

**Setting Standards for Sustainable Tourism:
An analysis of US tourism certification programs**

by

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Abstract

As one of the biggest industries in the world, tourism has huge positive and negative socioeconomic, cultural and environmental impacts. Over the past fifteen years, a plethora of tourism certification programs have sprung up worldwide in an effort to recognize tourism businesses who truly work to reduce negative impacts by using sustainable practices. This worldwide proliferation of tourism certification programs, however, has led to consumer confusion, lack of brand recognition and widely varying standards. With a global accreditation body looming on the horizon that aims to create a single recognizable sustainable tourism brand, tourism certification programs will soon have the opportunity to become accredited by complying with minimum standards that will be determined by the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council. Accreditation will provide certification programs with the legitimacy and credibility they need to differentiate their programs, and thus the certified tourism businesses, from others with weaker standards, and may eventually lead to a shift of the tourism industry towards more sustainable practices. Here I use the best practice standards for tourism certification programs as laid out in the Mohonk Agreement, and the recently released Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, envisioned to serve as the common set of baseline criteria by which to accredit certification programs, to evaluate four state-level tourism certification programs as case studies in the United States. In assuming that these standards and criteria are the minimum requirements that need to be met for a certification program to become accredited, I find that none of these four programs, and presumably none of the US state-level programs as they currently stand, will meet accreditation requirements. I discuss the challenges these programs have in complying with best practice standards and in fulfilling the triple bottom line principles of environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural sustainability as specified by the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. I also conjecture what the future may look like for these programs and US tourism certification in general.

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List of Acronyms

AGA: Adventure Green Alaska

AWRTA: Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association

DEP: Department of Environmental Protection

DEQ: Department of Environmental Quality

DPPEA: Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

FGL: Florida Green Lodging

GSTC: Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

NEAP: Australian Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program

OPP: Office of Pollution Prevention

OTT: Office of Travel and Tourism

STEP: Sustainable Tourism and Eco-Certification Program

STSC: Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis

TGW: Travel Green Wisconsin

VG: Virginia Green

VGL: Virginia Green Lodging

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1. Introduction

The current initiative to create a global standard for sustainable tourism has the potential to change the face of the tourism industry. Widely varying standards over the past 20 years as to what constitutes “green” or sustainable tourism has led to accusations of green-washing, a term used to describe businesses or organizations that claim to use “green” or “sustainable” practices, but don’t actually comply with generally accepted standards. Tourism certification programs worldwide, now numbering more than 80, have become a popular tool providing recognition to tourism businesses that meet a determined set of program requirements. The ecolabel that is provided to a certified business, however, is only as good or as credible as the certification program is. In an effort to harmonize standards and ensure the credibility and legitimacy of certification programs, and hence the certified businesses, a global accreditation body has been proposed that will set minimum standards that sustainable tourism certification programs should comply with. The hope is that through the creation of a single accredited brand that will be recognizable worldwide, consumer preferences will be altered, eventually leading the tourism industry down a more sustainable path aimed at protecting the natural and cultural assets on which the industry depends

Today there are approximately twenty tourism certification programs that operate in the United States, with the majority being state-level programs focused on the lodging sector. As the industry pushes towards global standards and accreditation, it can be expected that both the procedural frameworks as well as the certification criteria of these programs will come under increased scrutiny.

The purpose of this report is to provide the tourism sector and all other interested parties with an analysis of select tourism certification programs in the United States. More specifically this report aims to:

- explain what tourism certification is, how it works, and what its benefits and challenges are;
- introduce the effort to create a global standard for sustainable tourism certification;
- outline four state-level tourism certification programs as case studies in the US; and
- evaluate how well these programs conform to best practice standards in the industry

A comparison is provided between the overall procedural frameworks for these four case studies to best practice standards in the industry. Additionally, a detailed analysis is conducted on each of the program's criteria in order to investigate the extent to which these tourism certification programs embrace the triple bottom line principles of environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural sustainability as laid out in the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

2. Background

2.1. The Tourism Industry

Tourism is no doubt one of the largest industries in the world. Behind fuels, chemicals and automotive parts, it is fourth in the amount of export income it generates (UNWTO 2008). International tourist arrivals continue to grow year after year as more and more countries, especially developing countries, turn to tourism as a development tool and as a source of employment. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, international tourist arrivals grew from 25 million to 903 million between 1950 and 2007. In 2007 export income generated by these arrivals was more than US\$ 1 trillion or about US\$ 3

billion a day (UNWTO 2008). Despite the recent slump in tourism related activities due to the current economic recession, the overall trend for tourism is projected to continue increasing with international arrivals being expected to reach 1.6 billion by 2020 (UNWTO 2008).

The United States is among the lead players in the tourism industry. Even though the country ranks third in the number of international tourist arrivals, it is first in international tourism receipts (expenditures by international inbound visitors, including payments to national carriers for international transport); a statistic highlighting the fact that the US attracts “higher-spending long-haul” tourists that most other nations (UNWTO 2008).

Environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts are felt worldwide by the numerous entities that make up the tourism industry including airlines, hotels, tour operators and travel agents. With the continued expansion of the industry comes the challenge of balancing the economic benefits of tourism development and growth with the need to protect the very things that tourists go to see – clean beaches, authentic communities, landscapes, culture and nature. For tourism to be profitable and beneficial, it must also be sustainable by providing benefits to the tourists and hosts, while at the same time protecting the resources on which it depends.

2.1.1. Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism

If you’ve been a tourist in your own country or internationally at anytime in the past twenty-five years, you’ve more than likely come across the word tourism preceded by “sustainable”, “eco-“ or “green” more than once on your travels. It’s become common practice for tourism businesses, from sprawling mega-hotel chains in the Caribbean to tourism operators working in wooden shacks in the Bolivian lowlands, to advertise using one or all of these words. Although sustainable, green and eco- are commonly uttered phrases in the 21st

century, many people have trouble defining exactly what they mean in relation to the tourism industry. Standards are not well known or enforced, and there is a thin and vague line between those businesses who are “greenwashing” and those who are truly using sustainable practices.

Numerous definitions of sustainable and ecotourism exist in the literature (Table 1). Evident in most definitions is that sustainable tourism is a triple bottom line approach that seeks to not only improve the sustainability of the tourism business, but also endeavors to reduce harm to the social, cultural, and natural environment in which the business operates for the indefinite future.

Table 1. Common definitions of sustainable tourism and ecotourism

Sustainable Tourism	Ecotourism
Sustainable tourism is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity , essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. - <i>United Nations World Tourism Organization</i>	Environmentally responsible travel to natural areas , in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promote conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples. - <i>The Nature Conservancy and World Conservation Union (IUCN)</i>
Sustainable tourism products are products which operate in harmony with local environment, community and cultures , so that these become the permanent beneficiaries. – <i>according to Agenda 21 for the Travel & Tourism Industry in (Bien 2007)</i>	Responsible travel to natural areas , which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people. – <i>The International Ecotourism Society</i> ¹
[There is] overall consensus that [sustainable tourism] integrates economic, socio-cultural and ecological well being as well as futurity , equity and holism. (Solimar 2007)	Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation. – <i>Ecotourism Australia</i> ²
Sustainable tourism is tourism that seeks to minimize ecological and socio-cultural impacts while providing economic benefits to local communities and host countries. (Mohonk 2000)	Ecotourism is sustainable tourism with a natural area focus , which benefits the environment and communities visited, and fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and awareness. (Mohonk 2000)

¹ The International Ecotourism Society website. www.ecotourism.org, Accessed April 2009.

² Ecotourism Australia website. www.ecotourism.org.au, Accessed April 2009.

Sustainable tourism can be incorporated into many types of tourism such as urban, coastal, or nature-based tourism. At the crossroads of nature tourism and sustainable tourism is ecotourism (Figure 1). While nature-based tourism and ecotourism both focus on travel to natural areas, ecotourism is different from nature tourism in that it focuses more on impacts to the environment and human communities than on the activity the tourist participates in. It is not so focused on reducing harm like sustainable tourism is, but rather it strives to improve the environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural environment in the place in which it operates.



Figure 1. Connection between sustainable tourism and ecotourism (Bien 2007)

One of the most common definitions of ecotourism comes from the International Ecotourism Society and states that ecotourism is “responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people .” Expanding upon this, Martha Honey, a leading expert and author in the ecotourism field, says that authentic ecotourism must include the following seven characteristics (Honey 2008):

- ✓ involves travel to natural areas
- ✓ minimizes impact

- ✓ builds environmental awareness
- ✓ provides direct financial benefits for conservation
- ✓ provides financial benefits and empowerment for local communities
- ✓ respects local culture
- ✓ supports human rights and international labor agreements

2.1.2. Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism in the United States

When most people think of ecotourism, they think of Costa Rica, a country whose tourism industry has long been considered the epitome of ecotourism ideals. The United States, on the other hand, has not usually been considered a sustainable or ecotourism destination. At a national level, rather than having a tourism ministry as many other countries do, the US tourism industry is housed within the Office of Travel and Tourism (OTT) which is located within the Commerce Department's International Trade Administration. Within the OTT, consensus has never been developed as to the significance of sustainable or ecotourism and therefore it hasn't been promoted on a national level (Honey 2008). At a state level, however, interest has begun to grow over the past decade.

When ecotourism guru, Martha Honey, published the first edition of her book *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development* in 1999, the United States wasn't included in her case studies. In her second edition published in 2008, however, there is an entire chapter dedicated to ecotourism in the United States. Societies and associations dedicated to ecotourism and/or sustainable tourism have now begun to pop up around the US. A few notable programs with honest attempts to move their states towards sustainable or ecotourism include: the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association, La Ruta de Senora Ecotourism Association in Arizona, the Hawaii Ecotourism Association, and Wisconsin's Department of Tourism partnering with the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative.

Expectations of what ecotourism is intended to accomplish are high. But while countries like Costa Rica and South Africa seem to be doing fairly well in terms of fulfilling the seven core components of ecotourism, the United States “offers a more sobering portrait” according to Honey. Below is a summary of Honey’s ecotourism scorecard for the United States (Honey 2008, p.438-442).

- ✓ Visits to natural areas in the US such as national parks remains high and demand for leisure activities is expected to grow.
- ✓ Minimizing impact requires a more broad scale approach with “national planning and government leadership, and this does not yet exist in the United States”. Additionally, as noted by the current “green” tourism certification programs in the US, most of the focus is solely on minimizing impact to the environment, not on social, cultural or economic impacts.
- ✓ Genuine ecotourism initiatives in the US work to build environmental awareness among their customers, but overall, ecotourism still isn’t widely known or used as a tool for building environmental awareness.
- ✓ Financial benefits for conservation are being provided through the private sector as the idea of corporate social responsibility grows, but less so by the national government or park fees.
- ✓ While tourism has been used in some instances to protect culture, for example by African American communities, many Native Americans still see tourism as another form of “exploitation and expropriation”.
- ✓ Most of those involved in US ecotourism have not been directly involved in the struggle for human rights and the democratic movement. The tourism industry needs to incorporate this into ecotourism as a way to “rebuild our reputation as the world’s leading democracy and defender of human rights”.

2.2. Tourism Certification

Certification as defined in the tourism industry is a process by which a logo or seal is awarded to those who meet or exceed a set of criteria that have been set forth by the certification body (Honey 2002). All tourism certification programs to date are voluntary, meaning that they are not imposed on tourism businesses by the government or anyone else.

Because the tourism industry is so diverse, offers both products and services, and has such a far-reaching supply chain, certification across the industry is not an easy task (Honey 2001). Most certification programs have therefore focused on certifying lodging facilities which lie at the heart of most tourists' vacations. A small but growing number of programs certify other sectors of the tourism industry such as tourism operators, tour guides, parks, convention centers, golf courses, transport providers, beaches, etc.

In 2001 it was estimated that there were around 60 "green" tourism certification programs in the world (Honey 2002, WTO 2002). This number varies, however, depending on how widely or narrowly the term "tourism certification program" is defined. For example there are programs like STEP (Sustainable Tourism Eco-certification Program) that certify tour operators, accommodations, attractions and transport providers based on social, economic and environmental sustainability; and there is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) whose main focus is on certifying green buildings, however they have a sub-program that is designed specifically for the hospitality industry. Despite this great variety, the number of certification programs dealing with some aspect of the tourism industry appears to be growing and in 2007 it was estimated that as many as 80 programs existed (Solimar 2007).

Most tourism certification programs are operated by governments in developed countries and by NGOs in developing countries (Font and Sallows 2002). The large majority of certification programs are in Europe while there are only a handful in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Caribbean and the Americas. Most of these programs target accommodation facilities and do not include sociocultural or economic criteria (WTO 2002). A few programs like STEP and

Green Globe 21 are global programs, whereas the rest certify on a regional, national, or local level.

To distinguish between tourism certification programs, it is useful to divide them into three broad categories: conventional, sustainable, and ecotourism (Honey 2002).

Conventional tourism certification programs include large hotel chains, cruises, and high-volume tourist destinations. These programs focus on the internal business rather than on the external community and environmental impacts, and they are mostly concerned with improving eco-efficiency standards whereby a business saves money by implementing practices that reduce water and energy use. They also tend to award certification based on setting up a management system rather than achieving certain standards or benchmarks.

Sustainable tourism certification programs should include criteria on the environmental, socio-economic and cultural impacts of a business and often focus on minimizing impact or reducing harm. The criteria are performance-based for the most part and are usually broad enough to attempt to certify various sized businesses and various types of tourism like nature or cultural tourism. Additionally, questions specific to particular issues within a region may be included in the criteria.

