

# SURVEY ON THE POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ECO-TOURISM IN SAVANNAKET

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## Introduction

It is now widely accepted that local stewardship of resources plays an important role in sustainable resource use. The participation of local communities in the management of biodiversity not only promotes conservation but can also help achieve rural economic development goals. Community-based eco-tourism is one such participatory activity which is gaining in popularity throughout the world and is being increasingly used as a central component in Integrated Conservation and Development (ICAD) projects. When used correctly, eco-tourism offers a number of benefits: (I) it represents an initial entry point and community organisation framework for other ICAD activities, (II) it provides an additional income source for local communities, (III) it gives them an economic stake and a vested interest in conservation, and (IV) it increases community awareness generally in regard to the importance of natural resource conservation.

Despite its potential advantages, eco-tourism *per se* does not necessarily contribute to improved conservation. Indeed, poorly planned or inadequately controlled nature tourism activities can actually impact negatively on conservation and biodiversity values. As a consequence, precautions will need to be taken during the planning stages of eco-tourism development in the Lao PDR.<sup>1</sup>

Firstly, national policy guidelines for eco-tourism development in Laos as a whole need to be drawn up by the relevant government agencies involving as a minimum, the National Tourism Authority, the Department of Forestry and the Science, Technology and Environment Office (STENO). During this collaborative effort, care must be taken to ensure that future eco-tourism initiatives remain in line with and support the goals of the GOL in regard to tourism development, natural resources conservation and national socio-economic development generally.

Secondly, at the NBCA level, eco-tourism must support the conservation and socioeconomic development goals of each individual NBCA and must be compatible with their unique bio-physical characteristics. Consequently eco-tourism activities will vary in each NBCA, thus requiring that national policy is sufficiently flexible to cater for this. Although the private sector will have a key role to play in eco-tourism development, a partnership approach is required under which NBCA management and district authorities are fully involved in both planning and in instigating adequate controls and safeguards. One such important safeguard will require the estimation of tourist carrying capacity and the setting of adequate controls to ensure that this is not exceeded.

Finally, although this survey is mainly aimed at eliciting information from foreign visitors, it is recognised that development of the domestic eco-tourism market must be an eventual goal if conservation objectives are to be fully realised. However, at the current level of national economic development, disposable family incomes available to most Laotians are insufficient to enable them to participate in this type of activity and it will therefore be necessary to rely on revenues from foreign tourists to develop the sector initially.

## Survey Scope and Objectives

A survey was conducted in Savannaket town in April 1999 to determine the potential for eco-tourism in the province. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information from visitors in regard to their interest in a variety of nature tourism activities, with the eventual aim of using the data obtained to plan pilot activities in the Phu Xang He National Biodiversity Conservation Area. Although the survey focused specifically on eco-tourism, it is anticipated that the information obtained will also be of value to the provincial planning and tourism authorities and will help them make better informed decisions in regard to tourism development more generally in Savannaket.

A simple questionnaire was used to obtain information on length of stay, travel details, destinations, budget limits, type of eco-tourism activities most favoured, etc. and also to elicit additional suggestions and ideas (See Annex 1). Over 150 questionnaires were left in suitable locations such as restaurants, guest-houses and hotels for tourists to complete at their own convenience. Completed questionnaires were collected from these

establishments at regular intervals and the data obtained were entered and collated into a computerised database at the Provincial NBCA Office.

Although no form of compensation was offered to participating establishments or to individual respondents, cooperation was generally excellent. Following the survey, a selection of wildlife posters and calendars were given to participating establishments in recognition of their cooperation. Virtually all tourists who received the questionnaires responded willingly and thoughtfully, and additional comments and suggestions were provided by over half of them. A number of these suggestions generated additional ideas which have been incorporated into the proposed plans contained in this report.

