THE FLOCK HILL WORKSHOPS

Eco-tourism - An ally of nature conservation? Defining the rules and measuring the outcomes

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The Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation was established in 1999. Its mission is 'to promote the conservation of biological diversity and other elements of nature, its sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of its utilisation through education, training and advocacy'.

The “Flock Hill Workshop” is an annual event and the aim is to promote discussion and analysis of challenging and contemporary nature conservation issues. Attendance at each annual workshop is by invitation only. The report from each workshop is made widely available.

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Eco-tourism: An ally of nature conservation?

Proceedings of a workshop held at
Flock Hill, Canterbury
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The workshop commenced with a powhiri led by Rik Tau and Maru Stirling of Ngai Taihuriri. We acknowledge their contribution to the workshop.
Flock Hill participants on the field trip at Kura Tawhiti
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SECTION 1: Introduction and Aims
1.1 Aims

Nature and natural sites are key attractions for tourists in New Zealand. Continuing strong growth in both international and domestic tourism numbers is placing increasing pressure on many New Zealand nature-based tourism sites. Eco-tourism is sometimes promoted as the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. A rapidly growing number of businesses advertise their activities to tourists as ‘eco-tourism’ and eco-tourism is sometimes hailed as a pathway to avoid some of the negative consequences associated with mass tourism. However, the term suffers from ambiguity and it lacks ownership. There is doubt over the veracity of claims that eco-tourism, in all its forms, is sustainable. The Flock Hill 2002 workshop comprised representatives of the tourism industry, government policy agencies, conservation NGO’s and researchers who debated the nature and role of eco-tourism in New Zealand. The workshop focused on three key issues:

- How might we distinguish eco-tourism from other forms of tourism?
- What strategies and policies are required to ensure that eco-tourism contributes to nature conservation?
- How is this supportive role of eco-tourism to be verified?

The Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation at Lincoln University organised a forum of key thinkers to address these issues and contribute to development of policy in New Zealand. Our intention was to assemble a group of people, who during two days, could identify the issues, canvas the range of options open to New Zealand, debate the merits of the options and develop recommendations for action. No final set of recommendations was developed and the proceedings do not imply agreement by all participants with all points. A consensus or declaration was not sought nor obtained.

Participants were invited as individuals not as representatives of institutions. The size of the group was kept below 40 in order to facilitate whole group discussion.

The Flock Hill workshop was held under the Chatham House Rule. The rule allows participants to quote ideas or proposals discussed at the event, but not to attribute an idea or proposal to any one person. The intent of the Chatham House rule is to foster more open discussion and debate than might occur if participants were concerned their ideas or proposals might subsequently be attributed to them. The participants at the Flock Hill workshop were advised at the opening session that the Chatham House Rule would apply and a copy of the Chatham House Rule was posted on the meeting room wall throughout the workshop. Participants all accepted the event would proceed under the Chatham House Rule and the proceedings have respected that agreement. These proceedings also contain notes on four presentations with speakers names included. These speakers were invited to make presentations at the workshop and all four speakers agreed their notes could be published with their names attached.
1.2 Report Format and Editorial Guidelines

Section 1, Background and Aims, is a statement of the facts about the reasons for, aims of, and operation of the workshop. It includes the background paper provided to participants before the workshop, prepared by Professor David Simmons, on issues concerning eco-tourism. A complete version of this paper was pre-circulated to attendees.

Sections 2 to 8 represent our best efforts to faithfully represent the ‘thoughts’ from the workshop. This task was not easy. There was much debate and the record of events was sometimes difficult to interpret. Our documentation of this record has been informed by the notes generated during presentations, breakouts and discussions, and also by notes taken by the workshop organisers. At times, the workshop changed direction or revisited an issue addressed sometime earlier. These proceedings, therefore, reflect developing lines of thinking throughout the workshop rather than representing a chronological record.
1.3 Background Paper

The following paper by David G. Simmons, Professor of Tourism, Human Sciences Division, Lincoln University was sent to all workshop participants as a means to stimulate ideas and discussion prior to the workshop.

**Eco-tourism: An ally of nature conservation? Defining the rules and measuring the outcomes**.

David G Simmons, Professor of Tourism, Human Sciences Division, Lincoln University New Zealand (dssimmons@lincoln.ac.nz)

Abstract

Eco-tourism is often promoted as the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. While tourists increasingly define themselves as ‘eco’ tourists, and the industry operators increasingly posit to offer ecotours, ecotreks and ecolodges, larger questions remain unanswered:

- How might we distinguish eco-tourism from other forms of tourism?
- What strategies and policies are required to ensure that eco-tourism contributes to nature conservation?
- How is this supportive role of eco-tourism to be verified?

Towards a Definition of Eco-tourism

The concept of eco-tourism continues to expand over time. Also the use of the word eco-tourism is open to all, regardless of their environmental, management or service attributes. Today there are a plethora of definitions of eco-tourism, and this is seen most keenly in the variety of eco-tourism “products” offered to tourists. While there is a common focus on nature, there is no core definition of eco-tourism. Ziffer (1989) described the definitional challenge:

*The term has eluded firm definition because it is a complex notion, which ambitiously attempts to describe an activity, set forth a philosophy and espouse a model of development.*

We also need to question the actual size and rate of growth of the eco-tourism market? Here the lack of a prescriptive definition creates most difficulties and at worst has led to almost any nature based activity being labelled and sold as eco-tourism. Industry commentators in New Zealand suggest that ecotourists comprise 4 –5 percent of the New Zealand market, with the potential to grow to 7 - 8 percent in the near future (Coventry, 1997). From a database of over 400 New Zealand operations offering ‘general nature-based tourism activities’ Higham et al (2001) have recently identified 247 ‘that claim to deliver eco-tourism activities’. “The

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1 A background paper to promote discussion at the ICNC annual policy forum, Flock Hill, April 16 – 17, 2002.
primary product in these cases was to experience, observe and learn about aspects of New Zealand’s natural environment” (p 13). Meanwhile the New Zealand Engineer (1996) has recently referred to all tourists coming to New Zealand as “ecotourists”; while the Australian Commonwealth Department of Environment, Sport and Territories (1996) questioned the need for an eco-tourism strategy because there were only possibly 60 – 80 “pure” eco-tourism operators in Australia. Without an operational definition we simply cannot define the level of activity.

Three dominant perspectives of eco-tourism can be identified:
1. **Commercial operators and national tourism organisations** view eco-tourism as an activity occurring in natural settings that is increasing in demand and can be readily converted into ‘eco-tourism products’.
2. **Conservation organisations** view eco-tourism as a tool for nature conservation where the benefits to conservation outweigh the costs to the environment. For them, eco-tourism can have strong links with sustainable development.
3. **Community development organisations** perceive eco-tourism as indigenous based (‘alternative’)-tourism that delivers benefit to poor local communities.

While each perspective has much in common, there is considerable capacity for conflict between them. What is now required is a prescriptive definition of eco-tourism. Based on the historical origins of the concept, at its simplest level it can be stated that “eco-tourism is a symbiotic relationship between tourism and conservation” (Ref). Monteiths Black Petrel colony south of Westport is one example of this where data clearly link increases in visitors to increases in petrel survival (via demonstrable increases in predator protection funded from entry fees).

An operational definition requires criteria that are unambiguous, achievable and measurable. For eco-tourism, these would indicate that the activity:
- Must be nature based (but not necessarily on the public estate);
- Must make a positive contribution to nature conservation, and
- Must be environmentally sustainable.

More recent additions to eco-tourism definitions include environmental education and local economic development, but these are excluded because they:
- do not encompass all the environments where eco-tourism might occur (e.g. Antarctica);
- do not offer direct insights into operational criteria (e.g. what level of involvement /resourcing /language constitutes environmental “education”), or
- simply do not distinguish eco-tourism from its other variants of tourism (shouldn’t all tourism lead to various (undefined) levels of local economic development).

In an attempt to elaborate and operationalise the core concept of eco-tourism four key dimensions - tourists; environmental; economic and social - are elaborated briefly below.
Tourists
Are we defining ecotourists, eco-tourism, or ecotours?
There is a need to consider eco-tourism within larger tourism systems

Much rhetoric exists about the “eco”-tourist. It is mischievous to define eco-tourism on the basis of either the motivation or activity of tourists. At the simplest level, an eco-tourism activity may be a small component of a much broader trip (business trips included) (Weaver, 1998). Is our management of eco-tourism therefore to be focussed on the tourist or an isolated (or sequence of) activities in a much broader package?

Similarly we do not know where an eco-tourism experience might fit within a tourist’s motivational and experiential “career”. Do tourists begin their lives as ecotourists, become resort tourists and later return to become ecotourists according to the flow of life cycle constraints? At worst ecotourists might simply represent the nursery stage in an eventual succession to mass tourism (see Butler, 1980; 1989). These questions indicate a need to integrate studies of eco-tourism into wider studies of tourism systems and evolution.

