



MINISTRY OF TOURISM

ECOTOURISM POLICY

Trinidad and Tobago

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
EMA	Environmental Management Authority
EPI	Environmental Performance Index
IYE	International Year of Ecotourism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
STAR	Services. Training. Attitude. Respect. Programme
STEP	Small Tourism Enterprises Project Programme
TDC	Tourism Development Company Limited
THA	Tobago House of Assembly
TTTIC	Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Industry Certification Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Adaptation	The term generally used for coping mechanisms for the adverse impacts of climate change.
Agrotourism	A form of tourism in which visits are made to a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.
Biodiversity	The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.
Carrying Capacity	The maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at any given time, without degrading the natural, physical, economic, infrastructural, and social environment and without an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction.
Climate Change	A change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer as a result of natural variability or human activity.
Co-Management	A partnership in which government agencies, local communities, and resource users, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders negotiate, as appropriate to each context, the authority and responsibility for the management of a specific area or set of resources.
Community-based Tourism	A type of tourism that engages and empowers local residents in the development, management and ownership of tourism products and services in their communities. Community-based tourism (CBT) emphasizes the need to protect, preserve and promote the environment.
Conservation	The protection, maintenance and rehabilitation of native biota, their habitats and life-support systems to ensure ecosystem sustainability and biodiversity.
Dive Centre	A tourism product that includes SCUBA diving and other recreational water sports.

Domestic Tourism	A resident of the given country travelling only within this country.
Eco Lodge	A tourist accommodation facility that meets the principles and philosophies of ecotourism in that it is developed and managed in an environmentally sensitive manner, affords protection of its operating environment and offers educational and participatory experience to visitors.
Eco quality	A concept of quality management that incorporates the design, control and improvement of products and services with environmental sustainability.
Ecosystem	A dynamic complex system of plant, animal, fungal and microorganism communities and their associated non-living environment interacting as an ecological unit.
Ecotourism	Environmentally and socially responsible travel to natural areas that promotes conservation of the environment [and any accompanying cultural and historic features], has low visitor impact, improves the wellbeing and sustainable livelihood of local people and involves interpretation and education.
Ecotourist	Individuals who travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations.
Ecotourism Activities	These are activities that are designed to educate, inform, inspire learning, raise sensitivities about the environment and may include some measure of adventure or recreational experience. These activities are designed to have minimal negative impact on the environment and low or minor consumption of natural resources.
Ecotourism Products and Services	Goods and services which are compatible with the environment and ecology of the area, and which promote a better understanding of the natural, social, environmental and cultural history of an area.
Green Construction	The application and implementation of environmentally-sustainable methods, the use of alternative energy, materials and systems in the planning, design, construction and use of man-made structures.
Habitat	An ecological or environmental area that is inhabited by a particular species of animal, plant or other type of organism.
Limits of Acceptable Change	The variation that is considered acceptable in a particular component or process of the ecological character of an ecosystem

without indicating change in ecological character that may lead to a reduction or loss in ecosystem health.

National Park	A clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.
National Resources	The living plants, animals, organisms and other biological factors within the environment, and the geologic formations, mineral deposits, renewable and non-renewable assets and the habitat of the living plants, animals, organisms and other biological factors.
Protected Area	It is a geographically defined area which is designated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives.
Responsible Tourism	All forms of tourism activity by both tourists and tourism suppliers that minimizes negative social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts while generating greater economic benefits for local people and enhancing the well-being of host communities.
Stakeholder	Individuals who have a vested interest in development, including community members; environmental, social, and community NGOs; natural resource, planning, and government officials; hotel owners, tour operators, guides, transportation providers, and representatives from other related services in the private sector.
Sustainable Development	A pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs (social, cultural and economic) while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also by future generations.
Sustainable Tourism	Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.
Sustainable Use	The use of a resource in a way or rate that does not lead to decline in the availability of the resource.
Visitor Management	A strategy to control or modify visitor behaviour to ensure protection or responsible use when visiting a (natural) attraction.

PREFACE

The Ecotourism Policy was developed with the intention of providing a framework which will facilitate an enabling environment for the sustainable development and management of the local ecotourism sector. The establishment of this framework is in accordance with the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's (GORTT) Policy Framework as well as the guiding principles and goals from the National Tourism Policy (2010). The sections of the policy are as follows:

Section 1 provides a brief introduction to the Policy and makes reference to the international and regional framework for ecotourism and its global economic impact

Section 2 discusses a definition for ecotourism

Section 3 describes the role of ecotourism in the development of Trinidad and Tobago and the potential of this niche

Section 4 provides some key considerations in the development of ecotourism

Section 5 outlines the policy statement, vision, guiding principles, goals, objectives, outcomes and key success factors

Section 6 provides the main dimensions of the Ecotourism Policy

Section 7 discusses the need for the establishment of an institutional and regulatory framework and describes the roles of key public sector and other agencies

Section 8 highlights the importance of policy implementation

Section 9 addresses the importance of monitoring and evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1998, the United Nations Economic and Social Council designated 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE). This initiative served to build on the efforts of government organisations, international and regional agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations to fulfil the aims of Agenda 21 in the promotion and protection of the environment.¹

In 2002, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) jointly produced a guide for the development of environmentally and socially sound ecotourism practices worldwide entitled *Ecotourism: Principles, Practices and Policies for Sustainability*. This guide is instructive in terms of providing a framework for ecotourism development for governments and relevant tourism stakeholders from a holistic perspective.

Global Trends in Ecotourism

Sustainability Watch stated that ecotourism generated US\$77 billion in revenue, making up 5-7% of the overall travel and tourism market in 2009² and according to CMI Green Traveller Study 2010, eco-conscious consumers travel more frequently than the average consumer. During 2009, nearly 76% took at least two vacations away from home and 22% took five to eight vacations during that time.

Nature based travel, of which ecotourism is a segment, currently accounts for 20% of the global tourism market (UNWTO 2015, cited in CREST 2016), however, ecotourism “could grow to 25% of the global travel market within six years and account for US\$ 470 billion per year in revenues,” (TIES, cited in CREST 2015).

A report published by Booking.com on sustainable travel in 2016, indicated that “most travellers (56%) consider their holidays eco-friendly if they stay in some green accommodation facility, 22% of travellers consider their vacation eco-friendly if they take place in a natural park, and for 16% this means to go camping.³ For 12% of the respondents, “green” also means staying in indigenous community.” Moreover, Booking.com reported that “62% of respondents confirmed that they intend to stay in sustainable accommodation within the year and 50% say they have considered, or will be considering, a destination they would not have otherwise been interested in because of sustainable practices.” Environmentally friendly or “green” travel has been a buzzword in the industry for some time, and 24% of travel agents reported “green is highest it has ever been in 10 years” (Travel Guard Update, April 2013). Travel Agents listed popular eco-destinations as Costa Rica (49%), South Africa (12%), Galapagos Islands (8%), Peru (7%) and Belize (6%).

Global and Regional Ranking in Environmental Performance

The environment is a fundamental component in the development of ecotourism and therefore destinations must seek to promote conservation and sustainable management of this natural asset.

¹ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/tourism/events/iye/index.htm> (accessed October 10th, 2012)

² Sustainability Watch

³ Booking.com, Sustainable Travel in 2016

One global indicator of environmental performance is the Environmental Performance Index (EPI). The EPI was developed by Yale University, Centre for Environmental Law and Policy and Columbia University and is used to measure environmental policy outcomes.

According to the EPI 2016, Finland is ranked first out of 180 countries due to its commitment in addressing sustainable consumption and production and by promoting Finland as one of the most eco-efficient countries in the world. Designated nature parks, managed forest reserves and UNESCO World Heritage Sites have contributed to Finland's effort towards environmental conservation which are enforced by laws and legislation⁴.

Costa Rica, a popular ecotourism destination in the global market which has a rich abundance of ecosystems and high-levels of endemism of flora and fauna is ranked 42nd. Costa Rica has implemented the Certification for Sustainable Tourism Program which encourages sustainable management of natural, cultural and social resources used in businesses as a means to promote sustainable tourism practices in local businesses.⁵

In the Caribbean, Dominica is recognised as one of the leading ecotourism destinations and according to this same index, is ranked 70th. There are three national parks and four protected forest reserves on the island with the Morne Trois Piton a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Ministry of Tourism in Dominica created the Ecotourism Development Programme to develop sustainable tourism and ecotourism which have also been linked with the development of community-based tourism.