In retrospect, it is possible to identify a number of minor shortcomings in both the implementation of the survey in general and more specifically in the design of the questionnaire. These shortcomings should be taken into account and rectified in any similar surveys in the future :

- The survey was specifically designed to focus on Savannaket and thus its findings do not necessarily reflect the situation in the country as a whole. Although this is not considered a real deficiency, it does mean that care should be taken in extrapolating the findings to other provinces or situations in the Lao PDR.
- The survey was conducted during the international tourist low-season and over the Lao New Year. Such timing meant that certain types of tourist were inadvertently targeted (or excluded), possibly somewhat skewing the findings.
- The timing was also unfortunate in that it was too late to develop and test pilot eco-tourism activities in the current dry season.
- The survey sites used may have favoured low-budget tourists as the only upmarket hotel in the province was not particularly cooperative when approached to participate in the survey.
- Some of the questions in the survey were obviously confusing, particularly to non-native English speakers. Such questions will require simplification in the future.
- Because no questions of a personal nature were asked in the survey, responses could not be disaggregated by gender, age or nationality thus somewhat restricting analysis of the results.
- The economic status of the respondents was not determined and thus possible skews in the findings towards a particular tourist sector could not be properly ascertained.

Despite these minor shortcomings, the survey yielded much useful information and the results are considered sufficiently accurate and entirely adequate for planning pilot eco-tourism activities for Savannaket. The remainder of this report describes and analyses the results in more detail and discusses their implications for eco-tourism promotion and development of the tourist sector generally.

## Results of the Survey

A total of 114 foreign tourists responded to the survey over a 4 week period. On the whole, responses were extremely positive and 97 percent supported the idea of ecotourism in Laos. In addition, many valuable comments regarding eco-tourism were received from the survey respondents.

Starting with a summary of the survey findings in Table 1 on the following page, the remainder of this report describes the findings in more detail, discusses their implications for tourism development and puts forward various proposals for future pilot nature-tourism activities in Phu Xang He National Biodiversity Conservation Area.

**Table 1. Summary of information obtained by the eco-tourism survey.**

RESPONSE TO QUESTION	MEAN	MIN	MAX
<b>Days spent in:</b>			
Savannaket	2.7	1	12
Laos	24	2	60
For eco-tourism (if available)	5	1	28
<b>Number of provinces visited</b>	5	1	12

<b>Traveling on Route 9:</b>			
Thailand to Vietnam	32%		
Vietnam to Thailand	24%		
<b>Interest in PXH (of those using Route 9)</b>	<b>78%</b>		
<b>Interest in:</b>			
Scenic beauty	19%		
Eco-expeditions	16%		
Camping	19%		
Trekking	23%		
Bird watching	8%		
Wildlife observation	11%		
<b>Other interests:</b>			
Aquatic eco-tourism	4%		
Cultural tourism	1%		
<b>Acceptable daily charges:</b>			
< \$5	21 %		
\$5 -10	59 %		
\$10 - 20	17 %		
> \$20	4 %		
<b>Additional comments:</b>			
Lack of information	21%		
Environmental issues	33%		
Transport and communications	13%		
Comparison with other S.E. Asian countries	11%		
Tourism costs	9%		
Ethnic concerns	12%		
Other NBCA's	2%		
<b>Questionnaire distribution points</b>	<b>6 locations<sup>2</sup></b>		
<b>Total number of responses</b>	<b>114 records</b>		

Although most tourists stay in Laos for extended periods (24 days) and visit on average 5 provinces, they tend to spend only a short time in Savannaket (2.7 days on average). Over half (56%) use Savannaket as a transit point for travel between Thailand and Vietnam along National Route 9, with approximately equal numbers traveling in each direction (Table 2).

