



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES CHECKLIST

For the Restaurant and Food Service Industry



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Sustainability is a growing trend in all industries and is now finding its way into mainstream tourism. The increasing popularity of sustainability has led to differing understandings of what sustainability really means. To help clarify for tourism professionals, the Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University has developed a working definition to include "actions that contribute to a balanced and healthy economy by generating tourism-related jobs, revenues, and taxes while protecting and enhancing the destination's socio-cultural, historical, natural and built resources for the enjoyment and well-being of both residents and visitors."

The following twelve categories are offered for consideration where you might incorporate sustainability within your tourism business, in developing government policy, or in your personal life. Within each category you will also find a list of specific actions for sustainable practices applicable to food service organizations.

Given the comprehensive nature of this list, not all practices are relevant or recommended for every property. Practices listed are for informational purposes and proper care should be taken before adopting any practice to insure applicability to specific situations. This list is not intended to be an environmental certification program. It is also not intended to replace a formal sustainability management plan, however it can be a helpful tool in assessing your current business practices and serve as a spring board in developing your own business' formal sustainability plan. This checklist is a work in progress and businesses are encouraged share with its authors best practices not included in this list.

We would like to acknowledge the staff of Sustainable Travel International for the development of many of these items as well as their permission to use this information for informational purposes. Please visit www.sustainabletravelinternational.org for further information and a list of their services. You can contact Sustainable Travel International directly by email at info@sustainabletravel.com or by phone at 800-276-7764.

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Greenhouse Gas Emissions Management and Reduction

- Conduct a greenhouse gas emissions assessment or carbon footprint analysis
- Use renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, biomass, and geothermal
- Install a solar water heating system
- Purchase renewable energy credits and or greenhouse gas/carbon offsets
- Minimize transportation by scheduling deliveries for multiple items
- Provide opportunities for the use of alternative forms of transportation for customers and staff such as carpooling, mass transit maps, bike racks and showers
- Offer preferred parking spaces for customers and staff who use alternative fuel vehicles or alternative transportation
- Choose local vendors to reduce transportation of items
- Use electric or manual landscaping equipment
- Institute fuel economizing programs for company vehicles such as regular inspection of vehicles, reduced idling, and route planning to minimize travel distances
- Allow flexible staff schedules to minimize staff travel during heavy traffic periods
- Adopt alternative forms of transportation and fuels, such as hybrid-electric, biodiesel, E85 (Ethanol) and electric for business activities services, customer shuttle, errands and deliveries
- Participate in used cooking oil recycling program for biodiesel processing
- Consider offering low carbon menu items
- Share with customers carbon footprint of menu items

Solid Waste Management, Reduction, Reuse and Recycling

- Conduct a waste audit/assessment
- Purchase products in reusable and/or returnable containers
- Work with suppliers and vendors to reduce packaging, for example developing “take back” program to return crates, pallets, and other packing materials
- Provide waste reduction education to staff/employees and routinely inspect trash bins to ensure that best practices are being followed
- Reduce and reuse paper by:
 - Set photocopiers and printers to print on both sides
 - Distributing information to customers, staff, and business associates via e-mail and avoid unnecessary printed copies
 - Avoid use of fax cover sheets
 - Distributing inter-office documents using routing slips, bulletin board, or scan for email distribution rather than printing a copy for individual staff members
 - Collect and use the reverse/blank side of single-sided printed paper as scratch paper
 - Digitize operational processes that rely on single use paper/printed documents
 - Routinely inspect internal mailing lists to minimize unnecessary direct mailing to your customers
 - Institute reusable methods of informing customers of specials rather than one-time use printed documents
 - Write weekly schedules and prep schedules using reusable products such as a laminate sheet and grease pencil or dry erase board.
 - Reuse envelopes for inter-office mail
 - Set and use fax and copy machines to copy documents directly to computers rather than printing a new copy
 - Request to be taken off of mailing lists of unneeded catalogs and print advertisements
 - Ensure that materials such as brochures and marketing materials are printed on paper with high recycled content (at least 35%) and printed using soy ink



