

## The public administration and environmental tourism

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**Received: 18.02.2021. Accepted 24.03.2021**

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The authors developed an ecological and management approach to internal and external ecological tourism based on the existing network of specially protected natural areas – national parks and reserves in Ukraine. Analysis of the current condition of tourism in national parks shows the need for more effective public administration of environmental tourism and recreation in the two following areas: creating conditions for the development of regulated environmental tourism and recreation; minimizing the negative impact of tourism and recreation on natural complexes and historical and cultural objects. The authors draw attention to the fact that it is essential to understand the role of ecotourism public administration and its social responsibility for nature's fate. Accordingly, the authors proposed a set of priorities to ensure the effective public administration of ecological tourism in specially protected natural areas.

**Keywords:** environmental tourism industry, public administration, recreation on natural complexes, specially protected natural areas.

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### Introduction

The tourism industry is currently one of the most highly profitable and most dynamic world economies. Environmental tourism is one of the most actively developing areas in tourism. Environmental tourism focuses on man's immersion in an untouched natural environment, which serves as a goal and a reason for travel. Simultaneously, tourists' primary attention is paid to the region's landscape and recreational features they visit. The use of the term "landscape and recreational potential of the territory" for environmental tourism allows to displace the emphasis in the understanding of this term to the ecological basis of travel and to separate ecotourism from unique historical, cultural, business, engineering, social and economic, sports and other aspects of tourism.

Many Ukrainian and foreign scientists consider environmental tourism and public administration issues, particularly Arkinson et al. (2003), Dmytruk (2004), Holden (2008), Rátz & Puszczó (2002). Nevertheless, the influential public administration in environmental tourism industry processes remains insufficiently researched, and in Ukraine, there is a specific deficit of similar research. Thus, our ms aimed to analyze the Ukrainian status quo in environmental tourism administration and elaborate possible urgent measures to increase its efficiency regarding foreign experience.

### Methods

The research's theoretical and methodological basis are the laws and principles of public administration in the environmental tourism industry. We also used the available domestic and foreign legislative and by-laws regulatory legal acts on public administration in environmental tourism, scientific reports of Ukrainian and foreign scientists, statistical and analytical materials, and own research.

### Results

When developing the concept of ecotourism, it should be emphasized that travel and active recreation communicate with "wildlife," natural and cultural landscapes. The latter are interesting natural objects, phenomena and beautiful landscapes, plant and animal world. It can be closely intertwined with other directions of recreations, with the so-called "rural tourism," focused on staying in natural-anthropogenic ("cultural") landscapes, with the possible participation of tourists in agricultural activities and with "ethnic tourism," associated with the interest of tourists in other ethnic groups inhabiting the visiting area, in their culture, as well as with other interests (Eagles & McCool, 2002; Atkinson, Dietz & Neumayer, 2007).

In practice, the concept of "ecotourism" was initially developed in the American continent and later also developed in Australia, in countries where large areas that were not significantly anthropogenic were preserved. The model of "soft" - natural-oriented, environmentally and socially responsible tourism, i.e., implemented in the cultural landscape, has developed later in Western European

countries, where practically no such territories are left. In general, both concepts are based on similar principles, but significant attention is paid, along with the environmental aspect, to preserve the Western European model's cultural property.

As for Ukraine, environmental tourism in its organized form essentially takes only the first steps there. Traditionally, it is implemented in the territories of national parks and nature reserves. Here the most outstanding natural values are concentrated, the inclusion of which attracts numerous tourists. However, tourism in the protected areas is associated with damage to flora and fauna. The weak development of the topic and the need to use a systematic approach to studying, organizing, and managing environmental tourism development in specially protected natural areas are undeniable. The economic role of ecotourism and environmental excursion activities is very relevant for Ukrainian specially protected natural areas in the face of catastrophic budget funding reduction (Dmytruk, 2004; Byrkovych, 2008).

