

JAMMU & KASHMIR DRAFT ECO-TOURISM POLICY – 2016

The Draft Eco-tourism Policy of Jammu & Kashmir is in the public domain from inviting comments/suggestions from stakeholders/NGOs/Departments within 4 weeks time.

The comments should be sent to:-

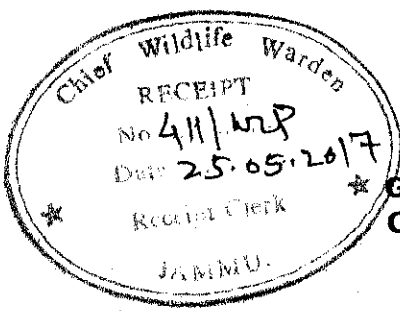
- i) Commissioner/Secretary to Government, Forest Department, Civil Secretariat, Srinagar either by post or through e-mail.

or to

- ii) Chief Conservator of Forests (Eco-tourism), Boulevard Road near Hotel Lalit Grand Palace, Srinagar.

Email address:-

- (i) Commissioner/Secretary to Government, Forest Department: csforestjk@gmail.com
- (ii) Chief Conservator of Forests (Eco-tourism) Srinagar: jkwildlife78@gmail.com



**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
CIVIL SECRETARIAT FOREST, ENVIRONMENT
& ECOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

1. Pr. Chief Conservator of Forest ,(HoFF),
J&K,
2. Chairman ,
State Pollution Control Board, J&K,
- ✓ 3. Chief Wildlife Warden,
J&K, Jammu.
4. Project Chief,
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9. Director,
State Forest Research Institute, J&K.
10. Director,
Soil & Water Conservation , J&K.

No: FST/Land/02/2005

Dated:- 17 - 05-2017

Subject:- Jammu and Kashmir Draft Eco- Tourism Department- Policy.

Sir,

I am directed to invite your attention towards the above noted subject and to forward herewith a copy of the draft note of Jammu and Kashmir Eco- Tourism Policy , and request you to kindly furnish comments/ views in the matter within 4 week's positively.

Yours faithfully

(Amreet Singh)KAS

Deputy Secretary to Government
Forest Environment & Ecology Deptt.

Encl:-

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16/5

JAMMU AND KASHMIR ECOTOURISM POLICY

(Draft -2017)

1 PREAMBLE

Ecotourism is defined as "*Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.*" (The International Ecotourism Society, 2015). Such tourism is low-impact, educational, and directly benefits the local communities. Most of the popular tourist destinations in the State are fragile ecosystems that provide a whole host of ecosystem services to local residents and people living downstream. Unplanned tourism in these landscapes can destroy the very environment that attracts the tourists in the first place. Ecotourism promotes the non-consumptive use of wilderness areas, for the benefit of local communities living around, and dependent on, these fragile landscapes.

The basic principle of ecotourism is to unite conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. Practice of ecotourism essentially involves the following elements:

- Adopt low-impact tourism that protects ecological integrity of wilderness areas, secures wildlife values of the destination and its surrounding areas
- Highlight the heritage value of the wilderness and protected areas
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- Facilitate the sustainability of ecotourism enterprises and activities
- Provide livelihood opportunities to local communities
- Use indigenous, locally produced and ecologically sustainable materials for tourism activities

Ecotourism has been included as one of the strategies in the J&K State Forest Policy, 2011 under section 4.13 which reads as follows:

"Jammu and Kashmir has immense potential for eco-tourism which provides basic framework for ecologically sustainable tourism with livelihood opportunities for local communities. Following actions will be taken to promote and popularise eco-tourism in the State:

- a. Eco-tourism activities will be regulated in a manner that preserves the health, scenic beauty and natural attributes of the eco-tourism sites.*
- b. Local communities will be trained and motivated to be an integral part of the eco-tourism activities.*

c. Eco-tourism will compulsorily focus on providing eco-sustainable livelihood support to the local communities."

2 VISION

The State of Jammu and Kashmir aims to protect the aesthetic landscapes in the State by regulating tourism in an ecologically sustainable manner, and to provide livelihood opportunities to the local communities through ecotourism.

