From Principles to Practice:

Compendia of *In Situ* Sustainable Tourism in North America

Background Note for the

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

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From Principles to Practice: Compendia of *In Situ* Sustainable Tourism in North America

Executive Summary

Tourism is currently the world's largest industry and also one of the fastest growing. The travel and tourism economy in North America (Canada, Mexico and the United States) represented 11.6 percent of total GDP, 12 percent of total employment and 10 percent of total capital investments in 2000. Most of this tourist activity is what is known as 'mass' or 'conventional' tourism, which for the most part pays little heed to its impacts on host environments and cultures. Some of the environmental effects of "mass" or "conventional" tourism include, for example, air pollution from increased transportation, loss of habitat and biodiversity from construction of tourist facilities and infrastructure, and increased solid waste and sewage from visiting tourists. Sustainable tourism in natural areas is a broad vision that fuses the elusive concept of sustainable development with the tourism industry. It attempts to balance a variety of economic, sociocultural and ecological concerns at international, national and local scales. It is reported that in 1998 ecotourism (a subset of sustainable tourism) and all nature-related forms of tourism accounted for approximately 20 percent of total international travel. Sustainable tourism is also one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry and is estimated to be growing at anywhere between 7 to 30 percent per year, depending on the source data.

This survey and the accompanying database illustrate the great number and variety of best practice guidelines and codes of conduct that have been produced by governments, NGOs and the tourism industry internationally and in North America. The codes and guidelines vary greatly in coverage and content. Indeed, their variety and lack of consistency are reflected in the confusing array of certification schemes for 'green' hotels, the different meanings of the word 'best', and the plethora of uses and interpretations of the term 'ecotourism' in general. There are very few certified sustainable tourism companies in North America. Most of the examples in this survey relate specifically to hotels (mainly large ones or chains). There is a need for a common, overarching North American understanding of the principles of sustainable tourism and for this industry to work towards developing not only codes of conduct, but also actual, reliable standards and certification systems for sustainable tourism that can be adopted and mutually recognized by companies, agencies and consumers throughout the region.

I.   Tourism

Tourism is currently the world's largest industry and also one of the fastest growing. It is estimated that in 2000, tourism accounted for approximately 10 percent of global GDP, or US$4.7 trillion (World Tourism Organization WTO 2001). According to the WTO there were more than 663 million international travelers in 1999, with the Americas remaining one of the main tourist-receiving regions in the world. In a ranking of the world's top 15 tourist destinations, the United States was third (market share 7.3 percent); and Canada and Mexico were seventh and eighth respectively (each with a 2.9 percent market share). International arrivals to the three North American countries in 1999 totalled nearly 87.3 million (Canada 19.6, Mexico 19.2 and United States 48.5 million arrivals respectively) (WTO 2000a).

The travel and tourism economy in North America represented 11.6 percent of total GDP, 12 percent of total employment and 10 percent of total capital investments in 2000 (WTTC 2001a). In terms of international tourism receipts, in 1999, the tourism industry generated US$74.4 billion in the United States, US$10 billion in Canada, and US$7.6 billion in Mexico. In Mexico, tourism is the second most important generator of foreign currency, with visitor spending exceeding that of residents, and capital investment in travel and tourism expected to continue growing at an annual rate of 13.8 percent. Revenue generated by travel and tourism in the United States is over three times the amount generated in Japan, the country with the next-largest receipts. In Canada, the industry represents a higher percentage of total GDP than it does in the United States or as a world average (WTO, 2000a).

Most of this tourist activity is what is known as 'mass' or 'conventional' tourism, which for the most part pays little heed to its impacts on host environments and cultures. There is a great deal of evidence, however, that many forms of this "mass" or "conventional" tourism cause varying degrees of harm to the environment as well as to local populations, especially in areas of natural beauty and in small communities of cultural significance. Table 1 below lists some of these environmental effects.

Table 1: Environmental Effects of Tourism

Impact	Examples
Air pollution	From transportation and increased electricity consumption
Water pollution	Sewage from hotels and boats, and discharge of hydrocarbons from motorized vessels
Solid waste	In the form of litter left by tourists and tourism workers as well as garbage
Loss of natural landscape and biodiversity	From the construction of buildings (tourist facilities and accommodation), infrastructure (roads, paths, transmission lines). Tourist use and behavior (collection of plants, shells, rocks/fossils, etc.) (disturbance of natural ecosystem coral reefs, beaches, forests)
Noise	From increased traffic, airplanes, recreational vehicles, and entertainment facilities

Source: adapted from Environment Canada 1996 and Tolba et al. 1992

II.   Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism in natural areas is a broad vision that fuses the concept of sustainable development with the tourism industry. It attempts to balance a variety of economic, sociocultural and ecological concerns at international, national and local scales. Sustainable tourism, as defined by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the World Tourism Organization and the Earth Council, "meets the needs of present tourist and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life-support systems" (WTTC/WTO and Earth Council 1999). Ecotourism is a subset of sustainable tourism, and is defined as "…environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations" (Ceballos-Lascurain [IUCN] 1996).

Unfortunately, there is a lack of consistency in defining ecotourism throughout the Americas. For example, Edwards et al (1998) conducted a comprehensive survey of national and state government tourism agencies in Canada, the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean. They found that 76 percent of the agencies created their own or adapted a published version to meet their needs or understanding of the term. This leads to each region and sector developing its own standards.

Statistics are beginning to emerge from the tourism industry about this growing business sector and relevant agencies within the North American governments are also devoting resources to protecting their natural heritage through the study and promotion of alternatives to mass tourism. The governments of each of the three North American countries approach sustainable tourism development and promotion differently. Mexico is the only North American country with a federal ministry responsible for tourism. The Secretaría de Turismo (Sectur) promotes and markets tourism and is currently looking to further develop its ecotourism and sustainable tourism sectors. In its strategy statement, it uses the IUCN's definition of ecotourism. The United States has no official sustainable or ecotourism policy, although the EPA launched a

> Box 1:
> *"Ecotourism has become the most rapidly growing and most dynamic sector of the tourism market…."* (Honey 1999, 390).

Sustainable Tourism Roundtable in 1999 and the Department of Commerce uses the WTO and WTTC's definition of ecotourism. Most ecotourism in the United States is marketed and promoted by the private sector while Canadian tourism is promoted by the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC), a public/private sector partnership that has developed its own definition of ecotourism.

