

Protecting Paradise:

Certification Programs for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism



By Martha Honey and Abigail Rome
Institute for Policy Studies

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Preface

This report, produced as part of the Ecotourism and Sustainable Development Project at the Institute for Policy Studies, is the result of nearly two years' examination of certification programs for the travel and tourism industry. In putting together this report, we were both humbled by and grateful for the explosion of information on the topic of certification and eco-labeling. Our work has been enriched by these studies and by many people who took time to answer our questions, help us gather information, and share their ideas.

Most importantly, our knowledge and analysis made a great leap forward during the Institute for Policy Studies' Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Certification Workshop, held at Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York from November 17 to 19, 2000. We are grateful to the 45 participants from some 20 countries who brought expertise and creativity to the workshop and to the many who have continued to collaborate with us since then.

In addition, we are indebted to Michael E. Conroy of the Ford Foundation for his financial support, as well as for sharing his own knowledge of certification programs and his critical, professorial eye. He struck a nice balance between demanding rigor and permitting independence. In addition, IPS colleagues provided support and encouragement. We would like to especially thank IPS Director John Cavanagh, Erik Leaver who assisted in organizing the workshop and laying out and editing this report, Scott Williams who created the Ecotourism and Sustainable Development Project's webpage on the IPS site (www.ips-dc.org), and Briana Krompfer for doing the final copyediting. Emma Stewart-Teitelbaum, a graduate student at Stanford University, competently assisted with fact checking and editing in the final stages of this report.

While the following study draws heavily on the Mohonk workshop, existing literature, personal interviews, and analysis of current and proposed programs, the critique and conclusions are those of the authors alone. The main programs described in text boxes in Part 1, as well as those described in Part 2, were represented at the Mohonk Conference.

Martha Honey

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October 2001

Acronyms

ASTA	American Society of Travel Agents
AV	Alianza Verde
BEST	Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel
CAST	Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism
CEC	Commission for Environmental Cooperation
CI	Conservation International
CRC	Cooperative Research Center, Australia
CREM	Consultancy and Research for Environmental Management
CST	Certification for Sustainable Tourism
EAA	Ecotourism Association of Australia
EAST	Environmental Audits for Sustainable Tourism
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme
EMS	Environmental Management System
ESOK	Ecotourism Society of Kenya
ESS	Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan
FEEE	Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe
FEMATOUR	Feasibility and Market Study for a European Eco-label for Tourist Accommodations
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
ICT	Costa Rican Tourism Institute
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IHEI	International Hotels Environment Initiative
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISTC	International Sustainable Tourism Commission
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement

NEAP 1 National Ecotourism Accreditation Program
NEAP 2 Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program
NGO Non-governmental organization
OAS Organization of American States
PATA Pacific Asia Travel Association
PROARCA/ Regional Environmental Program for Central America/
CAPAS Central America Protected Areas System
QTC Quality Tourism for the Caribbean
RA Rainforest Alliance
SME Small and medium enterprises
STSC Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council
TIANZ Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand
TIES The International Ecotourism Society
TRINET Tourism Research International Network
TUI Touristik Union International
USAID United States Agency for International Development
UNCED United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
(also known as the Earth Summit)
UNEP United Nations Environment Program
WTO World Tourism Organization
WTTC World Travel and Tourism Council
WWF World Wide Fund for Nature (in U.S. & Canada: World Wildlife Fund)

Glossary of Terms

Accreditation is a process of qualifying, endorsing, and "licensing" entities that perform certification of businesses, products, processes, or services. In other words, an accreditation program certifies the certifiers. In Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Fiji and some other places, accreditation has been used synonymously with certification, but in this study, they have distinct meanings.

Assessment is the process of examining, measuring, testing, or otherwise determining conformance with requirements specified in an applicable standard (Toth, 2000).

Audit is a systematic, documented, periodic, and objective evaluation and verification of how well a particular entity (company, product, program, individual, destination, etc.) is doing compared with a set of standards.

Benchmarking is the process of comparing performance and processes within an industry to assess relative position against either a set industry standard or against those who are "best in class" (Synergy, 2000).

Best Practice(s) is used to designate highest quality, excellence, or superior practices in a particular field by a tourism operator. It is widely used in many award and certification programs, as well as academic studies, to designate best in a particular class or a leader in the field. "Best," however, is a contextual term. There is no set standard of measurement and the term is often loosely or ill-defined (NEAP, 2000; Wight, 1999).

Biodiversity means the variety of live forms, i.e., the different plants, animals, and microorganisms, the genes they contain, and ecosystems they form. Biodiversity is usually considered at four levels: genetic diversity, species diversity, community diversity, and ecosystem diversity (NEAP, 2000).

Certification is a voluntary procedure that assesses, monitors, and gives written assurance that a business, product, process, service, or management system conforms to specific requirements. It awards a marketable logo or seal to those that meet or exceed baseline standards, i.e., those that at a minimum comply with national and regional regulations, and, typically, fulfill other declared or negotiated standards prescribed by the program.

Community is people living in one place, district, state, or country (NEAP, 2000).

Culture is the sum total of ways of living by a group of human beings that is transmitted from one generation to another (NEAP, 2000).

Cultural tourism is travel for the purpose of learning about cultures or aspects of cultures (NEAP, 2000).

Degradation is any decline in the quality of natural or cultural resources, or the viability of ecosystems that is caused directly or indirectly by humans (NEAP, 2000).

Eco-Management and Audit System (EMAS) is a voluntary European Union regulation that strengthens ISO 14001 in key areas including public access and third party verification. It was created by the Council of European Communities and the environmental ministers for businesses interested in certification to an environmental management system. It helps them to evaluate their programs and work towards continuous improvement in environmental performance. It calls for businesses to establish and implement environmental policies, programs, and management systems and to periodically evaluate the performance of the site elements and provide environmental performance information to the public (Krut and Gleckman, 1998).

Eco-labeling describes a scheme in which a product or service may be awarded an ecological label on the basis of its "acceptable" level of environmental impact. The acceptable level of environmental impact may be determined by consideration of a single environmental hurdle or after undertaking an assessment of its overall impacts (Synergy, 2000).

Ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people," according to The International Ecotourism Society. A more comprehensive definition is "travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and (usually) small scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights" (Honey, 1999).

Ecotourism certification programs are ones that cover businesses, services, and products that describe themselves as involved in ecotourism. They focus on individual or site-specific businesses, have standards that are tailored to local conditions, and are largely or totally performance-based.

Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is a process of predicting and evaluating the impacts of specific developments or actions on the environment. The EIA process involves: 1) reviewing the existing state of the environment and the characteristics of the proposed development, 2) predicting the state of the future environment with and without the development, 3) considering methods for reducing or eliminating any negative impacts, 4) producing the environmental impact statement for public consultation which discusses these points, and 5) making a decision about whether the development should proceed in the proposed site along with a list of relevant mitigation measures (Synergy, 2000).

Environmental impact statement is the report resulting from an environmental impact assessment.

Environmental management system (EMS) is part of the overall management system that includes the organizational structure, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes, and resources for determining and implementing the environmental policy. An environmental management system includes tools such as environmental impact assessment, environmental auditing, and strategic environmental assessment (Synergy, 2000).

Interpretation is a means of communicating ideas and feelings that help people enrich their understanding and appreciation of their world and their role within it. Common interpretation techniques used in ecotourism include commentary on guided tours, presentations and discussions, drama performance, musical performance, brochures, signs, displays, and audiovisual presentations (NEAP, 2000).

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a world federation based in Geneva to develop voluntary standards designed to facilitate international manufacturing, trade, and communications.

ISO 14001 is the international standard for environmental management systems.

ISO 14001 Plus seeks to address some of the limitations of the ISO system by including requirements for public participation, corporate disclosure of environmental statements, and compliance with government regulations (Krut & Gleckman, 1998).

ISO 9000 is the international series of standards for quality management systems.

Life Cycle assessment is a variant of an EMS that tracks a product, process or activity from "cradle to grave." In the tourism industry, it assesses the use of resources and social and environmental impact during three phases: 1) departure and return travel, 2) stay at the destination, and 3) activities at the destination. For accommodations, the three-phase life cycle can be analyzed as: 1) construction, 2) operation, and 3) demolition (Krut & Gleckman, 1998; UNEP, 1996).

Mass or mainstream tourism are terms commonly but loosely used to refer to popular forms of leisure tourism pioneered in southern Europe, the Caribbean, and North America in the 1960's and 1970's. It involves the movement of a large number of people on nominally standardized packaged tour holidays to resorts and on cruise ships (Synergy, 2000).

Mass tourism certification covers companies within the mass market or conventional tourism industry. These programs, which tend to be dominated by industry, are based on setting up environmental management systems (often ISO 14001 or their derivatives) and focus internally on the physical plant, product, or service. They are typically the narrowest and least effective of the certification models. They can lead to some "green" innovations, but they are insufficient to ensure sustainable development.

Monitoring is an ongoing review, evaluation, and assessment to detect changes in the condition of the natural or cultural integrity of a place, with reference to a baseline condition (NEAP, 2000).

Nature tourism is travel to unspoiled places to experience and enjoy nature.

Process-based certification programs use environmental management systems to measure companies seeking certification.

Performance-based certification programs use a set of externally-determined environmental and usually socio-cultural and economic criteria or benchmarks to measure companies, services, tours, attractions, etc. seeking certification.

Small and medium enterprises (SME) are generally companies that employ less than 250 but more than ten individuals. Companies employing less than ten people are generally referred to as micro-enterprises (Synergy, 2000).

Stakeholders are, in the context of this report, environmentalists, park managers, tourism industry representatives, consumers, host countries, host communities, funders and financiers, and others who have an interest in a particular certification program.

Standard is a document approved by a recognized body that provides for common and repeated use of a prescribed set of rules, conditions, or requirements (Toth, 2000).

Sustainable development is that which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” according to the 1987 Brundtland report. It entails using, conserving, and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological development processes, on which life depends, are maintained and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be sustained (NEAP, 2000).

Sustainable tourism is, according to the World Tourism Organization, “envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled with maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.” According to *Agenda 21 for the Travel & Tourism Industry*, “Sustainable tourism products are products which operate in harmony with local environment, community, and cultures, so that these become the permanent beneficiaries” (WTO, 2001; WTTC, 1995).

Sustainable tourism certification are programs that measure a range of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic equity issues both internally (within the business, service, or product) and externally (on the surrounding community and physical environment).

The Natural Step (TNS) is a non-profit environmental education organization founded in Sweden in 1989 that promotes both scientific principles and social equity. It holds that there are four non-negotiable “E” principles for sustainability: extraction and exotics (both of which should be avoided) and ecology and equity (which should be enhanced). It offers a framework that is based on science and serves as a compass for businesses, communities, academia, government entities, and individuals working to redesign their activities to become more sustainable (Wildesen, 2000; Synergy, 2000; www.naturalstep.org).

Tourism is travel undertaken for pleasure.

Tourism certification programs, such as AAA (Automobile Association of America), have typically measured and compared quantity, service, and price, areas deemed most important to travelers. Today many programs measure, as well, the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of tourism businesses. This study divides these programs into three broad categories: Mass Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, and Ecotourism certification programs. They are based on criteria that are either process- or performance-based or a combination of these two, and they may involve first-, second-, or third-party verification or auditing.

Voluntary initiatives within the tourism industry are not legally required or binding and are usually focused on achieving environmental benefits beyond what the law requires (Synergy, 2000).

WTO stands for two international organizations: 1) the World Tourism Organization, a UN-related institution based in Madrid that collects data on tourism and lobbies on behalf of the industry. Founded in 1975, its members include 134 national governments and more than 325 affiliates, representing tourism-related businesses; and 2) the World Trade Organization, founded in 1995 as a successor to GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs), to regulate international trade. Membership in both WTOs is for governments, although the first is open to those who pay, and the latter to those who are voted in.

Introduction

Today, certification and eco-labeling are among the hottest topics within the travel and tourism industry. Around the world, there are some 250 voluntary initiatives including tourism codes of conduct, labels, awards, "benchmarking," and "best practices." Of these, about 100 are eco-labeling and certification programs offering logos, seals of approval, or awards designed to signify socially and/or environmentally superior tourism practices. Dozens more are either on the verge of being launched or are in the planning stages. In addition, discussions and feasibility studies are underway to create both regional and international certification and accreditation programs.

The broad richness of efforts to evaluate socially and environmentally superior practices in the travel and tourism industry range from global standards and programs such as ISO 14001, Green Globe 21, HVS Eco Services' ECOTEL, and International Hotels Environment Initiative (IHEI); to regional efforts in Central America, the three NAFTA countries (Canada, Mexico and the U.S.), Europe, and the Caribbean; to national certification and eco-labeling programs in Costa Rica, Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and a wide variety of eco-labels in Germany, Norway, England, and other western European countries; to state or provincial efforts including in the Petén, Guatemala; Saskatchewan, Canada; and the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. And there are new certification initiatives under discussion in Fiji, Brazil, Peru, Kenya, South Africa, Vermont, Hawaii, and elsewhere.

Many of these programs focus on accommodations, but there are a growing number of certification and eco-labeling schemes covering other sectors of the travel and tourism industry. Among these are the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System for golf courses, Blue Flag for beaches, PAN Parks for protected areas, Smart Voyager for boats in the Galapagos, and NEAP, (Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program) for naturalist tour guides. In addition, the Rainforest Alliance's Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC) proposal seeks to create an accreditation program to set common standards among auditors of sustainable tourism businesses, that is to "certify the certifiers."

Several major studies and books have recently been published, and more begun on eco-labeling and certification. Over the last year, there have been a series of conferences and online discussions of these topics, as well as lively and at times heated debates about the impact and direction of certification, ecotourism, and the United Nation's declaration of 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism.

In November 2000, the Institute for Policy Studies hosted the first-ever international workshop on sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification programs at the Mohonk Mountain House in New York. Some 45 participants from 20 countries attended this workshop, including practitioners from most of the sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification and accreditation programs currently in place or in planning, as well as

some of the leading analysts and academics working in this field. This workshop facilitated the sharing of experiences, successes, and challenges among certification practitioners and permitted firsthand comparisons of the most important programs. From these discussions, it became clear that there already exists a great deal of knowledge and practical experience about how to set up credible certification programs within the travel and tourism field. Further, it was apparent that there is a great deal of overlap and commonality among existing certification programs. Participants reached consensus that new programs need not begin from scratch, but rather that they could begin with a common framework based on the criteria, methodology, scope, and lessons learned from existing programs. In other words, new programs should not have to “reinvent the wheel;” rather they could be given the basic components or the “spokes of the wheel” and use these to build a certification program tailored to their particular needs.

As a result, the workshop succeeded in producing and unanimously accepting a document, the “Mohonk Agreement: Framework and Principles for the Certification of Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism” (See Appendix 1). This Agreement lays out the ingredients that, the participants believed, should form the framework—the “spokes”—for credible sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification programs. In addition, the workshop participants unanimously endorsed a proposal presented by the Rainforest Alliance to proceed with a feasibility study of how to develop an international accreditation body (See Appendix 2).

The following report is based on research and a preliminary report done in preparation for the Mohonk workshop, as well as upon the workshop's deliberations, conclusions, minutes, and follow-up. It examines the lay of the land within the field of sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification programs, with particular focus on those programs represented at the workshop. It categorizes and analyzes different types of programs, delineates their common components, and outlines some of the major issues, challenges, and areas of debate. It is hoped that, as certification efforts accelerate during the International Year of Ecotourism in 2002, this report can help to advance efforts to create a universally accepted framework and standards for sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification, as well as for an international accreditation system.

The report seeks to answer a series of questions about certification, including:

- Why is certification important?
- How do certification programs for the tourism industry differ from those for other industries?
- How is certification connected to the growth of ecotourism?
- What are the key components of certification programs?
- Who does the auditing?
- What parts of the tourism industry are being certified?

- What should the criteria include?
- What is the distinction between process- and performance-based systems?
- What is the difference between tourism, sustainable tourism, and ecotourism certification programs?
- What does it mean if you see a Green Globe, CST, NEAP or other major logo?
- Is there consumer demand for certification?
- What is the distinction and connection between certification and accreditation?

In addition, this study poses, but only partially answers, a number of the more complex and vexing questions, including:

- How can certification programs be structured so that they don't, as many in the global South fear, merely strengthen the most powerful tourism companies rather than bolstering locally-owned enterprises?
- How can certification programs become self-supporting?
- How can consumer demand be increased for certified tourism projects?
- How can consumer confusion be lessened or avoided?
- What is the proper mix of stakeholders in designing and executing a certification program?
- How can certification programs be made affordable for small and medium businesses?
- Is it possible to build a global certification program that incorporates variations in local realities?

Part 1: Certification Systems: The Context and Components

"Certification programs are similar to dandelions. First, there is one certification program. Overnight a whole field of certification programs seem to spring up! Once dandelions get a hold in your yard, it is difficult if not impossible to eliminate them—the same is true of certification programs. The answer to the question 'Are dandelions weeds or flowers?' is determined by the beholder, as is the value of certification" (Tourigny, 1990).

1. Overview and Origins

While tourism itself is thousands of years old, tourism labeling, awards and certification on environmentally and socially responsible standards have only been around for little more than a decade. Today, there are scores of tourism certification programs around the world, certifying tourism professionals, i.e., individuals, as well as businesses, attractions, destinations, or services. Because the field of socially and environmentally responsible certification is so new, what are viewed as the "pioneering" or "ground-breaking" programs date only from the late 1980's or early 1990's. Most of these certification programs started in the late 1990's, but the groundwork for them has been laid over the last three decades.

During the past 30 years, global concern has gradually grown over sustainable development and how to create an integrated approach to industrial development, including tourism. In the 1970's, many governments, at both the national and local levels, began passing laws that required companies to comply with regulations for environmental impact and emissions, particularly into the air and water. In the 1980's, a few companies tried to go "beyond compliance," using technologies and practices that exceeded government requirements. Some business leaders also took a longer view, supporting the concept of sustainable development. As articulated in the 1987 Brundtland report, sustainable development is that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." At its best, the concept of sustainable industrial development means that businesses contribute to the "triple bottom line" of sound and responsible economic, social, and environmental behavior (Krut and Gleckman, 1998:109).

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or so-called Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro provided an important impetus for a variety of efforts to "green" industries through voluntary compliance, governmental regulation, and international treaty. The Earth Summit's *Agenda 21*, approved by 182 countries, laid out a broad path and challenge for business to adopt the principles and practices of sustainable development. Regarding the travel and tourism industry, Earth Summit organizer Maurice Strong stated, "Without a clean and healthy environment,

travel and tourism cannot retain its role as world leader, businesses cannot thrive, and destinations will continue to be abandoned. To enjoy success, the industry needs to embrace the concept of sustainable development and make it a reality in the next century." In the wake of the Earth Summit, a number of new tourism certification programs were started with the aim of measuring environmentally and socially responsible practices. Currently, certification of products in the field of tourism is getting another boost in meetings leading up to 2002, which the United Nations' declared "International Year of Ecotourism," as well as the tenth anniversary of the Earth Summit.

But while certification has been thrust forward by these international events—the Earth Summit and the Year of Ecotourism—it is also an outgrowth and logical next step in the evolution of efforts to "green" the tourism industry as a whole and to build a movement for sustainable tourism and ecotourism. Before 1970, little attention was given by companies, governments, or NGOs to environmental and social impacts of the travel and tourism industry. The oldest tourism and hospitality industry programs certifying facilities—Michelin, whose first travel guide to France came out in 1900 and the Automobile Association of America (AAA)'s travel guides that began shortly afterwards—catered to motorists. They measured and rated cost and quality of services and facilities, not their environmental and socio-economic impacts.

By the early 1990's, there were, as well, some dozen programs in the United States to certify tourism professionals. The oldest program, the Certified Travel Counselor (CTC), was introduced in 1965 by the Institute of Certified Travel Agents as a voluntary program to rate and recognize the competence of individual travel agents. Other programs certified a range of professionals within the tourism and travel industry, including hotel administrators, tour professionals, meeting professionals, hotel sales executives, festival executives, incentive travel executives, and exhibit managers. By the early 1990's, the number of similar programs was growing in Canada and Europe as well (Morrison, 1992). This type of certification program was designed to demonstrate professional competence and performance and to promote self-assessment and improvement. While the programs helped to attest for the integrity of individuals, they were not linked to setting or measuring environmentally or socially responsible criteria for the industry. Further, as will be elaborated later, they are all second-party certification programs, i.e., ones run by industry trade associations. As such they cannot be considered independent evaluations by impartial auditors. As one analyst put it, the danger is that these industry-run certification schemes are "more interested in creating an additional source of income and members than in advancing their professions" (Morrison,1992:38).

A. Definitions

Over time, in different circumstances and in various parts of the world, the term certification has been used in different ways. Currently, in the United States, Europe, and Latin America, tourism certification refers to a procedure that assesses, monitors, gives written

assurance, and awards a marketable logo to a business, attraction, destination, tour, service, service provider (such as naturalist guide), process, or management system that meets specific standards. This is the definition used in this report. In contrast, another and apparently older definition has been used by academics in the United States and elsewhere to measure whether an individual knows a certain body of knowledge. A 1992 definition by the American Society of Association Executives defines this more narrow use of certification as “a process by which an individual is tested and evaluated in order to determine his or her mastery of a specific body of knowledge, or some portion of a body of knowledge” (Morrison, 1992:33). To add to the confusion, currently Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and Canada use the term “accreditation” instead of “certification” to refer to systems for rating products such as accommodations, tours, and attractions.

As used in this study, certification is a voluntary procedure which assesses, monitors, and gives written assurance that a business, product, process, service, or management system conforms to specific requirements. It awards a marketable logo or seal to those that meet or exceed baseline standards, i.e., those that, at a minimum, comply with national and regional regulations, and, typically, fulfill other declared or negotiated standards prescribed by the program.

Further, accreditation is used here to mean the process of qualifying, endorsing and “licensing” entities that perform certification of businesses, products, processes, or services. In other words, an accreditation program certifies the certifiers.