In terms of the broader development of sustainable tourism an obvious, but often unasked question remains:

Why would we believe that small groups of active, educated and inquisitive tourists in unique (at times fragile) environmental situations would be less impactful than larger numbers of tourists in specially prepared and managed environments?

If we cannot make eco-tourism sustainable is there any real hope for resort, or mass tourism? Conventional tourism has very strong emphasis on management and maintenance functions – parallel processes are clearly required in more open resource systems where eco-tourism occurs. Is eco-tourism is a process, not just a product?

The environmental dimension
Does eco-tourism lead to fewer environmental impacts?
Is it an ally of nature conservation?

Proponents of eco-tourism often assume that its activities are environmentally benign. This assumption is made because the number of visitors and party sizes are small, and because the visitors are interested in aspects of the environment and are, therefore, assumed to respect natural phenomena. However,

• the timing of visitation;
• the nature of use-impact relationships and
• distances travelled

suggest that eco-tourism can be very demanding on environmental resource systems.
Eco-tourism is usually directed to unique environments, which may have limited ability to withstand use pressures. For New Zealand, geothermal areas and sub-Antarctic islands are examples.

In the absence of longitudinal studies, it is often assumed that relationship between volumes of use and associated impacts is linear. This has been proven not to be the case (Shelby and Heberlein, 1986). In fact, it is more likely to be curvilinear or even step-like and even small numbers of users generate impacts (Cole 1989, Urlich et al 2001). In New Zealand our state of the environment reporting and diverse recreation environments suggest there is considerable work to be undertaken (Ward & Beanland, 1996).

Even if impact processes were clearly understood, significant management problems still remain when there are overlapping commercial concessions in protected areas and effects are cumulative. I recently read with some surprise that DoC concessions have increased by more than 50 percent in the last two years (Inside Tourism (March 2002)).

In the past, much research has been directed at finding a single “carrying capacity” for recreation resources. However the concept, which includes bio-physical and physical as well as social and psychological elements has been found largely unworkable (Stankey and McCool, 1984; Shelby and Hehelein, 1986). Current research attempts to find the “limits of acceptable change” and manage recreation opportunities within a spectrum of resource management constraints (Driver, et al 1987).

Finally, even if the on-site impact is small, the off-site and en-route impacts may be substantial. For example, the considerable distances travelled by ecotourists, often by plane and then on land or sea, consume large amounts of energy per capita and contribute to global climate change just as much, and perhaps more, than that of the average mass tourist (Wall, 1997; Becken, 2002 forthcoming). A recent review of the energy use of tourist attractions and activities in New Zealand (Becken et al, 2001) reports that ‘guided walks’ are the third most energy intensive activity (110 MJ /tourist/visit compared with an average of 95.6 MJ/tourist/visit for all activities) with ‘boat cruising’ (165 MJ/tourist/visit) and diving (800 MJ/tourist/visit) among the most energy intensive. Throughout the New Zealand tourism sector, destination based travel (i.e., excluding international air travel), accounts for 68 percent and 85 (respectively) of an international and domestic tourist’s average energy budget. In these terms, eco-tourism to remote destinations may have an increasingly large global environmental cost.

**Economic Considerations**

Is eco-tourism a significant regional development tool?

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2 FoRST funded research of this nature is scheduled to commence in New Zealand as a joint venture between Lincoln University’s Tourism Research and Education Centre (TREC) and Landcare CRI, however the variability of recreational use, environmental response and day to day conditions make this a particularly complex task.
Recent definitions of eco-tourism increasingly advocate that it should contribute to local economies, but how can this realistically distinguish eco-tourism when this goal is a core requirement of all tourism development?

Eco-tourists spend a great deal of money. Often qualitative motivational dimensions drive them as they seek out the ‘very best’ experiences from their discretionary income. However, as Wall (1997) points out, a large proportion of this money is spent at the place of origin, primarily to pay for travel, with usual relatively little being spent at the destination. Many of the places of interest to ecotourists are likely to be relatively remote, with rudimentary infrastructure, and with little for sale except experiences (Butler, 1989). The result is that, with some notable exceptions, the local economic impact of eco-tourism is likely to be small. However, even though the sums of money may not be large, it should be acknowledged that their consequences might be substantial when they are injected into economies, which are also small. Small group sizes and the restricted number of visits (required to ensure minimal ecological impacts and high quality experiences) also indicate that, unless prices are very high, profits will not be large. Over time, the inevitable profit motive will surely tempt tour operators and destination areas to increase both the sizes and numbers of parties. Thus an economic imperative also suggests growth in the direction of mass tourism, for economic growth is usually a goal of destination areas and economies of scale are likely to be sought by eco-tourism operators (see Butler, 1980). For tourism the “freedom of entry” to the core tourism product (unique environments and settings, hospitality and cultures) suggests we now need to search for appropriate ‘instruments’ (pricing and regulation) as means to ensure nature is conserved. For the present the converse is seen to operate, as potential visitors are often encouraged to visit such places before it is too late.

Finally in the wider nature conservation debate the offering of eco-tourism development to geographically dispersed groups of indigenous peoples (as is often the case in the Pacific) may be, at best, naive. Eco-tourism development requires expenditure and time for the development of tourist facilities establishing reliable travel and marketing links to core tourist flows or centres. In the interim other cash based options e.g. logging, often have more appeal. Indeed over-promising the benefits and ease of eco-tourism development may have already done much to undermine the concept as a development tool.

Social Consequences

Is eco-tourism of special significance to indigenous groups (including New Zealand Maori)?

In the global context eco-tourism is increasingly becoming enmeshed with indigenous rights and development. In New Zealand, Maori ownership, stewardship and access to key natural resources is the focus for the increasing interface between Maori development and eco-tourism development.

Where local people do not receive benefits, they are likely to compete with the tourism industry for the use of scarce natural resources. This is most acute when local peoples must struggle to meet basic human needs. In Nepal it was hoped that residents would benefit from the development of specially designated eco-tourism trails but, in the absence of relevant
skills (including language and management skills) and capital, and with small numbers of visitors, it is difficult for local residents to play a meaningful part in, and benefit substantially from, eco-tourism (Nyaupane et al. 1998). Furthermore, according to Boo (1992), many tour operators and lodge owners have come to realise that having the added dimension of local involvement is appreciated by tourists and also affords a significant marketing opportunity.

What strategies and policies are needed to ensure eco-tourism is an ally of nature?

Eco-tourism, especially as it is presently constructed may not be sustainable. There is nothing to suggest that even low levels of visitation would be sustainable in some situations. Ryan (1998) suggests that because the term “eco-tourism” is currently unowned and there is a need to shift it to a “common property” resource whereby those who seek to use the term are active in protecting its integrity. To achieve its goals the effects of eco-tourism must be monitored, and management systems must be in place to restrict unsustainable activities or effects.

The goals for eco-tourism indicate that it will require on-going communication between various stakeholders, - conservation advocates, resource managers, local community members and tourists themselves. It should also be noted that while any one eco-tourism activity might be sustainable there is still much to be done to achieve sustainable tourism.

To be sustainable eco-tourism will need to be linked to wider understanding of both ecological and tourism “systems”. As questioned above, are ecotourists simply identifiers of the first stage of tourist “succession” whereby harder species of tourists are soon followed by softer species.

Certification – A way forward?

Australia and Canada have developed sector specific eco-tourism strategies and Pearson (1997) has called for a New Zealand equivalent. A key plank in such a strategy is the certification of eco-tourism operators, which Ryan (1998) argues will lead to legal contestation of the term as those excluded seek to maintain the use of the valuable “eco” label.

Elsewhere many industries and now the tourism industry itself are moving towards environmental certification programmes. In New Zealand strong emphasis has been given to the GreenGlobe21 programme. Work is currently being undertaken to develop an eco-tourism standard within this programme, based on the successful NEAP (National Eco-tourism Accreditation Programme) developed in Australia. It is planned that a new eco-tourism standard will be brought into the Green Globe 21 stable at the end of 2002 (IYE - International Year of Eco-tourism). We need to consider whether in the New Zealand context this is an appropriate development.

How do we measure what is being achieved?

What elements of eco-tourism might need to be incorporated to:

- record its positive contributions to the environment;
• monitor and mitigate negative (and cumulative) effects;
• offer guarantees to the visitor,
• protect the label.

Summary

1. The original eco-tourism concept has become increasingly broadened (and some would say devalued) over time.
2. As a concept eco-tourism can be seen as a symbiosis between ecology and tourism. However an “operational definition” of eco-tourism is required to measure (and therefore manage) this actively. Presumably such a definition can only realistically focus on individual activities.
3. What strategies and policies are needed to ensure eco-tourism becomes an ally of nature conservation, e.g. certification, limitations on number of concessions up to ‘limits of acceptable change’? Regardless of the mechanisms developed, experience elsewhere tells us the focus should be based on achieving outcomes, not on the regulation of tourism.
4. How do we measure both eco-tourism benefits and negative impacts (both short and long term)? What are the key performance indicators?
5. A core solution appears to be moving the ‘eco’ label from ‘unowned’ into a ‘common property’ resource whereby those who gain value from it actively seek to protect its value.
6. If certification is the answer what are to be its component parts and how would such a programme operate?

