kokkrellur, Karnataka
 - b. NGO Initiated and community owned, e.g. Rampuria, Darjeeling; Pastanga, Sikkim

4. Co-managed
Community Managed and Government Supported, e.g. Bamboo Groves, Kerala

The policy needs in terms of monitoring and regulations may differ for these models. An attempt has been made in section VII to demonstrate the utility of a set of criteria and concerned indicators for ET models. Scoring of criteria, based on quantification of indicators, needs more research and participation from stakeholder groups. A nodal agency can articulate process for monitored promotion of these models in proposed destinations and also correct the imbalance brought out in Table 1, by setting broad basic operational guidelines for all.

V Proposed institutions:

Figure 2 depicts the recommended institutional and linkage structures for ET sector in India. State and national departments of tourism can host the nodal agencies to coordinate and regulate ET. These agencies should have deputed officials from related departments like MoEF and Cultural affairs. Other departments should be invited in as and when needed by the nodal agency. For instance, to discuss a guideline for ET in a tribal belt, ministry of tribal affairs should be involved. For waste management guidelines, CPCB and for incentive mechanisms, Ministry of Commerce/ Finance should be represented. The nodal Agency at the center, **National Ecotourism Directorate** (NED), hosted by Ministry of Tourism can refine existing National Guidelines so as to

- Remove ambiguity in the concept, definition and practice of ET. The NED can correct the imbalance in understanding of ET across states by setting broad basic operational guidelines for all.
- Groom ET as a successful industry, conservation driver and livelihood tool overcoming the self destructive tendencies evidenced by mass tourism



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

- Help the industry leave minimum eco-cultural footprint and reap maximum socio-economic benefits
- Mandate setting up of state level nodal institution to facilitate and monitor ET sector
- Suggest departments to be represented in the nodal ET institution at the center and the states.
- Suggest criteria to develop site specific indicators for monitoring
- Suggest potential incentives linked to monitoring
- Liaison with other departments for needed inputs and participation (eg: upholding the rights of local self governments in matters of ET)
- Provide a platform for consultations on international agreements having implications on the sector.

Deliberating on the present situation where in definition and practices of ET are nebulous, it is recognized that bringing all ecotourism initiatives in one platform is essential to keep a watch on their individual and collective impact. Thus the need for a formal channel in the states emerges. A nodal agency at the state can be the responsible government body to facilitate responsible tourism. The nodal agency at the state, **State Ecotourism Directorate (SED)** can

- Clearly identify Ecotourism ventures falling under the purview of the definition elaborated in section I, which will be articulated in the guidelines from NED.
- Legitimize through a process of registration, usage of the tag ‘Ecotourism’
- Allow ratings/certification of enterprises based on well laid out criteria/indicators
- Encourage socio-ecologically responsible tourism by incentives linked to monitoring of natural and social impacts.
- Adopt with needed improvements, existing guidelines (WWF, 2001) to assess feasibility of; and plan, develop and strengthen community-based ventures.

Potential Tasks of the SED

- A multi stakeholder agency, SED could be headed by an expert in managing social and natural resources.
- Set up ET management cell with representative natural and cultural resource managers and Panchayati Raj Institutions (*ex-officio*; agriculture, forests, rural development, culture, tribal, water, pollution control board, etc)
- The cell can assess and decide on proposals to be registered as ET enterprises based on relevant criteria and indicators, where consultations with local communities is mandatory
- Prepare proposal format for ET, and associated procedures like whether to mandate public hearing and consent from concerned local government agency
- Develop with guidance from the proposed Institute of Eco-Tourism, participatory monitoring processes based on indicators suggested by NED and link the performance/scores with ratings (certification) and incentives
- Implement phased decentralization till district level cognizant of constitutional and legal provisions for decentralized governance.

