

Ecotourism - Experiences from Himachal Pradesh

Traffic jam at Rohtang pass – daily scenario during summer months



Rohtang pass – Murree scenario



Introduction

- Himachal Pradesh is one of the top five tourist destinations in the country. Roughly around 90 lakh tourists visit the state every year .
- Much of the tourism related activities are concentrated in four major hill stations of Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala and Dalhousie.
- The bulk of the tourist does not get an opportunity to visit countryside and dense forest areas.

Policy initiatives by HPFD...

- H.P. Forest Department formulated an Ecotourism Policy during 2001 which was subsequently revised in 2005.
- The **revised policy** aims to
 - bring the wilderness and solitude of Himachal closure to the tourists visiting the state
 - attempts to put in place adequate safeguards and systems leading to the preservation of these natural resources.
 - The policy also envisages involving local communities with a view to help improve their prosperity through increased livelihood opportunities.
- The **central theme** is to
 - decongest the overflowing city tourist destinations
 - bring the tourists closure to nature
 - ensure adequate economic returns to the state and livelihood opportunities to the local communities.

Strategy adopted...

- Strengthening and further develop already existing Eco-Tourism sites presently managed by local Ecotourism Societies (ECOSOCs).
- Development of new sites/circuits is a priority.
- Management of some sites/ FRH through PPP.
- Liaison with State Tourism Department for logistic and publicity support.

Local ECOSOCs

- Local Ecotourism Societies already in place in Shimla, Rohru, Chopal, Kullu, WL Shimla, WL Chamba Forest Divisions and GHNP. New societies formed in Parvati, Banjar, Kinnaur, Dalhousie & Bilaspur Divisions during 2008-09.
- Tenting facilities are being provided in Shimla (Potter's Hill), Narkanda, Kullu, and GHNP in and around forest areas.

Development of new sites/circuits

- An **ecotourism project** amounting to Rs. 3.68 crores has been approved by **Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India** in 2007, out of which, Rs. 2.94 crores has been released to the State. Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation further released Rs. 1.12 crores as first instalment during 2008-09, for which UCs have been submitted. Second instalment of Rs. 1.87 crores released by the DT&CA on 10.9.09.
- Ecotourism circuits are being created from the above funds in Kullu, Shimla, Kinnaur and Bilaspur districts.

Departmental Funding under TFC

- **Rs. 60.15 lakhs have been allotted** for the development of following 5 eco-circuits during **2008-09** : Dalhousie circuit (Chamba District), Chopal circuit (Shimla district), Dhauladhar WL Sanctuary (Bir- Rajgundha circuit), Kais WL Sanctuary (Nagar-Footasurlake circuit) in Kullu district, completion of Diana park trekking hut and Prashar lake FRH (Mandi) and for repair of FRH at Bassi (Bilaspur).
- During 2009-10, funds have been allotted for Dharamshala (Triund) Circuit, Bir-Rajgundha Circuit (Dhauladhar WL Sanctuary), Tundah-Banni Circuit, Hadsar-Kugti Circuit, Chopal Circuit, Rohru Circuit, Garkhal-Subathu Circuit, Kilba FRH & Purbani-Kanda Circuits in Kinnaur.

EOI under PPP...

- Under **public-private-partnership**, 10 proposals for 10 sites belonging to 5 parties were finally cleared which have been approved by the Government during 2008-09. The **MoA have been signed for 10 sites** in February-April, 2009. These sites are at Motikuna Hill, Chewa, Barog Bye-pass, Shoghi, Sonu Bungalow, Dalhousie, Ala FRH, Naddi Dharamshala, Kangra FRH and Dhuandevi FRH (Mandi).
- Expression of Interest has been invited in respect of 23 Forest Rest Houses / Inspection Huts in 2nd week of July, 2009. 184 proposals were received from 63 parties, out of which 149 proposals by 49 parties cleared at first stage. A briefing meeting was held on 25.9.09.

PPP (contd)...

- **Following activities will be carried out on these sites:**
- Temporary accommodation for 30 to 40 persons such as Swiss cottages (removable) / tents will be put up
- Nature trails/ walks and other activities such as trekking, mountain biking, rock climbing, nature awareness including local flora & fauna, planting of trees, etc. will be carried out.
- Sewerage and garbage disposal mechanisms will be developed.
- Appropriate signage for nature awareness and maintenance of nature & natural resources will be put up.
- At least 70% local employment will be generated.
- Wildlife, nature & environment related movies will be shown.
- Local communities and school children will be associated in nature awareness and plantation programmes in and around these sites.
- Effective fire protection and forest protection measures will be adopted as a safeguard and as well as for demonstrative effect.

Liaison with State Tourism Department

- A meeting has been held with representatives of **Asian Development Bank** and Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Tourism) on 2nd October, 2008 inter alia funding for eco tourism developmental activities at Pong dam lake, Prashar lake, Narkanda, Sarahan, Kalpa and Sangla, for which proposals have been submitted to the ADB.
- Linkage of ecotourism web-site is provided in the tourism web-site.

Updating the web-site

- An official **web-site of ecotourism** has been created :(www.himachalecotourism.nic.in). Periodic updating of the same is an ongoing process. On-going and newly completed sites have been provided linkage for booking facilities there e.g. GHNP, Kalatop-Khajiar, Narkanda HPSFC site, Potter's Hill, Chewa and Motikuna Hill.
- **Online booking facility** will also be made available once substantial number of sites start functioning. Ground work for which has already been completed.

Success stories of ecotourism recent initiatives...

- Narkanda (HPSFC), Chewa and Motikuna sites (PPP) operational
- Local direct & indirect employment already generated
- Tourist being made aware about environment, ecology and forestry
- Fire fighting initiatives/ carried out by PPP partners at Chewa, Motikuna and Barog Bye-pass sites

Overview of Narkanda camping site



Organizing local ethnic & cultural activity



Involving visitors in outdoor activities



Outdoor activities continued



Pine hills Eco-camp, Chewa (Barog)



Pine hills Eco-camp, Chewa



Motikuna Hills camping site



Motikuna (contd.)



Proposed FRH for Ecotourism

