A New Vision for Sustainable Ecotourism in Mauritius

US Forest Service Technical Assistance to Mauritius Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries

Mauritius National Parks and Conservation/Forestry Services

View from Macchabee Trail

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I. Table of Contents

I. Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... 2
II. List of Acronyms ........................................................................................................... 3
III. Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... 4
IV. Executive Summary .................................................................................................... 5
V. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 7
VI. Cross-cutting Issues ................................................................................................... 8
   A. Sustainable Ecotourism ............................................................................................. 8
   B. Collaboration Between Services, Departments and Ministries .................................. 10
   C. Branding of Ecotourism Opportunities ..................................................................... 12
   D. Funding .................................................................................................................. 13
   E. Staff Training .......................................................................................................... 15
   F. Thematic Interpretation ............................................................................................ 17
VII. Specific Issues from the Action Plan ........................................................................ 20
   A. Ranger Patrols in Parks ............................................................................................ 20
   B. Communication Amongst Staff While in Remote Areas ........................................... 20
   C. Uniforms ................................................................................................................ 21
   D. Security ................................................................................................................... 21
   E. Community Involvement .......................................................................................... 22
   F. Watchable Wildlife ................................................................................................... 23
   G. Trail Design and Safety ............................................................................................ 24
   H. Trail Assessment Inventory ...................................................................................... 26
   I. Alexandra Falls Overlook .......................................................................................... 27
   J. Marketing .................................................................................................................. 27
   K. Directional Signage .................................................................................................... 28
   L. Entrance Fees ......................................................................................................... 29
   M. Maintenance of Tracks, Trails and Lookouts ......................................................... 30
   N. State of Petrin Information Center .......................................................................... 30
   O. State of BRGVC ....................................................................................................... 32
   P. Customer Service Strategy ....................................................................................... 33
   Q. Hawkers ................................................................................................................. 34
VIII. Next Steps ................................................................................................................. 35
IX. Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 35
X. Action Plan .................................................................................................................. 36
Appendix 1 - Key Contacts ............................................................................................... 48
Appendix 2 - Workshop Participants .............................................................................. 49
Appendix 3 – IP Ecotourism Assistance ......................................................................... 51
Appendix 4 – USFS Team Contact Information ............................................................... 52
II. List of Acronyms

APR -- Assistant Park Ranger

BRGNP -- Black River Gorges National Park

BRGVC -- Black River Gorges Visitors’ Center

CFR -- US Code of Federal Regulations

CMA -- Conservation Management Area

FS -- Mauritius Forestry Service (Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries)

IUCN -- World Conservation Union

MOA -- Mauritius Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries

NPCS -- Mauritius National Parks and Conservation Service (Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries)

REA -- Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act

RTRBS -- Rivulet Terre Rouge Bird Sanctuary

SOW -- Scope of Work

SSRBG -- Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden

USFS -- United States Forest Service

USFSIP -- United States Forest Service International Programs

VP -- Viewpoint
III. Acknowledgements

The USFS International Programs mission team extends sincere thanks to our Mauritian hosts and counterparts. We were received with unparalleled hospitality, and quickly appreciated the camaraderie, professionalism, and technical exchange shared with our counterparts at NPCS and the Forestry Service. To all with whom we collaborated, thank you. The success of this mission would not have been possible without your dedication, hard work, and investment of time and energy. It was an honor to work with you.

We thank the US Embassy East Africa Regional Hub, and the US Embassy in Port Louis, Mauritius, for the invaluable support provided to our team in preparation for the mission, and while in-country. Your vision and collaboration with Mauritius NPCS brought this important partnership between US and Mauritian land management agencies into being; we are grateful for your support, and hope that ongoing synergies might be realized in the future toward the common goal of Sustainable Ecotourism in Mauritius.

We extend a special thanks to the Ministry of Agro-Industry & Fisheries, especially Dr. The Hon. Arvin BOOLELL, Minister. We are grateful to all the Ministry staff that dedicated energy toward the success of this mission. In particular, we extend out gratitude to our colleagues at NPCS and the Forestry Service.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to Mr. Manickchand PUTTOO, Director of National Parks and Conservation Service, who conceptualized this partnership long before our January mission. Mr. PUTTOO and his staff invested countless hours toward ensuring the success of this multi-agency collaborative effort. We are grateful to Mr. Vinehswar Sharma (Suraj) GOPAL for all of the behind-the-scenes planning, mission preparation, logistics, trip report review, and involvement in implementation of the Action Plan. We are grateful to Mr. Paul MOOLEE, Park Ranger, whose professional insight and friendship proved invaluable in advancing the goals of the mission.

We thank the Mauritius Forestry Service for generously making available to us Monvert, a wonderful venue for the Sustainable Ecotourism workshop. We appreciated the participation of and interaction with Forestry staff, and look forward to an on-going relationship.

We extend our thanks to all of the workshop participants and their home agencies for making time in their busy schedules to share with us by taking part in the collaborative planning and work sessions held at Monvert; this workshop provided an important platform for a new, collaborative approach to sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius.

We greatly appreciated the opportunity to serve this unique and challenging mission, and extend our thanks for support to our USFS home offices in Alaska and Pennsylvania, and to USFS International Programs in Washington, DC.
IV. Executive Summary

Mauritius National Parks and Conservation Service (NPCS) requested US Forest Service technical assistance in making Black River Gorges National Park and other priority areas for conservation more user friendly for visitors. Ameliorating park services is one aspect of a larger government initiative to increase the number of tourists in Mauritius to 2 million by the year 2015.

A team of three US Forest Service (USFS) experts worked in-country with counterparts from NPCS, Mauritius Forestry Service, and other sustainable ecotourism stakeholders from January 16 – Feb 3, 2008 on sustainable ecotourism priorities for Mauritius. During the mission, the USFS team visited priority ecotourism sites in-country; interacted with stakeholders including NPCS and Forestry staff, representatives of local government, and the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries, enabling informal exchange of information; and conducted a formal 3-day workshop on principles of sustainable ecotourism, including some basic technical instruction on topics such as sustainable trail construction and maintenance, visitor relations, and signage.

The following are important “take-away points” from the mission, which the USFS team deems crucial to the advancement of sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius. In order for sustainable ecotourism to be achieved, the team believes these following points must be held as common priorities across institutions in Mauritius working to attract ecotourists and to conserve biodiversity in the country:

- Sustainable ecotourism is tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.

- There are a number of good examples of sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius: Blue Bay, Isle Aux Aigrettes, Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, Valley Ferney.

- It is crucial that sustainable ecotourism be applied to parks and conservation areas in Mauritius so that nature, culture, & community can all benefit today and in the future.

- It is critical to prioritize sustainable ecotourism, when working toward the goal of 2 million visitors by 2015, and moving beyond the image of “Sun, Sand, and Sea.” If “tourism” is approached purely with a business model in mind (creation of golf courses, hotels, cable cars through forested areas, heavy beach use) it can result in the degradation of parks and other natural spaces. However, balancing tourist influx with conservation objectives--true sustainable ecotourism--can serve to enhance park integrity and other conservation efforts.

- In order for parks and nature reserve areas to be sustainable, there must be a source of sustainable funding. This might stem from a variety of sources:
  - Entrance fees
  - Private investment/ sponsorships
  - The Conservation Fund
• Mauritius has a tremendous number of Conservation Success Stories; it is important to get this message out to the ecotourism niche market as well as residents.
• Examples include:
  ▪ Pink pigeon
  ▪ Echo parakeet
  ▪ Kestrel

• A current challenge to sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius is the need for collaboration between different institutions (services, departments, ministries.) We suggest that an intra-institutional approach be taken in ecotourism areas where various stakeholders have interests.

Figure 1-A New Vision for Sustainable Ecotourism in Mauritius workshop participants and guests of honor
V. Introduction

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The text below details the main issues encountered during the course of the USFS mission, and treats them in the following format:

- **Issue** – A brief description of the problem
- **Findings** – Team’s first hand observations
- **USFS Recommendations** – Potential solutions based on the Team’s past experience and current research
- **Stakeholder Decisions** – As recorded in the Action Plan, decisions made in consultation with workshop participants to aid in the resolution of the Issue

Please also see the *Action Plan*, which is a product of the 3-day sustainable ecotourism workshop, and which includes potential next steps for USFS involvement in Mauritius.

Note: Throughout the body of the report “CD” is provided as a reference. This refers to a complete Trip Report including links to all referenced material. CD copies can be obtained from Vinehswar Sharma (Suraj) GOPAL.
VI. Cross-cutting Issues

A. Sustainable Ecotourism

Finding
There is a need to define sustainable ecotourism for Mauritius to insure proposed ecotourism projects conform to an acceptable model. While no specific training on the broad concepts of sustainable ecotourism were requested by NPCS, the team noticed early in the mission a need to clarify these concepts. The scope of work (SOW) for this Mauritius assignment defined potential outcomes that focused on improving trails, visitor centers and staff skills, especially in the Black River Gorges National Park. The following is quoted from the SOW:

Mauritius National Parks and Conservation Service has requested technical assistance in developing better and more varied trails, better managing visitors, signage, and disseminating information about the parks. Mauritius National Parks and Conservation Service has also requested assistance in training park staff (rangers, assistant rangers, guides, and technical officers) in ways to better communicate with visitors, and possibly how to design appropriate park programs.

Ecotourism is not well understood in its complete context of natural, cultural and community benefits for Mauritius. While the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries (MOA) staff seemed well grounded in the conservation aspects of biodiversity and sustainable resource protection, they seemed much less familiar with how recreation developments either contribute to or detract from sustainability. Staff with whom our team interacted did not bring to the forefront the role that cultural attractions can play in ecotourism, nor the fact that tourism developments can either serve to the benefit or detriment of communities. The government of Mauritius has targeted a large increase in tourist visits to the island in coming years, an initiative coined “Two million by 2015.” It assumes a 12.5 percent average annual increase in visitor arrivals and is said to be a key part of the overall economic development strategy. During the workshop, participants discussed the following questions about this initiative:

1. Are Mauritius beaches capable of supporting an additional one million visitors?
2. Is there a point at which people will believe there are too many visitors?
3. Can the interior parks and forests sustain additional tourist visits?
4. Will tourism in the interior meet our definition of sustainable ecotourism?
5. What is the most important step toward insuring this tourism is sustainable?
Large scale tourism projects such as hotels, theme parks, cable cars, water parks and the like may be appropriate business opportunities for developed communities and will perhaps continue to be considered for Mauritius just as beach resorts and golf courses are already abundant in coastal areas. These are not sustainable development models to use in National Parks or Forests, however, where concerns over biodiversity and shrinking habitat for endangered species are of utmost concern.