Jamaica is ranked 54th and is one of the more popular ecotourism destinations in the Caribbean region. The island is dominated by an abundance of diverse species of avifauna, different species of bats, lizards and frogs. The Jamaican government has taken steps to ensure that their natural resources are protected by the establishment of protected areas for endangered species of flora and fauna.

Guyana is ranked 74th and is one of the emerging ecotourism destinations in the Caribbean. An array of ecosystems from lush rainforests, wetlands, savannahs, riverine systems and waterfalls are some of the natural attractions found in Guyana. Initiatives have been implemented to promote environmental conservation and awareness through educational programmes since more than 80% of the landscape is covered in virgin forests.

2. DEFINING ECOTOURISM

It is uncertain where the concept of ecotourism was derived, however, some researchers believe that due to the plethora of definitions for ecotourism, trying to define exactly what is ecotourism may be an elusive exercise.

⁴ Booking.com, Sustainable Travel in 2016

⁵ Sustainable Tourism CST: Certification for Sustainable Tourism in Costa Rica

Several definitions were examined, for example, Goodwin (1996: 288), Ziffer (1989), Wallace and Pierre (1996), Fennel (1999), UNWTO (2001), Weaver (2008) and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) 2015. However common dimensions emerging were: *protection of the environment; conservation of habitats and ecosystems; sustainable development; meaningful participation of the community; low impact visitation of sites and attractions; environmentally and socially responsible travel; interpretation and education, and minimal disruption to natural and cultural setting.*

In view of the foregoing, and in order to craft a definition that is comprehensive and embraces international standards for ecotourism, the definition that will be adopted for the purpose of this policy will be:

“Environmentally and socially responsible travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas, that conserves the environment, sustains the livelihood and well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education”

3. THE ROLE OF ECOTOURISM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The GORTT is committed to facilitating the diversification and promotion of Trinidad and Tobago’s tourism product and has set out to develop ecotourism as a specialised tourism niche. It is envisaged that ecotourism, will be used as a tool for balancing the need for economic development while protecting and preserving the assets of the communities through activities and/or practices that are environmentally friendly and culturally sensitive. Communities will be encouraged to partner with the State by engaging in conservation efforts to safeguard its biodiversity.

Economic development will include but not be limited to the engagement of rural communities and the utilisation of their natural assets for creating entrepreneurial opportunities. Opportunities include but are not limited to agro-tourism, tour guiding, tour operations, arts, craft, food and beverage services, music and culture, and accommodation. A critical component for successful ecotourism development will be capacity-building in the aforementioned areas for the citizens within these communities.

The GORTT acknowledges that the future development of the ecotourism niche requires a strategic and responsible approach to maximize the benefits and improve the livelihood of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the intent of this policy to provide the guidance and framework for development of this niche.

3.1 Trinidad and Tobago’s Ecotourism Potential

Trinidad and Tobago has immense potential as an ecotourism destination and current market trends show that USA, Canada, Germany, Scandinavia and the UK are strong source markets for ecotourism, especially in the area of bird watching. Although the GORTT would like to use

ecotourism as an impetus for diversification and economic growth, it is cognisant of issues such as site carrying capacity, and potential negative impacts on the delicate ecosystem. The GORTT will therefore ensure that development of the ecotourism niche will be guided by policies and practices that are environmentally friendly, culturally sensitive and sustainable. Trinidad and Tobago is currently ranked 62nd in the Environmental Performance Index (2016)⁶.

The country is endowed with a rich array of flora and fauna and has an abundance of landscapes such as forests, marine and coastal, and freshwater habitats that differentiates it from other Caribbean ecotourism destinations. Turtle watching opportunities are available at several sites in Trinidad and Tobago which are visited by five (5) species of turtles. Ornithologists and other bird-watching enthusiasts will appreciate the wide variety of species that are common to both islands. The Nylon Pool and Buccoo Reef provides an ideal marine environment with a wealth of species for both study and recreation. The aforementioned diversity provides Trinidad and Tobago with a distinct and competitive advantage for attracting the discerning ecotourist. Some of the more recognized ecotourism sites and attractions in Trinidad and Tobago are listed at Appendix 2 and common ecotourism activities are listed at Appendix 3.

Recognising the importance of the country's natural and cultural assets and its contribution to the development and livelihood of the communities, the GORTT in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, shall support the implementation of existing feasible management plans and the strengthening of protected area governance to restore and protect ecosystems, natural resources and the environment. A sustainable approach for the use of resources will be employed and methods and procedures for conserving the flora and fauna located in terrestrial and marine ecosystems will be implemented. Furthermore, stricter enforcement of conditions stipulated under the Conservation of Wildlife Act (1980) to address the issue of hunting and poaching of endangered and protected fauna will be effected. Measures for the conservation of biodiversity and protected areas are currently being implemented in Trinidad and Tobago under the Improving Forest and Protected Area Management Project. This is a four year Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funded-project that focuses on six pilot sites:

- i. Caroni Swamp
- ii. Nariva Swamp and coastal zone
- iii. Matura Forest and coastal zone
- iv. Trinity Hills and eastern extension
- v. The Main Ridge Forest Reserve, Tobago
- vi. North-East Tobago Marine Protected Area, Tobago

Based on the foregoing, and being one of the key products in the tourism portfolio, the GORTT has identified this niche as one that can facilitate the further development of tourism, become a revenue generator, engage and empower local residents in the development and management of tourism products and services in their communities and protect, preserve and conserve the natural assets in those communities.

Sustainable Tourism CST: Certification for Sustainable Tourism in Costa Rica
try-rankings" <http://epi.yale.edu/country-rankings>

4. KEY CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING ECOTOURISM

4.1 Environmental Practices and Legislation

The Ministry of Tourism advocates the utilisation of best practices for the development, operation and use at all ecotourism sites and attractions in Trinidad and Tobago. Through the collaborative effort of key government agencies and stakeholders, mechanisms will be put in place to ensure adherence to internationally accepted and agreed upon best practices and guidelines. Any ecotourism development that is being contemplated will be guided by the relevant legislation, regulation, conventions and policies. These include but are not limited to the Environmental Management Act Chapter 35:05 (Act 3 of 2000), National Environmental Policy (2005), National Protected Areas Policy (2011), National Wildlife Policy (2013) and the Convention of Biological Diversity (1992) which are listed in Appendix 4. The current laws and legislation relating to the environment will be enforced through increased patrols and surveillance at sites and attractions.

In addition, there are several categories of legally protected areas in Trinidad and Tobago and these fall under various pieces of legislation. Protected areas include wildlife sanctuaries, prohibited areas, forest reserves, environmentally sensitive areas, and protected marine areas. Similarly, conservation efforts will be undertaken to protect and rehabilitate beaches, wetlands, coral reefs and savannas as well as the protected, endangered and endemic species of flora and fauna which inhabit these ecosystems. Protecting the country's natural assets from destruction and degradation is of prime importance when considering any development plans for ecotourism, therefore environmental impact assessments must be conducted to assess the impact of tourism development on the environment.

Key practices including recycling initiatives to reduce the quantity of litter at sites and attractions and use of alternative energy sources, contribute to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The identification and implementation of buffer zones at protected areas and the identification of potential threats and mitigation systems to deal with these threats, such as fires and invasive species must be given a high priority. Other notable practices include conducting scientific research and biological surveys, monitoring air and water quality parameters against existing international standards, educating domestic and international ecotourists on the importance of ecosystems; and providing capacity building training to communities.

Regarding environmentally sensitive areas, it is a good practice to apply limits on the number of persons allowed access and schedule times that visitors can enter the site. In addition, areas can be designated as restricted and appropriate signage installed to inform visitors of activities that are permissible or not. Visitor management plans should be developed for each site and only certified tour guides or a well-trained local interpreter should be allowed access for the provision of tour guiding services.

The execution of good environmental practices are sometimes hindered by the lack of implementation and enforcement of legislation, for example the regulation of proper waste management. In addition, access to energy resources in Trinidad and Tobago is affordable and readily available which results in wastage and prevents the use of energy conservation efforts. In light of these and other factors, the GORTT will advocate for the enforcement of legislation

pertaining to the environment.

4.2 Community relationships

This policy acknowledges that the community must be meaningfully engaged in the planning, development, management and ownership of tourism products and services. Close partnerships must be engendered with the community and an avenue made available for its contribution to any planned ecotourism development. Partnership arrangements may include the organisation coordinating the programme, those responsible for the management of the natural resource and any other organisation or agency deemed applicable.