- Install high efficiency air hand-dryers, cloth or roll type to minimize paper towel usage
- Reuse newspaper, shredded paper, and incoming packaging materials (bags, boxes, peanuts) for packaging and shipping needs
- ❑ Provide straws in approved dispensers and rather than use individually wrapped straws
- ❑ Provide reusable coasters rather than disposable ones
- ❑ Use paper napkin, cutlery and condiment dispensers that facilitate more efficient consumption such as distributing from behind the counter or upon request
- ❑ Encourage wait staff to conserve unopened condiment packets
- ❑ Eliminate use of Styrofoam (polystyrene) and other difficult to recycle products; if necessary, develop "difficult to recycle" programs if volumes warrant
- ❑ Donate left over cookware, silverware, and old linens to charity or local artisans and craftsmen
- ❑ Donate obsolete or unwanted equipment, electronics, furniture, drapes, and carpeting to charity
- ❑ Donate unused food to a community food bank or arrange to be composted
- ❑ Avoid using disposable products in favor of reusable products such as glass cups, cotton linens, hairnets/hats and refillable condiment dispensers
- ❑ When reusable options are not feasible, use disposable products that are compostable or recyclable
- ❑ Provide incentives and discounts to customers who use refillable mugs and to-go containers, and encourage employees to use reusable mugs and cups
- ❑ Use purchasing policy to give preference to products that are recyclable, such as toner cartages, and have high post-consumer recycled content
- ❑ Purchase products, such as condiments, cleaning supplies, and other durable products in bulk and in concentrated form when possible
- ❑ Purchase used/antique furniture and equipment from local vendors
- ❑ Purchase durable goods of sufficient quality to allow reuse, refinishing, and/or reupholstering
- ❑ Recycle damaged towels and sheets as cleaning rags or torn or worn linens into other usable items, e.g., aprons into rags
- ❑ Institute a composting program for yard and food waste. Mulch grass clippings and avoid bagging; invite customers and staff to bring personal food scraps and compostable items
- ❑ Use non-bleached napkins, paper towels, and coffee filters
- ❑ Provide alternatives to individual plastic water bottles such as water pitchers and point of use water filters
- ❑ Reduce waste from expired stock by using effective inventory control, such as just-in-time purchasing, effective labeling systems, and last in/first out
- ❑ Routinely evaluate serving portion sizes
- ❑ Consider purchasing pre-shelled eggs in bulk
- ❑ Use best practices to reduce leftover spoilage, e.g., reusing sensitive food first, pre-cooling steam table hot foods before placing into cooler, and storing hot leftover foods from different station in separate containers
- ❑ Routinely inspect and clean cooler and freezer to check for fallen food behind shelving that might spoil
- ❑ Develop a method to minimize over-prepping food
- ❑ Use best practices to prevent accidental glassware and china breakage and place rubber mats around dishwashing stations
- ❑ Ensure that appointed staff inspect produce and other products before accepting deliveries
- ❑ Reduce amount of packaging needed for take-out orders



- Serve carbonated beverage from a dispensing unit rather than individual bottles or cans
- Use eatable garnish and reusable center pieces
- Use rechargeable batteries
- Provide cigarette disposal bins in smoking areas
- Use preventative maintenance on equipment to reduce risk of replacement
- Provide and publicize recycling bins across business property
- Begin or enlarge a recycling program to include:
 - Aluminum
 - Glass
 - Office mix
 - Batteries
 - Yard waste
 - Plastic
 - Corrugated cardboard
 - Newspaper
 - Ink cartridges and laser toner cartridges
 - Phone books
 - Fluorescent light tubes
 - Electronics such as computers and televisions
 - Carpeting