Ecotourism certification programs go beyond trying to reduce negative environmental, socio-economic and cultural impacts, and gauges if companies contribute positively to these aspects both within and external to the business. They typically certify businesses that operate in protected or pristine areas.

Tourism certification programs can also be grouped into two categories based on the methodology for certifying businesses: process-based programs and performance-based programs (Honey 2002). Process-based programs, or management systems, stress a

commitment to improvement, are self-updating, and are generic and transferable across countries. Operating by themselves, process-based programs are not sufficient to ensure environmental and social sustainability because certification may be awarded simply when a company sets up an EMS, not when certain criteria or a certain level of sustainability are met. Additionally, process-based programs focus on the companies' internal operating systems, not on external social or economic impacts. One of the most popular programs today is the EMS (Environmental Management System) ISO 14001 which aims to improve the environmental policy of companies (Honey 2001).

Performance-based programs on the other hand measure achievement based on set standards or benchmarks, require external and regular updating as the industry changes, and tend to be context specific. Advantages of performance based certification include (Honey 2002):

- they are less expensive and more applicable to small and medium size businesses
- they can include checklists that are comprehensible to both businesses and consumers
- they allow comparison among businesses or products
- they can measure performance inside and outside the business
- programs that offer different levels of certification encourage competition and continual improvement

Some certification programs like NEAP (Australian Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program) or Green Globe 21 are hybrid programs that include both process and performance-based standards; and in fact best practice standards for certification programs state that criteria should have aspects of both a performance and process-based program.

2.2.1. Certification Process

The certification process consists of five main steps: setting standards, completing an assessment of the business, granting certification based on a successful assessment, recognition of the certification, and finally acceptance by the industry and the consumers (Figure 2).

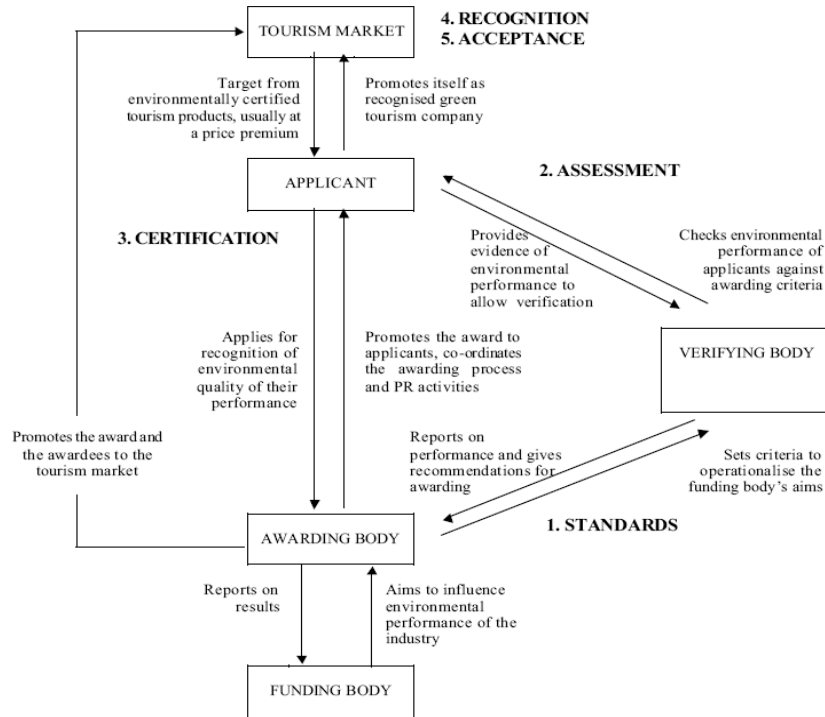


Fig. 2. The players in tourism ecolabels. Source: updated from Font (2001a).

Figure 2. Process and key players in tourism certification (from Font 2002)

Standards: A standard is a documented set of rules, conditions or requirements that are approved by a recognized body. To be eligible for certification, an entity must meet or exceed the set standard for that particular certification. To begin the certification process the tourism provider normally must apply to the program by filling out an application form which is reviewed by the certification body. In addition to the standards, or criteria, by which the

sustainability or greenness of the business is measured, some programs have core criteria which must be met by any business that wishes to be certified.

Assessment: Compliance with the criteria may be determined by the business itself (self-evaluation), the certification body (second party), or by an independent auditor (third-party). While self-evaluation is an important first step in enhancing ownership of the process and helping to educate the business about sustainability practices, alone it does not produce credible certification. Third-party certification is considered to be the most credible as the auditor doesn't have a stake in either the business or the certification program. Performing audits of tourism providers tends to be the mostly costly part of the certification process.

Certification: Those businesses that meet the specified certification program standards are given an award, logo, or ecolabel to use for marketing purposes. Some programs certify businesses on more than one level of certification, allowing and usually encouraging the business to improve its sustainability initiatives over time. Monitoring continued compliance with the criteria is an important aspect of certification; however programs vary in the degree to which they do this mainly because of funding or the availability of staff resources. Many programs charge a certification fee that varies with either the number of employees the business has or with the revenue generated by the tourism provider. The money supports administrative functions as well as advertising and promotion of the logo and of the certified companies (Honey 2001). Some programs, usually those with a less stringent certification process and criteria, are free.

Recognition and Acceptance: The concept of certification revolves around the idea that consumers will recognize and accept ecolabeled products or services as preferable to non-ecolabeled ones, thereby giving ecolabeled products a larger marketing share. Given the

global nature of the tourism industry, accreditation of certification programs based on international standards seems to be a crucial, but currently missing link, in giving credibility and increased visibility to these programs and their ecolabels.

2.2.2. Benefits and Challenges

There are many benefits that tourism certification brings to certified businesses, consumers, local communities, governments and the environment. Businesses that are considering becoming certified are tempted by certification programs with benefits such as being able to use the certification program logo on marketing information and websites, free technical assistance, free promotion through various sources associated with the certification program, cost-savings and the opportunity to market to a new audience. Additionally, through the application process businesses learn how to improve the efficiency of their internal operations and they become aware of how they can reduce their external impacts as well. For consumers, certification offers an environmentally and socially responsible choice and increases the confidence that their tourism operator or destination is indeed sustainable. For governments, certification raises industry standards in health, safety, environment and social stability and lowers regulatory costs of environmental protection (Bien 2007). Tourism certification also helps to ensure that the industry is held accountable to local stakeholders by aiming to reduce the environmental and social impacts of businesses.

Along with the many benefits of tourism certification come a host of challenges. One commonly cited challenge is that there is currently a great deal of confusion about the existing certification programs due to the sheer number of programs and their widely varying standards. This consumer confusion means that tourism ecolabels still don't hold a marketing advantage. Another challenge is that consumer demand for sustainable tourism certified

products is largely unknown, or at the very least, a hotly debated issue (Honey 2002). Some reports seem to show that there *is* strong consumer support for responsible tourism. But despite this support, few people actually demand or inquire about sustainable business practices when making purchasing decisions, and other factors such as safety, distance and cost may still take precedence in tourist's decisions (CESD/TIES 2005).

Also, most certification programs are incentive-led rather than market-led, meaning that the majority of businesses become certified because it will help them to save money and not so much because they believe that they will gain customers by marketing their sustainability practices. In fact, there seems to be a lack of evidence that certified businesses do indeed have an economic advantage over non-certified ones (Rivera 2002).

Foremost among the challenges that certification programs face worldwide is the lack of robust and regular sources of income to operate and market their programs. Out of 33 programs examined in a study on the financial sustainability of sustainable tourism certification programs, none of the programs, not even those that have established user fees, are self-sufficient (Rome et al. 2006). Programs always rely on additional sources of funding from government or private sources. On-site audits, a crucial aspect of any tourism certification program, are generally the most expensive part of the certification process. If these audits are eliminated to save costs, the credibility of the program suffers tremendously.

Another challenge for the success of sustainable tourism certification is the difficulty in creating criteria that accurately measure triple bottom line standards of social, economic and environmental sustainability. Socio-cultural criteria are noted as being especially open to interpretation (Font and Harris 2004) and defining ambiguous terms like "local", "benefit" and "participatory" has proven difficult (Medina 2005).

2.2.3. Tourism Certification in the United States

The first tourism certification programs were very different from the sustainable tourism standards being developed today in that they focused more on measuring cost, quality and ambiance (and some aspects of health, hygiene and safety) than on environmental or social impacts (Honey 2001). The American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Mobil five-star system were among the first programs in the United States that certified tourism related businesses or entities.

Environmental certification programs became extremely prevalent worldwide in the ten years between the Earth Summit in 1992 and the International Year of Ecotourism in 2002 because of the increasing focus on sustainable development and a call for environmental and social responsibility of all sectors of society from Agenda 21. In the last five years state-level tourism certification programs have become especially popular in the US with 15 programs launching since 2004. Although most of these programs focus on reducing environmental impacts, a few have started to expand their criteria to cover social, cultural and economic impacts as well.

The following timeline (Table 2) provides a brief glimpse of the key events leading up to the proliferation of tourism certification programs in the US as well as the launch dates for many of the programs.

Table 2. Timeline of important events in tourism certification

1970-1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a global rise in the environmental movement, the term <i>ecotourism</i> is first used (Honey 2002).
1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First environmental certification for a tourism service – Blue Flag Campaign for beaches in Denmark launches.
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecotourism and nature tourism are hailed as the fastest growing sectors of tourism.
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) results in creation of Agenda 21. <p>Agenda 21 emphasized the need for sustainable development rather than unlimited development and led to a proliferation of tourism certification schemes aimed at measuring environmental and social sustainability.</p>
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audubon Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program launches. • Green Hotels in the Green Mountain State (Vermont) launches.
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Seal starts certifying lodging properties under its GS-33 program.
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Millennium Development Goals <p>As a response to key development challenges, eight goals to be achieved by 2015 are adopted by 189 nations at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. Among these goals are eradicating extreme poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mohonk Agreement <p>Principles and elements that should be part of any sound ecotourism or sustainable tourism certification scheme are agreed upon.</p>
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rainforest Alliance initiates study to determine the feasibility of creating a Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council.
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations declares 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism.
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida Green Lodging launches. • California Green Lodging launches.
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Hampshire Sustainable Lodging and Restaurant program launches.
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Green launches. • Green Lodging Michigan launches. • Maine Green Lodging launches.
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel Green Wisconsin launches. • Rhode Island Hospitality Certification Program launches. • Sustainable Travel International launches STEP, a global eco-certification program.

2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) are released. Developed partly as a response to the Millennium Development Goals, the GSTC are an attempt to come to a common understanding of the purpose and goals of sustainable tourism. • Adventure Green Alaska launches. • Delaware Green Lodging launches. • Oregon Bed and Breakfast Green Certification launches.
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • StayGreen Illinois launches. • Connecticut Green Lodging (to launch in May).

Today there are approximately 21 tourism related certification programs operating in the United States at the state level or higher (described in Appendix A). Green Globe 21, STEP and LEED certify businesses worldwide; the Audubon Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program operates in the US and Canada; and Green Seal certifies lodging facilities in the US only.

State-level programs have been especially successful and today there are more than sixteen states with some sort of green certification program for tourism-related businesses. All together approximately 1,569 facilities have been certified by these state-level programs. Most of these efforts have thus far focused on the lodging and accommodation sector – and rightfully so as lodging is at the heart of a traveler’s vacation. The states with more mainstream green-lodging programs include California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia. Alaska and Wisconsin both have sustainable tourism certification programs that certify a wide variety of tourism related businesses within their respective states, while Georgia and Hawaii have all encompassing green business certification programs under which lodging facilities can be certified. New York and Connecticut are in the process of developing certification programs.

Although they are not full certification programs, Pennsylvania and North Carolina also have green lodging initiatives. The Department of Environmental Protection in

Pennsylvania has a website dedicated to providing information on how to green your hotel and the benefits of doing so. It also lists all the hotels in Pennsylvania that are certified by Green Seal. The North Carolina Green Plan for Hotels website is run by the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA) and details a nine-step process for developing a hotel waste-reduction program. It's likely that North Carolina will have some sort of a certification program in the near future as the DPPEA is currently partnering with the Center for Sustainable Tourism at Eastern Carolina University to define a standard for certification. The program will most likely involve self-certification with some "check-backs" (Tom Rhodes, Environmental Specialist, NC DPPEA, personal communication, Feb 2009).

Without doubt there are other state tourism certifications being created as you read this. The Hawaii Ecotourism Association for example, has a peer review process that recognizes companies for their commitment to sustainable travel based on environmental conservation, cultural and historical stewardship, contributions to local community, and education and training . Although this program is not a full certification program, as the website states, it is a "first step in that direction". In 2005, a study was done by a master student at the University of Hawaii about the opportunities and risks of establishing an ecotourism certification program in Hawaii (Bauckham 2004). The results stated that the ecotourism industry in Hawaii was in support of a certification program based on elements of existing certification programs with a few Hawaii-specific considerations to be added. For these reasons, the creation and implementation of an ecotourism certification program in Hawaii seems imminent.

2.3. A Global Standard for Sustainable Tourism

Around the turn of the millennium the tourism certification industry began to take notice of the fact that a proliferation of certification schemes had led to consumer confusion, widely varying standards, and a lack of marketing power for individual ecolabels. Like other industries with ecolabels have done, such as agriculture, fisheries and forestry, the tourism certification industry came together to begin to formalize standards within the industry (Buckley 2002).