The level of local involvement and the intensity of its participation will depend on many factors such as the resources, skills and know-how of the community, as well as the readiness of their members to accept any planned development in the community. Communities will need to understand how any planned development will affect their livelihood, their culture and environment, how they can become involved in conservation and protection of the biodiversity and the benefits that will be afforded to them and future generations. Consideration of these issues at the outset can determine whether or not the planned development will advance and lead to successful outcomes.

Critical to the building and strengthening of the capacity of the community is the provision of training and development programmes to upgrade the skills of the participants. Programme components that infuse critical thinking, problem solving and innovation will be developed for the community so that individuals will be equipped to commence their own businesses. In addition, private tourism businesses will be encouraged to employ local persons at their enterprises.

Civil Society Organisations will be encouraged to partner with communities throughout all stages of the development and implementation of initiatives. Those that have a focus on the role of women, children and rural groups and the protection of their rights will be aided, where possible, in accessing resources needed to execute ecotourism initiatives.

4.3 Marketing and Promotion

A key goal is to position the islands in the minds of potential visitors as a country with a high quality, competitive, ecotourism product. Branding destination Trinidad and Tobago will be at the forefront of the marketing strategy for the ecotourism product offering. The destination's marketing message will inform the visitor of the area's ecology, culture, how to respect the sensitivities of the local community, its product offering, and the environment.

The internet and social media are pivotal to the marketing and promotional function and present significant potential for reach and message delivery. Booking of ecotourism activities can be effortlessly managed via the internet, and IT based Destination Management Systems that seamlessly link demand and supply more efficiently can be implemented.

In spite of the growing popularity of the internet, there is still a need to retain traditional channels and use a range of promotional tools. Specialist media, tour operators and familiarisation trips will still feature prominently, however, local tourist organisations have the opportunity to promote ecotourism themes and products as part of their overall product development and packaging thrust.

Whilst marketing may centre on a profound and attractive message in the right medium, the importance of 'word of mouth' cannot be denied. The majority of persons visiting a destination must have been impacted at some point by feedback from a past visitor and therefore it is critical that marketing efforts include gauging feedback and maintaining post visitor contact. This in turn can engender the creation of committed ecotourists and ambassadors for conservation at the destination.

In marketing and promoting the destination, Trinidad and Tobago will target primarily the mid to high end ecotourists. This is ideal as it would allow the destination to benefit from greater spend per traveller as well as provide opportunities to develop products, facilities and services that meet higher standards. Overall, emphasis will be placed on ensuring that international standards and practices for preservation, conservation and management of the environment are upheld as the more discerning traveller will have higher expectations.

4.4 Investment

In keeping with the National Tourism Policy framework to attract investment domestically, regionally and internationally, the GORTT will facilitate and monitor the administration of the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000. As such, the GORTT will ensure that owners/operators of new and existing approved ecotourism-related projects will have access to development incentives. This access will be granted once the owners/operators have satisfied the criteria prescribed by the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000: Chapter 87:22; Part 2. Appendix 5 provides details of the incentives offered.

The Policy acknowledges that tourism operators and service suppliers have the option to access other forms of incentives as outlined in the Ministry of Trade and Industry's Investment Policy Statement and Compendium of Incentives. In addition, there are a number of sources for grant funding from public/private sector agencies such as the Ministry of Planning and Development – The Green Fund, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts - The Community Development Fund and international agencies e.g. the United Nations Development Fund Programme - Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme, the European Union - European Development Fund (EDF).

In anticipation of the growth and development of this niche, the GORTT will review the existing suite of incentives with a view to making it more attractive and competitive in order to encourage investment in this niche. Promotion and facilitation of investment for ecotourism will be supported by relevant research, market intelligence and analysis.

4.5 Health, Safety and Security

A destination's appeal and image can be negatively affected if it is perceived as an unsafe one. Hence, the GORTT, in collaboration with all relevant agencies will prioritise the safety and

security of local and foreign visitors, as well as safeguard the ecotourism assets from vandalism and destruction especially those situated in remote areas. Signage and other safety and security collateral will be utilised to inform visitors about safety precautions and measures that should be adopted at the site/attraction. In addition, emergency preparedness and contingency plans shall be established for the local tourism sector.

Similarly, given the advent of vector borne diseases (e.g. Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika and others), additional safety measures to protect the health of visitors and locals alike will be employed. The services of the relevant authorities will be utilized to reduce the incidences of contracting these illnesses and to educate the general public of their role in the reduction and eradication of this threat. In this regard, the Ministry of Tourism, the THA and the Ministry of Health have partnered with the Caribbean Public Health Authority (CARPHA) to improve this country's capacity to provide cost-effective and quality health, food safety and environmental sanitation solutions to Health, Safety and Environmental Sanitation (HSE) threats impacting on sustainable tourism in the country.

In order to address the issue of crime and other anti-social behaviour, the Ministry of Tourism and the TDC have approached the Ministry of National Security to replicate the Tourism Oriented Policing Services (TOPS) which is available in Tobago to be developed in Trinidad. This unit comprises Police Officers who are specifically trained to assist and protect visitors against crime and other anti-social behaviour. In addition, an initiative focussing on visitors' relation and management will be developed to enhance the visitors' experience at the destination.

4.6 Climate Change Adaptation

The Climate Change Policy (2011) of Trinidad and Tobago acknowledges that the country is particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change such as those related to temperature increases, changes in precipitation and sea level rise. As an island destination, Trinidad and Tobago is susceptible to negative impacts on its coastal and marine environments, its key assets that are vital for the ecotourism niche.

In addition, the NTP 2010 of Trinidad and Tobago also acknowledges that climate change will have negative impacts on the tourism industry. Given that both of these policies have noted the far reaching impacts of this phenomena, it is imperative that strategies are developed to address the potential effects that may arise due to this phenomena. Adaptation planning will be a core response to the changes anticipated. The Ministry of Tourism will seek the assistance of the relevant appointed agency to engage in systematic observations, research and climate change modelling. Strategies will be developed to improve the resilience of natural biophysical systems and international best practice methods and technologies adopted. Research will be undertaken to monitor climate change impacts at the designated ecotourism sites and attractions. Adaptation actions will then be designed based on the threats identified.

5. ECOTOURISM POLICY FRAMEWORK

The development of ecotourism in Trinidad and Tobago shall be facilitated by the GORTT Policy Framework as well as the guiding principles and goals of the National Tourism Policy (NTP, 2010)

and the National Development Strategy 2016–2030 (Vision 2030). The NTP, inter alia, emphasizes responsible development with due care for the historic, natural and cultural resources in both underdeveloped and environmentally sensitive areas of the country.

Moreover, ecotourism activities shall be conducted in keeping with the country's existing policies and legislative frameworks governing the protection of biological diversity and conservation of the environment. Ecotourism development shall also be guided by regional and international sustainable tourism guidelines and principles as appropriate.

5.1 Policy Statement

To protect and promote the conservation of ecosystems, habitats and landscapes while enhancing the economic and socio-cultural well-being of citizens consistent with internationally accepted principles of sustainable tourism.

5.2 Vision

Trinidad and Tobago will become a model ecotourism destination recognised for its commitment to preservation and conservation of its natural resources while delivering high quality authentic ecotourism experiences.

5.3 Guiding Principles

The development, management and promotion of ecotourism in Trinidad and Tobago shall be governed by the following guiding principles as espoused by The International Ecotourism Society:⁷

- i) Minimize physical, social, behavioural, and psychological impacts;
- ii) Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect;
- iii) Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts;
- iv) Provide direct financial benefits for conservation;
- v) Generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry;
- vi) Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates;
- vii) Design, construct and operate low-impact facilities; and
- viii) Recognize the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous People in the community and work in partnership with them to create empowerment.

⁷ Ecotourism: Principles, Practices & Policies for Sustainability. United Nations Environment Programme and the International Ecotourism Society revised, (January 2015)

5.4 Goals

The Goals set for the development of the ecotourism sector are:

- i) Preserving, protecting and conserving the biodiversity and natural assets in communities and protected areas;
- ii) Empowering and strengthening the capacity in the community to take ownership of its natural resources and capitalising the benefits from ecotourism initiatives;
- iii) Educating and raising environmental awareness among the population;
- iv) Marketing and promoting Trinidad and Tobago as a premier ecotourism destination;
- v) Positioning Trinidad and Tobago as a prime contender for the regional and international ecotourism investment market;
- vi) Providing an environment which is healthy, safe and secure for residents and visitors;
- vii) Developing standards and certification programmes for ecotourism operators and service providers, sites, attractions and facilities;
- viii) Enhancing and upgrading ecotourism sites, attractions and facilities to meet international standards; and
- ix) Implementing monitoring and evaluation systems at ecotourism sites and attractions.