Freshwater Consumption Reduction

- Conduct a water audit with a water conservation professional
- Conduct regular inspections and establish preventative maintenance schedules to ensure maximum efficiency, i.e., ensure that the blow down on cooling towers are at manufacture's specifications
- Educate staff on water conservation and best practices
- Discourage water-based cleanup and use alternatives such as microfiber technology
- When purchasing new or replacing appliances or fixtures, purchase water-efficient models such as those certified by EPA WaterSense® and Energy Star®
- Install low-flow aerators on sinks (1.5 gal/min)
- Install automatic shut off sinks in common area rest rooms
- Install efficient spray heads on dishwashers if manufacturer's warranty permits
- Use re-circulating, chilled water loop and temperature control systems in water cooled ice machines, air conditioners, and water cooled refrigeration units
- Use air-cooled refrigeration equipment rather than water-cooled models
- Clean windows on an on-call basis rather than according to an established schedule
- Use floor cleaning equipment with high pressure, low volume and recycling filtering systems
- Turn off the continuous flow mechanism used in cleaning beverage island drain trays and clean the trays as needed
- Install foot pedals under kitchen sinks
- Use water conserving practices for dishwashing:
 - Presoak dishes and utensils
 - Only run dishwasher when full and turn off when not in use
 - Use basin style dish washing rather than continuously running water
- Routinely inspect icemakers to prevent overflow
- Install low-flow spray heads at dishwashing pre-rinse stations



- ❑ Use water from steam tables to wash down cooking areas
- ❑ Plan ahead and thaw foods in the cooler rather than with running water
- ❑ Routinely inspect flow to dipper wells (troughs)
- ❑ Recycle rinse water from dishwater or re-circulate to the garbage disposal
- ❑ Rinse utensils and dishes in a holding basin rather than with running water
- ❑ Serve water on request
- ❑ Use best management practices in water usage for landscaping/irrigation, including:
 - Establish frequency schedule according to local climate, season and landscaped area (multiple hydro zones) in order to maximize water use efficiency
 - Raise lawn mower cutting height to cut down on evaporation
 - Routinely inspect sprinkler system, including heads, nozzles, lines and valves, to ensure efficient settings and proper operation
 - Ensure irrigation equipment applies water uniformly
 - Limit lawn areas and/or use xeriscaping
 - Place ornamental water features in shaded areas
 - Avoid plant fertilizing and pruning that would stimulate excessive growth
 - Use soaker hoses in plant beds
 - Remove weeds and unhealthy plants to ensure only wanted plants are watered
 - Water landscapes only when necessary; one inch of water per week is sufficient to sustain established lawns in most circumstances
 - Time watering to occur in the early morning or evening when evaporation is lowest
 - Remove any thatch and aerate turf to encourage the movement of water to the root zone
 - Avoid runoff and make sure sprinklers do not run onto sidewalks paved areas
 - Do not water on windy, rainy, or overly hot days
 - Install rain shut-off or moisture sensors to ensure against over watering
 - Establish drip irrigation systems where feasible
 - Mulch around plants to limit evaporation and discourage weed growth
 - Avoid extravagant uses of water such as hosing down sidewalks, driveways, and parking lots
 - Consider using gray water (from dishwashers, laundry, etc.) and rain water to irrigate landscaping. Check state and local government-approved gray water uses

Wastewater Management

- ❑ Ensure proper use, storage, and disposal of cleaning products and other potentially harmful chemicals such as fertilizers and paints
- ❑ Limit the number of chemical products used and stored (minimize stockpiling) on the property and have a management plan for chemical purchasing, such as just-in-time purchasing
- ❑ Ensure that all chemicals are securely stored and clearly marked
- ❑ Use best storm-water runoff practices to ensure that wastewater does not enter local waterways, including:
 - Reduce hard surfaces such as impervious parking lots
 - Create natural buffers around bodies of water
 - Build bio-swales or ditches near parking lots to reduce runoff
 - Build natural areas to retain storm water such as rain gardens
 - Limit use of chemicals, such as fertilizers and pesticides, and ensure they are not used near storm-water drains and natural water
 - Place food scraps into the trash or composting bins prior to washing dishes and other kitchenware
- ❑ Use environmentally safe/preferable cleaning products:
 - MSDS Health Hazard Rating of 1 or less for all cleaning chemicals used on property
 - Ensure dishwashing detergents are biodegradable and do not contain nitrilotriacetic acid or chlorine bleach, that they are phosphate and bleach-free, nontoxic, biodegradable, and are concentrated liquid or powder laundry detergents
 - Use disinfectants only when necessary and in accordance with public health standards
 - Use environmentally certified cleaning products