- Establish conflict resolution mechanisms so that participatory processes come with efficiency, streamlined responsibilities, powers, constitution and regulations integrating essential components of ET

Institute of Eco Tourism (IET)

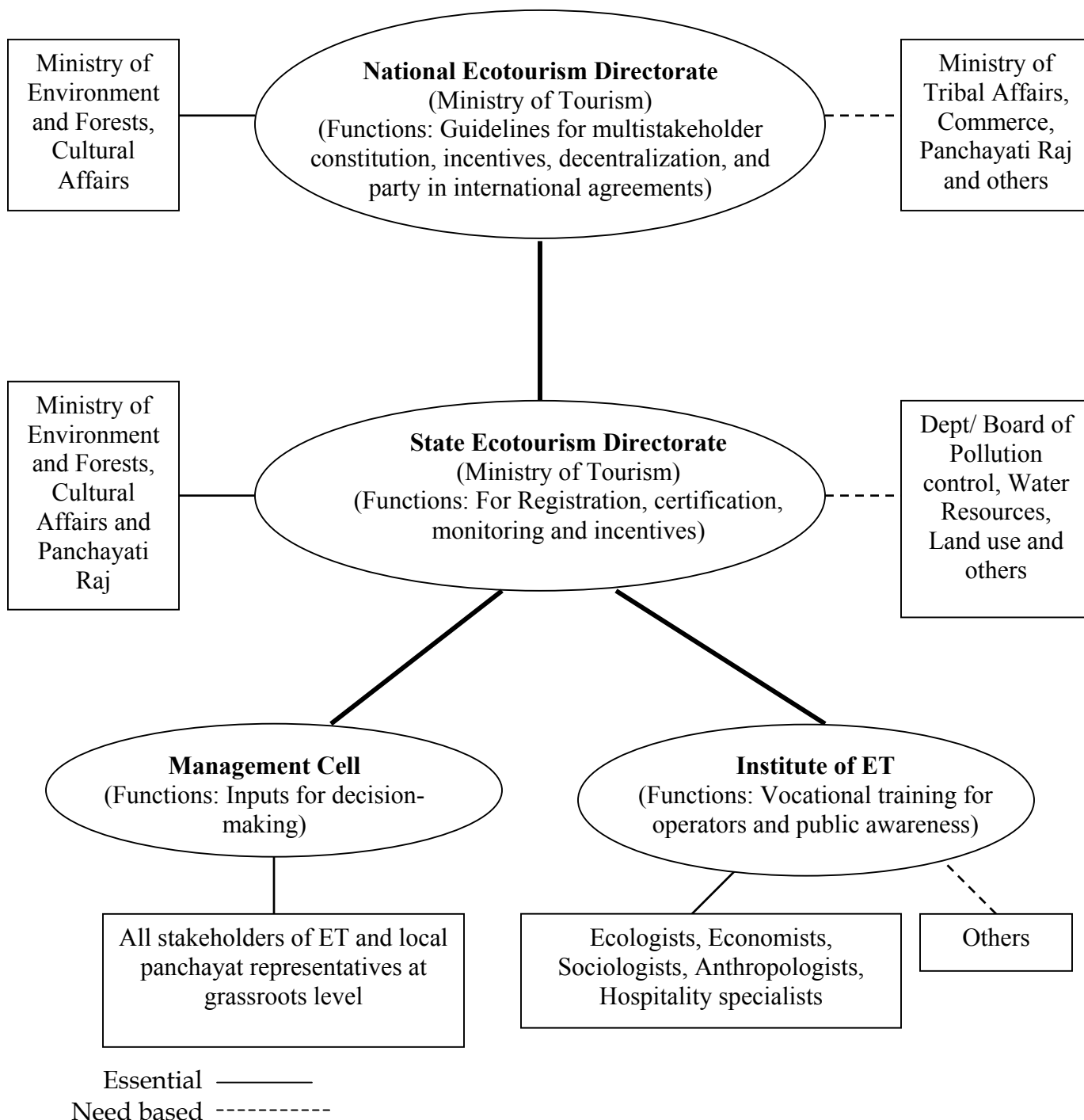
- A vocational training and research agency to support SED in identifying capacity building needs of various models prepare modules and conduct training/courses and exposure visits.
- The institute could be a Government or a private or joint effort with experienced trainers in all fields needed for ET practice.
- To spread awareness on responsible travel (street plays, folk arts etc)
- To facilitate participatory monitoring and assessment of 'Limits to Acceptable Change' in an ET destination. Basic indicators for this are elicited in section VII.
- To suggest periodic revisions in regulations e.g to prevent bio-piracy and cultural invasion
- To institute and analyze feed back mechanisms
- Maintain constant and close interface with ET directorate
- Publish ET newsletter for dissemination of news and events

