

Issues for stakeholders to address in achieving sustainable tourism and recreation in and around wetlands

(Resolution XI.7, annex 2)



A. National/regional policy-makers and planners in the tourism and land-use planning sectors should seek to ensure that:

- i) tourism and recreation activities and developments do not compromise national commitments to ensuring the wise use of all wetlands under the Ramsar Convention;
- ii) policies and decision-making processes, including processes for approval and authorization of tourism developments, recognize that healthy wetlands can sustain tourism over the long term and so generate continued benefits and livelihoods, both locally and more widely;
- iii) where national or regional tourism and recreation plans and policies exist or are under development, wetlands and their tourism and recreation values are well integrated into such plans and policies;
- iv) there is increased awareness about the mutually beneficial objectives for wetlands and tourism resulting from the key role wetlands play as part of “natural capital”, which when maintained makes regions attractive for sustainable tourism and development; and from the importance of effective wetland conservation and management to the success of the tourism business in and around wetlands;
- v) incentives for tourism development are not perverse incentives in terms of wetland conservation and wise use;
- vi) tourism developments and activities that are authorized in and around wetlands are consistent with the UNWTO principles of sustainable tourism and Ramsar wise use, as well as with management plans for wetland sites; and take into account the views of indigenous peoples and local communities as well as interested and affected parties;
- vii) sustainable tourism income provides financial resources for wetland conservation and management through the implementation of adequate economic instruments, so in turn supporting maintenance of the wetland features and functions of importance for tourism; and
- viii) the wide range of economic benefits from wetlands for indigenous peoples and local communities are recognized and integrated in tourism planning in order to enhance and not reduce them.

B. Other national/regional wetland policy implementation agencies, protected area management authorities, and environment ministries and departments should seek to ensure that:

- i) tourism and recreation issues are integrated into wetland policy and planning, including training opportunities for wetland managers; and
- ii) there is full integration of wetlands into tourism policy and planning by engaging with the tourism sector.

C. National and local tourism authorities, the private sector, tourism investors and developers should seek to have:

- i) all activities and developments being consistent with sustainable tourism and wise use in relation to tourism and complying with the relevant government plans, processes and regulations;
- ii) indigenous peoples and local communities participating in tourism planning and decision-making, and that tourism benefits are equitably shared;
- iii) tourism and recreation activities in and around wetlands contributing to the creation of alternative sustainable livelihoods for the indigenous peoples and local communities, including through investment in training and capacity building to enable them to participate in the business and employment opportunities provided by tourism;
- iv) tourism developments providing adequate contributions to support maintenance of the wetland features and functions, including financial resources for wetland conservation and management by the implementation of economic instruments; and
- v) responsible marketing using the Ramsar logo and Ramsar mission being promoted to tourists who visit Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).

D. National and local tourism authorities and local tourism operators offering services to tourists (including guides associations, travel agencies, local communities where they provide tourism services such as guided tours, lodging, accommodation and transport) should seek to ensure that:

- i) sufficient resources are invested into local livelihoods to provide a positive incentive for wetland resource custodianship, as well as into the management and conservation of the wetland, in order to maintain its attraction for tourists;
- ii) tourists' behavior is positively influenced and controlled by different means including interpretation programs and codes of ethics and etiquette, so as to protect the wetland resource they are visiting;
- iii) there is close collaboration with the wetland site managers, in order to optimize the benefits derived from each other's expertise in ensuring that wetlands are well managed to support a long-term meaningful tourism experience; this could include control of tour groups and individual visitors, monitoring of tourism impact and provision of interpretive information;

- iv) responsible marketing using the Ramsar logo and Ramsar mission is promoted to tourists who visit Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites); and
- v) the services offered by operators are appropriate in relation to carrying capacity and the quality of the visitor experience.

E. Wetland site managers (including NGOs, private and government agencies) should seek to ensure that:

- i) indigenous peoples and local community participation in wetland management is created and strengthened (making use, as appropriate, of Ramsar guidelines on *Establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands*, Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 7, 4th edition) and local communities are assisted in taking advantage of the opportunities presented by sustainable tourism by developing appropriate and responsible tourist products;
- ii) tourism's revenue and investment where appropriate help provide management capacity to maintain or improve the ecological character of the wetland;
- iii) assessment, monitoring and management of tourism and recreation impacts are integrated into wetland management planning, including limits of acceptable change of the wetland ecological character; and importantly that this information is communicated to those responsible for tourism policy and planning and used to support adaptive management responses;
- iv) assessments of wetland values related to recreation criteria are prepared and made available to national/regional policy-makers and planners in the tourism and land-use planning sectors and other relevant government agencies, and are applied by being incorporated into tourism and land-use planning and decision making;
- v) appropriate recreation activities are identified and promoted especially to those dealing with thematic interpretation and are compatible with the wetland's characteristics and its management plan; and visitors are encouraged to follow visiting rules, if necessary through appropriate enforcement of regulations; and
- vi) in any Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site) visited by tourists, the Ramsar logo is prominently displayed and the Ramsar mission promoted.