In 1998, the World Tourism Organization reported that ecotourism and all nature-related forms of tourism accounted for approximately 20 percent of total international travel. Sustainable tourism is also one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry and is estimated to be growing at anywhere between 7 to 30 percent per year (Wight, in press). In a 1994 North American study (the most recent and detailed study to date for North America), about 77 percent of respondents claimed to have taken a vacation that involved nature, outdoor adventure, or learning about another culture (HLA 1994). A US Fish and Wildlife Service (1997) report indicates that 11.6% of tourists travelled for the primary purpose of participating in wildlife viewing activities (i.e., an ecotourism activity). Statistics are imprecise, however, since they do not distinguish between the diverse forms of travel now providing alternatives to conventional or mass tourism, variously termed adventure tourism, nature travel, low-impact tourism and ecotourism, among others.

The term ecotourism has been widely adopted by the travel industry and used as a marketing tool to attract a new and growing number of environmentally and socially conscious consumers and to open new, unexploited destinations (Honey 1999). But ecotourism is much more than this; the aforementioned IUCN ecotourism definition has been officially adopted in over 30 countries around the world and by many other international institutions (e.g., The Nature Conservancy) to signify a tool for conservation and an instrument for sustainable development. However, like other terms with the prefix 'eco' (eco-friendly, for example) its use as a marketing tool has led to the watering down, or 'greenwashing', of the original meaning.

The responsible development and proper management of sustainable tourism in natural areas will benefit the economies of all three nations and has the potential to provide important financial resources to some of North America's poorest regions. A serious lack of robust data about the market characteristics of the industry and the lack of consensus or consistency in definitions of terminology hinder concerted efforts to promote sustainable tourism, however. There is no universally agreed-upon definition, set of criteria, list of indicators, or single recognized seal or certification system for sustainable tourism in North America (CEC, 1999).

There has been an influx, within the industry, of best practice documents. These documents illustrate how certain principles or codes of conduct are being practiced by exemplary companies, to serve as tools for replication by others, and to provide consumers with a way of choosing reputable environmentally friendly tourism services. In addition, to promote the emerging industry, a vast array of lists of companies that claim to offer ecotourism activities is now available on the Internet.

To avoid the replication of effort, rather than document individual companies and their operations, as done by existing compendia, this survey identifies and assesses available compendia, catalogues and collections of best or exemplary practices in North America. The purpose is to note and describe existing compendia, identify gaps in the available

literature, suggest ways in which the lessons learned from the literature may be applied to the CEC's project, and from these lessons, suggest new tools to achieve sustainable tourism in North America's natural areas. In addition to providing background documentation for the CEC's own purposes, it is expected that the report will provide the North American sustainable tourism industry with a useful reference document. This work also attempts to complement a database developed by the CEC that collates currently available sustainable tourism guidelines, codes of conduct and certification criteria relevant for North America (http://www.cec.org/databases).

This survey is a result of a rather extensive literature review, but does not claim to be exhaustive. The order in which the programs appear throughout the document is not a ranking nor does it suggest that some programs are better than others. The CEC does not endorse any of the programs within this document.

III.   Certification Programs and Environmental Award or Funding Recipients

This section includes third party environmental certification programs within the tourism industry, either globally or ones specific to North America. The level or rating within a certification program is based upon pre-defined environmental criteria with which the establishment complies. It also includes funding recipients and lists of winners of awards or recipients of funding based on specific, transparent criteria. It includes literature that publishes the names of companies that have been awarded prizes or other kinds of recognition for voluntarily demonstrating practices that adhere to transparent principles or guidelines. Although not strictly a compendia of best practices, this literature was chosen to be part of the survey because certification, awards and funding are benchmarks that indicate a level of achievement considered to be the 'best'.

Certification Programs

Green Globe 21 Member Action[*]
Green Globe 21 is an international certification standard for travel and tourism companies representing many sectors of the tourism industry—airlines, cruise ships, trains, airports, hotels and restaurants, tour operators and agents—and communities. The standard is based on the objectives of Agenda 21 and was developed by the World Travel and Tourism Council (UNEP & IE 1995). The program certifies companies that demonstrate through independent verification that they are committed to and will achieve certain criteria within an agreed time frame. Application criteria are specific to the different industry sectors. A company is evaluated and rated according to 9 performance areas: energy efficiency, conservation and management; management of freshwater resources; ecosystem conservation and management; management of social and cultural issues; land use planning and management; air quality protection and noise control; wastewater

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[*] More information about this standard is available on the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database* (http://www.cec.org/databases).

management; waste minimisation, reuse and recycling; and storage and use of hazardous substances. The Green Globe 21 standard allows a company to use a first-order logo when it has developed an environmental management system signalling its commitment to undertake the certification process. A checkmark is added to the logo at the time of achievement of the standards required. Since this is an international program, member companies represent countries worldwide, with examples from all three North American nations. Presently, only the hotel sector of the tourism industry is able to apply for Green Globe certification. A list of member hotels is posted on the Green Globe web page, with the practices each one engages in described on each hotel's own web page (Green Globe 21 2000).

Green Seal Annex to the Green Globe Standard for US Lodging Properties[*]
The non-profit organization of Green Seal provides additional criteria and standards to the aforementioned Green Globe certification program (Green Seal 2000). The certification system is only for lodging properties in the United States. Standards include an array of environmental concerns such as waste minimization, energy efficiency, management of fresh and waste water and hazardous substances. An environmental and socially sensitive purchasing policy is also included.

Ecotel Member Hotels
The Ecotel certification program is another international scheme (Ecotel 2000). It is specific to the hotel industry, certifying inns, hotels and resorts as environmentally responsible according to a rating scheme. The measure of responsibility is indicated by which, and how many of the five different basic codes (represented by five globes) are adhered to: environmental commitment; solid waste management; energy efficiency; water conservation; employee environmental education; and community involvement. In addition, there are three levels of scoring—primary, secondary and tertiary. Inspection takes place only when primary criteria are complied with, after which all the hotel's departments are evaluated according to the second set of criteria. To achieve certified status, the hotel must score 75 percent or higher in adherence to the criteria. Those companies that surpass regulatory requirements may be eligible for the tertiary criteria rating, which is essentially an awarding of bonus points (HV Ecoservices 2000; Synergy 2000).