3 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the J&K Ecotourism Policy are as follows:

- a. To inform and sensitize the public and Government Departments about ecotourism and to lay down the framework for its growth in an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable manner.
- b. To provide a common platform for promoting ecotourism in the state.
- c. To provide livelihood opportunities to local communities through ecotourism and to secure their involvement in conservation of natural resources.
- d. To provide environment friendly facilities at tourist destinations.
- e. To diversify the range of ecotourism activities at select destinations.
- f. To develop and enforce standards and norms for ecotourism activities including the carrying capacity of each site.
- g. To create awareness about the local culture and traditions amongst visitors, and to educate them about the importance of nature conservation.
- h. To regulate tourism activities in a manner that maintains the ecological and cultural integrity of the area and the people.
- i. To ensure compliance of environmental and forest/ wildlife laws in tourist places so as to preserve the natural heritage of the State.
- j. To ecologically restore the popular tourist destinations which have suffered environmental degradation over a period of time throughout the State.
- k. To discourage use of Forest area/ Wildlife area for Tourism/Recreational purposes which are not in consonance with ecotourism policy.

4 STRATEGY

The stated objectives would be achieved through following strategies:

4.1 Capacity building: In order to provide ecologically sustainable livelihood support to the local communities, their orientation, education and training is a pre requisite. This would involve the following:

- a. Training of local communities in different ecotourism activities like guides for trekking, bird watching, nature interpretation, home management etc.
- b. Training of frontline staff, tour operators, ecotourism societies as well as various stakeholders, in different aspects of eco-tourism with focus on environmental conservation and enforcement of environmental regulations.
- c. Training and capacity building of local communities to take up such income generation activities which complement ecotourism namely, handicraft souvenirs, food and fruit processing, providing adventure sport equipments etc.

4.2. Ecotourism activities: Ecotourism activities to be promoted at any destination shall be site-specific depending upon the potential of the particular site being developed. The following activities may be undertaken for promoting an area as an ecotourism destination within the State.

- a. **Nature Camps:** Camping sites will have very basic facilities of temporary nature to enable the tourists to stay in natural surroundings to experience the wilderness and for participating in other activities requiring overnight stay in forests, if any.
- b. **Home-stays and Eco-friendly Accommodation:** The local community members shall be encouraged and facilitated to provide lodging and boarding facilities of prescribed quality standards to the tourists outside the forest areas. In locations where such home-stays are not possible, basic facilities for boarding and lodging of tourists may be developed subject to the provisions of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1997. The facilities shall be eco-friendly and strictly in accordance with guidelines as prescribed in this regard. Existing buildings located in picturesque areas may also be developed suitably for accommodating tourists.
- c. **Trekking and Nature Walks:** Trekking routes of varying distances and nature trails along designated paths may be identified and developed in scenic landscapes, with minimum disturbance to the natural vegetation and soil. Staff and local people, especially youth, shall be appropriately trained to act

as Nature Guides and Naturalists so as to assist visitors during nature/wildlife viewing and trekking.

- d. **Adventure Sports:** Facilities for adventure sports such as rock climbing, along with water sports such as river rafting, boating and canoeing may be developed in consultation and collaboration with experts.
- e. **Herbal Ecotourism:** Herbal ecotourism may be promoted as a thrust area at suitable locations having a rich herbal heritage. Traditional medicinal practices of such locations should be explored and based on these, authentic herbal products having appropriate certification can be made available to the tourists. Similarly, outlets for promoting local, ethnic and forest based food and beverages should also be promoted.
- f. **Other Facilities:** Facilities for any other eco-friendly activities may also be provided based on specific requirements of a site provided the activity is compatible with the overall objectives of this policy, and in conformity with environmental laws and the standards and guidelines laid down in this regard.

4.3 Compliance with Forest, Wildlife and Environment Laws: All activities in forest and wildlife areas shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the provisions of the J&K Forest Act 1930, J&K Forest (Conservation) Act 1997, and the J&K (Wildlife) Protection Act 1978. Generation of solid waste/ plastic waste and liquid waste is invariably associated with tourism activities. Therefore, strict compliance with waste rules notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and the provisions of J&K State Non-biodegradable Material (Management and Disposal) Act, 2007, shall be ensured.