2.3.1. Best Practice Standards for Certification Programs

In November of 2000 the Mohonk Workshop brought together participants from twenty countries representing tourism certification programs from around the world to discuss standards in the sustainable and ecotourism industries. No representatives from US certification programs were present. Participants met at the Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York on November 17-19, 2000. One of the results of the Workshop was an agreement on the components that should be present in any tourism certification scheme in order to ensure its credibility (Mohonk 2000). The certification scheme overall framework that was developed consists of three categories: basis of a scheme, criteria framework, and scheme integrity. Among the elements of a certification scheme that are important to consider are the process in which the scheme is developed, methods of monitoring compliance with the criteria, controlled use of the logo, and the provision of technical assistance to businesses undergoing certification (see Appendix B for a complete listing of Mohonk Agreement principles). Another result of the workshop was an informal consensus among the programs about the minimum standards for certifying sustainable tourism and ecotourism

providers. Over the years the Mohonk Agreement has proven to be the main guideline for developing new programs and for harmonizing existing ones (Solimar 2007).

2.3.2. Creation of a Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council

In 2001, following the Mohonk Workshop, a feasibility study was initiated by Rainforest Alliance to examine the possibility of creating a Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC). Stewardship councils have been used in the past by other industries to serve as accreditation bodies. Examples include the Marine Stewardship Council for certifiers of sustainable fisheries, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements for organic foods, and Social Accountability International for socially responsible standards (Honey 2002).

The goal of the STSC would be to research criteria in order to set a global standard for sustainable tourism and ecotourism, to promote high-quality certification programs that follow those best practice standards, and to analyze the potential for a tourism accreditation body, the first attempt ever in the tourism industry (Honey 2002; Font and Sallows 2003). Accreditation is the process through which a license to perform certification based on agreed upon global principles and standards is granted to qualifying certification programs.

The council was envisioned as working in a three phase process. The first phase initiated in 2007 was a *Network* phase where the Council served as a central location for gathering information on tourism certification and in turn providing that information, along with ideas about accreditation, to stakeholders. The second phase was *Association*. This stage provided an opportunity to market certified products, gave guidance to those wishing to create certification bodies, and reached an agreement on standards for sustainable tourism criteria. The third phase, stretching between 2009 and 2012 when the accreditation body is expected to

become financially independent, is that of *Accreditation* in which certification programs will be accredited by a body outsourced from the STSC (Font and Sallows 2003).

2.3.3. Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

In 2007, during the end of the Association stage, the Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria was created with the intent of developing criteria that would provide a “globally relevant common understanding of sustainable tourism”. These criteria could potentially be used as a framework for accrediting certification programs. The final version of the criteria which indicate *what should be done* by a tourism business, not *how to do it*, are available online³ and are also shown in Appendix C. Most currently, a public consultation of potential indicators which specify how to measure the criteria is underway at the same website.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) were first introduced on October 6, 2008 at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, Spain by the Rainforest Alliance, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (Rainforest 2008). The new global tourism criteria emphasized a triple bottom line approach to tourism including socioeconomic and cultural components in addition to the already common environmental criteria for tourism certification. In total there are thirty-seven criteria listed within four main themes (see Table 3) aimed at maximizing benefits and minimizing negative impacts of tourism. Although the criteria were created initially for use by the accommodation and tour operation sectors, they have applicability to the entire tourism industry.

³ Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria website: www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org
Accessed April 2009.

Despite the many challenges and uncertainties that come along with the creation and implementation of a global tourism accreditation body (Font and Sallows 2002), its formation is imminent and arguably necessary as the concept of triple bottom line sustainability gains momentum and consumer demand increases.

Table 3. Four main categories of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Demonstrate effective sustainable management.B. Maximize social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts.C. Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts.D. Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts. |
|---|

* See Appendix C for a complete list of criteria.

2.4. Previous Studies of Tourism Certification Programs

Due to the increasing role of eco-labels, certification schemes, environmental management systems, and codes of conduct in regulating the tourism industry, there is a wealth of information in the tourism literature outlining, analyzing, and comparing these programs. The well known book, *Ecotourism and Certification: Setting Standards in Practice* (Honey 2002) devotes seven chapters to case studies about certification programs in Central America, Australia, Europe, Africa, Fiji, and one global program. Most of the case studies and analyses in the tourism literature, like in this book, come from international or global certification programs (Synergy 2000, Buckley 2002, Font and Harris 2004, Solimar 2007, Rovinski 2007).

One commonly cited report is the World Tourism Organization study (WTO 2002) that reviewed more than sixty sustainable and ecotourism certification programs around the world. The study aimed to identify similarities and differences amongst the programs as well as outlining factors that made them successful in terms of sustainable tourism development. In 2000 the World Wildlife Fund completed an analysis of Green Globe 21 and other tourism certification programs (Synergy 2000) in which it outlined certification programs, examined the specific requirements of each program, identified lessons learned, and made suggestions about how the programs could be improved. The report also discussed key aspects of the tourism certification programs and identified which aspects of the triple bottom line each program covered. Other studies on tourism certification programs explore challenges and successes in including socioeconomic criteria in the programs (Font and Harris 2004, Medina 2005). Most, if not all of these analyses relied on a combination of internet research, discussions with individuals involved in tourism certification, interviews with the certification program representatives, email inquiries, and surveys to obtain the information that was needed.

As indicated in the Simple User's Guide for tourism certification (Bien 2007), written by a leading expert in tourism certification, the Mohonk Agreement principles and triple-bottom line criteria, like the GSTC, are among the most important criteria used to evaluate certification programs.

2.4.1. Qualitative Analysis of Criteria

One particularly useful qualitative method for evaluating certification programs can be adapted from the tourism planning literature. First developed by Simpson (2001), this method used an evaluation instrument created by the researcher to determine the extent to which

sustainability principles were integrated into tourism planning. Originally the method was used as a quantitative analysis in which there was a panel of assessors scoring the tourism plans. Ruhanen (2004), however, adopted the methodology for a quantitative study in which the analysis was conducted solely by the one researcher. The process uses a three point likert-scale, an off-shoot of a technique called categorical indexing, to determine if the criteria are evident, somewhat evident or not at all evident in the documents being analyzed. Although the evaluation of the certification criteria documents were at the discretion of the author, the objectivity of the analysis was maintained because there was only one researcher conducting all of the analyses in the same manner.

2.4.2. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity, and Threat) analysis, first used by Albert Humphrey in the 1960-1970s to compare data from Fortune 500 companies, is a strategic planning method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a project. It is a simple method that does not require extensive training to be used successfully. A SWOT analysis helps to identify the internal and external factors of the company or project that are important in achieving a specific objective. The strengths and weaknesses represent the entity's internal factors, while the opportunities and threats represent the factors that refer to the entity's external environments, factors that would still be present if the entity did not exist.

3. Methods

For the purpose of this report, tourism certification programs in the US were recognized as those that:

- are specifically aimed at certifying businesses in the US involved with the tourism industry
- certify at least the accommodation/lodging sector
- certify businesses using *at least* environmental criteria and possibly social, cultural and/or economic criteria as well
- award ecolabels to businesses that comply with a certain set of standards as developed by the certification program

These programs were identified through literature reviews, a series of internet searches, and through personal communication with professionals in the tourism industry. Information about the final list of 21 programs was gathered both from program websites and by personal communication (email or phone) with program contacts that were listed on the program websites. A summary of this information is presented in Appendix A.

3.1. Case Study Selection

Case studies were chosen from among the twenty-one tourism certification schemes found to be operating in the United States. I chose to focus on state-level programs because many of these programs are fairly new and have yet to be outlined in the literature. In addition, numerous studies and comparisons have already been completed on national and global programs as previously noted. Out of sixteen US certification programs operating at the state level, four case studies were chosen which allowed for a more thorough analysis and comparison of programs and their criteria. Although these case studies are not necessarily

representative of all the state-level programs, their characteristics represent the diversity of procedural aspects and criteria present in many US programs.

The only state-level certification programs with goals of meeting environmental, social and economic sustainability standards, Adventure Green Alaska (AGA) and Travel Green Wisconsin (TGW), were chosen as two of the case studies. The third program, Virginia Green (VG), was chosen because similar to the first two case studies it attempts to certify tourism providers other than lodging. Unlike AGA and TGW, however, its goals are simply to reduce the environmental impact of tourism. The final case study is Florida Green Lodging (FGL) which certifies lodging facilities on environmental criteria and distinguishes itself from the other three in that it uses second-party certification rather than relying on self-evaluation by the businesses. Although two of these programs are typically considered to be sustainable tourism certification programs, while two are considered to be green lodging programs, all four have the potential to become accredited by the forthcoming global tourism accreditation program.

3.2. Case Study Analyses

A SWOT analysis was completed for each certification program case study to assist with identifying the internal and external factors important to achieving their assumed objective of credibly certifying tourism businesses and operators according to best practice standards. While Travel Green Wisconsin and Adventure Green Alaska are considered to be sustainable tourism certification programs, Virginia Green and Florida Green Lodging are labeled as green lodging programs which have typically only been concerned with eco-efficiency standards that affect a business' bottom line. Because of the significant differences

between these two types of programs, it is not fair to directly compare them, but a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of each individual program should be useful.

The procedural framework for each certification program was compared to the best practice standards for certification schemes (see Appendix B) as laid out in the Mohonk Agreement (Mohonk 2000). Two of the original components were left out of the analysis as they overlap with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. The components left out include: The scheme should provide tangible benefits to local communities and to conservation, and criteria should embody global best practice environmental, social and economic management. This comparison provides both an understanding of how well these programs conform to best practice standards as well as what standards these programs have the most trouble complying with.

Criteria from the certification programs (internet links to these criteria are found in Appendix D) were compared to each individual Global Sustainable Tourism Criterion (see Appendix C) using a qualitative method that resulted in a matrix-like table. The method used was adapted from tourism planning literature as described above. Although this method was originally intended to be used in tourism planning, it provides a useful way to determine to what extent the GSTC are currently being embraced by these four certification programs.

In order to score how well each of the programs' criteria fulfilled each of the thirty-seven GSTC, a three point scale was used. In the comparison, an "X" represented that the program's criteria fully addressed a particular GSTC criterion, "x" represented that the program's criteria somewhat addressed a particular GSTC criterion, and a blank box represented that the program's criteria did not address the GSTC criterion at all. So if for example, a GSTC criterion stated that *water consumption should be measured, sources*

indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted, and the program's criteria did not state anything about measuring water use but did have criteria pertaining to decreasing overall consumption, that comparison would receive an "x" indicating that the program addressed the GSTC criterion to some extent, but not fully. The degree to which a criterion was "fully addressed" or "somewhat addressed" was essentially up to my discretion. However since these analyses were all performed by the same person within a relatively short time period, a degree of consistency was maintained.

While the Mohonk Agreement best practice standards and the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria were intended for sustainable and/or ecotourism certification programs, comparing green lodging programs with these standards is interesting for several reasons. First, the procedural framework for green lodging programs has the same components as any sustainable tourism certification program and should likewise be held up to best practice standards in the industry. Second, the initial intent of the GSTC was to provide standard practices for sustainable tourism for the lodging sector, obviously the target client of green lodging programs. In some instances green lodging programs (like Virginia Green) are expanding to include tourism businesses other than just lodging however, a step that makes them more similar to current sustainable tourism certification programs. And third, while the focus of green lodging programs is improving environmentally efficiency *within* the business, there is some indication that programs may in the near future begin to incorporate criteria focusing on other aspects more in line with sustainable tourism standards.

Information about the tourism certification programs as well as the criteria for each program comes from the triangulation of three sources: the programs' websites (including content on the websites themselves and documents published on the websites such as

application instructions, questionnaires and self-assessment forms), the programs' certification criteria (located on websites), and personal communication by email or phone with program coordinators (see Appendix D for a listing of information sources). Information about each program was first sought from the program website and published materials. Information that could not be found in this material or needed further clarification was summoned through email and phone communication with program contacts. Program coordinators for all programs (except the Adventure Green Alaska program) were interviewed by phone. These interviews were informal and the questions asked varied depending on what information I still needed to know about the program in order to fill in missing gaps.

I was unable to get in personal contact with the Adventure Green Alaska program, however all the necessary information for the analyses was available from the website. Because the program is so new and had not yet certified any businesses when the analyses were completed, some procedural aspects of the program were inferred based on the information available.

4. Results

4.1. Case Studies: US Tourism Certification Programs

4.1.1. Adventure Green Alaska

The Adventure Green Alaska (AGA) certification program was launched September 9, 2008 by the Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association (AWRTA), a nonprofit trade association representing over 300 wilderness-dependent businesses and communities. The certification program will be administered by Adventure Green Alaska, Inc., an Alaskan

nonprofit corporation. It is the first tourism certification program in Alaska and as stated in its guiding principles it is simple, affordable, and applies statewide.

AGA accepts applications from all tourism businesses operating in Alaska that “meet standards of economic, environmental, and social sustainability”. According to Kent John, AWRTA’s President and owner of the Great Alaska Adventure Lodge in Sterling, Alaska, AGA will “help promote businesses that are using green practices and encourage other businesses to do the same”.⁴

The AGA website makes information available including application instructions, the sustainability questionnaire, and frequently asked questions. The first businesses were awarded AGA certification at the March 2009 AWRTA Conference and currently there are three gold, four silver, and two bronze level certified businesses.

Certification process

To become certified, businesses are required to fill out a registration form, provide two references who can verify the quality, stability and sustainability of their business, complete the sustainability application in which they check off yes/no answers to questions, and pay a yearly certification fee. AGA program administrators review the final application and the board of directors approves the business. Those businesses who qualify receive use of the AGA logo and recognition in promotional materials, at events and on Adventure Green Alaska and Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association websites.

Qualification for certification

To be certified, businesses must first meet the following three basic criteria:

⁴ Adventure Green Alaska website: www.adventuregreenalaska.org, Accessed April 2009.