Ecotel criteria are very explicit, but because of copyright ownership rules, these are not made available to the public. The CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database* posts the primary criteria for the Solid Waste Management Globe as an example of the level of stringency expected by this program. North American certified hotels are identified on a map and can be found on Ecotel's web page.

Green Leaf Participating Hotels
The Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program is an independently (third-party) verified, national rating initiative sponsored by the Hotel Association of Canada. It was developed and is

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[*] More information about this program is available on the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database* (http://www.cec.org/databases).

operated by TerraChoice Environmental Services Inc. A participating hotel's achievements are recognized through the awarding of between one and five green leaves. Basic commitment to environmental principles entitles a hotel to the first leaf, and subsequent leaves are awarded when specific results are achieved. Four green leaves indicate a score of more than 75 percent performance, while a score of 90 percent is required to obtain five green leaves. The categories of achievement include energy saving; waste reduction; water conservation; management of hazardous and toxic substances; environmental procurement; staff training in environmental considerations; and community involvement. Due to intellectual property rights the criteria/checklist is not available on the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database.* A comprehensive list of participating hotels in Canada can be accessed though a map on the TerraChoice web page (TerraChoice 2000).

Saskatchewan Ecotourism Accreditation System[*]
A new certification program, sponsored by the Ecotourism Society of Saskachewan (a non-profit NGO), that includes the certification of accommodations, tour operators and attractions in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada. Approval is based upon information given in an application form and an evaluation report, along with an on-site visit by a third party (Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan 2000).

Environmental Award Recipients

Environmental Good Practice in Hotels: Cases Studies from the International Hotel and Restaurant Association (IH&RA) Environmental Award
The International Hotel & Restaurant Association (IH & RA) is a global network of hospitality operators, associations and suppliers. It aims to protect, promote and inform the tourism industry. IH & RA has published case studies of environmental good practice in hotels drawn from the applicants to their 1992-1995 Environmental Award program. Applicants were judged by the United Nations Environment Programme–Industry and Environment. The cases are sector-specific, representing small independent hotels and large international hotel chains around the world, with two North American examples. The hotels were not evaluated on a uniform scale but rather highlight a diversity of exemplary practices based on criteria listed in the publication, such as minimizing environmental impact; integrating infrastructure into the local environment; water, energy, waste disposal efficiency and other resource management; links with and support of local communities; staff education in environmental sensitivity; visitor communication; and the level of green consumerism (UNEP IH-RA 1999).

More recently, the criteria for judging this award have become more explicit and the 'best' practices highlighted in the case studies (yet to be published) will likely better reflect links to the key principles and basic guidelines of sustainable tourism. Judging for the 2000 Environmental Award, for example, focused more specifically on sustainable

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[*] More information about this program is available on the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database* (http://www.cec.org/databases).

development criteria and was based on guidelines developed by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (IH-RA 2000).

Funding Recipients

NAFEC Ecotourism Projects

The CEC's North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC) supports projects that are community-based (involve a clearly defined community of stakeholders who actively participate in the design and implementation of the project); respond to a specific issue or problem and lead to concrete results; reflect cooperative and equitable partnerships between or among organizations from different sectors and/or countries within North America; meet the objectives of the CEC (by complementing the current CEC program); strengthen and build the capacities of local people, organizations and institutions; emphasize sustainability; link environmental, social and economic issues; and leverage additional support, but are unlikely to obtain full funding from other sources. For a listing of these projects, please visit <http://www.cec.org/grants/grants_awarded/> and keyword search 'tourism'.

IV.   Catalogues of Best Practices

Literature that claimed, either explicitly or implicitly, to highlight best or exemplary practices in sustainable tourism was identified for inclusion in the survey. Compilations of 'best' or exemplary practices in which the authors explicitly or implicitly refer to the principles and guidelines to which the illustrative companies and practices adhere and by which they are considered to be the 'best' are included. Best practices in these compendia were identified by the authors rather than self-declared by the operator. It is understood that 'best' is highly subjective, and the choice for inclusion did not depend on a judgement of the word's authenticity. Attempting to define 'best' in terms of sustainable tourism practices would necessarily involve reference to a scale from 'best' to 'worst' in terms of adherence to the principles of sustainable tourism[1]. In the absence of indices that provide a rating, the word is used in this review with the understanding that it simply refers to practices that are deemed by the compendia authors to be 'better' than those engaged in by mass tourism. The terms 'best' or 'exemplary' as employed by the compendia refer to the best available technology and tools used by either the tourism organization or operator or to one or more of the practices in which it engages, or both. Analysis will refer to both these designations as well as to compendia that provide examples of 'best' places or sites. The terms used by each compendium have not been changed. Most of the compilations of 'best' practices use the term 'ecotourism' rather than sustainable tourism. This survey notes the level of transparency of principles or

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[1] For example, the World Wildlife Fund developed an index to rate different tourism certification schemes according to how well they address the key elements of sustainability (social equity, long term economic benefit for all, and environmental protection). A second index rates them according to the degree of sustainability in the use or management of energy, waste, water, land, air, noise, and hazardous substances. A third index relates each of the schemes to their performance in delivering the social criteria of sustainability. The rating scheme weighs each element with three graduated icons: a smiling face indicates the program explicitly addresses the issue; a neutral face shows that the program addresses the issue to some extent; and an unhappy face reflects the program does not really address the issue (Synergy 2000).

codes of conduct that guided the identification of best or exemplary practices in each of the compendia.

For the purposes of comparison and analysis, this survey will refer to the *key principles* and *basic guidelines* of sustainable tourism and to whether and how these are acknowledged in the literature. The key principles of sustainable tourism, as outlined above, are the economic, social and environmental imperatives implied in the definition. The *basic guidelines* of sustainable tourism, as listed in Box 2, are referred to in the descriptions of each compendium and in the assessment by way of highlighting the presence or absence of these criteria. They were synthesized from those in the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database* and constitute the basic complement of sustainable tourism guidelines.