B. Roots of Sustainable Tourism Certification: Rise of Ecotourism

Within the travel and tourism industry, the concept of sustainable development has most clearly been articulated through the growth of the ecotourism movement. The term ecotourism first entered the lexicon in the late 1970's, a decade that saw the rise of a global environmental movement. The historical roots of ecotourism can be traced to five sources:

- (1) Scientific, conservation, and other non-government organizations (NGOs) that were increasingly alarmed by the loss of habitat and species, especially destruction of the rain forest and of wildlife (rhinos, elephants, tigers, and other endangered species), and who began to argue that protected areas would only survive if the people in or around these fragile ecosystems saw some tangible benefits from tourism;
- (2) Less developed countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia that were becoming disillusioned with the economic “leakage” of tourist dollars and negative social and environmental impacts of mass tourism;
- (3) Multilateral aid institutions that came to view mass tourism as a bad development strategy. In the late 1970's, for instance, the World Bank and the Inter-American

Development Bank closed their tourism departments and stopped loans for tourism projects;

(4) Traveling public, a portion of whom were increasingly turned off by packaged cruises, sun-sand-and-surf beach holidays, and over-crowded campsites, and began seeking out less crowded and more unspoiled natural areas; and

(5) Travel and tourism industry that came to view environmental protection of its income base as in its own self interest and began to see that there was a growing market for “green” tourism (Honey, 1999).

Between the late 1970's and mid-1980's, a new field known as “ecotourism” gradually began taking shape. Its definition, however, has often been vague: ecotourism is frequently referred to as “responsible,” “sustainable,” “low-impact” or “green” tourism, and the industry usually lumps it together with “nature,” “adventure,” and “wildlife” tourism. The confusion over definition is partly due to its varying historical roots and to the two current trajectories within ecotourism—one towards genuine ecotourism and the other towards ecotourism “lite”. The latter, which is practiced and marketed by parts of the industry, puts a thin green veneer over conventional tourism by aggressively promoting and marketing its modest, usually cost-saving environmental reforms that do little to reshape tourism as we know it. Real ecotourism, on the other hand, is a multifaceted concept that requires tourism to ensure sustainable environmental, socio-cultural, and economic development. The most frequently quoted definition is the one proposed in 1991 by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, formerly The Ecotourism Society). It states that ecotourism is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.” Properly understood, ecotourism contains the following eight characteristics:

- Involves travel to natural sites.
- Minimizes impact.
- Builds environmental awareness.
- Provides direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Provides financial benefits and empowerment for local communities.
- Respects local culture.
- Is sensitive to the host country's political environment and social climate.
- Supports human rights and international labor agreements (Honey, 1999:21-26).

Beginning in the early 1990's, ecotourism (together with nature tourism) was being hailed as the fastest growing sector of the travel and tourism industry. Travel and tourism, in turn, is the world's top export earning industry—surpassing automotive products, chemicals, and food, according to World Tourism Organization statistics. By 2000, worldwide spending on tourism has reached over \$5 trillion a year and the indus-

try was generating, directly and indirectly, 11% of the GDP. Tourism is also the world's largest employer, generating, directly and indirectly, nearly 200 million jobs or some 10% of jobs globally. And, based on even modest growth projections, tourism is projected to double in size over the next decade. The WTO forecasts that, over the next 20 years, Europe will remain the largest receiving region of international tourist arrivals, and that East Africa and the Pacific will grow the fastest.

C. Range of Environmental Standards within the Tourism Industry

Over the last two decades, efforts to “green” the travel and tourism industry have taken a variety of forms. Trade associations, travel magazines and guidebooks, environmental and community-based NGOs, governments, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and international financial institutions have adopted a wide variety of initiatives, most voluntary, designed to set standards and give awards for environmentally responsible practices. These have included sustainable and eco-tourism statements of definition and principle, codes of conduct, “best practices,” awards, and self-help guides and manuals. In addition to The International Ecotourism Society, there are a dozen or more national ecotourism associations, including in Fiji, Hawaii, Ecuador, Kenya, and Zanzibar. The stated purposes of these diverse initiatives are three-fold: to raise standards and practices within the industry; to promote environmentally and often socially and culturally responsible behavior; and to provide travelers with information on “green” companies, services, and attractions.

For industry associations, another, less publicly stated reason for promoting voluntary self-regulation is to avoid international or government directives or legislation. The World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) “Environmental Guidelines,” for example, are a clear call for preemptive action to stave off outside regulation. Issued in 1997, the guidelines state, “Travel and Tourism companies should seek to implement sound environmental principles through self-regulation, recognizing that national and international regulation may be inevitable and that preparation is vital.” In 1994, WTTC created the industry-run Green Globe with an intent, WTTC President Geoffrey Lipman made clear when he unveiled the program, to avoid government or other third party certification. While talking the talk of environmental responsibility, the WTTC, which represents many of the world's largest tourism corporations, promotes only self-monitoring, and vigorously opposes any government or international regulations (Honey, 1999; WTTC, 1995).

In efforts to block government regulations, travel industry associations may adopt the rhetoric of ecotourism and sustainable development to mask policies that go against the principles behind these concepts. In 1995, for instance, three tourism organizations closely tied to industry—the Earth Council which was headed by Maurice Strong, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), and the WTO—released their blueprint for how tourism should implement the Rio Earth Summit's *Agenda 21*. However, this docu-

ment, *Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry*, made clear that the industry couples sustainable development with free trade, privatization, and government deregulation. Two of the twelve “guiding principles” in the document state that “nations should cooperate to promote an open economic system in which international trade in Travel & Tourism services can take place” and “protectionism in trade in Travel & Tourism services should be halted or reversed.” In less developed countries, these prescriptions for open borders for trade and investment permit the penetration of multinational corporations, sometimes into previously closed markets, and can be directly at odds with local efforts to participate in and benefit from tourism.

Despite efforts to avoid regulation and push deregulation, travel and tourism, like other businesses and industries, is subject to certain government directives and procedures. Every country sets certain standards intended to balance human and environmental health with economic development and technological sophistication. Licenses and/or permits and monitoring (inspection and surveillance) are used to ensure that enterprises comply or meet the standards.

While the ability of government regulatory powers, particularly in less developed countries, has been weakened in recent decades, the rising global environmental consciousness and activism has served as some counter-weight. In the last three decades, for example, environmental impact assessment (EIA) has become one of the most widely used techniques for examining the potential ecological impact of particular companies or projects. This “front end” approach is now typically required by governments and international development and lending agencies such as the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for both new and upgraded or expanded projects ranging from dams, highways, and factories to hotels and lodges. In practice, however, EIAs may be poorly performed and the results kept confidential, and government monitoring may be lax, standards weak, and officials susceptible to influence.

EIAs can vary widely, but usually include a presentation by the builder or other project proponent and an evaluation of its environment impact by government agencies or consultants. It seeks to answer the following five questions:

- What do we want to do?
- What resources are affected?
- How big are the impacts?
- How can we mitigate them?
- When can we start the project?

If the impacts are determined not to be serious, the project proceeds; if they are serious, the project must be redesigned or relocated, or the impacts must be mitigated before the project is approved. If these alternatives prove impossible or the project is contro-

versial, it may be canceled. The EIA process does not, however, determine what should be done to reach compliance (Wildesen, 2000:3-4). It also does not include follow-up to see that a project continues to comply over time with environmental regulations.

D. Comparing EIAs and Certification Programs

Certification, a voluntary process predicated on market demand is designed to encourage and reward companies that meet certain social and environmental standards, differs from EIAs in various ways. While governments do require certification for a number of products, to date all tourism certification programs, even those partially run or financed by the government, are voluntary. These programs rely, instead, on the perception or reality of consumer demand and market distinction: that tourists want to patronize certified businesses. Other differences include:

- EIAs are “front end” assessments, examining a project before it begins, while certification focuses on businesses that are up and running;
- EIAs are aimed at bringing a project into compliance with government regulations, while certification programs are usually broader and wider, involving environmental, socio-cultural and economic criteria and setting standards that go “beyond compliance;” and,
- EIAs usually involve discussions between a developer and government or a financial lending agency, while certification schemes often times involve—or at least purport to involve—a wider spectrum of stakeholders.

In light of these differences, certification should not be seen as a substitute for other efforts—EIAs, eco-labels, codes of conducts, ecotourism societies, etc.—to “green” the travel and tourism industry. Rather it should be viewed as an important instrument in the mix that, along with other tools, rules, and regulations, seeks to reshape tourism towards sustainable principles and practices.

E. What Do Different Stakeholders Want?

Where does the impetus for certification within the travel and tourism industry come from? The reality is that the different stakeholders involved in the tourism industry are looking to certification for different reasons. Successful certification programs need to balance a range of stakeholders and try to meet their demands. These may include:

- Environmentalists, park managers, and others concerned about the negative ecological impacts of traditional tourism, who view certification as a way of raising the bar, holding tourism enterprises to standards that minimize environmental impact, and helping to protect the long-term health of the ecosystem.
- The tourism industry that sees voluntary certification programs and eco-labels as a way to help companies evaluate their practices in relation to established standards,

receive technical advice, and develop targets for improvement, as well as to gain market distinction, win consumer recognition, and increase business. In addition, self-audits or industry-run certification programs can be seen, particularly by some of the bigger players in the tourism industry, as a way to stave off further government regulation or independent, third-party audit programs. Others view it as a way to undertake some cost-saving reforms that can be marketed as “green” innovations.

- Host countries that look to certification as a way to raise their international image and sell tourism to the global market, as well as a way to measure compliance with government standards and encourage businesses to improve their environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts.
- Host communities located near tourism attractions or facilities that see certification as a way of measuring and improving the environmental and socio-cultural impacts of the project. Certification can also help to assess financial benefits to both the country and the local community by, for instance, requiring local ownership or local partners, local hiring of staff, and use of locally made products. Therefore, it can be a tool to gain increased local equity and to help communities level the playing field in negotiations with investors, developers, and managers of tourism facilities.
- Consumers that view certification programs and eco-labels as a way to identify and select products and services that demonstrate their commitment to protecting the environment and respecting the social, cultural, economic, and political concerns of residents in host countries and near tourism destinations.
- International funding agencies that view certification as a tool to help ensure higher quality projects and compliance with existing regulations. Certified projects are more likely to win international recognition and encounter less trouble with both government regulators and host communities.

2. Methodology: Process vs. Performance

These different categories of stakeholders, each with their distinct interests, have helped to spawn different types of certification programs. Broadly stated, tourism certification programs can be divided into two methodologies: 1) process-based using environmental management systems, or 2) performance-based using environmental and usually socio-cultural and economic criteria, standards, or benchmarks. In many ways, both these methodologies are implemented similarly: both can involve first-, second- or third-party audits and both award logos for those that achieve certification. However, understanding the process vs. performance distinction is vital to any analysis of the integrity of certification programs within tourism and travel, as well as those in other industries. As one recent study suggests, "For the credibility and effectiveness of tourism certification schemes, both consumers and the travel and tourism industry must understand and recognize this process-performance distinction" (Synergy, 2000:7). It is a conclusion of this study that, to date, effective certification within the travel and tourism industry has been hampered because many of the older and larger programs are wholly or largely process-based and therefore award certification to companies when they set up an environmental management system, rather than when that system is implemented. They are unable to guarantee that companies are performing in environmentally and socially responsible ways. There is a growing awareness of the shortcomings of this methodology and a recognition that, to be credible, certification programs must be largely performance-based, i.e., must entail compliance with a set of externally determined standards that are used to measure all companies, services, or products.

A. Process-based Programs

1 Environmental Management Systems (EMS)

The process-based certification programs are all variations of environmental management systems (EMS). The EMS method has become a popular tool in helping management conduct baseline studies, put together a program plan, do staff training, and set up systems for on-going monitoring and attainment of set environmental targets such as pollution, water, and electricity reduction. It seeks to answer the following five questions:

- Where are we now, with respect to the environment?
- Where do we want to go?
- How will we get there?
- Are we getting there?
- Is it still where we want to go? (Wildesen, 2000)

Currently, EMS is being widely used within the tourism and travel industry. Many of the larger and better known tourism certification programs—including Green Globe and IHEI (International Hotels Environment Initiative)—have embarked on certification programs based on an environmental management system. (A number have recently incorporated performance standards as well.) EMS helps businesses find a systematic way to incorporate and integrate environmentally-sensitive procedures into their service process, to identify and control environmental impacts and risks, to recognize environmental opportunities, and to improve their images and competitiveness (FEMATOUR, 2000).

The International Hotel Association, for instance, published the *Environmental Action Pack: Practical Steps to Benefit Your Business and the Environment* for the American Hotel & Motel Association (International Hotel Association, 1996). Addressed to hotel managers, it states that its aim is “to help you introduce environmental management as an extension to the daily operation of your business.” It emphasizes that the EMS should be tailored to the needs of each hotel: “Manage it at a pace which is right for your hotel, and bring it into your normal working schedules from now on.” This guide includes a “Green Health Check” covering six areas: 1) energy, 2) solid waste, 3) water, 4) effluents and emissions, 5) purchasing, and 6) business issues. Managers are asked to answer a list of yes/no questions in each category and if the score is five or more, the hotel is rated as performing well; four or less, “you may need to consider that area as a priority for action.” Many items are also cost-saving measures, as can be seen from the check list for energy:

Environmental Checklist: Energy	
	Yes No
• Does the staff switch off appliances & lighting when not in use?	
• Are energy services shut down when & where parts of the building are unoccupied?	
• Have temperature settings, timers, lighting levels, etc., been adjusted to ensure minimum energy use for given comfort levels?	
• Is hotel energy use regularly monitored?	
• Is consumption of energy going down year to year?	
• Have targets for reducing energy consumption been set?	
• Has energy use been compared with energy benchmarks?	
• Have you checked that the cheapest fuel rate is being used for each purpose?	
• Is all of your energy plant/equipment less than 10 years old?	
• Have low-energy lights been fitted where cost-effective?	
• Has an energy audit been undertaken in the last three years?	

An EMS system is considered to be officially implemented only if it complies with EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme), ISO 14001, or the British adoption of ISO, British Standards BS7750. Around the world, ISO has become the most popular EMS system.

2. International Organization for Standardization and ISO 14001

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a world federation founded in 1946 and based in Geneva, Switzerland to facilitate international inter-firm trade. It is composed of 111 national and regional standard-setting bodies that develop voluntary standards designed to facilitate international manufacturing, trade, and communication. The ISO 14000 series is one of several industry responses to the increasing public interest in sustainable development that came in the wake of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. While ISO 14000 is a family of standards, ISO14001 contains an EMS standard against which a business, regardless of its size, product, service, or sector, is certified. It can be used by tourism companies or any other type of business and can be applied corporate-wide, at a particular site, or to one particular part of a firm's operations. The exact scope of ISO 14001 is up to the discretion of the company.

An ISO 14000 environmental management system includes five elements:

- An environmental policy
- An assessment of environmental aspects and legal and voluntary obligations
- A management system
- A series of periodic internal audits and reports to top management
- A public declaration that ISO 14001 is being implemented

Certification to ISO 14001 means that a company's environmental management system conforms to the specifications of the standard, as verified by an audit process. ISO does not do auditing; it simply facilitates the development of EMS standards. Businesses often elect to use an independent firm not connected to the industry because an EMS audit confirmed by a qualified, neutral third party will have more credibility. However, certification to ISO standards is based on having an acceptable process for developing and revising the EMS; it is not based on implementation of the EMS. Once a company is certified and registered to an ISO standard, it receives a certification that is valid for a maximum of 3 years.

A number of individual hotels and hotel chains (such as the Spanish chain Sol Melia Hotel) have set up certification programs based on ISO 14001. Several of the largest global certification programs as well as some in Europe (including Green Flag for Green Hotels) are based on or have incorporated some of the ISO 14001 standards. By 1998, however, only 16 hotels had been certified under the ISO 14001 program, including 13 in Germany, Portugal, and Sweden and three in Hong Kong and Mauritius; three more were in the application stage (Hagler Bailly, 1998:6).

ISO 14001 in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the U.S.-based Environmental Training & Consulting International, Inc. (ETCI) has conducted an ISO 14001 project for two resorts catering to European tourists. One is a large resort in Habarana, in the north central province 170 kms. from Colombo, owned by a large Sri Lankan group of companies with investments in many businesses, including tea and tourism. It caters mostly to mass-market Germans who come to visit some of the six World Heritage sites located near the resort. In April 2001, this lodge at Habarana received its ISO 14001 certification, becoming the first hotel in Sri Lanka to be certified.

The other is the 84-room Ranweli Holiday Village located on a 22-acre peninsula in a mangrove environment where a river meets the ocean. Ranweli describes itself as "an environmentally responsible ecotouristic product" and caters to a niche market of mostly British and Germans who come to combine bird watching and other nature-based activities with a beach holiday. Ranweli CEO Chandra de Silva, who is also president of the ISO14001 EMS Users Association and of the Ecotourism Society of Sri Lanka, says that his hotel's "environmental management both in its operations (saving water, energy, minimal use of pesticides, etc.), site sensitivity, and protecting fauna and flora, is held as a model by many visitors to Ranweli." Ranweli expects to receive its certification in late 2001.

ETCI President Leslie Wildesen says that although these two resort hotels are very different, the ISO 14001 management system can be used because it is so flexible: "ISO 14001 is the foundation. We help our clients draw up a program, train

their staff in the standards, and train them how to implement the standards."

Wildesen explains that setting up an EMS is just the first step towards certification. Second is implementing the systems and making the necessary reforms to meet the standards. And third is an independent audit to verify that the accommodation achieves ISO 14001 standards. She says the incentive for hotels is two-fold: they will save money by setting up a management system and they will gain market distinction if the clientele is, as is the case in Sri Lanka, largely from Europe where ISO standards are widely accepted. According to Wildesen, "We believe that focusing on an internationally-recognized standard will enable both facilities not only to improve their environmental performance, but also to attract clients who value the objectively-audited systems they can put in place to avoid damaging their environment."

Wildesen estimates that developing an EMS can cost up to US\$30,000 or more—and that the three steps together can cost a medium to large hotel up to \$60,000, depending on how many upgrades and reforms are needed. Because this cost is prohibitive for many smaller tourism enterprises, Wildesen and de Silva are creating a book-and-diskette package specifically for developing countries which contains templates and protocols which accommodations and other tourism enterprises can use in developing an environmental management system and, if desired, seeking third party certification to international EMS standards.

Sources: Interviews and correspondence with Wildesen and de Silva; <http://www.envirotrain.com>

Proponents of ISO contend it has the advantage that it is versatile and can be used across industries and with different industry sectors. Critics argue this is a drawback because it is too broad to accurately measure the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of different businesses and industries. And there are other problems as well. One is its high cost. According to one study, ISO 14001 certification, not including compliance, runs between \$500 and \$15,000, making it prohibitively expensive for all but the largest hotels (Hagler Bailly, 1998:11,13). Certification expert Robert Toth explained in an interview that the real cost, if travel, staff training, and consultation is included, is between typically \$20,000 and \$40,000 for a medium-sized company. In addition, the ISO process is complicated and heavily engineering oriented, it contains no social or economic standards, and the audit for ISO 14001 certification produces an internal document intended for senior management, not for the public. Further, because it measures process, not performance, *what* a business does is not important, only *how* it does it. "Following this logic," note Krut and Gleckman, "a company making weapons for biological warfare can be certified to ISO 14001" (Krut and Gleckman, 1998:8).

Because ISO 14001 allows a company to draw up its own environmental policy against which its management system is designed, a company may become certified based on a weak or narrowly defined policy. There is no requirement under ISO 14001 for a company to exceed existing laws should these regulations be deficient. It is possible, as well, for a company to meet ISO requirements and gain certification, while at the same time it is in litigation and in conflict with environmentalists and local communities (Krut and Gleckman, 1998:8,16).

Today within the field of tourism certification, debate continues around ISO 14001, with efforts on some fronts to have it adopted as the standard both in Europe and worldwide. However, we concur with those who argue that this is an error. ISO 14001 and other process-based management systems are insufficient, by themselves, to generate sustainable tourism practices. In addition, they don't fully meet consumer needs: EMS focuses on "gray" environmental characteristics—consumption of water and energy and waste disposal, for example—while surveys show that tourists are more interested in "green" environmental aspects in the surrounding areas, such as beautiful and pristine surroundings, clean and healthy air and water, and peace and quiet. To be marketable, a major European study found, certification programs and eco-labels must add in and evaluate consumers' broader green concerns (FEMATOUR, 2000). In addition, it will be argued in subsequent sections, certification programs must also include criteria to assess the social, cultural, and economic impacts on the host community if they are to measure sustainable development.

In sum, the ISO and other forms of process-based certification have the advantage that they fit well with how large companies are organized, can operate globally, and can be used across tourism sectors. However, drawbacks to the ISO-type management systems approach include:

- they are less applicable to small business, which make up an estimated 97% of the travel and tourism industry;
- the environmental aspects they address may ignore those that are important to host communities, to conservation, and to tourists;
- they can permit a company to earn a logo for setting up a management system, even though its performance record may be less sustainable than that of other companies; and,
- their path to implementation and certification is not self-evident, resulting in additional expenses to hire consultants and trainers.

Such criticisms have spurred the development of a number of other programs that seek to combine some performance criteria with a process-based environmental management system. Several are being used in tourism certification schemes, particularly in Europe.

3. Building on and Beyond ISO

ISO 14001 Plus is one of several approaches that builds upon the ISO system, but seeks to address some of its limitations. This program, which has been used by the Swedish and Danish governments, augments the ISO system “with tools that provide information on environmental performance.” It includes requirements for public participation, corporate disclosure of its environmental statement, and compliance with government laws and regulations (Krut & Gleckman, 1998:2, 22).

Another type of program is Life Cycle assessment (or Chain of Custody) that tracks a product from “cradle to grave.” For manufactured goods, this runs from extraction, growing or harvesting of raw materials, through processing and transportation, to consumption, disposal and recovery. The tourism industry can be subdivided into three life cycles: 1) departure and return travel, 2) stay at the destination, and 3) activities at the destination. Within each of these cycles, it is possible to discuss the use of resources and the impact on the environment and on society. In addition, a distinction must be made between global, regional and local travel since this affects the impact measurements. Access and return travel account for 90% of the energy used for tourism and, unfortunately, this percentage is likely to rise. According to a study by European-based International Friends of Nature, there is a trend away from more benign types of travel—train and bus—and towards the car and plane (FEMATOUR, 2000). This means that, in general, global travel has a more negative environmental impact than local travel.

In looking at the accommodation sector, the three-phase life cycle can be analyzed as: 1) construction phase, 2) operational phase, and 3) demolition phase. Most eco-labels focus on the operational phases and do not pay much attention to the phases before and after service is given. The FEMATOUR study argues that it is important to include phase one—construction—in any European eco-label certification scheme (FEMATOUR,

2000). Indeed, those involved in sustainable tourism and ecotourism are increasingly recognizing that sound certification must include an assessment of the environmental and socio-cultural impacts *before* construction begins.