- The business complies with U.S. environmental, consumer protection, and labor laws while operating within the State of Alaska or its territorial waters.
- The business has a two-year operating history in Alaska.
- The business is a member of a tourism or community trade association (the Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association, convention & visitors bureau, Sustainable Travel International, etc.).

Businesses are then certified into gold, silver or bronze status base on the number of points they receive on their sustainability application. There are a total of 400 points possible from the listed criteria plus four extra credit sections (up to 25 points each) for additional sustainable business strategies, adding up to a total of 500 available points. To receive gold certification the business must receive 360 points or more, for silver 320 points or more, and for bronze 280 points or more. A business can therefore essentially be certified by fulfilling 56% of the available points. Because each question on the survey is worth a different number of points, a business certified with 280 points may be fulfilling a bit more or less than 56% of the listed criteria.

Monitoring compliance

AGA is a self-assessment certification program. It is the responsibility of the business to ensure that all program requirements are met. Compliance is monitored through random spot checks and solicitation of customer comments. Tourism business applications may also be posted on the AGA website to ensure transparency of business practices.

To renew certification after one year the business must resubmit an application and the application fee. To ensure continued improvement, the business must also submit a report stating what sustainability practices it has implemented and what its goals are for the next year.

Criteria outline

AGA’s criteria are divided into four broad categories:

- Local Communities and Economies
- The Environment
- Climate Change
- Alaska History and Culture

Table 4. SWOT Analysis for Adventure Green Alaska

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed in partnership with tourism business owners, industry consultants, and conservation group representatives • Program description and application conveniently available on AWRTA website • Accepts application from all tourism businesses operating in Alaska • Three different levels of certification • Sliding scale of fees, yearly basis • Compliance is monitored through random spot checks, and customer comments; 2 independent references must also be provided • Three core criteria are required for certification • Extra credit points may be earned for practices not already listed on the application • Ensures transparency by listing business sustainability practices on website (although these are not yet posted) • Businesses receive: logo, technical assistance and training, media exposure, coverage on AGA and AWRTA websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very new and may gain wide recognition • May lead to an increased awareness among consumers and private sector about triple bottom line sustainable tourism standards • Possibility to be accredited under the forthcoming sustainable tourism accreditation body
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation used to certify businesses • No baseline data is required • Business can be certified by obtaining only about 56% of available points • Missing 7 of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May compete with future national/global certification program/standard • Unknown consumer demand for AGA certification • Most likely will not meet accreditation standards in its current form

4.1.2. Travel Green Wisconsin

The Travel Green Wisconsin (TGW) certification program, launched in 2007 by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative, is the nation's first "green" travel certification program sponsored by a state tourism agency. It is a "voluntary program that reviews, certifies and recognizes tourism businesses and organizations that have made a commitment to reducing their environmental impact. Specifically the program encourages participants to evaluate their operations, set goals, and take specific actions towards environmental, social, and economic sustainability".⁵ The program is funded through application fees and the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, which seems fairly committed to continue funding for the program (Will Christianson, Outreach Coordinator, TGW, personal communication, March 2009). Currently there are only one and a half full time employees.

Travel Green Wisconsin certifies a variety of tourism businesses and organizations including accommodations, attractions, restaurants, shops, resorts, convention centers, golf courses, campgrounds, marinas, tour operators/leaders, events/festivals, chambers and convention & visitors bureaus. Currently there are 208 certified businesses broken down in the following categories: 85 accommodations, 40 attraction/convention centers, 20 shops, 11 resorts, 10 restaurants, 9 destination marketing organizations, 6 tourism operators/leaders, 3 golf courses, 3 cruise vessels, 2 campgrounds, 2 botanical gardens, 2 festival/events, 1 orchard, 1 marina, and 13 in the "other" category.

The website for Travel Green Wisconsin is comprehensive and well laid out. One section labeled "Business Listings" allows the viewer to search the certified participants based

⁵ Travel Green Wisconsin website: www.travelgreenwisconsin.com, Accessed April 2009.

on business category, city, or the green score for each business. Each business has a separate page on the Travel Green site that lists a summary of the business, a link to their website, their green score, a detailed list of their scorecard indicating how many points they earned in each section, and a summary of their innovative best practices. Currently the highest green score is 131 and the lowest is 33 (30 points are required for certification).

Certification process

To become certified a business must fill out a registration form (which asks for baseline environmental performance data), complete a checklist of questions stating whether the business already implements the practice or when it expects to implement the practice, and pay a yearly certification fee. Applications are reviewed by the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative. If the business meets all requirements, they receive use of the TGW logo and a website profile.

Qualification for certification

To earn certification, the business must fulfill 3 basic requirements:

- The business is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Each Travel Green Wisconsin applicant should be a model of regulatory compliance as well as environmental excellence.
- The business will allow certification documents to be posted on the Travel Green Wisconsin Web site. In addition, the business will make these documents available to the public, customers, and others upon request.
- The business is required to obtain at least 5 points in Section A, Communication and Education.

Applicants must also supply the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative with a Baseline Environmental Performance Assessment. The baseline collects information about the amount

of energy, fuel, water, and solid waste that the business consumed during the last calendar year. The business must then earn a minimum of 30 points out of about 139 available - more points indicate a “greener” business. Extra credit points (no limit stated) can be earned in each section for innovative best practices unique to their business. A business can earn points if they already comply with a practice listed on the application or if they plan to implement the practice within six months. According to the TGW Outreach Coordinator (Will Christianson, personal communication, March 2009), the “expected date of completion” option for fulfilling the criteria is the result of an effort to create a checklist that was “meaningful and achievable” for the businesses. It hopefully encourages them to commit to being a sustainable business and it gives them an additional opportunity to set goals for the future. Under the Wisconsin Travel Green scheme, businesses can essentially become certified by fulfilling about 21.6% of the available points (this does not include any extra credit points they may receive). Because some of the criteria are worth more points than others, the exact number of listed criteria fulfilled can be slightly more or less than 21.6%.

Monitoring compliance

TGW is a self-assessment certification program. It is the responsibility of each business to ensure all program requirements are met. In order to monitor compliance, the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative solicits feedback from customer comments. In addition, certification documents are posted on the Travel Green Wisconsin Web site and must be made available upon request to the public. The Outreach Coordinator noted that they would like to add spot checks to the TGW program in order to monitor businesses’ compliance with the criteria, but at this time they do not have the money to do so (Will Christianson, Outreach Coordinator TGW, personal communication, March 2009).

After one year businesses must be recertified by updating the registration form and checklist, paying the certification fee, reporting what sustainability practices have been achieved over the year, and listing goals for the following year to promote continuous improvement.

Criteria outline

TGW’s criteria are divided into nine categories:

- Communication and Education (Customers, Employees, Public)
- Waste Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling
- Energy Efficiency, Conservation, and Management
- Water Conservation and Wastewater Management
- Air Quality
- Wildlife and Landscape Conservation and Management
- Transportation
- Purchasing
- Local Community Benefits

Table 5. SWOT Analysis for Travel Green Wisconsin

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed through multi-stakeholder/sector process • Program description and application conveniently available on WI Travel Green website • Accepts applications from all tourism businesses and organizations operating in WI • Sliding scale of “greenness” based on points earned • Sliding scale of fees, yearly basis • Compliance monitored through customer feedback and public availability of application documents • 1-year baseline required for energy, fuel, water & solid waste • Three basic requirements must be fulfilled • Extra points may be earned by including innovative practices not already listed in application • Ensures transparency by listing business sustainability practices on website • Business receives: use of logo and website profile • Fairly stable funding source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly new program already with 200+ applicants, potential to grow • May lead to an increased awareness among consumers and private sector about triple-bottom line sustainable tourism standards • Potential to be accredited under the forthcoming sustainable tourism accreditation body

Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation used to certify businesses • Businesses can be certified by fulfilling less than 25% of listed criteria • Businesses can earn points for an intent to complete the practices rather than achievement • Businesses not required to show improvement over time • Missing 11 of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May compete with future national/global certification program/standard • Unknown consumer demand for TGW certification • Most likely will not meet accreditation standards in its current form

4.1.3. Virginia Green

Virginia Green (VG) is a statewide program whose mission is to reduce the environmental impacts of Virginia’s tourism industry. The program began in the Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) Office of Pollution Prevention (OPP) and is run as a partnership between the DEQ, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, and the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association. In addition to lodging, the Virginia Green program also certifies attractions, restaurants, convention centers, conference centers, visitor centers & rest areas, events, and travel & partner organizations (any organization or business that is associated with tourism including vendors, tour companies, service providers, convention & visitor bureaus, hotel and B&B associations, etc). In addition, certification is coming soon for wineries and golf courses.

Virginia Green Lodging (VGL), the first program established in the Virginia Green program, accepted the first lodging facilities in September 2006 and now has about 250 participants. There are also 57 restaurants, 52 travel and partner organizations, 26 convention and conference centers, 24 attractions, 4 visitor centers, and a varying number of green events each year that are certified by Virginia Green. The program appears to be doing well as indicated by a note on the Virginia Green website saying “Thanks so much for your interest in

Virginia Green! So many of you have joined the program recently that it has created a slight backlog in our application processing time. It may take a couple of weeks for us to process your application, but you will hear from us soon”.⁶ A new automated online system is currently being developed for Virginia Green, making it easier for customers to search the Virginia is for Lovers website for VG certified facilities (Rachel Bullene and Sharon Baxter, VGL, personal communication, March 2009)

In marketing to potential applicants, Virginia Green puts most of the emphasis on its potential to save the businesses and organizations money. Mentioned on one fact sheet are concerns that a business may have about the certification making them appear too “green” or like “some sort of radical, left-wingist organization”. Also the valid concern that environmental improvement projects may cost them money is countered by stating the fact that many times operational changes can actually save the facility money.

VG is funded through various means including the OPP general funds and with EPA grants. The number of staff working with the Virginia Green program was difficult to identify because people from all different sectors seem to take on different roles to keep the program running.

Certification process

To receive the Virginia Green status, the business must complete the application that corresponds to their business category and email it to Virginia Green. The application consists of checking boxes to state that the business complies with certain core criteria. In addition, the business is asked to give more detail about the specific green activities they practice under the core criteria categories. There is no fee for certification. Virginia Green reviews the

⁶ Virginia Green website: www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/virginiagreen/lodging.html, Accessed April 2009.

application and if the business qualifies they will be profiled on the Virginia Green website and given use of the logo.

Qualification for certification

For each business category there is a list of five core criteria that the business must comply with. As long as the business fulfills these criteria and works for or with the tourism industry, they are eligible to receive Virginia Green status.

The minimum requirements for Virginia Green Lodging Participants are:

- Offer optional linen service – sheets and towels are not automatically changed every day
- Recycle and reduce waste – strive to at least provide the opportunity for guests to recycle cans, bottles, etc.; facilities should have a written explanation available for the recycling opportunities they provide, and staff should be able to address this with guests
- Use water efficiently – facility must have a plan for conserving water that should consider water-saving faucets, showerheads and toilets, leak detection and effective landscape watering plan
- Conserve energy – facility must have a plan in place that encourages the replacement of lighting and equipment to energy-efficient alternatives
- Offer a green events package - facility must offer a “green” or “environmentally-friendly” package for conferences, meetings and other events and at a minimum must be able to provide recycling at such events and be willing to work with “environmentally-aware” customers on other techniques to reduce waste

Monitoring compliance

VG is a self-assessment certification program meaning that there is no second or third party monitoring compliance. Facilities must “pledge” on their application that they do indeed practice the stated activity. Virginia Green does encourage businesses to give their

“environmental profiles” to customers for feedback, however VG never sees the customer feedback as all comments or complaints are directed to the facilities themselves (Rachel Bullene and Sharon Baxter, VGL, personal communication, March 2009). Currently there is no recertification process, however there are plans to automate the entire application system through the Virginia Tourism website and once that happens an annual recertification process will begin. Through the new online system there could also be the opportunity for customers to provide feedback about the Virginia Green facilities. There are no spot checks of certified businesses and there does not seem to be plans for including them in the future. Rather, VG relies on the Tourism Corporation and local convention and visitor bureaus to keep an eye out on the businesses (Rachel Bullene and Sharon Baxter, VGL, personal communication, March 2009).

Criteria outline

The Virginia Green criteria are slightly different for each type of entity that is certified. For example the required criteria for restaurants include eliminating the use of Styrofoam and recycling grease, while the required criteria for hotels include an optional linen service. In all cases the core criteria for certification are rather vague and interpretation is mostly left up to each business as to whether or not they comply with it. The criteria are currently being “redefined” and made more specific, however. For example, facilities will soon have to list who their recycling vendor is rather than simply claiming that they recycle (Rachel Bullene and Sharon Baxter, VGL, personal communication, March 2009). The core criteria for VG Hotels and Lodging Facilities are the same as the minimum requirements listed above.

