

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Abstract

Department of Tourism – Eco-Tourism- Participatory Eco- tourism Programme undertaken by the Forest Department- Guidelines- Approved – Orders issued.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION (TOURISM- A) DEPARTMENT

G.O .(Rt) No. 3314/05/GAD

Dated, Thiruvananthapuram 30..04.2005

Read: 1. Letter No. ET/FST/CO1/10/2004 dated 21.05.04 from the Director, Eco- Tourism, Thiruvananthapuram.

ORDER

In order to ensure proper accountability and transparency, Government are pleased to approve the appended guidelines for seeking financial assistance from Eco- tourism Directorate for participatory Eco- Tourism Programmes undertaken by the Forest Department and for the transfer of fund to Forest Development Agency (FDA) of various Forest Division for implementations of the various Eco- Tourism programmes through Vana Samrakshana Samithi./ Eco- Development Committee, subject to the following conditions.

- 1 Implementation/ Monitoring Committee for each project to have a local tourism representative or nominated by the Department of Tourism
- 2 The Director, Eco- Tourism should audit the accounts on the expenditure as well as the receipts side of all the projects in order to ensure that the income form the project is utilized only for the improvement of the related facilities as approved by the implementation/Monitoring Committee.
- 3 Marketing the tourism product to be linked to the marketing efforts of Department of Tourism

(By Order of the Governor)

D.Saraswathy Amma,

Deputy Secretary,

For Principal Secretary to Government

To

The Director of Department of Tourism, Thiruvananthapuram,
The Director, Eco- Tourism, Thiruvananthapuram,
The Forest Department
The Principal Accountant General (A&E), Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.
The Stock File/ Office copy

Forwarded/by Order

Section Officer

Copy to: The private Secretary to Minister (Tourism & Devaswom)
The Personal Assistant to Principal Secretary (Tourism).

**GUIDELINES FOR SEEKING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM
ECOTOURISM DIRECTOR FOR PARTICIPATORY ECOTOURISM
PROGRAMME UNDERTAKEN BY THE FOREST DEPARTMENT**

- 1 Ecotourism Programme to be implemented on the basis of the circular issued by the Forest Department. (Annexure IA). The project proposal with approved micro-plan should be submitted to Director ecotourism through the concerned Forest Development Agency (FDA) for financial assistance.
- 2 If the FDA finds it possible to have an ecotourism programme in a location and needs financial resources to do micro-planning exercises (PRA, stakeholders analysis, documentation etc,) assistance to the tune of Rs 10,000/-(Rupees Ten Thousand only) can be sanctioned. For this purpose, a draft project proposal approved by the Forest Department should be submitted through the FDA concerned.
- 3 The ecotourism programme has to community led and to be implemented through the institutions of Forest Development Agency, components qualify for support from Ecotourism Directorate are detailed below.
 - a) Training, for Van Samrakshana Samithi/ Eco- Development Committet (VSS/ EDC) staff on visitor management
 - b) Providing a kit for trekking programme, which may include small carry bags, binoculars, torch etc.
 - c) First Aid Kit
 - d) Sign boards in public places, tree labeling etc.
 - e) Safety measures including handrails, creation of safe bathing place, providing life jackets, etc.
 - f) Bamboo raft, coracle, etc
 - g) Trek path maintenance –only in steep terrains where the trekkers find it difficult
 - h) Waste Management including providing ecofriendly waste bins in appropriate places, providing substance for plastic carry bags, to support the local interactive in waste recovery, biogas production from waste, disposal of waste generated, etc
 - i) Providing drinking water facilities in ecotourism zones (locally)
 - j) Providing toilet facilities in ecotourism zones.
 - k) Providing interpretational aids in information centers
 - l) Small boardwalks and wooden passage to cross nullahs, rivulets, etc
 - m) Preparation and printing of Pamphlets and educational materials for the dissemination of information about the ecotourism sites
 - n) Seed money for the development of local handicraft products by the VSS/EDC
 - o) Restoration of old 19th century structures (type of old log house) and other type of small forest rest houses, keeping the very same ambience. This will be on the condition that the same will be available for ecotourists and there will be a definite approved ecotourim product attached to that. The proposal should be part of such a project
 - p) Use of renewable resources of energy in ecotourism sites. E.g. Solar Power

GUIDELINES FOR THE TRANSFER OF FUND TO FOREST DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (FDA) OF VARIOUS FOREST DIVISIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARTICIPATORY ECOTOURISM PROGRAMMES THROUGH VANA SAMRAKSHANA SAMITHI (VSS)/ ECO-DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (EDC)