IET can train the employees of ET sector in the following:

- Feasibility assessment
- ET proposals writing
- Environmental regulations
- Ecotourism policies and institutions
- Monitoring methods
- Marketing strategies
- Certification process
- Hospitality
- First aid
- Sanitation
- Naturalists
- People to people contact (local content, reed rafts, folk music, rituals and cuisines)
- Waste Management Policies
- Guest profiling
- Visitor education

Public sensitization of potential visitors by the IET could include mass awareness on responsible travel and tourism, leaving minimum impact in terms of ecology and culture. This could leverage on folk art forms and public media. Visitor's capacity as ecotourists can make them guardians of nature and culture and hence should be an important component in ET.

Figure 2 Proposed institutional mechanisms and linkages.





Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

VI ET co-ordination and enforcement in states

While NED can be largely a strategic and co-coordinating agency, SED needs to be pro active and enforcing. SED will be responsible for streamlining the process involving registration, monitoring, certification and incentive mechanisms. The dichotomy between mass-tourism and ET needs to be clarified by SED in distinctive terms taking the local natural and cultural thresholds.

Any one/society/ company/ foundation wanting to use the title eco-tourism should be registered under respective model (described in section IV) category with the SED. SED could be decentralized to help inclusive and speedy processing, in a phased manner till district level. Decisions (registration of a proposed ET venture, certification, incentives, monitoring etc) should be taken by a representative committee with officials from concerned departments in the proposed destination (eg: pollution control board, water authority, revenue, land use, agriculture, horticulture) and concerned community representatives. The directorate would facilitate the realization of the concept of ET i.e. of nature and culture conservation, education and local ownership.

Certain areas with unique ecology or ethnicity could be declared by SED as 'eco-tourism zones' to imply that all tourism activities in that locality will be confined to Eco-tourism. Initiative to declare eco-tourism zones can spearhead from the co-coordinating agency or any concerned agency/person and should be facilitated by the ET directorate in pursuing the processes involved.

Registration

Once SED receives a proposal for an ET venture, it needs to set up a decision-making committee for assessing the feasibility of the proposal, involving all concerned stakeholders. Therefore the first step envisaged in processing a proposal for ET registration is to identify the stakeholder groups. Later, in a time bound process, the proposal should be evaluated with necessary site visits, stakeholder consultations, and scientific assessment of potential ecological, socio-cultural and economic criteria under the guidance of the Institute of ET. A potential list of indicators under the relevant criteria with methods of scoring is provided in section VII. A subset of these indicators with additions if found needed could be used for ex-ante assessment. Cut off scores for certain indicators, based on location specific features and weightage is a participatory decision of the management committee in consultation with IET. Based on the multi criteria assessment of any proposed ET enterprise, if the ecological and socio-cultural criteria score with respect to the cut-off limit, the proposal could be recommended by the decision making committee for registration to the ET director as an eco-tourism enterprise. Registration fees could be differentially charged: nominal for community owned enterprises and highest for private corporate sector.



