



NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Ecotourism as an industry is a growing facet of the Eastern Shore economy, as well as a key component of the area's economic development plan and the Seaside Management Plan currently under development by the CZMP. In order to ensure the viability of this industry, standards of service, sustainability, and quality must be established. This project attempts to contribute toward the development of those standards by expanding the existing CZM Basic Ecotourism Guide Certification program to produce a more rigorous curriculum that is customized for the specific local ecological and tourism concerns of Virginia's Eastern Shore. More importantly, the process used to develop this more rigorous, customized curriculum was documented in order to make the project replicable in other tourism regions of the Commonwealth.

A previously-certified instructor worked as a part-time consultant with ESCC officials to establish the curriculum at ESCC, so that courses may be offered on a regular basis as part of the formal certification and recertification process. The curriculum was developed under advisement from various local business, tourism and conservation agencies. These included local Chambers of Commerce, the Eastern Tourism Commission, the Nature Conservancy, tourism related business representatives, and state and federal park officials.

This report includes the revised and enhanced Ecotour Guide training materials including instructor notes, a graphic slide presentation, learner materials and a sample final exam. In addition, there is a curriculum outline explaining how the Ecotour Guide class fits into a broader certification program. This curriculum outline is the key to making the program replicable throughout the Commonwealth.

The full program consists of four required elements:

- Ecotourism Guide Training
- Local Tourism Information Training
- Customer Service Training
- First Aid/CPR Training

The curriculum outline document explains that each of the required elements can be delivered in various ways to meet the logistical requirements of any given training provider. The first three elements above should be customized to reflect the issues and concerns of the local region, and they can be delivered as one course or as separate courses. This flexible format makes it possible for any training provider to pull together a robust, quality program while also making it possible to fit the program into the deliverer's specific logistical limitations.

ESCC is proud to have been able to develop this program for the Eastern Shore. It is our sincere hope that the CZMP will be able to replicate the program throughout the Commonwealth, and we remain eager to help with that process.