- A The funds received by the FDA shall be deposited in an exclusive and separate Current Account in a National Bank, which would be operated jointly by its Chairperson and the Chief Executive Officer. Funds in no case shall be kept in the Fixed Deposit/Term Deposits
- B The FDA shall release the amount earmarked for identified Vana Samarakshan Samithi/ Eco- development Committee (VSS/EDC) by demand draft within 30 days of receipt of funds from the Director, Eco-tourism based on the fund requirement, progress of implementation and utilization of earlier releases.
- C The respective VSS/EDCs shall deposit the funds thus received from the FDA in their exclusive and separate account in a National Bank/ a Co-operative Bank or a Post Office, which would, be jointly operated by Treasure and Member Secretary i.e the concerned Forest Officer
- D. Each VSS/EDCs shall submit a monthly statement of accounts and progress of works carried out by them to the FDA
- E The FDA shall submit a comprehensive quarterly report and annual report on progress of works and utilization of funds in respect of all VSS/EDCs, Which implements the programme to Director, Ecotoursim
- F. The project shall be implemented in the areas as indicated in the project proposal and approved by the Forest Department and Director Ecotoursim.
- G The interest amount if any, accrued on the deposits of these funds shall be treated as part of the FDAs additional resources for this purpose and would be adjusted towards further instalments of the grant.
- H. The funds released under the scheme shall be subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India or his nominated officer. Any other agency/officer authorized by the Director Ecotoursim shall have the right of access to books and accounts of the FDA/VSS/EDCs for the funds received under the project
- I. The FDA shall responsible for guidance, co-odination, supervision, periodical reporting and monitoring the implementation of the project by their constituent VSs/EDCs.
- J. The project shall be montiroed periodically by the State Forest Department and the Ec-tourism Directorate and all assistance for this purpose will be rendered by the FDA.
- K. The project should be completed within the approved project period. The FDA shall furnish 2 copies of detailed report to the Director Ecotourism on the outcome of the project
- L. Director Ecotourism reserve the right to terminate the grant at any stage if it is convinced that the grant has not been properly utilized or appropriate progress has not been made.
- M In case the FDA fails to execute the project within the stipulated time, including such extension as may be granted by Director Ecotoursim, may, require the FDA to refund the grant in whole or in such part along with interest thereon as the Ecotoursim Directorate may specify

- N. There will be no diversion of funds one ecotourism project to another or one VSS/EDCs to another save in exceptional circumstances and with the prior approval of Director Ecotourism
- O The FDA will submit non-diversion and non-embezzlement certificate each time a request for release of grant is made to Director Ecotoursim
- P The auditing of accounts of FDA will have to be carried out through a reputed Chartered Accountant
- Q The FDA also submit a certificates to the effect that all conditions laid down in the guidelines and the sanction order are being followed each time a request for releasing of grant is made to Director Ecotoursim
- R. FDA/VSS/EDCs will maintain a record of all assets created under the project as per rules
- S. The whole programme has to be implemented through local community participation.

Guidelines under PFM for Eco-tourism in Forest Areas

(Issued by Kerala Forest Department)

1. Introduction

The GO (MS) No.18/02/F&WLD dated 02.04.02 has authorized the VSS to receive service charges from visitors and create River Forest Protection Fund (RFPF). The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests is authorized by this G.O to be the final authority in approving the rates for this purpose. Large number of visitors congregate in places like Vazhachal, Palaruvi etc; and avail of the services rendered by VSS. The VSS have performed their duties satisfactorily and the visitors have started appreciating the new setup.

It is possible to go beyond this limited objective of managing visitors in specific localities through this simple arrangement. Some visitors obviously would like to trek in the forests. There could be short one-day trips or an extended programme of 2 or 3 days staying overnight in the wilderness. Such interested visitors can be conducted through the forests and such programmes could be judiciously integrated with forest protection.

This is a programme of forest protection cum visitor management with active involvement of VSS/EDC members. With judicious dovetailing of the programme with forest protection priorities, the income from visitor management will go a long way to meet the livelihood requirements of forest dependent marginalized communities, improve forest protection and satisfy the requirements of serious visitors.

2. Goals and Objectives

Protect and maintain the quality and magnificence of forests& rivers in their pristine state.

To provide an environment for visitors to appreciate wilderness and create conservation awareness.

To eliminate the adverse impacts caused by visitors.

To take care of the safety of visitors and prevent activities of antisocial elements.