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

Regulations

1. Prior Informed Consent from the local Panchayati Raj Institution can be mandatory for a proposal
2. When deemed necessary as per the scale and impact of operation of the proposed model, the directorate shall conduct a public discussion on the social and environmental impact assessments and possible cultural fences.
3. Community owned ET models: Group of people applying for registration as ET enterprise should be registered in an appropriate category (society, trust, company etc) with the government. They also should have the approval of the local PRI and should have well laid out bye-laws for equitable benefit sharing.
4. High-end tourism operators should be contributing a proportion of their income to the local administration as a cess for using local ecosystem services. The quantum of conservation cess should be fixed by the SED in consultation with the management cell and IET. This cess should be ploughed back to conservation activities of the environment and local cultural traditions.

Monitoring

The approach to monitoring as in the case of assessment should be integrated and based on multiple criteria so as to cover the triple bottom line of eco-tourism. Multicriteria assessment/monitoring is needed for registration, certification or incentives. Enterprises can use the monitoring procedure for self-evaluation. Indicators for which attaining a high score is practically difficult due to absence of systems or technology in place (eg: solid waste management) should be taken up by the SED with concerned authorities for improving the system. SED will be responsible for monitoring the growth of the sector as a whole and to judge carrying capacity along with the Institute of ET at regular intervals. SED should discuss the guidelines issued from time to time by the international Ecotourism society and NED and the rating criteria prescribed by various agencies to formulate needed indicators and regulations in the local context.

Certification

Allows inclusion of an enterprise as per request in a specific category of rating (eg: five star or three or two stars) which should be linked to careful monitoring by the decision-making committee and IET, based on selected parameters and indicators. This is proposed to link ratings to charges and monitoring based incentives. Voluntary compliance based ratings already existing in the field may not fully achieve this. These ratings should be indicators of the prices charged. The categories can be identified with range of cut off scores attached to each model in each of the three sets of criteria elaborated in the next section (ecological, socio-cultural and economic). Ratings should follow a process: application to the SED, setting up a monitoring committee for site visits and valuation of the criteria. The committee will meet and discuss the scores under each of the three criteria and decide on granting certification with respect to cumulative rating with inputs form IET.



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

Incentives

1. Considering the societal benefit of eco-tourism, these enterprises should be eligible for income tax relief. This incentive should be differential as minimum relief to the corporate and maximum to the community owned initiatives. The incentives could be linked to the scores under social benefits especially to the indicators of employment and multiplier benefits. Determine and utilize measures of direct and indirect societal benefits to provide differential fiscal incentives to models.
2. Investment cost in complying with selected input intensive parameters (eg: rain water harvesting, non-conventional energy etc) could be extended as green loans under a subsidized lending rate. SED could recommend such lending schemes to the banking sector, based on the scores under economic criterion.
3. Operational eco-friendly inputs (like insecticides, fertilizers and water purifiers of organic origin or reviving endangered skills using local natural assets) should be considered fro-green subsidies to all registered eco-tourism enterprises.

Capacity Building

The SED should facilitate capacity building through the IET for people involved in running the enterprises as also in sensitization of public on responsible travel and visits. SED and IET can guide advertising agencies to contextualize the destinations in the light of the complete concept of ET. Supporting research interest in different aspects of Eco-tourism helps scientific monitoring as well as an academic perspective.

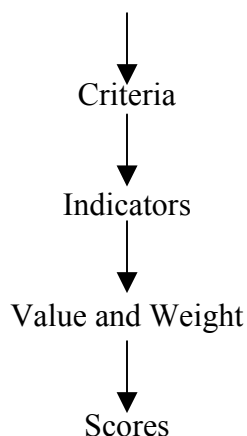
VII Criteria and indicators for assessment and monitoring

The process of selecting indicators for the relevant criteria was based on our experience in different models of ET and a review of existing literature on the topic. The objective of the exercise was to see how the ET practices deviate from its definition and how can these be improved in order to comply with the accepted characteristics of ET. They can be indicative of a complete set of indicators for any model for the purpose of initial assessment of ET proposal, monitoring and certification of an on-going project, as also in laying out targeted incentives and regulations. The methodology can be replicated by concerned stakeholders in any context.