- ❑ Use linen service that uses environmentally preferable cleaning methods or use an Ozone washing machine which have shorter wash cycles, enhanced soil removal and disinfectant capability
- ❑ Use less harmful alternatives if possible such as organic substitutes for chemical fertilizers
- ❑ Monitor equipment and products for potential chemical leaks such as aerosols, fire extinguishers, CFCs and HCFCs from cooling equipment refrigerators, and automotive liquids
- ❑ Use an integrated pest management (IPM) system for interior and exterior pest control
- ❑ Follow best management practices for fats, oil, and grease
 - Have a grease interceptor or trap to collect grease from wastewater that is inspected at least bi-weekly
 - Train dishwashing staff to scrape food scraps and fatty liquids in trash or compost bins and drain grease from pots into bins for recycling or trash
 - Install filters and screens in kitchen drain
 - Disconnect all garbage disposals
 - Train staff on proper cleanup of grease spills
 - Keep waste grease and oil bin area clean and sealed
 - Floor mats, trash cans, and other equipment are only hosed down in area with sewer drain with a grease trap, not outside where water may flow to storm drain
 - Recycle cooking oils which can be converted to biofuels by a rendering service
- ❑ Use environmentally preferable or certified paints, solvents and coatings (MSDS Health Hazard Rating of 1 or less)
- ❑ Reuse paint thinners
- ❑ Use latex paints rather than oil based paints
- ❑ Educate staff on proper methods of containment and clean-up of spills, drips, leachings, and conduct regular inspections in relevant areas
- ❑ When doing exterior cleaning or pressure washing, proper care should be taken to avoid discharge of contaminants such as detergents into rivers, wetlands and streams

Energy Efficiency, Conservation and Management

- ❑ Conduct an energy audit to determine your baseline energy use and identify any improvements that could be made
- ❑ Monitor, record, and post rates of energy to quickly identify if there is system leakage
- ❑ Work with an energy expert to develop an energy management system
- ❑ Develop an energy education and conservation program
- ❑ Use a renewable energy heating system (e.g. passive solar or geo-thermal)
- ❑ Use natural/day lighting whenever possible
- ❑ Turn off electronic equipment at the end of each workday. Consider using surge protectors enabled with master switches so that energy is not consumed when electronics are not in use
- ❑ Activate sleep/standby or low energy mode on appliances
- ❑ Maximize central air efficiency by allowing sunlight to enter through windows in the winter and blocking sunlight in the summer. Install heat-control glass and/or sun control window film to windows with heavy sun exposure
- ❑ Weatherize the property by ensuring that doors and windows have tight seals and remain closed when shut; seal unused windows and doors and inspect the property at least annually for cracks and leaks
- ❑ Set water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit rather than pre-set 140 degrees
- ❑ Replace existing lighting (particularly incandescent) with energy efficient or compact florescent bulbs. Replace or retrofit T12 florescent lamps and magnetic ballasts with T8 or T5 lamps and electronic ballasts
- ❑ Use programmable Energy Star®-labeled thermostats. Set to appropriate temperature ranges and conduct regular inspections to ensure efficient function



