

Joint DENR-DOT Memorandum Circular

No. 98-02

June 29, 1998

Subject : Guidelines Ecotourism Development in The Philippines

In line with the Government's effort to promote sustainable development and cognizant of the importance of tourism in national economic development, guidelines for Ecotourism Development in the Philippines are hereby established for the information and guidance of all concerned.

Sec. 1. Basic Policy

- 1.1 It is the policy of the State to ensure sustainable use, development, management, protection and conservation of the country's environment and natural resources and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of the present and future generations.
- 1.2 It is likewise the policy of the Government to develop and promote sustainable tourism that is designed to improve the quality of life of the people, provide a high quality of life of the integrity of the environment.

Sec. 2. Definition of Terms

The following terms, as used in this Order, shall be construed to mean as:

Ecotourism - a low - impact, environmentally-sound and community-participatory tourism activity in a given natural environment that enhances the conservation of bio-physical and cultural diversity, promotes environmental understanding and education, and yields socio-economic benefits to the concerned community.

- 2.2 Protection** - identified portions of land and water set aside by reason of their unique physical and biological significance, managed to enhance biological diversity and protected against destructive human exploitation;
- 2.3 Carrying Capacity** - the extent of development and maximum number of individuals that accommodated in a given area without adversity affecting the state of the environment, the level of satisfaction of the visitors, and the socio-cultural characteristics of the concerned community;
- 2.4 Sustainable Tourism** - model form of economic development that is designed to improve the quality of life of the host community, provide a high quality of experience for the visitors, and maintain the quality of the environment on which both the community and the visitors depend;
- 2.5 Biodiversity** - the variety and variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes in which said organism occur. It is usually considered at three levels namely-genetic diversity, species diversity, and ecosystem diversity,
- 2.6 Recreation Zones** - areas of high recreational, tourism, educational and/or environmental values where ecotourism could be allowed;
- 2.7 Sustainable Development** - meeting the needs and aspirations of the people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs; and

2.8 Natural Areas - areas that remain relatively undisturbed by human activities and remain in their natural state thus maintaining biodiversity and ecological processes.

Sec. 3. Objectives

- 3.1 To regulate implementation of ecotourism projects to make it a viable tool in sustainable development;
- 3.2 To provide mechanism for the accreditation of developers, investors and other concerned individuals and groups who will engage in the implementation of ecotourism projects; and
- 3.3 To ensure multi-sectoral participation in ecotourism development and implementation.

Sec. 4. Scope and Coverage

This Circular shall cover the development and implementation of ecotourism activities in the Philippines.

Sec. 5. Criteria in the Development and Implementation of Ecotourism Projects

5.1 Site Considerations

- 5.1.1 The area should have unique natural/cultural features which will provide enjoyment and educational benefits to visitors;
- 5.1.2 The area should be accessible;
- 5.1.3 The area should have a stable peace and order condition;
- 5.1.4 There must be a highly receptive and cooperative local community; and
- 5.1.5 In case of NIPAS areas, ecotourism sites should be recreational zones and other appropriate zones.

5.2 Activity/Development Considerations

Ecotourism activities must have all the following attributes;

- 5.2.1 environmentally-sound and low-impact development;
- 5.2.2 with educational value;
- 5.2.3 have community acceptance and participation;
- 5.2.4 provide social and economic benefits to the concerned community thru livelihood undertakings.

Sec. 6. Requirements and Procedures

6.1 The National Ecotourism Committee (NEC) or Regional Ecotourism Committee (REC), created in Sec. 7 hereof, shall review and evaluate all proposed ecotourism development projects.

The following documents must be submitted by the project proponent;

6.1.1 Letter of intent

6.1.2 Ecotourism development project proposal to include the following information;

- a. Title
- b. Objectives
- c. Rationale
- d. Area coverage
- e. Activities to be undertaken
- f. Duration
- g. Cost
- h. Location map
- i. Development maps
- j. Fees to be paid
- k. Other relevant information

- 6.1.3 Duly accomplishment application form
 - 6.1.4 Profile of project proponent
 - 6.1.5 Initial Environmental Examination/Environmental Impact Assessment, if necessary
 - 6.1.6 Application fee
 - 6.1.7 Others documents as may be required by relevant agencies
- 6.2 Once the proposal is accepted, a more detailed Ecotourism Management Plan shall be submitted by the proponent. The must be complementary with the Protected Area General Management Plan if the site is within a protected area.
- 6.3 Once approved, NEC or REC shall issue a coresponding document informing the proponent of the approval of the project.

Sec. 7. Organization

7.1 Ecotourism Steering Committee

An Ecotourism Steering Committee (ESC) shall created to serve as the policy making body that will provide the general direction in the over-all development and implementation of ecotourism projects in the Philippines.

7.1.2 Composition of the Ecotourism Steering Committee:

- a. DOT Undersecretary for Planning-Chairman
- b. DENR Undersecretary for Environment & Programs Co-Chairman
- c. Director, PAWB
- d. DOT Director for Planning
- e. Private Sector representative

7.2 A National Ecotourism Committee (NEC) shall be created jointly by the DENR and DOT. Likewise, Regional Ecotourism Committee (REC) shall be created jointly by the same agencies at the field level;

7.2.1 Composition of the National Ecotourism Committee (NEC);

The NEC shall be composed of the following;

- a. Director, Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau-Chairman;
- b. Director of Product Research Development, Department of Tourism (DOT) – Co-Chairman;
- c. Division Chief, Natural Recreation and Extension Division (NRED) PAWB;
- d. Division Chief, Department of Tourism (DOT);
- e. NGO representative
- f. Director, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); and
- g. Private Sector representative.

7.2.2 Composition of the Regional Ecotourism Committees (REC)

The REC shall be composed of the following;

- a. Regional Director, DOT- Chairman
- b. Regional Technical Director, EMPAS-DENR Co-Chairman
- c. Protected Area and Wildlife Division, Chief
- d. NEDA representative
- e. NGO representative
- f. Concerned Local Government Unit representative
- g. Private Sector representative

7.3 Function of National Ecotourism Committee (NEC) and Regional Ecotourism Committee (REC)

- 7.3.1 To review, evaluate and approve major ecotourism project proposals;
- 7.3.2 To formulate and recommend plans and programs on ecotourism;
- 7.3.3 To devise an accreditation and incentives mechanism for ecotourism project proponent.

7.4 Ecotourism of National Monitoring and Evaluation Team (EMET)

A joint Ecotourism Monitoring and Evaluation Team (EMET) shall be created at the field level to monitor and evaluate the implementation of ecotourism projects.

A corresponding monitoring and evaluation strategy shall be formulated to ensure proper review of ecotourism projects. If ecotourism project is within a protected area, the EMET shall coordinate closely with the Protected Area Management Board.

Sec 8. Funding

- 8.1 The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Tourism (DOT) will put up and initial fund to defray the expenses of NEC, REC and EMET to be shared equally, and
- 8.2 The DENR and DOT shall establish a trust account where deposit made by private clientele shall be credited. Amount generated from said deposit shall be used by members of NEC, REC and EMET in rendering special services to the private clientele.

Sec. 9. Effectivity

This Order takes effect 15 days after its publication in two major dailies of national circulation.

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