Table 6. SWOT Analysis for Virginia Green

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepts application from a variety of tourism businesses and organizations • Certification is free for businesses • Program application and minimal description are available on website • Ensures transparency by listing business' individualized "green" profile and contact information on website • Great website for leading tourists to VG facilities • Business receives: certificate, window decal and logo to use on promotional material • Fairly reliable funding (especially considering EPA's current interest in green standards) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears to be adding new participants quickly • Opportunity to educate tourism industry about green practices
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation used to certify businesses • No monitoring of businesses • No motivation provided for improvement of businesses • Only one level of certification available • Five core criteria are vague and ill-defined, leaving the interpretation up to each business • OPP staff running program lack experience working with non-regulatory facilities like lodging • Businesses not required to meet or exceed regulatory compliance • Does not comply with the majority of best practice procedural standards for tourism certification schemes. • Missing 25 of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May compete with future national/global certification program/standard • Unknown consumer demand • Lack of staff resources • Will not meet accreditation standards in its current form

4.1.4. Florida Green Lodging

Florida's Green Lodging (FGL) program was established in 2004 by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with the stated intent of "recognizing and rewarding environmentally conscientious lodging facilities in the state".⁷ The program promotes three key benefits that a facility will earn when it becomes designated: it will save

⁷ Florida Green Lodging website: www.dep.state.fl.us/greenlodging, Accessed April 2009.

money and reduce utility costs, it will have the ability to market to a new audience (the new audience is expected to be eco-friendly travelers explicitly stated as being associated with ecotourism), and it will have free advertising from the FGL program. On its application page it states, however, that the “main purpose of the designation program is to encourage hotels to understand and improve their environmental performance rather than simply implement a few green practices.” As a response to criticisms claiming the criteria aren’t strict enough, the FGL Program Coordinator argues that FGL is the first step for many of these hotels and it is important to keep in mind that the hotels’ first priority always has to be the guest (Karen Moore, Green Lodging Coordinator, FGL, personal communication, March 2009).

The program and the three staff members who run FGL are funded through the Florida state budget and part of the website giving technical advice is funded through EPA grants. Initially the program did not have the statutory authority to call itself a “certification” program, so it used the term “designation” instead. Today it has the authority to legally be called a certification program but the DEP has decided to continue using the name “designated hotel”.

The program has grown exponentially since its inception, possibly with the help of a 2007 Executive Order and a 2008 House Bill requiring all Florida state agencies to use Florida Green Lodging facilities for meetings and conferences. Encouraging lodging facilities of all sizes to join, the program currently has 419 designated properties and almost as many applicants in the certification process. Of those 419 designated properties, only about twelve have obtained Two Palm status and one has Three Palm status, the highest level of certification.

Certification process

In order for a property to become Florida Green Lodging designated, the first required steps are to identify an Environmental Champion (a liaison between the program and the lodging facility), obtain approval from the appropriate management, and create a Green Team with members from different operational areas of the lodging facility. The Green Team then needs to complete and submit an Environmental Self-Assessment form. An on-site visit from a trained FGL assessor to ensure that the facility meets the program requirements is the final step in becoming a designated Florida Green Lodging facility. If the facility meets the required criteria, it receives use of the FGL logo and advertising on the website. The application process and certification are free for all levels of certification.

Qualification for certification

There are three levels of certification that a facility may obtain: One, Two and Three Palm status. For One Palm status the facility must meet certain core activities that represent a minimum set of best management practices in the areas of communication, water conservation, energy efficiency, waste reduction and clean air. They must also get upper management approval, form a Green Team, and operate in compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations.

The process is an incremental one in that facilities move from one level to the next over a period of time. Facilities *are required* to move from One Palm to Two Palm status within two years of obtaining One Palm status; if they fail to do this, they become inactive and are no longer eligible to use the Florida Green Lodging logo. Two Palm status requires the submission of one year of baseline data for occupancy rate, water consumed, wastewater generated, energy used, waste disposed, and hazardous waste generated. The facility must

also establish goals and identify environmental improvement projects. To achieve Two Palm status the facility must first have One Palm status for at least 12 consecutive months and they also must demonstrate a decrease in energy and water consumption and a reduction in waste disposal based on a year long environmental baseline assessment.

Three Palm status is achieved by maintaining Two Palm status for three consecutive years and maintaining or improving environmental sustainability practices. The designated property must implement a sustainability project within the community and must also prove to FGL why they deserve the prestigious Three Palm status. For a facility to achieve a Three Palm level, it must be “obvious by walking into the building that the business is committed to environmentally friendly practices” (Karen Moore, Green Lodging Coordinator, FGL, personal communication, March 2009).

Monitoring compliance

Compliance with Florida Green Lodging program standards is determined by a FGL trained assessor (or a contractor who has been trained by FGL) who performs an on-site assessment of each facility prior to certification. Because the audit is sometimes performed by the same organization that certifies facilities (the awarding body) and sometimes by consultants, FGL is a second or third-party certification. When the program first began in 2004, FGL assessors returned to facilities once a year to check compliance; however due to the current large number of designated facilities and a lack of funding, they are no longer able to do so. The process of recertification, however, is built into the first couple years of the program when the facility must move to Two Palm status. And at this point, an on-site assessment is performed. Compliance over the year is therefore mostly monitored by online

customer comments. There is a Green Lodging Survey on the FGL website that guests can fill out and submit to FGL to report any infractions.

Criteria outline

The criteria for FGL have recently been updated, but the administrators are waiting to implement it until it can be compared to new government standards that are expected to be released shortly. In the future the criteria may be updated to include standards that take into account a hotel's carbon footprint and its impact on wildlife species (Karen Moore, Green Lodging Coordinator, FGL, personal communication, March 2009). For now though, the criteria categories are as follows:

- Communication
- Water Conservation
- Energy Efficiency
- Waste Reduction
- Clean Air Practices

Table 7. SWOT Analysis for Florida Green Lodging Program

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification is free for businesses • Program application, environmental assessment form, program description are available on FGL website • Certification is second-party (rather than self evaluation); audit performed by a trained FGL assessor • Baseline data is required for water, energy and waste • Three levels of certification are available • Businesses receive: contact information posted on FGL website and use of logo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great potential for reaching lodging industry (~5,000 hotels in state) and increasing green practices • Popular program with Florida lodging industry, potential to expand • Possibility of including more criteria in the future for 2 Palm and 3 Palm status • State government gives preference to FGL designated businesses for employee travel needs
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble with controlling use of the logo • Business sustainability practices not listed on website, lacks transparency (although self-assessment and planning checklist has to be made available to public on request) • Missing 25 of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May compete with future national/global certification program/standard • Funding source unreliable, cutbacks in budget means program must choose what services it can/can't provide • Will not meet accreditation standards in its current form

4.2. Comparison of Case Studies to Mohonk Best Practice Procedural Standards

The following analysis is based on a comparison of the procedural aspects of each case study to the best practice standards laid out in the Mohonk Agreement (see Table 8). Overall the AGA, TGW and FGL programs fulfill the majority of best practice standards - 15, 14 and 12 respectively out of 17 total. VGL falls short in a number of key areas including not being developed in a fully participative manner, not providing a way to withdraw certification in the event of non-compliance (because there is currently no recertification phase), and not having a built in method encouraging businesses to continually improve over time. VGL fulfills eight of the 17 best practice standards.

Because the majority of green lodging programs' criteria focus on ecoefficiency, neither VGL nor FGL meet the standards that deal with triple bottom line principles. And although none of the certification programs are fully *independent from the parties being certified, the technical assistance, and the assessment body*, FGL is the closest of all the programs to meeting the assessment and auditing standard as it performs a second-party assessment of all businesses prior to certification by suitably trained auditors.

Table 8. Comparison of case studies to Mohonk best practice procedural standards

AGA: Adventure Green Alaska; TGW: Travel Green Wisconsin;
 VGL: Virginia Green Lodging; FGL: Florida Green Lodging

Mohonk Agreement Standards	AGA	TGW	VGL	FGL
<i>The scheme should:</i>				
be developed through a participatory, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral process	✓	✓	most likely no	✓
provide tangible benefits to tourism providers	✓	✓	✓	✓
set minimum standards while encouraging and rewarding best practice	✓	✓	✓	✓
provide a process to withdraw certification in the event of non-compliance	✓	✓	No	✓
establish control of existing/new seals/logos in terms of appropriate use	✓ ?	most likely	not really	difficult to do
include provisions for technical assistance	✓	No	✓	✓
be designed such that there is motivation for continual improvement of the scheme	✓	✓	✓	✓
be designed such that there is motivation for continual improvement of the certified business	✓	✓	No	✓
<i>The criteria should:</i>				
provide the mechanism(s) to meet the stated objective(s)	✓	✓	✓	✓
meet and preferably exceed regulatory compliance	✓	✓	No	No (enviro. compliance only)
be adapted to recognizing local/regional ecological, social and economic conditions and local sustainable development efforts	✓	✓	No	No (missing socioeconomic criteria)
be subject to a periodic review	✓	✓	✓	✓
be principally performance-based and include environmental, social and economic management process elements	✓	✓	No	No
<i>To ensure integrity, the certification program should:</i>				
be transparent and involve an appeals process	✓	✓	✓	✓
be independent of the parties being certified and of technical assistance and assessment bodies	No	No	No	No
require audits by suitably trained auditors	No	No	No	✓
require mechanisms for consumer and local community feedback	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of best practice standards fulfilled (17 total)	15	14	8	12

* See Appendix B for complete list of Mohonk Agreement Standards

Below is a more detailed description of the comparison between four of the best practice standards and the four case study programs.

1. The scheme should establish control of existing/new seals/logos in terms of appropriate use.

This standard should ensure that businesses whom are already certified are using the logo appropriately, and also that the logo has been awarded to them by credible and appropriate means. Here I assume that the methods each program uses for certification are “appropriate” (the credibility of their certification method is examined further in best practice standard #4) and I evaluate programs based on what the program coordinators answered for this question.

Considering the AGA program is so new, it is difficult to say whether they have been able to establish control of their logo. However, based on their published information regarding use of the logo as well as their intended use of random spot checks to check compliance, they are given the benefit of the doubt. The other entries for this comparison were based on personal communications with the program coordinators. The TGW program claims they have fairly good control over their logo (Will Christianson, Outreach Coordinator TGW, personal communication, March 2009), although without spot checks on businesses, they cannot necessarily ensure that businesses are in compliance with program requirements. The Florida program admitted that they have trouble controlling the use of their logo (Karen Moore, Green Lodging Coordinator, FGL, March 2009), and the VGL program at this time doesn't perform any monitoring of businesses or have a recertification process through which they can check-up on businesses.

2. The scheme should include provisions for technical assistance.

The TGW program is the only case study that doesn't provide technical assistance. They assert the reason for this is because TGW is run by the Department of Tourism which is a marketing agency, not a regulatory agency, and they do not have the expertise to provide technical information (Will Christianson, Outreach Coordinator TGW, personal communication, March 2009). TGW does, however, have links on their website offering ideas about how to green a business, and they partner with the UW land grant extension and Focus on Energy whom provide overall program support.

VGL provides support on a request only basis to certified hotels and often to convention and visitors bureaus. When the VGL program began they were able to provide more one-on-one support to the facilities, but as the numbers of certified facilities has increased, they haven't had enough resources to continue doing so (Rachel Bullene and Sharon Baxter, VGL, personal communication March 2009).

To ensure the provision of technical support for Florida facilities, FGL assigns each business a liaison to assist them with the application process and answer any questions they may have over the phone. FGL partners like Progress Energy and the Carpet and Rug Institute offer technical support at a reduced cost or in some cases at no cost to certified facilities. In addition, the FGL program has an interactive website providing facilities with best management practices for minimizing solid and hazardous waste, reducing energy and water consumption, and improving indoor air quality.

3. *The scheme should be designed such that there is motivation for continual improvement of the certified business.*

Both the AGA and FGL offer three different levels of certification. While in the Alaska program a business may move up a level by obtaining more points on its sustainability application, in the Florida program businesses are *required* to move to the second level and comply with additional requirements after one year. The TGW program takes a different approach by placing businesses on a sliding green scale on which they move up in “greenness” if they obtain more points on their application. The number of points they can receive is essentially endless as extra credit points may be added on for innovative practices. This approach and the fact that businesses can easily identify the green scores of others on the TGW website may motivate businesses to increase their score in an effort to out compete others. Although most Travel Green Wisconsin certified businesses do increase their score over time, improvement is not a requirement for recertification (Will Christianson, Outreach Coordinator TGW, personal communication, March 2009).

Virginia Green has only one level of certification, but the program claims that the market produces enough competition between businesses to cause them to improve their practices as needed (Rachel Bullene and Sharon Baxter, VGL, personal communication March 2009). In addition to AGA, TGW and FGL, six other US state-level programs also offer different levels of certification that allow businesses to move up over time. Six programs besides VGL have only one level of certification.

An important aspect of motivating businesses to improve over time is monitoring or recertification. During the annual recertification period both TGW and AGA require businesses to report what sustainability practices they have implemented over the last year

and make goals for the coming year. The Virginia Green program on the other hand does not currently have a recertification program in place. Without recertification or monitoring of certified businesses, there is no motivation for businesses to implement new sustainability practices since they essentially hold the certification indefinitely.

As an additional motivation for businesses to green their operations, Travel Green Wisconsin is working on employing a reimbursement program whereby certified businesses would receive discounts or financial assistance if they, for example, bought Energy Star appliances for their business.

4. To ensure integrity the certification program should be independent of the parties being certified and of technical assistance and assessment bodies; it should also require audits by suitably trained auditors.

The Alaska, Virginia, and Wisconsin programs are all self-evaluation programs and therefore do not have suitably trained auditors as the auditors are essentially the business owners themselves. When third-party assessment is not possible because of cost or other factors like extended geographical distances between businesses, programs may use alternative forms of assessment. For example Alaska requires the business to submit the names and contacts of two independent references who can verify the accuracy of the application. Wisconsin and Virginia both require that businesses post their application online or at least make it available to the public if asked for it.

The Florida program is the only one of the case studies that has a second/third-party assessment. The second-party assessors are the FGL staff themselves and the third-party assessors are engineers hired by FGL to assist with audits for businesses that are far away from where FGL staff work.

In total, 11 out of 16 US state-level programs will award certification and the use of an ecolabel based on a business' self-evaluation. Some of these programs do, however, require site assessments after certification or second-party assessment to obtain a higher level of certification. The other five programs require second or third-party assessment prior to certification.