A third variant on ISO is The Natural Step which promotes both scientific principles and social equity. This program was founded in 1989 by Karl-Henrik Robèrt, a Swedish medical doctor who sought to lay out a scientific basis around four underlying principles that, he argued, must be considered non-negotiable if humankind is to survive. These four principles can be reduced to the four “E’s”: extraction, exotics, ecology, and equity. As Wildesen writes, “An organization should avoid the first two (extraction and exotics) and enhance the second two (ecology and equity)...[T]he extent to which an organization succeeds in this is the extent to which it is on the path of sustainability.” And, she adds that “this framework automatically provides a *direction* to planning not offered by either EIA or EMS by themselves” (Wildesen, 2000:6, 7, italics in original). The Natural Step has been used by companies in many industries, ranging from furniture, carpet, and plastics to electronics, power utilities, and hotels, including the Scandix hotel chain in Sweden.

A fourth approach is the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). In the mid-1990's, the European Commission negotiated the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) with industry, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders. The development of EMAS paralleled a number of national environmental management initiatives in Europe, including ones in Britain, France, Spain and elsewhere. EMAS is a voluntary European Union regulation created for businesses interested in certification to an environmental management system. It helps them evaluate their programs and work toward continuous improvement in environmental performance. As Krut and Gleckman explain, “The emphasis of EMAS is in front-of-pipe environmental solutions or pollution prevention; cleaner technology, life-cycle analysis; and continuous improvement of environmental performance. To create incentives for these approaches, but at the same time secure environmental protection, EMAS firms have to operate 'beyond compliance.' In addition, firms must produce an initial environmental impact assessment and disclose their environmental improvements in annual reports” (Krut and Gleckman, 1998:6).

There are a number of important differences between ISO 14001 and EMAS. ISO 14001 was created by an international association whose participating membership is usually the ministry of trade and industry or department of commerce. EMAS, in contrast, was conceived as a partnership between the public and private sectors and was created by the Council of European Communities and the environmental ministries of member states. Not only do the two programs represent different interests, but EMAS is stronger than ISO 14001 in several key areas that are crucial to sustainable development. These include public access to information, legal environmental proceedings, assurances of regulatory compliance, and required third party verification and independent audits at least every three years for certification. In addition, EMAS is performance-based against

the baseline review which is publicly reported, while ISO 14001 is process-based, requiring that continual improvement of the management system be demonstrated internally to management.

“EMAS takes as its province,” Krut and Gleckman write, “a much wider definition of the environment and the process by which it is managed. The role of the firm therefore starts with a baseline review of its environmental impact and ends with a public report on performance improvements against that initial review.” It includes reporting on various fields of environmental impact through an independent third party accredited body. Finally, the authors state, “EMAS requires a company to commit itself to continuous improvement of environmental performance; ISO 14001, on the other hand, encourages (the more limited) continuous improvement of the environment management system.” In sum, ISO is a method of standardization, while EMAS can be viewed as a standard of excellence (Krut and Gleckman, 1998:17).

B. Performance-Based Programs

Performance-based programs use a set of externally-determined environmental and usually socio-cultural and economic criteria or benchmarks to measure all companies seeking certification. Today, an increasing number of programs are performance-based, or are a combination of both process and performance methodologies. Performance-based systems are used mainly by national or sub-national certification programs to compare and judge businesses against a set of common criteria. In most cases, an independent auditor is contracted to inspect products and services to ensure that the criteria are met. If so, the business or product is awarded a logo that may have several different levels in order to indicate current status and to encourage improvement in fulfilling more or higher criteria.

Costa Rica's Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) program, for example, has developed a complex scoring procedure that, Costa Rican officials say, helps to promote improvement. CST includes criteria in four different areas: 1) physical and biological environment, 2) infrastructure and services, 3) external clients, and 4) socio-economic environment. There are a total of 153 yes/no questions divided among these four areas. Each question, in turn, is weighted in importance from one to three, with three the most important. For example, one of CST's questions in its socio-economic environment category asks whether the hotel has a private reserve. If the respondent says yes, two points are awarded. In the survey, the question appears as follows:

4.4 The hotel has a private reserve?			
Weight	Compliance	Non-Compliance	Does Not Apply
2	YES	NO	N/A

The total points received in each category are then calculated, translated into a percentage, and then given a rating level of sustainability based on scale of zero to five. This is similar to the traditional “star” rating given for hotels.

The accommodation's final score equals the *lowest* rating received in the four different areas. For example, a hotel may be rated 3, 2, 4, 3 in each of the areas, but its overall rating and logo will be a level 2. There is, therefore, a clear incentive for the business to improve in this second category of infrastructure and services in order to raise its rating the next time it is audited.

Costa Rica's Certification for Sustainable Tourism	
Level of sustainability	Minimum % of compliance for all four general areas
0	< 20%
1	20 - 39%
2	40 - 59%
3	60 - 79%
4	80 - 94%
5	> 94%

In Europe, the Blue Flag program has two sets of criteria for certifying beaches and marinas. One set contains the "essential" criteria for certification, and the other contains "guidelines" or desirable criteria. Since Blue Flag is an international program that is implemented nationally, the international Blue Flag management requires that all applicants satisfy the first set, and leaves it up to national implementers to determine which of the second set are necessary. The criteria for beaches fall into three categories: 1) water quality, 2) beach management and safety, and 3) environmental information and education (UNEP, WTO, FEEE, 1996). Blue Flag provides detailed discussions for all the criteria, as well as check lists, such as:

Blue Flag Water Quality Check List	
Essential:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Microbiological monitoring</i> • <i>Public display of water quality data</i> • <i>No discharges affecting beach</i> • <i>Compliance with official plans & legislation</i> • <i>No visible pollution</i> 	
Guideline:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Plans for pollution accidents</i> • <i>No decaying vegetation</i> 	

Performance standards (often on several levels) help to encourage businesses to invest in technologies that give the greatest economic and environmental benefits both to their enterprises and to the wider community in which they are situated. Such programs can be scaled according to size and complexity of the product or company, and can therefore be more easily applied and managed by small and medium sized enterprises.

Increasingly, however, many of the newer or revamped programs represent a hybrid of process (management systems) and performance (standards or benchmarks).

3. Types of Certification Programs: Mass Tourism, Sustainable Tourism & Ecotourism

As outlined above, a central division among tourism certification programs is between two distinct methodologies: environmental management systems based on process and externally-determined criteria or standards based on performance. While this process-performance distinction is extremely important, certification programs can be categorized with a wider lens than methodology. In terms of developing public policy, model programs, international standards, and accreditation systems, it is helpful to define three fundamental types of certification: tourism, sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification.

A. Mass Tourism Certification

These are certification programs that cover companies within the mass market or conventional tourism industry. They are based on setting up environmental management systems (often ISO 14001 or their derivatives) tailored to the individual business and outlining the steps to be taken to achieve certification and a logo. For hotels, for instance, such programs monitor compliance with existing legislation, set targets for improvement, and highlight “best practices” which go beyond compliance. They involve an emphasis on adopting environmentally-friendly, usually cost-saving procedures and renovations. Often these mass certification programs are developed and financed by the industry trade associations who are the main stakeholders involved in design and implementation. Some allow certification at a corporate level (a hotel chain or tour operator) or whole destination (Green Globe 21), rather than at each site-specific individual unit.

While these programs focus on the physical plant or the business, they also usually say they include both staff training and community outreach sections. In actuality, however, these “social” concerns concentrate on teaching the staff to implement the environmental management system; the community outreach may be little more than donations of surplus items to the community that can be packaged and advertised as “best practices.”

Most often this type of certification is used for the mass or conventional tourism industry, particularly large accommodations or hotel chains. Rather than having wide stakeholder involvement, most of these programs are dominated by industry. In fact, many develop as sort of preemptive strikes aimed at getting industry off the block before government, NGOs, or local communities can set up an eco-labeling or certification program.

While mass tourism certification programs are, in a sense, the narrowest and least effective of the certification models, they are also typically the best funded, best known, and most-heavily marketed—precisely because they are financed by major players within the

Green Globe: A Mass Tourism Certification Program

Of all the certification schemes around the world, none has been as ambitious and controversial as Green Globe. Green Globe 21, as its present incarnation is known, describes itself as "the ONLY independently verified worldwide certification scheme for Travel and Tourism." Green Globe is unique in that it aims to cover all sectors of the tourism industry, has managed to align with many powerful tourism organizations, and is the only certification program run as a commercial, for-profit enterprise. Green Globe caters mainly to larger, conventional tourism businesses but aspires to cover the sustainable tourism and ecotourism enterprises as well. Green Globe is seeking to become, according to a WTTC official, "the dominant, the main certification program for travel and tourism."

Over the last several years, Green Globe has been the Pacman of the tourism certification field, aggressively gobbling up many other tourism logo, award, and certification programs and forming partnerships with tourism associations in Asia, the Pacific, the Caribbean, the United States, and Europe. Its relatively effective marketing combined with these alliances, has allowed Green Globe to gain international industry and consumer name recognition in a short time.

Despite its relatively high profile, Green Globe has been plagued by external criticism and internal financial difficulties and has gone through a series of makeovers. First launched in 1994 by an industry association, the World Travel and Tourism Council, Green Globe was originally described as a "environmental awareness" not a certification program. Criteria were, in fact, totally lacking. Initially, companies could join Green Globe for as little as \$200, indicate an intention to make environmental reforms, and immediately begin using the logo on all their publicity, giving the impression they were "green." There were no standards that had to be met and no audits to see that reforms had been implemented. What Green Globe offered its members, in addition to the logo, was information on "how to help the environment and cut costs by reducing your energy consumption"

through such measures as using low wattage light bulbs, natural lighting, water saver shower heads, and less air conditioning.

It wasn't until 1998 that Green Globe actually developed its own "standard" to provide, according to Green Globe's Environmental Services Manager Margo Sallows, "a generic set of requirements supported by guidance material" (Font and Buckley, 2000: 307). The criteria in the Green Globe Standard are based on Agenda 21 and involve the development and implementation of an environmental management system covering:

- greenhouse gases
- energy efficiency, conservation and management
- management of fresh water resources
- ecosystem conservation and management
- management of social and cultural issues
- land-use planning and management
- air quality protection and noise control
- waste water management
- waste minimization, reuse and recycling
- storage and use of hazardous substances (Font and Buckley, 2000:307).

Under the category of "management of social and cultural issues," is listed the objective of "positive and sustainable relations with the local community" which Green Globe suggests may include:

- respecting where appropriate local traditions and customs
- purchase where possible of local goods and services
- active participation of hotel representatives in local committees and organizations
- encouraging local employment
- encouraging employees' use of communal transportation (Green Globe 21, 2000c).

At the beginning of 1999, Green Globe separated from WTTC, becoming a private, for-profit entity, financed by some dozen compa-

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nies. The scheme was then renamed Green Globe 21 and revamped to include an independent audit and to incorporate a second logo—the globe with a check in the middle—to distinguish companies that had actually achieved certification. Those companies seeking certification did so by developing and implementing an environmental management system (EMS) based on ISO 14001. After the EMS was set up, the company contracted with an auditing firm to do a certification inspection.

Despite these revisions, Green Globe 21 continued to draw fire, most publicly in the *Synergy Tourism Certification* report commissioned by WWF-UK. The August 2000 press release announcing the report's release criticized Green Globe for "certifying that companies have management systems in place to reduce their environmental impacts without requiring them to achieve a standard level of performance. This means a company which has developed a 'green' policy and set up an environmental management system, can be certified by Green Globe 21 while still operating in an environmentally damaging manner." Justin Woolford, WWF International Policy Officer, added that "Green Globe 21 certified companies appear better to consumers, but may be much worse than uncertified ones. The scheme is misleading, lacks credibility and is not really an indication of good performance at all." The Synergy report and WWF press release further charged that the two similar logos, one with a check in the center and one without, "promotes confusion rather than clarity" among consumers.

But by the end of 2000, Graeme Worboys, Chief Executive of Green Globe Asia Pacific, said that Green Globe 21 was committed to "moving from process to performance," i.e., to incorporating some uniform achievement standards into its EMS. In April 2001, Green Globe 21 announced yet another overhaul, this time with three program levels, dubbed A,B,C: Affiliates for companies and communities that for a small fee (less than \$100) receive information about environmental

practices without committing to certification; Benchmarked for businesses and destinations wanting an annual measure their environmental and social performance against key performance areas; and Certification for those that go through an independent auditing process to see if they meet the criteria in the Green Globe 21 "Standard" which includes a mix of process and performance criteria. Benchmarked companies can use the Green Globe logo without a check, while those certified receive the same logo with a check.

More than other tourism certification programs, Green Globe has, according to the Synergy study, "managed to gain a moderately high level of industry awareness and some consumer awareness." But despite efforts to become a more rigorous and responsible certification program, experts and practitioners continue to raise concerns, including:

- The logos and levels remain confusing. Not only is it difficult for consumers to distinguish the slight difference between logos for 'benchmarked' (without the check) and "certified" (with the check) products, but on the Green Globe 21 website, affiliates are not clearly distinguished from the other categories. By August 2001, over 1000 companies in all sectors had become affiliates, while only a few dozen had been certified. While affiliates do not have the right to use the Green Globe logo, they undoubtedly anticipate that they will be helped by Green Globe's website advertising—now the program's main form of marketing. The Green Globe Asia Pacific website, for instance, contains a long list on its home page of all companies that are "GG21 Affiliates" with no clarification that they have not been certified. Indeed, the description just above this listing states, "The Green Globe Program asks tourism businesses and destinations to make a commitment to improving their environmental performance across a range of indicators. It provides consumers with an assurance that Green Globe companies and communities are committed to a better travel and tourism future." This

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certainly gives the impression that what follows are “green” businesses.

- The Standard “is littered with poorly explained jargon,” states the Synergy report, including such key terms as “benchmarks,” “best practices,” and “indicators.”
- Green Globe's pass or no pass certification process means that there is less incentive for companies to make real improvements. A graded system with different levels, such as that used by NEAP or CST, provides a clear measure of improvement and allows exemplary businesses to publicly stand out above their peers.
- The program's global reach is too ambitious. Not only does Green Globe have small number of full time staffs at its three regional locations (Australia, England, and Puerto Rico), but its claim that it can certify all sectors of the tourism industry anywhere in the world is not realistic. The result is that there are smattering of Green Globe 21-certified companies: in early 2001, officials said only 31 businesses had received Green Globe 21 certification. Most were beach and city hotels scattered from Mauritius to Manchester (UK), Jamaica to Jerusalem, Cairo to Geneva. The list also included a museum, railway, shopping center, and destination (Cumbria, the Lake District in northwest England). This can make marketing difficult: it is easier to build consumer awareness through, for instance, guidebooks, government tourism promotional programs, or travel magazines, for certification programs that specialize in particular sectors (hotels, beaches, etc.) or specific geographical areas (Costa Rica, Australia, or even Europe, for example).

In addition, despite Green Globe 21's efforts to incorporate performance criteria, the program continues to rely heavily on generic environmental management systems which can fit any business anywhere in the world.

- Green Globe's destinations program is ill-conceived, prohibitively costly (a minimum of \$50,000), enormously time consuming (taking years to complete), and ultimately not a sound certification program. As the Synergy report states, “The processes of destination management are not adequately understood or capable of being embraced by a single environmental management system approach.”
- Finally, there is the problem of “loose logos.” Given all of Green Globe's revisions, there are hundreds of companies that received logos in the past but would not or have not bothered to qualify for certification under the latest version of Green Globe 21. It is supported that many may be continuing to display the Green Globe logo on their promotional materials. While many of the current Green Globe 21 staff, particularly that based at the Cooperative Research Center (CRC) for Sustainable Tourism in Australia, are committed to developing a scientifically and ethically sound system, they are stretched thin and face enormous challenges as they try to simultaneously expand and revise the Green Globe 21 program.

Sources: Font and Buckley, 2001; Hagler Bailly, 1998; Synergy, 2000; WWF-UK press release, 2000; Green Globe, CAST and CRC websites; numerous personal communications and Green Globe documents.

tourism industry. In sum, mass tourism certification programs can lead to some “green” innovations, but they are insufficient to generate sustainable tourism.

In contrast, the next two categories of certification programs do contain sufficient criteria to at least hold out the possibility that the businesses they certify are following sound environmental and social practices. As one recent study argues, “Progress towards sustainable tourism requires certification programmes to embrace more explicitly the concept of sustainable development (especially some of the equity aspects of this term) and promote it to their members.” (Synergy, 2000:16) Further, certification programs may work better in terms of promoting sustainable development if they differentiate between the broader category of sustainable tourism and a more specific category for ecotourism, either through different levels within the same program or through separate programs.

Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST)

The Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) is a non-profit subsidiary company of the Caribbean Hotel Association, which assists hoteliers in the Caribbean to effectively manage natural resources. CAST is working on several initiatives directly related to tourism certification. As a partner with Green Globe, CAST is establishing methodology for measuring the environmental performance of hotels in the Caribbean. By mid-2001, thirteen hotels (in Aruba, Jamaica, and Barbados) had been certified under the new Green Globe 21 scheme, and another 27 hotels were undergoing certification.

In 1999, CAST carried out an assessment of seven tourism certification programs in other parts of the world in order to assess the relevancy of their approaches for the Caribbean. CAST also conducted audits (which involved both paper reporting and a site walk through) of 200 hotels in 10 countries regarding community participation and environmental practices in the areas water, energy, wastewater, solid waste, handling of chemicals and community participation, and then shared its findings and recommendations with those involved. From this experi-

ence, Kelly Robinson, Executive Director of CAST says, “We realized after this experience that the evaluations could not be based on simple technology, operational or infrastructure criteria as the facilities in the region differ greatly. It was at this point that we saw value in the development of the Green Globe EMS based certification process.”

At the same time, CAST worked with British Airways to conduct evaluations of their client hotels in the region in order to reward those that passed with the British Airways’ “Tourism for Tomorrow” sign of approval. Of the 111 hotels evaluated, only 12 passed the criteria.

Together with the Pan American Health Organization, and the Caribbean Epidemiology Center, a regional environmental health body, CAST is developing regional environment, health, hygiene and safety standards for the Caribbean tourism industry. The standards will be supported by a certification and training program called Quality Tourism for the Caribbean (QTC).

(Source: Interviews and correspondence with Robinson, Roberts-White, and Burden, 2000-2001; Hagler Bailly, 1998; CAST website: www.cha-hotels.com.)

B. Sustainable Tourism Certification

This type of program measures a range of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic equity issues both internally (within the business, service, or product) and externally (on the surrounding community and physical environment). It uses primarily a performance-based system, third-party auditors, and a multi-faceted questionnaire drawn up in consultation with a variety of stakeholders. It may also include creating or implementing a management system to help establish better and more efficient environmental procedures within the business. Most often sustainable tourism certification (such as ECOTEL) involves individual or site-specific businesses, such as hotels and lodges.

Sustainable tourism certification programs can also cover distinct geographic areas (such as Costa Rica) or particular sectors of the industry (such as Blue Flag's program certifying beaches and marinas) and its standards are set to fit these conditions. A number of the programs analyzed in this report, including Costa Rica's Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST), fit most comfortably into this category.

Sustainable tourism certification appears to offer the best option in terms of developing global standards and a model program. Its criteria are broad enough to encompass various sizes of businesses and types of tourism, including niche markets such as nature, historic, and cultural. At the same time, because it focuses on performance both inside and outside the business, it offers a more holistic approach to sustainability. But even if one sustainable tourism program were adopted as a global model for certification, specific regional and/or climatic differences could be accommodated through two or more sets of criteria, as Blue Flag has for its beaches and marinas.

Costa Rica: Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST)

Costa Rica's Certification in Sustainable Tourism (CST) system has become one of the most widely respected sustainable certification programs, and there is a strong move to "export" this model and have it adopted as the global standard for sustainable tourism certification. In June 2001, at a meeting in Panama, officials from six Central American countries agreed to promote a regional "Certificate of Sustainable Tourism" based on CST.

CST was first developed in 1996 by Rodolfo Lizano who was then a student at INCAE, a Costa Rican-based business school connected with Harvard University. After graduation, he became Director of Planning at the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT), the government's tourism agency that had, over the

years of the tourism explosion, been widely criticized for approving mass tourism and foreign-owned development projects, several of which have been environmental disasters.

CST drew on a number of other models, including the *New Key* ecotourism certification program already underway in Costa Rica (see box in next section). But according to Lawrence Pratt, Associate Director for Latin America at INCAE's Center for Sustainable Development, "CST is not an 'ecotourism' seal per se. It is applicable to all types of hotels (and in the near future, tour operators)—city, country, eco, beach. That is its principal strength. It addresses environmental, social, and community variables as well."

Lizano and others behind the CST are similarly motivated by the belief that a solid certifica-

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tion program is vital to protect Costa Rica's tourism reputation and weed out greenwashing. "This program directly attacks the practices of some businesses which operate as 'greenwashers' (businesses which abuse the concept of 'eco' or 'sustainable') because it will offer reliable information about which businesses really make an effort to offer a sustainable tourism project and which don't. Without a doubt, this reinforces the image of the country as an authentic 'naturalist destination....' According to a 1998 evaluation of CST, many of the hotels that signed up describe themselves as 'eco-friendly,' 'sensitive to the environment,' and as resentful of other facilities that "also use such terminology but do not really put into practice basic environmental principles or contribute to the quality of life in their communities" (Toth, 1998: 8). But while *New Key* included many smaller and locally-owned eco-lodges, more of the larger and foreign-owned hotels have taken part in the CST program.

What has really distinguished the CST program are, in fact, a number of other features:

- it is a government-run, not-for-profit program
- it plans to cover the entire hotel industry, beginning with accommodations
- initially it was relatively well-funded and staffed
- it has the backing of a fairly diverse set of stakeholders
- it is now "marketing" itself as the model both within Central America and globally

While CST was originally conceived of by a small handful of people from INCAE and ICT, it has reached out to involve other key stakeholders. It is officially administered by a National Accreditation Committee, a voluntary committee composed of representatives from government, NGOs, scientific organizations, the tourism industry, and the universities, and is headed by the Minister of Tourism. This committee reviews all applications and

approves the eco-awards. Not well represented are smaller operators—Amos Bien of Rara Avis eco-lodge, is one of the few exceptions—nor community representatives.