3. Operational Guidelines

The following is the Operational Guidelines for the establishment of such eco-tourism locations under participatory management, by the Forest Department and VSSs/EDCs.

3.1 Identification and selection of locations

Location in forest areas with potential for eco-tourism may be identified by the Forest Department or the local VSS and proposed for setting up the project. The DFO in whose jurisdiction the area falls, may then take up the matter for approval by the CF. In Kerala, almost all such potential areas are already known to us and hence this selection process would be easy. Consultation with the local VSS is vital in this process.

3.2 Micro planning

Once the proposal is approved by the CF, a micro plan is to be prepared through PRA, involving the local VSS. The Forest Department will design visitor programmes with different contents in them and manage them observing strict code of conduct appropriate to the forest eco-system. The Conservator of Forests along with the DFO, protective staff and VSS will together formulate the contents as well as the codes of conduct and its enforcement. Areas, which need complete insulation from disturbance, shall be kept free of visitors seasonally or round the year. They will develop route maps, the contents of the programme and arrive at the rates to be charged from the visitors. The services of specialized expertise can be incorporated to make the visit educative and rewarding to the visitors. The VSSs/EDCs will be creatively involved in the visitor management programme.

3.2.1 Facilities

The following facilities may be available in any eco-tourism location

- Parking area;
- Visits including visit to information centre, general area and use of picnic facilities;
- Classes on nature education for groups of maximum 40 members;
- Treks—Peripheral area treks (1) Up to 3 hours (2) Half day & (3) Full day;
Interior Area Treks (1) Full day (2) Two days (3) Three days etc;
(Nature appreciation programmes can be incorporated in the treks. The trek party will have to arrange their own resource person if needed).

Trekking shall be only along pre laid out trek paths. One guide shall invariably accompany on treks outside the picnic area. Number of groups shall be limited to keep down disturbance. Minimum of one-hour interval shall be kept between each group on a trek path.

- **VSS/EDC will provide**

Guides, helpers, cloak room facility. Equipments like binoculars, camera, tents etc; can be procured by the VSS/EDC from their funds and provided to the visitors on suitable hire charges. Food and other special assistance can also be arranged by VSS/EDC.

Country Rafts can be made available for rafting by the VSS/EDC on suitable hire charges. This will be limited by controlling the number of rafts. The number of visitors per raft shall be controlled according to the load bearing capacity of the raft. The visitors will wear life jackets supplied. One guide shall accompany each raft. The rafts shall not be motorized.

- Use of forest streams and pools inside forest area for bathing in prescribed and specified places to be regulated with a specified charge. This charge is for providing special security, law and order and for keeping the area clean. Bathing will be permitted only in specifically identified spots, which are declared safe.

3.2.2 Basic Rules to be observed

1. Flora and fauna, mementos etc; shall not be collected/disturbed
2. No littering, no plastics, no contamination of water sources
3. No smoking
4. No liquor
5. No kindling of fire inside forests
6. No noise pollution
7. Agreement on own risk and adherence to rules to be signed by visitors.
8. The VSS, Range Officer, DFO, Conservator of Forests and the concerned field staff will together formulate the local code of conduct, schedules and timings of different programmes/facilities. These will be strictly followed.
9. No new permanent structures/roads will be constructed in the forest area
10. No new paths will be opened for vehicular traffic
11. Site-specific micro plans for visitor management will be prepared for each eco-tourism location and approved by the Conservator of Forests.

The micro plan thus prepared through participatory process can follow the following general format.

3.2.3 Micro plan Format

1. Introduction
2. Location

- Location map
 - Name of RFPF
 - Area of operation
 - Forest section/station
 - Range/Division/Circle
 - District/Taluk/Village/Panchayat
 - VSSs/EDCs involved
3. Management area map
Potential of sites in the management area
 4. Goals and objectives
 5. Programme for achieving the goals
 6. Plan of action
Programmes offered (list routes, camping sites, safe swimming/rafting locations etc;)
Services offered
Rates of service * (refer item 6 below)
 7. Facilities
Existing facilities
Proposed creations
 8. Financial forecast
 9. Problems/proposed solutions
 10. Administration of RFPF
 11. Participating institution and their responsibilities
 12. Basic rules and local code of conduct to be observed
 13. Charts, Annexures
 - (a) Details of visitors
 - (b) Details of Vehicles
 - (c) Map showing trek routes, camping sites, safe swimming/rafting locations
 - (d) Flow of funds
 - (e) Display boards and instructions
 - (f) Others if any

3.2.4 Approval of Micro Plan

The Conservator of Forests will approve the micro plan

4. Implementation

The concerned Divisional Forest Officer will make public the contact point for visitors. The visitors will register here. Advance payment from the visitors will be received into the River Forest Protection Fund (RFPF). The guides and specialized services made available by the VSS/EDC will be paid from this fund. For this, the required amount will flow to the VSS/EDC Operational Fund and from there to the Core Fund. The payment for services rendered will be made from the Core Fund of concerned VSS/EDC. The savings will be retained in the RFPF and utilized for the purpose for which the fund is maintained. The income from the programme will be taken as Locally Generated Money and audited in the FDA by an auditor appointed for the purpose.