4.3. Comparison of Case Studies to the GSTC

The following analysis is based on a comparison of the case studies' criteria to the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (see Table 9). It is performed on all core (required) criteria listed by each program in addition to criteria listed on their application questionnaires. Certification by these programs works in such a way that businesses do not usually need to fulfill all of the listed criteria in order to be certified. The case studies' criteria used for each comparison was therefore a listing of practices that businesses *could* potentially fulfill, but don't necessarily *have to* fulfill in order to become certified. Some programs will certify a business even if less than half of the listed criteria are met (ex. Travel Green Wisconsin); while some programs require more than 50% of the listed criteria to be met (ex. Adventure Green Alaska). In some instances there are core criteria that *must* be fulfilled, but these criteria are usually minimal.

The environmental criteria have been grouped into two groups labeled Eco-efficiency/Natural Resources and Biodiversity Protection in order to further distinguish between the environmental criteria. Eco-efficiency criteria revolve around the concept that money can be saved by implementing specific sustainability practices that use fewer resources and produce less pollution.

Table 9. Comparison of case studies to Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

		Adventure Green Alaska	Travel Green Wisconsin	Virginia Green Lodging	Florida Green Lodging	
		AGA	TGW	VGL	FGL	
Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria						
Sustainable Management	A.1 Sustainability management system	X				
	A.2 Legislation and regulations	X	X		x	
	A.3 Personnel receive periodic training	x	x	x	x	
	A.4 Customer satisfaction	x	x		x	
	A.5 Promotional materials					
	Buildings and infrastructure:					
	A.6.1 Comply with local zoning					
	A.6.2 Respect the natural or cultural heritage		x	x		
	A.6.3 Sustainable construction		X	x		
	A.6.4 Persons with special needs					
A.7 Interpretation of natural areas & culture	X	x				
Socioeconomic	B.1 Community development	X	X			
	B.2 Local employment	x	x			
	B.3 Local purchasing	x	X	x		
	B.4 Support local small entrepreneurs	x	X			
	B.5 A code of conduct	X				
	B.6 Commercial exploitation policy	x	x			
	B.7 Equitable hiring	x	x			
	B.8 Legal protection of employees	x	x			
	B.9 The activities of the company	x				
Cultural	C.1 Code of behavior	X				
	C.2 Historical and archeological artifacts	x				
	C.3 Protection of sites	x				
	C.4 Uses elements of local art	x	x			
Environmental	Eco-efficiency	D.1.1 Purchasing policy favors	X	X	X	x
		D.1.2 Disposable and consumable goods	x	X	X	x
		D.1.3 Energy consumption	x	x	X	X
		D.1.4 Water consumption	x	X	X	X
		D.2.1 Greenhouse gas emissions	x	X	x	x
	Natural resources	D.2.2 Wastewater		X		x
		D.2.3 Solid waste management plan		X	X	X
		D.2.4 Use of harmful substances	X	X	X	x
		D.2.5 Business implements practices	x	x	x	x
		D.3.1 Wildlife species	x			
	Biodiversity protection	D.3.2 No captive wildlife is held	x			
		D.3.3 Native species for landscaping	X	X		
		D.3.4 Biodiversity conservation	x	x		
		D.3.5 Interactions with wildlife	x	X		

* For detailed listing of Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria see Appendix C

Two different summaries of the comparisons between the programs' criteria and the GSTC are provided below. Figure 3 indicates what percentage of the GSTC are either explicitly addressed (represented in Table 9 by "X") or somewhat addressed (represented in Table 9 by "x") in the programs' criteria. So for example, the AGA program's criteria mentions 50% of the Sustainable Management criteria from the GSTC; and the TGW and FGL programs' criteria addresses 100% of the eco-efficiency criteria.

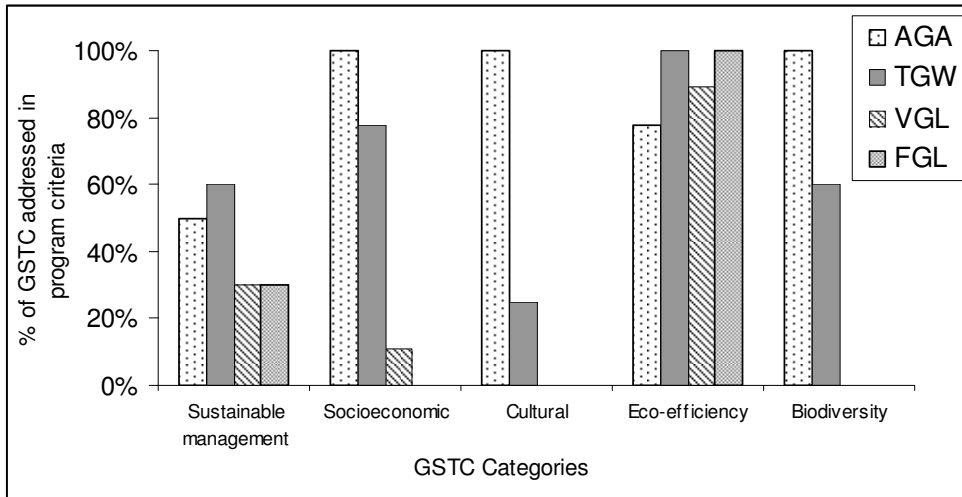


Figure 3. Percent of GST Criteria addressed in program criteria

Evident from this summary is that all four programs address most of the eco-efficiency criteria and at least some of the sustainable management criteria. Neither the VGL nor FGL programs address any cultural or biodiversity criteria. The socioeconomic criteria addressed by VGL is for local purchasing.

Figure 4 is a summary of the same data but here *the extent* to which the programs' criteria address the GSTC is taken into account and expressed. For this summary the "X"s in Table 9 were converted to 2's, the "x"s were converted to 1's, and blank boxes equaled 0.

Percentages represent the number of points the program’s criteria received out of 74 total (each criterion was worth 2 points).

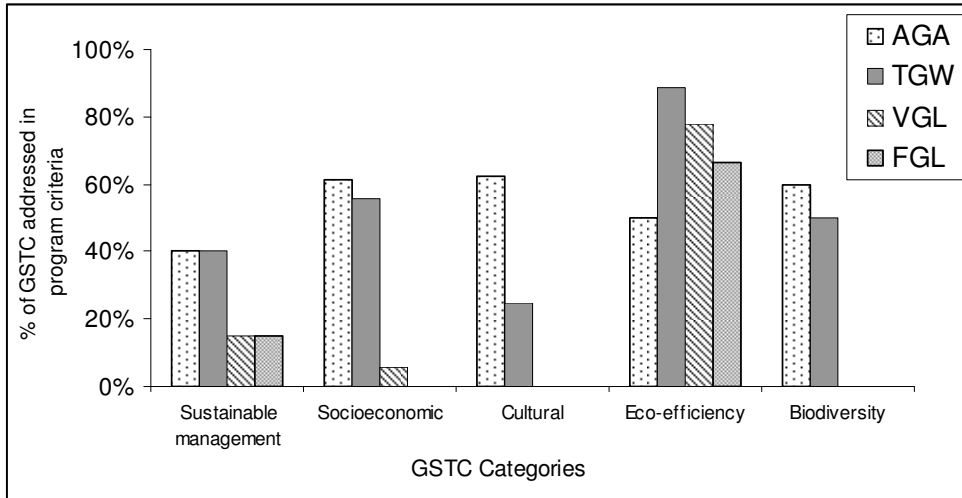


Figure 4. Extent to which program criteria address the GST Criteria

This summary essentially represents how well the programs’ criteria complies with the minimum standards for sustainable tourism as laid out in the GSTC. For example, in the eco-efficiency category, AGA’s criteria mentions reducing water and energy use, but does not require that it be measured as the GSTC do. AGA therefore does not completely comply with those criteria and receives a lower score in this summary (Figure 4) for the eco-efficiency category than in the first summary (Figure 3).

It is also interesting to note those Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria that none of the four programs address in their certification criteria. These criteria are:

- A.5. Promotional materials are accurate and complete and do not promise more than can be delivered by the business.
- A.6. Design and construction of buildings and infrastructure:
 - A.6.1. comply with local zoning and protected or heritage area requirements;
 - A.6.4. provide access for persons with special needs.

GSTC that were only addressed in one of the four programs are:

- A.1. The company has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, sociocultural, quality, health, and safety issues.
- B.5. A code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed, with the consent of and in collaboration with the community.
- B.9. The activities of the company do not jeopardize the provision of basic services, such as water, energy, or sanitation, to neighboring communities.
- C.1. The company follows established guidelines or a code of behavior for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimize visitor impact and maximize enjoyment.
- C.2. Historical and archeological artifacts are not sold, traded, or displayed, except as permitted by law.
- C.3. The business contributes to the protection of local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and does not impede access to them by local residents.
- D.3.1. Wildlife species are only harvested from the wild, consumed, displayed, sold, or internationally traded, as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable.
- D.3.2. No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities, and living specimens of protected wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them.

5. Discussion

5.1. Best Practice Procedural Standards

All certification programs, no matter what they are certifying or what kind of criteria they use, should follow some set of best practice standards in terms of operational and procedural aspects. In the four case studies presented here, the AGA, TGW, and FGL programs exhibit a majority of the Mohonk Agreement best practice standards while the VGL program falls short on even half of these standards.

The fact that almost all of the Mohonk Agreement best practice standards are present in at least one of the case study programs indicates that these standards are achievable for a US state-level certification program. The only standard that none of the programs fulfill is the

one suggesting that certification bodies should be independent of the auditors and the certified parties. This raises a red flag about the feasibility of US state-level certification programs being able to comply with this particular criterion. Given the staff and financial restraints of these programs, it seems unlikely that a program will be able to comply with all of these standards collectively.

Following is a detailed explanation of four of the best practice standards that programs had difficulty complying with. The discussion in some instances is extended to include all US state-level tourism certification programs.

1. The scheme should establish control of existing/new seals/logos in terms of appropriate use.

Establishing control over the use of logos (or ecolabels) is important in ensuring credibility and trustworthiness of the logo brand. All of the programs indicate on their website that in the event a business is unwilling or unable to meet the program requirements, they will be required to give up the right to use the certification name and logo. This may be easier said than done, however, due to the inability of the certification program to actually monitor and enforce regulations at all businesses. Additionally, since most of the programs rely on self-assessment and customer feedback, the programs may not know if the logo is being used inappropriately unless a customer makes a report. Like the Wisconsin program, most programs assume that if their logo is being used inappropriately, or by a business that is not certified, they will hear about it by word of mouth. Both Florida and Wisconsin mentioned that they thought about trade marking their logos to ensure better control, but neither has done so.

In order to ensure the control and appropriate use of program logos the following procedures should be considered: a credible assessment of businesses prior to certification, a recertification period including a check-up on compliance, random spot checks of businesses, solicitation of customer comments by the certification program about business practices, and provision of clear instructions to the certified businesses on appropriate logo use. Given that all of these procedures, except the last one, require substantial staff and financial resources, it is no surprise that programs have difficulty establishing control of their logos.

2. The scheme should include provisions for technical assistance.

Technical assistance may be provided to both certified businesses so that they may improve their sustainability practices, and to non-certified businesses so they may become eligible for certification. Support is offered in person by way of site visits, over the phone, or on a website. A few state-level certification programs are administered by environmental government agencies and therefore already have the expertise to assist businesses with improving their business practices related to eco-efficiency standards. Other programs administered by tourism departments or non-profit corporations will have to form partnerships with organizations offering technical support as TGW has done.

For these four case studies and presumably most of the other US state-level certification programs, technical support and assistance is typically only offered to businesses as a way to improve their eco-efficiency standards. As demand for ethical products and services increases and tourism businesses start to incorporate triple bottom line sustainability practices into their operations, however, outside support and assistance will also be needed to

help measure and mitigate social, cultural and economic implications of businesses – aspects considered much more difficult to measure than environmental impacts.

Two programs, FLG and VGL, mentioned that when funding is limited, technical support is often set aside for other more necessary program operations. Additionally, when the number of certified businesses continues to increase over time, the program may at some point not have enough resources to provide assistance to everyone. In the case of VGL, this means that technical assistance is only offered on a request basis, rather than provided to all businesses. The provision of technical support therefore depends once again on whether or not the certification program has the staff and financial resources and/or technical expertise to offer such information.

3. The scheme should be designed such that there is motivation for continual improvement of the certified business.

It is important that certified businesses are continually working to improve their sustainability practices in order to stay updated with the most current practices. In some of the schemes, businesses are certified initially with fairly non-demanding criteria in order to promote initial acceptance to the program and gain their commitment to sustainable practices. Over time, however, the businesses should show improvement in order to remain certified and to demonstrate continued commitment to the program. There are a number of different ways that programs have been designed to encourage improvement of certified businesses. One of the most common ways is to offer different levels of certification. Being able to attain a more prestigious (or “greener”) level of certification provides the incentive for businesses to improve their sustainability practices. This program aspect does have its limitations in

encouraging improvement, however, especially for those businesses already certified at the highest level.

As shown by the four case studies presented here, there are other ways a program may encourage improvement among certified businesses. A scale of greenness rather than various levels of certification is one example. With this technique it is important to set minimum certification requirements high enough so that all businesses granted use of the logo meet some set of sustainability standards. Other procedural aspects of a program that encourage businesses to improve include monitoring or recertification, requiring businesses to state what sustainability practices they have implemented since the last certification period and make goals for the coming year, provide reimbursements or financial incentives to businesses for implementing sustainable practices, and ensure businesses sustainability practices or level of certification is visible to the public to encourage self-induced competition among businesses.