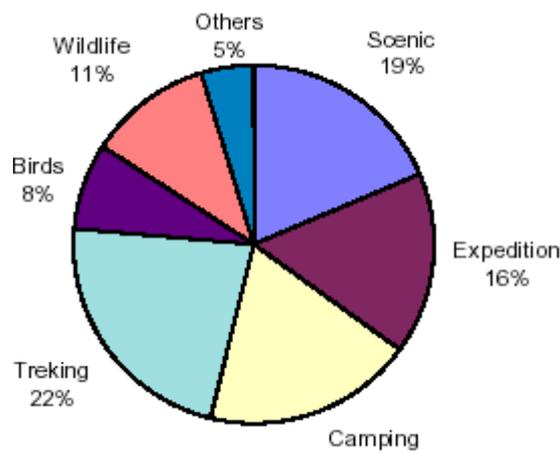
**Table 2. Average length of stay and number of Provinces visited**

<b>Details of Visit</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Length of stay in Laos (days)	24	2	60
Length of stay in Savannaket (days)	2.7	1	12

Provinces visited (incl. Savannaket)	5	1	12
Those traveling between Thailand & Vietnam	56%	-	-

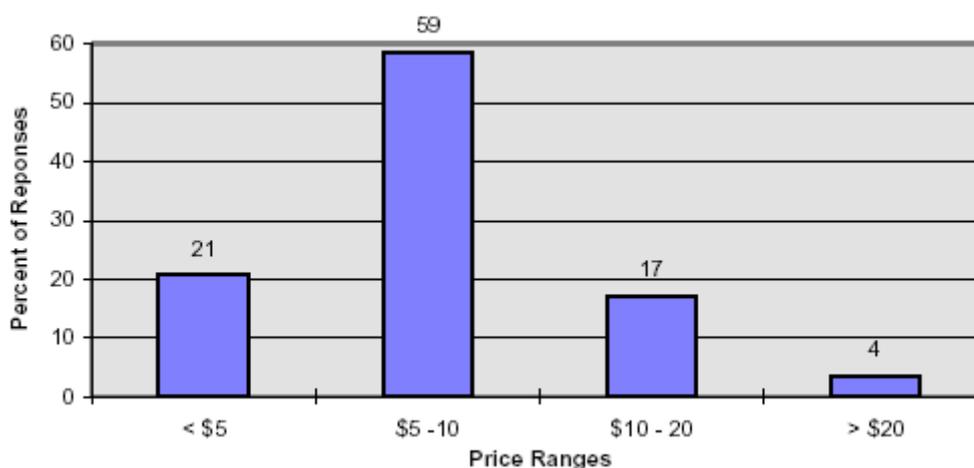
With only 3 exceptions, all respondents stated that they were potentially interested in some form of nature tourism, with the average tourist expressing a desire to spend 5 days on such activities. Of those traveling between Thailand and Vietnam, 80 percent said that they would be interested in visiting Phu Xang He en-route. Most respondents would prefer trekking, camping and scenic type activities, but there was fairly broad interest across all categories of nature tourism (Figure 1). Suggestions for alternative eco-tourism activities included rafting, fishing, cycling and controlled hunting (culling).

**Figure 1. Tourist interest in various forms of nature tourism**



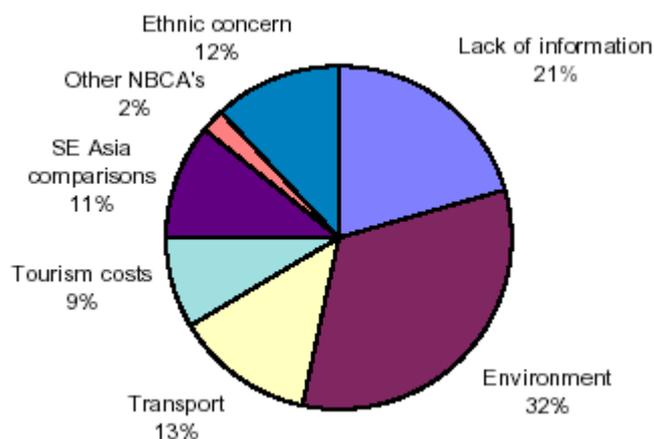
The potential eco-tourism market in Savannaket is essentially low-budget (Figure 2). The majority of respondents (59 %) would be willing to spend between \$5 to \$10 per day for eco-tourism, but only 21 percent are ready to pay more than this amount.