**Recommendations**
MOA leadership should adopt a definition of sustainable ecotourism in accordance with international standards and work with other ministries to promote projects that fit this model, especially within National Parks and Forests. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) definition is:

> “Environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas (and any accompanying cultural features) in order to enjoy and appreciate nature, that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples”

_Ceballos-Lascurain 2006^1_.

MOA should also promote sustainable ecotourism activities that:

- Have a strong focus on learning and discovering local ecology and cultural heritage
- Are guided by local guides
- Promote a first-hand participatory experience that does not degrade the resource
- Are diverse, providing a range of visitor experience including “harder”, more strenuous activities, and “softer” activities that are less physically strenuous

**References:**  
[http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism.cfm?id=council](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism.cfm?id=council) or CD  
[http://www.sustainabletravelinternational.org/](http://www.sustainabletravelinternational.org/) or CD

**Stakeholder Decisions**
During the first session of the workshop, half the participants defined sustainable ecotourism from their perspective through a group exercise. Their results were similar to the definition below, except they lacked cultural aspects and community benefits. Consensus on the following definition was later reached:

> tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.  

_National Geographic Society_

The remaining half of participants contributed examples of projects in Mauritius that fit this definition. Examples they gave include:

- Isle Aux Aigrettes
- Valley Ferney
- Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden

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• Blue Bay Marine Park

Adopting the above definitions of sustainable ecotourism and using these examples of existing projects that conform to the model should help guide future considerations of projects within National parks and forests.

Workshop participants gained an appreciation for the differences between tourism and “sustainable ecotourism”, but this is just a small start toward any policy or emphasis shifts for Mauritius. Social and economic pressures are at work in the promotion of tourism developments that conform to business models, models that are often inappropriate in sensitive natural habitats harboring endangered species. We recommend a robust internal campaign within the MOA to adopt the above definitions and examples of ecotourism (Isle Aux Aigrettes, Blue Bay, etc.), coupled with an external education campaign for other government ministries, especially the Ministry of Tourism.

B. Collaboration Between Services, Departments and Ministries

Finding
Mauritius has set a goal of expanding and improving ecotourism opportunities in conjunction with the goal to attract 2 million tourists by 2015. It appears that the realization of sustainable ecotourism can sometimes be challenging due to multi-jurisdictional management issues at ecotourism sites. As an example, Flat Island is a Nature Reserve, according to the Forestry Service (FS) Act (Ministry of Agro-Industry & Fisheries) but conservation activities are managed by the National Parks and Conservation Service (NPCS) another service within the Ministry of Agro-Industry & Fisheries. All enforcement matters on the island are handled by the Coast Guard (Ministry of Internal Affairs.) The Beach Authority (Ministry of Tourism) issues permits to boat operators to visit the island. The Ministry of Culture is not heavily involved on the island to date, though this is the ministry under whose auspices matters related to the lighthouse and building ruins would fall; we are told that the Ministry of Culture might become more involved in the future.

Recommendations
In order to realize sustainable ecotourism as defined above, it is necessary to achieve collaboration between government departments and ministries responsible for the various aspects of ecotourism. Workshop participants and other in-country partners identified the following ministries as key players in the sustainable ecotourism vision: Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment. It would be prudent to utilize an “Advisory Council” or a “Board of Trustees,” as has been done at Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, comprised of representatives from principle stakeholder groups.

Our team has been informed that a “Wildlife and Parks Advisory Council” exists, which could serve this role. The Wildlife and Parks Advisory Council is comprised of representatives from NPCS, Forestry Service, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Tourism, Mauritius Wildlife Foundation, University of Mauritius, Ministry of Education, local government, representatives from 2 NGO’s, the private sector, and the Ministry of Rodrigues. The exact role of each of these members is unclear, as we are advised that some members of the committee only hold
“answerable roles,” and do not actually serve as decision-makers; our team’s understanding, therefore, is that this body offers advice to the Ministry of Agro-Industry when called upon.

In the case of Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden (SSRBG), the Board of Trustees includes members from: Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Environment, National Parks and Conservation Service, SSRBG, and 3 representatives of private interests in SSRBG. We note that the Board of Trustees at SSRBG is primarily an administrative body, whereas the Advisory Council is—per its title—advisory on more technical matters. Though the two bodies are intended to fill different roles, “lessons learned” from SSRBG can be applied to maximize effective collaboration among members of the Wildlife and Parks Advisory Council.

In order to guide sustainable ecotourism decisions, our team recommends that the advisory council assemble and allow each stakeholder member to have a voice in order to collectively make decisions that impact the future integrity of Mauritius’ biodiversity and tourism. This intra-institutional approach is crucial to the success of ecotourism which, by definition, is founded upon cross-cutting issues including both sustainable resource use and conservation.

It is essential that the lines of communication be kept open between services (departments and ministries) whose mandates “overlap” in the realm of sustainable ecotourism; a prudent mechanism to ensure that this occur is to utilize the advisory council.

Stakeholder Decisions
Within 1 month (no later than March 2008) seek opportunities to collaborate on items delineated in the Action Plan. This should lead to periodic collaborative evaluation of progress toward achieving specific activities outlined in the Action Plan, (perhaps at the 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year marks.) Another potential means by which to collaborate would be to collectively conduct trainings for members of various services with similar interests (as was the case during the USFS January workshop).

Stakeholders have also indicated that the Chairman of the Advisory Council should make a recommendation to the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries to initiate entrance / user fees at certain points on NPCS and Forestry Service land. A plan exists and the recommendation to implement should be made within 1-month’s time (no later than March 2008).
C. Branding of Ecotourism Opportunities

Finding
Branding of ecotourism opportunities is critical for informing prospective visitors and for meeting their expectations once they arrive. It became clear during our earliest discussions as a team that no unifying theme or brand exists for the types of ecotourism opportunities offered by NPCS, the Forestry Service, and/or the private sector. Developing a brand is a proven way to market a product to a select group of customers. The challenge for Mauritius as a whole is how to describe its uniqueness among other island destinations around the globe to entice travelers that have the means to vacation anywhere. In particular, the government of Mauritius has already begun marketing ‘ecotourism’ opportunities, but to date has not undertaken ecotourism-directed marketing efforts. Well established as a high-end provider of sun, sand, and sea resort opportunities, it is evident to the USFS team that Mauritius has more to offer.

As visitors to the island, each member of the team conducted individual pre-trip evaluations of the opportunities available for ecotourism, as well as other attractions in general. Information about 4 and 5 star resorts was common, but other information from the internet was limited. The Ministerial website contains only a minimal amount of information about natural destinations. Third party tour operators visible on the web made the standard offerings of Chamarel, Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, Ile aux Cerfs, Grand Bassin, Alexandra Falls, Black River Gorges Viewpoint and the Glass Gallery Museum. Only two attractions, Alexandra Falls and the Gorges Viewpoint, are within the boundaries of the park and neither is marketed as a National Park attraction. When asked, tour operators did acknowledge that these destinations were within the Black River Gorges National Park (BRGNP) but it was apparent that tour operators did not deem it necessary to acknowledge the national park. The team found it interesting that the only comments we received about the extensive trail system in national parks or conservation areas were less than favorable. Information available at the airport put more emphasis on sun, sand, and sea type activities, and no information was available at the airport regarding ecotourism or National Park destinations or attractions.

Branding is used to differentiate products, to create a consistent image, and to create instant recognition. After our intensive tour and longer than average stay on the island, the Team found plenty of positive examples of cultural and natural resource sites and stories that can easily differentiate this destination from others.

We found several topics that could be used to create a consistent image like ‘Saving species from the brink’, ‘The success of reestablishing the forests of Mauritius’ or ‘Visits to the Past, Present and Future-The Conservation of Mauritius’. Cultural opportunities abound due to the rich history of this region of the Indian Ocean. Great opportunities exist to share stories about the slave trade, indentured laborers, and early settlement by the Dutch, British, and French. Great success stories about the conservation efforts that have saved of the Kestrel, Pink Pigeon, and Echo Parakeet can also contribute to the branding effort in a very positive way. Positive images such as these can promote ecotourism and can excite people to explore more of the island.

At this point, the Dodo is the instant recognition symbol for the island. The attempt to use the Dodo as a marketing tool leaves a somewhat negative image in our minds since it was a species
driven to extinction. In many cases the Dodo image has been used on items of poor quality which can leave a bad impression on visitors, as well. It is our hope that the new image for Mauritius includes one of the many success stories that have occurred here.

It is unclear to what extent the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries have collaborated on the promotion of sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius, to date. Our team repeatedly remarked that delivering a single brand message for the entire island is crucial in creating communication efficiencies, solidifying a good target market, and enhancing overall visitor expectations.

**Recommendations**
The Team recommends developing a brand specific to the marketing of sustainable ecotourism opportunities. Ideally, the brand will be the result of a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries. In order to successfully create a brand, several things must be accomplished:

- Develop a Vision Statement as discussed at the workshop
- Develop Core Values or adopt the ones from the workshop
- Develop a Target Audience with the help of the Ministry of Tourism
- Develop the Significant Properties and Personality of ecotourism opportunities
- Develop a Branding Message that introduces and entices visitors, and authenticates the Mauritian Brand. For example, ‘Visits to the Past, Present and Future-The Conservation of Mauritius’

Reference: [http://www.fermatainc.com/les_cheneaux/index.html](http://www.fermatainc.com/les_cheneaux/index.html) or CD

**D. Funding**

**Finding**
Lack of funding effects all potential actions discussed during the mission and the workshop. NPCS and Forestry staff continually mentioned funding shortages as a barrier to effective management. While this was not surprising, as funding is often a limiting factor worldwide, this barrier seems to have an interesting caveat in Mauritius among NPCS and Forestry staff, as there is a perception that funding does exist in the Conservation Fund, but that Conservation Fund resources are not allocated for park or forest operations. Most of the Conservation Fund income comes from the sale of exotic monkeys to other countries for research purposes. The fund has generally been used for larger projects that cost millions of rupees, but has not normally been used for smaller projects or for operating expenses such as staff salaries. Entrance fees for park and forest attractions or services offer great promise for increasing the budget for operating costs, but staff expressed concern that fees could potentially be allocated to the Conservation Fund, thereby failing to yield a benefit to the collection site.

A UNDP-GEF proposal to strengthen protected area management in Mauritius offers potential resource benefits to parks and reserves.