- Perform regularly scheduled preventative maintenance on equipment and appliances, including replacing and cleaning air filters, cleaning burners and air conditioner coils, and checking duct and pipe insulation for damage
- Ensure proper insulation of water heater and hot water plumbing
- Install energy saving equipment, such as timers, motion sensors, master switches, and photocells. Conduct regular inspections to ensure proper function
- Purchase and replace existing equipment with energy efficient or Energy Star® labeled electronics, appliances, and heating and cooling equipment
- Install plastic strip curtains at walk-in refrigerator and freezer doors
- Insulate facilities, including interior and exterior walls, ceilings, and wall cavities
- Use LED or electroluminescent exit signs
- Open windows rather than using central air when possible
- Use ceiling fans to circulate air in both winter and summer
- Install motion sensors on vending machines and/or remove unneeded lights on vending and snack machines
- Consider installing a "white" or "green" roof to reduce heat island effect
- Install variable speed fans where feasible/appropriate (e.g. grill exhaust hoods)
- Use ventilation fans with humidity sensors for areas where are needed
- Operate multiple individual climate controlled comfort zones
- Clean lighting fixtures and lamps regularly to increase illumination
- Keep kitchen appliances and office electronics on only when in use, particularly exhaust hoods and hood lights
- Place coolers, refrigerators, and ice machines away from direct sunlight, ovens, and other sources of internal heat
- Develop a seating policy to minimize the number of rooms needed to be lit and/or heated/cooled
- Use Energy Star's® or other similar benchmarking tools to compare energy use with industry standards

Ecosystem and Biodiversity Conservation

- Develop partnerships with local environmental and community organizations
- Participate in local environmental and conservation efforts either through sponsorship, monetary contributions, or volunteering and supporting employees to do so
- Provide environmental education materials and information on local biodiversity conservation efforts to staff and customers
- Design landscaping or on-site gardens to incorporate and support "heirloom" and native species
- Work with relevant parks and public land agencies to find out how your business might participate in ecosystem and biodiversity conservation efforts
- Provide information on how staff and customers can become involved in community projects such as posting project information in common areas and offer transportation assistance when needed
- Provide staff incentives to volunteer
- Rehabilitate or improve waterways on property or in the region
- Avoid purchasing and serving overexploited species, particularly seafood. Consider developing a sustainable seafood policy
- Set aside property and/or donate land to a conservation society or consider establishing a conservation easement
- Prevent wildlife from accessing trash and food by secure food sources
- Ensure that interactions with wildlife is done at a safe and respectful distance



- ❑ Protect sensitive areas, such as wetlands and large trees
- ❑ Install glass that has low levels of reflectivity
- ❑ Establish measures to reduce light pollution
- ❑ Contribute a percentage of annual net revenues to local environmental and community based organizations

Land Use Planning and Management

- ❑ Follow standards for development and construction that take into account community values, distinctiveness, and sense of place
- ❑ Adopt development strategies that result in a constructive and collaborative relationship with local community
- ❑ Direct development towards existing local communities that are already served by infrastructure and utilize the resources they have to offer
- ❑ Support the integration of mixed land uses and provide local community with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation
- ❑ Integrate green building design in new construction and remodeling
- ❑ Take measures to ensure property and operations do not cause soil loss, soil contamination, or other negative impacts, such as erosion and sediment pollution to lands and waterways
- ❑ Participate in community events such as National Arbor Day, Earth Day, Great American Backyard Bird Count, and Take a Child Outside Day with local community
- ❑ Preference is given to environmentally responsible landscaping, pool, and construction services and firms