**Figure 2. Distribution of responses on acceptable daily charges for eco-tourism**



Additional comments, suggestions and ideas were received from exactly half of all respondents (Figure 3). The majority of such comments dealt with the environment (33%), lack of tourist related information (21%), transport and communications (13%) and ethno-cultural concerns (12%). The large number of respondents commenting on environmental issues demonstrates a high degree of environmental awareness in the tourists visiting Savannaket. This, coupled with their cultural sensitivity as illustrated by the comments received in regard to ethno-cultural concerns, bodes well for the development of community-based eco-tourism in Savannaket. A selection of the comments received on all the issues are presented in Annex 3.

**Figure 3. Type of additional comments received by respondents to the survey**



### Implications for Tourism Development Generally

As shown by the survey, the comparatively low level of tourism development in the province and the facilities available, means that Savannaket currently receives mainly low-budget tourists, commonly referred to as 'back-packers'. These pioneer tourists are always the first to appear in any developing tourist market and are essential for tourism development generally. Valuable lessons can be learned from them in regard to future development of the tourist sector.

The survey shows that Savannaket is mainly a tourist transit point for those entering Laos from Thailand and Vietnam, rather than a tourist destination in its own right. Many tourists use the province merely as a bridge along Route 9 between Thailand and Vietnam while others use it as a staging point for traveling to either Vientiane or the south. The challenge currently facing tourism development in Savannaket lies in persuading tourists to remain longer by providing them with more than just a convenient geographical location. Not only will this promote tourism and economic progress generally, it will also be an important pre-cursor to eco-tourism development in the province.

One approach to achieving the above would involve making Savannaket Town a more attractive place for the tourist to stay. Its location on the east bank of the Mekong river could certainly be capitalised upon through well-planned river frontage development. Such development should make the most of existing temples and the many grand old buildings which are currently partially concealed by ramshackle food stalls, decaying paintwork and dilapidated fences. Some parts of the old town still retain French Colonial style architecture along entire streets and around small squares. Although mainly in a poor state of repair, their protection and restoration could make these areas important tourist attractions. Unfortunately, many are being demolished in preference to restoration and this valuable opportunity will soon be lost unless action is taken quickly. Many of the survey respondents mentioned litter and poor waste management as a major problem detracting from the attractiveness of Savannaket to tourists.

Increased public awareness in this regard, coupled with improved municipal waste management could greatly increase the town's appeal to tourists. The lack of tourist related information is another problem commonly cited in the survey. Essential tourist information, once compiled, could be easily and cheaply disseminated through the private sector. Most of the tourist-related businesses utilised by this survey would probably be willing to provide such information free of charge as a means of attracting customers. A provincial government produced newsletter, sold at tourist outlets, the airport and ferry and bus terminals is another alternative which could even be expected to make a small profit through sales and advertising revenue. The type of information which would need to be covered in such a publication is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Tourist information required for development of the tourism sector**

Category	Items of information
<b>Savannaket information</b>	History, religion, culture, and people Economy, population and administration Industry, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, etc.
<b>Travel information</b>	Public transport: routes, timetables, prices Ferry crossing: times, prices, immigration formalities

	River travel: routes, timetables, prices Air travel: timetables, prices, ticketing agents Car and bike rental: agents, driving laws, etc.
<b>Places of interest</b>	Descriptions, history, etc. Opening times, prices, Travel time, directions, means of transport
<b>Accommodation</b>	Hotels: address, tel., facilities, price ranges Guesthouses: address, tel., type, price ranges
<b>Dining</b>	Lao food and restaurants Western food and restaurants Vegetarian food Other food and restaurants
<b>Entertainment</b>	Major festivals: description, significance, dates, places Cultural entertainment: types, venues, times Night-life: discos, nightclubs, live music
<b>Do's and don'ts</b>	Cultural taboos Laws and regulations Basic health-care advice A few useful words in the Lao language
<b>Public services</b>	Postal services Phone and fax services Email and internet services Government offices
<b>Emergency services</b>	Police: address, telephone number Medical: hospitals, clinics, doctors Consular services: telephone numbers, addresses Legal advice: telephone numbers, addresses