CST developed its evaluation questionnaire and certification system after studying other models around the world. Lizano says CST chose not to use ISO 14001 standards because "ISO certifies processes, and even if the processes are good, the results may not be." Unlike ISO 14001 and other generic standards that can be used for any sector, the CST standard is tailored to fit hotel operations. "For this reason," writes certification specialist Robert Toth, "there is little need for the intensive training, consultants, and other service providers typical of sectors which apply generic standards" (Toth, 1998:6). In addition, CST officials say that because this rating system, in contrast to Green Globe which is a pass/fail system, is on a scale of one to five, hotel staff is encouraged to try to improve.

CST's eco-award program is voluntary, open to any hotel and, at least for the first round, free, in an effort to attract wide participation from hotels and lodges. ICT, the Costa Rican government tourism institute, has underwritten the CST program. The CST evaluation questionnaire contains a check list of 153 criteria in four general categories: 1) physical-biological environment (including such sub-categories as emissions and waste, landscaping); 2) hotel facilities and infrastructure (including, for instance, management policies, final disposal and training); 3) customers (including respect for community and nature); and 4) social-economic environment (including direct and indirect economic benefits, contributions to cultural development and health). The entire questionnaire, as well as other details about CST, are posted on its website.

When hotels sign up to be certified they are handled on a first come, first serve basis. CST's five-person technical staff includes four inspectors, each with expertise in one or more of the four major questionnaire categories. Inspectors first do an initial site visit to explain the CST process, give the managers a manual

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containing evaluation guidelines, and go over the evaluation questionnaire. This takes on average two hours. A month or two month later, an inspection team (initially of all four inspectors; now usually two inspectors) returns for a formal assessment, using the check list and putting "yes" (compliance) or "no" (non-compliance) beside each item (Toth, 1998: 8-9). According to Pratt, "CST has nailed it by having yes/no questions and a system of levels. Within the yes/no there's a large body of jurisprudence as to what answers mean. The technicians write down details of what they find and of their views. We do some interpretation. There is a good level of detail." In addition, the on-site inspectors confirm that management has written operational guidelines to verify the existence of appropriate procedures and checks receipts verifying purchasing practices. The inspectors also visit the community, but do not interview any guests. It is estimated that a site visit to a 50-room hotel requires four person-days.

After the evaluation, the hotels are given a list of recommendations and 15 days to fix various problems. The auditors may go back to see if the corrections were made. There is also an on-line self-evaluation so that hotels can rate themselves and assess where improvements are needed. But certification requires on-site, third party inspection.

Certified hotels receive a CST plaque showing the level they have achieved. By mid-2000, no hotel had received the maximum 5 rating, although one lodge was close to achieving this top score. Of the 47 certified hotels, only three had received a level 4. About ten percent of those that applied for certification have failed, getting a zero rating. Lizano argues that the process is more important than the score: "Sustainable tourism is a synonym for responsible tourism. What's important is not arriving at the goal but the work towards getting there. Along the way, you're changing the mental-

ity of businessmen. The goal is never entirely reached. It's a learning process."

Survey results are posted on the web so that a hotel's strengths and weaknesses are public and results can be compared across the entire sector. This has been another of CST's controversial decisions. Pratt explains that CST "decided to go for absolute transparency because it wards against cheating and allows guests to download information on a hotel and check details." However, Marriott and some of the other larger hotels opposed making everything made public, arguing that certain information, such as their environmental management system, is proprietary or confidential. Therefore a compromise has been struck: "CST inspectors see everything but if the hotel doesn't want the information to go into CST files or onto the web, we agree. But our inspectors must satisfy themselves by seeing all the information. We assure ourselves that the information exists," explained Pratt.

The website, which was financed by USAID, has been CST's main promotional tool. Otherwise, the CST program and the certified hotels are being promoted as part of the government's general international tourism marketing program. In addition, most of the accommodations now have their own websites where they can post their CST ecolabel. CST officials say that most in-bound tour operators in Costa Rica know about the program. Marketing, however, has remained a "huge problem," concedes Pratt. Glenn Jampol, owner-operator of Rosa Blanca Country Inn, one of the three hotels to achieve level 4, says he has yet to see any increase in visitors or other financial payoff for the investments he made to get his high rating. He argues that CST must develop a good marketing plan. "Sustainability has to economically work, or no hotel will ever join in," he contends (Pashby, *Tico Times*, 2000).

By mid-2000, 171 of the estimated 400 hotels in Costa Rica suitable for certification had signed up, but by mid-2001, only 51 had been certified. The remainder either had

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not yet been audited or, if site visits were complete, the auditors had not submitted the written evaluations to the National Accreditation Committee. In addition, there is a backlog of surveillance audits (which are supposed to be held every six months to a year) of facilities that have already been certified.

These are serious bottlenecks. Even though the inspection process has been streamlined so that usually only one or two inspectors goes on each site visit, CST's technical staff is clearly too small to handle all the hotels, let alone undertake certification for other sub-sectors of the tourism industry, such as tour operators. CST is, therefore, moving towards a model of outsourcing the site visits and auditing to government-authorized private companies and NGOs. This sensible plan will leave CST with the responsibility for oversight and ensuring that all audits conform to the same standards.

A goal is to make the CST program self-supporting. CST cannot continue to do free audits and it does not have the funds to hire private certifiers. Pratt says, "Hotels must pay to be audited. We want a fixed fee and then another additional one based on the size of the hotel." But, he argues, payment should be made to independent, third-party auditors. CST should not become, like Green Globe, a for-profit program that charges hotels to get certified. "CST should not make money off audits conducted by third parties. The certification organization cannot be both judge and jury," argues Pratt.

There have been some concerns that CST's current model contains a conflict of interest. According to Toth's report, the initial "orientation provided by ICT's (CST's) assessors could be construed as training and consultation which can be interpreted as a conflict of interest" (Toth, 1998: 9), analogous to a teacher walking students through the correct answers before giving a test. CST officials argue, however, that overall it has been very useful during the initial stages to have

CST running the program in house and offering audits for free. It has facilitated getting the program started, testing and modifying it, and helping it to gain credibility. However, now that the program is successfully off the ground, it is important to make it financially sustainable and to remove any question of conflict of interest.

CST is currently in the process of expanding in several different directions. First, it plans to eventually cover other components of the tourism industry in Costa Rica, including tour operators, transportation, and restaurants. Manuals and criteria for tour operators have been developed and are currently being tested. Lizano says this took only six months, compared with four years that it took to develop the criteria and audit system for hotels. In addition, ICT is also underwriting and running the Blue Flag program in Costa Rica. Several of the CST inspectors are also doing beach inspections for Blue Flag.

CST is one of the strongest tourism certification programs in operation today. What it has going for it are its appropriate scope (a single country), its relative financial viability and (at least in some quarters) status as a government program; the involvement of a fairly broad range of key stakeholders; its multi-dimensional questionnaire that includes environmental, socio-cultural and economic aspects; its team of local auditors who bring diverse expertise and a solid knowledge of Costa Rica; its multiple site visits; a scaled eco-labeling system that encourages improvement; and an educational approach that offers to help hotels to meet the criteria. CST has grown slowly, overcome initial resistance from the big players, and has earned respectably wide support for its target sector, the hoteliers.

But, as CST is now positioning itself as a regional model, it is important to look as well at its shortcomings. CST needs to be put on a sound, independent financial footing, to identify or help develop a network of third-party certifiers, and to aggressively market any certified hotels and other businesses. At present, the CST website, its main marketing

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tool, is not tourist-friendly: it is hard to find, not attractive, and does not delineate the type of tourist experience offered by different accommodations.

This points to a bigger problem. While CST appears to be doing a good job in rating the more conventional and the larger hotels and encouraging them towards more sustainable and responsible practices, it is not serving well—or serving at all—the eco-lodges that have formed the backbone of Costa Rica's ecotourism image and economic boom. Rara Avis owner Amos Bien says that the CST survey "doesn't work well for small and micro-businesses" because it requires ISO-like requirements for its physical plant and has other design features more suitable to larger hotels.

More importantly, the CST survey only gives minimal attention to lodges that are involved in responsible protection of the land or work-

ing to prevent logging, poaching and other environmental threats. It is these places that have helped to give Costa Rica its reputation as an environmentally and socially responsible destination. It therefore seems appropriate, as argued in the following section, that the CST survey be expanded to incorporate a parallel or additional rating level which will differentiate out and award eco-labels to those places located in or near parks and protected areas. Attaching such a rating system to CST will help to highlight the type of lodge that has helped to earn Costa Rica its ecotourism mantle; it may also help to raise the bar for all hotels, demonstrating by example and helping to stimulate "green" reforms in the more conventional and larger hotels.

Sources: Pashby, 2000; Toth, 1998; Toth, 2000; Personal interviews and E-mail correspondence with Bien, Blake, Lizano, Pratt; Websites: www.tourism.costarica.com, www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr.

C. Ecotourism Certification

This covers those businesses that describe themselves (through their brochures, websites, etc.) as involved in ecotourism. These are invariably businesses located in or near natural areas and involved in the protection of pristine and fragile ecosystems. Like sustainable tourism certification, ecotourism certification also focuses on individual or site-specific businesses; its standards are tailored to the conditions of a particular country, state, or region; and it is administered locally. This type of program looks beyond the tourism entity itself to assess how it relates to and benefits the local community and the ecosystem in which it operates. The criteria measuring how a business impacts its surroundings is not simply an adjunct; it weighs equally with how the business functions internally in terms of its physical plant and staff and guest relations.

While ecotourism certification demands parity between the internal and external impacts, in some instances, a company's role in the community and in conservation are given even more weight than everyday business functionings. For instance, while the first two types make no distinction between locally-owned and foreign-owned businesses, an ecotourism certification program would likely weight local ownership as important since ecotourism strives to promote sustainable development partly through economic empowerment.

In a country like Costa Rica, whose tourism image is very clearly that of ecotourism, it would seem important to evaluate separately (either within the same program or in parallel programs) those businesses that claim to be involved in ecotourism. Costa Rica's original eco-labeling program, the "Sustainable Tourism Rating" developed for the *New Key to Costa Rica* guidebook, is among the oldest ecotourism certification programs.

Simple "green standards" for the mainstream tourism reduce energy consumption and waste. Ecotourism standards go beyond questions of eco-efficiency (i.e., those that are both cost-saving and environmentally better) and are more responsive to national and local stakeholder concerns. They ask how ecotourism companies contribute to conservation of protected areas and what mechanisms are in place to ensure benefits reach local people. Often launched by governments, academics, and NGOs, they usually lack adequate financing and support from industry (Epler Wood and Halpenny, 2000:1). NEAP in Australia is an example of an ecotourism certification program. Two of its three levels distinguish and rate those enterprises involved ecotourism; the third category rates nature tourism enterprises or those more properly involved in sustainable tourism.

NEAP's three-tiered division, which separates ecotourism from sustainable tourism certification, is preferred by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), Rainforest Alliance, and a number of other ecotourism experts, environmentalists, and community empowerment proponents. They argue that there can be a positive, bottom-up influence among these different types, with ecotourism criteria helping to encourage more rigorous standards throughout the industry.

But separating out ecotourism with distinct criteria and logos is not accepted by others who are involved in certification programs. Among the opponents is Amos Bien, who has been involved in crafting and analyzing certification programs in Central America. Bien, as well as officials of the CST program and the Sri Lanka Ecotourism Society, among others, believe there should be only one certification program, covering the full range from conventional to ecotourism businesses. "Standard tourism and ecotourism must be lumped together," Bien argues, "in 'appropriate' environmental and social classification and certification systems. It is the only way to level the playing field. Otherwise," he writes, "what happens is that businesses that are already doing a decent environmental job (e.g. eco-lodges) will be held to a much higher standard than their neighbors who don't bother" (Bien, 2000b).

While it is true that ecotourism certification sets higher standards, there are also difficulties if all three certification categories—mass, sustainable, and ecotourism—are collapsed together as they are in the CST program. In that program, both Bien's rural and rugged eco-lodge Rara Avis and the center city Marriott Hotel receive a level three rating, and this does not tell the public very much. The rating system does not properly reflect, for instance, Rara Avis' high level of involvement in community and conservation programs. Bien concedes that the CST survey "doesn't work well for small and micro-businesses" because it requires ISO-like management systems for its physical plant and has other

Costa Rica: *New Key's* "Sustainable Tourism Rating"

Costa Rica's certification experiments began in 1990 when a small group of environmentalists and writers of the then-leading guidebook, *The New Key to Costa Rica*, began developing an eco-rating system. As *New Key* authors Beatrice Blake and Anne Becher wrote in a 1998 evaluation of their program, "We originally initiated the evaluation project when Costa Rica was in the first stages of its tourism boom, because we wanted to promote establishments that embodied our vision of how tourism should develop in Costa Rica. We wanted to do what we could to help the tourism industry avoid the pitfalls of traditional tourism." The authors set out to identify and evaluate all lodges in Costa Rica that claim to be involved in ecotourism. In practice, this meant lodges that either had their own reserve or that make use of a national park. Most beach resorts were, by definition, excluded from the survey.

The first "green-rating" appeared in *New Key's* 1992 edition, and in subsequent editions, the model developed into an 8-page survey focused on three areas of operation:

- Environmental variables: environmental impact of the lodge, use of energy and natural resources;
- Economic variables: how much money stays in the local community; and
- Sociocultural variables: how knowledgeable the owners are about the local culture and how they work to fortify it.

Each of these variables, in turn, contained three "tiers" of criteria and more weight was given to items in the first tier.

This home-grown, low-budget, labor-intensive project is a creative and principled pioneer in the field of ecotourism certification. Those doing the audits knew Costa Rica well and, in keeping with sound ecotourism principles, they gave weight to locally-owned lodges, ones that "offer a true experience of nature" and "strive to use sustainable practices," and that are actively involved in the

community and in environmental initiatives and struggles.

For the first few years, the authors traversed the country, spending hours at each location interviewing lodge owners, workers, and community representatives. Those lodges that passed muster—numbering around 65 with each survey—received a rating of one to three "suns"; those that failed were not listed in the *New Key's* "Sustainable Tourism Rating." The survey findings were kept confidential, but Becher would write long reports to all the lodge managers, outlining the results and suggesting areas for improvement.

Initially, as well, they had a good marketing tool through what was, until recently, Costa Rica's most popular guidebook. But over time, Blake says, the model has proved unsustainable. Its problems were several-fold: the publishers of *New Key* were not willing to invest sufficient funds to do the onsite survey; other guidebooks on Costa Rica (particularly *Lonely Planet*) became more popular; the program failed to win support from some lodge owners and the government; and the eco-rating system was heavily dependent on Becher and Blake, both of whom moved away from Costa Rica. In practice, the *New Key* authors also found it difficult to balance the different requirements of researching and writing a guidebook and of doing impartial audits for the eco-rating program. As they explained, "The cost of conducting a comprehensive evaluation is beyond what we could continue to afford ourselves. Despite our consultation with experts...our evaluation would have been stronger had we been able to contract technicians to inspect these facilities at each lodging. Perhaps the greatest difficulty for us...was the obligation we had to divide ourselves in half. On one hand we were subjective book writers who spoke out about what we liked and didn't like in each lodging...On the other hand, carrying out the survey transformed us into objective evaluators, blind to how we personally felt about each place...An ideal solution to this conflict of interest/heart, which we tried to fashion,

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would have been to pass our methodology and records to a separate, non-profit evaluation team...". Blake said that in doing the 2000 survey, "I visited the places and checked them out, but not with questions. I don't have the time or money so it's very haphazard."

Becher and Blake say they have watched the development of CST "with hope and curiosity." In 1998, they wrote, "Ideally, we would like to let their certification program replace ours." But while stimulated by the *New Key* program, CST did not draw heavily on this model. CST has concentrated on rating the

more conventional and the larger hotels and encouraging them towards more responsible practices. It is not, however, serving many of the eco-lodges that have formed the backbone of the *New Key* rating system. In 2000, Beatrice Blake said that of the 68 lodges on the *New Key* list, only seven appeared on the ICT list. When she questioned a number of the *New Key* lodges, she found many of the owners did not know about CST; others were wary that it was biased towards big hotels or could end up costing them too much for certification.

Sources: Blake and Becher, 1994, 1997, 2001; Becher and Blake, 1998; Blake, personal correspondence.

design features more suitable to larger hotels. In addition, the CST survey gives only minimal attention to lodges that are involved in responsible protection of the land or are involved in efforts to prevent logging, mining, poaching, and other environmentally destructive activities.

In evaluating and comparing these three systems of mass, sustainable and eco-tourism markets, it is important to ask what each does to satisfy the needs of the principle stakeholders: industry, consumers, and the host country, and local communities. The responses serve to highlight the differences among these types of certification programs:

- Mass tourism certification programs generally satisfy the needs of business by providing cost-saving changes, technical assistance, and continuous improvement, as well as market-distinction and mass market advertising. But they offer weak and often misleading or incomplete information to consumers, and minimize or ignore the needs of host governments (particularly in relatively underdeveloped countries), local communities, and NGOs for social equity, long term economic equity, and environmental protection beyond the business' immediate footprint.
- Sustainable tourism programs do better in satisfying, although not completely, the needs of business, consumers and host governments and communities. The downsides are that such programs do not adequately distinguish those businesses operating in or near natural areas, may be relatively expensive for small and medium size businesses, may not have adequate funding or sufficient marketing to consumers, and may leave local communities and NGOs sensing they have been marginalized.
- Ecotourism certification programs tend to favor small and medium businesses, to be most respectful of the needs of local communities and conservation, and help the public distinguish businesses, geographical areas, and even whole countries committed to ecotourism. But, typically, these programs suffer from insufficient funding for audits and promotion, thereby not meeting the needs of either the businesses they certify, government, or the ecotourism public.

Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP 2)

The NEAP program in Australia was one of the first designed expressly for ecotourism, and it is rapidly becoming a model for many similar initiatives around the world. NEAP's first ecotourism hotels and tours were certified in early 1997, and by late 2000 the program had certified over 300 products (tours, accommodations, and attractions) from over 100 companies throughout Australia, with the majority in Queensland. This represents approximately ten percent of the country's viable nature-based tourism operators.

In 1993, as concern grew over tourism's negative impacts on wildlife, community life, and cultural traditions, a multidisciplinary group which included businesses, government, protected areas managers, and conservation NGOs met to examine ecotourism certification. As Alice Crabtree, a member of the NEAP panel and one of the developers of NEAP recalls, "NEAP came about through a tortuous route. It is a very industry-driven program, but from the outset conservation groups and the federal government have also been involved." Between 1994 and 1996, the NEAP process and criteria were developed with assistance from 30-some tourism operators. In 1996, the government's Office of National Tourism (ONT) gave a seed grant of US \$30,000 to the Ecotourism Association of Australia (EAA) and the Australian Tourism Operators Network (ATON) to develop and launch a certification program.

In its first incarnation, NEAP 1, there were two levels of certification, Ecotourism and Advanced Ecotourism, that were tested on a diverse group of over 40 operators. "A lot of hard work went into getting the standards right," Crabtree explained. "The idea was to begin with those who were already defining themselves as ecotourism operators and to draw them into the program by setting standards that would be attainable without too much work. Then, given time, the standards would be ratcheted up" (Crabtree, 2000).

In late 1999, NEAP was revised to upgrade the existing two levels and to add a third, broader

Nature Tourism level. NEAP 2 became the only certification program in the world that covers both ecotourism (divided into two levels) and sustainable tourism (classified as Nature Tourism). While its acronym has remained the same, change in its programmatic scope is reflected in the slight alternation of its name, from the National Ecotourism Accreditation Program to the Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program. This new sustainable tourism category has opened up the program to a wider range of businesses and products that are based in natural areas but do not meet the program's stricter definition of ecotourism. NEAP 2 defines its three levels of certification as:

- Nature Tourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas.
- Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.
- Advanced Ecotourism is the above, plus a more stringent set of assessment criteria, including an emphasis on environmental interpretation for visitors.

NEAP's definition of ecotourism emphasizes promoting appreciation for nature through education and good interpretation. This is tailored to fit the realities of Australia, a country where government funding for national parks and conservation is relatively high and daily survival for the majority of people is not dependent on forest or wildlife extraction activities. As Crabtree explained, "We do not have many of the issues [regarding local communities and economic development] that developing countries have, except in indigenous areas. For us, the emphasis is on interpretation because it's a key differentiating point between nature tourism and ecotourism. The education component is the crux of whether people will become more aware after an ecotourism experience. The

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'ambassador' effect of good interpretation is encouraged."

Those certified receive a logo with one to three checks, indicating the level attained. Beginning in 2000, all new products were certified according to the new criteria, while those already certified will be reassessed when their three-year certification period expires.

Two other features about the NEAP system are important to note. First, NEAP certifies "products"—individual hotels and other accommodations, tours, and attractions—not entire companies. NEAP officials argue this method is more precise than, for instance, certifying a tour operator since many run a variety of trips, some designed to follow ecotourism principles while others may include cruises, hunting, city sightseeing, and other activities outside the definition of ecotourism. While the emphasis on products allows tour operators to focus on and gain certification for distinct elements of their businesses and helps ensure a more rigorous application of ecotourism principles, it may confuse consumers who assume that an entire company and all its activities ("products") are certified. Up to four products at a time may be certified with each application. For instance, a tour company, may certify four of its trips, or a hotel chain may certify four of its lodges with a single application.

Second, NEAP certification is based on a self-administered paper audit, based on a questionnaire contained in a 150-page, user-friendly, clearly-written manual (NEAP, 2000). The questionnaire takes applicants about six hours to complete. By early 2001, only a small number of applicants were being selected randomly for on-site audits. While NEAP plans to create a system of third-party auditing and on-site inspection for all applicants, it has not had sufficient funding and staff to do so. "We've built a VW, not a Rolls Royce. It runs well, but it doesn't have a lot of luxury features," quips NEAP official Guy Chester.

Applicants must provide two references, one of whom must be a protected area manager or someone from a government nature conservation agency, and the other an operator with NEAP-certified products or a representative of an industry or tourism association. NEAP assessors analyze the completed application and each month the NEAP administrator coordinates a teleconference with the 5-member NEAP panel. The panel reviews all new applications and, if clarification or additional information is deemed necessary, it consults directly with the applicant, orders a site inspection, or solicits customer feedback. Finally, applicants must state that they have fulfilled all legal and regulatory obligations for their businesses. Certification is either awarded outright, is dependent on implementation of identified improvements, or is subject to positive findings on a site visit. An unsuccessful applicant may appeal to a designated independent person.