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

Monitoring and Evaluation of an ET model



Going by the definition elaborated in section I, the criteria for monitoring or evaluating an ET model fall under Ecological, Socio-cultural and Economic categories. Relative importance of the first two over the Economic criterion is probably in line with the accepted definition of ET. This probably can be articulated by the fact that in certain models the Economic criteria needs to have a commercially viable score; while in others like that of a community model, it just needs to be positive. The rationale is that for community ET enterprises like home-stays, it is a supplementary livelihood and not an exclusive source of income/profit.

*Score of any indicator = Value * Weightage*

Value: is the measure of impact on the various parameters by the model based on observations and calculations. The value here is taken as ranging from -3 to 3. These values can be given appropriate weightage as their importance varies depending on the immediate environment and operational conditions.

Weightage: is site specific; models compared here belong to different sites and hence are not weighted. But weightage is crucial when any one impact can have severe consequence eg: water pollution by houseboats can be weighed more than the use of imported material in boat construction.

Ranges of values for an indicator taken in the score tables below are as follows:

+3 = major positive impact

+2 = improvement in *status quo*

+1 = potential improvement in status quo

0 = no change/status quo

-1 = major negative impact



Ashoka Trust for Research in
Ecology and the Environment
www.atree.org

-2 = negative change

-3 = potential negative change to status quo

Monitoring the socio-ecological indicators is important for the sector not only in terms of assessing the impact but also for financial sustainability, as in many cases; the demand is related to factors like biodiversity (Naidoo, 2005). For any enterprise a score table in the manner discussed below can be prepared. This can also be used to draw inputs for identifying successful models in particular destinations. The sample score tables provided here just demonstrates the process. The numbers are only indicative, in the absence of a serious participatory quantification effort.

Ecological indicators (see Table 2 for scores)

1. Topography- alterations of the physical landscape during the inception and operation of the model
2. Air quality- activities like burning inorganic waste, fuels like kerosene, petrol, diesel etc
3. Noise-resulting from the use of generators, motors, engine, transport vehicles etc.
4. Water quantity- per capita consumption of water and water conservation measures like rainwater harvesting
5. Water quality- activities like garbage disposal, runoff and wastewater discharge in local water bodies
6. Solid waste management- scientific collection and disposal methods for solid waste
7. Terrestrial flora - introduction of invasive species eg: lantana, excessive lighting, trekking (trampling) etc, which affects the local flora
8. Terrestrial fauna- activities like excessive lighting, fire, smoke and noise, which affects the local fauna
9. Aquatic flora and fauna- activities like angling, boating, fishing, water sports etc, which affects the aquatic biodiversity
10. Conservation efforts- reporting illegal activities to police, patrolling, energy conservation methods and generating awareness among locals



Table 2. Sample scoring of Ecological indicators

Criteria	Indicators	Un weighted score across models			
		Homestay	Public Sector	Co-managed	Community Owned
Ecological	Topography	0	0	0	-1
	Air quality	-1	-1	-1	-1
	Noise	-1	-2	0	-1
	Water quantity	-1	-1	-1	-1
	Water quality	0	-1	0	0
	Solid waste management	2	1	-2	0
	Terrestrial flora	-1	-1	-1	-1
	Terrestrial fauna	-1	-2	0	0
	Aquatic flora & fauna	0	-1	0	0
	Conservation efforts	1	1	2	1
	Total	-2	-7	-3	-4

Socio-cultural indicators (see Table 3 for scores)

1. Design - Habitat/tradition friendly design and materials
2. Local art forms - support to local art forms like folk dance, music, theatre etc arranging performances etc
3. Local handicrafts - promotion of local handicrafts by establishing gift shops or other types of promotion.
4. Local cuisine - Emphasis on ethnic menu, using locally produced and indigenous ingredients.
5. Culture - impact of the activity on the overall living style of the local community, change in values and traditions
6. Education and awareness of guests - on local resources by way of literature handouts, interpretation etc.
7. Employment - number of employees per bed/cottage
8. Leakages - benefits flow to outside communities eg: purchases of commodities or services from outside the locality
9. Multiplier effect on local economy - activities resulting indirect generation of benefits like taxi/auto, shops etc.
10. Equitable distribution of benefits among the stake holding communities
11. Proportion of domestic tourists to foreign visitors



