

Tourism and Conservation in Protected Areas

~ Putting words into action ~



Pamela A. Wright, Ph.D.
Outdoor Recreation & Tourism Management
University of Northern British Columbia
Chair, BC Protected Area Research Forum

Key questions

- Why tourism and conservation?
- What are some types of tourism-conservation initiatives?
- What is the state of tourism-conservation initiatives?
 - Internationally
 - Canada
- What are the challenges/barriers to tourism-conservation initiatives?
- What are the best methods to encourage tourism operators to contribute to conservation efforts?



Conservation values are at risk

- Global environmental values under threat
- Protected areas facing growing stressors



From enjoyment and appreciation – to action

- Healthy environment premise of sustainability
- Sustainable tourism includes:
 - greening the footprint of tourism businesses footprint
 - encouraging visitors to travel softly
- Clearly tourism businesses promote awareness, appreciation and understanding –a major contributor to conservation initiatives
- Want to examine tourism-conservation link that goes beyond understanding to action
- Where, how, and to what extent do and can tourism can contribute more directly to conservation initiatives?



Why tourism and conservation?

- Healthy ecosystems at core of tourism product
 - “the premise is that ecotourism depends on maintaining attractive natural landscapes and a rich flora and fauna” (Kiss 2004)
- Growing public concern about environment
- Increasingly discerning travelers (conservation travelers)
- Concerned about potential for green-washing
- Part of being a good corporate citizen/corporate responsibility
- May provide a competitive edge



Types of tourism-conservation initiatives

Corporate Giving



Tourist Donations

Tourism Business Volunteerism



Volun-tourism



Conservation Research



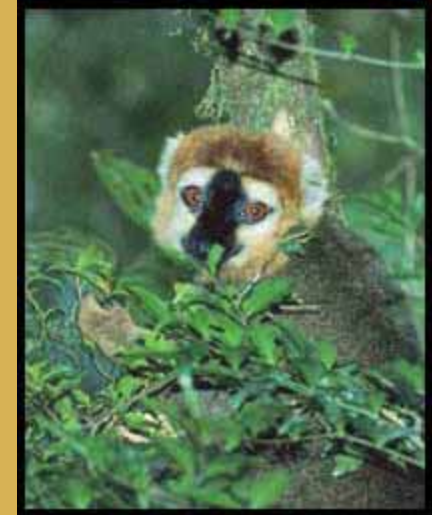
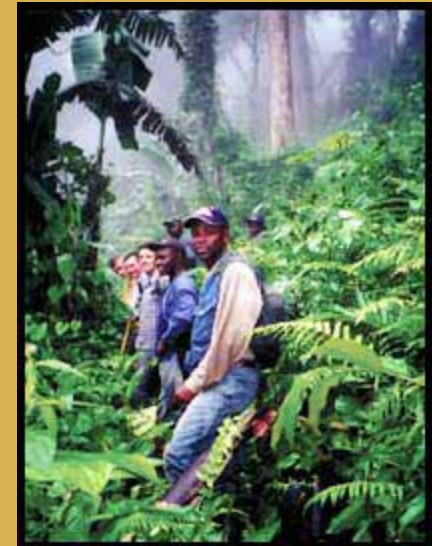
Conservation Lobbying



Active Conservation Ambassadors

My lens

- Protected areas... but not exclusively
- Sometimes in fact there may be advantages to initiatives outside of protected areas
- Tourism-conservation ‘initiatives’ not necessarily ‘partnerships’
- Looking globally – applying locally



What is the state of tourism-conservation partnerships?

- Internationally
 - Many fall under heading of community-based ecotourism (development work)
 - NGO driven
 - Non-profit tourism companies
 - Organized or encouraged giving (typically limited)
 - Limited number of longer time commitment volun-tourism (most from NGO sector)



State of tourism-conservation partnerships



- Canadian
 - Very limited but probably many small initiatives that slide under the radar
 - Some corporate giving (e.g., visitor centre)
 - Number of business initiatives but not involving clients
 - Some staff ‘clean-up’ type activities
 - Others ‘greening’ initiatives but really a condition of development permits
 - PA managers noted their interest in finding out what is going on – so they could share/promote

Conclusion shared by many was that “environmental altruism is not alive and not well. Rather: this is a park so its govt’s responsibility”

Voluntourism



- ~ Those wishing to travel with a purpose
- Join a research or conservation team
- Help initiative that couldn't happen without volunteers
- A number of major travel websites partner to offer short international trips that combine work and vacationing (Travelocity – “Travel for Good” partnership – CheapTickets.com – United Way)
- Must be realistic about true benefits
- Many projects require real skills and long term time
- Some ‘spend’ all the benefit in accommodating tourist
- Does volunteer labour replace hiring people?