The description of each compendium notes the type of sustainable tourism development it portrays, and whether it is oriented to nature, adventure, low-impact or another type of tourism that distinguishes itself as being more sustainable than conventional mass tourism (see Box 3). *Site-specificity* refers to the political, geographical, or ecosystemic organization (the natural region in which they are found, such as mountains, forests, National Parks, tropical forests, the Arctic, oceans and beaches, etc.) of the examples. Considered here are site-specific guides to scenic areas or tour guides to wilderness areas. The guides to such areas include advertisements for accommodation and tour operators oriented toward ecotourism activities that may be engaged in exemplary practices. *Sector-specificity* refers to the sector of the tourism industry portrayed by the exemplary practices. Examples may be confined to accommodation facilities (hotels), or to services such as tour operators and outfitters, for example. Some compendia are *activity-specific* in that they highlight best practices in a narrow type of ecotourism activity such as hiking or wildlife viewing.

Box 2: Basic Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism
- support conservation;
- support wilderness and biodiversity preservation;
- use natural resources sustainably;
- minimize consumption, waste and pollution;
- respect local cultures, historic and scientific sites;
- benefit local communities;
- train staff in codes of conduct for sustainable tourism;
- educate tourists in environmental and cultural awareness.

Box 3: Organizational Schemes Used in Compendia of Best Practices

- *By Orientation*: nature, adventure, low-impact, wilderness, etc.
- *By Site:* political (nation, province or state); geographical or ecosystemic (mountains, forests, National Parks, tropical forests, the Arctic, oceans, beaches)
- *By Sector:* hotels, tour operators, outfitters, etc.
- *By Activity:* hiking, camping, whale watching, etc.

Industry

Sustainable Development of Tourism: A Compilation of Good Practices
The World Tourism Organization is an international organization with 138 member countries and territories as well as over 350 affiliate members of local governments,

tourist associations and private companies. Its purpose is to promote and develop tourism worldwide. It is developing sustainable tourism indicators, researching financing sources for this sector of the industry and it has established guidelines for sustainable tourism development (CEC 1999a). The World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is in the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database*. The World Tourism Organization prepared a catalogue of good practices, which includes two examples from both Canada and Mexico (WTO 2000b). The examples of good practices were submitted by the governments. They are presented in the document in a tabular format explaining the project details (name, location, description, funding and contact persons); the document also highlights the main objectives/strategies, problems/solutions, etc., and explains why the project is considered to be sustainable.

The Conference Board and WTTC's BEST Practices
The Conference Board and the World Travel and Tourism Council are international organizations for global business leaders. WTTC's Environmental Guidelines can be found in the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database.* They jointly initiated *Best Practices,* a regular series of profiles from Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel (BEST). This publication, also available on the Internet, highlights practices that successfully advance business objectives while enhancing the social and economic well being of host communities (The Conference Board 2000). The purpose of this initiative is to encourage other companies to emulate the sustainable practices pioneered by some of the most successful travel companies specializing in nature and adventure travel.

The Conference Board maintains an ever-growing database of the latest sustainable tourism practices and selects the 'best' of these to profile in each edition of the publication. The organizations highlighted are selected according to the key principles of sustainable tourism. These principles are reflected in each profile, which underscores the benefits that accrue to the business, the destination (environmental protection; revenues dedicated to conservation, etc.) and the traveler (increased environmental awareness, among others). The presence of these benefits constitutes the criteria by which the 'best' practices are selected.

Members of the "Green" Hotels Association
This is a sector-specific association of hotels whose members pay a fee to advertise their commitment to environmental responsibility by flying the association's flag. The organization promotes itself by showing how saving water and energy, reducing waste and protecting beautiful destinations will save hotels money while helping to 'save the planet'. Its stated goal is to encourage, promote and support the 'greening' of the lodging industry (Green Hotels Association 2000). Members receive a list of suggestions and ideas on how to save resources and reduce waste as well as a catalogue of environmental products for the lodging industry.

Excerpts of the Association's conservation guidelines and ideas are posted on its web page and can also be found in the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource Database.* Members are listed on a web page and include 'allies' such as eco service and product

providers and environmental consultants, 'educators' who are environmental specialists, and 'environmentalists' who are usually NGOs promoting sustainable tourism.

NGOs

International Hotels Environment Initiative (IHEI)
Created in 1992, the International Hotels Environment Initiative (IHEI) is a non-profit program developed by the international hotel industry to benefit both the hotels and the environment through the promotion of environmental management as an integral part of a hotel's successful operation. The IHEI was founded in collaboration with 11 of the world's leading hotel chains and the Prince of Wales Business Leader's Forum. The Initiative's *Charter for Environmental Action in the International Hotel and Catering Industry* outlines a number of activities that are being implemented to promote environmental practices in the hotel industry (UNEP & IE 1995).

The program is sector-specific, focusing exclusively on hotels, providing them guidance in protecting the environment. The vast majority of all hotels (over 80%) are small and medium enterprises that often lack the resources and expertise to tackle environmental problems. As stated on its web page, it "works closely with a core group of influential hotel champions and hotel associations as a catalyst, demonstrating that environmental best practice can be of enormous benefit to hotels" (IHEI 2000).

The program has published a number of guides to environmental practices. *Best Environmental Specifications* provides detailed technical specifications for the design and construction of new hotels. These were also made available in the quarterly *Green Hotelier Magazine*. This magazine provides practical advice for environmental improvement and highlights 'best' practices through all its sections, drawn from all the world's regions including North America. Together with UNEP and IH&RA, this organization also produced the *Environmental Action Packs for Hotels*, a guide to developing effective environment programs. It also published *Environment Management for Hotels: Industry Guide to Best Practice* and *Striving for Excellence,* which profiles six case studies ranging from an international chain to a small independent hotel. Although not specifically stated on their web page, it is presumed the 'best' practices identified in the case studies and the magazine adhere in some way to IHEI's guidelines for best practice and environmental management.