4. To ensure integrity the certification program should be independent of the parties being certified and of technical assistance and assessment body; it should also require audits by suitably trained auditors.

Certification programs should be independent of the parties being certified. However for programs like AGA that were developed by non-profit trade associations representing tourism businesses, this may prove to be a challenge. On the board of directors of AGA for example, is one of the owners of a newly certified tour company. It seems reasonable that the initiators of sustainable or ecotourism certification programs will be those with the most expertise in the industry – the owners of tourism businesses. However having certified parties

who are also involved with the certification program can reduce the credibility of the program.

Third-party certification whereby an assessment of the business being certified is done independently of both the applicant and the awarding body is a key aspect of any credible certification program. In addition, the assessors must be adequately trained so that the method is reliable and equivalent for each business. Because the cost of this type of certification is high, often times certification programs will be forced to use either self-evaluation or second-party certification. In fact the large majority (eleven out of sixteen) of US state-level programs and one of the global-level programs (STEP) will grant at least some level of certification based on self-assessment alone. Although allowing self-assessment of businesses does not give much credibility to the program or the ecolabel, it does have its advantages in that it keeps operating costs low thereby keeping costs of certification low, it encourages admission to the program, and it promotes ownership of the process. The claim that self-assessment certification programs are beneficial because they are a good way to teach eco-efficiency practices to businesses may not be as strong anymore, however, as there are plenty of other ways available to get this same information (Rome et al. 2006).

For those programs that use self-assessment as the primary means through which certification is granted, there are other techniques that can at least be used to help ensure businesses are in compliance with the program's criteria. These techniques include: spot checks, telephone interviews, requiring businesses to submit names of independent references verifying their application, requiring they submit examples of marketing materials, and making each business' certification application available to the public.

Budget cuts and funding issues are noted by the Florida program as its biggest challenge. In order to maintain the important second/third-party audits it is forced to cut other parts of the program like technical support or educational components when funding is low (Karen Moore, Green Lodging Coordinator, FGL, March 2009). This example and the fact that so many certification programs currently use self-assessment begs the question, is it really realistic for programs to use third-party assessment? And therefore would it be realistic for an accreditation body to require this as a standard for accreditation?

Experts in the tourism certification field seem to think that the risk of losing credibility by allowing self-assessments isn't worth the savings from less frequent, or non-existent audits. "Many so-called certification programs coming on line (i.e. Green Wisconsin) that rely solely on self-check 'audits' are in reality nothing more than statements of self-commitment and suitable only for awareness-raising purposes rather than quality assurance. As programs downgrade audit procedures to reduce costs, their reliability diminishes" (Rome et al. 2006, p11). It seems probable then that regular, independent (third or at least second-party) audits of businesses will be a requirement for tourism accreditation. Held under increasing scrutiny, tourism certification programs, even those without much of a prospect for accreditation, will have to find a way to include these independent audits.

5.2. Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

As previously mentioned, the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are envisioned to serve as the common set of baseline criteria with which to accredit certification programs and

as the “minimum standard that any tourism business should aspire to reach in order to protect and sustain the world’s natural and cultural resources”.⁸

The results of the analysis comparing the case studies’ criteria to the GSTC indicate that none of the four programs’ criteria contain 100% of the GSTC. Unlike the typical green lodging programs though, the AGA and TGW attempt to include socioeconomic, cultural and biodiversity criteria in addition to the typical eco-efficiency criteria.

Also evident from the analysis of these four case studies is that the minimum criteria requirements for certification are fairly lenient (Table 10). Even in those programs’ criteria that contain many of the GSTC, only a portion (and sometimes an extremely small portion) of the criteria listed on the application are required to be fulfilled in order for a business to be certified. In setting minimum criteria requirements a program must keep in mind that if they set them too high, or they are too complicated, businesses won’t be able to enter the scheme; however if they are set too low, the risk of greenwashing prevails.

⁸ Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria website: www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org, Accessed April 2009.

Table 10. Minimum criteria requirements for certification

AGA	TGW	VGL	FGL
<p>3 core criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business complies with U.S. environmental, consumer protection, and labor laws while operating within the State of AK or its territorial waters. The business has a two-year operating history in AK. The business is a member of a tourism or community trade association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 400 points available for AGA listed criteria 25 extra credit points in 4 sections = 100 pts Total: 500 points available <p>Points required for certification: 280: bronze level 320: silver level 360: gold level</p>	<p>1-year baseline data required for energy, water & solid waste</p> <p>3 core criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Each TGW applicant should be a model of regulatory compliance as well as environmental excellence. The business will allow certification documents to be posted on the TGW Web site). Documents will be available to the public, customers, and others upon request. The business is required to obtain at least 5 points in Section A, Communication and Education. about 140 points available for TGW listed criteria + extra credit points (no stated limit) <p>Points required for certification: 30</p>	<p>Comply with the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer optional linen service Recycle and reduce waste Use water efficiently Conserve energy Offer a green events package <p>(see Section 4.1.3 for detailed explanation of criteria)</p>	<p><u>1 Palm status</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Communication (5 of 5 required practices) Water Conservation (3 of 7 required practices) Energy Efficiency (2 of 6 required practices) Waste Reduction (4 of 4 practices required) Clean Air Practices (3 of 3 required practices) <p><u>2 Palm status</u></p> <p>Also requires: 1-year baseline data required for water, wastewater, energy, waste disposed, hazardous waste</p>

As previously noted there were a few GSTC that were either not addressed in any of the four programs' criteria, or were only addressed in one of the programs' criteria.

Explanations for why these particular GSTC are missing from the programs' criteria as well as why particular categories of criteria are missing from certain programs all together may include the following reasonings.

1. It never occurred to the certification program's designer to include it.

- A.5. Promotional materials are accurate and complete and do not promise more than can be delivered by the business.

Criterion such as A.5 would be easy enough for a certification program to add if it wanted to and also fairly easy to assess a business' compliance with.

2. The criterion simply isn't applicable to the type of business that the program aims to certify.

- B.5. A code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed, with the consent of and in collaboration with the community.
- C.1. The company follows established guidelines or a code of behavior for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimize visitor impact and maximize enjoyment.

For a lodging facility in the US, these criteria might not have any significance and therefore they would not be included in a certification program's criteria whose main audience are US hotels. Given that the GSTC are global criteria it can be expected that not all GSTC will be completely applicable to every location or circumstance. It is assumed that the accreditation standards would take this in account when working to accredit certification programs.

3. The criterion/criteria category was not applicable to the mission or intent of the program.

It is obvious from a quick review of US state-level tourism certification programs that the intent of the majority of the programs is to save businesses money by implementing eco-efficiency standards. These programs are incentive-based, focus on internal business aspects rather than on how the business impacts its external environment, and were developed by

either hospitality associations or environmental government agencies. Considering this, and that social and cultural criteria are relatively new to certification programs in the US (compared to environmental criteria), it is no big surprise that socioeconomic and cultural criteria were not a part of the green lodging programs' criteria.

One explanation given by Honey (2002) as to why socioeconomic and cultural impacts of hotels on surrounding community are not adequately addressed in some programs is because these impacts are less “profound or apparent in large cities in developed countries than in rural or developing countries”. Additionally, social criteria such as requiring that businesses purchase local goods and services or requiring local people to be hired may not bode so well in countries where this type of activity may be seen as a barrier to trade or as a violation of legislation protecting equal employment rights for all citizens (Font and Harris 2004). Surprisingly, however, three of these programs include criteria about local purchasing and two mention local hiring. This push to include socioeconomic criteria comes from the fairly recently developed concept of corporate social responsibility. Under these principles a business is forced not only to deal with issues impacting its bottom line, but also with issues that impact consumers, communities and local governments (Font and Harris 2004).

There is some indication that green lodging programs, once focused entirely on eco-efficiency standards, may begin to incorporate biodiversity criteria in their programs. This indication comes from the Florida Green Lodging program which soon intends to include criteria in its Two Palm or Three Palm certification levels dealing with the effects the business has on its external environment. Florida is considering issues such as measuring carbon footprints, the effects of hotel lights on nesting sea turtles, habitat for wildlife, and landscaping with native plants. Given the number of lodging facilities certified by FGL, the

popularity of the program, and their potential to gain more applicants, incorporating criteria such as those listed above into the FGL program could have large positive ramifications for conservation of biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife in Florida.

5.3. Looking to the Future

Given the impending tourism accreditation body and the current situation with tourism certification in the US, there are a few future scenarios that seem possible. One is a future where US states continue, as they have for the past five years, to develop their own tourism certification programs with their own set of standards. Whether these programs are more of the green lodging sort or the sustainable tourism sort depends on who initiates them and where the funding comes from. An advantage of this scenario is that at a state-level, certification programs can be customized to reduce impacts and deal with issues specific to that state. A challenge is that in order to become accredited, gaining much needed recognition and credibility, most of these programs will have to undergo procedural changes and introduce new criteria requirements.

The prospect that the current US green lodging programs will reform their criteria enough to be considered for sustainable tourism accreditation seems slim. A more likely scenario for the green lodging programs is that their criteria and standards will eventually converge under a new Green Meeting and Event Standard created under EPA which is currently in development. This will affect lodging facilities because they are a central component of many meetings and conferences.

Another future scenario is that a national tourism certification program is created whose standards are in line with the GSTC and other requirements for becoming accredited, as well as with the particularities of the US tourism industry, the political system, and the

legislation and regulations. This scenario perhaps fits more in line with what Alex Naar (Coordinator for Sustainable Tourism Initiatives, Center for Sustainable Tourism, East Carolina University, personal communication, March 2009) thinks will occur – that there will be “more participation in certification programs, but less programs”. The likelihood that a national sustainable tourism certification program will be created solely for the US also seems doubtful due to a lack of leadership at a national level for true sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism certification will only reach its potential if and when consumers demand sustainable tourism products and services. As previously noted, consumer demand for sustainable tourism continues to be a topic of great debate. For those consumers that *do* already demand sustainable tourism though (like LOHAS - Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability - consumers), credibly certified tourism products and services are needed, but in some instances are not available. For example, it has been estimated that less than two percent of hotels in the US participate in a green hotel certification program (Petruzzi in Honey 2008 p.436), therefore making it difficult for consumers to find a green certified hotel, or a sustainable tourism certified company, even if they wanted to.

In addition to my research on certification programs in the US, I spoke with a few tourism businesses such as whitewater rafting companies and international tour operators in order to learn about their thoughts on tourism certification. It quickly became apparent that not only is there a lack of awareness among consumers about certification, but also among tourism businesses. Many businesses either don't know enough about certification to want to pursue it, don't know where to go to get certified, or become lost in the plethora of programs to choose from. The education of tourism businesses is therefore a necessary step in ensuring a successful future for tourism certification. A few suggestions include:

- Increase awareness and understanding of sustainable tourism certification among tourism businesses
- Assist businesses in: understanding the options they have for tourism certification and the strengths and weaknesses of those options, deciding what type of program would be best to pursue, and learning how the typical certification process works
- Provide a step-by-step process on how to incorporate triple bottom line principles (like the GSTC) into tourism business practices

6. Conclusions

A tourism accreditation body that will essentially certify the certifiers is on the horizon and is expected to give much needed visibility and credibility to existing tourism certification programs and their ecolabels. Once accreditation procedures and standards are finalized, certification programs will have the option to undergo the accreditation process. If US certification programs want to be considered for accreditation, it will be necessary for them to reexamine their procedural practices as well as the criteria that they use for certification. Many programs will have to make significant changes including implementing independent audits of businesses, expanding the content of their criteria, and increasing their minimum requirements for certification.

Although those programs that choose to continue certifying businesses solely on incentive-based eco-efficiency criteria will not be eligible for sustainable tourism accreditation, they will potentially play an important role in helping to push the industry towards more environmentally friendly practices. Even if certain tourism certification programs do not plan on becoming accredited, they should still expect to come under increased scrutiny as best practice standards and triple bottom line criteria become better known among the industry and among consumers.

Given the increasing interest in concepts like corporate social responsibility and ethical tourism, it seems inevitable that consumers will start demanding more from all sectors of society in terms of reducing or mitigating their environmental, social and cultural impacts. It therefore seems wise for all tourism certification programs to consider the new accreditation standards when revising their programs, and especially when scheming to create a new program all together.

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Appendix A: Tourism Certification Programs in the US





* Programs listed here were identified as those that certified or “designated” tourism-related businesses based on specific program standards that at least had environmental criteria, but may have also had social, cultural and/or economic criteria.

* All information was obtained from program websites and/or email correspondence with program coordinators/organizers.