5.5 Objectives

5.5.1 Preservation, Protection and Conservation

A critical component of the ecotourism niche is the environment and its natural resources at the destination. Collaboration with the relevant agencies to preserve, protect and conserve the natural assets of the destination is pertinent to the sustainability of this niche. The GORTT shall:

- i) To support the implementation of existing management plans and enforcement of legislation and regulation where necessary for protected areas (terrestrial and marine ecosystems);
- ii) To encourage the implementation of sustainable tourism practices such as energy conservation, water conservation, waste conservation and disposal, and the use of biodegradable products at ecotourism sites and attractions;

- iii) To support the establishment of community ambassadors to monitor environmental practices at ecotourism sites and attractions along with officials of the Ministry of Tourism or other designated agency;
- iv) To liaise with the EMA and Forestry Division to enforce fines and penalties on activities that negatively impact the environment and natural resources;
- v) To adopt environmental practices that reduce the carbon footprint for the local travel and tourism industry;
- vi) To encourage and support local residents to preserve, conserve, protect, manage and promote ecotourism assets in keeping with local cultural traditions and practices;
- vii) To promote the conduct of biological surveys of natural resources and habitats to determine carrying capacities and limits of acceptable change;
- viii) To support projects and activities that contribute to the conservation of natural resources and habitat regeneration; and
- xi) To encourage each person and the community to recognise the environment in which they live, work or recreate as an asset that must be managed, preserved and enjoyed.

5.5.2 Empowerment and strengthening the capacity of the community

The ability of the community to participate in ecotourism in a meaningful way will require supporting and facilitating structures to be in place. The GORTT shall:

- i) To support the community by providing the tools and knowledge essential for making decisions;
- ii) To include the community as a key stakeholder in the decision-making process for the development of the ecotourism sector;
- iii) To strengthen linkages in the decision-making process among state agencies, communities, NGOs and the private sector through the establishment of committees and other collaborative mechanisms;
- iv) To engender sustainable employment and entrepreneurship opportunities through training and capacity building initiatives;
- v) To advocate for a percentage of local persons from the community to be employed at private eco-tourism related businesses;
- vi) To support small, micro and medium business owners in accessing finance and funding from international and local donor agencies; and

- vii) To encourage communities to organise themselves into independent, communally owned and run enterprises.

5.5.3 Education and Public Awareness

The engagement of the public through sensitization and public awareness programmes will lead to a more informed public and support for protection and preservation of the environment. The GORTT shall:

- i) To promote environmental awareness through educational programmes, research initiatives and scientific studies;
- ii) To conduct sensitisation programmes that are aimed at appreciating and preserving local customs and traditions in communities;
- iii) To support programmes that promote positive changes in environmental attitudes and responsible environmental behaviour;
- iv) To ensure that ecotourism projects, initiatives and ventures include education as part of their mode of operations;
- v) To support training and certification programmes for guides and operators providing interpretative services; and
- vi) To provide high quality maps and literature pertaining to ecotourism at all ecotourism sites and attractions, accommodation facilities, libraries, schools and other high traffic areas.

5.5.4 Marketing and Promotion

The destination will be positioned as one that is unique, has a range of diversity and provides high quality authentic ecotourism experiences. As such, a range of marketing and promotional tools will be employed to transmit the message to the international visitor. The GORTT shall:

- i) To market and promote Trinidad and Tobago as an attractive and distinctive location for ecotourism investment;
- ii) To source new markets for the future expansion of Trinidad and Tobago's ecotourism products and services;
- iii) To use the internet and social media platforms and networks as pivotal tools to market and promote ecotourism activities;

- iv) To develop strategic partnerships with specific and targeted media to transmit the ecotourism message internationally; and
- v) To develop and promote packages that include authentic ecotourism experiences reflecting the lifestyle, customs and culture of the community.

5.5.5 Investment

In order to encourage growth, development and investment in the ecotourism niche and present opportunities to attract prospective investors. The GORTT shall:

- i) To target investments that have a proven track record in sustainable and responsible ecotourism development and which contribute to capacity building among the local population;
- ii) To establish an attractive and competitive portfolio of ecotourism investment projects;
- iii) To establish zones and sites for ecotourism development and supporting infrastructure;
- iv) To encourage investment in projects that provides linkages to other sectors in the economy;
- v) To encourage investments that contribute to the preservation and promotion of the nation's culture and heritage; and
- vi) To develop and provide incentives for local communities to invest in green businesses and ecotourism projects.

5.5.6 Sites, Attractions and Facilities

Well maintained and informative sites, attractions and facilities enhance the visitor experience especially when aligned with international standards and best practices. The GORTT shall:

- i) To use energy efficient and renewable energy sources at information centres situated at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- ii) To establish guidelines for the implementation and regulation of user fees, entrance fees, concession fees and donations at designated ecotourism sites and attractions;
- iii) To establish an appropriate visitor management framework to address limits of acceptable change in keeping with international best practices;
- iv) To promote the development of suitable sustainably-built facilities for visitor accommodation such as ecolodges in the community;
- v) To encourage the use of internationally acceptable and environmentally-friendly design standards in the construction of physical infrastructure in ecotourism settings;

- vi) To install signage at ecotourism sites to inform and educate the ecotourist;
- vii) To support the upgrade and enhancement of existing ecotourism accommodation;
- viii) To ensure that environmental impact assessments are conducted for all ecotourism related projects and that strict mitigation measures are enforced wherever applicable;
- ix) To support the rehabilitation and maintenance of nature trails and the construction of trailhead facilities through collaborative efforts with key stakeholders; and
- x) To facilitate the introduction of free Wi-Fi access at ecotourism sites that allows ecotourists to share their experiences on social media.

5.5.7 Standards and Certification

Ecotourism products and services that meet international standards and are in alignment with best practices and guiding principles lead to competitive advantage for the destination. The GORTT shall:

- i) To ensure that all ecotourism products and services meet national and international quality standards;
- ii) To support the establishment of a certification programme for all ecotourism related products and services;
- iii) To ensure that only trained and certified guides and operators are used to provide interpretive services at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- iv) To establish and implement a code of conduct for operators and visitors at all sites and attractions; and
- v) To establish management and operational guidelines for ecotourism sites and attractions.

5.5.8 Health and Safety and Security

The perception of safety and security at a destination influences its international reputation and appeal. A destination that prioritises health, safety and security will enhance and improve its reputation and visitor experience. The GORTT shall:

- i) To implement public health and sanitation programmes at all communities that host visitors especially at popular ecotourism sites and attractions;
- ii) To ensure that health care facilities are easily accessible and available to meet the needs of the visitor;

- iii) To take appropriate action to prevent and minimise the spread of communicable diseases, especially those that have a grave impact on the tourism sector;
- iv) To address the issues of crime and harassment that target visitors including but not limited to ecotourism sites and attractions;
- v) To develop and implement emergency disaster preparedness and contingency plans with relevant agencies at ecotourism sites and attractions; and
- vi) To develop and implement a public education campaign to educate the general public, especially communities, about their role in the reduction and eradication of threats to health, safety and security.

5.5.9 Monitoring and Evaluation

The tracking and reporting on performance and outcomes is instrumental in determining whether the goals, objectives set out for the niche are being realised. The GORTT shall:

- i) To develop a framework to evaluate the impact of ecotourism development on the environment;
- ii) To sensitise and train local participants in the monitoring process to keep track of their performance;
- iii) To establish a monitoring and evaluation committee to conduct ecological and environmental monitoring at sites and attractions;
- iv) To monitor the use and maintenance of ecotourism facilities and amenities; and
- v) To use visitor feedback forms and questionnaires at ecotourism sites and attractions for improvement of services and upgrade purposes.

5.6 Outcomes

5.6.1 Preservation, Protection and Conservation

- i) Improvement in environmental conservation and protection of natural resources;
- ii) Increased use of environmentally friendly technology and equipment at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- iii) Increased efforts at habitat regeneration;
- iv) Increased scientific research on environmental protection and conservation; and

- v) Improved efforts at conservation in protected areas.

5.6.2 Empowerment of the Community

- i) Increase in the number of active community groups involved in decision making, planning and execution of ecotourism projects;
- ii) Reduction of negative impacts of tourism on the natural environment;
- iii) Increased quality and quantity of jobs generated;
- iv) Increased small and micro business enterprises within the communities and by extension the country; and
- v) Increased public-private partnerships with key stakeholders.