Innovative Practices and Promising Examples for Community-based Mountain Tourism
The Mountain Forum is a site-specific global network of individuals and organizations concerned with mountain cultures, environment and development. Its mission is to provide a forum for information sharing, mutual support and advocacy. The Mountain Forum's basic operational values are to be open, democratic, decentralized, accessible, transparent, accountable, and flexible. It operates an electronic conference on community-based mountain tourism, which identifies practices and policies for developing community-based initiatives focusing on natural and cultural conservation linked to

revenue generation. Examples of 'best' practices from the online *Community-based Mountain Tourism* conference held in 1998 were brought together in a document called *Innovative Practices and Promising Examples for Community-based Mountain Tourism* (Mountain Forum 1998). This compendium includes North American examples. The following themes are introduced, followed by descriptions of how specific tour operators or projects put the principles and guidelines into practice: Planning, Monitoring, and Assessment; Infrastructure and Social Capacity Building; Institutional Development; Zoning and Regulation; Financial Sustainability; and Promotion. These themes and the subcategories under each relate to the key principles and basic guidelines of sustainable tourism. A useful table (Table 2: Promising Practices in Community-Based Mountain Tourism Initiatives) lists numerous generic practices under each of the above themes, stating their purpose and how they work, and then provides the names of each organization, operation or site selected from the conference participants that exemplify the practice.

The document's introduction explains that the practices within each of the categories can overlap, and that generally each practice is implemented in conjunction with a number of others. The practices, it points out, vary in their degree of practicality and success depending on the specific socio-cultural, economic and political circumstances of each mountain region.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) – Marine Ecotourism
TIES is in the process of publishing a report entitled "Marine Ecotourism: Impacts, International Guidelines and Best Practice Case Studies (Halpenny, in review). A resource for tourism operators and coastal planners and managers." This report includes an in depth review of marine ecotourism guidelines and key best practice case studies from regions around the world. The highlighted case studies adhere to the established best practices. The report will surely become an important tool for the protection and conservation of sensitive coastal areas.

United States

The United States National Parks Service Success Stories
This is an example of a national government that highlights 'best' sustainable tourism practices. These practices are site-specific (National Parks) and most examples are sector-specific, drawing on the construction attributes of park facilities. The National Parks Service (NPS) publishes a list of Success Stories on its web page showcasing national parks that adhere to its Guiding Principles of Sustainable Design. These principles are set forth in a document that prescribes a sustainable design approach, recognizing that every design choice has impacts on the "natural and cultural resources of the local, regional, and global environments" (NPS 2000). The guidebook articulates the key principles of sustainable tourism, focusing primarily on the environmental and economic factors. It emphasizes environmental sensitivity in construction, use of nontoxic materials, resource conservation, recycling, and integration of visitors with natural and cultural settings. The

principles are set out in chapters on interpretation; natural and cultural resources; site and building design; energy, water and waste management; and facility maintenance and operations.

Ecotourism Case Studies in the United States
The International Ecotourism Society published "Ecotourism Case Studies in the United States" by Alicia Pinto, 2000. It is the first collection of in-depth case studies concerning ecotourism projects in the United States, and offers some examples of best practices in various states.

Canada

Best Practices for Parks Canada Trails
Canada's Parks agency also publishes 'best' practices (Parks Canada 1996). These are site-specific (National Parks) and activity-specific (hiking). They provide information and examples of trail-related visitor activities, services and facilities in Canada's National Parks, Historic Sites, and Canals. The guidelines are spelled out in *Parks Canada's Spectrum of Appropriate National Parks Opportunities,* which, like the US National Parks Service's guide, is a "how to" manual. This one is specifically oriented to trail planning, design methods and techniques for future trail installations and recapitalization of older trails. It aims to translate the key principles and basic guidelines for sustainable tourism into on-the-ground design standards and maintenance practices. A matrix arranges the guiding principles and procedures for six phases in the process (planning, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation), under 10 categories: marketing, activities, experience and benefits, natural and cultural resource protection, physical setting, services and facilities, heritage presentation, visitor risk management, legislation and policy, and cost/benefit analysis. The examples shown in Canada's Best Practices document are highlighted through photographs and are generic in that they do not specify the park from which these 'best' examples are drawn.

Canadian Tourism Commission
The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC), formed in 1995, is a public/private sector partnership that promotes Canadian tourism. It supports the development of adventure travel and ecotourism by encouraging small and medium-sized businesses to work together. It provides its own definition of ecotourism and has produced three catalogues of 'best' practices. The industry's vision and mission as declared on their web page are elaborated with the help of the principles of sustainable development (CTC 2000).

The goal of the three following CTC documents on best practices is to stimulate new ideas and actions among various stakeholders in the ecotourism and tourism industry and to provide them with transferable practices that enhance the profitability and sustainability of their operations. The catalogues illustrate cases of 'best' and successful practices in ecotourism or adventure tourism and include site-, sector- and activity-specific examples.

On the Path to Success—Lessons from Canadian Adventure Travel and Ecotourism Operators

The Economic Planning Group of Canada (1999) reports on the results of a week-long *Best Practices Tour* that took place in Alberta and British Columbia in 1999. The 11 participants in the tour were new to the adventure and ecotourism industry and the intention was that they learn from the experience of six of the most successful tour and trip operators in the country. The practices highlight the best development, marketing and operation aspects of the six host operations. These hosts were chosen for the quality of their operations and the knowledge, experience and strengths of the tour operators.

Seminars were held during the tour on topics that included quality product development, marketing strategies, partnering with the travel trade, and packaging and market research. These, as well as background discussion materials on best environmental practices and best practices in interpretation, also provided insight into how to identify exemplary practices. The parameters for judging what was 'best' about the practices were delivered during these seminars and these, as well as the guidelines to which they adhered, are published in the catalogue's annex. Thus, the practices highlighted in this catalogue were deemed to be the 'best' through drawing out and synthesizing the lessons learned from the host adventure and ecotourism providers based on the criteria provided in the instructive seminars and on the collective opinion of the participants. The practices listed in this report are organized under the following headings: Administration, Operations, Product Development and Market-Readiness, Human Resources, Marketing Strategies, Market Research, Packaging, Working with Suppliers and the Travel Trade, Customer Service, Interpretation, Environmental Practices, and Other Insights.

This report is primarily dedicated to prescribing marketing and administrative tools that will enhance the profitability of tourism enterprises oriented to adventure and nature tourists. Three sections provide guidelines related to sustaining local communities and the environment: human resources (knowledge and training of local guides), interpretation (education of the tourist), and environmental practices (environmental protection and conservation). Rather than providing on-the-ground examples of how the host operators actually apply these tools, this report sets forth suggested codes of conduct. In other words, working from observations of on-the-ground operations, it teases out overarching guidelines and codes of conduct that are the basis of the report.