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*Inside Tourism* (a weekly electronic newssheet for the NZ Tourism Industry) South pacific Media Services Ltd, Box 1430, Paraparaumu Beach, NZ (available at: nigel@insidetourism.com)


**WEB References (selected)**

Green Travel Directory of Organisations (lists key organisations with interest in eco-tourism)
http://www.green-travel.com/gtdirog.htm

Eco-tourism statistical fact sheet
http://www.eco-tourism.org/textfiles/stats.txt

Eco-tourism Bibliography
http://www.hawaii.gov/tourism/Eco/Ecoi.html

Performance measurement Reporting
http://iisdl.iisd.ca/about/prodcat/perfrep.html


International Eco-tourism Society
http://www.eco-tourism.org

Eco-tourism Association of Australia
http://www.eco-tourism.org.au
(includes NEAP National Eco-tourism Accreditation Programme).
2.1 Defining the Issues and Developing a Shared Terminology

The purpose of the first session of Day One was to discuss and create a shared understanding for the topic of the workshop ‘Eco-tourism: An ally of nature conservation?’ This entailed both small and large group debate. In addition, a vision statement and two objectives for tourism were presented on Day Two as a basis for further discussion. Pages 15-50 depict the ideas captured in the ‘problem definition’ session of Day One.

One result of this discussion was to amend the boundaries of the topic to ‘Eco-tourism and Nature-based Tourism.’ It was agreed that Nature-based Tourism is the much larger sector of tourism in New Zealand. The management of nature based tourism needs investigation and the workshop participants agreed to focus their energies on this broader sector.
2.2 Keynote Speakers

Geoff Gabites, Adventure South Limited

If we are to debate the role of eco-tourism in New Zealand it is important to understand how tourists learn about tourist activities in New Zealand. With the recent development of the Internet, tourists can learn about tourism opportunities, and contact tourism operators by a variety of pathways. The following diagram illustrates some of those pathways.
Outside clients also contact operator directly (often via internet)
This is a stronger linkage because it takes out the "middle men", but it also negates some of the need for connection to associations.
Patagonia Limited research: Required attributes of outdoor clothing products.
$1 = \text{Unimportant}, \ 5 = \text{Very Important}$. 
New Zealand Eco-tourism, Status Quo

- Mass market and a meaningless label
- Requires only a tickbox selection
- 80-100 true eco-tourism operators often driven by personal values

New Zealand Eco-tourism Requirements

- Control over the use of the label
  - Specific and regulated.
  - Provides benefits to operators and to the environment
- Eco-tourism label to mean something
- Driver
  - Consumer driven and/or
  - Industry regulation
The first of the preceding figures illustrates what Patagonia Limited found in terms of ‘Willingness to Pay’ for outdoor clothing products produced in an environmentally friendly way. Given that environmentally friendly production is ranked only fifth in the required attributes of outdoor clothing, we might wonder how important environmental issues are to tourists. Based upon that question, the following recommendations apply for New Zealand tourism.

**Recommendations for Patagonia/New Zealand Eco-Nature Tourism**

- Focus on a few relevant environmental issues
- Develop green advertisements that provide specific and comprehensible environmental information
- Offer avenues for consumers to contribute to problem solving
- Combine environment with other priority purchasing considerations

Finally, there is a need for branding a standard.

National versus international branding, that’s the question because:

- Today eco-tourism is a devalued label. Certification is better for existing, longer term operators

Last point, “You can’t be green until you come out of the red!”
Bev Abbott, Tourism New Zealand

Introduction
Within seven minutes, I want to provide insights from two quite different perspectives:
• International marketing of New Zealand.
• Some policies for enhancing the contribution of eco-tourism to conservation.

I’ll preface that with some comments about definitions.

It’s a personal contribution that reflects:
• Where I work now – Tourism New Zealand, the Crown agency with responsibility for marketing New Zealand internationally as a visitor destination;
• Where I used to work – Department of Conservation Head Office, especially my roles in public awareness, visitor services and concessions management, and
• My earlier involvement in environmental and outdoor education.

Definitions:

Who needs a definition?

David Simmons’ paper states “what is now required is a prescriptive definition of eco-tourism”. I’m still to be convinced of that. I believe we first need to ask: Who needs a prescriptive definition and why do they need it? We may find that different stakeholders need quite different definitions for different purposes.

Wherever possible, I avoid using the word “eco-tourism” because it has no commonly understood meaning. If pushed, I’ll talk about a continuum of eco-tourism activities, from pale to deep green.

• Pale green is for experiences where visitors just passively observe a species or habitat while listening to a guide;

• Mid green may be an ornithologist who arrives on his/her own with binoculars, notebook and reference books to learn more about the birds in an unfamiliar habitat. Or it may be visitors actively engaged in making a direct, positive contribution to conservation or restoration of habitat,

• Deepest green is for more intense interactions where the visit takes place under very strict impact management regimes and the educational component is interactive and requires higher-level intellectual skills and concepts.

From a marketing perspective, a visitor who gets a pale green experience when they wanted a deep green one is likely to be highly dissatisfied with their experience. Describing both in a brochure or on a website as “eco-tourism” won’t meet visitors’ needs for reliable and accurate information.

PATA also propose levels of eco-tourism, but without the colour-coding. Level five requires the entire system to be operating in an environmentally sound way. This includes the trip advertising (e.g., no direct mail-outs, no advertising in magazines that are not printed on recycled paper); transport (more use of solar and animal transport), accommodation (solar-powered heating and air-conditioning), treatment of waste and so on. (See Appendix 1)
Definitions for New Zealand

I agree with Higham and Carr that the commonly used international definitions may not apply in New Zealand. In particular it's important to recognise the role of the public sector - many visitors' eco-tourism experiences are self-guided visits to conservation areas using DoC's visitor facilities and interpretation services. I'd like to see any definition coming out of this meeting acknowledge both public and private sector provision.

Marketing

Despite the wide interest in nature-based tourism internationally and within New Zealand, the word "eco-tourism" appears to be problematic from a marketing perspective. Two examples:

Views of the international travel trade about "eco-tourism".

The World Tourism Organisation, as part of its contribution to International Year of Eco-tourism (IYE), conducted research in seven countries seen as key generators of eco-tourism. Interestingly, these countries were all western. One component of the research investigated tour operators use of the words "nature tourism" and "eco-tourism" using the following definitions:

Nature Tourism: a form of tourism in which the main motivation is the observation and appreciation of nature.

Eco tourism: a form of tourism with the following characteristics:
1. All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas.

2. Contains educational and interpretation features.

3. Generally, but not exclusively, organised for small groups by specialised and small locally owned businesses. Foreign operators of varying sizes also organise, operate and/or market eco-tourism tours, generally for small groups.


5. Supports the protection of natural areas by:
   a. Generating economic benefits for host communities, organisations and authorities that are responsible for conserving natural areas;
   b. Creating jobs and income opportunities for local communities; and
   c. Increases awareness both among locals and tourists of the need to conserve natural and cultural assets.
The research showed that:

- The sector that most closely matches the WTO definition of eco-tourism is relatively small but may grow faster than other sectors;

- The use of the term eco-tourism in marketing and promotion is relatively limited, and

- There are differences in results between countries, e.g. ecotour operators in the United Kingdom agree with the WTO definition of eco-tourism but German operators don’t.

Two significant comments in the British study:

Focus group meetings with members of the Association of Independent Tour Operators:
“Eco-tourism was felt to be a hangover from the past and to be a meaningless brand name which clients would recognise as having no meaning. Operators felt that were any of their members to use the word eco-tourism as a marketing device, it would be more likely to work negatively against them than to attract clients on the basis of any perceived ethical or environmental credentials. The “eco” prefix was seen as having didactic and self-righteous connotations. It was felt that the word confronted potential clients with responsibilities or demands and was somewhat preachy”.

The Association of British Travel Agents were even more sceptical of the concept:
Most of the agents present commented negatively on the word and mentioned that when they first saw it on the Agenda and heard from the researcher they were not interested. They commented that “eco” makes them think of ecowarriors and the extreme end of the UK green movement. Ecoterrorists, people protesting in trees, and excessively worthy people were the images it brought to mind. Eco-tourism, therefore, was thought of as frill-free travel that would probably involve suffering in the wilderness or jungle.”


With those attitudes prevalent in the UK distribution system, New Zealand may be unwise to promote itself as an eco-tourism destination in the UK.

