



The Nature Conservancy achieved significant successes over the course of the past year employing ecotourism as a conservation strategy. With the launch of a joint initiative with the UNESCO World Heritage Center to promote sustainable tourism, the Conservancy continued to strengthen the financial sustainability and management of protected areas in developing countries, while also increasing the benefits to surrounding communities and sharing best practices for widespread application. These achievements were made possible through the generous support of the Alex C. Walker Foundation, a new grant from the Bank of America Foundation, and the continuing support of the USAID-The Nature Conservancy Parks in Peril program.

Increasing Income for Protected Areas

With the right policies in place, developing countries have the opportunity to help pay for conservation activities by capturing the economic value of tourism. To demonstrate this potential in Bolivia, the Conservancy held a workshop with Bolivian Park Service directors and managers and successfully achieved consensus around a plan to implement policy reform. The plan will include mechanisms such as visitor entrance fees, tour operator license fees, and concession agreements at the country's most visited protected areas that will generate over \$1 million per year for conservation. To help execute the plan, the Conservancy carried out a financial analysis of tourism operations at Noel Kempff Mercado National Park with Price Waterhouse Coopers that will further guide government strategies for tourism business management. The Conservancy also helped strengthened the long-term legal standing of these new mechanisms by facilitating the development of an updated national tourism regulation that was approved by Bolivian government decree.

In Ecuador, the Conservancy, the ministries of Environment, Tourism, and Finance, and the tourism private sector and local NGOs have launched a study together to capitalize on the economic benefits of tourism for conservation. This study will quantify the economic value of tourism to protected areas and develop a strategy to optimize the flow of tourism



Ecotourist seeking to capture the spectacular volcanic desert landscape of Bolivia's Eduardo Avaroa Reserve where the tourism entrance fee the Conservancy helped develop is financing new investments in tourism infrastructure and community enterprise. © Andy Drumm/TNC

spending for the conservation of Ecuador's protected area system. The Conservancy and partners hope to demonstrate how tourism can be a significant contributor to the financial sustainability of the park system, rather than a threat to it.

Reducing Threats of Park Visitation

Parks must have the capacity to manage the threats that uncontrolled visitation poses. In an effort to help build this capacity at a national level in Bolivia, the Conservancy organized a workshop in collaboration with Colorado State University at the Eduardo Avaroa Reserve, which was attended by managers from four protected areas, local NGOs, and Bolivian National Park Service leadership. The workshop provided training in the techniques of monitoring conservation impacts and developing strategies to mitigate threats such as



Conservancy staff and local tourism business owners explore new ecotourism attractions near Cotopaxi National Park, Ecuador.

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off-road vehicles, uncontrolled access to sensitive areas, and contamination from human waste. Implementation plans were prepared for each of the protected areas represented, thus providing the participants with directly applicable actions.

Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods

Providing sustainable economic opportunities for communities in a way that conserves rather than depletes the natural resources of nearby protected areas is a central element for ensuring long-term conservation. In the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador, the Conservancy held an exchange with fishers from Baja California, Mexico, to share strategies and experiences to better protect fish populations by establishing fisheries property rights. The Conservancy also supported local communities at Amboro National Park, Bolivia, by holding workshops in financial analysis and business planning for community-based ecotourism enterprises. By focusing on marketing strategy development and shared challenges and opportunities, the workshops identified next steps for the communities to follow and supplied training in business planning to the park staff and NGO partners to enable them to support business opportunities.

Sharing Ecotourism Best Practices

As a part of an on-going effort to share best practices in ecotourism management, the Conservancy empowered conservation professionals with a range of tools and training opportunities by:

- *Publishing new case studies and updated information in response to popular demand with an updated version of Ecotourism Development: A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers, Volume I.*
- *Developing an educational CD in collaboration with the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and Conservation Commons to supply the latest ecotourism strategies and case studies*

from the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress The CD was distributed to over 1,000 protected area managers, government officials, and conservation practitioners.

- *Co-designing and presenting a sustainable tourism training series for USAID mission staff from around the world at an event in Tanzania.*
- *Presenting sustainable finance strategies for protected areas at the Conservation Finance Alliance Conference in Panama and at the Parks in Peril partner conference in Jamaica.*

New Initiative with UNESCO

In a shared vision to strengthen the conservation of natural protected areas that are recognized for their universal value, the Conservancy and the UNESCO World Heritage Center announced a partnership to advance the sustainable management of natural World Heritage Sites. The first initiative is a 3-year, \$2 million effort to foster sustainable tourism development at the sites and in their corresponding national protected area systems. With financial support from the United Nations Foundation and in cooperation with local and international tour operators, the initiative will execute strategies at demonstration sites in order to promote sustainable tourism policy at a national, regional, and global scale.

Looking Ahead

The Conservancy will continue to strengthen the ability of tourism to benefit conservation in the year ahead through efforts such as a major study to quantify the economic value of tourism at parks across South America. In Ecuador and Bolivia, the Conservancy will provide technical assistance at the park system level in support of tourism-based sustainable finance strategies for protected areas systems. With the World Heritage Center, the Conservancy will work with the tourism industry and local partners at demonstration sites to implement proof of concept initiatives that will be shared throughout Conservancy and World Heritage Center networks. Through these efforts, the Conservancy will continue to leverage strategies that enable tourists to enjoy the protected areas they visit while also leaving a positive impact on conservation.

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