Air Quality Protection and Noise Reduction

- ❑ Avoid use of ozone depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) found in refrigerants and aerosols
- ❑ Designate your property as a non-smoking establishment or designate smoking areas outside the building and away from air in-take
- ❑ Address the root cause of odors rather than masking them with the use of artificial air cleaners, refreshers, and cleaning products
- ❑ Purchase non-toxic paints or paints with low levels of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
- ❑ Maintain "quiet" hours in the evening and early morning for staff and customers. Avoid noise intrusion by scheduling service and repairs at optimum hours
- ❑ Landscaping design should include a noise abatement plan
- ❑ Place insulation around loud equipment
- ❑ Design ventilation to exhaust outside of the building and not to roof space or other building cavities
- ❑ Ensure that dehumidifiers are installed in high moisture areas (e.g., kitchen and laundry), building is ventilated, and that relative humidity is maintained (between 35 percent and 55 percent)
- ❑ Use High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters
- ❑ Conduct regular tests for poisonous gases such as carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and radon
- ❑ Conduct regular tests for particulates such as lead and asbestos
- ❑ Conduct regular inspections of HVAC system for mold/bacteria, air flow blockages, and clean drip pans
- ❑ Consider an air filtration system



Preserving the Social Norms and Cultures of Local and Indigenous Communities

- Develop methods of establishing dialogue with local representatives to determine socio-cultural and economic impacts of your organization and to ensure their concerns are recognized in operational decisions
- Train staff to ensure they are well-informed on local customs
- Develop informative educational materials for customers about the local community and local history
- Use appropriate and authentic cultural elements from the local region
- Make your property available for community events
- Establish policies that restrict commercialization of endangered or protected flora and fauna
- Incorporate traditional local arts and crafts in your facility and make information available to customers
- Use regional/traditional and locally grown agricultural products

Providing Economic Benefits to Local and Indigenous Communities

- Provide information to and encourage customers to purchase local products and services
- Provide employment opportunities for local community members
- Allow local artists to display and sell their handicrafts and art work at your property
- Provide information to customers on local attractions and cultural activities
- Form partnerships with locally owned businesses (e.g., transportation and guide services)
- Use local goods and services whenever possible
- Involve your organization in local philanthropic projects and develop a public relations plan that ensures customers, the greater community, and interest groups and others can be aware of your community involvement
- Provide volunteer opportunities for customers and staff
- Exceed minimum local standards for employee's wages, salaries and benefits, ensuring a livable working wage
- Ensure that operational demands for basic services (water, electricity, roads, food, and other resources) do not compete with local needs
- Provide education and training opportunities in your place of business for local community members
- Support training for community members for non-competitive tourism-related activities that compliment your business
- Provide promotional information on local services and businesses to customers

Responsible Purchasing

- Develop an environmentally preferable procurement/purchasing program that has a clear mission and distinct purchasing targets. Elements of program should include:
 - Preference to vendors and suppliers that are environmentally and socially responsible
 - "Lease toxic alternative"
 - Recyclable or compostable materials
 - Products and services are from local locally owned businesses whenever possible
 - Products come from sustainable and/or renewable sources
 - Produce, meats, fish, and other food products are sustainable (e.g. organic and/or locally grown)
- Use recycled and/or environmentally certified building materials on property
- Regularly test new environmentally preferable products for effectiveness in operations and evaluate current products used



- ❑ Ensure that life-cycle analysis is conducted for major investments such as new equipment and construction projects
- ❑ Incorporate environmental preferences and requirements in RFP's and contracts with vendors and suppliers. Suppliers and vendors can then be held accountable to the environmental commitments made during negotiations
- ❑ Chose Fair Trade Certified™ products for business uses as well as for resale to customers

Training and Education for Employees and Clients

- ❑ Create an environmental program that includes stakeholder participation and input
- ❑ Place informational signing about your organization's sustainable practices is placed around the property in appropriate places
- ❑ Provide an incentive program for staff and customers to participant in your business's' current sustainable practices
- ❑ Claims of environmental practices are transparent and verifiable by customers and/or third party entities
- ❑ Notification about sustainable efforts is provided to customers in publications, advertising, and web site
- ❑ Offer feedback or comment cards to get customers and staff input on further sustainable practices
- ❑ Educate other businesses about sustainability by speaking at events and conferences and providing tours of facility's sustainable practices
- ❑ Provide continuing sustainability training for staff and forums for staff input
- ❑ Include sustainability as part of staff evaluation
- ❑ Participate in an environmental or sustainable tourism certification program