Use of the word eco-tourism by the industry in New Zealand

For a New Zealand perspective, can look at Tourism New Zealand’s purenz.com internet site. About 4000 tourism businesses link their web sites to this site. To help visitors find what they are looking for, the site offers standard categories such as “land activities, water activities, wild-life encounters, accommodation etc. Eco-tourism is not used but visitors can do a search for companies that use the word “eco-tourism” on their web-sites. It brings up only 25 firms out of about 4000 listings on the site.

Clearly “eco-tourism is not a term that is widely used by New Zealand operators to describe their products.
Policy Perspective: Eco-tourism’s Contribution to Conservation

The WTO has prepared a special report called “Sustainable Development of Eco-tourism: a compilation of good practices” as part of its contribution to IYE. It summarises 55 case studies from throughout the world. Almost all case studies identified tourism as a means of guaranteeing permanent conservation measures and creating economic value for natural habitats and endemic and endangered species.

Conservation results achieved from the projects include:
- Greater government commitment to protecting natural resources;
- Change in the focus of development priorities;
- New legislative and regulatory instruments for environmental protection;
- Rehabilitation of ecosystems and improvements in biodiversity;
- Enhanced co-operation between local communities and authorities in charge of managing protected natural areas, and
- Increased sense of ownership and responsibility for natural resources among local communities.

There is also a list of problems and possible solutions. Many seem more relevant to developing countries than New Zealand given our strong resource management and conservation frameworks.

This seminar, however, forced me to think about the policies I’d like introduced to enhance the contribution of eco-tourism to conservation. Equally important, however, is enhancing the quality of visitors’ experiences.

Three Policies:

1. Adopt a consistent, proactive national approach to visitor management planning that:
   (i) provides place-based descriptions of the types of visitor experiences DoC wants visitors to have
   (ii) measures the cumulative effects of visitor activities and levels of visitor satisfaction with their experiences at those sites

2. Develop policies and mechanisms for restricting access to sites in order to maintain the quality of visitor experiences and/or protect natural and historic resources.

3. Enhance the business relationship between departmental staff and concessionaires and encourage DoC and concessionaires to work together to protect natural and historic resources and enhance the quality of visitor experiences.

Concession documents often set special conditions that require the operators to reduce any negative social, cultural or environmental effect. Conditions are rarely set to enhance positive effects. There is also little use of financial or other incentives to encourage concessionaires to enhance environmental performance, increase conservation awareness or generate benefits for conservation.
Summary

The value of the term “eco-tourism” in marketing destinations and products is not clear.

A small but growing number of visitors want pre-purchase reassurance about the “green-ness” of products.

Both the public and private sectors provide eco-tourism experiences in New Zealand.

Increased benefits to conservation will result from closer working relationships between concessionaires and DoC and incentives in concession documents.

The significant management issues are in nature-based tourism, not eco-tourism.

References:


Pacific Asia Travel Association, “How green is my vacation?” Compass, July-August 2000.
PATA's ECO-TOURISM LEVELS

EL 0  The beginning (zero) level of eco-tourism requires that the traveller be exposed to or made aware of the fragility of the ecosystems they have come to enjoy. This is the very lowest "awareness" threshold. Incidental nature travel would usually qualify at this level.

EL 1  Level 1 eco-tourism requires that a net positive flow of monetary support occur between the travelling ecotourist and the ecosystems visited. Financial earmarks, whether airport departure taxes or designations of a portion of land travel costs, would qualify at this level.

EL 2  Level 2 requires that the ecotourist engage in a personal way in supporting the environment. Some eco-tourists have planted trees; others have participated in litter cleanups.

EL 3  Qualifying at Level 3 requires certifying that the specific tour system is benign to the environment. The system should include the international air travel as well as on-site transport and accommodation. Level 3 requires demonstrating that the net effect of the traveller's presence is neutral or positive.

EL 4  Level 4 requires demonstrating that the net effect of the traveller is positive. On-site efforts to use appropriate technology, low energy consumption, recycling, organic agriculture, sustainable harvesting methods, and make a personal contribution to ecosystem restoration can be used to balance less environmentally benign aspects of the larger travel system that might involve air travel, stays in luxury hotels and excessive energy consumption.

EL 5  A perfect 5 in eco-tourism would be a trip where the entire system was operating in an environmentally sound way. This means that the trip advertising, transport, accommodation, and treatment of residual products must all be considered.

Source: PATA Compass – July-August 2000
Ecotourism - an ally of nature conservation

Malcolm Anderson
Manager
Tourism Planning & Development
Tourism Industry Association New Zealand
Ecotourism - an ally of nature conservation

- What is it?
- Why bother?
- What next?
- Ally or foe?
- Challenges
Ecotourism - an ally of nature conservation

- What is it?

- Sustainable tourism with a natural area focus, which benefits the environment and communities visited, and fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and awareness.

  Mohonk 2000
Ecotourism - an ally of nature conservation

- What next?
  - Launch of draft international standard
  - NZ part of the global standard
  - Integrated into GG 21 programme
  - Integration into Qualmark
  - Ecotourism - subset of sustainable tourism
Ecotourism - an ally of nature conservation

- Ally or foe?
- Outcome based
- Social / cultural
- Interpretation / advocacy
- Ecological
- Economic
Ecotourism - an ally of nature conservation

- Challenges
  - Ecotourism is...
  - North vs South
  - Driver of change through all tourism
  - Single global brand/s
  - Industry based / owned
  - Outcome based not process
  - Sharing the knowledge
Ecotourism - an ally of nature conservation

"Lead follow or get the hell out of the way...."

Ted Turner. CNN
Ecotourism - an ally of nature conservation

Why bother?

- Ecotourism will always be a minority
- A subset of sustainable tourism
- Supports NZ's branding
- Enough talk and research
A definition is here.

- What next? New Zealand must have a national standard, tying into Qualmark, Green Globe 21 and the international standard
- New Zealand must buy into the global standard
- Certification
- Does the tourism industry want to save the goose that lays the golden eggs?
EquiToursim Inue
Manager's Perspective

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai
Join an informative, non-impact, personalised boat tour of the Bendigo wetlands and experience first-hand the beauty of a natural ecosystem on the edge of Lake Dunstan.

Observe a wide variety of waterfowl and protected birds in their natural environment, with amazing photographic opportunities. Pukeko, Banded Dotterel, Welcome Swallow, Scaup, White-faced Heron, Black-fronted Tern, and many more.

- Courtesy vehicle available
- Up to four per boat
- Duration at least three hours
- Light refreshments supplied
Is this an Ecotourist?

- Setting?
- Information?
- Thoughts?
- Experience?
- Impacts?
- Speed of Transit
NZ Conservation Manager’s Perspective

• Three Dominant Perspectives - David Simmons
  – Commercial, Conservation, Community
• Conservationists view ecotourism as a tool for nature conservation
Conservation Manager’s Perspective II

- David Simmons’ definition is useful
- DOC perspective: well-managed ecotourism makes a positive contribution
- DOC’s major tourism concerns are managing impacts of forecast growth and providing recreation facilities
- Ecotourism has a marginal effect on these
Choices

- Do the benefits of an ecotourism strategy and certification scheme outweigh the costs?
- Certified Ecotourism niche
  or
- Mainstream NZ tourism as eco-based tourism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-quality eco-tourism niche</th>
<th>Provides some direct conservation benefits at the margin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream eco-based tourism</td>
<td>Provides tools for managing major conservation impacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can we do both? Perhaps not
SECTION 3: Plenary Discussion
Following the four initial presentations, workshop participants quickly reached consensus that eco-tourism was being defined internationally and there was little point in New Zealand attempting to develop competing definitions. It was agreed that eco-tourism operations had to be able to demonstrate they were ecologically, economically and socially sustainable. Flock Hill participants agreed that eco-tourism was a small subset of nature-based tourism. The group judged that it was not likely that eco-tourism performance could provide a benchmark to use to achieve better performance from mainstream tourism. The conclusion of the discussion was a logical outcome - the workshop would be best to examine the larger nature-based tourism sector, which encompassed eco-tourism. The three questions posed in David Simmons' introductory paper could be directed toward nature-based tourism.
Questions to be Discussed

• Do we need to define the term, or has eco-tourism already been defined?
• What does a definition matter anyway?
• Certification, if it’s desired, then a definition is necessary. If not, then no definition required.
• Are we talking mainstream tourism and not eco-tourism? Sustainability of all tourism?
• We must make this workshop work for us

From the Audience

• No definitions and certifications
• Let’s jump straight into policies and proposals
• How to sustain the environmental resource with tourism, then policies and strategies
• What is tourism’s responsibility and contribution to the resource base?

Sustainability

• Not just horizontal, but vertical through all issues
• Social, economic, environmental, but also a clear link to customers expressed in many ways
• International and domestic

Certification

< Eco-tourism

Verification

Definition (GLOBAL)

MAINSTREAM TOURISM

SUSTAINABILITY

[Politics/Strategies]
(include ‘eco’ issues)

ECO TOURISM

Nature based

MAINSTREAM TOURISM

*Industry responsibilities

Other
FACILITATOR'S FRAMEWORK
The facilitators created this framework over the lunch break in response to the morning discussion.