**Recommendations**
Entrance fees should be charged at certain park and forest attractions where facilities or services warrant the charge and visitors appreciate the need. In general, fees are better supported when the outcome is readily visible to visitors and dignitaries. Examples include:

- Scenic overlooks are properly constructed and maintained
- Visitor centers are attractive, functional and accessible
- Parking is adequate, toilets are well maintained, litter is regularly cleaned
- Guide services are offered on trails and/or to special destinations

A plan to enact fees is already in place and should be introduced by the Advisory Council and vetted by the MOA. The fees should be largely returned to the site where they are collected. An example of such a fee-collection system is the American Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA), which stipulates that 15% of fee collection receipts be directly returned to the site to be used to pay the costs of collection. This could include staff salaries, printing costs, supporting materials, collection tools and more. The American model also returns an additional 80% of the fee receipts to be used for improvements to the site or associated sites. Improvements could include staff salaries to conduct guided walks, for example, as well as structural improvements. The remaining 5% is put into a regional fund similar to the Mauritian Conservation Fund.

See the REA summary at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/fee-legislation-summary.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/fee-legislation-summary.shtml) or CD
See the full text of the REA at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/fee-legislation-text.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/fee-legislation-text.shtml) or CD

Other sources of funding for specific park or forest projects have also been mentioned by staff including corporate sponsorship. In the past, banks have provided labor to help weed Conservation Management Areas (CMA’s.) Other similar funding possibilities exist and should be explored.

A United Nations Development Program GEF Trust Fund proposal has been submitted to expand protected areas in Mauritius and strengthen management effectiveness. $3.1 million US has been requested from GEF to strengthen protected area management, create partnerships and promote investments by private industry to secure protected areas from threats. NPCS could receive a significant boost in several ways if this proposal proceeds. The director of NPCS should actively monitor this proposal and advocate for its approval.

**Stakeholder Decisions**
- As noted under “entrance fees,” begin charging fees at sites according to the agreed upon plan and return a large portion of the receipts to the fee collection sites to help offset the costs of fee collection and to improve facilities or services.
- Make regular proposals to use...
Conservation Fund receipts for projects that best qualify, such as large construction or reconstruction projects (e.g. visitor centers, overlooks, parking lots, infrastructure). Proposals for moderate sized projects can also be made, such as a large purchase of signs for multiple trailheads and junctions within a park, or for training sessions and exchanges for staff. Proposals should be submitted at every opportunity and may receive extra recognition if they follow the Action Plan agreed upon during the workshop, as included in this report.

- Seek private sponsorship of specific projects with tangible results. Keep in mind that private corporations expect to receive marketing benefits for their contributions.

### E. Staff Training

**Findings**

NPCS and FS staff are extremely passionate about their work, and well-versed in many scientific aspects of their jobs. The staff with whom we interacted over the course of our mission, however, repeatedly expressed desire for additional training—particularly in subjects related to matters other than biology / botany. While formal schooling and on-the-ground work experience have taught invaluable lessons related to nature in Black River Gorges National Park, Monvert Nature Trail, etc. our Mauritian counterparts expressed sincere hunger for training related to specific technical and social science skills such as trail construction and maintenance, improved signage, customer service, and properly addressing the issue of hawkers. It appears as though NPCS and FS staff have received little to no instruction on these topics as part of job training.

**Recommendations**

It would be prudent for NPCS and FS to establish a training schedule for staff. The schedule might be organized in several different ways, according to service priorities and resource capacity:

1. One example of the way trainings could be conducted would be for the services to commit to sponsoring 1 or 2 service-wide trainings for staff each year on general topics that are relevant to all staff growth. Such trainings might focus on topics such as interaction with the public or effective time management. If chosen training topics are relevant to NPCS and FS (and / or other services or agencies) the services might choose to combine resources and conduct a joint training, which would provide a valuable opportunity for collaboration as well as consistency of messages across services.

2. More specific trainings could also be conducted on an annual or bi-annual basis for certain sectors of each service. For example, Park Rangers and Assistant Park Rangers (APR’s) could greatly benefit from hands-on instruction in trail construction and maintenance, while this training would not be appropriate for NPCS staff holding administrative positions.

3. Training schedules could also be established for individuals to strengthen skills, as necessary. An appropriate time to determine what skills training might be appropriate via consultation between supervisor and staff might be during individual annual performance reviews. Examples of this might include having an administrative officer complete a 1-week course in grant proposal writing, or programming an international exchange opportunity for a park ranger to gain hands-on skills development via an exchange with a foreign land management agency.
4. Training might also be programmed on an “as needed” basis. It would be useful to establish a system whereby individual and/or “department” (i.e. park ranger) requests could be made for specific skills training, as the need arises.

Another means by which staff training can be executed is to have USFS expert(s) return to Mauritius for short term (generally 2-3 week) missions to work with staff on specific skills development, as defined by NPCS and / or FS. This initial January 2008 mission served to lay an important foundation for future possibilities, and allowed USFS to briefly explore a number of ecotourism aspects with NPCS and FS staff. The next logical step would be to build upon knowledge acquired during the initial mission and delve more deeply into specific priority action items. For example, NPCS and FS have exhibited tremendous interest in construction and maintenance of tracks and trails. Due to time constraints, and the more general nature of the January mission wherein a broad spectrum of topics were covered, the attention paid to tracks and trail construction was of a general nature. With the groundwork that has now been laid, it would make sense to have a team of USFS experts return to conduct hands-on training with Rangers and APR’s in trail construction and design; this could be the priority focus of a return mission, during the course of which USFS experts would go out with a NPCS and/or FS crew every day and work together on trail design and layout, construction, and maintenance.

Additionally, opportunities for “exchange programs” should be explored and acted upon. This would include sending NPCS and/or FS staff abroad to learn with and from foreign land management agencies, as well as receiving/hosting counterparts from international agencies. Sponsoring staff to study abroad can be an important means by which to foster personal growth, as well as enable the individual(s) participating in such opportunities to return to his/her host agency and impart newly acquired knowledge in a sort of “Train-the-Trainer” scenario. Alternatively, hosting counterparts from abroad can serve to directly expose a greater number NPCS/FS staff to an “international perspective.” Our team encourages NPCS and FS to make a priority of annually exploring, engaging in, and evaluating exchange opportunities.

For exchange opportunities specific to the USA, our Mauritian counterparts are encouraged to work directly with their service director and Lauren Chitty of USFS International Programs, Africa Program (email: lchitty@fs.fed.us; tel: 202-273-4728.) Opportunities exist for participation in an international Protected Area Management Seminar (http://www.fs.fed.us/global/is/welcome.htm or CD) as well as in individual “tailor-made” shadowing experiences and hands-on learning exchanges with forestry and parks recreation staff in the USA.

**Stakeholders’ Decisions**

Stakeholders expressed an overall desire to have more training provided to staff. NPCS has set as a 1-month goal (no later than March 2008) the objectives of having the Director of NPCS establish priority staff training needs and identify resources within the agency. Within 6 months (no later than August 2008) NPCS plans to submit a proposal to fund staff training using resources from the Conservation Fund.

Both NPCS and FS would like for staff to receive hands-on training in designing tracks and trails. As a 1-month goal (no later than March 2008) both NPCS and FS have committed to having staff review the sustainable trail design DVD *Building Mountain Bike Trails: Sustainable Singletrack* (0623–2D01–MTDC). (reference material provided by USFS team; NPCS contact
A New Vision for Sustainable Ecotourism in Mauritius

F. Thematic Interpretation

Finding

Mauritian parks and forests have important conservation messages that aren’t being adequately interpreted for visitors. Displays and information available at parks do not follow the general principles and suggested practices of thematic interpretation, resulting in lost opportunities to engage visitors. Park employees are aware of the outdated information displays at Petrin Information Center and Lower Gorges Visitor Center and efforts have been made to update these displays. Currently, display panels present information about endangered bird conservation and endemic plants, but have no unifying theme. Good trail maps are lacking; it is important that maps be made available that are easy to follow with trail routes, suggested amount of times for completion, terrain profiles and other helpful information for hikers. The web site for the NPCS is scant on information and lacks good images. The Team did not have the opportunity to see interpretive talks or personal communication; guided walks are not generally offered for visitors by NPCS staff.

Recommendation

Apply the principles of thematic interpretation to all forms of public media and personal and non-personal communications. Tell the visitors a story with a unifying theme that is well developed and does more than state a topic. Use interpretive tools to fulfill park management objectives. Interpretation must be purposeful, organized, enjoyable, thematic, and relevant to achieve its full potential of engaging and influencing visitor attitudes. Simply stating

Figure 5-Learning through personal interpretation
information is *not* interpretation and will not keep the display or presentation well organized and engaging for visitors. An overview of interpretation principles was given at the workshop and is outlined in the USFS workshop reference CD and in the book *Interpretation A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets* by Sam Ham left with NPCS staff.

Use multiple interpretive tools at each visitor contact point such as visitor centers, information centers, and scenic overlooks. Consider completing a sensitization plan for each park that outlines issues, tools and techniques to be used. A template for a sensitization plan is included in the USFS workshop reference CD. Signs and displays are obvious needs but they should fit the “family of signs” concept with a similar look and feel at every place. Develop themes for each overlook that are unique and interpret more than just the scenery. Visitor centers have more room to interpret several themes if they are developed completely with an introduction, body, and conclusion. Strive to give much more than just information. Attempt to influence hiker behaviors through positive messages at trailheads that explain why litter or native plant extraction is destructive. *Leave No Trace* Inc. offers useful messages to borrow at: [http://lnt.org/index.php](http://lnt.org/index.php) or CD


**Stakeholder Decisions**

The action plan outlines some interpretive tools to develop and more staff training to deliver:

- Staff training – exchanges with other parks outside Mauritius would allow staff to see interpretive tools being used, hopefully to their fullest potential.
- Train the Trainer session – key visitor center and information center staff and rangers should be given a longer session (two to three days) in thematic interpretation, perhaps as part of future assistance missions. Tangible products could include developing displays and talks.
- Overlooks at Alexandra Falls and Gorges are scheduled for new construction that could include interpretive displays and signs with important themes specific to those locations.
- Marketing efforts with brochures and websites are scheduled for the future. All should use interpretation techniques for better products with not only a similar look and feel, but with a thematic and organized approach.
- Petrin Information Center is planned for reconstruction. The new visitor center could include not only thematic displays, but perhaps also a trail from a secure location in the center through the adjacent CMA. Guides could give walks through the CMA for visitors that reinforce themes of the displays. A special fee could be charged for these walks, or it could be integrated into the visitor center entrance fee.
- Some new displays for Lower Gorges Visitor Center have already been developed. Future displays should be organized around distinct themes that help communicate park objectives.
- Discussion of expanding live animal displays near the center are taking place, and could offer interpretive opportunities for guided walks, but the displays should be of high quality incorporating best management practices for zoos that include natural habitat features and should allow for natural behaviors of the animals. See the World
Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) web site: http://www.waza.org/about/index.php?main=about&view=values or CD

- Strive to develop themes for the displays and walks that help communicate park objectives. Perhaps animal displays could be accessed from within the visitor center to control access and stimulate interest in entering the center, as recommended for Petrin.
VII. Specific Issues from the Action Plan

A. Ranger Patrols in Parks

Finding
Park Rangers and Assistant Park Rangers (APR’s) would like to improve their methods of patrolling recreation destinations and sensitive places in the park. Some felt the existing schedules used for patrols were ineffective. Not enough visitors are contacted to prevent problems such as litter or vandalism. The Team did not have the opportunity to join patrols or review them in any detail, but workshop participants indicated that Rangers work normal business hours, which generally means that they do not work weekends, holidays, or evening hours when many visitors are present.