Catalogue of Exemplary Practices in Adventure Travel and Ecotourism

Rather than extracting criteria for 'best' practices from existing exemplary activities, another CTC guide to best practices does the reverse: beginning with a comprehensive set of principles for successful business practices and sustainable tourism, it then provides concrete examples of how specific ecotourism or adventure tourism providers in Canada apply these in their operations. The *Catalogue of Exemplary Practices in Adventure Travel and Ecotourism* reports on the findings from an evaluation of over 300 operators based on responses to a survey. Recognizing that 'best' is a subjective word, and that what is best depends on the stage of a company's development, the authors chose to

highlight exemplary practices that produce superior results. Thus, the report catalogues *good* practices engaged in by *exemplary* operators (Pam Wight and Associates 1999).

Nine Core Areas of Competency are prescribed, within which the key principles and basic guidelines for sustainable tourism are found: Business Management, Product and Delivery, Customer Service and Relations, Training & Human Resources Development, Resource Protection and Sustainability, Social and Community Contribution, Packaging, and Marketing and Promotion. Each core area is highlighted through the provision of numerous, very explicit examples. The concrete examples, highlighted in boxes, are vignettes that describe the specific activities engaged in by tour operators that effectively illustrate the application of the overarching principles and guidelines in each core area.

On Route to Sustainability: Best Practices in Canadian Tourism
A third CTC report on best practices highlights site-, sector- and activity-specific operations in Canada that "are leading the push for more sustainable forms of tourism" (Williams and Budke 1999, 1). *On Route to Sustainability: Best Practices in Canadian Tourism* describes operations whose practices are flagging ways to support effective regulatory systems that would lead to greater sustainability; preservation and conservation initiatives; low impact planning and design; carrying capacity strategies; and more energy and waste efficient facility operations. A set of key sustainability criteria guided the identification of the case studies. Ecological criteria focused on how activities supported efficient resource use and biodiversity protection; social criteria examined the ways in which human values and the right to healthy environments were protected and promoted; and economic criteria centred on assessing the way tourism activities help sustain local livelihoods (Williams and Budke 1999).

The case studies in this report are presented in a sequence to illustrate three stages in the development of a sustainable tourism operation. Section I highlights the 'best' examples of the initial stage, which involves establishing sustainability principles. Emphasis is placed on the role and process of developing codes of conduct to help transfer overarching sustainable development principles into concrete actions. In the following section, the focus is on implementation. Examples are drawn from the case studies to illustrate a broad range of management practices. Section III illustrates the practices of companies and organizations whose ecotourism activities have evolved to the stage of monitoring the effectiveness of their operations.

Mexico

Catálogo Mexicano de Casos Exitosos en Turismo Sustentable 2000
Mexico's Secretaría de Turismo has compiled a catalogue of successful cases in sustainable tourism in Mexico, which includes practices from nine of the country's states. For each of the projects the document includes the following information (where available):
- location, description and contact information of involved organizations/persons

- objectives, strategies, problems, solutions and results
- sustainability, financing, lessons learned and activities (Secretaría de Turismo, 2000a).

AMTAVE Members

Mexico's Association of Adventure Travel and Ecotourism (AMTAVE: Asociación Mexicana de Turismo de Aventura y Ecoturismo A.C.) was formed in 1994 with the goal of promoting this sector of the tourism industry in Mexico. AMTAVE is a public-private partnership, belonging to the country's Executive Commission for Tourism (Comisión Ejecutiva de Turismo) and other official tourism agencies, and representing and promoting the adventure and ecotourism industry on behalf of its some 60 members. AMTAVE's stated goal is to form a national network of alternative travel operators, ecotourism facilities, wilderness parks and reserves, and community projects that stand out for their excellence and professionalism in providing ecotourism and adventure tourism services dedicated to enhancing, restoring and preserving the natural areas in which they operate. Member companies are meant to comply with AMTAVE's mission and objectives and the general principles and guidelines of adventure and eco tourism (AMTAVE 2000).

Its mission, posted on its web page, is to promote and protect ecotourism and adventure tourism sites in Mexico so as to contribute to economic development while actively involving local communities and protecting the environment through the regulation and monitoring of activities and by complying with international standards. Its mission and objectives are in keeping with the key principles of sustainable tourism.

The organization's web page and its printed literature post the names of the member companies and the activities they offer, thus highlighting what can be considered the 'best' practices the country offers in adventure and ecotourism. The viewer is presented with the possibility of finding a company that offers the activity he or she is seeking according either to the environmental media in which the activity takes place: air, earth or water, or by the state in which the travel opportunity is sought. A second level of choice is activity-specific to further focus the search.

V.   Guidebooks and Directories

This section gives some examples of catalogues, guidebooks or lists of sustainable tourism sites or companies that do not claim to be examples of best practices but do claim to illustrate sustainable tourism. Some of the literature cited here mentions principles that guided the identification of the ecotourism practices or operators. A subsection is devoted to Internet ecotourism directories.

Government

Guía Oficial de Destinos para el Turismo de Aventura, Ecoturismo y Turismo Rural en México
Mexico's Tourism Secretariat's (Secretaría de Turismo de México) 2000 Guide to Adventure, Ecotourism and Rural Tourism Destinations in Mexico (Secretaría de Turismo 2000b), is a site-specific (both by ecosystem and by state) guide to Mexico's natural and scenic wilderness sites. Rather than a compendium of best practices, it is a guide to 'best places'—a promotional guidebook for the nation's most attractive and pristine natural sites—and tangentially, a guide to the private services and facilities listed in the publication that cater to the outdoor, nature, adventure or wilderness tourist.

The Secretariat's guide is a 210-page listing of Mexico's natural sites and attractions, specified as those that have been spared extensive alteration by humans and that are subject to some regulated protection, conservation, restoration or sustainable development. The book is organized by the country's major regions and describes the islands, parks, waterfalls, deserts, mountains, beaches, volcanoes, coral reefs, whale watching sites, etc. within each of its states. These attractions exemplify the country's megadiversity and wealth of beautiful landscapes and afford opportunities to engage in adventure, ecotourism or rural tourist activities. Accommodation (hotels, ecolodges, hostels, camping); services (equipment rentals and outfitters; tour, expedition, boating, diving, hiking operators and guides, etc.) and educational centers are suggested for each site or at the end of each section. The purpose of the guide is to advertise Mexico's wilderness destinations rather than its private companies so no attempt was made to classify the services or facilities or their attributes as adhering to 'ecotourism' principles or guidelines.