5.6.3 Education and Public Awareness

- i) A well informed and educated local and foreign visitor;
- ii) Increased appreciation of cultural and heritage assets;
- iii) Increased initiatives to protect and conserve the environment; and
- iv) An enhanced tourism experience.

5.6.4 Marketing and Promotions

- i) Increased visitors and visitor spend at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- ii) Increased ecotourism destination packages offered by local tour operators;
- iii) Strengthened strategic partnerships among ministries, agencies and community ecotourism service providers/suppliers; and
- iv) Increased number of innovative marketing strategies.

5.6.5 Investment

- i) Increased number of investors seeking ecotourism projects;
- ii) Increased opportunities for the generation of income for local communities;
- iii) Increased national revenue and net foreign exchange earnings;
- iv) Increased number of zones and sites for ecotourism development; and
- v) Increased utilization of local resources for ecotourism development.

5.6.6 Sites, Attractions and Facilities

- i) Reduction in energy cost;
- ii) Improved and enhanced infrastructure;
- iii) Well maintained sites, attractions and facilities;
- iv) Reduction in visitor complaints;
- v) Increased number of accommodation establishments utilising sound environmental practices; and
- vi) Increased adherence to carrying capacity limits.

5.6.7 Standards and Certification

- i) Greater adherence to codes of conduct and operating guidelines;
- ii) Increased number of certified operators;
- iii) Increased number of sites and attractions meeting international standards; and
- iv) Improved and enhanced visitor experience.

5.6.8 Health, Safety and Security

- i) Improved timeliness in meeting the health care needs of the visitor;
- ii) Reduction in transmission of communicable diseases;
- iii) Reduction in reports of crime and visitor harassment; and
- iv) Improvement in health, safety and security in communities.

5.6.9 Monitoring and Evaluation

- i) Reduction of negative impacts on the ecosystem and environment;
- ii) Improved execution of maintenance plans for the sector;
- iii) Improved planning and management of the sector; and

- iv) Increased ability to meet set targets for the sector.

5.7 Key Success Factors

The GORTT recognises that there are key factors that will drive the success of the ecotourism sector, these include:

- i) An appropriate form and scale of development which has taken into consideration carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change, the environment and its natural assets;
- ii) Full engagement and participation of the community and key stakeholders;
- iii) A safe, secure and healthy environment;
- iv) Enforcement of legislation and compliance with international standards and guiding principles;
- v) Authentic ecotourism product and services;
- vi) An attractive and competitive investment portfolio;
- vii) Highly trained and knowledgeable service professionals; and
- viii) A unique, highly differentiated and competitive ecotourism product.

6. ECOTOURISM POLICY STATEMENTS

The GORTT recognises the importance of the environment and its natural resources to the development of ecotourism. Accordingly, the development of ecotourism shall be in accordance with existing legislation, physical environmental policies and international environmental standards and guiding principles.

6.1 Community Participation

The GORTT recognises that one of the key pillars of this policy is the meaningful involvement of the communities in the tourism sector. Accordingly, the GORTT will institute measures to appropriately engage and empower local communities in the planning and decision making process for the development, management and ownership of the ecotourism products and services. The GORTT shall:

- i. Develop models and strategies for owning, developing and managing community based projects;

- ii. Create structures and mechanisms that engender the participation of community members in the various phases of ecotourism product planning, development and promotion;
- iii. Encourage, facilitate and support the initiatives that lead to the creation of employment and related job opportunities;
- iv. Provide training and skills upgrade programmes to strengthen and build capacity in local communities;
- v. Encourage communities to partner with NGOs, private sector and other external stakeholders in delivering and promoting ecotourism products and services to market;
- vi. Collaborate with key governmental and other agencies to encourage entrepreneurial opportunities in communities;
- vii. Promote increased access to funding to facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities in the sector; and
- viii. Promote and establish linkages with other sectors of the economy to maximise economic benefits for the community.

6.2 Product Development

The GORTT shall support and encourage projects that adopt best practices in the design, construction and operation of ecotourism sites and attractions. In addition, all planning and physical development of ecotourism sites and facilities shall be done in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

The GORTT shall:

- i. Ensure that the design and construction of ecotourism sites and attractions, facilities and amenities adhere to environmentally-friendly and sustainable-building design practices;
- ii. Advocate for the adoption of sustainable and responsible practices in the development of products and services for the sector;
- iii. Encourage international environmental certification of key ecotourism products and services;
- iv. Ensure that regulations are strictly enforced with regard to the collection and disposal of waste materials both solid and liquid, including the disposal of food and the

- elimination of noise pollution at ecotourism sites and attractions;
- v. Encourage the development of visitor and interpretation centres stocked with current and relevant research in biodiversity, environment related studies, educational materials and displays;
 - vi. Ensure that local communities are not negatively affected or exploited in the development of ecotourism products or services for the sector;
 - vii. Allocate resources for the development and upgrading of ecotourism sites and attractions, as well as any ancillary infrastructure at these sites;
 - viii. Encourage the development of facilities that provide access for the differently abled; and
 - ix. Provide support services to small, independent and locally – owned properties to become more environmentally and economically sustainable.

6.3 Ecotourism Accommodation and Facilities

The term accommodation refers to the range of facilities that are available for lodging. Given that the ecotourism sector requires specialised lodging and other facilities that meet the requirements and principles set out for sustainable practices, it is imperative that guidelines be available for development in this area to ensure that it is both low-capacity and low-impact in nature. The GORTT through the establishment of a Committee composed of key stakeholders shall:

- i. Provide guidelines on the scale, number of visitors, types of activities, impact of operations and access, and infrastructure requirements and materials for any planned ecotourism development
- ii. Encourage lodging and other purpose-built facilities that fit within the physical and cultural contexts in which they are constructed and upgraded with attention being paid to the use of localised architecture, form and landscaping;
- iii. Ensure that the construction of eco lodges and other forms of accommodation adhere to environmentally-friendly and sustainable-building design practices;
- iv. Ensure that water acquisition methods are sustainable thereby reducing exploitation or over-consumption;
- v. Ensure proper handling and disposal of solid waste and sewage such that it is not injurious to the public or the environment;

- vi. Ensure that tourism facilities and amenities such as interpretation centres, washrooms, parking lots, access for disabled persons and trail heads are incorporated in the design concept for eco lodges; and
- vii. Encourage the passive design of energy and combine these with modern technology for greater sustainability.

6.4 Marketing and Promotions

The GORTT will oversee the marketing strategies that are employed at the destination. These will be developed in collaboration with the key stakeholders in the tourism industry, bearing in mind the special considerations regarding sustainability of the ecotourism niche. The GORTT shall:

- i. Encourage the efficient and effective coordination of marketing activities and strategies;
- ii. Effectively promote, support and encourage the development and hosting of ecotourism activities and events;
- iii. Market and promote the ecotourism sites, attractions and facilities that have received national and international certification;
- iv. Utilise the internet, business websites, social networking models and social media as pivotal tools to market and promote the ecotourism niche;
- v. Identify and liaise with travel trade partners to promote the ecotourism product to different market segments;
- vi. Invite specialist media to experience the ecotourism product and share their experiences with local, regional and international audiences; and
- vii. Encourage the development of high quality, unique and stimulating ecotourism packages to target specific segments and groups (soft adventure, hard adventure, recreational, scientific and others).

6.5 Training and Education

The GORTT is fully cognisant that a well-trained and educated workforce will support the sustainability of the ecotourism sector. The GORTT shall:

- i. Stimulate and promote employment opportunities linked to the ecotourism sector;
- ii. Facilitate training and development of personnel especially from the community in partnership with the private sector and other relevant agencies;

- iii. Encourage institutions to develop and expand academic and vocational programmes which are focused on the environment;
- iv. Encourage institutions, agencies, NGOs and other organisations to offer internships and scholarships in tourism with an emphasis on the environment; and
- v. Encourage the adoption of service quality standards provided by Trinidad and Tobago certification programmes and internationally approved programmes.

7. ECOTOURISM POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Institutional and Regulatory Framework

Efficient and flexible co-management arrangements and similar structures shall be established to allow State agencies which have intersecting responsibilities, to work together harmoniously for the development of ecotourism. Such mechanisms shall articulate clear roles and responsibilities of Ministries as well as executing and regulatory agencies.