Recommendations
Scheduling patrols during times of peak visitor use should be a normal expectation. Schedules should include rotations of APR’s to sensitive locations where problems have arisen in the past. While it is not possible to patrol all locations in the park, it may be feasible to have a regular presence at important locations during those times when visitors are present. The Rangers know these locations and times better than anyone else and are in the best position to schedule this, but some issues of overtime and holiday time pay may need to be addressed by their superiors. These extra salary costs are considered a regular “cost of doing business” in most park programs.

Stakeholder Decisions
The action plan contains a recommendation for the rangers to improve the schedule.

B. Communication Amongst Staff While in Remote Areas

Finding
There is no radio system to communicate between visitor stations and park personnel. Although Rangers and APR’s carry cell phones, the coverage of the park is not complete. They cannot effectively communicate amongst themselves to coordinate the many tasks that may require assistance, especially emergency evacuations or visitor safety.

Recommendations
There are several radio towers in the Black River Gorges National Park that may be useful for installation of radio repeaters. Other parks and forests may have the same situation. Coordination with private utility companies or other agencies (i.e. police) should be undertaken to investigate possibilities and costs of installing a radio system.

Stakeholder Decisions
The action plan contains one month (March 2008), six month (August 2008) and one year (February 2009) action items to install communication equipment at important locations.
C. Uniforms

Finding
Uniforms are essential for recognition of staff by park and forest visitors. Although NPCS polo shirts with logos are worn by some staff, at present no official uniforms are available to NPCS or Forestry Service staff. NPCS uniforms have never been designed; Forestry Service uniforms do exist, but need to be updated.

Uniforms are an important component of park and forest operations, as they facilitate better law enforcement, and help identify the agency(s) to park and forest visitors. Without uniforms, employees currently feel they do not receive the recognition they need to assist visitors.

One Ranger has received uniform catalogs and descriptions from the US Forest Service and US National Park Service in order to help design uniform components.

Recommendations
Design a NPCS uniform, and update the Forestry Service uniform. Using models from other agencies (such as US Forest Service and US National Parks Service) can assist in facilitating the task. Assistance in US Forest Service uniform program advice can be obtained by contacting John Neary (rneary@fs.fed.us; tel: 907-789-6224) or Robert Wetherell (rwetherell@fs.fed.us; tel: 814-728-6159) of this Team at any time. Current USFS uniform catalog is on the CD.

Stakeholder Decisions
The action plan contains steps to design, submit for approval, and purchase uniforms.

D. Security

Finding
Visitors and staff may not feel their personal safety is assured at certain park facilities. Terre Rouge Visitor Center (NPCS) is located in a less affluent neighborhood of Port Louis, and the contract security service appears inadequate. Montvert also has some security concerns that Forestry Service staff feel should be addressed. Visitor security is a very basic need that must be assured in order for agency success to be realized.

Recommendations
A safety/security plan should be completed for any facility where concern has been expressed by staff or visitors. The plan should detail the problems and the remedial actions to be taken, and it should evaluate the success at regular intervals. In some cases it may require structural improvements to gates, fences, parking areas, lighting or controlled entry devices. In other cases, it may require replacing contract workers (such as security guards) who provide inadequate services. Entrance fees should be used to fund necessary safety improvements.

Stakeholder Decisions
The action plan recommends a security plan be implemented at Terre Rouge and Montvert within the next year (no later than Feb 2009).

### E. Community Involvement

**Finding**
Community awareness and involvement in the Terre Rouge Bird Sanctuary is essential to long term sustainability of the estuarine habitat. Community involvement is considered a high priority for Visitor Center staff. Approximately 300 people per week visit the center, but most are students, not tourists. Local fishermen regularly traverse the area as they access their boats or fish for bait. Birding is best at low tides, as the predominant species are waders and shorebirds.

**Recommendations**

**For the facility:**
- The concrete drainage ditch near the parking lot detracts from aesthetic appreciation of the Visitor Center. It collects litter and crossing the ditch involves climbing stairs to a bridge that limits access to those less physically able. Investigate capping the drainage ditch to facilitate easy crossing and to hide the mess.
- A bird viewing blind should be constructed along the pathway.
- Displays in the center need to be more thematic and site-specific.

**For community involvement:**
Overcoming significant issues at the estuary such as pollution will require a long-term perspective. A community involvement and sensitization plan is the best first step to outline goals and objectives. The action plan items mentioned below are a good start to building community pride in the estuary. Facility improvements should help with sensitization efforts, especially if local jobs are created by construction projects.

**Stakeholder Decisions**
• Develop a community involvement plan similar to the sensitization plan template provided in the workshop CD.
• Initiate one community project within 6 months (no later than August 2008) such as a cleaning campaign.
• Plan for a greenway and “health walk” within 12 months (no later than Feb 2009) to promote use of the estuary by community members as a green park.
• In the future, perhaps train local guides to offer tours and involve nearby institutions in projects (such as in financing the greenway).

F. Watchable Wildlife

Finding
Bird viewing blinds at Terre Rouge would help visitors see and appreciate the resident and migrant populations and help build support for conservation. The Lower Gorges Visitor Center staff would like to display captive animals to enhance the visitor experience. Watchable wildlife is a very popular niche market within the ecotourism sector and offers great promise for solidifying support for conservation, when properly managed. It can also degrade the quality of the visitor experience and negatively impact the wildlife, if implemented incorrectly. Some wildlife displays are inappropriate for park settings and are not normally provided on public lands. Wildlife can be difficult to see in the Black River Gorges National Park and in other forested habitat. Mauritius lacks the large game species normally associated with safari experiences in east and southern Africa; most opportunities for wildlife viewing are of birds and reptiles. These experiences are unique considering the amazing local conservation success stories of the endemic Kestrel, Pink Pigeon, Echo Parakeet and Telfair skink that are worth telling to build pride, hope, and support for conservation.

Recommendations
Care should be taken in the design of structures to have them fit the habitat and appear less obtrusive. One source of design ideas for blinds is on the web at:

http://wildlife.state.co.us/NR/rdonlyres/EE092288-68D0-4631-AEFF-FC39400F0C98/0/PhotoAndViewBlindGuidePartOne_Web.pdf or CD

Displays at the Lower Gorges should be cautiously pursued with an emphasis on authenticity and quality. The current displays of parakeet, kestrel, and fruit bat are mere cages without enough room, without enough natural habitat, and without socialization opportunities for the caged specimens. Display improvements should comply with internationally recognized models such as those available for review at the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) web site:

http://www.waza.org/about/index.php?main=about&view=values or CD
Interpretive opportunities should help realize the goals of thematic interpretation to tell the story of these endangered species and to motivate conservation practices.

**Stakeholder Decisions**
- Workshop participants agreed to review designs for bird blinds within 6 months (no later than August 2008) for Terre Rouge.
- Participants will investigate the display of some authentic Mauritian animals at the Lower Gorges. Displays will comply with the WAZA code of ethics and will help interpret themes that promote park management objectives.

### G. Trail Design and Safety

**Findings**
The Team visited the high use Macchabee Trail (14 km from Petrin Information Center to the Lower Gorges Visitor Center) within the Black River Gorges National Park. The trail needs to be reconstructed in several sections where poor design and layout have diminished the attractiveness and function. The trail was originally used by a hunting concession for vehicular access, and does not adequately accommodate current walking traffic. Many sections of both the tracks and trails on this route direct water to flow along the walking surface and do not use principles of sustainable trail design. Sheet flows of water across the trail would better limit erosion.

The first section of trail starts at the Petrin Information Center and ends at Black River Overlook. This section is considered a ‘track’ due to its width and access by vehicle for administrative purposes. The track surface is native compacted volcanic material that is friable (crumbly) and appears to wash away fairly easily. The Team was advised that maintenance is scheduled on an annual basis on this section of the route, but is sometimes not carried out. However, without consistent use of drainage structures, a crowned prism profile, and avoidance of grades over 15%, the track will continue to see heavy erosion and sedimentation. This section of Macchabee Trail is easy to follow, but cannot be considered sustainable due to its propensity to wash and move sediment, and collect standing water.

The Calophanes track is an alternative route that branches off the first section of the Macchabee route early on, then parallels the track on the Gorges side of the ridge. It eventually descends the ridge and meets the middle section of the Macchabee Trail. The Team did not walk this upper section, but it appears there is an opportunity to connect the Calophanes track to the upper Macchabee track if a short connector is built just prior to descending the middle section. This would...
create a series of loop trail possibilities that do not require severe slope ascent and descent.

The middle section starts at the Macchabee Viewpoint and descends along grades between 60%-85% along a series of very dangerous stairs. The trail location is directly along the fall line and appears to be the straightest route between the overlook and the lower track below. The trail is narrow and the stairs, which were constructed in 2000, have lost the top riser timbers revealing 25 mm rebar that are exposed for their last 10-25 cm. The exposed rebar pose a very serious safety issue to hikers who may trip, fall down the over steepened slope, and impale themselves. It was apparent through direct observations made by the Team that many people avoid using the dangerous stairs where possible, walking next to the steps instead. (See Figure 8.) Walking through the bush is nearly impossible due to the dense growth of Chinese Guava.