Mexico's Tourism Secretariat also has a web site linked to its home page that is dedicated to ecotourism. Here are posted the names of destinations such as national parks and biosphere reserves that cater to the ecotourist, but like the aforementioned book, it does not provide a definition of the term nor how the sites or facilities it advertises adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism (Secretaría de Turismo 2000c).

Industry

Mexico: Adventures in Nature
This is a comprehensive site-specific tour guide to Mexico's natural areas by Ron Mader (1998) that describes Mexico's 'best places'. It loosely classifies the sustainability of the nature and adventure tourism facilities and services listed based on a scheme proposed by John Shores, which suggests five levels of ecotourism (Shores 1996). The lowest level (0) is when travelers are made aware of the fragility of the ecosystems they visit. Level 1 is characterized by a net flow of financial support from the tourist (from airport departure taxes, for example) to the ecosystems visited. The next level requires the tourist's personal engagement in supporting environmental goals. Specific tour systems must

demonstrate that their activities are environmentally benign to be classified as level 3, while level 4 requires a net positive impact on the site, such as ecosystem restoration. Level 5 represents the ultimate goal for all ecotourism supporters and is reached when the entire system in which a service or facility operates is environmentally sound.

Mader tentatively promises that the next edition of his book will offer a case-by-case evaluation of tourism destinations in Mexico. In the 1998 edition, he stipulates only that most destinations would rank between levels 0 and 3 of Shores' ecotourism rating scale. Although the process of identifying 'best' practices is limited to the first step, in numerous cases throughout the guide, Mader underscores desirable attributes or specific activities of the operators or facilities advertised. He notes, for example, where companies support scientific research and conservation in the local area and where claims of environmental friendliness are reputable.

Earth-friendly Inns & Environmental Travel: Northeast
A published guide to lodging in the US northeast provides information about the environmental sensitivity of each inn listed. 'Best' practices, such as solar heating, innovative recycling, car-free or bicycle friendly attributes are highlighted (Dahlin 2000).

Internet Ecotourism Directories

This section includes Internet sites that are dedicated to providing lists or catalogues of tours or destinations related to sustainable tourism (not just one individual tour or destination).

Planeta.com's Directory: Mexico's Environmental Travel Providers and Destinations
Planeta.com, one of the most popular ecotourism websites used by tourists, operators, researchers, regulators and activists, is a clearinghouse on environmental issues, biodiversity, and indigenous concerns—all the disparate elements of ecotourism. Mader notes on the web page devoted to ecotourism destinations that to the best of his knowledge "companies listed …are environment and traveler-friendly" (Mader 2000).

GoNOMAD.com contains a searcheable travel directory with over 1,000 unique tour operators, lodgings, learning and volunteer programs, and other alternative travel options around the world (GoNOMAD 2001). GoNomad supports a code of responsible tourism.

EarthFoot's Ecotour Posterboard provides thumbnail sketches for each tour, facility or site it advertises, taking particular note of operations that are especially sensitive to the key principles and basic guidelines of sustainable tourism. The posterboard is a web page listing activities, sites and facilities oriented to adventure, nature and ecotourism. The authors post a vision statement, which includes plans to invest in community-based tourism to bring money to local economies. A map invites viewers to identify a destination and a menu allows for specifying an activity. There are destination pages

devoted to the three North American countries, arranged by state or province (Earth Foot 2000).

EarthWise Journeys notes that like eco travel, adventure travel has a strong element of adventure, discovery and sensitivity to the environment. This is an online independent resource and clearinghouse for trips that are run by what the web page authors deem to be responsible tour operators and outfitters. The sponsors consider these to be examples of the "best travels available that focus on active, outdoor adventures and wilderness experiences." Destinations include the North American countries (EarthWise Journeys 1998).

The *Transitions Abroad* site provides a list of resources and programs related to "responsible travel" from around the world (Transitions Abroad 2000).

The Green Culture's *Eco travel* page points to Green Resorts and Hotels and Earth Friendly Tours, prefacing the listings with a note to the prospective tourist to take responsibility for determining the authenticity of the 'eco' claim made by the agencies or operators. The site provides tips on how to do this, advising clients to "ask for a list of the company's contributions, donations, and policies which directly benefit the planet and/or indigenous cultures" and to look for landscaping and conservation hypocrisy (Green Culture 1999).

Most Internet advertisements for ecotourism make no reference to the principles or guidelines of ecotourism. Examples include the *Eco travel* page on the Ecomall (Ecomall 2000), *EcoFlorida's Ecotour Directory* (Ecoflorida 2000) and Nature Node's web page entitled *Nature Travel, Adventure Travel, Ecotourism, Natural History Guides and Wildlife Viewing Trips* (Naturenode 2000).

VI.   Results and Conclusion

This survey as well as the CEC's database illustrate the great number and variety of best practice guidelines and codes of conduct that have been produced by governments, NGOs and the tourism industry internationally and in North America. The codes and guidelines vary greatly in coverage and content. Indeed, their variety and lack of consistency are reflected in the confusing array of certification schemes for 'green' hotels, the different meanings of the word 'best', and the plethora of uses and interpretations of the term 'ecotourism' in general. There are few eco-certified tourism companies in North America. Four of the five sustainable tourism ecolabeling schemes available in North America currently only certify accommodations, not activities. However, many are in the making. For example, an ecolabel based on the Australian Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) approach is supposed to be implemented in Quebec for 2002, highlighting eco-tours. In addition, the Oceans Blue Foundation (OBF) is in the first phase of a four-phase process to develop a Cruise Ship Stewardship Initiative.

The hotel certification schemes described in this paper publish lists of the member hotels whose practices are rated against increasing levels of performance standards, such that they may be viewed as illustrating 'best' practices relative to lower levels and to uncertified hotels. Recipients of the IH & RA Environmental Award have also attained a level of achievement according to explicit criteria.