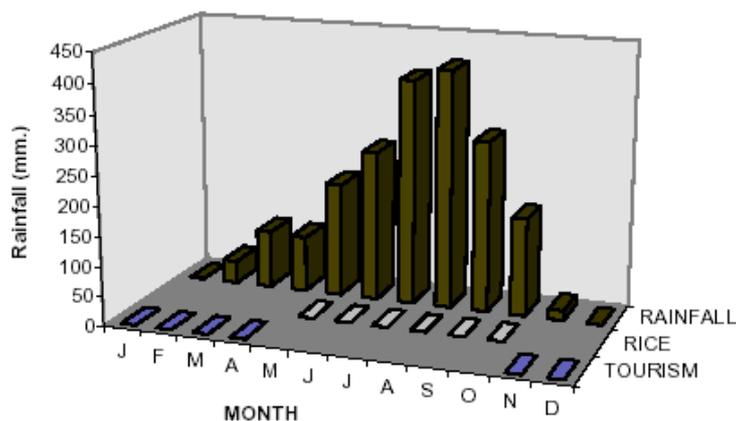
## Implications for Nature Tourism Development

The survey shows a very strong interest in and a high potential for eco-tourism in Savannaket. The province is extremely well-placed for such an initiative by virtue of the situation of 3 NBCA's within or on its borders, namely Phu Xang He (PXH), Don Phu Viang (DPV) and Xe Bang Nuan (XBN). The large number of tourists traveling between Thailand and Vietnam on National Route 9 make PXH and DPV, which are both located close to this road, particularly suitable for eco-tourism.

Camping, trekking and the appreciation of scenic beauty, the types of nature-tourism found to be of most interest by the survey, are the simplest forms of eco-tourism to implement and could become largely villager-managed, following some initial training and support. Investment costs are also relatively low for these types of activities as they can be conducted from simple base camps or staging-areas in one or a number of NBCA guardian villages.

Because of the problems of access, malaria and leeches in the rainy season, ecotourism should ideally be conducted mainly in the dry season from November through to May. This fits well with the rice-based farming systems which predominate in PXH guardian villages, where rice transplanting normally occurs in June with harvesting in November, leaving the dry season free for other activities (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Rainfall adjacent to PXH (Xepon) and potential livelihood activities**



The survey shows that Savannaket currently receives mainly low-budget or 'backpacker' type tourists. Although longer term provincial tourism development goals may be aimed at developing domestic tourism and the more lucrative quality-tourist market, foreign back-packer tourists are particularly beneficial in the early stages of eco-tourism development for a number of reasons :-

- They tend to be extremely environmentally aware and are likely to pass on this awareness to the local population.
- They are generally quite culturally sensitive and would respect community and ethnic values.
- They are willing to travel by local transport and live in fairly primitive accommodation, thus the facilities they require tend to be simple, low-cost and less-polluting.
- Although not big-spenders, what they do spend tends to directly benefit the local people rather than the large tour companies which cater for more upmarket tourists.
- Travel time is not generally a major constraint and they are willing to spend however long it takes to get to eco-tourism destinations, which tend to be more remote, isolated and difficult to reach.
- Advertising needs can be minimal as information tends to spread through the back-packer grapevine by word-of-mouth, guesthouse notice-boards or the budget-tourist guidebooks.

For these reasons, the proposals put forward in later sections of this report concentrate on participatory, community-based nature tourism aimed at the low budget end of the market rather than up-market eco-tourism activities which, although currently invogue, may be more appropriate for the government-managed protected area systems found in neighbouring countries.