Policy Issues

Economic

Social/Cultural

Biophysical

Energy

Verification/Certification

Integration

(a) Eco-tourism

(b) Sustainability

(c) Tourism (General)
SECTION 4: Breakout Groups
Based on the previous two diagrams and the plenary discussion, three breakout groups were set up to address each of the three topics, Eco-tourism, Sustainability and Tourism (general). The workshop theme, is eco-tourism an ally of nature conservation?

4.1 Eco-tourism Group Response

Integration
Relationships

ECONOMIC
Economically, eco-tourism businesses need to examine their viability/work as a lifestyle. This would include:

- A long term view of the operation
- Certification, ensuring quality and best practice
- A business plan that assists initial start-up, but also allows for future success or failure

SOCIO-CULTURAL
What are the socio cultural issues associated with eco-tourism? For both the visitor and host community?

- Consumers/visitor satisfaction
- Crowding
- Regional Economic Development, is this reasonable or possible?
- Appropriate interpretation includes or incorporates Maori knowledge
- Employment; is the ‘local’ skill base able to provide for eco-tourism?
- Socio-cultural issues and the way they are dealt with have a strong link to economic performance

BIOPHYSICAL

- The importance of healthy biophysical features trickle out as links to other sectors, therefore image is important. ‘Clean, green New Zealand’
- Use and thus impact is concentrated at hotspots
- Main focus is currently ‘social’ capacity except special sites. This focus needs to broaden and include: cultural, environmental and physical carrying capacities

ENERGY

- For the eco-tourism sector or the whole tourism sector?
- Transport links are where the bulk of tourist’s energy is used
- Eco – regions, is this a solution?
4.2 Tourism (General) Group Response

These points were discussed by the ‘Bottom Uppers’ group:

- Must manage visitor experience/opportunities so they are economically, socially, environmentally sustainable i.e. triple bottom line.

- A free resource leads to exploitation: tragedy of the commons. Need to measure change and charge for this, i.e. access charges.

- Public good – what’s the cost of restoring the environment? If set desired environment conditions, can the private sector contribute to maintenance? An example, concessionaires stoat trapping - a symbiotic relationship between industry and environment.

- Numbers effects will need to be controlled to protect public good, via a variety of mechanisms e.g. pricing seasonality.

4.3 Sustainability Group Response

This group examined sustainability from a mainly economic focus.

- There are no panaceas from certification of businesses
- What the eco-tourism sector needs are more viable businesses

In terms of infrastructure, charges do not currently cover costs, i.e. tracks, huts etc

Question: How do we fund infrastructure? Taxes, charges etc.

Question: How do we control total usage rates?

Currently there is easy entry into the tourism industry and thus certifying businesses may not solve the problem.

Some possible options:

- Self regulation
- Tendering of access to sites
- Better use of the RMA
- Limited concessions

What control can the RTO’s have? And what role do they play presently? Can we bring them into the loop?

This is a complex problem —→ it will need several instruments to solve

But we must maintain entrepreneurial drive and protect the small businesses in the tourism industry.
4.4 Additional Plenary Comments

Everything has an echo
- Tourism is customer/demand driven
- Everything is thus echoed, based on what the tourist wants

Tourism is just a subset of business activity

Can we tie the whole tourism system into the nature-based facets of New Zealand?
- Nature-based tourism is the key for visitors coming to NZ
- International and domestic tourists must be catered for
5.1 Kura Tawhiti

Flock Hill participants drove ten kilometres to Kura Tawhiti/Castle Hill, for a guided visit to this unique area. Kura Tawhiti is a topuni site, as part of the Ngai Tahu settlement. Interpretation was provided by Joseph Hullen; Joseph is a member of the local runanga and is contracted by the Department of Conservation to provide on site interpretation for visitors during the summer.

Traditionally, Kura Tawhiti was a meeting place of Maori travellers, providing a forum where those travelling to and from the West Coast could meet. Today, Kura Tawhiti attracts several thousand visitors each year. The limestone boulders are a mecca for boulderers and rock climbers; it is arguably New Zealand’s most important bouldering area, while the unusual shaped rocks, the remnant plants, and several cultural features attract other visitors. For many years the site was believed to contain a rare and endangered plant, however, research established some years ago that it was in fact a variant of a widely distributed species.

An access way across private land leads to the site. The Department of Conservation has worked with the runanga to provide several interpretation panels at the site. A vault toilet has been installed at the site by the Department of Conservation. Parts of the site are fenced off in an attempt to reduce foot traffic and allow the remnant vegetation a chance to recover.

Despite efforts to inform visitors of the significance of the site, and to manage the harmful effects of tourism, several issues were identified during the visit. They included: defacing of Maori rock art; uncontrolled deterioration of Maori rock art; bolting of rock climbing routes; non-inclusion of rock climbers in co-management; crude fencing to protect vegetation; waste from the toilet being transported over the stream which flows through the site; confusion over the need for tourism operators to hold concessions if they wish to bring tourists onto the site.

The field trip and recognition of issues surrounding Kura Tawhiti provided workshop participants with a common focus for the following days discussion.
5.2 Comments on the Field Trip to Kura Tawhiti

The visit to Kura Tawhiti was definitely an eco-tourism field trip.

Management issues
- Why can’t we protect the rock art? No other culture would allow its art to deteriorate without attempting to protect and restore it
- Protection and enforcement are issues
- Co-management issue
  - Conflicts between use values and protection values
  - Need to ensure operators have knowledge, respect and appropriate interpretation regarding Maori issues
- Toilet issue, we need to get smarter on conflicts and potential conflicts

Maori in tourism. Key points:
- Beliefs of local people must be recognised
- Liaison between operator/local people is important
- Interpretation of sites is essential

Conflicts over property rights
- Same debate as overseas, misunderstanding is the key factor in property rights issues in New Zealand
- Need redefinition of property rights with respect to rights of access and traditional needs

Concessions
- Who needs them and where do you need them?
- Confusion exists over the need for, nature of, and locations covered by concessions
- Confusion occurs amongst concessionaires
- No enforcement, and non-granting of concessions leads to underground activities - can lead to worse practices if these are not guided or controlled

- Response is that you need a concession to visit all conservation land
- How do you rationalise concessions with respect to customary rights?

- Interpretation of fieldtrip has changed ideas
- Co-management is useful between DoC and Iwi.
- Consultation is flawed, co-management is what is needed
- Co-management doesn’t have to be 50/50

Who should be included in co-management groups? Need to recognise the social values of different groups and stakeholders.
SECTION 6:  A Vision and Objectives for New Zealand tourism
6.1 Organisers’ Comment

On Tuesday evening the Flock Hill organisers discussed with several people the focus of the workshop. It was determined that proposing a Vision and Objectives for tourism would provide a clearer focus for the ongoing workshop discussions. The following vision and objectives were proposed on day two. They were generally supported by workshop participants.

A Vision for New Zealand tourism:

*A tourism sector that supports a healthy environment.*

Participants recognised the need to develop strategies and policies to manage or moderate the negative effects of tourism and the workshop resolved to focus its energy on those issues.

Two objectives were agreed:

1. *To ensure those in the tourism industry operate in accordance with eco-tourism and nature based tourism standards, attract customers and contribute to maintaining and improving the environment.*

2. *To ensure the cumulative effects of the eco-tourism and nature based tourism industry on New Zealand’s natural and cultural heritage are neutral or positive.*
6.2 Plenary evaluation of Vision and Objectives

The overarching principle is a healthy environment; this is New Zealand’s advantage in the world market. What do we need to ensure a healthy environment?

Objectives restated as:
1. A behavioural approach (operating system, inputs)
2. RMA stance (cumulative effects - focus on outcomes)

- Tourism industry, who is this?
  Concessionaires only account for a small number of users, thus a small impact. What about the larger user groups on conservation estate, those that are self-guiding visitors?

What of the role of TLA's with regards to land and water bodies under their jurisdiction that are utilised by tourism?

Does there need to be a change in focus to tourism activities?

- Key focus areas are sites of capacity/high impacts and/or high number of concessions
- These areas are visited more by international tourists
- Domestic visitors don’t necessarily use a concessionaire and tend to visit the less-visited areas

The question remains, are we discussing tourism in natural settings or tourism in the natural setting of New Zealand?

Impacts of tourism are largely in service hubs, not onsite

Is Objective One unrealistic? Should we bring the discussion focus back to eco-tourism? You can’t focus on the whole industry, but can either focus on the trickle down or build up?

Eco-tourism has key experiences for its clients, but are there:
- standards?
- goals?
- policies that would address the objectives?

Take Objective One, what can we do, what are the pros and cons, who needs to do what?