The roles and functions of the State agencies responsible for tourism development in Trinidad and Tobago are discussed in the National Tourism Policy and reproduced below.

7.1.1 The Ministry of Tourism

The mission of the Ministry of Tourism is to formulate tourism policy and strategy and to guide, regulate, oversee and foster the sustainable development and promotion of the tourism sector through effective public, private and community partnerships, so as to enhance its contribution to the economic and social progress of Trinidad and Tobago. The principal responsibilities of the Ministry as it relates to this policy are:

- (i) Provision of leadership and strategic direction in tourism development;
- (ii) Collaborating with relevant agencies, organizations, Ministries, associations and community groups on matters related to the ecotourism policy;
- (iii) Monitoring the implementation of the ecotourism policy and ensuring that strategies and programmes are in sync with the National Tourism Policy;
- (iv) Utilize the provision of environmental legislative and incentives framework to guide ecotourism; and
- (v) Facilitating and monitoring the administration incentives for ecotourism products and service in the Tourism Development Act, Chapter 87:22.

7.1.2 The Tobago House of Assembly (THA)

In accordance with the Tobago House of Assembly Act, 1996, the THA is responsible for tourism development in Tobago. The Division of Tourism and Transportation is the main implementing agent of the THA with respect to tourism and the THA's responsibility as it relates to this policy includes but is not limited to:

- (i) Formulating specific plans for the tourism sector;
- (ii) Conducting ecotourism market research for Tobago;
- (iii) Monitoring and evaluation of the ecotourism niche in Tobago;
- (iv) Implementing standards for the development and maintenance of ecotourism infrastructure at sites and attractions in Tobago;
- (v) Promoting ecotourism investment opportunities in Tobago;
- (vi) Maintaining ecotourism sites, facilities and attractions in Tobago;
- (vii) Administering the provisions of the Tourism Development Act, Chap. 87:22 in respect of ecotourism investment in Tobago; and
- (viii) Collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism and the TDC with regard to the development and promotion of ecotourism.

7.1.3 The Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC)

The Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) is a special purpose State Enterprise operationalized in May 2005 and mandated to develop and market Trinidad and Tobago's tourism product. The TDC is the implementation arm of the Ministry of Tourism, dedicated to realizing the vision for tourism in Trinidad and Tobago. The TDC's specific functions include:

- (i) Maintenance of identified ecotourism facilities/amenities in Trinidad;
- (ii) Marketing and promotion of the ecotourism niche;
- (iii) Establishment of standards for ecotourism development in collaboration with relevant agencies;
- (iv) Implementation of standards for eco-infrastructure at sites and attractions in Trinidad;
- (v) Promotion of ecotourism investment opportunities in Trinidad; and

- (vi) Administering the provisions of the Tourism Development Act, Chap. 87:22, in respect of ecotourism investment in Trinidad.

7.2 ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS

The GORTT shall strengthen its relationships with stakeholders in an effort to realise the full potential of the country's tourism industry, and to increase the benefits of ecotourism to local communities and the country as a whole. Some of the key stakeholders identified in the development of ecotourism are indicated hereunder:

7.2.1 The Ministry of Planning and Development

The Ministry of Planning and Development is responsible, inter alia, for the National Framework for Sustainable Development of Trinidad and Tobago and has the specific mandate for the planning and administration of a land use policy framework. The Ministry of Tourism will therefore collaborate with the Ministry of Planning and Development and associated agencies to ensure effective allocation and optimal use of land resources when planning for ecotourism development. In addition, the Green Fund Division of the Ministry has a critical role to play by providing funding opportunities to stakeholders who are pursuing ecotourism projects that address environmental protection and conservation and capacity building in communities.

7.2.2 The Land Settlement Agency

The Land Settlement Agency is responsible for the protection of eligible squatters from being ejected off State Lands; facilitating the acquisition of leasehold titles by both squatters and tenants in designated areas and, providing for the establishment of land settlement areas. The Ministry of Tourism will partner with the Land Settlement Agency to prevent squatting or other illegal occupation of land designated as an ecotourism site or attraction.

7.2.3 The Environmental Management Authority

The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) is responsible for establishing and implementing policies for the effective management and wise use of the environment, consistent with the objects of the Environmental Management Act. The Ministry of Tourism will work with the EMA to ensure that ecotourism development is in accordance with environmental laws and practices. The Ministry will also collaborate with the EMA to host workshops that sensitise communities on the value of biodiversity and the fragile relationship that exists between the activities of the communities and the environment.

7.2.4 The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries including the Forestry Division through its

relevant divisions has the responsibility for the conservation and protection of this country's biodiversity and sustainable development of food and non-food systems. In light of the above, and given the Ministry of Tourism's goal for achieving sustainability in tourism development, partnership and collaboration with this Ministry is critical to the promotion of inter-sectoral linkages necessary for the successful implementation of ecotourism projects. The Ministry of Tourism will work with this Ministry to ensure that its land and marine resources are conserved, protected and managed in a sustainable manner.

7.2.5 The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

At the Local Government level, specific functions of policy implementation, environmental planning and land-use and product development, are further supported. Under the Municipal Corporation Act No. 21 of 1990; Chapter 25:04, Section 232, the Municipal Corporations have the specific responsibility for the provision, maintenance and control of parks, recreation grounds, beaches, watercourses and other public spaces. The Ministry of Tourism will collaborate with Local Government entities to ensure community buy-in and involvement in ecotourism projects. It should also be noted that the appropriate entity under the purview of this Ministry which has the responsibility for waste management, both solid and liquid, would be part of initiatives to develop and/or approve waste management plans for the eco-sites.

7.2.6 The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts

The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts is responsible for facilitating the empowerment of communities through the development and implementation of programmes and initiatives that serve to ensure a better quality of life for its citizens. The Ministry's mandate to support and guide the development of the artistic manifestations of culture will aid in the development of products that can be used for the ecotourism niche. The Ministry of Tourism will partner with this Ministry and its relevant divisions to support the development and implementation of ecotourism projects and initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago. Capacity-building and entrepreneurial support will be provided for community groups that wish to establish viable ecotourism projects. The Ministry of Tourism will also collaborate with this Ministry to develop, promote, preserve and protect the country's cultural and heritage assets found within communities.

7.2.7 The Ministry of National Security

The Ministry of National Security and its relevant divisions are responsible for ensuring the maintenance of law and order and public safety of all nationals and visitors to Trinidad and Tobago, migration and coordinating disaster preparedness and relief. The Community Policing Secretariat will be approached to host lectures and workshops in various communities on crime prevention and securing of the community assets. The Ministry of Tourism will continue to engage the Ministry of National Security and all its divisions: Immigration, Life Guard Services, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to strengthen initiatives that seek to protect and safeguard the citizens and visitors to Trinidad and Tobago.

7.2.8 Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL)

The Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited will be engaged to collect, manage and dispose of waste, both solid and liquid produced at ecotourism sites. Approved waste management plans will be executed at ecotourism sites in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministries of Tourism and Education and other relevant organisations will partner with SWMCOL to promote educational programmes including but not limited to those programmes that address waste management practices and the impacts of waste (solid or liquid) on the environment.

7.2.9 The Private Sector

The private sector is critical to the development and promotion of ecotourism in Trinidad and Tobago. The delivery of quality ecotourism services and provision of value for money are aspects where the private sector plays a vital role. The private sector will be encouraged to create sustainable employment opportunities and to promote the involvement of local communities in tourism ventures. The Ministry of Tourism will assist in the facilitation of investment in approved ecotourism projects .

7.2.10 Civil Society, Non-Governmental and Community-based Organizations

Civil Society, Non-governmental and community-based organizations, especially those with an environmental and a community focus, play a vital role in the development and spread of responsible tourism practices, while providing valuable insights at the grassroots level. These agencies also play a critical role in building capacity and assisting local communities to develop new and innovative products and services. The Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other Ministries and related agencies will work with these organisations to preserve, conserve and promote community assets for ecotourism development.

7.2.11 The Media

The media is recognized as a key partner in the tourism development process. As tourism operates in a global environment, the messages that are communicated can have either a positive or negative effect on the tourism market share. The Ministry of Tourism, the Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) and the Tobago House of Assembly will collaborate with the media to promote environmental awareness and develop positive messages that show the importance of ecotourism and the potential benefits that can accrue to the communities and the destination as a whole. The media will also be encouraged to provide educational and informative coverage on ecotourism activities and initiatives and to disseminate these messages using a wide range of platforms including social media.