The price range of \$5 to \$10 per day which the survey found to be most acceptable to tourists, should provide a reasonable margin over operating costs and offers villagers a good opportunity for income generation. A significant proportion of the benefits from food, lodging, cleaning and guide services can be expected to accrue to local guardian communities participating in eco-tourism activities. The benefits from eco-tourism also tend to be extremely equitable reaching all ethnic groups, male and female, young and old, and rich and poor alike. With forward planning, the benefits can even be targeted at specific sectors within guardian village communities such as wildlife hunters who (often being the poorest of the poor) are forced into this activity to meet family subsistence and income needs.

If properly planned and executed, community-based eco-tourism offers a number of potential benefits to natural resources conservation, community development and to the national economy :

- It promotes the integration of all development sectors; as all sectors impact on eco-tourism and can potentially benefit from it.
- The rub-off effect of 'green' eco-tourists promotes environmental awareness in local communities.
- It provides a strong and visible community stake in conserving their natural resources.
- It provides revenue for village development and other community-based activities.
- It promotes community wildlife patrolling by indirectly compensating Village Forestry Volunteers (VfV's) for doing this, while they act as paid eco-tour guides.
- It provides equitable gender and minority group opportunities.
- It provides an incentive for English language capacity development in government staff and an opportunity to practice the language skills learned.

## Potential Eco-tourism Pilot Project

A pilot eco-tourism activity is proposed for testing in Phu Xang He as a forerunner to an eventual full eco-tourism program for the NBCA. Under the pilot phase, intensive support will be provided by provincial and district NBCA staff, who will initially be responsible for a number of tasks which will be taken over by villagers themselves in cooperation with the private sector in the later full program phase. It is intended that the guardian village networks being established for participatory conservation and development in PXH will also be used for eco-tourism management. Under this scheme, eco-tourism trips will be rotated among those guardian network villages which are interested in and appropriate for eco-tourism. By this means, the networks will be strengthened and the benefits from eco-tourism will be equitably distributed.

**Table 4. Roles and responsibilities in pilot and final eco-tourism program phases**

<b>Tasks and activities</b>	<b>Pilot phase responsibility</b>	<b>Final responsibility</b>
<b>Organisation:</b>		
1. Advertising	Provincial NBCA staff	Private sector
2. Bookings	Provincial NBCA staff	Private sector
3. Payments and accounts	Provincial NBCA staff	Private sector
<b>Travel arrangements:</b>		
1. Vehicles	Provincial NBCA staff	Private sector
2. Drivers	Provincial NBCA staff	Private sector
<b>Accommodation arrangements:</b>		
1. Chalets	(Final phase only)	Village
2. Campsite	DAFO/village	Village
3. Tents	NBCA staff	Village
4. Bedding	NBCA staff	Village
5. Lanterns for lighting	Village	Village
6. Cleaning, bed-linen laundry	Village	Village
<b>Eating arrangements:</b>		
1. Drinking water	Provincial NBCA staff	Private sector/village
2. Food purchase	Provincial NBCA staff	Private sector/village
3. Food preparation	Village	Village
4. Cooking	Village	Village
<b>Guide services:</b>		
1. Guides	Village/NBCA/DAFO	Village/DAFO
2. Compasses	NBCA	Village
3. Binocular rental	NBCA	Village
<b>Sale of commodities:</b>		
1. Basic necessities	NBCA staff/Village	Private sector/village

2. Handicrafts	Village	Village
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The estimated costs and returns for one 5-day eco-tourism trip, involving 10 tourists, each paying \$7.50 per day are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Estimated cost and return breakdown for eco-tourism**

