JOINT DENR-DOT MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR No. 98-02

June 29, 1998

SUBJECT: Guidelines For Ecotourism for Development Of The Philippines

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

SECTION 1. BASIC POLICY

1.1 It is the policy of the State to ensure sustainable use, development, management, protection and conservation of the country's environment and natural resources and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of the present and future generations.

1.2 It is likewise the policy of the Government to develop and promote sustainable tourism that is designed to improve the quality of life of the people, provide a high quality of experience for the visitors, and maintain the integrity of the environment.

SECTION 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

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

2.1 Ecotourism - a low-impact, environmentally-sound and community-participatory tourism activity in a given natural environment that enhances the conservation of biophysical and cultural diversity, promotes environmental understanding and education, and yields socioeconomic benefit to the concerned community.

2.2 Protected Area - identified portions of land and water set aside by reason of their unique physical and biological significance, managed to enhance biological diversity and protected against destructive human exploitation;
2.3 Carrying Capacity - the extent of development and maximum number of individuals that can be accommodated in a given area without adversely affecting the state of the environment, the level of satisfaction of the visitors, and the sociocultural characteristics of the concerned community;

2.4 Sustainable Tourism - model form of economic development that is designed to improve, the quality of life of the host community, provide a high quality of experience for the visitors, and maintain the quality of the environment on which both the community and the visitors depend;

2.5 Biodiversity the variety and variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes in which said organisms occur. It is usually considered at three levels namely: genetic diversity, species diversity, and ecosystem diversity;

2.6 Recreational Zones - areas of high recreational, tourism, educational and/or environmental values where ecotourism could be allowed;

2.7 Sustainable Development - meeting the needs and aspirations of the people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs; and

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

SECTION 3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 To regulate implementation of ecotourism projects to make it a viable tool for sustainable development

3.2 To provide mechanism for the accreditation of developers, investors and other concerned individuals and groups who will engage in the implementation of ecotourism projects; and

3.3 To ensure multi-sectoral participation in ecotourism development implementation.

SECTION 4. SCOPE AND COVERAGE
This Circular shall cover the development and implementation of ecotourism activities in the Philippines.

SECTION 5. CRITERIA IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ECOTOURISM PROJECTS

5.1 SITE CONSIDERATION

5.1.1 The area should have unique natural/cultural features which will provide enjoyment and educational benefits to visitors;

5.1.2 The area should be accessible;

5.1.3 The area should have a stable peace and order condition;

5.1.4 There must be a highly receptive and cooperative local community; and

5.1.5 In case of NIPAS areas, ecotourism sites should be in recreational zones and other appropriate zones

5.2 ACTIVITY/DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Ecotourism activities must have all the following attributes:

5.2.1 environmentally-sound and low-impact development;

5.2.2 with educational value;

5.2.3 have community acceptance and participation;

5.2.4 provide social and economic benefits to the concerned community thru livelihood undertakings.

SECTION 6. REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

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

The following documents must be submitted by the project proponent:
6.1. Letter of Intent

6.1.2 Ecotourism development project proposal to include the following information:

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

6.1.3 Duly accomplished application form

6.1.4 Profile of project proponent

6.1.5 Initial Environmental Examination/ Environmental Impact Assessment, if necessary.

6.1.6 Application fee

6.1.7 Other documents as may be required by relevant agencies

6.2 Once the proposal is accepted, a more detailed Ecotourism Management Plan shall be submitted by the proponent. The plan must be complementary with the Protected Area General Management Plan if the site is within a protected area.

6.3 Once approved, NEC or REC shall issue a corresponding document informing the proponent of the approval of the project.

SECTION 7. ORGANIZATION

7.1 Ecotourism Steering Committee

An Ecotourism Steering Committee shall be created to serve as the policy making body that will provide the general direction in
the overall development and implementation of ecotourism projects in the Philippines.

7.1.2 Composition of the Ecotourism Steering Committee

a. DOT Undersecretary for Planning - Chairman
b. DENR Undersecretary for Environment and Programs - Co-Chairman
C. Director, PAWB
d. DOT Director for Planning
e. Private Sector Representative

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

7.2.1 Composition of the National Ecotourism Committee:

The NEC shall be composed of the following:

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

7.2.2 Composition of the Regional Ecotourism Committees (REC)

The REC shall be composed of the following:

a. Regional Director, DOT - Chairman
b. Regional Technical Director, EMPAS-DENR - Co-Chairman
c. Protected Area and Wildlife Division Chief
d. NEDA-PCSD
e. NGO representative
f. Concerned Local Government Unit representative
g. Private Sector representative
7.3 Functions of National Ecotourism Committees (NEC) and Regional Ecotourism Committees (REC)

7.3.1 To review, evaluate, and approve major ecotourism Project proposals;

7.3.2 To formulate and recommend plans and programs on ecotourism;

7.3.3 To devise an accreditation and incentives mechanism for eco-tourism project proponents.

7.4 Ecotourism Monitoring and Evaluation Team (EMET)

A corresponding monitoring and evaluation strategy shall be formulated to ensure proper review. A joint Ecotourism Monitoring and Evaluation Team (EMET) shall be created at the field level to monitor and evaluate the implementation of ecotourism projects. If ecotourism project is within a protected area, the EMET shall coordinate closely with the Protected Area Management Board.

SECTION 8. FUNDING

8.1 The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Tourism (DOT) will put up an initial fund to defray the expenses of NEC, REC and EMET to be shared equally; and

8.2 The DENR and DOT shall establish a trust account where deposit made by Private clientele shall be credited. Amount generated from said deposit shall be used by members of NEC, REC and EMET in rendering special services to the private clientele.

SECTION 9. Effectivity

This Order takes effect 15 days after its publication in two major dailies of national circulation.
MINA GABOR
O. RAMOS
Secretary
Secretary
Dept. of Tourism
Dept. Of Environment and Natural Resources