Table 3 Sample scoring of Socio-cultural indicators

Criteria	Indicators	Un weighted scores across models			
		Homestay	Public Sector	Co-managed	Community Owned
Socio/Cultural	Design	2	0	2	2
	Local art form	0	0	1	0
	Local handicrafts	1	0	0	0
	Local cuisine	0	0	0	1
	Culture	1	0	1	1
	Education/Awareness	2	1	1	1
	Employment	1	3	2	1
	Leakages	-1	-2	3	2
	Multiplier effect on local economy	0	1	1	1
	Equity in benefit sharing	0	0	2	0
	Domestic tourist	1	1	1	2
	Total		7	4	14

Economic indicators (see Table 4 for scores)

1. Profit (% of average annual profits)
2. Gestation period- no. of years to break even
3. Occupancy- average occupancy/ year
4. Living standards- change in public health, literacy etc
5. Competition- number of competitors in the vicinity

Table 4. Sample scoring of Economic indicators

Criteria	Indicators	Un weighted scores across Models			
		Homestay	Public Sector	Co-managed	Community Owned
Economic	Profit	1	3	2	2
	Gestation period	2	1	1	2
	Occupancy	1	3	2	1
	Living standards	1	1	2	1
	Competition	0	1	2	0
	Total		5	9	9



Scores for the three criteria can be compared between enterprises or models in and across any site. The decision on the cut-off level for each criteria and the relative importance of any of the criteria for making a decision on any venture needs to be discussed by concerned stakeholders in the specific context as discussed in the previous section. Table 5 provides the consolidated scores for demonstration.

Table 5. Sample of consolidated scores under the three criteria

Criteria	Homestays	Public Sector	Co-managed	Community
Ecological	-2	-7	-3	-4
Socio-cultural	7	4	14	11
Economic	5	9	9	6
Total	10	6	20	13

Role of Economic criterion is only in ensuring that ET is not a loss making enterprise. Once this is ensured this criterion need not be instrumental in making a choice between enterprises or models.

VIII Concluding Recommendations

1. Establishing National and State Ecotourism Directorates in the Ministry of Tourism
2. National Ecotourism Directorate to provide
 - Uniform and inclusive definition of ecotourism across states
 - Guidelines on multi-stakeholder constitution of state directorates
 - Guidelines on criteria to monitor and incentives
 - Inputs on constitutional provisions on decentralized governance and international negotiations
3. State directorate to
 - Set up a management cell and streamline processes for the following tasks
 - Develop indicators for assessment and monitoring according to the accepted definition
 - Assess proposals,
 - Register enterprises
 - Certify and monitor based on indicators
 - Facilitate establishment of Institute of Ecotourism for training, research and contributing to monitoring and decisions.
 - Design appropriate incentives for conservation and community benefits and cess on natural capital used in high end tourism.
 - Identify and establish exclusive eco-tourism zones.

Bibliography

I Book chapters and Journal Articles:

- Brewer, G. D. and P. deLeon. 1983. *The Foundations of Policy Analysis*. The Dorsey Press: Homewood, Ill. Pp. 476.
- Batta R.N.2000. *Tourism And The Environment: A Quest for Sustainability*. Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi. pp. 203.
- Butler, R.W. 1980. The concept of tourism area cycle of evolution: implications for management of resources. *Canadian Geographer*. 24 (1), pp.5-12.
- Charters T. 1996. Ecotourism: A tool for conservation. eds. Chatters T. et. al. *National parks: Private sector's role*. Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia: USQ Press. pp. 77-92.
- Edward S.N., McLaughlin W.J. and Ham S.H. 1998. *Comparative Study of Ecotourism Policy in the Americas*. University of Idaho, Organisation of American States.
- Heinz E. and Kenneth P. 1973. *Labyrinths of Democracy: Adaptations, Linkages, Representation, and Policies in Urban Politics*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Jeffrey K.D. 2001. *Tourism and Natural Resource Management: A general overview of research and issues*. US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. p-19.
- Li W. and Han N. 2001. Ecotourism management in China's Nature Reserves. *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment*. Vol. 30. No. 1. pp. 62-63.
- Lee-Choong K. et.al. 1998. Measuring the economic value of ecotourism resources: the case of South Korea. *Journal of Travel Research*. 36(4):40-46.
- Luzar E.J. et.al. 1998. Profiling the nature-based tourist: a multinomial logit approach. *Journal of Travel Research*. 37(1):48-55.
- Martin, B.S and M. Uysal. 1990. An Examination of the Relationship Between Carrying Capacity and the Tourism Lifecycle: Management and Policy Implications. *Journal of Environmental Management*.31(4):327-333.
- Menkhaus S. and D.J.Lober. 1996. International ecotourism and the valuation of tropical rainforests in Costa Rica. *Journal of Environmental Management*. 47(1):1-10.
- Miller J. A. and E. Malek-Zadeh (eds). 1996. The ecotourism equation: Measuring the impacts. *New Haven, CT: Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Bulletin Series No. 99*. pp 302.

Marshall, V. Assessing the possible local community benefits from ecotourism operations in Kenya. Available at URL:
<http://www.uga.edu/juro/2004/marshall.pdf>

McKercher, B. 2001. "The Business of Ecotourism". *The Encyclopedia of Ecotourism* Ed. David B. Weaver. CABI Publishing New York. pp 569. (7)

Naidoo R. and Adamwicz W.L. 2005. Biodiversity and Nature base tourism at forest reserve in Uganda. *Environment and Development Economics*.10: 159-178.

Nyaupane G.P. 2000. *Assessing "eco" in ecotourism in Nepal*. Banko Janakari 10(1):7-10.

Patton, C. V. and D. S. Sawicki. 1993. *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Prentice Hall

Singh, R. 2004. National Ecotourism & Wildlife Tourism, Policies and guidelines. Kanishka Publishers. New Delhi.

Singh, R. 2004. Handbook of Environmental Guidelines for Indian Tourism. Kanishka Publishers. New Delhi.

Stephen, N., William, J. and Sam, H. 1998. Comparative study of Ecotourism Policy in the America. The Inter-Sectoral Unit for Tourism Organization of American states

Theophile K. 1995. The forest as a business: Is ecotourism the answer? *Journal of Forestry*. 93(3):25-27.

The International Ecotourism Society (IETS). 1998. *Ecotourism Statistical Fact Sheet*. Available at URL:
<http://www.ecotourism.org/research/stats/files/stats.pdf>

Tandi Dorji.--. Sustainability of Tourism in Bhutan. *Journal of Bhutan Studies*.
<http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/journal/vol3no1/v3n1tourism.pdf>

Tsung-Wei Lai. 1995. Ecotourism in Australia. *Ecotourism Book*. pp. 270-276.
http://www.apo-tokyo.org/gp/e_publi/gplinkeco/34chapter32.pdf

Wight, P.A. 2001. "Ecotourists: Not a Homogeneous Market Segment". *The Encyclopedia of Ecotourism*. Ed. David B. Weaver. CABI Publishing New York. pp 38. (6)

Wight P.A. 1996. North American ecotourists: market profile and trip characteristics. *Journal of Travel Research*. 34(4):2-10.

