The Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University is an interdisciplinary research center comprised of many diverse university academic and non-academic units.

The goals of the Center are to promote and support the adoption of sustainable practices throughout the tourism industry whether business, government or individual traveler behaviors.

This is done through graduate level education, academic research, and community engagement and outreach.

The Center offers solutions to challenges facing the tourism industry and destination communities as they balance economic viability with socio-cultural and environmental enhancement and equity.

For more information visit www.sustainabletourism.org or call (252)328-4969

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Many sustainable practices can result in increased cost savings but any investment has its risks. It is important to research the short- and long-term effects of any green initiative before beginning a project and keep in mind what might be a good practice at one property might not be at another. Investigations can be done in a variety of ways: implementing more efficient appliances and fixtures in waves, consulting with pollution prevention specialists, and getting input from all parties involved, including staff whose work will be affected by the change. Click here and here for databases of companies that provide a range of environmental services in North Carolina. Also, please visit here for general information on energy efficiency. To speak to a pollution prevention specialist, contact Tom Rhodes. For more information on sustainability in tourism, contact Alex Naar at (252) 737-1346.

According to TravelAgentCentral.com, U.S. Travel Association and Ypartnership in August co-authored a study on the environmental awareness of travelers. The survey found that although the number of self described "environmentally conscious" travelers have not changed, these green minded travelers are becoming more familiar with terms such as ‘carbon footprint’ and ‘green travel.’ The study also found that 9 percent of travelers are willing to pay more for green travel options while 29 percent of travelers found it easy to find out about green practices.

Highland Lake Inn in Flat Rock is devoted to protecting and preserving the environment. The staff is passionate about the inn’s commitment to sustainability and organic gardening. As a member of the Green Hotels Association, they adhere to the association's guidelines, as well as their own environmental standards, to institute programs that save water, save energy and reduce solid waste—all in an effort to protect the Earth. Some of these efforts include: participating in the EPA ENERGY STAR Challenge, installing solar thermal water heating panels, using environmentally preferable cleaning products, and using motion sensor technology for lighting. For more examples of tourism businesses that have adopted sustainable practices click here.

Shaun Willson, Instructor, Department of Biology, is interested in sharing the emerging wealth of information regarding sustainability with the non-academic public. After building a sustainable home and changing his lifestyle to decrease his ecological footprint his interests turned toward the practical aspects of sustainable lifestyles and behaviors, bridging the gap between academic research and "sustainability-in-action". Current research focuses on carbon neutral behaviors of transportation and accommodations and the professional and cultural acceptance of (1) a standard definition for sustainability, and (2) a method of measurement. For any questions on greenhouse gas emissions and tourism, you can contact Shaun Willson at willsonk@ecu.edu.