COST ITEMS		ESTIMATED COST (\$)	
Advertising, bookings, administration and accounting.		10	
NBCA development fees (\$5 x 10 tourists)		50	
Travel	fuel (2 vehicles x 2 return trips)	20	
	drivers (2 drivers x 2 days)	4	
Lodging:	firewood	1	
	lanterns for light	2	
	cleaning materials (soap, detergent, etc.)	2	
	cleaners (\$1 x 2 cleaners x 5 days)	10	
Guides:	local (\$1 x 2 villagers x 3 days)	6	
	NBCA (\$1 x 1 staff x 5 days)	5	
Food:	ingredients (\$1 x 13 meals x 10 tourists)	130	
	cooking materials (oil, condiments, etc.)	5	
	cooks (\$1 x 2 cooks x 5 days)	10	
	drinking water	5	
<b>Total costs</b>		<b>\$ 260</b>	
ITEMS OF REVENUE		REVENUE (\$)	
Charge to tourists (\$37.5 x 10 people)		375	
Binocular rental (\$1 x 5 persons)		5	
Sales:	basic commodities	5	
	handicrafts	5	
	<b>Total revenue</b>		<b>\$390</b>
	<b>Net returns</b>		<b>\$130</b>
	<b>Money accruing to the NBCA</b>		<b>\$50</b>
	<b>Gross returns accruing to villagers</b>		<b>\$184</b>
	<b>Potential profit margin for the private sector</b>		<b>\$115</b>

Vehicles and equipment including such items as tents, sleeping-bags, compasses and binoculars will be provided by the NBCA during the pilot phase. Profits accruing from the pilot phase could be used to capitalise village revolving funds for the purchase and maintenance of these items and for the construction of simple chalets, trail development, signs, etc. for the later program phase. Any accumulated income from these revolving funds from both phases could also be used to fund community development activities in participating villages. In particular, agricultural production activities aimed at producing food for tourist meals should be emphasised. Such activities might include chicken raising (for meat and eggs), aquaculture (for fish), fruit trees and vegetable gardens.

Although an assessment of the real demand for eco-tourism will have to await the results of the pilot testing phase, the survey indicates that there is probably sufficient interest to conduct one eco-tourism trip per week. Ideally, these would be conducted on a rotational basis, among all participating communities. Such a scheme run over a 6 month season, would provide annual returns to various sectors as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Benefits from eco-tourism to various sectors in Savannaket**

<b>Benefits Accruing</b>	<b>Estimated revenue (Kip<sup>3</sup>)</b>
Increase in Savannaket GDP	50,700,000
Increase in GDP in each of 5 districts	10,140,000
Increased GDP in each participating village	3,380,000
Revenue and other benefits <sup>4</sup> to PXH NBCA	7,930,000

## Future Planning Needs

Although too late in the season to begin pilot eco-tourism activities this year, the rainy season will be used for further planning and preparation. Tasks remaining include:

- Consultation and coordination with provincial planning and tourism authorities in Savannaket.
- The identification of features of special interest and additional tourist attractions such as waterfalls, darns, the dinosaur footprints in Palansai, etc.
- The production and publication of a PXH information brochure along with some limited advertising of eco-tourism activities in the NBCA.
- Assessing private sector interest in eco-tourism in the province and the development of cooperative agreements and appropriate safeguards.
- The identification of villages suitable for eco-tourism along with the training of villagers and the preparation of village forestry volunteers as local guides.
- The identification of appropriate nature trails and viewing points in PXH along with their development, sign-posting and the production of trail maps for tourist use.

The potential for cooperation with FOMACOP should also be explored in regard to the possible concurrent development of eco-tourism in both Phu Xang He and Don Phu Viang NBCA's. This might include the development of FOMACOP facilities in Phin as a visitor-centre for eco-tourism.

## ANNEX 1

### Survey Questionnaire Form

#### NATIONAL PARKS AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE LAO PDR

#### A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION FROM TOURISTS

Dear Visitor,

As you probably already know, Laos is a magnificent country endowed with bountiful forests, pristine rivers and a wealth of birds and wildlife, many of which are lost or seriously threatened in neighbouring nations. Indeed, the country's natural resources and inherent beauty are quite possibly what attracted you here in the first place.

The Lao Government takes the management and conservation of its natural resources very seriously and has devoted over one fifth of its total land area to biodiversity conservation under either national, provincial or district management. Quite unlike conservation initiatives in many other countries, Laos is committed to developing a partnership with the local people who live in and depend on the natural resources in these

conservation areas for their daily livelihoods.