5. Monitoring and Review

The Conservator will review the programme every quarter and submit a consolidated report to the Regional Chief Conservator of Forests/Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) who will in turn report to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.

6. Proposed Rates of service charges, chargeable for various programmes

Choose the apt rate from the minimum and maximum rates shown in the left and right columns respectively, below. (Also see note 7 below)					
Sl. No	Item	Description	Lower Limit (Rs.)	Upper Limit (Rs.)	Remarks
1	Parking	Two wheelers	5.00	15.00	Upto 12 hours
		LMVs	10.00	30.00	
		HMV's	20.00	60.00	
2	Picnic area/ General area use	Of & above 13 years age	10.00 per head	30.00 per head	(a).Free below 13 yrs (b).Free for mentally / physically handicapped irrespective of age (c). Half rates for educational tours from recognized institutions
3 (a)	Short distance peripheral Forest Treks for 3 hours	Of & above 13 years age	250.00 upto 10 members. For each additional member Rs.30./- per head extra. Maximum permissible members-20 in a group.	500.00 upto 10 members. Rs.60/- for each additional member. Maximum allowable group size 20.	Half rates for (a). below 13 years age (b). educational tours from recognized institutions. Mentally/physically handicapped not allowed for Treks.
(b)	Peripheral forest Treks for 6 hours	-do-	400.00 upto 10 members. For each additional member Rs.50./- per head extra. Maximum permissible members-20 in a group.	800.00 upto 10 members. Rs.100/- for each additional member. Maximum allowable group size 20.	-do-
4 (a)	Interior forest Treks 12 hours (without night camping in forest)	Of & above 13 years age	800.00 upto 5 members. For each additional member Rs.200./- per head extra. Maximum permissible members-10 in a group.	1500.00 upto 5 members. Rs.400/- for each additional member. Maximum allowable group size 10.	(a). Forest Officer should invariably accompany group (b). below 13 years age not allowed (c).No other concessions allowed
(b)	Interior forest treks 36 hours (including one night forest camp)	-do-	2000.00 and upto 5 members only in a group .	4000.00 and upto 5 members only in a group.	
(c)	Interior forest treks 60 hours (including 2 nights forest camp)	-do-	3000.00 and upto 5 members only in a group.	6000.00 and upto 5 members only in a group.	
5	Special class	One hour	400.00	To be fixed as per local conditions	These charges include fee for Resource person and charges for use of facilities and equipment.
		1- 3 hours	600.00		
		3-6 hours	750.00		
6	Swimming/ Bathing	Maximum 3hours, during day time only	50.00 per head	Swimming/Bathing allowed only in designated sports. The charge is for providing special security, law and order and for keeping the area clean. The rates for trekking can be fixed including this also. No separate charge need be levied for this in picnic/general area.	

- Note:** (1) All sites may not have potential for all the programmes listed above. Site-specific programmes may be identified and offered.
- (2) The rates are exclusive of food /refreshments and porter services. The VSS/EDC can provide food and other services at fixed rates, as its own arrangement.
- (3) Double the rates are applicable to foreign nationals.
- (4) *In exceptional situations, to be explained in the micro plan, higher/lower rates can be charged with the prior approval of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests***
- (5) Groups of minors (below age 18) will not be allowed without responsible guardians.
- (6) The rates can be revised as and when required
- (7) The income to the RFPPF is to be utilized for forest protection, litter eradication, visitor security and conservation awareness campaigns and so on. When total expenditure is planned in the micro plan, the expenditure for such programmes should be taken into account. The amount thus required for maintenance divided by the expected number of visitors would give a reasonable figure of service charge to be levied.
- (8) These guidelines are applicable to Protected Areas as well. Care should be taken to see that such programme in PAs are not detrimental to Wildlife and its habitat. RFPPF can be designated as Park Management Fund or so in PAs.
- (9) Nothing should contravene the existing forest Acts and Rules.