It’s far too difficult to discuss strategies individually.
SECTION 7: Breakout Group Topics
7.1 Participant Break Out Groups

Participants broke into groups to discuss the following topics:

1=ES 1*  Land, Water status  
Flexibility, cope with new demand

2= Certification  

3  Resource use charging (concessions)

ES 4  access, enable/restrict

5  organisational structure

3=  (conservation volunteer holidays)

6  mechanisms for nature investment

1=ES 7  Destination management (monitor cumulative impacts)

1=ES 8  Community control

4= 9  Positioning in the market

10  Education, clients, operators

Notes:
* Numbers indicate topics covered by different groups
ES=Environmental Systems group
Group 3 disbanded shortly after the discussion began and members dispersed into other groups.

Each group was to discuss and report back on:

1. Strategies/policies
2. Positives/negatives
3. Action statement
4. Weighting re: Objectives ‘1’ or ‘2’

With respect to:

1. Certification (Objective 1)
2. Resource use charging (Objectives 1,2)

3. Establishing land status

4. Cumulative impacts monitoring (Objective 2)

5. Role of local communities, especially if controls applied (Objectives 1,2)

6. Links to New Zealand positioning in market (Objectives 1,2)

Questions and additional thoughts prior to break out, re: objectives

- Pressure points – Are we talking concessionaires vs. all visitors?

- How do we manage natural assets vs. visitor hubs?

The following structure may be in place:

```
Input controls
  " " Property rights

Output controls
  " " Effectiveness
        " " yield/structure
```

- Objectives, norms, standards, benchmark conditions (management) – for Eco-tourism or all Nature-based tourism? Values

- Customers – demand, etc. (Objective 1)

- Education component (Objectives 1,2)
7.2 Group One (Environment) Response

We need to clarify expectations and values at places/sites, as each exists within its own geographical, cultural, social, economic and environmental context.

There needs to be an improved community consultation process for defining desired outcomes at places/sites. DoC is improving the process so that strategies and plans improve outcomes at places/sites.

The RMA and TLA’s should provide the process for the extensive number of non-DoC sites within their jurisdiction. TLA’s need to be engaged and encouraged to take this responsibility for tourism.

There must be a building of knowledge resources, i.e.
- What is important in places (values etc.)?
- The TRC must revisit priorities, and re-provision to communicate and disseminate existing knowledge

There must be an application/interpretation of research, thereby linking science to businesses and local communities. This would enable communities to utilise research and knowledge specific to their areas, thereby improving operations and sustainability.

Prioritising of sites on public and private land should take place with a view to protection of important sites, sites that have the potential to become tourism hotspots.
- Addressing tenure issues and access regimes

Discussion of ‘destination management’.
- The RMA is reactive, there is need for a framework which allows for anticipatory action e.g. set-up local boards; plan preparation
- Processes do exist, however, existing plans are deficient especially with regards to tourism

ACTIONS:
- Better strategic assessment of plan change - the Ministry of Tourism
- Next round of plans should include tourism input - identification of areas, sites, rules, and policies - Local Government New Zealand strategy group
- Tourism component into the QP process of the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Tourism

Notes:
- Discussing access and New Zealand’s unusual freedom of access - due to peculiarities of large natural areas and a small population, leading to few pressures until recently.
- Territorial land authorities control coastal land and water, inadequate processes for dealing with tourism at present
7.3 Group Two (Environmental Systems) Response

- Certification
- Resource charging/concessions
- Access

1. Certification

- strong driver to change behaviour
- international recognition
- easy to understand
- incentives eg. Marketing, Visitor Information Network
- benefits – Companies, clients – environment
- simplicity – Qualmark/Green Globe 21
- small sector size/uptake

2. Concessions

If concessions are the only mechanism this influences only a small proportion of use

On site managers $ Costs
Need to charge (key hot spots)

Public versus private- good tension

Backlash

- Need to charge at hotspots
- Change New Zealand’s attitude/culture with relation to freedom of access versus user pays
- Need for interpretation- education and experience
- Encourage DoC to use their ability to charge for road use
- Use charging intelligently

ACTIONS

- Simple statement to explain the proposed certification process for eco-tourism and tourism generally
  – NZTIA, Qualmark, Green Globe 21

Concessions:

- Identify the 10-20 hotspots and ‘charge’ to cover ‘costs’ (regarding impacts, rationing, access) (DoC)

- Need to clarify/explore public/private aspects. (DoC/Industry)

- Develop a proactive approach to promoting concessions. (DoC/Industry)
Positioning in the market. Etc.

EDUCATION ACTIONS

- Include need for education in concessions and provide information/advice – DoC
- Encourage active input from DoC in ‘guide’ training – appropriate in timing, content, location, ‘cost’ – DoC
- Disseminate information / provision thereof that is available and co-ordinate between agencies, e.g., CRI’s, universities – processes – TRC, NZTIA

POSITIONING EXTRA ACTIONS:

- Implement needs, expectations, resources-integration

EDUCATION / INFO

Destination Management

Land/Water Status

Environment

Industry

Resource charging

Outcome

Monitor

Inputs

Certification

Incentives

NZ positioning
Visitor Information Centres
Marketing ‘clubs’

Ecolabels?

Consumer

Domestic

International
7.4 Group Four (Positioning in the Market) Response

- New Zealand 100% experience

National and local alignment of positioning with Regional plus alignment, regional variation
bottom driven – Tourism New Zealand, local government, RTO’s (best practice)

- loss of local autonomy

1. Marketing tourism excellence
   Quality promotion
   - tourism awards, etc.

2. Eco-tourism for all clients in all seasons.

   Promote and push NZTIA – cultural awareness/understanding.
   Some tourists with Korean guides were recently told deserted beaches were unsafe!
   Align marketing and destination management/capacity (Tourism New Zealand)
   (who should limit)

   - If we don’t address this, there will be oversupply of visitors leading to harmful impacts
   - We need product management.

EDUCATION

- Push for education in concessions workshops
- Green Globe 21 indicator/Quality Tourism Standards
- Industry auditing of interpretation.
- Promote the positive environmental case studies

Notes:
- Communication within the industry
- DoC needs to be pro-active with concessionaires regarding information.
  Hard to get some information.
  Information flows in systems linking processes
- Research by academics isn’t reaching the ground level, “but withering on the vine”
- How does NZTIA communicate with small businesses?
- Use New Zealand expertise
- Need to match expectations of clients to what the destination can provide.
The organisers invited two people to provide reaction and comments on what they had heard at the workshop. A summary of their points is provided below:

8.1 A Personal Perspective on Eco-tourism

1. Eco-tourism is a form of nature-based tourism
   • Eco-tourism is a subset of nature-based tourism
   • Eco-tourism has an educational component
   • Eco-tourism challenges value, thereby demonstrates allegiance

2. Eco-tourism challenges tourists in variety of ways
   • But it needs to satisfy visitors and still be financially viable

3. Do we really know what is happening in the Eco-tourism sector?
   • How many of us have experienced eco-tourism?
     Are we aware of operators?
     Aware of types of eco-tourism?
     Aware of constraints?
     Aware of goals?
     Aware of visitor types?
     Aware of lifestyle choices?
     Aware of the range of types of organisations?

4. We have some world class eco-tourism operations in New Zealand, which results in visitor value changes.

5. Face very challenging operating environment, e.g. with regards to certification, concessions visitor management, impact management, business/financial planning, product development, competition, stakeholder demands, cultural issues, branding, community involvement, other business developments.

   • Operators need knowledge, business needs finance management and visitor management
   • We need simplicity for compliance
     Cooperation
     Best-practices
     Education and training
   • Need to understand issues such as land status, branding, interpretation, community involvement.
   • Eco-tourism exists in conflict with other industries
8.2 A Perspective on What I’ve Heard

- What are we trying to achieve?
- We need to be clearer about effects
- Service directed at outcomes
- We need to monitor impacts, which is the big challenge
- Agnostic of certification
- Charging is a shift from the thinking of 5-10 years ago, but may be due to twice the number of tourists in New Zealand
- Cumulative impacts are the real challenge
8.3 Audience Plenary Discussions
The following is comments taken from the audience’s final discussion of the plenary. Comments are grouped according to their relative topic.

- The tourism industry is young – a long way behind much of the economy, but that doesn’t mean it should not learn from other industry lessons, e.g. research.
- Research results are not being disseminated

- Vision / objectives a good start - some strategies already underway.
- The role of Local Government New Zealand is pivotal, but we are uncertain about how their engagement will occur. The multiplier effect is poorly addressed and understood. Local government needs to engage, communicate and understand.

- We don’t need more organizations or systems, biggest challenge is the non-unified industry.
- Without tourism some communities would fail and collapse.
- Resist temptation to create entities, but a co-ordination challenge.

- Strategies/policy ideas will help.
- Pressure on DoC is dismaying at times, but the diagram in Section 8.2 above is happening.