The lowest section of track starts at the bottom of the stairs, traverses Black River at the base of the slope, and continues to the Lower Gorges Visitor Center. This section of track has heavier erosion along the centerline and approaches 1 meter in depth at one point. Less of this track is located along the fall line, but outslope or drainage structures are missing in portions of the track located on full bench profiles. The Team did not have time to survey the possibilities for rerouting this track to a more sustainable location, but this could result in lower maintenance costs and a more attractive route for hikers, if properly constructed. In fact, given the demand for mountain biking opportunities in the park, the existing Calophanes to lower Gorges track could easily be converted to a mountain bike route while directing hikers to a newer route along the Grandes Gorges River or another valley that optimizes sustainable trail concepts.

**Recommendations**
Recommendations for this route should initially include basin-wide planning for the types of opportunities that should be offered. Existing users include casual hikers, Grand Bassin Pilgrims, and administrators in vehicles. Mountain bikers could be added along this route. Reroutes of existing trails should be considered to accommodate the differing user expectations. For example, it is generally better to separate mountain bikers and hikers wherever possible to avoid collisions, and it is better to separate motorized vehicles from all others by severely restricting vehicular access.

Once decisions are made about where to generally locate the differing types of tracks and trails, specific recommendations along the existing route include the following:

- Re-grade the prism of most tracks to crown the track surface
- Construct ditches where necessary to facilitate drainage of surface water, and reroute areas that exceed 15% gradient. If rerouting the track is not possible, installation of grade dips in steeper sections is an acceptable alternative.

Rerouting of the trail from the Macchabee View Point to the lower trail (i.e. the stairs) is essential for safety as well as sustainability. The reroute should follow the principles of sustainable trail design by following the contours and using full bench construction techniques and the installation of switch backs. A connector trail could also be considered from the Macchabee View Point to the Calophanes trail to create a loop opportunity without a steep descent. Mountain biking opportunities could be considered for the Calophanes to lower Gorges route. The lower section of this route needs the same reconstruction techniques described for the first track. In addition, the Black River is crossed two times and neither of the current locations appears able to support a constructed crossing such as a bridge without a significant investment.
It is the Team’s recommendation to look for alternative crossing locations with more bank
stability where constructed crossings could be installed. It is possible that there is a nearby
location which is not easily accessed by a track, but would be very suitable for a trail reroute.
Alternatively, provide the track to stable control points along the river course and reconstruct the
crossings when a significant storm event rearranges the riverbed.

Sustainable Mountain Trails Sketchbook National Park Service 2007 and the DVD Building
Mountain Bike Trails: Sustainable Singletrack (0623–2D01–MTDC).

The most current information about projects and publications completed by both US Forest
Service Technology & Development Centers is available at http://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/ (username:
t-d, password t-d). Then look for T&D Pubs/Recreation.

Stakeholders Decisions
During the workshop the participants agreed to identify training materials within one month (no
later than March 2008) for a trail survey training to be conducted within 6 months (no later than
August 2008). Within 12 months (no later than Feb 2009) the trail itself should be surveyed.
Within 24 months (Feb 2010) survey information should be used to create a redesign of the
entire trail with an emphasis on the stairs below the Black River Viewpoint as a priority.

H. Trail Assessment Inventory

Findings
It is apparent to the Team that there are very basic needs for trail construction, maintenance, and
operations. NPCS and Forestry Service staff do not know the basic steps for surveying trails, nor
have the proper tools to do so.

Recommendations
A simple course to teach the basic skills of horizontal and vertical traverse survey techniques is a
must. The principles of stationing, use of Suunto clinometer and compass, and proper survey
note taking are essential. The relocation of the Macchabee Trail would be an excellent teaching
example while accomplishing much needed work.

Trail survey tools are available from Forestry Suppliers. Suunto clinometers (percent and degree
or CD

Stakeholders Decisions
During the workshop, the participants agreed to identify and acquire training materials within
one month (no later than March 2008) for a trail survey training to be conducted within 6 months
(no later than August 2008).
I. Alexandra Falls Overlook

Findings
During our visit to Alexandra Falls, we understood from our guide that many improvements had been made to this viewpoint in the recent past. Evident were a large parking area, extensive rock paved trails, a new bridge over a small creek, and a new barrier wall adjacent to the slope above the falls. Unfortunately, the new barrier wall was designed in such a way that visitors to the falls must stand on top of it to get a glimpse of the attraction. Vegetation has also not been maintained to ensure a view. We inquired the reason behind designing a viewing area that didn’t provide a view of the main attraction and were told that the project was handed off to engineering staff and this was the result. Their feelings of powerlessness were evident. Panoramic views of the landscape including seaside, mountains, and towns in the valley below were unobstructed for the most part, but were certainly enhanced by standing on the barrier wall. Alexandra Falls is completely hidden from view unless standing atop the barrier wall.

Recommendations
Redesign of this site is necessary to ensure visitor safety and satisfaction. An elevated viewing platform seems the most logical solution; however there may be an opportunity for a full bench trail below the barrier wall that would provide a more dramatic view of the falls as well as an opportunity for an additional walking trail based on a stacked loop trail design.

Stakeholders Decisions
During the Action Plan, participants decided it would be beneficial to invite the Minister of Tourism for a site visit to discuss the needs of visitors and the outstanding attributes of this site. Participants also agreed that within one month (no later than March 2008) NPCS will make an utmost effort to ensure that a visit by the Minister of Tourism occurs, and that the tendering of a proposal to design the elevated viewing deck with the appropriate engineer take place. Additionally, it was agreed that by month 6 (no later than August 2008) the deck design will be completed and by month 12 (no later than Feb 2009) the new deck will be constructed.

J. Marketing

Findings
Very little public information could be found about National Parks or Forestry facilities and offerings. A very limited web presence, little public distribution of promotional brochures, and limited tour operator acknowledgement of opportunities exist currently. Promotion of
opportunities seems to be exclusively by word of mouth and some exposure by MBC Television and radio.

**Recommendations**
Web presence is a must, as the Team’s past experience indicates that this media will reach the most people for the least cost. Education of potential visitors about the many conservation success stories and the incredibly rich cultural history will stimulate visitors interested in ecotourism to visit Mauritius and its natural inland wonders. Caution must be exercised about the timing of the ‘go live’ date of the website and the readiness of facilities to accept new visitors. To retain customers for repeat visits, adequate signage, upgrades of key facilities, and other visitor comfort and satisfaction issues will need remedy. Promotional literature or brochures could be developed in cooperation with the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Agency to help further this effort.

**Stakeholders Decisions**
Within one month (no later than March 2008) the participants agreed to initiate the development of a unifying theme to be used in a brochure design. Within 6 months (no later than August 2008) this unifying design element will be further developed into a theme and be used for the production of brochures for Macchabee and Monvert Trails.

### K. Directional Signage

**Findings**
The Team discovered that directional signage was lacking at critical places at most of the sites visited. Visitors are also confused by the different combinations of sign materials and placement. According to staff, vandalism seems to play a part in the challenge of maintaining signs on high-use trails. To deter theft, a number of different things have been tried including painted rocks, concrete, and sign placement high up on posts and in trees out of reach of vandals.

**Recommendations**
Of critical importance to visitors is the feeling of safety and security. Without consistent signage visitors will lose their sense of security and may possibly become lost, resulting in a bad experience. Consistency in the sign program can be very effective at ensuring visitor satisfaction. A ‘Family of Signs’ is a good approach to unifying not only directional/informational signage but possibly interpretive/educational signage, too. Within the Family of Signs a design theme usually based on color and shape is developed to provide instant recognition by the visitor. These design elements become part of the visual ‘brand’ associated with the facility and visitors begin a subconscious search for the next sign in order to find their way and obtain reassurance that they are not lost.

One good example used locally is the “waymarking” concept utilized along the Grand Randonnee trails located on Reunion Island. Waymarking utilizes the ‘family of signs’ approach by

![Figure 10-Different styles of signage are confusing to the visitor](image_url)
including same shaped and colored blazes for individual trails. Usually trails of similar difficulty are linked in this way.

Also recommended is the development of a sign plan. Sign plans ensure that all signs are located in the proper place and are located consistently throughout the facility so that visitors come to expect certain signs at certain places which, again, provide reassurance to visitors who are in unfamiliar territory.


**Stakeholders Decisions**
Participants agreed that the first step in the development of improved signage would be a meeting with the Ministry of Tourism to coordinate efforts. This meeting should happen within one month’s time (before the end of March 2008). Within 6 months (no later than August 2008) the family of signs design should be completed. No discussion took place regarding the sign plan, but it seems logical that this could be completed within the same amount of time, or very shortly after, reaching agreement of the composition of the family signs.

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**L. Entrance Fees**

**Findings**
Entrance fees are controversial no matter where they are proposed. Staff seem very concerned over the acceptance of fees by both the public and the Mauritian political structure. The recent success of the Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden fee model is encouraging. Administered by an Administrative Advisory Board represented by several Ministries and private sector interests, this model seems diverse enough that widespread buy-in by the Mauritian political structure and the public has been successful; albeit with some initial protest. The SSRBG model also has a sliding scale of fees that allows Mauritians to visit the garden for a reduced rate and allows all to visit the garden free of charge on Sundays. Overall support of entrance fees by staff is very high and is considered necessary.

In the case of national parks and forests, concerns exist about how to control access and ensure payment at individual sites. Specifically, certain NPCS and Forestry Service staff expressed the idea that fees need to be charged for all facilities to be successful. The Team suggested, instead, that fees may only need to be charged at highly developed or often used sites, and/or where access could be easily controlled, and that fees may not be physically possible to implement at all sites. Well into our mission, the Team was able to determine that a fee proposal by NPCS (very similar to the Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden model) had already been tendered and rejected by an advisory board. Significant thought about where, how much, and when to charge has already been given to this task.

**Recommendations**
The Team felt that a number of lessons could be learned from the fee collection program initiated at Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden. This model seems logical and is already proven in both the public and political environment. We recommend that fees be imposed only in those places where guide services are offered or significant improvements have been made and that at a minimum, restroom facilities, off street parking, and litter collection be provided at fee collection

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*A New Vision for Sustainable Ecotourism in Mauritius*
sites. Alternatively, fees could also be justified where services above the normal expectations are offered, such as guided walks. Sites not meeting these minimum requirements should be free of charge given the minimum investment made by the Government. The idea of a fee free day may also be useful in attracting Mauritians to facilities, and thought should be given to using this approach, and whether to make it a weekly, monthly, or semi-annual event. The fact that fee collection met with failure at the Ministerial level in a previous attempt should not dissuade staff from another attempt. This failure may have simply been bad timing. Now that the SSRBG model has some support, the time may be ripe for another attempt by NPCs and Forestry Service to initiate a fee proposal (see also Cross Cutting Issue – Funding)

**Stakeholders Decisions**
Staff agreed to resurrect the previous proposal for fee implementation and to resubmit it to the Wildlife and Parks Advisory Council for further consideration within one month (no later than March 2008). Within 6 months (no later than August 2008) it is hoped that the proposal will be accepted for implementation by the Minister of Agro-Industry and Fisheries. By month 12 (Feb 2009) gates should be installed at control points and fee collection should begin.