Most of the compendia in this survey illustrate best practices through case studies. The CTC's *Catalogue of Exemplary Practices in Adventure and Ecotourism* and The Mountain Forum's *Innovative Practices and Promising Examples for Community-Based Mountain Tourism* differ in that they illustrate their guidelines or criteria through specific on-the-ground practices showcased from a large range of companies. Generic guides of 'best' practices are 'how to' manuals that generalize 'best' practices, such as Park Canada's *Best Practices for Parks Canada Trails* and the CTC's *On the Path to Success: Lessons from Canadian Adventure Travel and Ecotourism Operators.* All three means of illustrating sustainable tourism are useful to the fledging ecotourism industry, providing variety and flexibility in the choice of tools.

Most tour guides to wilderness sites are catalogues of 'best' places. These guides, such as Ron Mader's *Mexico: Adventures in Nature* and the *Guide to Adventure, Ecotourism and Rural Tourism Destinations in Mexico* also advertise ecotourism providers but generally do not identify the particular practices that warrant an eco-label. Tour guides play a role in promoting ecotourism, however, by helping to develop a niche market for low-impact nature tourism. As Mader says, "When travelers support tours and destinations that play an active role in environmental protection and local development, tour operators and resort owners come to see that there is a significant new niche in the tourism market comprised of travelers who are more interested in the local environment than in duplicating their home environment with First-World comforts" (Mader 1998, 21).

Most Internet directories for ecotourism are intended as marketing tools. The plethora of these sites, however, demonstrates "a growing public commitment to this type of travel" (Honey 1999, 64). Some guides and web pages that use the 'eco' tag to advertise specific facilities such as ecolodges, ecotour operators, or wilderness destinations, do make efforts to highlight practices that correspond to the key elements of the sustainable tourism concept, as illustrated in the previous section.

It appears that Canada is taking a leadership role in educating the tourism industry and its stakeholders and encouraging the voluntary adoption of sustainable practices. Through its publications, which are made available on the Internet, the CTC is providing tools for tourism operators to improve their businesses by preserving environments and supporting local communities. The CTC is leading the field with its three reports on best practices. These are excellent educational tools promoting more sustainable practices in that country's tourism industry. They are comprehensive guides to establishing, operating and monitoring a successful ecotourism company. One of them provides case studies of 'best' companies, projects or communities; another is a more generic guide to 'best' practices as synthesized from lessons learned; and the third provides a multitude of examples of

specific on-the-ground practices to illustrate each of the prescriptive codes of conduct in its guidelines for sustainable tourism.

The fact that certifying bodies are reluctant to release information about their standards is important from trust and learning perspectives: other parts of the industry cannot learn from the hotel certification experience. The hotel industry is often characterized by large multi-national companies, and could thus probably afford to develop schemes or pay for certification. Other activities (with the exception of the cruise ship industry) are generally smaller scale and may thus face higher transaction costs to gather information, organize and pay for certification schemes. Development of these schemes will most likely, as in the case of the development of an accreditation system for small operators and companies by the Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan, be developed by an NGO or by the public. These schemes benefit from being developed in collaboration with the industry.

Creating trust in 'eco-labels' requires eco-label integrity and credibility. Integrity, in the sense that the principle addressed, in this case sustainable tourism, must be based on measurable criteria and standards (i.e., environmental, social and economic impacts). Trust also requires that a credible third party certify the claims. Claims must be transparent and understood by the consumer. For instance, a recent World Wildlife Fund (WWF) analysis of certification schemes notes that ecotourism certification programs are not always based on actual performance – some recognize the process of moving towards eligibility criteria rather than results (i.e., ISO 14001 based) which could dilute consumer trust. In addition, it notes that others approve self-evaluation and monitoring and some are mere public relations campaigns for the participating companies (Synergy 2000).

It has been said that "many voluntary codes of conduct directed at either tourists or travel promoters and operators or both are simply platitudes with no teeth" (Honey 1999). This survey shows, through the compendia, that there are many companies that adopt voluntary, transparent codes of conduct or sets of guidelines; it also shows how they put these into practice in their operations. Indeed, the terms 'best', 'exemplary' and 'successful' were only used in compendia that also indicated the criteria by which these were deemed to be good or 'best' practices. In short, where the compendium's goal is to illustrate companies for whom all three sustainable development imperatives—economic, social and environmental—are a priority, the criteria by which they achieve these goals are made apparent. As a general rule, it appears that the compendia have been created to educate the tourism industry in sustainable practices and promote the niche market of ecotourism not only for economic gains but also for social and environmental goals explicitly linking practices to principles.

There also exists a plethora of commitment statements, guidelines, and codes of conduct in the ecotourism industry, as illustrated by the CEC's *Sustainable Tourism Resource* database (http://www.cec.org/databases), that remain in isolation with no evidence of if, how and by whom they are being implemented. What is not clear is if this failure to make transparent how the advertised companies practice legitimate 'ecotourism' activities is due to a lack of the resources or knowledge required to afford the development of best

practices and the recognition by a third party certifier. They could also be free-riding on the "eco" wave. As long as no clear standards, codes of conduct, or best practices are agreed upon, and implementation is not verified by independent third parties, those whose main purpose is to benefit from the strategic advantage this new market affords and to promote a product or service for profit will continue to dilute the confidence of the consumer and jeopardize the credibility of sustainable tourism.

There is a need for a common, overarching North American understanding of the principles of sustainable tourism and for this industry to work towards developing not only codes of conduct, but also actual, reliable standards and certification systems for sustainable tourism that can be adopted and mutually recognized by companies and agencies throughout the region. As part of this attempt to encourage mutual recognition, the "Mohonk Agreement: an agreed framework and principles for the certification of ecotourism and sustainable tourism" was developed (during a workshop organized by the Institute for Policy Studies which including attendees representing governmental bodies, NGOs and leading experts from over 20 countries, including the CEC) to identify the key common elements of a sustainable tourism certification program (Mohonk, 2000). This agreement has already proved to be a useful tool and has been used to develop and guide tourism certification projects in several countries. There is hope that this framework will also guide the North American tourism certification industry.

The codes of conduct and best practices described in this document and the CEC database should provide rich material in the future development of standards and criteria of certification. Their presence will ensure that instead of 'reinventing the wheel' when the time comes to define standards, the best standards will be chosen from, or designed from, the plethora that already exist.

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