Visitor payback partnership

- Tourism & Conservation Partnership ~ Cumbria, England
- To encourage Corporate Social Responsibility fundraising through tourism businesses (from visitors) to secure improvements to the environment.
- Funded by over 230 businesses - raised over £1 million
- The Partnership promotes **Visitor Payback** fundraising as an opportunity for visitors to interact with the landscape, and take ownership of conservation work.



Park-industry coalitions



- Partnership between: parks-tourism industry-nonprofit (cooperating assoc)

- Yosemite Fund - habitat restoration, trail repair and access, wildlife management, cultural and historic preservation, and visitor services and education
- Yosemite Concession Services Corp required to put 4.5% of gross revenue to fund

[Home](#)

[About Partnerships](#)

[Resources](#)

[How To](#)

[Case Studies](#)

[Recognition](#)

[Site Map](#)

[News](#)

Active ambassadors

- Conscious development of conservation ambassadors
- Arm tourists with inspiration, information and tools for action
- Evaluations however show limited increase in actual action resulting from these programs

We have lectures most evenings at the camp about the importance of respecting the delicate environment

We try to educate our clients about the environment to which they have come in the hope that they to can become Antarctic ambassadors when they return home after a journey into such a fragile place.



Potential barriers...

- Perception that ‘responsibility’ for conservation is governments
- Union concerns
- Research permits/environmental assessments – independent projects difficult
- Data quality issues
- Research objectivity
- Liability insurance/health and safety concerns
- Cost of training short-term volunteers
- Conservation projects often require very technical skills
- Protected area agencies may have onerous regulations
- Declining revenues/price sensitive travelers – hard to divert funds
- Client barriers, price sensitive... limited time to contribute
- Clients may well feel they ‘give’ to conservation outside of their travel time
- Restricted mechanisms to receive funds

How do we encourage operators to contribute to conservation efforts?