NEAP applicants must pay a modest application fee based on the annual business turnover and an annual fee, ranging from US\$53 and US\$398. Charges have been kept low to encourage businesses to enter the program. This system has worked because NEAP's costs to administer the program have been kept down. The only paid staff person is one administrator; the NEAP panel members work on a voluntary basis, and auditors receive only remuneration for their costs and a small honorarium. NEAP officials say this low-budget, voluntary system worked well until the introduction of NEAP 2 which includes the much larger Nature Tourism category.

One of the longest-running debates within NEAP has been whether or not to rely on self-assessment or to require on-site audits prior to certification. However, both geographical distances and the small (often micro) size of the majority of Australian ecotourism businesses made it difficult to incorporate independent, on-site audits into the application process. In late 2000 NEAP began developing an audit protocol based on the NEAP 2 criteria, and an extensive schedule of on-site

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audits to test these protocols was rolled out in 2001. NEAP eventually aims to conduct one random, physical on-site audit of every certified product within a three year period.

Under the current self-audit system, NEAP's manual give examples of "innovative best practices" (such as limiting the number of tourists per guide, using solar powered vehicles, contracting with a community-based food cooperative to purchase food in bulk, or working with the local community to undertake a social impact study) that may be used as "bonus" criteria for operators seeking Advanced Ecotourism certification. The main section of the manual contains the crux of the program—the criteria, which are predominantly performance-based. They are organized into the following sections:

- natural area focus
- interpretation
- environmental sustainability
- contribution to conservation
- working with local communities
- cultural component
- customer satisfaction
- responsible marketing

The longest section of the questionnaire is the one on "environmental sustainability." It covers knowledge and responsibilities of staff, contingency and emergency planning, location, environmental planning and impact assessment, site disturbance, water management, materials used during construction, visual impacts, lighting, water conservation, wastewater, noise, air quality, solid waste, energy use, disturbance to wildlife, and minimal impact management for specialized activities such as power boat use or caving. The questions can be very specific (such as, whether cleaning chemicals are biodegradable) or general and based on EMSs (such as is there an ongoing system in place to identify environmental impacts and review environmental performance).

However, in contrast with Green Globe's emphasis on cost-saving environmental innovations in the physical plant, NEAP also emphasizes contribution to conservation and the community and consumer education and satisfaction. NEAP's criteria are laid out in workbook form so that applicants can provide their responses by checking boxes and adding explanations, when necessary.

In order to receive either Nature Tourism or Ecotourism certification, a product must satisfy 100% of the core criteria for these categories. However, for Advanced Ecotourism certification, businesses are offered a variety of opportunities in the "bonus criteria" section. To earn this highest level of certification, products must get a certain number of bonus points.

Another unique feature of NEAP is that it is semi-graded to encourage improvement. Since Nature Tourism requires fulfillment of fewer criteria than the two ecotourism levels, it is viewed as a separate label. On the other hand, the two Ecotourism categories are sequential and companies with basic level Ecotourism certification are highly encouraged to work towards satisfying additional criteria so that they may receive Advanced Ecotourism certification.

The NEAP logo is awarded for a three year period. However, NEAP conducts annual paper audits of selected criteria to determine company compliance and to test how the criteria is being understood. In addition, NEAP carries out random on-site audits on certified products. These auditors are "in-house," a three-person team, representing the Australia Ecotourism Association and private business. If they discover non-compliance, the team makes recommendations and, if the necessary adjustments are not made, they may remove the logo.

While applicants seek certification in hopes of gaining market advantage, NEAP has lacked sufficient funds and staff to do more than minimal publicity, mainly through several tourism guides. Most promotion has come about a result of specific cooperative

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arrangements between government agencies and certified tour operators. For instance, the Australian government has produced an in-flight video on NEAP for Qantas Airlines and has financed several short commercials about NEAP for use at conferences and public meetings. A NEAP website, under development for several years, was finally launched in August 2000.

According to NEAP officials, almost all of those certified reapply for certification and many seek to move up to a higher level. They say that its data indicate that 48% of operators say NEAP has increased public awareness, 30% say it has increased their business, and 90% say they see ongoing benefits from NEAP. In addition, 32% of the tourists surveyed are aware of NEAP and 70% of those who are aware say they use NEAP to choose a tourism product. And, after using a NEAP product, 60% are more likely to use NEAP in the future. Finally, 67% of those surveyed say they would pay 5%—10% more for a NEAP certified product (NEAP powerpoint presentation, 2000).

A *Tourism Queensland* survey done in 2000, however, is not quite so positive. It found that operators with certified products complain there is insufficient public awareness of NEAP and of ecotourism, in general. It concluded that “while a majority of operators initially sought certification to evaluate their own business or progress towards achieving best practice in ecotourism, a significant proportion were seeking to differentiate themselves from non-genuine ‘ecotourism’ operators and gain an assurance of quality for their operations.” This indicates that businesses look to certification to help with internal improvements as well as marketing and product distinction.

Funding has also become an increasingly critical issue. The NEAP panel and associates recognize that lack of funds is making it impossible to do adequate promotion, on-site inspections, hire more staff, and, increasingly, even to handle the paperwork from

the large number of new applicants applying for Nature Tourism certification. As presently structured, NEAP is a not-for-profit company and all proceeds from application and certification go back into the company. It holds the copyright to its set of standards and this, NEAP officials believe, may offer a possibility to sell their program outside Australia. In early 2001, NEAP began exploring a package of other funding options, including a government grant, charging fees for technical assistance, selling the NEAP system to other countries or regions, or partnering with Green Globe 21. While a strong affiliation with Green Globe 21 could benefit NEAP by providing increased marketing potential and wider name recognition, there is some concern among Australia’s ecotourism community that NEAP would lose control of the program and that NEAP’s reputation for independence and objectivity would suffer (Crabtree, 2000).

Overall, however, the NEAP program illustrates an early and strong commitment from Australian businesses, parks officials, government, and other stakeholders to setting standards and measuring the tourism’s impacts in and near protected areas. As one of the first ecotourism certification programs and, by 2000, as the only one combining sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification, NEAP has a number of strengths and advantages. These include:

- Its criteria are extensive, covering a wide range of environmental, socio-economic, and cultural issues.
- The criteria add up to an effective tool for measuring responsible tourism practice and offering targets and incentives for improvement to nature tourism and ecotourism providers.
- With over 300 products certified, NEAP has certainly made inroads into voluntary tourism certification in Australia.
- Many companies involved have expressed high satisfaction with the program, stating it is an effective tool for helping them to improve their envi-

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ronmental, socio-economic, cultural, and educational practices and activities.

- NEAP has laid the groundwork for the Australian tourism industry as a whole to be able to credibly and honestly promote Australia as a country that is actively working towards delivery of sustainable tourism programs.

At the same time, NEAP has come in for some criticism and there are clearly areas where improvement is needed. These include:

- While the NEAP 2 revamp, with two Ecotourism categories and a Nature Tourism one, was necessary to increase the program's rigor and bring in more products, the change is causing some confusion. Because the new standards are being phased in over a three year period ending in early 2003, there are currently five different sets of standards operating simultaneously—two from NEAP 1 and three from NEAP 2. In addition, NEAP 3, also slated for 2003, is projected to bring in additional revisions.
- There is confusion regarding the different logos, which are distinguished, as with Green Globe, by the number of checks. In addition, to anyone who does not have

access to the 150-page NEAP manual, the differences between the three levels are not very clear.

- NEAP also suffers from too few voluntary assessors to carry out audits so that neither the paper nor the on-site audits have been as rigorous or extensive as they could be. With the addition of the Nature Tourism category, the need has greatly expanded.
- Promotion and marketing remain weak. Consumer recognition, especially outside the state of Queensland which has the highest number of NEAP certified products, is extremely low. In New South Wales, the gateway to Australia for the majority of foreign visitors, the program is virtually unknown. Some companies without certified products say they are not motivated to spend the time and money to enter NEAP since they do not see real marketing value to the program. If this impression continues in the future, NEAP could suffer serious setbacks.

Sources: Interviews with Crabtree, Chester, DeLacy, Noakes; Font and Buckley, 2001; NEAP 1, 1996; NEAP 2, 2000; NEAP powerpoint presentation, 2000, Newson, 2000; Sheridan, 2000; Tourism Queensland, 2000.

4. Common Components of Certification Programs

Despite the above distinctions among certification programs—the process vs. performance methodologies and the three tiers—mass tourism, sustainable tourism, and ecotourism—there are at least six components that they all certification programs share in common. These are:

A. Voluntary Enrollment

At present, all certification programs in the travel and tourism industry are strictly voluntary. Unlike EIAs which are usually obligatory, businesses can decide whether to apply for certification, and most often companies pay for the audit and other services. It is likely that, in the future, governments will use more 'carrots' such as marketing and promotion and 'sticks' such as denying contracts, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas, to uncertified companies.

B. Logo

All programs award use of a selective logo, seal, or brand designed to differentiate their product in the marketplace and to be recognizable to consumers. Most permit the logo to be used only after certification is achieved. Green Globe 21, however, allows businesses or destinations that become members to use its logo from the time they officially commit to becoming certified, and before they have implemented any actions and been externally audited. Once certified, a slightly different logo—one with a check in the middle—is issued. A number of experts say such a slight distinction is lost on most consumers.

Many programs give logos for different levels of achievement, one to five suns, globes, or leaves, for instance. ECOTEL, which measures environmental performance in “exclusive” hotels, inns, and resorts, has one of the more complicated systems: it offers a different logo for each of five areas: 1) solid waste management, 2) energy efficiency, 3) water conservation, 4) employee environmental education and community involvement, and 5) environmental commitment. Each logo, in turn, has a three-level scoring system. This allows members to display a combination of logos as they progress to different levels in each of the five areas. The drawback, however, is that it may prove confusing to consumers.

In Costa Rica, the CST program also has a rather unusual scoring process: it ranks those it certifies on a scale of one to five, based on their performance in four areas. As explained earlier, the final ranking, which determines how many leaves are issued as the logo, is the lowest score in any of the four areas. (The scores are not averaged.) For instance, Rara Avis, the first eco-lodge in Costa Rica, scored a five in two thematic areas and a three in the other two; it received an overall rating of three leaves. CST officials

say this system is intended to encourage equal improvement in all four areas in order to receive the highest possible score.

All programs state, at least on paper, that logos will be withdrawn if the company fails to comply with the certification system or if the programs themselves adopt more stringent certification criteria. Yet policing has proved difficult. It is estimated that hundreds of companies that originally signed up for Green Globe membership may be using the logo, even though they have not been through and may not qualify for certification under Green Globe 21.

ECOTEL Certification	
<p>The ECOTEL certification, managed by HVS Eco Services, originated in the hospitality industry to test environmental responsibility. The criteria and inspection system were designed by a team that included experts from the Rocky Mountain Institute, an environmental think tank based in Aspen, Colorado, as well as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Since the ECOTEL certification's creation in 1994, over 1,100 hotels from more than 30 countries have applied for the certification. By 2001, only 36 hotels, less than 4% of the applicants, had passed the certification inspection.</p>	<p>By mid-2001, ECOTEL had certified 5 hotels in the United States, 2 in Mexico, 23 in Central America, 5 in Japan, and one in India. In 1997, the Orchid Hotel in Mumbai, India, became Asia's first hotel to win the ECOTEL certification. The Orchid is one of four hotels in the world to maintain a "five-globe" ECOTEL certified status. By mid-2001, Costa Rica had 17 ECOTEL certified hotels, more than any other country.</p>
<p>ECOTEL awards globe logos to hotels that qualify in any of its five categories. Hotels certified or recertified after 1999 must achieve at least two globe awards to be certified. The criteria are updated every two years to keep current with evolving environmental trends in hospitality. This means that hotels must be re-inspected once every two years to retain their certified status. Furthermore, members must agree to unannounced inspections anytime during their two-year membership period.</p>	<p>HVS International was created in 1980 to satisfy the growing demand for reliable and well-documented hotel market studies and feasibility reports. With 12 offices worldwide, HVS offers services including evaluations, strategic analyses, development planning, litigation support, executive search, waste management, gaming and restaurant consulting, asset management, operational and management strategy development, and timeshare consulting services.</p>
	<p>Source: www.hvsecoservices.com/ecotel.htm; correspondence with Ecotel; press releases.</p>

C. Criteria that comply with regulations, or go beyond

All certification programs require, at a minimum, that members comply with local, national, regional, and international regulations and many have criteria that require companies go beyond these baselines. Sustainable tourism and ecotourism programs, which include socio-cultural and conservation criteria, always go beyond regulations. The criteria influence other aspects of the certification program, including the evaluation and monitoring procedures and the type and sophistication of technical assistance needed. In analyzing tourism eco-labels in Europe, one recent study concluded that for

national and sub-national programs, the number and the demands of the criteria are higher than for regional and international schemes (FEMATOUR, 2000), an observation that seems applicable to other geographical regions as well.

One of the challenges is that regulations differ substantially from country to country, both in their rigor and in enforcement. In poorer countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America where tourism is expanding rapidly but government regulations may be weak, certification programs can possibly help to promote and ensure compliance. It is frequently argued that tourism certification programs covering corporations that span a number of countries (a hotel chain or tour operator, for instance) have the potential to raise standards in countries with weaker regulations. Others, however, note that given the differences among countries, it is better to have site-specific certification.

D. Published Commitment to Sustainable Development

All tourism businesses that undertake certification make a broad statement about their commitment to sustainable development, although they can differ widely in what practices they say are necessary for sustainable development. Those involved in tourism certification programs tend to have policy statements that refer only to their internal operations, with a focus on water and air quality, waste and energy use; companies involved in sustainable tourism or ecotourism, will have broader statements that also encompass their impacts on conservation and the host community. The Smart Voyager program in the Galapagos Islands, for example, states, "The Smart Voyager seal of approval gives travelers the assurance that they are supporting operators who care about the environment, wildlife conservation, tourist safety and the well-being of workers and local communities." In the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, Horizons, the "Saskatchewan Ecotourism Accreditation System" provides businesses with a certificate and a logo indicating that they fulfill the principles of ecotourism set out by the Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan (ESS).

E. Assessment and Auditing

All certification programs award logos based on some kind of assessment. Assessment or auditing can be first-, second-, or third-party, that is, it can be done by the business itself, by an industry trade association, or by an independent firm, NGO, or even the government. There are an estimated 200 certifying agencies around the world, most of which are for-profit companies. Some are accredited, that is they are recognized by a national accreditation body; others are not.

The earliest programs were often first-party ones that rated compliance based only on a written questionnaire filled out by the business. Concerns about the weakness and abuses of this self-assessment process have led to many programs moving to on-site audits by independent third-parties. There are a growing number of professional auditors on the staffs of certifiers, but more often they function as independent contractors carrying

out such external audits. Some programs still use a written pre-screening application form as a first step in the certification process and then move to on-site, third party audits and/or spot checks, and follow-ups, usually after one or two years.

Concerns have been raised as well that there can be a conflict of interest when a certification program handles both the recruiting of applicants and the auditing and awarding of logos. While neither NEAP or CST have, as yet, established third party auditing, officials argue that in the initial stages it has been useful to have these functions centralized. They say it has helped their staff to perfect the program, iron out wrinkles, and gain invaluable expertise. But officials with both programs also recognize that in the future it is imperative, for a number of reasons, to have outside assessors do the audits.

Another issue is that of making the results of audits public so that consumers and others (in the industry, government, NGOs, etc.) can judge the strengths and weaknesses of a company and make comparisons among companies. While desirable, the CST program is one of the few that posts the results of its audit questionnaire on its website, but even here the site is not very user friendly and, as is standard business practice, information that the company deems to be proprietary is withheld.

F. Membership and Fees

Many certification programs enroll participants as members and charge a fee to those businesses applying for certification. This money is used to run the program and to support advertising and promotion of the logo and of the companies that are certified. The certification programs, and/or auditing bodies, also charge fees for the assessments they provide and for auditing services, usually structured according to the size and income of the company. These fees vary widely and tend to be highest for those using ISO 14001 or other types of environmental management systems. To set up an environmental management system, go through a training program for implementing the EMS, and finally have a third-party audit can add up to many thousands of dollars, making cost the biggest barrier to certification for small and medium-sized companies.

Some programs—CST and Blue Flag, for instance—have received government funding, allowing them to do audits either free or at a minimal cost. However, such government funding may not be available in the long term, and financing of certification programs remains a major issue for further discussion.

5. Certification Programs in Other Industries: Lessons for Tourism

The 1990's saw the rise of socially and environmentally responsible labeling and certification initiatives in a number of other industries, including timber, coffee, bananas, and handicrafts, and these efforts can provide lessons for certification programs within the travel and tourism industry. As in tourism, these certification campaigns were spurred by an increasing consumer awareness and expressions of consumer preference for socially and environmentally responsible products. And, they grow against the backdrop of globalized free trade and within the womb of a broad and increasingly militant anti-globalization movement. This movement was recently taken to the streets in Seattle, Washington, Prague, Davos, Quebec City, Genoa, and elsewhere to protest the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and other institutions dominated by the wealthiest countries and corporations. Sensing both opportunity (consumer demand) and challenge (consumer boycott), some industries have entered negotiations with advocacy groups to establish certification programs.

In presenting a critical analysis of socially and environmentally responsible certification and accreditation initiatives in other industries, Michael E. Conroy, Senior Program officer and certification expert with the Ford Foundation, concluded that the most successful has been the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international NGO created in 1993 to transform the global timber industry (Conroy, 2000). Based in Oaxaca, Mexico, FSC was, by 2000, operating in 40 countries. FSC's functions include:

- setting standards and accrediting certifiers;
- overseeing certifiers who inspect producers, determine eligibility, issue two types of certificates, and monitor continued eligibility;
- resolving disputes, protecting the integrity of the label;
- issuing forest management certificates;
- establishing "chain-of-custody"-tracking-certificates; and,
- informing consumers about products that use FSC labels as their own "brand."

FSC works by balancing the interests of the key stakeholders involved in the timber industry that are represented within FSC's three "chambers." The environmental chamber is made up of major environmental organizations, including Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, and National Resources Defense Council. The economic/industry chamber includes both timber companies and retailers. The social chamber includes indigenous people, labor and local communities, as well as representatives of the global North and South.

The three chambers have agreed to accept a set of core standards, including:

- assurance of long term tenure and use-rights;
- management plans to maintain ecological integrity;
- conservation of primary forests and sites of major environmental importance;
- monitoring and assessment of management;
- protection of indigenous people's traditional use-rights;
- protection of local communities and forest workers; and,
- plantations to be managed according to same principles.

FSC has become so popular that by 2000, demand was far outstripping supply, with consumers willing to pay high prices for certified products. Leading retail chains, including Home Depot, Lowe's, B&Q, OBI, Centex Homes, Kaufman & Broad, as well as 400 other European and 250 other US firms are buying FSC certified timber. The Swedish multinational, IKEA, is selling furniture made from FSC certified wood from 120 countries and printing its catalogues using FSC certified paper. While FSC is facing some organized opposition from the American Forest & Paper Association, small-scale European forest owners, and a handful of environmental groups, it has firmly put in place the ingredients necessary for success: broad stakeholder participation, a credible certification process, a recognized label, and a market demand. And, waiting in the wings, is the threat that environmental groups will organize consumer boycotts against retailers who don't buy FSC products.

After a slow beginning, the movement to certify fair trade coffee has also gained significant consumer popularity and corporate compliance. The certifier, TransFair USA, has established a registry and monitoring system, set clear standards that give preference to small-scale growers, and assured that farmers are being paid fair prices for the coffee. Promoted by the activist NGO Global Exchange, TransFair USA had, by December 2000, convinced Starbucks, Green Mountain and some 3000 locations to carry its coffee.

Far less successful has been Green Seal, a U.S. pioneer in eco-labeling that is attempting to emulate Nordic Swan and other European consumer goods certification programs. Although Green Seal is a well-designed certification system covering a broad range of products, it lacks both advocacy by major environmental or consumer groups and corporate buy-in. Green Seal has not done adequate public education and promotion, it lacks visibility, and it has had little market impact.

In comparing these and other certification initiatives outside the travel and tourism industry, Conroy argues they highlight the following elements necessary for successful certification:

- negotiated stakeholder-based standards;
- third-party independent certification of compliance;

- a distinct seal or label to identify compliance;
- consumers who look for and ask for products with this label;
- financial self-sufficiency through label fees;
- PLUS, “turbocharging” from market-based campaigns by advocacy groups as pressure for compliance.

The most successful certification programs within the travel and tourism industry are also trying to incorporate the above elements—with the important exception of the last. This vital ingredient—consumer advocacy—is, to date, largely absent from the tourism certification movement. Rather, consumer support for green and socially responsible tourism has been largely passive, something that is measured and noted in surveys, but is not an organized force actively driving certification programs. One likely reason is that to date, none of the large international environmental organizations have used their memberships and their media clout to support sound certification programs. Several, however, appear to be on the cusp of taking a significant step forward into the arena of certification and accreditation:

- World Wildlife Fund/UK has recently completed its major study of Green Globe and other certification programs and is discussing a global accreditation program;
- Rainforest Alliance has set up Smart Voyager, a small certification program for “floating hotels” (boats) in the Galapagos and is coordinating a feasibility study for a global accreditation program for sustainable tourism;
- Conservation International provided technical and financial assistance to establish a pilot certification program in the Petén, Guatemala and its ecotourism department has expressed interest in getting more deeply involved in certification programs;
- National Geographic is discussing a plan to use its formidable marketing and membership reach to “brand” sustainable tourism projects.

While these efforts are promising, none of these major environmental organizations have the activist bent of either Greenpeace or Global Exchange, two of the organizations key in threatening consumer boycotts and forcing corporate compliance with FSC and TransFair USA.

If the threat of a retail boycott is a central ingredient for a successful certification program, then the tourism and travel industry presents some unique challenges. Many of those companies likely to be eligible for ecotourism certification and some sustainable tourism companies are not part of large chains and are therefore more difficult for consumers to target. The largest players within the tourism industry—the cruise lines, airlines, car rental companies, and hotel chains—are the least likely to even be eligible for any kind of significant environmental or socially responsible certification. More successful, at least in the short run, may be positive campaigns organized by environmental NGOs to encourage their members and the broader swath of responsible travelers to

patronize certified business. Gradually, once positive alternatives have gained wider popular attention, campaigns can be built against cruise lines, sun-sand-and-surf hotel chains, casinos, theme parks, and other icons of mass tourism.