4.4 Identification of sites and development of facilities: The primary criterion for selection of locations with ecotourism potential would be the willingness of local communities to take up ecotourism as one of their livelihood activities. The following principles shall be adhered to while developing facilities at ecotourism locations:

- a. Encourage use eco-friendly materials naturally available in the locality for construction;
- b. Avoid, as far as possible, use of concrete structures and buildings at ecotourism sites;
- c. Provide appropriate facilities which are visitor friendly, informative and cater to the basic needs of stay;

- d. Promote renewable energy systems and water harvesting as far as possible;
- e. Ensure compliance with the provisions of J&K Forest (Conservation) Act, 1997 while developing facilities in connection with ecotourism.

4.5 Awareness and Publicity

- a. Existing nature interpretation facilities should be enriched so as to accommodate the requirements of various classes of visitors envisaged.
- b. Each destination must incorporate ways to enhance and enrich the visitor experience.
- c. Conservation ethics should be promoted in and around each destination for creating awareness amongst school and college students, local communities, government staff and visitors in order to maintain and enhance support for ecotourism and environmental conservation.
- d. Awareness efforts can include naturalists (guides), media campaigns, formation of eco-clubs at schools and colleges, exposure visits to destinations, displays and hoardings, community centers and the like.
- e. New and innovative methods for generation of awareness should also be encouraged.

4.6 Management: For effective management and regulation of ecotourism activities, and in order to ensure compliance with the environment, forest and wildlife laws, the following administrative framework will be established:

a. Ecotourism Coordination Committee.

The State shall constitute an Ecotourism Coordination Committee (ECC) for effective implementation of the ecotourism policy and monitoring of the ecotourism activities. The Ecotourism Coordination Committee will have the following composition:

1	Principal Chief Conservator of Forests	Chairperson
2	Chief Wildlife Warden J&K	Vice-Chairperson
3	Chief Conservator of Forests, Ecotourism	Member Secretary
4	Member Secretary, J&K State Pollution Control Board	Member
5	Director Finance, Forest, Environment and Ecology Department	Member
6	Director Tourism, Jammu	Member

7	Director Tourism, Kashmir	Member
8	Director, Local Bodies, J&K	Member
9	Director, Rural Development Department, Kashmir	Member
10	Director, Rural Development Department, Jammu	Member
11	Two experts in the field of ecotourism, to be nominated for two years by the Government	Members

b. Project Implementation Agencies.

In order to have flexibility in the management of different destinations, separate 'Project Implementation Agencies' (PIA) shall be constituted for each site or cluster of sites. These PIA's shall be registered as societies under the J&K Societies Registration Act, 1998 (CE 1941) and also with the CCF Ecotourism. Their role and responsibility shall be prescribed by the Government in consultation with the Ecotourism Coordination Committee. Composition of Project Implementing Agency will be as follows;

1	Conservator of Forests/ Regional Wildlife Warden	Chairperson
2	DFO Territorial Concerned/ Wild Life Warden	Member Secretary
3	CEO of concerned Tourism Authority	Member
	Block Development Officer Concerned	Member
4	District Officer of the Pollution Control Board	Member
5	Two Non- Official Members form the local NGOs working in the field of nature conservation/ having experience in ecotourism to be nominated by the concerned DFO and WLW with the approval of the Conservator of Forests concerned for a period of two years.	Members
6	Concerned Range Officer, under whose jurisdiction the ecotourism activities fall	Member

4.7 Impact assessment studies, research and 'do not disturb' practices:

- a. Impact assessment studies would be carried out at periodic intervals so as to ascertain impacts of eco-tourism on environment and remedial measures taken.
- b. The carrying capacity shall be determined for various eco-tourism loations and the carrying capacity concept will be the cornerstone of the State's Eco-Tourism Policy. The number of tourists permissible shall be kept within limits.
- c. A set of 'do not disturb' guidelines would be issued for educating tourists so as to inculcate the right eco-tourism spirit, to minimize the use of resources for recreation and for general protection of nature.

- d. Research shall be undertaken on various facets of eco-tourism with a view to minimize negative impacts and for application of latest eco-restoration techniques and technologies.



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