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**M. Maintenance of Tracks, Trails and Lookouts**

**Findings**
Maintenance of facilities is of utmost concern among members of the public, US Embassy staff, and tour operators we interviewed. Although not large in number, the interviewees provided the information voluntarily and without prompting. To a person, all thought the facilities (in particular, trails) could be better maintained. Trail tread and sign maintenance were the two user satisfaction issues that were specifically cited. The Team noticed the same problems when hiking the Macchabee Trail, as well as the trails on Flat and Gabriel Islands. Vandalism, poor trail location, and poor lines of communication with internal customers exacerbate customer satisfaction issues. It is unclear to the Team why all maintenance of tracks and trails is contracted out and why some of the more easily accomplished tasks like drainage structure clearing, sign replacement, and litter pickup are not accomplished by the APR’s. The recognition of the need for facility operation and maintenance plans was minimal until discussed in the course of the USFS workshop.

**Recommendations**
It seems as though the daily issues of a clogged drainage feature, a tree across a trail, or litter pickup along the trail could easily be taken care of by an APR on patrol. This small amount of preventive maintenance can save money with the larger contracts and immediately increase user safety and satisfaction.

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**N. State of Petrin Information Center**

**Findings:**
This facility’s function as an information center is severely limited by its size, interior flow, composition of visitor information on display, and lack of a proper parking area. No signs are located along the road leading to the Information Center indicating its existence and location. The building itself has a placard above the door proclaiming the site. Restrooms are not visible
from the parking area, and no signage visible from the parking area exists to point visitors to them. Visitors commonly arrive by car or bus to the small and somewhat hard to navigate front parking area. Alternatively, visitors can park on the side of the building near the shelter for access to the Macchabee Trail, but there is no road-visible signage indicating that parking is available. At the Information Center, visitors are warmly greeted by a helpful Ranger or APR, where they are engaged in conversation at a small desk adjacent to the door. The conversation often begins by the visitor asking “What can I do in the Park?” followed by the Ranger’s question: “How much time do you have?” At this point, the discussion can revolve around pointing to a park map or some discussion about the displays in the visitor area. There are no chairs for the visitor to sit in and discuss recreation opportunities with the staff. The long and somewhat narrow visitor area displays a thematically disparate display of faded pictures and captions that are only minimally interesting and do not pass the ‘So what?’ test. No particular attention is paid to the logical flow of the display, nor is there an underlying theme related to conservation or recreation. The information presented is scientific with limited ability to engage most users. The Team understands that major renovations and new construction on the site will occur in the near future. Upgrades to the toilet and the existing building will be made, and the information center will move into a new building; the current structure will become a Visitors’ Center.

Recommendations
Clearly signing the approach to the Information Center will give visitors time to slow down and negotiate the parking area. Posting ‘Macchabee Trailhead Parking’ signs for the side parking area within site distance of the road would be helpful to those only wanting to walk the trail, and would give them the option of choosing to talk with someone inside the building, or not. Within the parking areas, signing the way to the restroom would be good customer service and appreciated by those only stopping for a rest break. Visitor handling should continue in the warm and friendly Mauritian fashion but the addition of a uniform and a Customer Service Strategy would be complementary. Better use of the existing display could be accomplished through rearranging panels to tell more of a story, but this suggestion should only be used for the short term. In the long term new, professionally designed displays will need to be designed for the new Visitor Center to be built within the next 2-3 years. Care should be given to the layout of any exhibit area to ensure that visitor flow is logical, comfort facilities are obvious, and that displays are readily accessed by people of all ages and physical condition. Given the amount of time that it takes to design and fabricate high quality interpretive displays, the Team suggests starting this task in the near future to ensure its completion before the new building is finished. This task should be integrated with the architectural design of the building to ensure an efficient use of space and minimize cost.

Stakeholders Decisions
Staff agreed to submit a budget request within one month (no later than March 2008) for the next annual budget cycle to upgrade the existing Information Center (Phase II). Within 6 months (no later than August 2008) building and site design will be initiated for the proposed new Visitor Center. Also, within 6 months, Phase I of the Information Center upgrade will occur. Within 12 months (Feb 2009) the design work on the new Visitor Center will be complete as will the Phase I upgrade project for the Information Center. Within 24 months (Feb 2010) construction should be complete on the new Visitor Center.

O. State of BRGVC

Findings
The Lower Gorges Visitor Center suffers from some of the same visitor information problems as Petrin Information Center. Theme based displays are absent. Currently, the Visitor Center offers a collection of photos with captions (similar to Petrin) newer text intensive scientific posters, an interesting 3D display of the park topography, a specimen display about geology, a collection of live threatened species including a fruit bat, echo parakeet, and pink pigeon, and a diorama and fountain display that both appear to be abandoned. The Team understands that some interpretive displays are already being produced for the Visitor Center. It was unclear what themes are addressed or how extensive the display redesign will be. BRGVC differs from Petrin in that the display area is larger, circulation is much better, toilets are easily accessible, and the parking area is much larger. One troubling issue is the large gaps in the concrete pavers that compose the walkway leading to the main entrance. These gaps are greater than the 12mm standard used in the US to ensure accessibility by people with limited motion. Gaps wider than 12mm can be a tripping or stumbling hazard or catch a cane tip causing a fall. Additionally, the raised curbing and walkway paving used throughout many recreation facilities within public lands on Mauritius could create a hazard due to the approximate 25cm elevation above the surrounding ground. Signage was missing or not visible to lead visitors to the Macchabee Trail. The live displays of the birds and a bat can be interesting, but seem less than desirable for the animals in their current state. Little effort has been made to provide the animals with a more natural appearing and appealing habitat. Compounding this problem is the lack of quality interpretive or educational material about the animals’ incredible recovery from the brink of extinction. Scientific material inside the building explains some of this recovery but in a very detached and scientific way that is not engaging to the visitor. The end result is sad looking animals in substandard confines. Infrastructure issues appear to be a major concern and impact the
operation of the facility dramatically. Water leaks in the roof have created structural and electrical problems causing the electricity to be turned off most of the time. Basic visitor safety and comfort will continue to be affected until these issues are remedied. Front desk staff presence at this facility was non-existent the day of the Team’s visit to the site. As our arrival was expected, we were met warmly by the Ranger and his staff when we entered the front door; however, the Team never did encounter a staff person at the semicircular desk near the front door where it seems obvious that one would be posted to greet unannounced visitors.

**Recommendations**

Priority must be given to the infrastructure needs at this facility. Without the basics of good shelter and electricity, it will be hard to meet basic customer satisfaction. In the short term, filling of the gaps in the pavement on the entrance walkway should be undertaken to alleviate the tripping hazard. Long term consideration should be given to eliminating the use of elevated walkways and redesigning trails that are flush with the surrounding landscape. Not only does this make the trails safer by eliminating the unnecessary drop off, but it allows the trail to recede into the landscape and become less of a dominate form, thereby highlighting the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape. A professional redesign of the displays inside the building is essential. Consideration should be given to contracting this task with a firm that specializes in natural resource interpretation. In the US, a professionally designed display to fill an area the size of BRGVC would cost about 8-10,000,000 rs. Some cost savings may be realized by designing and fabricating the displays at Petrin and the Lower Gorges sites simultaneously. There will likely be challenges integrating the display redesign already under contract with any future displays if a theme based approach is not taken.

A complete redesign of the habitat for the live specimens should be undertaken to bring them up to internationally recognized standards. The quality of attention to this habitat should be equal to the quality of care given to rescue these species from the brink of extinction; they deserve no less. Directional signage around the sites should orient and inform the visitor to what lies beyond the interior of the Visitor Center. Signage indicating the Macchabee Trail and other highlights within, or leading from, the property should be developed and installed.

**Stakeholders Decisions**

Within one month (no later than March 2008) staff agreed to contact the Minister of Public Infrastructure for a proposal to reconstruct the roof and fix the electrical and infrastructure problems. Also within one month, it was agreed to identify additional information display needs that are not covered by the current proposal. Within 6 months (no later than August 2008) a request to fund the roof and infrastructure projects should be made, and the new information displays (currently under contract) installed. Within 12 months (by Feb 2009) the infrastructure project will be under construction and the funding proposal for the new displays tendered.

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**P. Customer Service Strategy**

**Findings**

Mauritians are wonderful ambassadors of hospitality with a very gracious and giving spirit. Some attention to the finer points of customer service is needed, however. The basics of “comfort, direct, and inform the visitor” were discussed at the workshop, and a short customer service training was conducted. Currently lacking is an organized approach to customer service,
which is commonly called a customer service strategy. Personnel are typically science-centric, and not used to providing for “lay” customers needs. Most NPCS and Forestry Staff are very comfortable answering science-based questions, but few have the kind of training or knowledge necessary to provide a visitor all the basics; especially when the visitor does not know to ask the right questions.

**Recommendations**
Initiate customer service training with all personnel sensitizing them to the needs of both the internal and external customer. Develop a customer service strategy that outlines how customer interaction is to take place. Review US DOI Park Service survey methodology (Visitor Services Project) for possible adoption see: [http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.htm](http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.htm) or CD.

**References:**
[http://www.infosurv.com/customer-feedback-survey.htm](http://www.infosurv.com/customer-feedback-survey.htm) or CD
[http://www.surveymonkey.com/](http://www.surveymonkey.com/) or CD

**Stakeholders Decisions**
Within one month (no later than March 2008) review this USFS Trip Report for examples of other customer service strategies and customer feedback tools. By month 6 (no later than August 2008) develop and implement a customer service policy service-wide.

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**Q. Hawkers**

**Findings**
Hawkers have become a problem at government facilities due to conflicting permitting responsibilities and the ability of some to bypass normal applications procedures by going straight to the Ministerial level for a permit. These actions have resulted in poor customer service, overcrowding at some facilities, sales of inappropriate items, and impacts to natural ecosystems. The multi-jurisdictional nature of permit allocation by the first party, permit administration by the second party, and land management by a third party make it nearly impossible to be a good employer, meet customer expectations, or be a steward to the land. To some extent, the public will associate any hawker on Government property as being an extension of the Ministry responsible for its management. For that reason alone it is important that hawkers be controlled and managed as concessionaires providing services to visitors that otherwise would not be provided. Through discussion with NPCS and Forestry Service staff, it was evident fundamental changes to national policy/laws governing the management of MOA lands were needed to clarify the issuance and monitoring of hawker permits.