6. Toward a Sustainable Tourism Certification Program

Today there are active discussions around the issue of adopting or creating a universal certification program for the travel and tourism industry that can serve as a global and/or regional model, and can be used to guide countries or states/provinces that are now developing their own certification programs. It is argued here that a sustainable tourism certification program—rather than a weaker, process-based mass tourism certification or a more rigorous but more specialized ecotourism certification program—currently offers the best model. Before adoption, any global or regional sustainable certification program needs to be thoroughly ground-tested. In addition, it must be accompanied by both an internationally accepted framework and set of guidelines for certification programs within the tourism industry, and by an accreditation system.

However, in countries or states where ecotourism and nature tourism—based on responsible travel to natural or fragile ecosystems—are especially important (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Kenya, South Africa, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Nepal, Vermont, Hawaii, Saskatchewan, to name a few), an ecotourism certification system might well exist alongside or as a distinct level within a sustainable tourism certification program. This will help to evaluate and distinguish those enterprises that identify themselves as being involved in ecotourism, will better serve consumer needs, and will help to set higher standards that can, hopefully, raise the bar for the broader tourism industry. And in some highly fragile areas such as the Galapagos Islands, the only appropriate certification system is one based on ecotourism principles. Ideally, if tourism is to become an industry truly grounded upon sustainable development, it must be based on ecotourism principles and practices. But we are, of course, far from this reality. Therefore a more attainable, but still enormously important step, is to promote worldwide adoption of sustainable tourism certification programs.

While a universal certification framework seems feasible and desirable, this model should be flexible enough to incorporate local and regional conditions. In some areas—Guatemala, parts of Australia, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, South Africa and Kenya, for example—local communities and indigenous people are important stakeholders; elsewhere—much of Europe, for instance—they are less important. This means that certification programs, while ideally based on an international set of principles and a model program, must be tailored through broad-based dialogue with local stakeholders to fit the realities of the geographic and cultural area it is covering.

It seems most appropriate to implement certification programs on a country-by-country or, in some instances, state-by-state basis. It is preferable that auditors be locally based to help keep down costs and ensure that they interpret their findings with the utmost sensitivity and knowledge. In addition, in order to avoid conflicts of interest, the auditors must be independent, third-party experts or consultants—separate from both the businesses they are certifying. While many certification programs use certifiers or asses-

The Fiji Ecotourism Association: Initial Certification Efforts

In 1997, the government of Fiji disseminated a draft of the National Ecotourism and Village-based Policy and Strategy (NEVP) document that effectively resulted in attention to a niche market for ecotourism in Fiji. The primary objective of the NEVP document was to ensure that socio-cultural and environmental impacts were minimized and the quality of tourism products was enhanced or sustained in a way that achieves maximum benefits for rural residents of Fiji. Given that nearly 60% of all residents live in rural areas, this document had significant consequences for rural development.

A primary area addressed by the NEVP focused on quality control within the industry, including the need to carefully consider new ecotourism developments, ensuring diversity in activities and locations which are strategically located and accessible to tourists. This national mandate encouraged the resurrection of the Fiji Ecotourism Association (FETA), a non-profit organization re-established in 1999 to encourage quality ecotourism development. In partnership with the University of the South Pacific, FETA studied the status quo of ecotourism in Fiji. They found that a lack of knowledge about the underlying principles of ecotourism was rampant both at government and non-government levels; that government and business owners needed an operational understanding in developing ecotourism products, including business issues and safety; and that there was a severe lack of infrastructure into the hinterland that challenged possibilities for rural ecotourism projects. They also learned that while interpretation of culture was very good in most tour operations, interpretation of the environment was sorely lacking in many of those tours advertised as "ecotourism."

The first step was to address some of these challenges by implementing two workshops identifying the particular attributes of ecotourism and how it differed from mainstream tourism offerings.

During the course of the workshops, FETA also felt that there needed to be a united front in creating standards for ecotourism operations. During late 1999 and early 2000, a "Code of Practice" was developed for review by members of FETA. While this was more of a marketing than behavioral-changing tool, FETA saw this as a preliminary step toward building understanding and expectations to the development of an ecotourism certification program.

Next, FETA assisted with a proposal for ecotourism development within a national development plan for a period of five years. This plan included priority on infrastructure development, marketing, and education and training for ecotourism operators. Another aspect of the proposal included support (i.e., financial and marketing) for an ecotourism certification program.

In December 2000, FETA held an international conference to bring all stakeholders into one arena to discuss ecotourism certification and implementation. The conference took place in the wake of a tumultuous period of political instability caused by a coup d'etat that ousted the democratically-elected, multiracial government. The conference introduced important elements of the Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) and examined ways in which this model could be adapted to the Fiji context.

FETA has taken the results of the conference and written a proposal for funding to develop the certification program further. The steps in this process include the development of a draft ecotourism certification program to be shared with stakeholders over several workshops, and identifying training and implementation needs. The proposal also includes members of FETA's staff visiting Australia to learn about the administration of NEAP. FETA will also work closely with the Fiji Visitors Bureau to develop a marketing plan for the certification program and methods to further assist this growing niche market in Fiji.

Source: Interview, Kelly Bricker

Dominican Republic & Haiti: Binational Certification Program

The Kiskeya Alternative Destination (KAD) is a pilot project, initiated in 1999 and run by the NGO Kalulu-Danza, to “support the development of sustainable (and alternative) tourism initiatives” in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. One of its major activities has been the development and field testing of a pilot tourism certification program whose goals are to:

- have a tool to integrate its partners (tour operators) to “meet minimal levels of sustainability on environmental, social and cultural aspects;”
- develop collaboration with other institutions “for establishing a National Certification Program” that would be a powerful marketing tool; and
- establish mechanisms to “permanently monitor” KAD partners “on their activities’ sustainability and ‘product quality’.”

One of its first activities was to develop and field test a pilot “tourism sustainability identification” questionnaire. Researchers asked

one hundred yes/no questions in four areas: 1) institutional policies, 2) environment, 3) impacts and policies relative to local communities, and 4) tourists/visitors. They assigned points to each question and rated those interviewed accordingly. They also evaluated this certification tool, noted various difficulties encountered, and offered modifications.

The next steps for the KAD certification project is to build collaboration with local environmental NGOs, government, universities and others to create a more efficient sustainable certification tool and develop a logo to market ecotourism products. They also plan to produce a guide of tourism ethics for KAD partners and visitors, establish a network of services for alternative tourism, and provide training and assessment.

The Caribbean Network on Ecotourism (Cangonet) founded in conjunction with KAD, offers an online database of regional ecotourism information.

Source: Interviews, Yacine Khalladi; Website: www.kiskeya-alternative.org

sors who are on their staff, they should not give training or advice that could be perceived as a conflict of interest. However, these assessors should be subject to accreditation under a global, or at least regional, accreditation system.

Finally, there is a need for a tourism accreditation program, along the lines of the Forest Stewardship Council, that can serve to “certify the certifiers.” Such a program could have a series of regional divisions, all based on the same standards. A rigorous and well-functioning global accreditation program, like that which the Rainforest Alliance is helping to craft, is vital in building public confidence in the credibility of individual certification schemes (See Appendix 2).

Within this framework, here are some of the other major ingredients that would seem desirable as part of an internationally accepted sustainable tourism certification system:

- Award achievement, not just process: Certification programs based only on management systems, that is, on process or commitment, will not ensure sustainable tourism. Certification must be based on publicly-stated standards and benchmarks. Ideally, however, a certification program would combine performance criteria with an environmental management system to help with implementation. It

Ecotourism Society of Kenya (ESOK): Certification Planning

In the late 1990's, tourism practitioners in Kenya began to discuss the idea of developing an eco-rating scheme to help the tourism industry define and implement best practices and market the country as a responsible tourism destination provider. After much discussion, in 1999 a Select Committee on Eco-Rating, chaired by the non-profit Ecotourism Society of Kenya, and with representatives from the government, tourism and environmental NGOs and the private sector, was established to develop a national eco-rating system. In March 2000 the Committee conducted a survey of 50 organizations to assess their support for the ten guiding principles of sustainable tourism. The responses indicated support for the principles, but also demonstrated that there was insufficient knowledge about eco-rating. In order to raise awareness about tourism certification, its benefits and how certification programs may be structured, ESOK produced a document (issued in September 2000) examining tourism certification programs in other parts of the world and

raising key questions regarding the development of a program for Kenya. This document was used as the basis for workshops that were held in Nairobi and Mombasa in October 2000.

One of the major questions that the tourism industry in Kenya must face is whether to develop and implement its own eco-rating system or whether to adopt and/or modify an already existing one. Other issues of importance include: sectors (accommodations, transport, operators, destinations, guides, etc.) to include; type of approach (EMS or performance standards); criteria; ranking schemes; type of auditing; management structure; types of support to offer (training, information, marketing, etc.); costs; financing; and linkages with other programs. The report presents a process and timeline for designing and implementing a Kenyan eco-rating scheme.

Sources: Interviews and E-mail correspondence with Judith Kepher-Gona, 2000-2001; Website: www.esok.org

is recognized, however, that this may not be feasible or necessary for smaller enterprises.

- Promote improvements within the tourism industry: Programs should include a consultative process to encourage improvement. This is best facilitated by both providing technical advice to businesses that sign up for certifications and awarding different levels of eco-labels, not simply a single, "winner takes all" award. In order to avoid conflict of interest, however, it is better to have separate organizations that provide technical expertise and that certify the business.
- Backward/Forward and Horizontal Linkages: Certification programs can benefit from forming linkages with other certification programs for different tourism sectors (accommodation, restaurants, transport, tour operators, etc.) and regions, as well as encourage, reward, and highlight links to other "green" certification programs. This can be done by including, in the criteria, points for, for instance, accommodations that are built with certified wood or purchase low energy refrigerators and air conditioning systems, organic foods, etc. In Kenya, for instance, the People and Plants initiative is working with woodcarvers to identify tree species that are both available and suitable for carvings and to develop a system similar to the Forest

Stewardship Council and an eco-label so that consumers can recognize carvings that have been produced from environmentally-friendly raw materials (People and Plants Initiative, 2001).

- Ensure transparency in methodology: All steps in the certification process should be clearly and publicly laid out, and results of audits should be made public (except for certain proprietary information) so that consumers and other stakeholders can make more detailed comparisons and informed decisions.
- Multiple criteria: A sustainable tourism certification system needs to combine “green” and “gray (e.g. air and water quality, and energy efficiency)” environmental criteria. While tourists are concerned with green issues, sustainability also depends heavily upon compliance in “gray” environmental areas. In addition, while the criteria should include environmental measures that are cost saving, they should not shy away from measures that are essential to protect the environment but may be more costly, at least in the short run. Further, the criteria and standards should go beyond compliance (with government regulations) and include both the business itself and its relations to the broader community and environment in which it operates. A sustainable tourism certification program must measure environmental, socio-cultural, and economic equity issues connected to the community and geographical area in which the business operates.
- Broad-based stakeholder involvement: While determining who are the appropriate stakeholders to be involved in formulating and implementing a certification program at the local, national, regional and international level can be complex, there needs to be clear recognition that a credible program must involve a wide range of the interested parties.
- Effective Branding and Good Marketing Strategy: The aim is to avoid both consumer and business confusion. Consumers must have clarity as to what an eco-label promises. Certified businesses need to know that if they invest time and money to earn an eco-label, they will gain market advantage. One way to help ensure good marketing is to have a universally-recognized logo and a centralized and independent accreditation organization that can both certify the certifiers and promote the logo.

An important step towards formulating a framework and guidelines for a two-tiered sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification program was draw up and unanimously agreed upon at the Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Certification Workshop held at Mohonk Mountain House in November 2000. Organized by the Institute for Policy Studies, the workshop included participants from 20 countries. The delegates represented most of the best known global, regional national, and sub-national sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification programs, (including Blue Flag, CST, Green Globe Asia Pacific, CAST, NEAP, QTC, TIANZ, Kiskeya Alternativa, ISO 14000, Alianza Verde’s Green Deal, PAN Parks, Smart Voyager, and Horizons, Saskatchewan Ecotourism

Accreditation System) and new certification initiatives (Brazil, FEMATOUR/Europe, Kenya, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Fiji, and Vermont) conservation and environment organizations (including UNEP, ECOTRANS, Imaflora, Mafisa, Oceans Blue, TIES, CREM, CEC, PROARCA-CAPAS, Rainforest Alliance, WWF (UK), Conservation International, Ecotrust Canada, Kiskeya Alternativa, SOS Mata Atlantica) and others (including BEST, EAA, Ecorosorts/African Ecolodges, Lindblad Expeditions, Rainforest Expeditions, R.B. Toth Associates, Environmental Training and Consulting International, and several independent consultants) with expertise in tourism and ecotourism certification and environmental management (See Appendix 3).

Workshop participants recognized that certification programs for the travel and tourism industry need to be tailored to fit particular geographical regions and sectors of the tourism industry, but they agreed upon a set of universal components that must frame any sustainable and ecotourism certification program. As they described it, the components of the so-called Mohonk Agreement constitute the “spokes” which should be used in constructing a sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification “wheel” to fit local geographical conditions and sectors of the tourism industry (See Appendix 1).

7. Vexing Issues and Areas for More Work

While the section above suggests the framework and principles for a sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification program, there are a number of outstanding issues of uncertainty and debate. Among the most important are the following:

A. North-South Divide

Many, particularly those in the global South, are concerned that certification may be used to further enfranchise the most powerful tourism companies rather than to help level the playing field by protecting and bolstering locally-owned companies. While both sustainable and eco-tourism certification programs are more sensitive to the concerns of poorer countries and local communities, these voices tend to be fainter as certification discussions move higher up the ladder within corporations and international financial and political institutions. Often described as the North-South divide, government officials from poorer countries, NGOs, environmentalists, and community activists contend that international environmental standards and certification programs can be used to favor the wealthy and powerful and exacerbate rather than help alleviate the economic divide within and across countries.

With the imposition of structural adjustment policies in the 1980's and push towards privatization and open markets in the 1990's, governments in much of Africa, Latin America and Asia have lost income (from taxes and tariffs), as well as economic and political power as government assets are sold off and national policies are increasingly circumscribed by international trade and investment rules. This makes these governments less equipped to enforce strong environmental, work place, and social equity standards. At the same time, locally-owned businesses typically do not have the capital, level of training, or access to technology needed to make many environmental and other work place reforms. In an open letter calling for "a fundamental reassessment of the International Year of Ecotourism," a group of mainly southern activists wrote, "As supranational institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization are pressuring developing countries towards trade and investment liberalization, national and local governments are increasingly disabled to plan and manage tourism—and ecotourism—on their own terms" (Pleumarom, letter calling for "a fundamental reassessment of the International Year of Ecotourism," Third World Network, et al, October 2000).

This has meant that in a number of countries where the tourism sectors had been owned largely by either government or nationals—Costa Rica, Cuba, South Africa, Tanzania (and Zanzibar), Nepal, to name a few—there has been an enormous influx of foreign capital and the takeover of much of the industry, or at least the more high-end businesses, prime urban real estate, beach front property, and private reserves by foreign companies and investors. Often times, local regulations, licenses, and taxes give preference to foreign over local capital. While this foreign investment influx may have helped

create a tourism—or ecotourism—boom, there are serious questions about whether foreign ownership is contributing towards the country's long term sustainable development.

Within this context, poorer countries tend to look with suspicion on international efforts to set environmental development standards for tourism (and other businesses). They fear that such regulations will give unfair advantage to both more developed countries and international corporations. Rather than helping to lift standards around the globe, certification can, in practice, be used to penalize poorer countries and locally-owned businesses that cannot subscribe to the standards or meet, at least in the short term, the criteria. As Epler Wood and Halpenny write, "It is difficult to imagine how an international certification program could appropriately set standards for the ecotourism world, given the number of local concerns... The Maasai in Kenya, the Aborigines in Australia, and the Amazonian peoples of the rain forest are all stakeholders in the development of ecotourism. Are international certification systems really capable of incorporating these sensitive sociocultural concerns?" (*Cultural Survival*, 1999).

Such concerns are creating tensions within certification efforts and discussions, including those going on within the three NAFTA countries (Canada, the U.S., and Mexico); within United Nations and World Tourism Organization discussions regarding international codes of conducts, certification schemes, and the International Year of Ecotourism; and within an online discussion group about ecotourism certification organized by Planeta.com in January and June 2001. As ecotourism expert Juergen Gnoth wrote in one listserve discussion of these issues, "Economic, cultural and other socio-demographic variables may well generate ethical dilemmas and unfair situations. In other words, destinations in Europe can possibly afford more stringent requirements for an eco-label than Tanzania or Thailand" (Epler Wood and Halpenny, 2000).

There are, clearly, no facile solutions to the deep and widening chasm created by unchecked economic globalization. It is, however, not going unchallenged. By the late 1990's, citizen movements around the globe were protesting globalized capital's "race to the bottom," demanding that free trade be replaced with fair trade that provided worker and environmental protections. Certification schemes, as well, can address the North-South divide by building in some buffers. Certification programs and auditors could, for instance, charge less to smaller and newer companies, give more weight to locally-owned business and those that actively support community and conservation issues, and provide technical assistance to businesses to train staff and adapt reforms to comply with certification standards. Most importantly, a certification system, while adhering to a framework of principles that has wide international acceptance, must tailor the specifics of a certification program to local needs and realities. A first step in doing so is to ensure that local communities, NGOs, and domestically-owned tourism businesses are among the stakeholders involved in creating the certification program.

B. Consumer Confusion/Consumer Demand

Everyone agrees that certification will only work if tourists want and support green enterprises. It is clear, however, that so far certification in the tourism industry has not reached the eyes and ears of the majority of consumers. In fact, it is not really certain how deep is the consumer demand for sustainable tourism, especially if it costs more.

There has been some research looking at the importance of environmental aspects in tourist choices. Recent studies seem to be conflicting. Some indicate that while tourists may say in theory that they would select an environmentally sensitive alternative, in practice they are influenced by a wide range of travel motives. These include their personal knowledge of a destination; its cost and reputation; safety and security issues; logistics such as flight availability and transportation schedules; political, social, or environmental conditions in the destinations; and need for visas and immunizations. However, in some countries (such as Germany and Scandinavia) and some market segments (such as nature and eco-tourism), tourists give environmental criteria a higher concern. In a decade-long study, the German tour operator TUI found that environmental quality is “very high on the list of holiday essentials” (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998 in WWF-UK, 2000).

Consumers are definitely concerned about the environmental dimensions of their tourism travel, but they don't necessarily convert that into an appreciation of environmental characteristics of tour facilities. A recent Italian survey showed overwhelming support (94%) for adoption of environmental protection measures for hotels and accommodations. Tourists rated an accommodation's “proximity to zones of environmental interest” (76%) as just about as important as the price (78%). Yet a 1996 Dutch study found that most respondents were not willing to pay extra for environmentally sound tourism unless environmental aspects are an “integral part of a better quality of accommodation or vacation.” The FEMATOUR (2000) study that cited these findings concluded that these relatively positive attitudes may indicate that in the future, demand for accommodations with good environmental record will increase.

Surveys also reveal that in choosing an accommodation, tourists are more concerned with “green” environmental aspects, especially those that they see, and with health and safety conditions than they are with “gray” ones, i.e., those that are less visible. Therefore criteria for eco-awards and eco-labels that link gray environmental measures (related to energy savings, water savings, etc.) to green ones (clean natural surrounds) seem likely to have more consumer appeal.

While none of these surveys focused solely on the question of certification, a number of studies ask consumers about tourism eco-labels as part of a more general study on consumer demand for environmental aspects. The Italian study is one of the clearest endorsement for certification. It found 90% of those surveyed favor creating a European eco-label focusing on the environmental quality of accommodations. The TUI study also

European Union Project: A Single Eco-Label for Accommodations

Since 1999, 18 countries in the European Union (EU) have been studying the possibility of forming a single eco-label for accommodations in Western Europe. With financing from the European Commission, the Consultancy and Research for Environmental Management (CREM), a Dutch firm conducted a series of workshops and a feasibility study. FEMATOUR (Feasibility and Market Study for a European Eco-label for Tourist Accommodations) study was completed in August 2000.

The study found that there are some 505,000 accommodation establishments in these countries, ranging from small family businesses to multinational corporations. The vast majority (99.95%) are small and medium enterprises, employing fewer than 250 people. It also identified over 50 eco-labels in the EU countries.

The FEMATOUR study concluded that there is strong support for a single eco-label for accommodations. Among the factors in favor of a single eco-label are the increasing political and economic integration of EU countries, European integration of tourism markets, and a harmonized language. The study lists some dozen reasons why a European eco-label makes sense, including:

- One label makes the environmental performance of European accommodations transparent for tour operators and stimulates use of an eco-label by tour operators.
- A European eco-label backed by the European Commission is more reliable than many of the existing (private) eco-labels.
- One eco-label may reduce consumer confusion about “the wide variety of existing self claims and eco-labels” and will increase consumer recognition and consumer demand.
- A single label may serve as a valuable tool for internationally operating tourism service providers.

- A European eco-label can be an effective tool to enhance environmental improvement and may contribute to sustainable tourism.
- There is a clear market demand and the tourist market is “ready” for a single eco-label.

An alternative put forward by several stakeholders who have doubts about a single European eco-label is that the European Commission develop a framework (guidelines, code of practice, or a “label for labels”) for existing labeling initiatives. However, the CREM study concludes that, “under certain conditions and as part of wider process towards sustainable tourism...the majority of stakeholders” might favor a European eco-label for accommodation.”

Only one major organization, HOTREC, the European confederation of hotels, restaurants, and cafes representing 37 national associations, is strongly opposed; another ECTAA, the national travel agents and tour operators association with the EU, has some reservations.

While the criteria are still to be determined, the report favors environmental management system or process-based criteria based on Life Cycle assessment, mixed with some performance standards. It proposes that a European eco-label be clearly linked to reliable “existing environmental initiatives in the tourist sector, like eco-labels and EMS certification” and to “the wider process of sustainable tourism, like the promotion of environmental management in general and EMAS and ISO 14001 in particular.”

