

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FORUM PRELIMINARY REPORT

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In order to respond to the questions posed with as much accuracy as possible, I interviewed Guatemalans working in sustainable tourism and coastal management. What follows are the results of these electronic interviews.

Question 1: What aspects of coastal and marine management should the Forum emphasize in order to create linkages between Guatemala and the MBRS region?

Policy:

- Implement a regional tourism certification program. Maybe Blue Flag could be adapted to the socioeconomic and environmental realities of the region.
- Implement bilateral projects that focus on compatible conservation and environmental development in border zone areas
- Legislation and policies relating to the environment and to tourism should be compatible. Environmental legislation should be complete and simple enough that it does not discourage people from investing in sustainable tourism

Technical instruments:

- Develop a single system or analogous systems of Environmental Impact Studies for sustainable tourism projects in the region. This EIS system must be the simplest possible because ecotourism activities already are understood to have minimal environmental impacts. It is important to provide incentives for sustainable tourism in the area and not create bureaucratic obstacles. EISs for ecotourism should be conducted in similar fashions in each country in the region to ensure that the conditions for sustainable tourism will be equally favorable in each.
- In the EIS, develop an environmental monitoring and evaluation program and apply it at the beginning, throughout the process and for each of the stages of the project.
- Define specific mechanisms in order to guarantee effective participation of civil society in tourism development. Participants should include organized NGOs or cooperatives, as well as local communities. Mechanisms should include regulations, standards, guidelines and other instruments to ensure maximum participation. Full participation should focus on resource management issues, project implementation, and information about the economic benefits of the project.
- Develop land-use plans (conservation zones, public recreation areas for tourism, areas for environmental education, etc.)
- Develop local and regional level tourism plans

Coastal and marine resources management:

- One of the most critical issues in regional coastal zone management is precise information about biological diversity in the area and migratory patterns of marine fauna
- Identify sensitive and critical coastal and marine areas (such as nesting areas for marine turtle or shorebirds) in order to prevent destructive activities (such as mass tourism or use of motorized vehicles on beaches)

Training:

- Regional level training related to low impact tourism management, environmental monitoring (especially for high use tourism sites), conservation of coastal areas (including beaches) and public security
- Train local communities on development, implementation and evaluation of ecotourism projects

Question 2: What are expected outcomes of the Forum?

Institutionally:

- The Forum should become a permanent entity that ensures continuity and coordination of the initiatives developed through the Forum
- It should be an efficient and respectable institution that facilitates financing for regional sustainable tourism projects
- The Forum must be well defined. It must be clear who the responsible parties are, both nationally and regionally. These people or organizations must maintain personal and institutional continuity throughout the Forum process
- By clearly defining roles of the actors, institutional and personnel, in order to maximize the efficiency of regional and national cooperation
- The Forum should have an efficient system to record and share national and local experiences

Policy level:

- The Forum should promote multinational agreements regarding management of coastal resources such as development and implementation of regional sustainable tourism and conservation projects

Tourism management:

- Define national and regional tourism circuits based on land use plans
- Promote effective administration of the protected areas included in the MBRs, especially those which have had little or no management priority
- Offer sustainable economic activities to communities that are presently involved in environmentally disruptive activities

- Identify potential tourism activities and additional alternatives that can be carried out utilizing coastal and marine resources of the region

Question 3: Who are the key actors that should be involved in the Forum and its organization?

ABBREVIATIONS:

CAMTUR: Cámara de Turismo

CECON: Centro Conservacionista Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala

CONAP: Consejo Nacional Áreas Protegidas

FCG: Fideicomiso para la Conservación en Guatemala

FONACÓN: Fondo Nacional para la Conservación

FUNDAECO: Fundación para el ecodesarrollo

FUNDARY: Fundación Mario Dary

INGUAT: Instituto Guatemalteco de Turismo

INTECAP: Instituto Técnico de de Capacitación y Productividad

MARN: Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales

OCRET: Oficina de Control de Áreas de Reservas Territoriales del Estado

ONEGUA: Organización Negra de Guatemala

PROARCA: Programa Ambiental Regional de Centro América

RECOSMO: Proyecto de conservación y desarrollo sostenible para la región
Sarstún-Motagua

SAM: Sistema Arrecifal Mesoamericano

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