Strategic alliances will be formed with local and international media with regard to the broadcasting of ecotourism projects. Ecotourism projects, practices and initiatives that emphasise conservation and protection of endemic and endangered species have the ability to attract regional and international media which can generate awareness and in turn strengthen conservation efforts of the natural environment.

8. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Ministry of Tourism, the Tourism Development Company and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) will work closely with all relevant Ministries, state agencies, organisations and key stakeholders to ensure that the ecotourism niche is developed and marketed in keeping with the GORTT's overarching Policy Framework (2015).

Accordingly, a framework will be established whereby the Ministry of Tourism will work with these key ministries and agencies to devise Action and Implementation plans, prioritize action items, determine performance indicators, identify responsible persons/organizations, develop budgetary requirements and establish time frames for implementation. Plans developed, should be for the short (1-3 years), medium (4-6 years) and long term (7-10years). The extent of the implementation plan will therefore be 10 years.

The key ministries and their implementation arms shall include in their strategic plans the action items and initiatives that will be pursued to facilitate meeting the objectives identified in this policy. It is envisaged that post event research including the long term tracking of the successes or failures of implementing specific eco-tourism activities will aid in the future planning of this niche.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation with periodic review of this policy is integral to the implementation and management of this policy. As such, a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee comprising the Ministry of Tourism, the TDC and THA and any other key Ministry/agency, will be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy as prescribed in Section 7.

The Committee will focus on the development of performance targets for the policy's goals and objectives as outlined in the policy framework. The Committee will submit quarterly reports to Cabinet in order to provide updates on the progress of implementation.

Subsequently, a summative evaluation will be carried out by the committee at the end of each fiscal year. A summative report will be prepared by the committee based on their findings to submit to Cabinet stating whether the policy's goals, objectives and outcomes that were initially set were realised. This report will include recommendations for corrective measures to be deployed in order to address any deviations in this regard.

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Appendix 1: Swot Analysis

Table 1: SWOT Analysis of the Ecotourism sector in Trinidad & Tobago

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 native mammals, 468 species of birds, 100 species of reptiles & amphibians, and 600 species of butterflies, as well as over 2,200 species of flowering plants. • 44 species of coral, three species of endangered sea turtles and over 80 species of tropical reef fish and over 220 species of bird in Tobago • Native to the second smallest hummingbird in the world • Home to the Scarlet Ibis • Easy access to most sites • 3 Ramsar designated sites: Nariva, Caroni and Buccoo Reef/Bon Accord Lagoon • Home to the world famous Asa Wright Nature Centre • Knowledgeable, trained and certified guides • Established eco/nature trails • Low impact on the environment • The tropical climate fosters great birding year long • Nocturnal Oilbird or Guacharo (<i>Steatornis caripensis</i>). Located in Dunston Cave, a beautiful riparian grotto, is perhaps the most easily accessible colony known for this remarkable species. • Largest nesting population of leatherback turtles in the world⁸ • Blue Flag Beach in Las Cuevas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities and infrastructure still need developing to be competitive and meet world standards • Insufficient funds allocated to the upgrade of sites • Very little social media marketing • Information located on Ecotourism websites are not regularly updated. • Destination's ecotourism potential not as well-known as Brazil, Belize, Venezuela and Costa Rica. • Deficient market niche strategy • Slow rate of implementation of special training programmes. • Insufficient public education on ecotourism • Lack of concern for the environment • Local individuals lack involvement and incentives in Trinidad and Tobago's ecotourism industry as well as the poor physical infrastructure and accessibility

⁸ Nature Seekers. Learn about a Sea Turtle.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turtle watching is part of a growing volunteer tourism market where tourists travel for the purpose of protecting endangered species • Tobago has the oldest natural reserve in the western hemisphere • 3 wetlands in Trinidad and 2 in Tobago that are natural habitats for many species of birds • Development of eco-tourism in rural communities can change the distribution in those rural communities, decentralizing the economy • New nature trails are currently being developed (2016) • The <i>Discovering the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago</i> - bird watching guide was launched at the inaugural American Birding Expo (2015) • Conservation measures for biodiversity and protected areas are being implemented under the Improving Forest and Protected Area Management Project as well as rehabilitation and reforestation efforts to swamp lands under the EMA's National Restoration Carbon Sequestration Wildlife and Livelihoods Project • Increase in industry standards and tourism diversification and product development • Exploration of avenues for the further engagement of the private sector and exploring options for other sources of financing from international donors and the private sector of other countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of biodiversity and habitat to areas of economic development including housing, agriculture and quarrying • Solid competition emerging from Belize, Mexico, Costa Rica, Dominica • Pollution and destruction of wetlands and swamps • Tendency towards development with little regard to preservation of the natural environment in rural areas • Negative impact of climate change • Continued industrialization & quarrying erodes our ability to boast of being a green destination. • Lack of regulation, enforcement of laws & legislation and support of incentives for the sector • Lack of education and appreciation on the importance of ecotourism by the general public • Proliferation of invasive species such as the Lion fish (<i>Pterois volitans</i>) • Declining budgetary funding for eco-tourism projects including infrastructural work • Proliferation of forest fires and littering • Existence of land instability

Appendix 2: Some Popular Ecotourism Sites and Attractions in Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad

- i) **The Asa Wright Nature Centre:** a world-renowned nature conservation and research centre for naturalists and birdwatchers, situated in an area comprising nearly 1,500 acres of largely forested terrain in the Arima and Aripo valleys of the Northern Range. The area is also home to the Oilbirds (Devil birds) and the Golden Bearded Manakin;
- ii) **Brasso Seco:** an agricultural area located in the Northern Range of Trinidad, 16 miles from the town of Arima. This area is well known for its rich biodiversity and ecotourism sites and attractions (e.g. hiking trails and waterfalls - i.e. Double River, Sobo, Madamas, Cipriani and Paria) and cultural heritage (e.g. cocoa and coffee estates from the colonial era);
- iii) **The Chaguaramas Peninsula⁹:** situated in the north-western part of the island, the Peninsula covers a 14,752 acre region, includes five offshore islands and offers numerous opportunities for recreational activities such as cave exploration, bird watching, hiking and mountain biking. The Peninsula is also recognized as a “safe zone” from hurricanes and as a result houses a thriving yachting industry. Examples of the fauna that can be found in this region include deer, agouti, caimans and the Ocelot; Examples of the flora found include: bamboo trees, montane forest (Serrette bois-gris), Deciduous seasonal forest (Naked Indian incense poui), Dry evergreen forest (Sea grape manchineel and Palmiste balata) and Semi-evergreen seasonal forest (Purple heart incense poui, Purple heart-bois Lisette, Acurel-moussana-jiggerwood, Acurel-gommier and Moussana-figuier, Balata, Cedar and Cypre).
- iv) **The Caroni and Nariva Swamps** are both designated as Wetlands of International Importance under the RAMSAR Convention. These swamps are two of the largest wetland systems in Trinidad that comprise a variety of vegetation types e.g. mangrove forests and an abundance of terrestrial and marine wildlife e.g. the Red Howler Monkey, Scarlet Ibis, Anaconda, Red-Capped Cardinal, and the Manatee;
- v) **The Point-à-Pierre Wild Fowl Trust** is another nature-based tourism model which promotes environmental and education awareness whilst situated in 30 hectares of land in the heart of Petrotrin’s petrochemical and oil refining complex. The Trust is responsible for the management of the wetland habitat, endangered species of wetland birds and other avifauna and the proliferation of endangered flora. Some of these species of fauna and flora include the the Blue and Gold Macaw, wild ducks, Scarlet Ibis, Lotus Water Lily and numerous medicinal plants.”
- vi) **The Bush Bush Sanctuary:** a wildlife reserve located in the county of Nariva where the

⁹ Northern Range Assessment (NRA). Report of an Assessment of the Northern Range, Trinidad and Tobago: People and the Northern Range. (State of the Environment Report 2004. Environmental Management Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2005

Red Howler and Capuchin Monkeys can be found. Trinidad is the only Caribbean island with a natural population of these species;

- vii) **The Tamana Caves:** the caves are situated in the Central Range and possess a diversity that is considered unique by ecologists among cave systems and is home to over 500,000 bats of at least 12 species e.g. the Greater Spare-Nosed Bat and the Long-Nosed Bat;
- viii) **Grande Rivière and Matura Beaches** are two main turtle nesting grounds on the north and north east coasts in Trinidad for the endangered Leatherback Turtle. Some popular beaches where nesting turtles can be found include Maracas, Las Cuevas, Blanchisseuse, Manzanilla and Mayaro.