The most significant and unique tourist and recreational potential of Ukraine requires scientifically based and purposeful use. Concerning Ukrainian reality, it is the development of internal (both domestic and foreign) ecological tourism based on the existing network of specially protected natural areas - national parks and reserves. Such a concept has excellent economic prospects and can become an important basis for their sustainable development and attraction of additional financial resources to the region (Kyfyak, 2003; Dmytruk, 2004).

Tourism public administration is focused on creating a management system to the best satisfaction of people's travel needs within a variety of purposes. This system involves the complete orientation of tourism organizations and enterprises to market demand, specific consumers' needs, and organizing such tours, tourism services, and goods in demand and can bring the intended profit. The functioning of public tourism administration includes a performance of general and special management functions, various methods, tools, forms, and management structures with the involvement of a large amount of information necessary to prepare and adopt management decisions. Through this system, various activities are planned, developed, and implemented, primarily in such key areas of management activities as marketing, innovation, human resources, financial and material resources, productivity, social responsibility, profit. Tourism public administration is focused on introducing market relations to fill the entire management system with market content. Tourism public administration should be focused on an innovative approach, creating market novelty and constantly improving all aspects of tourism activities, taking into attention that tourism has received intensive development throughout the world (Rátz & Puszczó, 2002; Kolesnikova, 2016).

Public Administration of environmental tourism also takes only the first steps. It is also vital to understand the place and role of ecotourism public administration; it is also essential to understand the place and role of ecotourism public administration, identify its features, and imagine the potential of its social responsibility for the fate of nature. It should be noted that the formation of environmental tourism public administration is associated with the following circumstances. Firstly, any news is perceived with fear from those who have already taken a strong tourism position. Secondly, speaking of ecotourism, it is necessary to reckon with its specifics, which will require significant efforts to occupy its segment in the tourist market. Thirdly, entering the tourist market, ecotourism involves high initial costs, which makes its product too expensive and elite. Accordingly, environmental tourism public administration should have a much greater "punching ability," the basis of which is, first, the high quality of this type of activity.

Analysis of the current state of tourism in national parks shows the need for more effective public administration of environmental tourism and recreation in the two following areas: creating conditions for the development of regulated environmental tourism and recreation; minimizing the negative impact of tourism and recreation on natural complexes and historical and cultural objects. At the same time, public tourism administration means a set of measures aimed at preserving natural complexes, unique and reference natural sites and objects, preservation of historical and cultural objects, development and implementation of scientific methods of nature conservation and environmental education, motivating and stimulating all stakeholders in the development of regulated environmental tourism, planning of ecological tourism, organization of services for visitors in the territory of the national park or reserve, environmental monitoring and environmental control of tourism activities, restoration of disturbed natural and historical and cultural complexes and objects.

As the most acute problems impeding the development of ecotourism in Ukraine, it is necessary to highlight the following ones:

- Underdeveloped tourist infrastructure in regions;
- Small number of hotel accommodation facilities of tourist class with a modern level of comfort;
- Insufficient investment in construction and reconstruction of tourist accommodation facilities;
- Low level of tourist service in the whole country;
- Lack of conformity of quality of the provided tourist services;
- High cost of hotels, meals, transport, and other services offered to tourists, significantly exceeding the European average (Kyfyak, 2003; Byrkovych, 2008).

As a result, the cost of tours is too high. This situation, on the one hand, does not contribute to the attraction of organized ecotourists. On the other hand, high cost, the organization's complexity, and low profitability reduce the interest of protected areas and tour operators in developing this type of tourism. Insufficient air and rail transport within the country compared to international transport is one of the main factors limiting further development of tourist complexes in the country's regions. There is insufficient state non-profit advertising of the country's tourist opportunities, both in foreign markets and within the country, making it challenging to work towards the purposeful formation of a positive image of Ukraine as a favorable country for tourism. The negative stereotypes of perception of the image of Ukraine created by individual foreign media still exist (Dmytruk, 2004; Byrkovych, 2008). The main problematic points are:

- Disappearance of traditional settlements in several regions and, consequently, the traditional way of life of indigenous peoples and their crafts;
- Degradation of farmland, the disappearance of the cultural and historical landscape;
- Difficulty of access and remote location of many protected areas from major centers and airports;
- Difficulty and duration of delivering tourists to the territory, poor roads (or their absence);
- Presence of seasonal difficulties with travel; harsh climatic conditions and limited tourist season;
- Insufficient and low level of accommodation facilities for tourists in protected areas (guest houses, hotels, cordons, campsites, and shelters), equipped nature trails and tourist routes (a nowadays significant part of the material base of ecotourism needs to be updated);

- Lack of vehicles, communications, and necessary tourist equipment;
- Underdeveloped, lacking engineering infrastructure (electricity, water supply, transport networks, bridges, sewage treatment plants), as well as poor quality of roads, which is an obstacle to attracting private investment to the tourism sector;
- Lack of river-sea cruise ships and tourist buses;
- Lack of modern software and multimedia equipment in information centers;

Lack of legal and regulatory framework for developing environmental tourism in reserves (according to the current situation) only allows environmental and educational activities) (Kyfyak, 2003; Dmytruk, 2004).

The Ukraine legislation does not allow tourism development in the territories of reserves, except conservation zones.

In this regard, many reserves refrain from ecotourism activities. Besides, there is no legally formalized unified definition of the concept of "environmental tourism" (everyone understands and interprets it in their way) and restrictions on environmental tourism within protected areas (maximum permissible loads, zones where tourism is prohibited, buffer zones). The fundamental problem of planning and managing tourist flows in Ukrainian specially protected natural areas is the lack of uniform methodological approaches to assessing permissible recreational loads, monitoring the state of ecotourism facilities, and regulating ecotourism activities. This problem is one of the main obstacles in the design (zoning) of the territory and developing its development strategy and long-term development plans. There is no unified system of monitoring and management of ecotourism in the Ukrainian protected areas, particularly the state statistical data accounting system, development of ecotourism, and its multiplicative effect on the regional economy is not formed nowadays. The maximum permissible recreational loads have not yet been determined for many protected areas (including those where there is already a large tourist flow) (Rátz & Puszczkó, 2002; Kyfyak, 2003; Byrkovych, 2008). The following serious negative environmental consequences were noted in several protected areas, where there is a large flow of unorganized ecotourists:

- Uncontrolled movement of vehicles and paved roads (harm to plants, bird anxiety);
- Trampling of rare plant habitats by tourists;
- Unauthorized parking of vehicles; territory freezing;
- Poaching;
- Uncoordinated construction of economic facilities, including habitats of rare animals.

Marketing support is the most severe factor impeding the development of Ukrainian ecotourism in Russia. The world community does not have adequate information about Ukrainian protected areas, their significance, and the possibility of visiting them. The lack of Ukrainian staff experience and relevant knowledge of the successful tourism organization is an extremely urgent problem. The "host" often has a very weak idea of guests' true needs and desires, especially foreign ones. Accordingly, the small number (or lack) of qualified personnel, insufficient staff training, shortage of professional environmental tourism guides and interpreters, poor quality of tourist services, insufficient organization of training of Ukrainian personnel – all these would significantly decrease the quality of ecotourism and satisfaction of visitors (Kyfyak, 2003; Atkinson et al., 2007).

Most protected areas seriously underestimate the need for local participation in ecotourism. Meanwhile, as world practice shows, this could be an excellent opportunity to change residents' attitudes towards protected areas, attract them to cooperate, get their support, and smooth out existing contradictions. There are no mechanisms under which part of the financial income from ecotourism is directed to local settlements' needs.

Environmental tourism in national parks and other protected areas should be developed, first and foremost, towards the development and expansion of a continuously maintained network of scientifically based and specially equipped ecological routes or trails (walking, horse-drawn, water). Such routes may have different durations and degrees of difficulty but should reflect each national park's landscape structure's features and combine the most unique natural and historical, and cultural objects.

Also, and this is extremely important, they should have sufficiently complete information support (advertising, cartographic and descriptive). It is advisable to develop and equip several specialized alternative routes, the visits of which can be regulated, reducing the excessive load on prevalent routes, temporarily closing them "for rest" and offering tourists other routes of their choice (Holden, 2008; Mykhaajlova, 2010).