**Recommendations**
The Team recommends that permit allocation and administration be handled within one Ministry. Once administrative functions have been consolidated changes to national policy/laws are needed. The Team has provided MOA staff with a portion of the US Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) which provides the basis for the management of concessionaires on US Park Service and US Forest Service lands. The Team also recommends that fees be charged to permittees for the use of government lands for profit. Permits should be provisional on the good
service provided to the customer, and revocable if standards are not met. See US Code of Federal Regulations example Title 36CFR Chapter 1 Part 51 on reference CD.

**Stakeholders Decisions**
Within one month (no later than March 2008) determine if US CFR’s provide a basis of law appropriate for use on Mauritius. Also, determine items to be sold and appropriate locations for hawkers to sell their goods. Within 6 months (no later than August 2008) legislation should be passed and enforced, and the designs for the hawkers stands should be completed. By month 12 (February 2009) construct new facilities and start compliance checks on permitees.

**VIII. Next Steps**

Next Steps are outlined in the Action Plan below, and include priorities for the following time-frames: 1-month, 6-month, 12-month, and 24-months and beyond. Additionally, potential future involvement for USFS in Mauritius is illustrated in the Action Plan.

**IX. Conclusion**

The Action Plan below is a crucial tool to be used toward achieving sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius. It is important that a Point Person(s) be identified by the Director of DNCN to follow up on the achievement of goals set by workshop participants for the activities prioritized in the Action Plan.

Additionally, the following bullets are important “take-away points” from the mission, which the USFS team deems crucial to the advancement of sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius. In order for sustainable ecotourism to be achieved, the team believes these following points must be held as common priorities across institutions in Mauritius working to attract ecotourists and to conserve biodiversity in the country. The USFS Team encourages NPCS and Forestry Staff to employee these concepts frequently and to share them with the public:

- Sustainable ecotourism is tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.

- There are a number of good examples of sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius: Blue Bay, Isle Aux Aigrettes, Sir S. Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, Valley Ferney.

- It is crucial that sustainable ecotourism be applied to parks and conservation areas in Mauritius so that nature, culture, & community can all benefit today and in the future.

- It is critical to prioritize sustainable ecotourism, when working toward the goal of 2 million visitors by 2015, and moving beyond the image of “Sun, Sand, and Sea.” If “tourism” is approached purely with a business model in mind (creation of golf courses, hotels, cable cars through forested areas, heavy beach use) it can result in the degradation
of parks and other natural spaces. However, balancing tourist influx with conservation objectives—true sustainable ecotourism—can serve to enhance park integrity and other conservation efforts.

- In order for parks and nature reserve areas to be sustainable, there must be a source of sustainable funding. This might stem from a variety of sources:
  - Entrance fees
  - Private investment/ sponsorships
  - The Conservation Fund

- Mauritius has a tremendous number of Conservation Success Stories; it is important to get this message out to the ecotourism niche market as well as residents. Examples include:
  - Pink pigeon
  - Echo parakeet
  - Kestrel

- A current challenge to sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius is the need for collaboration between different institutions (services, departments, ministries.) We suggest that an intra-institutional approach be taken in ecotourism areas where various stakeholders have interests.

X. Action Plan

The Action Plan below is a product of the USFS-led workshop: A New Vision for Sustainable Ecotourism in Mauritius. The Action Plan was a collaborative effort of all workshop participants, and action items outlined below indicate participants’ goals and commitments for the next 24 months on issues they classify as priorities for conservation and sustainable ecotourism in Mauritius.

The USFS Team emphasizes the importance of identifying a “Point Person” to follow up on the progress of goal achievement, and in monitoring the timeframes indicated in the Action Plan for specific activities. We implore the Director of NPCS to name a Point Person (or to delegate specific broad tasks to 2 or 3 Point Persons) for Action Plan follow-up. We suggest the Point Person prepare an annual accomplishment report detailing achieved and ongoing activities.

The USFS Team also recommends that the Action Plan be incorporated into NPCS’s Programme of Work 2008-2009, and the Action Plan priorities extending beyond 2009 be incorporated into future years’ Programme of Work for NPCS. The Action Plan and Point Person’s “Action Plan Annual Report” can provide great assistance and programme and budget monitoring, and in planning for future NPCS activities.

The USFS Team hopes to be informed of the Director’s choice for the Action Plan Point Person(s), so that we might continue to liaise with him/her, as appropriate, and provide additional technical assistance when possible. The USFS Team respectfully requests that the Director consider Mr. Vinehswar Sharma (Suraj) GOPAL as the Action Plan Point Person, as
Mr. GOPAL was extremely instrumental in liaising with the USFS Team before arrival, preparing for the mission, and participating in and leading many workshop activities; Mr. GOPAL has an intimate understanding of the Action Plan objectives and principal stakeholders. The USFS Team respectfully requests that Mr. Vedvyass Doobay (Syam) MUDHOO support Mr. GOPAL as Action Plan “Point Person,” as necessary. Mr. MUDHOO was also very instrumental in the logistics of the workshop, and has an in-depth understanding of the priorities outlined in the Action Plan.
# Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Service P=Parks F=Forestry</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
<th>1 Month Action Items</th>
<th>6 Month Action Items</th>
<th>12 Month Action Items</th>
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<th>Potential future involvement for USFS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Better trained staff, training schedule, train-the-trainer sessions</td>
<td>Director of NPCS establishes priority needs and identifies resources.</td>
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<td>USFS expert(s) spend 2-3 week mission in Mauritius conducting hands-on trail construction/maintenance training with P/F staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Training</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Staff receives hands-on training in designing tracks and trails</td>
<td>Review trail design DVD and self-train staff, learn how to use survey tools, buy training materials/survey tools</td>
<td>Apply learned info to Macchabee Trail/Powder Mills Trail</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>Active exchange with other foreign parks and forestry services</td>
<td>Establish contact with park managers in Reunion, Madagascar, and other Indian Ocean countries</td>
<td>Have at least one exchange take place</td>
<td>Evaluate exchange program and adjust</td>
<td>Annually explore opportunities for exchange program. Work with Lauren Chitty for possibilities in US.</td>
<td>USFS facilitates exchange(s) with USFS and other US land management agencies that have recreation expertise. USFS also co-sponsors several international seminars that Mauritian partners might attend. Contact Lauren Chitty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trail design and safety</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Redesign Macchabee Trail with sustainable design principles using reroutes to eliminate steep sections with hazards</td>
<td>Identify training materials to teach staff trail surveying techniques. See USFS Trail Maintenance Handbook</td>
<td>Conduct survey training</td>
<td>Survey existing route</td>
<td>Apply learned info to Macchabee Trail; Use as case study for sustainable trail design by evaluating success and customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Included in USFS 2-3 week mission in trail design/construction/maintenance (see above)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Design Powder Mills Trail using sustainable design principles</td>
<td>Survey existing route</td>
<td>Apply learned info to Trail; Use as case study for sustainable trail design</td>
<td>Evaluate success of redesign - sustainability and customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Reevaluate success; start applying techniques on other trails</td>
<td>Included in USFS 2-3 week mission in trail design/construction/maintenance (see above)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrolling</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Better patrol schedule within the park</td>
<td>Rangers plan and initiate a proper schedule (including after hours patrols) to improve patrol zones and coverage</td>
<td>Evaluate effectiveness of schedule changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Better involve community in Rivulet Terre Rouge Bird Sanctuary</td>
<td>Develop a community project. Develop community involvement plan (review sensitization plan template from this report)</td>
<td>Initiate one project with help of community</td>
<td>Open Day for community; initiate cleaning campaign within community and TRBS, develop greenway and 'Health Walk'</td>
<td>Offer guide training to involve local community, and involve nearby institutions in projects</td>
<td>USFS Landscape Architect provides site design assistance at RTRBS to include greenway, better overall access, viewing decks, and other refinements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trail assessment inventory</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Learn how to conduct trail inventory and assess all trails</td>
<td>Identify training materials to teach staff to inventory trails</td>
<td>Conduct inventory training</td>
<td>Conduct trail inventory on high use trails</td>
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*A New Vision for Sustainable Ecotourism in Mauritius*
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenic Overlooks</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Develop elevated viewing area at Alexandra Falls (can't see waterfall)</td>
<td>Develop proposal to redesign deck; Initiate site visit with Minister of Tourism</td>
<td>Design deck</td>
<td>Construct viewing area</td>
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<td>USFS Landscape Architect provides design assistance to NPCS professionals for an elevated viewing area</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Gorges VP; Redesign</td>
<td>Finalize proposal</td>
<td>Submit for engineering review</td>
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<td>USFS Landscape Architect provides design assistance to NPCS professionals for Gorges VP (parking, toilets, picnic areas) redesign</td>
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## Issue

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<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Develop designs for brochures and website; Produce brochure and place at high tourist traffic areas; Develop high quality website for ecotourism activities</td>
<td>Initiate unifying design element for brochures and website (suggest cooperation with Ministry of Tourism to develop unifying themes)</td>
<td>Develop unifying design element for brochures and website</td>
<td>Develop individual trail brochures for P=Macchabee Trail; F=Monvert; Website 'go live'</td>
<td>USFS experts assist Mauritian counterparts in developing interpretive media (brochures). Website content assistance and site development by USFS or others through contract (RFQ and contract examples available from Robert Wetherell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directional signage</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Attract and direct visitors to National Park and Forestry facilities with adequate and appropriate signage</td>
<td>Initiate 'Family of Signs' design with Minister of Tourism and Minister Agro Ind and Fisheries</td>
<td>Complete 'Family of Signs' design by agreeing on composition</td>
<td>Use the Grand Randonnee example at Reunion as a model. Uniformity is key across all facilities.</td>
<td>USFS experts assist in developing 'Family of Signs'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entrance fees</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Entrance fees collected at all appropriate facilities (similar to existing Pamplamousses fees)</td>
<td>Plan in place. Chairman of Wildlife and Parks Advisory Council to make a recommendation to Minister of Agro Ind and Fisheries to initiate fees</td>
<td>Vette proposal by Minister of Agro Ind. And Fisheries</td>
<td>Construct gate posts at selected sites and initiate fee collection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Initiate action for fee collection at Monvert</td>
<td>Determine modality of fee structure</td>
<td>Initiate fee collection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Fees are returned to park or forest of origin</td>
<td>Propose to return fees to their park/refuge of origin similar to American model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of funding</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Increase funding from private sources</td>
<td>Contact additional sponsors for individual projects.</td>
<td>Agree on project for sponsorship/design</td>
<td>Initiate at least one sponsored project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance of Tracks, Trails and Lookouts</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Improve visitor safety and experience</td>
<td>Complete Maintenance and Operations plan for Tracks, Trails and Lookouts</td>
<td>USFS experts work with Mauritian counterparts to complete Maintenance and Operations plan for Tracks, Trails &amp; Lookouts</td>
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<tr>
<td>State of Petrin Info Center</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>New Petrin Visitor Center</td>
<td>Initiate design of new Visitor Center and site plan</td>
<td>Finalize design of facility and site plan</td>
<td>Problems fixed with Displays, Toilets; staffing shortage</td>
<td>USFS experts work with Mauritian counterparts to design new Petrin Visitor Center and site plan.</td>
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</table>