II Proceedings:

Mozambique. 2002. Proceedings of the Seminar on Planning, Development and Management of Ecotourism in Africa. Regional Preparatory Meeting for the International Year of Ecotourism. Available at URL:

http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE/Regional_Activities/Mozambique/Mozambique-table-intro-sum.htm

Proceedings of The South Asia Regional Conference on Ecotourism, Sikkim, India. 2002. Available at URL: http://www.sikkiminfo.net/ecoss/sarce/conference_background.htm

Proceedings of the East African IYE Regional Conference. 2002. Nairobi, Kenya. Available at URL: <http://www.conservationafrica.org/iye/>

III Reports:

Acharya Keya. 1997. *Issues in Wildlife Tourism in Karnataka*. With support from Equations, Bangalore.

Equations, Bangalore. 2004. *Adivasis, rights and tourism – An assertion from Nagarhole*.

Final Report of Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Development. IYE 2002. Maldives. Available at URL: http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE/National_Activities/Maldives/final-report-eng.pdf

Fredricson L.M. 2003. *Wildernes Ecotourism and education as a means of promoting an International environment ethic*. USAID Forest Service Proceedings RMRS.

FAO Corporate Document Repository. *Ecotourism and other services derived from forests in the Asia-Pacific Region*.

International Finance Corporation, Washington DC. 2004. *Ecolodges: Exploring opportunities for sustainable business*. Available at URL [http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/enviro.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/p_EBFP_ecolodge/\\$FILE/Ecolodge_Publication.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/enviro.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/p_EBFP_ecolodge/$FILE/Ecolodge_Publication.pdf)

Report of Workshop on ecotourism. 2003. Rodas Hotel, Pavillion I, Powai, Mumbai. Organised by, United States – Environmental Resources Center.

WTO. 2002. *Report on Sustainable Development of Ecotourism*. Web-Conference, International Year of Ecotourism Organized by UNEP and WTO. Available at URL: <http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/2002ecotourism/eng.htm>

IV Policy Documents:

Department of Tourism. 2002. *National Tourism Policy*. Ministry of Tourism & Cultural affairs. Government of India. Available at URL: http://www.doccentre.org/eldoc/g21_/Nationaltourism.htm

Department of Tourism. 2001-2002. *Eco & Adventure Tourism Policy*. Government of Madhya Pradesh. Available at URL:
<http://www.mptourism.com/wn/ecopolicy.pdf>

Department of Tourism. 2005. *Conservation and Preservation of Areas Act*. Government of Kerala. Available at URL:
<http://www.keralatourism.org/index.php?zone=4&menu=29&>

Department of Tourism. 2004. *Eco-Kerala Kerala Tourism Eco-Initiative*. Government of Kerala. Available at URL:
<http://www.keralatourism.org:8080/keralatourism/sidenews/ecokerala/Eco.htm>

Government of Karnataka. 2003. *Karnataka Tourism Policy*. (Order No. ITKC/296/TTT/2000)

Government of Kerala. 1998. *Tourism Policy of Kerala*.

Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. 2001. *Policy on Development of Ecotourism in Himachal Pradesh*. Available at URL:
<http://hpforest.nic.in/eco3.htm>

Karnataka Forest Department. 2002. *Wilderness Tourism Policy*. Government of Karnataka. Available at URL:
<http://www.karnatakawildernesstourism.org/WLPolicy.htm>

Ministry of Tourism. 1998. *Ecotourism in India - Policy and guidelines*. Government of India

Mandip Singh Soin (ed). 2004. A ready Reckoner for the tourism Industry. *Ecotourism and Environment Handbook*. Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India.

Nepal Tourism Board. 2004. *National strategy and marketing programme of Nepal*. Available at URL: <http://discovernepal.com.np/pdf/nationalEco2004.pdf>

Sri Lanka Ecotourism Foundation.
<http://www.ecotourismsrilanka.net/pgs/about.htm>

Tourism Authority of Thailand. 1997. *Ecotourism Policy and Plans*. Available at URL:
http://conservation.forest.ku.ac.th/ecotourdb/english/P_P/PP.htm

UNWTO. 2005. *Tourism Highlights*. World Tourism Organization. Available at URL: <http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/menu.html>

WWF International. 2001. *Guidelines for community-based ecotourism development*.