The study also recommends that, because of a variety of regional differences—including types of tourist accommodations, environmental impacts (for instance, in the Mediterranean and the Alps), varying financial, technical capacity and feasibility for environmental improvements—“a pragmatic approach” in the development of environmental criteria for accommodations is necessary. It adds, “A ‘learning by doing’ approach

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may very well offer the best chances of success," and suggests starting with one or two product groups, such as youth hostels and agro-tourism accommodations. The report further suggests that "a relatively high level of flexibility" should be incorporated in the environmental criteria and the eco-label should combine mandatory standards and optional standards with a scoring system. It adds that this has been the basis for many existing national eco-labeling schemes, such as the Nordic Swan.

The study finds that while environmental aspects still play a minor role in consumer decision about accommodations, tourists are interested in "green" surroundings and healthy, safety, peaceful and quiet surroundings. It argues that a European eco-label may well benefit by combining these criteria with the "gray" environmental measures (related to energy and water savings, etc.) typically included in environmental management systems analysis and eco-labels schemes, particularly for larger hotels. It further states that social criteria should be part of an eco-label,

that regional and local characteristics must be taken into account, and that the criteria be public and easily understood to consumers.

The FEMATOUR report recommends regular monitoring by an efficient, competent, reliable and independent or third party body. While it did not determine a fee structure for this certification program, the study states that it is important that the eco-label not be discriminating to small and medium enterprises who may not have the financial means nor the scale to comply with stringent environmental criteria. It recommended that there be multiple levels.

In terms of promotion, the FEMATOUR study recommends that eco-labels are best marketed through "the usual channels," including tourist information services, the Internet, television, newspapers, travel agencies, and, most importantly, tour operators. It predicted that the development of a single European eco-label certification, covering mass tourism, sustainable tourism, and ecotourism, would take at least three years.

Sources: Website: www.europa.eu.int/ecolabel; Correspondence with Wijnand Broer, CREM.

found respondents are confused by so many labels and in favor of one uniform eco-label (FEMATOUR, 2000).

What all these surveys indicate is that there are at least three consumer-linked factors that present obstacles to success of certification.

- Most tourists are unaware of the existence of tourism certification programs. It is estimated that probably less than 1% of consumers know of programs (Synergy, 2000: 36). The German study by TUI found, for instance, that while most German domestic tourists are familiar with consumer product labels, far fewer are familiar with German eco-labels in the tourist sector. For instance, only 3.3% said they know of Blue Flag, one of the most well established certification programs.
- Tourism certification has been hurt by a lack of credibility. Market confusion has been created in part because the most prominent scheme, Green Globe, has gone through so many metamorphoses and in part because there is yet no widely accepted framework against which to measure certification programs (Synergy, 2000). As certification consultant Robert Toth aptly puts it, "The critical ingredient in any certification program is summed up in one word: credibility" (Toth, 1998). Amos Bien

echoes this sentiment: “[T]here is an indispensable requirement for all certification systems: credibility. A system without credibility does not have market, it does not convince clients and it does not demonstrate anything. When the objective of a certification [logo] is to open external markets, the recognition and credibility must exist in the target markets” (Bien, 2000b).

- The plethora of eco-labels serves to confuse consumers, thereby undermining certification programs. In a number of countries, there are several competing and overlapping certification programs, making it difficult, if not impossible, for consumers to distinguish among them or for businesses to prove their legitimacy (Synergy, 2000). In Costa Rica, for instance, at least four programs—CST, *New Key*, Green Globe, and ECOTEL—have all rated accommodations based on their environmental performance.

C. Other Issues

Below are some of the other areas around which more discussion and pooling of knowledge and experience are necessary.

- What are the unique challenges certification programs within the travel and tourism industry face? Unlike other industries which have single, tangible products such as wood or coffee, the travel and tourism industry is geographically and structurally complex and fragmented, including a myriad of both services and products. In addition, the largest and most environmentally destructive part of the tourism industry—transport, most particularly airlines, automobiles, and cruise ships—are the most difficult to effectively “green.” Since the bulk of the cost of a trip is usually spent on transportation, particularly airlines, it would seem logical to have a certification system for transportation. But to date there have only been some un-audited eco-award programs that highlight “best practices” for airlines, rather than rating overall efforts towards sustainability.
- How can the geographical range of certification programs be increased and integrated? So far, a relatively small percentage of the tourism industry has been involved in certification programs. The four of the best known programs—Green Globe 21, NEAP, CST, and ECOTEL—have, taken together, less than one thousand members (Synergy, 2000:36). However, in Costa Rica, CST claims that close to half the eligible accommodations have applied for certification. What is clear is that not only are the percentages small, but also certification programs are not evenly spread. There are vast parts of the world—all of Africa, for instance—where there are no functioning national or regional certification programs and where participation in global programs such as Green Globe 21, ECOTEL or Blue Flag is very small or non-existent.
- Who can be certified? Should it be companies or individual products? Most of the certification programs to date involve accommodations. While many of these are

individually owned, some are parts of chains, and therefore a certification system needs to be site specific. Hotel chains like the Marriott have made overall efforts in environmental sustainability, but it remains open to question as to whether the company should be able to get certification or each hotel should be certified separately. And if it is the individual hotels, should they have to conform to standards in the country where the corporate headquarters is based, or to those in the country where they are situated.

Tour operators, a next step in certification for many programs, are proving more difficult since they sell a number of different packages. Since tour operators and agencies offer a variety of different trips and packages, this raises the question of whether a company as a whole be certified or should each individual tour that is offered be certified. Inbound operators seem to be a bit easier since it is possible to conceive of their using only certified accommodations, beaches, parks, etc. The solution, argues certification consultant Robert Toth, should come through “consensus product development,” that is, getting the tour operators together to come up with an agreed upon process for certification, rather than simply imposing a certification system on them.

There are other issues as well. The problems of certifying transport has been mentioned. In addition, there is the question of the vendors and auxiliary businesses attached to tourism: restaurants, recreational activities, tour guides, handicraft sellers, food suppliers, and so on. These are often owned by local people, use domestically-produced products, and hire from the surrounding community, so that a higher percentage of their cash flow stays in the host country economy. While certification and eco-labeling could help promote these businesses, because they are numerous and generally small, developing self-supporting certification schemes for them is difficult. Further, in certifying a hotel, for instance, how closely must and realistically can a certification program examine its vendors and suppliers?

- How should a well-designed sustainable tourism certification program mix and balance 1) process-based vs. performance-based, 2) “green” vs. “gray” environmental standards, and 3) company vs. wider community and conservation criteria? While the Mohonk Agreement sets a framework for balancing and weighing these concerns, in practice, the mix will vary depending on the types of businesses and products involved, as well as their size and the types of communities and environments in which they are located.
- Who are the stakeholders that need to be involved in creating a certification and accreditation system and what mechanisms are there to ensure they are included? Virtually all certification programs claim to involve the appropriate “stakeholders.” Often, however, participants are not spelled out, and, typically, the least powerful groups—most often local communities around tourism attractions—are those consulted last or not at all. This balance has changed when

communities and indigenous people organize, when they form alliances with other indigenous groups or with NGOs, when international financial institutions require the community be part of the consultative process, and when government makes a commitment to community involvement in tourism projects. However, the broader or more international a certification scheme, the more likely that local stakeholders will not be adequately represented. And, of course, even when local people are at the negotiating table, they may represent very narrow interests, be chosen simply because they speak English or have an education, and so on. Further, as the WWF-UK study notes, while there has been considerable debate around the issue of stakeholder involvement, the definition of who are stakeholders in travel and tourism is unclear. And, stakeholders at international levels are different from those at local levels. Likewise, the negotiation process at these two levels is not the same.

- What affordable and effective strategies can be used for marketing logos, especially for small businesses or those in poorer countries? One of the ironies is that the tourism certification programs that are least rigorous are often the ones most successfully and widely marketed. An example of this is the new "Green Tick" program initiated by Green Globe 21 for the World Travel Market's (WTM) Environmental Awareness Day on November 15, 2000. Exhibitors who claimed they were following just three "policies" of the WTM's 10-Point Policy were allowed to fly a green flag for the occasion. These policies include such "eco-lite" practices as the "3 Rs" (reduce, re-use, recycle), informing people about environmental achievements, motivating staff to be environmentally responsible, and placing environmental messages in promotional materials (Green Globe 21, 2000c).

There are a number of publicity options that are being either implemented by various programs or are under discussion. Internet and websites are helping to "democratize" marketing because it gives affordable and global access to ecotourism businesses and certification programs. Increasing numbers of travelers are gathering travel information and buying their tickets and travel packages online. And a Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) report found, for instance, that in the U.S., travel planning on the Internet leapt by 54%, to 52.2 million online traveler, in just one year, from 1998 to 1999 (TIA 1999, quoted in Epler Wood and Halpenny, 2000:6).

Other marketing opportunities include using guidebooks, dedicated sections of travel magazines, and associations such as the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) to promote credible certification programs. In addition, NGOs, environmental organizations, non-profit travel programs, the UN, WTO, and national governments could all be tapped to promote eco-labels and certified businesses.

- How should certification and accreditation programs be financed? Many experts in the field contend that both types of programs should be administered by reputable, credible, independent, and not-for-profit organizations. But how to make certification and accreditation programs self-supporting is one of the most difficult

challenges. As Toth puts it, "When you talk about cost and financing, that's where the rubber hits the road." TIES president Megan Epler Wood echoes these concerns, stating that financing is "a fundamental issue that outweighs most others." Part of the answer is to set up cost-efficient programs. This may mean, for instance, relying on volunteer committee members as many programs currently do, tapping resources and expertise from universities and NGOs, and minimizing the use of assessors and auditors who command international rates.

There are a range of possible sources for public and private financing for certification programs. Among those already in use or under discussion are: government support; certification fees, based on a system where large companies would subsidize smaller ones; registration of the certification mark or logo and charging licensing fees for its use by other programs; sale of standards; consumer taxes (via an airport tax or hotel levy, for instance) and taxes on businesses that do not demonstrate sustainable practices. Other possible sources of revenue could include publishing a directory or guidebook of certified businesses and selling advertising, as well as selling study courses and training manuals.

- Can certification be used for new products and services before they are fully developed to ensure that they will meet sustainability standards? There is a growing concern that tourism certification programs need to include the "front ends" of projects. As the Synergy report aptly states, "The focus of most programmes on existing tourism infrastructure, however, is flawed. For an industry that is predicted to double in size over the next decade, it is questionable whether certification programmes have the potential to ensure that new developments meet sustainability criteria. Most certification programmes do include some reference to integrating 'sustainable considerations' into new developments but these do not reflect the wide range of issues emerging within the sustainable design debate. Some destination programmes (such as Green Globe) seek to tackle this issue, but these are inadequately developed as yet to prove their credibility" (Synergy, 2000:35).

In examining the feasibility of a single European eco-label for accommodations, the FEMATOIR study also deals with this issue, arguing that the most important phases of environmental concern for tourist accommodations are construction and siting of new infrastructure, as well as extensions of buildings, etc. It then states that almost all existing eco-labels limit their scope to maintenance and use of resources (FEMATOIR, 2000).

These concerns go beyond EIAs, which typically only involve a developer reaching compliance with existing government regulations. Pre-development certification would require negotiating and setting environmental, socio-cultural and economic criteria with the various stakeholders before any construction begins. While some programs, such as Green Globe and PAN Parks, do consider impacts of construction, there is a need for all eco-labels to include more specific criteria for this crucial part

of tourism growth and development. In South Africa, environmental researchers, local communities and the government have been working to develop criteria which will cover the initial "life cycle" phase (Koch and Massyn, 2000). Costa Rica's CST is now beginning to be used to assess both new hotels and expansion of existing ones.

In addition, there is the question of how or whether criteria should be different and/or stricter for new establishments that have more flexibility in determining practices and activities. Would the process of certification for new products or services be changed? To go one step further, one might ask whether new developments should be required to meet certain certification standards. In this case, certification becomes required, no longer voluntary.

In conclusion, three points should be kept in mind.

- First, it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel. There are now so many models for tourism certification programs within the tourism field that those involved in developing new ones do not need to start from scratch. Local conditions are important and these can be reflected by modifying the criteria within existing systems.
- Second, to cut down confusion and increase credibility and clarity for the consumer, it is important to have an internationally or at least regionally endorsed certification system.
- And third, while certification systems within the travel and tourism industry are vital, they must be viewed as only one in a combination of tools, both voluntary and regulatory, that are needed in order to promote both social equity and sustainable development. As Michael Conroy puts it, "Certification is a type of insurance against social and environmental damage, not totally foolproof, but far better than running unprotected."

Part 2: Certification Systems for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism

Below are descriptions of the functioning certification programs that were represented at the Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Certification Workshop, held at the Mohonk Mountain House in November 2000. Information comes from participants, websites and literature, and is current as of spring 2001.

International Programs

1. *Green Globe 21*



Scope of Program: Mass Tourism & Sustainable Tourism

Geographic scope: Worldwide

Sectors covered: Airlines, airports, caravan parks, car hire, convention center, cruise boat, exhibition halls, golf courses, hotels, marinas, railways, restaurants, vineyards, and destinations including communities and protected areas

Date(s) of initiation: Developed in 1993. Officially launched in 1994 as a membership program with no standards or auditing. Companies received logo as soon as they became Green Globe member. Upgraded in 1999 with a standard and independent auditing. Upgraded again in April 2001 to include three tiers—Affiliate, Benchmarked, and Certified—with independent third party auditing for certification. The logo is not received unless an operation is above the measured Benchmarking baseline level of performance.

Institution(s): Green Globe 21 is a for-profit company comprised of three joint venture partners: Green Globe (London) which is responsible for global marketing; Green Globe Asia Pacific (Canberra) which is based at the Australian Cooperative Research Center (CRC) for Sustainable Tourism and responsible for development of the Green Globe product; and Green Globe America (Puerto Rico) which has been taken on by the Caribbean Action for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) and is responsible for the Caribbean and South America. Green Globe also lists as its “strategic partners” industry and government organizations, including PATA, WTTC, WTO, and UNEP, and 14 universities linked to the Australian CRC. It provides the environmental certification program for PATA.

Funding source(s): Green Globe was originally a subsidiary of WTTC. In late 1999, in a “friendly buy out,” WTTC transferred Green Globe to a group of WTTC investors.

Funding for the scheme comes from businesses that seek Green Globe Benchmarking and Certification services and products.

Criteria: Primarily process-based, using ISO 14001 management system. In May 2001, Green Globe introduced new Benchmarking and Certification levels. Benchmarking measures the actual environmental performance of companies for 9 key environmental and social performance areas which include some performance criteria. Operations are entitled to use the Green Globe logo (without check) if they are Benchmarked above baseline for all criteria. The Green Globe brand (with check) is achieved if an operation meets the requirements of the Green Globe Standard, has been independently assessed, and has been Benchmarked with all criteria above baseline.

Green Globe is placing particular emphasis on reducing the emission of greenhouse gases as part of its benchmarking process. The Benchmarking report returned by Green Globe to applicants provides an actual Benchmarked "reporting index" and recommendations for improvement in environmental performance.

Auditing: By 2001, independent third party auditing (assessment) was required. Assessors must be trained and have passed an exam prior to receiving their Green Globe Assessor qualification. The assessment is based on verification of the supplied Benchmarking data and the achievement of the Green Globe Standard by operators. Assessment is undertaken annually. Three global companies have been accredited as Accredited Green Globe Certification Organizations including Societe Generale de Surveillance (SGS), Anglo Japanese American Registrars, and BM Trada.

Awarding of Certification: Certification of operations is undertaken globally by both Green Globe and by accredited Green Globe certification organizations. Certification recommendations are evaluated and signed off by Green Globe. Benchmarking is a compulsory part of certification: the originally supplied Benchmarking data must be verified by assessors during the certification process and the analysis of the raw data supplied by operations is undertaken by Green Globe. All 9 key performance areas must be above a baseline level of performance for an operation to be successfully certified.

Fees: International Green Globe Affiliate fees, the introductory stage for Green Globe are US\$50. International registration fees for Benchmarking and Certification is the same as the annual fee and range from \$200 to \$1,000, depending on the size of the company. Annual fees for Green Globe Communities either Benchmarking or Certifying are \$5,000. Assessment fees are in addition to these fees. National fee rates also apply, and are often less than the international fee.

One level or multiple levels: Two: Benchmarking and Certification.

Logo(s): Benchmarked companies use the logo without the check and can qualify for Green Globe annual awards. A Certified operation uses the logo with the check. Logos are dated, and current for that year only.

Certified Companies/Products: Between November 1998 and August 2000, 30 companies, mainly hotels, were certified, according to the website. However, Green Globe has been reorganized a number of times, and many businesses that joined the now-disbanded Green Globe membership program still use the logo. In April 2000, the EcoNETT Internet site advertised more than 500 businesses and destinations bearing the Green Globe logo.

In June 2001, one month after the launch of the upgraded Green Globe product, registrations globally totaled 885 participants including Affiliates, Benchmarking, Certifying and Green Globe companies. The great majority were Affiliates. By August, the first to be certified under this new program were 13 Caribbean hotels (in Aruba, Jamaica and Barbados), and another 27 were awaiting certification.

Marketing and Promotion: In 2000, Green Globe acknowledged the criticism (Synergy, 2000) that it lacked sufficient marketing or a marketing budget. In 2001, marketing and sales kits were upgraded and marketing through participating organizations, the web, and promotional campaign got underway. Major marketing campaigns are being conducted within the Asia Pacific.

Website: www.greenglobe21.com or www.greenglobe.org

National Programs

2. Australia: Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) and EcoGuide Program

Scope of Program: Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism

Geographic scope: Australia. As of mid-2001, developing a Fiji NEAP in conjunction with the Fiji Ecotourism Society.

Sectors covered: NEAP certifies products, not companies: accommodations, tours and attractions. EcoGuide program certifies guides

Date of initiation: 1993, idea and planning began; 1997, first products certified. The program demand continual improvement; so in 2000 there was an upgrade of criteria to NEAP II, and further upgrade will occur in 2004. EcoGuide program launched in 2001.

Institution(s): Originally, Ecotourism Association of Australia (EAA) and the Australian Tourism Operators Network (ATON). In May 2001, ATON relinquished ownership of the NEAP as accreditation was no longer part of their core business. EAA is now sole owner of NEAP.

Funding source(s): Government: Federal Office of National Tourism (ONT) granted US\$30,000 as a one-time seed grant to help develop NEAP criteria/program. Considerable in-kind support, cash donations and professional time were provided by the EAA and ATON estimated to be in the value of US\$400,000. Federal Government (Regional Tourism grants) provided \$95,000 to fund development of the EcoGuide Program.

Criteria: Mixture of process- and performance-based criteria. Performance-based, yes/no, and descriptive questions in the following areas:

- natural area focus
- interpretation
- environmental sustainability
- contribution to conservation
- working with local communities
- cultural component
- customer satisfaction
- responsible marketing.

For Nature Tourism products, core criteria must be met for natural area focus, environmental sustainability, customer satisfaction and responsible marketing, and if interpreta-



tion is provided it must be accurate. Ecotourism products must meet core criteria in *all* 8 principles. To gain Advanced Ecotourism status products must score bonus criteria and provide examples of innovations in best practice. The sister EcoGuides program that nests under NEAP demands that guides display competence in a number of key areas including minimal impact techniques, cultural sensitivity, group management, specialized ecological/environmental/cultural knowledge and advanced interpretive techniques.

Auditing: NEAP requires annual desk audits of specific criteria as well as random and complaint-based physical audits. The aim is to conduct one physical audit of every product during the three year accreditation period. Audits are currently conducted by auditors drawn from the pool of expertise provided by NEAP, the NEAP Panel, and assessors (EAA and independent industry experts). In mid-2001, NEAP began restructuring to provide a body of auditors independent of the NEAP management team, with an independent chair. This body will have responsibility for the formal training of auditors, audit protocols and auditing schedules. The EcoGuide program has workplace assessors that assess guides on-site or in simulated workplaces and collects evidence of competence through direct and indirect evidence.

Awarding of Certification: NEAP: Five-member NEAP Panel (EAA, independent experts and an independent chair, currently from the University of Queensland), based on a desk audit of application document, marketing materials and two referee checks. Customer and stakeholder feedback may also be solicited. EcoGuide Program: Six member EcoGuide Panel consisting of EAA, representatives from Protected Area agencies, guiding associations and training organizations.

Fees: NEAP: Application fee of US\$85 (\$160 Australia) and US\$258 (\$485 Australia), depending on the annual business turnover, and an annual fee ranging between US\$53 (\$100 Australia) and US\$398 (\$750 Australia). EcoGuides: Application fee based on cost-recovery of workplace assessment US\$55-265 (\$100-500 Australia) and an annual fee of US\$55 (\$100 Australia).

One level or multiple levels: NEAP: Two categories—Nature Tourism and Ecotourism—with two levels of Ecotourism—Basic and Advanced Ecotourism. EcoGuide has one level.

Logo(s): Nature Tourism logo says Nature Tourism and has one check mark. Ecotourism logo says Ecotourism and has two check marks. Advanced Ecotourism logo says Advanced Ecotourism and has three check marks. EcoGuide logos has one check mark and says Guide. All are good for three years.

Certified Companies/Products: Over 320 NEAP accredited accommodations, tours, and attractions throughout Australia, currently half based in Queensland. Fifty EcoGuides were certified in the first six months after the program was launched in January 2001.

Marketing and Promotion: Tourism promotion guides, such as the Automobile Association and the Queensland Tourism Board, provide special listings and recognition of NEAP certified products. Australian government has produced an in-flight video on NEAP for Qantas Airlines and has financed several short commercials about NEAP. A NEAP website was initiated in the second half of 2000. Plans include developing a scheme to give preferential treatment to NEAP products, where only NEAP-certified products would be allowed in a protected area or specific protected zones.

Website: www.ecotourism.org.au/ and follow NEAP or EcoGuide logos

3. Costa Rica: Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST)



Scope of Program: Billed as Sustainable Tourism, but really covers all three types: Mass Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, and Ecotourism

Geographic scope: Costa Rica. CST is being considered as model for other national and regional programs. In June 2001, six Central American countries concluded an agreement to promote a single regional "Certificate of Sustainable Tourism," based on CST.

Sectors covered: Accommodations (hotels and lodges). Instrument for tour operators is in the field trial stage. Future plans include restaurants, transportation and other sectors of the tourism industry. ICT (Costa Rican Tourism Institute) also works closely with Blue Flag to certify beaches in Costa Rica.

Date of initiation: Planning began in 1996. Certification began in 1998.