Simultaneously, the most exciting objects, usually visited by tourists on the ecological route, can be connected by various trails, contributing to the fulfillment of environmental functions assigned to specially protected natural areas.

The organization of a network of environmental routes should be based on the following fundamental principles:

- Assessment of ecological capacity and the limit load of the route;
- Combination of different target settings (interests) on the route;
- Different duration and complexity of routes;
- Advertising and information support of routes.

Practice shows that the network of ecological routes or trails organized in this way with signs and parking lots for tourists equipped with them contributes to the preservation of most of the protected area in a calm, pristine state, avoids spontaneous traveling, the appearance of frozen areas and also to regulate the flow of tourists and prevent exceeding of the ecological capacity of routes (Eagles & McCool, 2002; Kyfyak, 2003; Bushell & Eagles, 2007).

Thus, proper public administration of ecological tourism can contribute to the achievement of environmental, environmental-educational, propaganda, and economic goals of specially protected natural areas at the same time.

## Conclusions

To ensure the effective public administration of ecological tourism in specially protected areas, the following priorities should be considered:

- 1) To develop strategic programs and business plans for ecotourism development for key protected areas groups;
- 2) To create and modernize environmental tourism infrastructure in Ukrainian protected areas, including facilities for visitors, equipped nature trails and tourist routes, nature museums, and visitor centers, animal observation places, recreation places;
- 3) Reconstruction and modification of cultural, natural, and historical objects of ecotourism;
- 4) To develop related infrastructure (transport and food);
- 5) To develop and implement a marketing strategy aimed at attracting of attention of the Ukrainian and international public to the protected areas of Ukraine;

- 6) To carry out advertising and information image promotion of Ukraine as a country favorable for ecotourism in the world and domestic tourism markets (organization of marketing, advertising, formation of an image of the protected areas of Ukraine as a center of environmental, scientific, and educational tourism, which meets international standards; advertising and promotion of new tourist products aimed at the relevant category of tourists; developing of international relations, ensuring participation in international programs, maximizing the use of the international status of protected areas for development of ecotourism and paying attention to protected areas of state importance);
- 7) To form a favorable investment climate in the regions of Ukraine due to the construction of new and reconstruction of existing facilities of engineering and related infrastructure of priority ecotourist complexes based on public-private partnership;
- 8) To create a modern regulatory and legal framework for the organization of excursion activities and environmental, cognitive tourism in protected areas;
- 9) To improve the system of planning and monitoring of effects of environmental and excursion activities, environmental and cognitive tourism;
- 10) To provide a single information space, including involvement of nature reserves in the global system for development of environmental tourism;
- 11) To ensure the development of the personnel potential of the ecotourism industry;
- 12) To create the system of preparation, retraining, and developing of the skills of personnel for work in the sphere of environmental tourism in protected areas (managers, guides, guides - nature interpreters, experts - ornithologists, botanists, geographers);
- 13) To promote the level of ecological literacy of tourists and residents, to foster a caring attitude towards nature;
- 14) To develop and implement a system of voluntary certification of ecotourist routes and services and to implement an eco-label of environmental tourism that meets international standards and is based on international experience;
- 15) To develop a set of specialized environmental tourism programs and their information support to create a flow of organized ecotourists within protected areas, attracting their new categories;
- 16) Development and implementation of a system for collecting information on the dynamics and structure of tourist flow in Ukrainian protected areas;
- 17) To develop the rules regulating the behavior of visitors in specially protected natural areas in order to ensure the safety of people and prevent damage to natural complexes and facilities;
- 18) To create conditions for the development of ecotourism-related forms of environmentally friendly business: formation of a system of guest houses, development of peasant farms and traditional crafts, production of environmentally friendly products and souvenir products;
- 19) Support the traditional activities of indigenous peoples.

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## Citation:

Hren, L.M., Naden, E.V., Aliieva, P.I., Husarov, K.A., Stankevych, S.V., Koroleva, E.N., Matsyura, M.V. (2021). The public administration and environmental tourism. *Ukrainian Journal of Ecology*, 11 (2), 191-194.



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