- Industry encouragement/initiative
- Encourage coalitions
- ‘Policy’ support

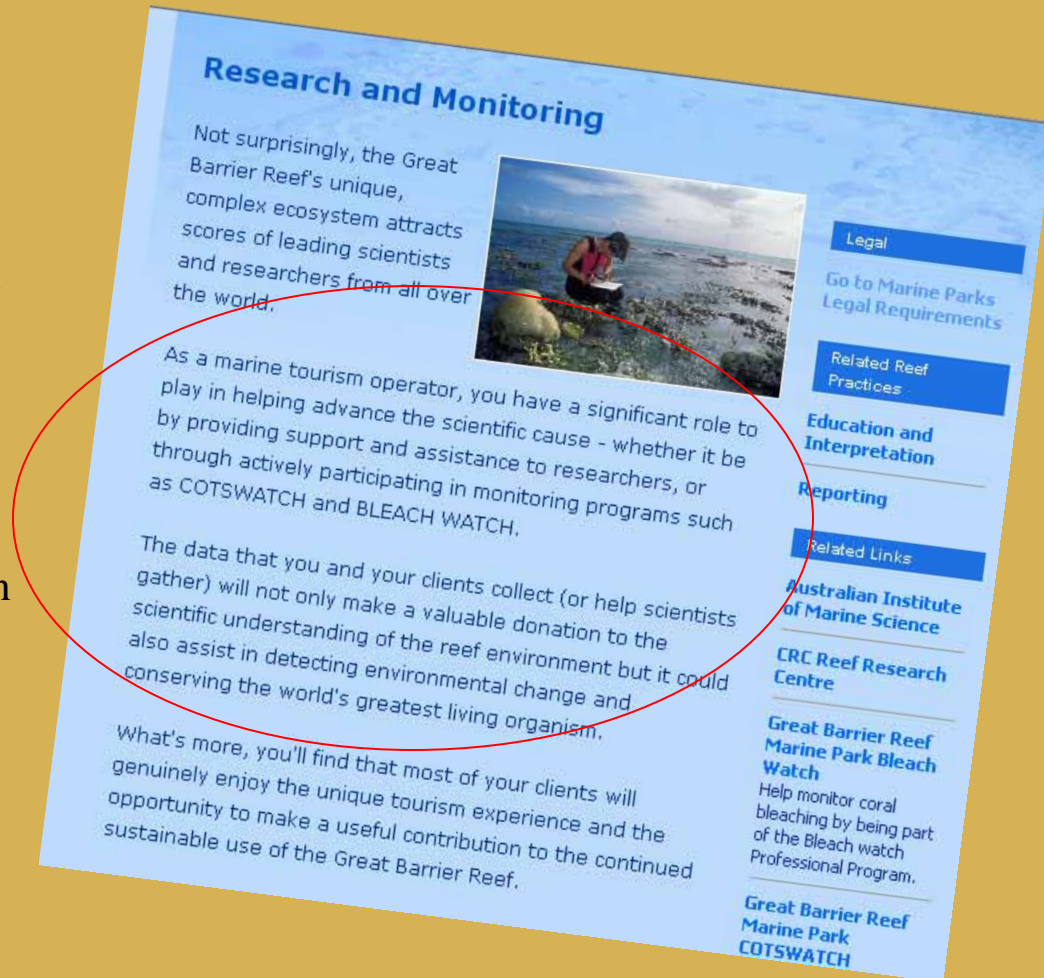


CTC-Parks Canada Accord

- enhance the system of protected areas
- maintain and enhance the EI and CI
- foster sustainable tourism, tourism that is economically viable, environmentally supportable and culturally acceptable
- seek well-informed and creative solutions to manage demand and use in a manner which supports the right experience in the right place, at the right time
- manage and reduce the impact of visitors
- enhance interpretive and educational programs
- provide accurate information and informed opinion on matters of significance to the planning and management of these special places


How do we encourage....

- Conduct specific research on tourism demand/interest in conservation travel
 - what type/what activities would they support/what time donate
- Minimize partnership barriers
 - make partnership process (formal one) easier
 - gov't side work to reduce barriers in partnering
 - create/promote mechanisms to receive funds/support (e.g., 'friends of') that can have quality assured
- Publicize conservation project needs



Research and Monitoring

Not surprisingly, the Great Barrier Reef's unique, complex ecosystem attracts scores of leading scientists and researchers from all over the world.



As a marine tourism operator, you have a significant role to play in helping advance the scientific cause - whether it be by providing support and assistance to researchers, or through actively participating in monitoring programs such as COTSWATCH and BLEACH WATCH.

The data that you and your clients collect (or help scientists gather) will not only make a valuable donation to the scientific understanding of the reef environment but it could also assist in detecting environmental change and conserving the world's greatest living organism.

What's more, you'll find that most of your clients will genuinely enjoy the unique tourism experience and the opportunity to make a useful contribution to the continued sustainable use of the Great Barrier Reef.

Legal
Go to Marine Parks Legal Requirements

Related Reef Practices

Education and Interpretation

Reporting

Related Links
Australian Institute of Marine Science
CRC Reef Research Centre
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Bleach Watch
Help monitor coral bleaching by being part of the Bleach watch Professional Program.
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park COTSWATCH

How do we encourage...



- Profile approaches and models
- Recognize and reward
- Promote idea and opportunities
- Evaluate success

Top accolade for Great Barrier Reef tourism partnership

29 November 2007

An innovative sustainable tourism partnership helping protect the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has scooped another top accolade, announced in Sydney last night (28 November 2007).

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) received the Public Sector Management Award in the 2007 Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF) Corporate Leadership Awards.

The peak body for the tourism, transport and infrastructure sectors recognised GBRMPA's robust sustainable partnership with the tourism industry and Queensland coastal communities.

GBRMPA Tourism and Recreation Director Lisha Mulqueen said the award was recognition of the outstanding commitment of the partners in achieving environmental sustainability on the Great Barrier Reef.

BC Wilderness Tourism Association



STEWARDSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT

A **steward of the environment** reflects an ecological conscience by demonstrating individual and collective responsibility for environmental health, and recognizes the need to conserve and restore the natural diversity of ecosystems and species for current and future generations. These wilderness tourism operators have demonstrated their commitment to sustainable business practices and environmental stewardship; a concern and care for the environment that will safeguard wilderness and ensure the sustainability and viability of wilderness tourism. Read their stories below.

Babine Norlakes



His trout lodge and steelhead camp relied on the watershed's health, so Clegg set out to protect the wilderness values of the river, a mission that he continues today.

Chilcotin Holidays Guest Ranch



Since the day Sylvia Waterer and Kevan Bracewell started their operation in 1990, they have focused on doing everything they can to protect the wilderness and wildlife of the South Chilcotin and beyond.

Canadian River Expeditions



The Canadian River Expedition's fight to create the Alsek-Tatshenshini Provincial Park started with what seemed like a harmless scenario: a plane flying overhead.

Clayoquot Wilderness Resorts & Spa



For the last five years they have been actively investing in their Environmental Legacy Program; \$3 million funded by resort revenues dedicated to five areas of environmental stewardship....

Resources



- www.responsibletravel.com
- [Volunteer Vacations: Short-Term Adventures That Will Benefit You and Others](#) by Bill McMillon, Doug Cutchins, Anne Geissinger, and Ed Asner.
- [Green Volunteers: The World Guide to Voluntary Work in Nature](#) by Fabio Ausenda.
- www.nps.gov/partnerships
- www.ontarioparks.com/english/corporate
- www.green-tourism-awards.org.uk
- www.wilderness-tourism.bc.ca/SOP_featured_cos