Institution(s): Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT), with INCAE, a business school connected with Harvard University. The Accreditation Board is the owner of intellectual property rights and supervises certification and modifications. The Board has membership from ICT, INCAE, universities, environmental and scientific NGOs, and the Chamber of Tourism (CANATUR).

Funding source(s): Government (via ICT). Future goal to become self-supporting.

Criteria: Primarily performance-based but also has ISO-like environmental management system criteria for assessing the physical plant. The questionnaire consists of a checklist of 153 criteria in four general categories:

- Physical-biological environment (including such subcategories as emissions and waste, landscaping);
- Hotel facilities and infrastructure (including, for instance, management policies, final disposal, and training);
- Customers (including "respect for community and nature"); and,
- Social-economic environment (including direct and indirect economic benefits, contributions to cultural development and health).

Auditing: Initial site visit by ICT staff to explain CST program. Next a formal assessment based on the criteria and recommendations are made. Once implementation is confirmed, a written evaluation is sent to the National Accreditation Commission.

An online self-evaluation allows hotels to assess where improvements are needed, and the inspection team's survey results are posted on the web. Surveillance audits are supposed to be repeated every six months to a year, but there is a large backlog of hotels waiting to be audited. The plan is to switch to independent, third party auditors in the near future in order to eliminate conflicts of interest.

Awarding of Certification: National Accreditation Commission, a voluntary committee headed by Minister of Tourism and composed of representatives from government, NGOs, scientific organizations, tourism industry, and universities. Reviews all applicants and awards eco-awards.

Fees: First round has been free, financed by ICT, in order to attract broad participation. In the future, companies will be charged, both a flat fee and an additional amount, based on size, but exact amounts are not yet determined.

One level or multiple levels: Five levels.

Logo(s): Plaque with one to five leaves.

Certified Companies/Products: By mid-2001 there were 51 certified hotels. None have yet received the top five rating (perfect score) although one hotel is close; only three received level four. About 10 percent of applicants have failed, getting a zero rating. By mid-2000, 171 of the estimated 400 hotels in Costa Rica suitable for certification had signed up and were waiting to be audited.

Marketing and Promotion: Main promotional tool is CST website, which is financed by USAID. CST is promoted as part of government's general international tourism marketing. Most accommodations have their own websites where they post their CST eco-label. However, CST officials say marketing remains a "huge problem."

Website: www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr or www.sustainable-tourism.co.cr

4. New Zealand: Qualmark Accreditation Program

Scope of Program: Mass Tourism. Expansion will cover Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism.

Geographic scope: New Zealand

Sectors covered: Currently rates and certifies accommodations for quality, service, and cost. It assigns star grades (one to five) in four generic areas (hotels, holiday parks, backpackers, self-contained and serviced facilities) as well as to retail tourist shops. Expansion plans include environmental and cultural criteria and will cover adventure tourism operators, transport, attractions, tours, retail shops, charter boats, scenic flights, rental cars, and range of ecotourism facilities and activities.

Date of initiation: 1993, idea and planning begun. 1994 began certifying accommodations for quality. 2000, drafted proposed expansion to set of minimum standards for responsible tourism. 2002, products to be certified under this new criteria.

Institution(s): Begun by two non-profits, Adventure Tourism Council NZ (ATC) and Tourism Industry Association NZ (TIA). Qualmark NZ is a joint venture between the private sector (the Automobile Association) and New Zealand governments' national tourism organization (Tourism New Zealand). Qualmark's role in expansion is as program manager and certification body.

Funding source(s): Currently, accommodation ratings funded by TIA and ATC. Development of standards funded by industry members. Seeking funding from government and private sector for expansion.

Criteria: Accommodations and tourist shops evaluated based on list of facilities, quality, service, cost. New ecotourism and sustainable tourism will be performance-based with both generic and sector specific criteria, including:

- natural area focus
- interpretation
- safety/legislation
- environmental sustainability
- contribution to conservation
- working with local communities
- cultural component
- customer satisfaction
- responsible marketing

By 2002, Qualmark plans to be compatible with Green Globe 21.



Auditing: Accommodations and retail shops are assessed annually by trained, independent auditors. New program will include annual desk audits of specific criteria and annual site visit administered by Qualmark.

Awarding of Certification: By Qualmark, based on audit processes.

Fees: Currently one year license fee is NZ\$440 (US\$1,100) to NZ\$1,500 (US\$3750) annually for accommodations. Proposed annual fee ranging between NZ\$500 and NZ\$800.

One level or multiple levels: Currently five star rating. New program initially plans one level. Variations may develop.

Logo(s): Qualmark accredited company brand. Good for one year. Beginning in 2001, TIA is offering its members option for Green Globe 21 brand. Qualmark plans to pick up Green Globe in 2002 for all its certified products.

Certified Companies/Products: Current certification includes ratings for 44 hotels, 52 backpacker facilities, and several hundred motels. Implementation of sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification planned for late 2001.

Marketing and Promotion: Website and tourism promotion guides, such as those published by Automobile Association and Tourism New Zealand. Distribution of brochures by Visitor Information Networks. A core component of membership is to provide special listings and recognition of Qualmark certified products. Considering developing a scheme to give preferential treatment to Qualmark certified products, where Qualmark products would be allowed some added bonus when working in protected areas.

Website: www.tianz.org.nz or www.qualmark.co.nz

Regional Programs

5. *The Petén, Guatemala: Green Deal*

Scope of Program: Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism

Geographic scope: The lowland Petén region of Guatemala

Sectors covered: Will cover accommodations, tour operators, restaurants, tourist transport, guides, and communities

Date of initiation: 1999

Institution(s): Asociación Alianza Verde (AV), local non-profit NGO, as the implementer and Conservation International (CI), international non-profit NGO, providing technical and financial assistance.

Funding source(s): Conservation International and PROARCA/CAPAS program of USAID.

Criteria: Two types: 1) Generic standards—process-based environmental management system standards, many of which parallel ISO requirements, are required for all businesses; 2) Specific performance-based criteria for each sector that cover quality control, environmental and socio-cultural issues.

Auditing: Independent six-member audit team selected for reputations of honesty, objectivity and familiarity with local tourism operations and including specialists in quality control, environment and/or socio-cultural issues and trained by CI and AV in auditing techniques and ethics.

Awarding of Certification: Certification Commission, currently composed of representatives from AV, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Propetén/CI, and the University of San Carlos.

Fees: Not yet determined. AV is examining a possible fee structure, based upon size of operation. Will include annual fee, assessment fee, and direct auditing costs.

One level or multiple levels: Currently, one level. Considering using five levels for each of the three areas of interest: quality control, environment, socio-cultural issues.

Logo(s): Currently, one seal. Proposal to use 1-5 symbols to indicate levels attained in each of three areas of interest. Valid for one year.

Certified Companies/Products: 9 enterprises are in the process-3 ecolodges, 1 community-based lodge, the EcoEscuela (a Spanish language school and homestay program for foreigners), 2 tour operators, and 2 restaurants.

Marketing and Promotion: Through various publications (including *Destination Petén*, a local tourism guide) and Internet web pages. Alianza Verde will publish annual Green Deal directory of certified companies and community-based tourism activities.

Website: www.greendeal.org and part of the Alianza Verde's network at www.peten.net



6. Saskatchewan, Canada: Horizons: Saskatchewan Ecotourism Accreditation System



Scope of Program: Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism

Geographic scope: Province of Saskatchewan, Canada

Sectors covered: Accommodations, tours, attractions

Date of initiation: 1999 program development; first products certified in 2000

Institution(s): Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan (ESS), a non-profit NGO

Funding source(s): Application and certification fees and government funding

Criteria: Performance-based, using two forms completed by applicants and reviewed by program assessment team:

1) Application: yes/no and descriptive questions about the following:

- Administration and business practices
- Nature appreciation; authenticity and concurrence of affected cultures
- Interpretation
- Community economic benefits
- Tangible return to conservation
- Impact monitoring and quality control
- Sustainable tourism issues
- Protected status of host area(s)
- Special/unique places and attractions
- Quality of interpretation
- Qualifications of staff
- Sustainable accommodation
- Activity-based transportation systems
- Food

2) Evaluation Report: descriptive information in the following areas:

- Site inventory and assessment—location, land uses, conservation status, future development plans, zoning and/or planning restrictions, staffing and packaging, accessibility of site, conformity with municipal requirements;
- Site inventories—birds, plants and landforms, non-bird wildlife;

- Natural history information—important wildlife areas; key plants, animals, habitats and landforms; natural processes (such as plant-animal interactions, water cycling, etc.), archaeological resources; human activities;
- Area sensitivity assessment—critical habitats; habitat sensitivity map; and,
- Visitor information plan—who uses the site; how many people; what are their skills and interests; why do they visit; how long will they be allowed to stay; how often do they return; age and gender.

Auditing: Before an application is submitted to ESS, an ESS representative pays a visit to the operator to assist him/her with the completion of the preliminary application form. After the completion of the confidential document, two ESS Board members will revisit the business to conduct an on-site audit.

Awarding of Certification: ESS Board of Directors.

Fees: Application fee of \$100 Canada (US\$65) fee, of which \$50 Canada (US\$33) is for ESS membership and another \$50 Canada for application process and site visit. Renewal requires \$50 Canada for annual site visit.

One level or multiple levels: One level.

Logo(s): Certificate. Valid for one year.

Certified companies/products: By mid-2001, 3 resorts, a historical canoe tour, and a dog-sled tour excursion had been certified.

Marketing and Promotion: Via the Internet, a newsletter (three times a year), and Tourism Saskatchewan's publications.

Website: www.ecotourism.sk.ca

Other Sectors

7. Blue Flag Campaign

Scope of Program: Sustainable Tourism

Geographic scope: Currently, 21 European countries. Expanding to Costa Rica and other parts of Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and South Africa



Sectors covered: Beaches and marinas, with local governments and marina owners as the applicants

Date of initiation: 1987

Institution(s): Owned and managed by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), a non-profit NGO with a coordinating office in Denmark. Individual non-profit NGOs implement programs within each country.

Funding source(s): Initially the European Commission; currently the individual NGOs in each country raise their own funds via a) fees to certified organizations or businesses, b) government grants, c) and/or business sponsorships. National implementers pay an annual fee to European FEE.

Criteria: Performance-based criteria: 27 specific criteria for beaches, 15 for marinas. Some are “imperative criteria” required in all countries and others are “guideline criteria” which are optional for national implementing organization. They cover four areas:

- water quality
- environmental management
- safety, services and facilities
- environmental education and information.

Auditing: Conducted by national Blue Flag implementers and national environmental protection agencies throughout the summer season.

Awarding of Certification: The European Blue Flag jury (3 FEE members, 1 from the European Union, 1 from UNEP, and 1 from European Union for Coastal Conservation) makes final decisions based on recommendations from national juries (representatives from federal and local governments, NGOs, academics, and specialists in beach management).

Fees: Determined by each national implementer to cover assessment, site visits, logo, and promotional support to communities and marina owners.

One level or multiple levels: One level. All imperative criteria and a number of guideline criteria must be achieved in order to be awarded a Blue Flag.

Logo(s): Blue flag. Valid for one year only.

Certified companies/products: Over 2,500 beaches and marinas in 21 countries.

Marketing and promotion: Active promotional campaigns are conducted by European FEE, national Blue Flag organizations, and Blue Flag communities or marina owners; these include posters, articles in newspapers and magazines and leaflets. Tourist guides throughout Europe indicate which beaches are Blue Flag certified.

Website: www.blueflag.org

8. PAN (Protected Areas Network) Parks



Scope of Program: Ecotourism

Geographic scope: Protected areas in Europe

Sectors covered: Protected areas over 25,000 hectares, and communities and businesses engaged in tourism in/near protected areas

Date of initiation: Development began in 1997. Self-assessment of select protected areas conducted in early 2000. Criteria for first 3 of 5 principles completed in May 2001. Auditing of at least 2 protected areas expected in 2002.

Institution(s): Program developed and supervised by the non-profit World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the for-profit Dutch Leisure Company Molecaten Group. Executed by the non-profit PAN Parks Foundation, based in the Netherlands with a regional office in Hungary. Government participation mainly at the local level; input on creation of 5 principles.

Funding source(s): WWF and Molecaten Group, a for-profit tourism operator. Long-term goal is to become self-sufficient through commercial concepts and licensing.

Criteria: Based on five principle areas:

- Natural heritage, legal protection, administration and ensuring that the natural value of the protected area is maintained.
- Habitat management, detailing elements of management plans and zoning to ensure that natural diversity and ecological processes are maintained.
- Visitor management.
- Regulations for sustainable tourism development and emphasizes sustainable use of economic, social and cultural resources of communities in the region of the protected area.
- Partners and sponsors—businesses, NGOs and parks authorities—to ensure that their visions and practices contribute to sustainable tourism and to the PAN Parks network.

Auditing: To be conducted by independent auditors.

Awarding of Certification: PAN Parks Foundation in agreement with PAN Parks Board (composed of representatives of WWF and the Molecaten Group) will accredit independent auditors who will conduct field verification of applicant protected areas. Based on the report of auditors, PAN Parks Foundation will award the certificate.

Fees: Not yet determined.

One level or multiple levels: One level.

Logo(s): Single design.

Certified companies/products: None yet; 7 national parks and one nature reserve are candidates.

Marketing and Promotion: Via the PAN Parks website, a quarterly newsletter (*PAN Parks Courier*), WWF publications and local and international media.

Website: www.panparks.org

9. *SmartVoyager*

Scope of Program: Ecotourism

Geographic scope: The Galapagos Islands, Ecuador

Sectors covered: Individual tour boats (“floating hotels”), not the associated companies.

Date of initiation: Officially launched in May 2000

Institution(s): Conservación y Desarrollo (C&D), an Ecuadorian non-profit NGO, and Rainforest Alliance (RA), an international non-profit NGO.

Funding source(s): General funds of C&D and RA.

Criteria: Combination of ISO 14001 standards and performance standards, based on 12 principles in these areas:

- company policy
- conservation of natural ecosystems
- reduction of negative environmental impacts
- lowering the risk of introduction and dispersal of exotic species
- fair treatment of workers
- employee training
- community relations and local welfare
- strict control of use, supply and storage of materials
- integrated waste management
- commitment on the part of the tourist
- safety
- planning and monitoring

Auditing: In preparation for certification, there is a pre-site audit conducted by a C&D representative to provide suggestions, followed by a complete site audit, also done by C&D team. Once certified, there will be annual audits by other C&D and RA representatives, as well as informal, unannounced audits.

Awarding of Certification: Certification Committee composed of at least one representative from C&D and one from RA, plus two or three international specialists.

Fees: Fees vary according to the size of the boat. First payment covers two years. Subsequent annual fees for boats with capacities above 16 passengers start at approximately US\$1,500. Fees are also charged for each site audit (an average of US\$160/day, plus travel expenses).



One level or multiple levels: One level. Requires compliance with at least 80% of the certification criteria, absence of “fatal flaws” and a written commitment for continual improvement in subsequent years.

Logo(s): A certificate and seal are provided.

Certified companies/products: Five vessels have been certified. Several other operators are enrolled and are working towards compliance.

Marketing and Promotion: Via the Internet, participation in special events, press releases and publications, letters to local operators, outbound operators and associations such as IGTOA (a network of outbound operators dedicated to conservation and sustainable tourism in the Galapagos).

Website: www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/sv/

Appendix 1: Mohonk Agreement:

Proposal for an International Certification Program for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism

Mohonk Agreement

A framework and principles for the certification of sustainable and ecotourism.

Background

This document contains a set of general principles and elements that should be part of any sound ecotourism and sustainable tourism certification programs. This framework was unanimously adopted at the conclusion of an international workshop convened by the Institute for Policy Studies with support from the Ford Foundation. It was held at Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, New York on November 17-19, 2000.

Workshop participants recognized that tourism certification programs need to be tailored to fit particular geographical reasons and sectors of the tourism industry, but agreed that the following are the universal components that must frame any ecotourism and sustainable certification program.

1. Certification Scheme Overall Framework

Basis of Scheme

The objectives of the scheme should be clearly stated. The development of a certification scheme should be a participatory, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral process (including representatives from local communities, tourism businesses, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, government, and others).

- The scheme should provide tangible benefits to tourism providers and a means for tourists to choose wisely
- The scheme should provide tangible benefits to local communities and to conservation
- The scheme should set minimum standards while encouraging and rewarding best practice
- There is a process to withdraw certification in the event of non-compliance
- The scheme should establish control of existing/new seals/logos in terms of appropriate use, an expiration date and, in the event of loss of certification, withdrawal

- The scheme should include provisions for technical assistance
- The scheme should be designed such that there is motivation for continual improvement—both of the scheme and of the products/companies to be certified

Criteria Framework

- Criteria should provide the mechanism(s) to meet the stated objective(s)
- Criteria used should meet and preferably exceed regulatory compliance
- Criteria should embody global best practice environmental, social and economic management
- Criteria should be adapted to recognizing local/regional ecological, social and economic conditions and local sustainable development efforts
- Criteria should be subject to a periodic review
- Criteria should be principally performance-based and include environmental, social and economic management process elements

Scheme Integrity

- The certification program should be transparent and involve an appeals process
- The certification body should be independent of the parties being certified and of technical assistance and assessment bodies (i.e., administrative structures for technical assistance, assessment and auditing should avoid conflicts of interest)
- The scheme should require audits by suitably trained auditors
- The scheme should require mechanisms for consumer and local community feedback

2. Sustainable Tourism Criteria

Sustainable tourism is tourism that seeks to minimize ecological and socio-cultural impacts while providing economic benefits to local communities and host countries. In any certification scheme, the criteria used to define sustainable tourism should address at least minimum standards in the following aspects (as appropriate):

Overall

- Environmental planning and impact assessment has been undertaken and has considered social, cultural, ecological and economic impacts (including cumulative impacts and mitigation strategies)
- Environmental management commitment by tourism business

- Staff training, education, responsibility, knowledge and awareness in environmental, social and cultural management
- Mechanisms for monitoring and reporting environmental performance
- Accurate, responsible marketing leading to realistic expectations
- Consumer feedback

Social/Cultural

- Impacts upon social structures, culture and economy (on both local and national levels)
- Appropriateness of land acquisition/access processes and land tenure
- Measures to protect the integrity of local community's social structure
- Mechanisms to ensure rights and aspirations of local and/or indigenous people are recognized

Ecological

- Appropriateness of location and sense of place
- Biodiversity conservation and integrity of ecosystem processes
- Site disturbance, landscaping and rehabilitation
- Drainage, soils and stormwater management
- Sustainability of energy supply and minimization of use
- Sustainability of water supply and minimization of use
- Sustainability of wastewater treatment and disposal
- Noise and air quality (including greenhouse emissions)
- Waste minimization and sustainability of disposal
- Visual impacts and light
- Sustainability of materials and supplies (recyclable and recycled materials, locally produced, certified timber products, etc.)
- Minimal environmental impacts of activities

Economic

- Requirements for ethical business practice
- Mechanisms to ensure labor arrangements and industrial relations procedures are not exploitative, and conform to local laws and international labor standards (whichever are higher)
- Mechanisms to ensure negative economic impacts on local communities are minimized and preferably there are substantial economic benefits to local communities

- Requirements to ensure contributions to the development/maintenance of local community infrastructure

3. Ecotourism Criteria

Ecotourism is sustainable tourism with a natural area focus, which benefits the environment and communities visited, and fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation, and awareness. In any ecotourism certification scheme, the criteria should address standards (preferably mostly best practice) for sustainable tourism (as per above) and at least minimum standards for:

- Focus on personal experiences of nature to lead to greater understanding and appreciation
- Interpretation and environmental awareness of nature, local society, and culture
- Positive and active contributions to conservation of natural areas or biodiversity
- Economic, social, and cultural benefits for local communities
- Fostering of community involvement, where appropriate
- Locally appropriate scale and design for lodging, tours and attractions
- Minimal impact on and presentation of local (indigenous) culture

Appendix 2: Proposal for an International Accreditation Body for Sustainable and Ecotourism

Mohonk Workshop participants unanimously endorsed the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council proposal presented by Ronald Sanabria of the Rainforest Alliance to carry out a detailed feasibility study for establishing an international accreditation body. This document is a slight modification of the proposal Sanabria had presented earlier. The workshop participants recommended that this study continue to be spearheaded by the Rainforest Alliance but the Advisory Committee be expanded to include other individuals and organizations. In addition, Oliver Hillel of UNEP agreed to communicate the results of the workshop and the endorsement of the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council proposal to the World Tourism Organization and other relevant bodies.

Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council Proposal

Challenges:

- Lack of reciprocity/ homogenization between schemes
- Lack of governmental support
- Multiplicity of schemes
- Green washing
- Lack of demand from “wholesalers” and “retailers”
- International marketing for local certification schemes
- Consumer confusion

Why Stewardship Accreditation Bodies are Important:

- Credibility
- International/regional recognition
- Stakeholder involvement
- Organization
- Continuous improvement
- Political and financial support
- Conflict resolution
- Protection against false claims

Some Responsibilities of an Accreditation Body:

- Help establish an international generic standard for sustainable/ecotourism
- Support the definition of local standards for each country or region
- Establish accreditation criteria for tourism certifiers
- Accredite certifiers
- Guarantee stakeholders participation
- Promote accreditation system and standards internationally
- Perform random audits of certifiers and companies

Proposal for Discussion:

Investigate the possibilities for creating an international accreditation body, determine the most appropriate organizational structure, the necessary steps for its implementation and provide recommendations for accreditation criteria.

A Coalition Effort:

Establish a coalition of organizations with different areas of expertise to lead an investigation on the possibilities to create an international accreditation organization for tourism certification.

The Project Must:

- Have a coordinating organization
- Consolidate a coalition for the supervision of the project
- Assure stakeholder participation and consensus building
- Provide guidance for implementation of results
- Explore accreditation, marketing, and technical assistance

Deliverables:

- A needs assessment of the different stakeholders for an accreditation system
- A financial model for establishing and maintaining an accreditation organization
- A white paper analyzing market demand for accreditation and documenting the feasibility of establishing an accreditation body
- Recommendations for accreditation criteria
- A complete organizational blueprint and implementation plan
- Organization of preliminary meetings with key players for project's implementation.

Next Steps:

- Discussion on objectives
- Determining the scope: ecotourism vs. sustainable tourism
- Identification of a planning committee
- Determine how this project can complement other efforts

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