Upgrade existing Info Center | Submit new proposal for next budget (June 2009) | Implement newly funded proposal (July 2008) | Complete upgrade | | |

_A New Vision for Sustainable Ecotourism in Mauritius_

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State of BRGVC Info Center</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Repair roof, electric and infrastructure problems</td>
<td>Contact Ministry of Public Infrastructure for proposal and cost estimate</td>
<td>Request funding for proposal</td>
<td>Initiate construction project</td>
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<td>Upgrade visitor information displays</td>
<td>Identify needs and coordinate with previously produced displays</td>
<td>Install previously produced displays</td>
<td>Secure funding for new displays</td>
<td>Install new displays</td>
<td>USFS experts work with Mauritian counterparts to upgrade visitor information displays.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workforce communication difficulties</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Install radio system</td>
<td>Contact communication companies to provide info to better improve communication</td>
<td>Initiate communication plan</td>
<td>Initiate improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Improve visitor and staff security at Monvert and Terre Rouge</td>
<td>Develop security plan for facilities, staff, and visitors</td>
<td>Tender proposal for improvements</td>
<td>Complete improvements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife viewing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Create watchable wildlife viewing areas</td>
<td>USFS to provide link to information on bird viewing blinds</td>
<td>Review bird viewing blind options for Terre Rouge</td>
<td></td>
<td>USFS experts assist Mauritian counterparts in planning &amp; developing watchable wildlife viewing areas</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Desired Outcome</td>
<td>1 Month Action Items</td>
<td>6 Month Action Items</td>
<td>12 Month Action Items</td>
<td>24 (or more) Month Action Items</td>
<td>Potential future involvement for USFS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniforms</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>New uniform</td>
<td>Design uniform</td>
<td>Submit design for approval</td>
<td>Purchase and implement</td>
<td></td>
<td>USFS can assist NPCS remotely with uniform design. Contact John Neary or Robert Wetherell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Updated uniform</td>
<td></td>
<td>Submit design for approval</td>
<td>Purchase and implement</td>
<td></td>
<td>USFS can assist Forestry Service remotely with updating uniform. Contact John Neary or Robert Wetherell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Strategy</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Better customer service</td>
<td>Review trip report for source information and examples of customer service strategy and feedback methods</td>
<td>Adapt and apply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USFS assists with customer service training. This could be done during a mission in Mauritius, and/or as part of an exchange in US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration between services</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td>Strengthen collaboration</td>
<td>Seek opportunities to collaborate on items within Action Plan</td>
<td>Take advantage of opportunities to host trainings or other group activities</td>
<td>Evaluate Action Plan and amend as necessary</td>
<td>Evaluate Action Plan and amend as necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Service P=Parks F=Forestry</td>
<td>Desired Outcome</td>
<td>1 Month Action Items</td>
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<td>24 (or more) Month Action Items</td>
<td>Potential future involvement for USFS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkers</td>
<td>P/F</td>
<td><em>Control existing problems to provide better customer service</em></td>
<td>Add language to new legislation to limit hawkers; Initiate policy to review items sold, Determine if American CFRs contain applicable language</td>
<td>Implement and enforce new legislation and policy</td>
<td>Evaluate permits for compliance and enforce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Have appropriate facilities for hawkers</em></td>
<td>Determine appropriate location for hawkers</td>
<td>Design facilities for hawkers</td>
<td>Construct facilities</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 1 - Key Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
<th>Tel No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>Uma (Mrs)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Arvin</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>cell: (230) 759-1341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2 - Workshop Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
<th>Tel No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALETTE</td>
<td>Marie Mario</td>
<td>Park Ranger</td>
<td>National Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
<td><a href="mailto:npcs@mail.gov.mu">npcs@mail.gov.mu</a></td>
<td>2580058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Forestry Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>6707274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEETUN</td>
<td>Ravindra Dharma</td>
<td>Assistant Park Ranger</td>
<td>National Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>4644016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOBIN</td>
<td>Mahandra</td>
<td>Assistant Park Ranger</td>
<td>National Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>4644053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOPAL</td>
<td>Vinehswar Sharma</td>
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<td>7191262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEMRAGE</td>
<td>Navin</td>
<td>Assistant Park Ranger</td>
<td>National Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>7575544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEETUN</td>
<td>Feroze Mohummud Ally</td>
<td>Assistant Park Ranger</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:j_feco@yahoo.com">j_feco@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>4644053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUMOORTY</td>
<td>M. Rafick</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEONCE</td>
<td>Denis Claude Sylvain</td>
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<td>9176721</td>
</tr>
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<td>2036200</td>
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<tr>
<td>MATADEEN</td>
<td>Sunil Duth</td>
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<td>National Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
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<td>7942204</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOOLEE</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Park Ranger</td>
<td>National Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
<td><a href="mailto:plml10@yahoo.ca">plml10@yahoo.ca</a></td>
<td>2580056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUDHOO</td>
<td>Vedvyass Doobay</td>
<td>Technical Officer</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:vmudhoo@mail.gov.mu">vmudhoo@mail.gov.mu</a></td>
<td>7565150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANDOO</td>
<td>Seewajee</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:sepandoo@mail.gov.mu">sepandoo@mail.gov.mu</a></td>
<td>6704108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUTTOO</td>
<td>Mannikchand</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:mputtoo@mail.gov.mu">mputtoo@mail.gov.mu</a></td>
<td>4642993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAGOOLBEER</td>
<td>Veekash</td>
<td>Assistant Park Ranger</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAJKKOMAR</td>
<td>Davetee (Ms)</td>
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<td>2134241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAMJAUN</td>
<td>Sheik Mohamed Reza</td>
<td>Forester</td>
<td>Forestry Service</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rramjaun@mail.gov.mu">rramjaun@mail.gov.mu</a>; <a href="mailto:rezaramjaun@yahoo.com">rezaramjaun@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>7714423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROOPA</td>
<td>Premanand</td>
<td>Assistant Park Ranger</td>
<td>National Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>RUTTY</td>
<td>Rajmohunsing</td>
<td>Forest Ranger</td>
<td>Forestry Service</td>
<td><a href="mailto:forest@intnet.mu">forest@intnet.mu</a></td>
<td>6740003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOOKHAREEA</td>
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<td>4658751</td>
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<tr>
<td>SURROOP</td>
<td>Ashoke</td>
<td>Forester</td>
<td>Forestry Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>TANAKOOR</td>
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<td>Deputy Forest Ranger</td>
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<td>2561907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEELUCKDHARRY</td>
<td>Ajay</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Ministry of Local Government</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ajayteeluckdharry@yahoo.co.uk">ajayteeluckdharry@yahoo.co.uk</a></td>
<td>2011328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOOCARAM</td>
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<td>Assistant Park Ranger</td>
<td>National Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Atmahtoocaram@yahoo.com">Atmahtoocaram@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>5070128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>TUPSY</td>
<td>Rameshwar</td>
<td>Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority</td>
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<td>2101545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 – IP Ecotourism Assistance

NATURAL RESOURCE BASED TOURISM / ECOTOURISM

The United States Forest Service has vast experience and leadership in planning and managing recreation activities on our national forests, and is able to utilize and share this knowledge internationally. The Forest Service Office of International Programs can provide assistance in the following:

- **DETERMINING FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**
  Conduct socioeconomic studies to address the potential of sustainable ecotourism.
  **FS in the field:** Performed MCC due diligence activities in Namibia for possible ecotourism sites (2007).

- **DEVELOPING MANAGEMENT PLANS**
  Help in the process of developing sustainable management plans for national parks.
  **FS in the field:** Currently working with the Gabonese government to assist in the creation of national park management plans and training of professionals to manage the country’s 13 new parks; Assisting government and NGO partners in DR Congo with park management planning (2003- present).

- **TRAIL AND ROAD DESIGN**
  Assist with trail design to make national parks more accessible and user-friendly, without encouraging negative impacts on the protected area.
  **FS in the field:** Helped develop a series of trainings, research and exchanges focused on trail building in Russia, with a master trail builder sent to demonstrate techniques (2003/2004).

- **COMMUNITY INTEGRATION/ ENCROACHMENT ISSUES/ BUFFER ZONE MANAGEMENT**
  Develop solutions for integrating surrounding communities into resource management decision making and ownership, including problems of encroachment into protected areas.
  **FS in the field:** Assisting in management of watershed health issues impacting national parks in Tanzania (2001 – present).

- **BUSINESS PLANNING FOR LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS**
  Help local businesses cater to tourists (hotels, restaurants, guiding associations, outfitting companies)
  **FS in the field:** In the US, the Forest Service has partnered with the Small Business Development Center Program to provide management assistance to current and prospective small business owners, who provide public services on FS land (2001 – present).

- **LAW ENFORCEMENT**
  Support efforts to curb illegal activities (harvesting, poaching, etc…) in eco-tourism areas.
  **FS in the field:** Training Indonesian counterparts in methods that increase field coordination and rapid responses to combat forest crimes as part of the new Memorandum of Understanding on Illegal Logging and Associated Trade signed in November 2006.

- **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**
  Provide expertise and assistance to manage wildlife and vegetation in eco-tourist areas.
  **FS in the field:** Currently working in Senegal to develop a methodology for wildlife inventories in hunting concessions located in the buffer zone of Niokolo Kolo National Park.

**USFS PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS:** Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Bank, Wildlife Conservation Society, the Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Conservation Int’l, African Wildlife Foundation…

For more information on our programs, please visit the website at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/global/](http://www.fs.fed.us/global/)
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