Tobago

- i) **The Main Ridge Forest Reserve** is an area made up of tropical rainforest and is a habitat for numerous flora and fauna including the endemic species, the ocellated Gecko;
- ii) **The Grafton Caledonia Wildlife Sanctuary** is a former cocoa estate that is now used as a reserve for bird watching of various species such as the Cocrico, the Blue-backed Manakin and the Blue Crowned Motmot;
- iii) **The Buccoo Reef** a fringing reef **and Bon Accord Lagoon** form part of a wetland system located on the leeward side of Tobago consisting coral reefs, sea grass beds and mangrove forests and habitat for aquatic and terrestrial organisms such as Hawksbill turtle, the endangered Green Turtle and the Nassau Grouper;
- iv) **Speyside Bay** is a bay located on the leeward coast of Tobago and considered to be a very popular dive site with the world's largest brain coral;
- v) **Little Tobago** is a small island off the northeastern coast of Tobago that is a breeding ground for seabirds such as Red-billed Tropicbird, Audubon's Shearwater, Brown Booby, Brown Noddy, Sooty and Bridled Terns;
- vi) **The Black Rock and Grafton Beaches** are nesting grounds where the Hawksbill and Leatherback turtles come to lay their eggs on the south western coast in Tobago.
- vii) **St. Giles Island** located off Castara Point is a diving site for advanced divers due to the rough conditions and a protected game sanctuary. The island is key breeding site inhabited by nesting colonies of Magnificent Frigatebirds, Red-footed Boobies and Brown Boobies. The island consist of a small group of islands known as Melville Island, Marble Island, London Bridge and Three Rock.
- viii) **Brothers Rock and Sisters Rock** located adjacent to each other with Brothers Rock located the closest to Fourmi Bay are separate groups of rocks that are popular amongst divers. Snappers, groupers, turtles, nurse sharks and reef sharks can be found around Brothers Rock while scalloped hammerhead sharks frequent Sisters Rock. Hard and soft

corals are located at Sisters Rock while small reefs are found off the southern side of Brothers Rock.

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Appendix 3: Ecotourism Activities

The GORTT in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders shall ensure that all proposed ecotourism activities are carried out in accordance with all applicable national policies and legislative frameworks, as well as, internationally accepted principles of sustainable tourism. Moreover, ecotourism activities shall be based on the identified assets and needs of communities and as far as possible, activities will be undertaken using trained local guides from the community.

Some of the activities that ecotourist may engage in include but are not limited to:

Nature Trails

The natural environment will be a key feature of this form of eco-related tourism. Nature trails for walking, cycling and hiking shall be developed and maintained to minimize negative impact in the area.

Bird Watching/Observance of Wildlife

Bird watching and observance of wildlife in their natural habitats e.g. turtle watching on the beaches and/or environmentally-sensitive/protected areas shall be undertaken in keeping with established carrying capacity limits. Access to eco-sensitive areas shall require visitors to obtain permits as required from the relevant state authorities.

Soft Adventure

Given that Trinidad and Tobago has a versatile terrain ranging from beaches and rivers to mountains and waterfalls, this variety allows us to participate in many of the forms of nature based outdoor activities. Generally, the destination has marketed activities for soft adventure. The level of physical challenge is normally low, as well as the level of risk to the visitor. These include: hiking, bicycling, snorkelling, bird/animal watching, etc. and shall be undertaken in designated areas. It is important to note that these activities shall be pursued in accordance with the regulations established by the relevant authorities and as appropriate to the environmental sensitivity of the area.

Farming Activities and Landscapes

The main attraction at these sites are the landscapes used for farming purposes. Visitors tour the agricultural sites and walk through trails that have been designed to accommodate them. They can also become involved in planting or reaping related activities and become familiar with local planning patterns and practices. As with trails, efforts must be taken to avoid negative impacts on the area and to prevent exceeding the carrying capacity.

Cultural Activities

Involvement in the local culture of the destination can also fall within this niche. Trinidad and Tobago possess a rich, and diverse cultural heritage which is well maintained and practised within communities. These can be offered as ecotourism products to visitors with an interest in this area. To prevent the commercialisation of these products, communities would need to be educated on the need to preserve authenticity.

Educational Component

Ecotourism also has an educational component as it allows visitors an opportunity to learn about nature and the local culture and traditions, as well as to respect these elements of the experience. As these visitors interact with nature and/or the community, or engage in research, the necessary precautionary measures will be put in place to ensure that destruction or degradation of the environment is minimised.

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Appendix 4: National Policies, Legislation, Plans and International Agreements

The following is a list of some of the relevant National Policies, Legislation and Plans and International Agreements that pertain to ecotourism development in Trinidad and Tobago.

National Policies:

- National Wetlands Policy (2002)
- National Environmental Policy (2005)
- National Water Resources Management Policy (2005)
- National Action Programme to Combat Land Degradation in Trinidad and Tobago 2006 - 2020
- National Tourism Policy (2010)
- National Protected Areas Policy (2011)
- National Forest Policy (2011)
- National Wildlife Policy (2013)
- National Climate Change Policy (2011)

Laws and Legislation:

- Sawmill Act, Chapter 66:02 (Act 35 of 1943 Amended by 34 of 1947; 45 of 1979; 24 of 1999)
- Conservation of Wildlife Act, Chapter 67:01 (1958 amended 1963, 1980)
- Fisheries Act, Chapter 67:51 (1916, amended 1966, 1975) (1980, amended)
- Agricultural Fires Act, Chapter 63:02 (Act 20 of 1965)
- State Lands Act, Chapter 57:01 (1969)
- Marine Areas (Preservation and Enhancement) Act, Chapter 37:02 (1970 amended 1996)
- Chaguaramas Development Authority Act, Chapter 35:02 (1972)
- Litter Act, Chapter 30:53 (Act 27 of 1973 and its amendments)
- Town and Country Planning Act, Chapter 35:01 (amended 1974, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1990)
- Municipal Corporations Act, Chapter 25:04 (Act 21 of 1990 and its amendments)
- Tobago House of Assembly Act, Chapter 25:03 (1996 amended 2001), Act 40 of 1996
- Plant Protection Act, Chapter 63:56 (Act 7 of 1997)
- Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act, Chapter 57:05 (Act 25 of 1998)
- National Heritage Trust Act, chapter 40:53 (2000)
- Tourism Development Act, Chapter 87:22 (Act 9 of 2000 and its amendments)
- Land Acquisition Act, chapter 58:01 (1994 amended 2000)
- Environmental Management Act, Chapter 35:05 (Act 3 of 2000)

- Environmentally Sensitive Area Rules (2001)
- Environmentally Sensitive Species Rules (2001)
- Certificate for Environmental Clearance Rules (2001)

Plans:

- A System of National Parks and other Protected Areas (1980)
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2001)
- National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme Strategic Plan (2004-2009)
- Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago (2006-2010). *Tobago, Capital of Paradise: Clean, Green Safe and Serene*
- Trinidad and Tobago National Action Programme to Combat Land Degradation in Trinidad and Tobago 2006-2020

International Agreements

- Convention of Biological Diversity (1992)
- Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere (Western Hemisphere Convention) (1969)
- Convention on Wetlands of international Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention, 1971)
- World Heritage Convention (1972)
- Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) (1973)
- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992)
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (1994)
- International Tropical Timber Agreement (2006)

Appendix 5: Investment - Approved Tourism Projects

The development incentives for approved ecotourism-related projects include tax benefits and exemptions (e.g. tax holidays up to seven years, carry-over of losses from a tax exemption period, capital allowances on approved capital expenditure and accelerated depreciation on depreciable equipment): customs and excise duty exemptions (duty concessions on the importation of vehicles for use in the transportation of guests/visitors at a reduced rate of import duty (10%) and exemption from motor vehicle tax, and duty exemption for building materials and articles of tourism equipment).

The following categories of ecotourism-related activities qualify for consideration for aforementioned incentives, these categories are:

- Tourism Accommodation Projects; under Schedule 4 and 5 of the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000: Chapter 87:22 e.g. Accommodation facilities (dive and eco-lodges);
- Tourism Ancillary Facilities; under Schedule 2 and 3 of the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000: Chapter 87:22 e.g. dive operations, water sports, charter boats, theme parks, tour operations, cultural centres, and recreational space use; and
- Other Projects; under Schedule 9 of the Tourism Development Act (TDA), 2000 e.g. destination management companies, ground tour operations, recreational space, transportation service, historical landmarks and heritage sites.