- Illegal guiding – many small, marginally viable, businesses – no concessions, limited NZ component, non-member NZTIA – We know little about this sector which is in the Nature-based tourism sector. Financially significant against its competitors. Research / knowledge needed regarding the scale – some knowledge, but lacking in significance.
- Large responsible operators need protection from illegal guiding
- How do we connect small businesses, provide them with information to get them into industry and systems?
- Network of small operators at the local level, e.g. good links, small local groups, network of all involved moving upwards rather than down

Network better at a local level – Ashburton is a good example, RTO’s

- Creatively using concessions can actively help protect ‘values’, Eg. Nugget Point penguin viewing where DoC wasn’t interested in granting concessions and managing the site, thus the response was free access. Free access was a bigger problem, so introducing a “user pay” system would benefit environment.
- Cumulative effects are thus the problem, controls over access can solve this.
- Need a change in culture as sites become “scarce resources”
  Access – assess the variety of mechanisms that can be used, e.g., concessions, certification, zoning, charging.
- Monitoring effects, indicators of health. Monitoring the health of environment much like we monitor our own health.
- In regards to access and charging, we need visitor management rather than access restrictions.
About the environment

In the environment

For the environment

- Role of the guide in eco-tourism is pivotal – performance of guide needs certification. Levels of interpretation / challenge. Interpretation needs to be in the environment, about the environment and for the environment.
Letter to Invitees

ICNC Forum 16-17 April 2002, Flock Hill, Canterbury.

_Eco-tourism – An ally of nature conservation?_
_Defining the rules and measuring the outcomes_

Tourism is now New Zealand’s largest foreign exchange earner. The combined numbers of international and domestic tourists travelling in New Zealand now average 250,000 per day. Nature and natural features are key attractions for tourists within New Zealand and eco-tourism is widely recognised as a major component of tourism both here and internationally. Uncontrolled tourism can, and has, contributed in many cases to degradation of key tourism attractions. National parks, reserves and many other natural areas are predominantly in mountainous regions. The areas of these sites are in many cases large, but their capacities to cater for growing numbers of visitors can readily be reached and exceeded.

Does the term eco-tourism have a well-understood meaning? Does this form of tourism contribute to degradation of nature? Can it be harnessed to contribute positively to nature conservation? What industry codes are required to ensure that eco-tourism makes a positive contribution to nature conservation? What measurements are needed to determine if eco-tourism makes a positive contribution to nature conservation? Who will collect this data?

The International Centre for Nature Conservation at Lincoln University is organising a forum of key thinkers to address these issues and contribute to development of policy in New Zealand. Three questions will provide focus for the forum:

➢ Is eco-tourism an ally of nature conservation?
➢ What strategies and policies are required to ensure that eco-tourism contributes to nature conservation?
➢ How can this positive role of eco-tourism be verified?

A background paper summarising some of the issues and outlining some of the options will be provided during February to participants.

Our intention is to assemble a group of no more than 40 people, who during two days, can identify the issues, canvas the range of options open to New Zealand, debate the merits of the options and develop recommendations for action. Invitees are invited as individuals not as representatives of institutions. Two skilled facilitators will be present during the forum as participants grapple with these issues and find paths to consensus and recommendations. Scribes will record key decisions of the working groups. It is anticipated that a statement of recommendations will be released at the end of the forum.

The forum location, Flock Hill, is situated one hours drive west of Christchurch, en route to Arthurs Pass. It provides comfortable accommodation and meeting rooms in the attractive surroundings of the Craigieburn Basin. The forum commences 10.30am Tuesday April 16, and concludes 3.00pm Wednesday April 17.
Funding

Developing policy is a public good project. Travel from Christchurch to Flock Hill and return, accommodation and meals at Flock Hill will be provided by the Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation. Participants are asked to meet their own travel costs to Christchurch Airport.

IAN SPELLERBERG
Director, Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation
List of Participants

Bev Abbott
Malcolm Anderson
John Barrett
Susanne Becken
Paul Bingham
Paul Blashcke
Kay Booth
Gordon Cessford
Ross Cullen
Geoff Gabites
David Given
Phil Hart
James Higham
Ken Hughey
Joseph Hullen
Diana, Lady Isaac
Keith Johnston
Alan Joliffe
Jason Leppens
Pat Maher
John Moriarty
David Simmons
Ian Spellerberg
Nick Taylor
Andy Thompson
Julie Warren
Richard Wesley
Québec Declaration on Ecotourism

In the framework of the UN International Year of Ecotourism, 2002, under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO), over one thousand participants coming from 132 countries, from the public, private and non-governmental sectors met at the World Ecotourism Summit, hosted in Québec City, Canada, by Tourisme Québec and the Canadian Tourism Commission, between 19 and 22 May 2002.

TheQuébec Summit represented the culmination of 18 preparatory meetings held in 2001 and 2002, involving over 3,000 representatives from national and local governments including the tourism, environment and other administrations, private ecotourism businesses and their trade associations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and consultants, intergovernmental organizations, and indigenous and local communities.

This document takes into account the preparatory process, as well as the discussions held during the Summit. Although it is the result of a multistakeholder dialogue, it is not a negotiated document. Its main purpose is the setting of a preliminary agenda and a set of recommendations for the development of ecotourism activities in the context of sustainable development.

The participants at the Summit acknowledge the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, August/September 2002, as the ground-setting event for international policy in the next 10 years, and emphasize that, as a leading industry, the sustainability of tourism should be a priority at WSSD due to its potential contribution to poverty alleviation and environmental protection in critically endangered ecosystems. Participants therefore request the UN, its organizations and member governments represented at this Summit to disseminate the following Declaration and other results from the World Ecotourism Summit at the WSSD.

The participants to the World Ecotourism Summit, aware of the limitations of this consultative process to incorporate the input of the large variety of ecotourism stakeholders, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local and indigenous communities,

 Acknowledge that tourism has significant and complex social, economic and environmental implications,

 Consider the growing interest of people in traveling to natural areas,

 Emphasize that ecotourism should contribute to make the overall tourism industry more sustainable, by increasing economic benefits for host communities, actively contributing to the conservation of natural resources and the cultural integrity of host communities, and by increasing awareness of travelers towards the conservation of natural and cultural heritage,

 Recognize the cultural diversity associated with natural areas, particularly because of the historical presence of local communities, of which some have maintained
their traditional knowledge, uses and practices many of which have proven to be sustainable over the centuries,

_Reiterate_ that funding for the conservation and management of biodiverse and culturally rich protected areas has been documented to be inadequate worldwide,

_Rekognize_ that sustainable tourism can be a leading source of revenue for protected areas,

_Rekognize further_ that many of these areas are home to rural peoples often living in poverty, who frequently lack adequate health care, education facilities, communications systems, and other infrastructure required for genuine development opportunity,

_Affirm_ that different forms of tourism, especially ecotourism, if managed in a sustainable manner can represent a valuable economic opportunity for local populations and their cultures and for the conservation and sustainable use of nature for future generations,

_Emphazize_ that at the same time, wherever and whenever tourism in natural and rural areas is not properly planned, developed and managed, it contributes to the deterioration of natural landscapes, threats to wildlife and biodiversity, poor water quality, poverty, displacement of indigenous and local communities, and the erosion of cultural traditions,

_Acknowledge_ that ecotourism must recognize and respect the land rights of indigenous and local communities, including their protected, sensitive and sacred sites,

_Strength_ that to achieve equitable social, economic and environmental benefits from ecotourism and other forms of tourism in natural areas, and to minimize or avoid potential negative impacts, participative planning mechanisms are needed that allow local and indigenous communities, in a transparent way, to define and regulate the use of their areas at the local level, including the right to opt out of tourism development,

_Note_ that small and micro businesses seeking to meet social and environmental objectives are often operating in a development climate that does not provide suitable financial and marketing support for this specialized new market, and that to achieve this goal further understanding of the ecotourism market will be required through market research at the destination level, specialized credit instruments for tourism businesses, grants for external costs, incentives for the use of sustainable energy and innovative technical solutions, and an emphasis on developing skills not only in business but within government and those seeking to support business solutions,

In light of the above, the participants of the Summit produced a series of recommendations to governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, community-based associations, academic and research institutions, inter-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, development assistance agencies, and indigenous and local communities, presented in an annex to this Declaration.
The participants to the World Ecotourism Summit, having met in Quebec City, from 19 to 22 May 2002, propose the following recommendations:

A. To Governments

1. **formulate** national, regional and local ecotourism policies and development strategies that are consistent with the overall objectives of sustainable development, and to do so through a wide consultation process with those who are likely to become involved in, affect, or be affected by ecotourism activities. Furthermore, the principles that apply to ecotourism should be broadened out to cover the entire tourism sector;

2. In conjunction with local communities, the private sector, NGOs and all ecotourism stakeholders, **guarantee** the protection of nature, local cultures and specially traditional knowledge and genetic resources;

3. **ensure** the involvement, appropriate participation and necessary coordination of all the relevant public institutions at the national, provincial and local level, (including the establishment of inter-ministerial working groups as appropriate) at different stages in the ecotourism process, while at the same time opening and facilitating the participation of other stakeholders in ecotourism-related decisions. Furthermore, adequate budgetary mechanisms and appropriate legislative frameworks be set up to allow implementation of the objectives and goals set up by these multistakeholder bodies;