FTEs: Full Time Equivalent Employees

Number of participants: as of April 2009

Certification Program	Operator	Launch Date	Type of Business	Number of Participants	Evaluation Method	Certification Fee	Ecolabel	Levels of Certification	Criteria Emphasis
State									
Adventure Green Alaska (Case Study 1)	Adventure Green Alaska, Inc. (AK nonprofit corp.)	Sept. 9, 2008	all tourism businesses operating in Alaska	9 total	self-evaluation	based on FTEs; range \$100-\$1000; yearly		3 levels based on points obtained on sustainability application - gold, silver, bronze	economic, enviro., and social sustainability
Travel Green Wisconsin (Case Study 2)	WI Dept. of Tourism and WI Enviro. Initiative (gov't – nonprofit partnership)	2007	a variety of tourism businesses & organizations in WI	208; 85 of those are lodging	self-evaluation	based on FTEs; range \$75-\$950; yearly		sliding scale of “greenness”	economic, enviro., and social sustainability
Virginia Green (Case Study 3)	VA Tourism Corp., VA Hospitality & Tourism Assoc., & VA Dept. of Enviro. Quality	Sept. 2006	lodging, restaurants, convention centers, conference centers, travel & partner organizations, etc.	~ 413 total; 250 of those are lodging	self-evaluation	free		1 level	reduce enviro. impacts
Florida Green Lodging (Case Study 4)	FL Department of Enviro. Protection	2004	lodging	419 certified; 390 applicants	second-party certification (auditors trained by FGL)	free		3 levels noted by 1, 2 or 3 palm trees	reduce enviro. impacts





Certification Program	Operator	Launch Date	Type of Business	Number of Participants	Evaluation Method	Certification Fee	Ecolabel	Levels of Certification	Criteria Emphasis
California Green Lodging Program ⁹	Dept. of General Services (developed by CA Integrated Waste Mngmt Board with Green Seal)	Sept. 2004	lodging	87 certified; 82 applicants	second-party certification (audits by CIWMB and DGS employees)	free		Leadership level denoted by 2 palm trees, Participation level denoted by 1 palm tree	reduce enviro. impacts
Delaware Green Lodging ¹⁰	DE Dept. of Natural Resources & Enviro. Control, DE Hotel & Lodging Assoc.	June 2008	lodging	12 lodging facilities	self-evaluation	free		1 level	reduce enviro. impacts
Partnership for a Sustainable Georgia ¹¹	Pollution Prevention Assistance Division	2004	Any business or org. that operates in GA (includes lodging)	~ 9 lodging facilities	self-evaluation (with randomly selected verification visits)	free		Enviro. Mgmt. System (EMS) or Sustainable Office Toolkit track; champion level (not for lodging), bronze, silver, gold	reduce enviro. impacts
Green Business Program (Hawaii) ¹²	Dept. of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism	?	businesses in Hawaii (includes) hotels and resorts	?	site-inspection	free		?	reduce enviro. impacts

⁹ www.ciwmb.ca.gov/EPP/greenlodging

¹⁰ www.delawarelodging.org/green.aspx

¹¹ www.p2ad.org/documents/ci_grnhotel.html

¹² <http://hawaii.gov/health/environmental/waste/p2wastemin/index.html>





Certification Program	Operator	Launch Date	Type of Business	Number of Participants	Evaluation Method	Certification Fee	Ecolabel	Levels of Certification	Criteria Emphasis
Stay Green (Illinois) ¹³	Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association	2009	lodging	35 lodging facilities	self-evaluation	free		StayGreen Energy Saving, StayGreen Recycling	reduce enviro. impacts
Maine Green Lodging Certification ¹⁴	ME Dept. of Enviro. Protection	2006	lodging, restaurants	94 certified lodging facilities, 24 restaurants	self-evaluation	free		1 level	reduce enviro. impacts
Green Lodging Michigan ¹⁵	MI Energy Office and Dept. of Enviro. Quality	Oct. 2006	lodging	46 certified; 31 applicants	self-eval. for Partner level; second-party cert. for Steward and Leader levels	free		3 levels: Green Lodging Partner, Steward, and Leader	reduce enviro. impacts
Missouri Green Lodging ¹⁶	MO Hotel & Lodging Association	Jan, 2009	lodging	7 lodging facilities	self-evaluation	\$50 per year		1 level	reduce enviro. impacts

¹³ www.stayillinois.com/Green_Recycling_Details.cfm

¹⁴ www.visitmaine.com/plan/environment/

¹⁵ www.michigan.gov/dleg/0,1607,7-154-25676_25677_37026---,00.html

¹⁶ www.lodgingmissouri.com/green.asp




Certification Program	Operator	Launch Date	Type of Business	Number of Participants	Evaluation Method	Certification Fee	Ecolabel	Levels of Certification	Criteria Emphasis
New Hampshire Sustainable Lodging and Restaurant Program ¹⁷	NH Lodging and Restaurant Assoc.	March 2005	lodging, restaurants	62 certified lodging facilities (15 are Enviro. Champions); 8 restaurants	self-eval. for first two levels; third-party cert. for Enviro. Champion level	free		3 levels: Endorsing Partner, Environmental Partner, Environmental Champion	reduce enviro. impacts
Oregon Bed and Breakfast Green Certification Program ¹⁸	OR Bed and Breakfast Guild	April 2008	lodging	7 lodging facilities	second-party (former innkeepers or OBBG members are the trained assessors)	\$50 + regular dues		3 levels: Operational, Mechanical Upgrades, Building Practices	reduce enviro. impacts
Rhode Island Hospitality Green Certification Program ¹⁹	RI Hospitality & Tourism Assoc., RI Dept. of Enviro. Management	Nov 2007	lodging, restaurants, other	22 lodging facilities, 14 restaurants, 5 other	self-evaluation	free		1 level	reduce enviro. impacts
Green Hotels in the Green Mountain State (Vermont) ²⁰	VT Business Enviro. Partnership (public-private partnership)	1998	lodging	91 Green Hotels, 6 Environmental Partners	second-party certification	free		2 levels: Green Hotel & Environmental Partner	reduce enviro. impacts

¹⁷ www.nhslrp.org

¹⁸ www.obbg.org/green.html

¹⁹ www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/assist/grncert/index.htm



²⁰ www.vtgreenhotels.org

Certification Program	Operator	Launch Date	Type of Business	Number of Participants	Evaluation Method	Certification Fee	Ecolabel	Levels of Certification	Criteria Emphasis
National (USA)									
Green Seal – GS-33 Lodging Properties Standard ²¹	Green Seal (independent, non-profit organization)	1999	lodging	41 lodging facilities	Type 1: Green Seal audits the facilities as a third-party	based on # of rooms and level of certification: \$1450-\$3000		3 levels: bronze, silver, gold	reduce enviro. impacts
Regional (USA and Canada)									
Audubon Green Leaf Eco-Rating Program ²²	Audubon International, Greenleaf Enviro. Communications, Inc.	1998	lodging, conference centers, tourist destinations	35 facilities	third-party certification	based on # of rooms, \$200 to \$800 + \$1/room		3 levels represented by 1 to 3 leafs	reduce enviro. impacts
Global									
Green Globe ^{21 23}	EC3 Global	Established 1994	variety of entities in travel and tourism sector	?	third-party certification	?		platinum, gold, silver, bronze - benchmarked	economic, enviro., and social sustainability

²¹ www.greenseal.org/programs/lodging.cfm

²² <http://greenleaf.auduboninternational.org/>

²³ www.ec3global.com/products-programs/green-globe/Default.aspx

Certification Program	Operator	Launch Date	Type of Business	Number of Participants	Evaluation Method	Certification Fee	Ecolabel	Levels of Certification	Criteria Emphasis
Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for hospitality ²⁴	US Green Building Council	2009 (?) in development	lodging (buildings)	415 hotel projects have achieved or registered for LEED certification	third-party certification	based on rating system that the project is certifying under, and size of the project		certified, gold, silver, bronze, platinum	reduce enviro. impacts (conserve natural resources, protect biodiversity and habitat)
STEP (Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program) ²⁵	Sustainable Travel International	Feb 2007	tour operators, accommodations, attractions, transportation service providers	approx. 10	self-evaluation; third-party certification for highest level	based on annual gross revenue for overall annual operations; range \$200-\$2500		level of certification denoted by 1 to 5 stars	economic, enviro., and social sustainability

²⁴ www.usgbc.org

²⁵ www.sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/op_ecocertification.html

Appendix B: Mohonk Agreement

* Accessed from <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism.cfm?id=mohonk>, April 13, 2009.

Mohonk Agreement: Proposal for an International Certification Program for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism. Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, New York on November 17-19, 2000.

Certification Scheme Overall Framework

Basis of Scheme

The objectives of the scheme should be clearly stated. The development of a certification scheme should be a participatory, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral process (including representatives from local communities, tourism businesses, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, government, and others).

- The scheme should provide tangible benefits to tourism providers and a means for tourists to choose wisely
- The scheme should provide tangible benefits to local communities and to conservation
- The scheme should set minimum standards while encouraging and rewarding best practice
- There is a process to withdraw certification in the event of non-compliance
- The scheme should establish control of existing/new seals/logos in terms of appropriate use, an expiration date and, in the event of loss of certification, withdrawal
- The scheme should include provisions for technical assistance
- The scheme should be designed such that there is motivation for continual improvement - both of the scheme and of the products/companies to be certified

Criteria Framework

- Criteria should provide the mechanism(s) to meet the stated objective(s)
- Criteria used should meet and preferably exceed regulatory compliance
- Criteria should embody global best practice environmental, social and economic management
- Criteria should be adapted to recognizing local/regional ecological, social and economic conditions and local sustainable development efforts
- Criteria should be subject to a periodic review
- Criteria should be principally performance-based and include environmental, social and economic management process elements

Scheme Integrity

- The certification program should be transparent and involve an appeals process
- The certification body should be independent of the parties being certified and of technical assistance and assessment bodies (i.e., administrative structures for technical assistance, assessment and auditing should avoid conflicts of interest)
- The scheme should require audits by suitably trained auditors
- The scheme should require mechanisms for consumer and local community feedback

Appendix C: Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

* Accessed from Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism website: April 13, 2009
<http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org/>, "About the Criteria"

A. **Demonstrate effective sustainable management.**

- A.1. The company has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, sociocultural, quality, health, and safety issues.
- A.2. The company is in compliance with all relevant international or local legislation and regulations (including, among others, health, safety, labor, and environmental aspects).
- A.3. All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in the management of environmental, sociocultural, health, and safety practices.
- A.4. Customer satisfaction is measured and corrective action taken where appropriate.
- A.5. Promotional materials are accurate and complete and do not promise more than can be delivered by the business.
- A.6. Design and construction of buildings and infrastructure:
 - A.6.1. comply with local zoning and protected or heritage area requirements;
 - A.6.2. respect the natural or cultural heritage surroundings in siting, design, impact assessment, and land rights and acquisition;
 - A.6.3 use locally appropriate principles of sustainable construction;
 - A.6.4 provide access for persons with special needs.
- A.7. Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage is provided to customers, as well as explaining appropriate behavior while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.

B. **Maximize social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts.**

- B.1. The company actively supports initiatives for social and infrastructure community development including, among others, education, health, and sanitation.
- B.2. Local residents are employed, including in management positions. Training is offered as necessary.
- B.3. Local and fair-trade services and goods are purchased by the business, where available.
- B.4. The company offers the means for local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture (including food and drink, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.).
- B.5. A code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed, with the consent of and in collaboration with the community.

- B.6. The company has implemented a policy against commercial exploitation, particularly of children and adolescents, including sexual exploitation.
- B.7. The company is equitable in hiring women and local minorities, including in management positions, while restraining child labor.
- B.8. The international or national legal protection of employees is respected, and employees are paid a living wage.
- B.9. The activities of the company do not jeopardize the provision of basic services, such as water, energy, or sanitation, to neighboring communities.

C. Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts.

- C.1. The company follows established guidelines or a code of behavior for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimize visitor impact and maximize enjoyment.
- C.2. Historical and archeological artifacts are not sold, traded, or displayed, except as permitted by law.
- C.3. The business contributes to the protection of local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and does not impede access to them by local residents.
- C.4. The business uses elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food, or shops; while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities.

D. Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.

I. D.1. Conserving resources (*Eco-efficiency/Natural Resources*)

- D.1.1. Purchasing policy favors environmentally friendly products for building materials, capital goods, food, and consumables.
- D.1.2. The purchase of disposable and consumable goods is measured, and the business actively seeks ways to reduce their use.
- D.1.3. Energy consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted, while encouraging the use of renewable energy.
- D.1.4. Water consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted.

II. D.2. Reducing pollution (*Eco-efficiency/Natural Resources*)

- D.2.1. Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the business are measured, and procedures are implemented to reduce and offset them as a way to achieve climate neutrality.
- D.2.2. Wastewater, including gray water, is treated effectively and reused where possible.
- D.2.3. A solid waste management plan is implemented, with quantitative goals to minimize waste that is not reused or recycled.
- D.2.4. The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is minimized;

substituted, when available, by innocuous products; and all chemical use is properly managed.

- D.2.5. The business implements practices to reduce pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds, and air and soil contaminants.

III. D.3. Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems, and landscapes (*Biodiversity Protection*)

- D.3.1. Wildlife species are only harvested from the wild, consumed, displayed, sold, or internationally traded, as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable.
- D.3.2. No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities, and living specimens of protected wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them.
- D.3.3. The business uses native species for landscaping and restoration, and takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.
- D.3.4. The business contributes to the support of biodiversity conservation, including supporting natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value.
- D.3.5. Interactions with wildlife must not produce adverse effects on the viability of populations in the wild; and any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized, rehabilitated, and there is a compensatory contribution to conservation management

Appendix D: Case Study Information Sources

Adventure Green Alaska

Website: www.adventuregreenalaska.org

Criteria: www.adventuregreenalaska.org/pdf/aga_application_part_2_questionnaire.pdf

Travel Green Wisconsin

Website: www.travelgreenwisconsin.com

Criteria: www.travelgreenwisconsin.com/participate/TGW_CHKLST.pdf

Personal Communication: Will Christianson, Outreach Coordinator

WI Department of Tourism

March 2009

Virginia Green Lodging

Website: www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/lodging/homepage.html

Criteria: www.deq.virginia.gov/export/sites/default/p2/lodging/lodging_checklist.pdf

Personal Communication: Rachel Bullene and Sharon Baxter

Office of Pollution Prevention, VA DEQ

March 2009

Florida Green Lodging

Website: www.dep.state.fl.us/greenlodging

Criteria: (see “Forms”) www.dep.state.fl.us/greenlodging/resources.htm

Personal Communication: Karen Moore, Green Lodging Coordinator

Florida Green Lodging Program, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

March 2009