4. **include** in the above framework the necessary regulatory and monitoring mechanisms at the national, regional and local levels, including objective sustainability indicators jointly agreed with all stakeholders and environmental impact assessment studies, to prevent or minimize the occurrence of negative impacts upon communities or the natural environment. Monitoring results should be made available to the general public, since this information will allow tourists to choose an operator who adopts ecotourism principles over one who does not;

5. **develop** the local and municipal capacity to implement growth management tools such as zoning, and participatory land-use planning not only in protected areas but in buffer zones and other ecotourism development zones;

6. **use** internationally approved and reviewed guidelines to develop certification schemes, ecolabels and other voluntary initiatives geared towards sustainability in ecotourism, encouraging private operators to join such schemes and promoting their recognition by consumers. However, certification systems should reflect regional and sub-regional criteria and build capacity and provide financial support to make these schemes accessible to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). A regulatory framework is needed for such schemes to fulfill their mission;
7. *ensure* the provision of technical, financial and human resources development support to micro, small and medium-sized firms, which are the core of ecotourism, with a view to enable them to start, grow and develop their businesses in a sustainable manner. Similarly, that appropriate infrastructure is established in areas with ecotourism potential to stimulate the emergence of local enterprises.

8. *define* appropriate policies, management plans, and interpretation programs for visitors, and to earmark adequate sources of funding for protected natural areas to manage (rapidly growing) visitor numbers and protect vulnerable ecosystems, and effectively prevent the use of conservation hotspots. Such plans should include clear norms, direct and indirect management strategies, and regulations with the funds to ensure monitoring of social and environmental impacts for all ecotourism businesses operating in the area, as well as for tourists wishing to visit them;

9. *include* micro, small and medium-sized ecotourism companies, as well as community-based and NGO-based ecotourism operations in the overall promotional strategies and programmes carried out by the National Tourism Administration, both in the international and domestic markets;

10. *develop* regional networks and cooperation for promotion and marketing of ecotourism products at the international and national levels;

11. *provide* incentives to tourism operators (such as marketing and promotion advantages) for them to adopt ecotourism principles and make their operations more environmentally, socially and culturally responsible;

12. *ensure* that basic environmental and health standards are defined for all ecotourism development even in the most rural areas and in national and regional parks, that can play a pilot role. This should include aspects such as site selection, planning, design, the treatment of solid waste, sewage, and the protection of watersheds, etc., and *ensure* also that ecotourism development strategies are not undertaken by governments without investment in sustainable infrastructure and the reinforcement of local/municipal capabilities to regulate and monitor such aspects;

13. *invest*, or support institutions that invest in research programmes on ecotourism and sustainable tourism. To institute baseline studies and surveys that record plant and animal life, with special attention to endangered species, as part of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for any proposed ecotourism development;

14. *support* the further development of the international principles, guidelines and codes of ethics for sustainable tourism (e.g. such as those proposed by the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNEP, WTO) for the enhancement of international and national legal frameworks, policies and master plans to implement the concept of sustainable development into tourism;

15. *consider* as one option the reallocation of tenure and management of public lands, from extractive or intensive productive sectors to tourism combined with conservation, wherever this is likely to improve the net social, economic and environmental benefit for the community concerned;
16. **promote** and develop educational programmes addressed to children and young people to enhance awareness about nature conservation and sustainable use, local and indigenous cultures and their relationship with ecotourism;

17. **promote** collaboration between outbound tour operators and incoming operators and other service providers and NGOs at the destination to further educate tourists and influence their behaviour at destinations, especially those in developing countries.

**B. The private sector**

18. **conceive, develop and conduct** their businesses minimizing negative effects on, and positively contributing to, the conservation of sensitive ecosystems and the environment in general, and directly benefiting local communities;

19. **bear** in mind that for ecotourism businesses to be sustainable, they need to be profitable for all stakeholders involved, including the projects’ owners, investors, managers and employees, as well as the communities and the conservation organizations of natural areas where it takes place;

20. **adopt** a reliable certification or other systems of voluntary regulation, such as ecolabels, in order to demonstrate to their potential clients their adherence to sustainability principles and the soundness of the products and services they offer;

21. **cooperate** with governmental and non-governmental organizations in charge of protected natural areas and conservation of biodiversity, ensuring that ecotourism operations are practiced according to the management plans and other regulations prevailing in those areas, so as to minimize any negative impacts upon them while enhancing the quality of the tourism experience and contribute financially to the conservation of natural resources;

22. **make** increasing use of local materials and products, as well as local logistical and human resource inputs in their operations, in order to maintain the overall authenticity of the ecotourism product and increase the proportion of financial and other benefits that remain at the destination. To achieve this, private operators should invest in the training of the local workforce;

23. **ensure** that the supply chain used in building up an ecotourism operation is thoroughly sustainable and consistent with the level of sustainability aimed at in the final product or service to be offered to the customer;

24. **work** actively with indigenous leadership to ensure that indigenous cultures and communities are depicted accurately and with respect, and that their staff and guests are well and accurately informed regarding local indigenous sites, customs and history;

25. **promote** among their clients, the tourists, a more ethical behavior vis-à-vis the ecotourism destinations visited, providing environmental education to travelers,
professionals and fostering inter-cultural understanding, as well as encouraging voluntary contributions to support local community or conservation initiatives;

26. *diversify* their offer by developing a wide range of tourist activities at a given destination and extending their operation to different destinations in order to spread the potential benefits of ecotourism and to avoid overcrowding some selected ecotourism sites, thus threatening their long-term sustainability. In this regard, private operators are urged to respect, and contribute to, established visitor impact management systems of ecotourism destinations;

27. *create* and *develop* funding mechanisms for the operation of business associations or cooperatives that can assist with ecotourism training, marketing, product development, research and financing;

28. In relation to the above points, *formulate* and *implement* company policies for sustainable tourism with a view to applying them in each part of the ecotourism operation.

C. Non-Governmental Organizations, community-based associations, academic and research institutions.

29. *provide* technical, financial, educational, capacity building and other support to ecotourism destinations, host community organizations, small businesses and the corresponding local authorities in order to ensure that appropriate policies, development and management guidelines, and monitoring mechanisms are being applied towards sustainability;

30. *monitor* and conduct research on the actual impacts of ecotourism activities upon ecosystems, biodiversity, local indigenous cultures and the socio-economic fabric of the ecotourism destinations;

31. *cooperate* with public and private organizations ensuring that the data and information generated through research is channeled to support decision-making processes in ecotourism development and management;

32. *cooperate* with research institutions to develop the most adequate and practical solutions to ecotourism development issues.

D. Inter-governmental organizations, international financial institutions and development assistance agencies

33. *develop* and *assist* in the implementation of national and local policy and planning guidelines and evaluation frameworks for ecotourism and its relationships with biodiversity conservation, socio-economic development, respect of human rights, poverty alleviation, nature conservation and other objectives of sustainable development, and to intensify the transfer of such know-how to all countries. Special attention should be paid to countries in a developing stage or least developed status, to small island developing states and to countries with mountain areas, regarding that 2002 is also designated as the International Year of Mountains by the UN;
34. **build capacity** for regional, national and local organizations for the formulation and application of ecotourism policies and plans, based on international guidelines;

35. **develop** international standards and financial mechanisms for ecotourism certification systems that takes into account needs of small and medium enterprises and facilitates their access to those procedures;

36. **incorporate** multistakeholder dialogue processes into policies, guidelines and projects at the global, regional and national levels for the exchange of experiences between countries and sectors involved in ecotourism;

37. **strengthen** their efforts in identifying the factors that determine the success or failure of ecotourism ventures throughout the world, in order to transfer such experiences and best practices to other nations, by means of publications, field missions, training seminars and technical assistance projects; UNEP and WTO should continue this international dialogue after the Summit on sustainable ecotourism issues, for example by conducting periodical evaluations of ecotourism development through international and regional forums.

38. **adapt** as necessary their financial facilities and lending conditions and procedures to suit the needs of micro-, small- and medium-sized ecotourism firms that are the core of this industry, as a condition to ensure its long term economic sustainability;

39. **develop** the internal human resource capacity to support sustainable tourism and ecotourism as a development sub-sector in itself and to ensure that internal expertise, research, and documentation are in place to oversee the use of ecotourism as a sustainable development tool.

**E. Local Communities and Municipal Organizations**

40. As part of a community vision for development, that may include ecotourism, **define and implement** a strategy for improving collective benefits for the community through ecotourism development including human, physical, financial, and social capital development, and improved access to technical information;

41. **strengthen, nurture and encourage** the community’s ability to maintain and use traditional skills that are relevant to ecotourism, particularly home-based arts and crafts, agricultural produce, traditional housing and landscaping that use local natural resources in a sustainable manner.