**This questionnaire is a request for information regarding the development and sustainable management of National Parks in Savannaket, in partnership with indigenous communities.**

The aims of this survey are to elicit your interest in eco-tourism with the objective of providing communities living in conservation areas with additional income from tourist related activities, thereby reducing their dependence on natural resource exploitation which can often be destructive to wildlife, their natural habitats and the scenic beauty of the area.

We would be very grateful if you could spare the time to complete the questionnaire on the reverse side of this handout and leave it with the organisation, guest-house or establishment which gave it to you. Additional comments, suggestions or enquiries will be gratefully received, and can be sent by post to :

Provincial Head, Phu Xang He National Biodiversity Conservation Area

P.O. Box 628

Savannaket

Lao PDR. Telefax. 212941

**We sincerely thank you for your kind assistance in this matter and assure you that your responses will be put to good use. (See over)**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Would you be potentially interested in eco-tourism in Laos?

Yes  No

2. If so, would your main interest be in :

Scenic nature tourism?

Eco-tourism expeditions?

Walking and camping?

Jungle trekking?

Bird watching?

Wildlife sighting?

Other?

Please tick one or more boxes

Please specify -----

3. What would you be prepared to pay per day (including food and lodging)?

< \$5  \$5-10  \$10-20  >\$20

4. How many days do you intend to spend in Savannaket? \_\_\_\_\_ Laos? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many days would you consider spending on eco-tourism in Savannaket? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which countries are you traveling from? \_\_\_\_\_ to? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What other provinces have you visited or intend to see to during your stay in Laos?

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8. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

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**Thank you for your response to this questionnaire.**

## **ANNEX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION POINTS**

### **1. The Pretty Girl**

Nature of business:	Restaurant and Bar
Description:	A small restaurant, frequented by many tourists due to its central location. It is a popular place for breakfast in the morning and for fruit drinks throughout the day.
Location:	In the centre of the old town, between the Lao French Restaurant and the Santiphap Hotel.
Number of responses:	22

### **2. The Lao French Restaurant.**

Nature of business:	Restaurant and bar
Description:	A very popular restaurant serving both local and western food, frequented by tourists, development workers and locals, alike. Much of its custom is due to the fact that it is the only restaurant in town mentioned in the Lonely Planet Guide.
Location:	Centrally located on the corner of Tha He Road, close to the passenger ferry terminal.
Number of responses:	63

### **3. The Riverside Restaurant.**

Nature of business:	Restaurant
Description:	An upper, mid-range restaurant with both covered and verandah style dining, overlooking the Mekong River. Serves both Lao and Thai food and is frequented by better-off locals and visitors alike. It is gaining in popularity with tourists due to its recently introduced sunset Mekong river cruise.
Location:	Tha He Road, close to where it meets Oudomsinh Road, on the northern side of the town. It is located on  the river about half a kilometre up-stream from the vehicle ferry landing.
Number of responses:	5

### **4. The Santiphap Hotel**

Nature of business:	Hotel
Description:	A mid -range, 25 room hotel with small bar and restaurant area. Popular with both Lao and foreign visitors.
Location:	Centrally located between the post office and the passenger ferry pier.
Number of responses:	13

### 5. The Vilaysak Guesthouse

Nature of business:	Guesthouse
Description:	Small guesthouse in a quiet part of town, popular with tourists and development workers. It undoubtedly gets much of its business by being close to the airport.
Location:	Situated on Phagnapui Road, on the south-west side of town close to the airport.
Number of responses	10

### 6. Phon Vilai Hotel

Nature of business:	Hotel
Description:	A small, middle-range hotel with air-conditioned rooms, refrigerators and satellite T.V. Popular with government workers and businessmen.
Location:	Situated on Phetsalath Road, on the southern edge of town.
Number of responses:	1

## ANNEX 3: SELECTED COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM TOURISTS

### General comments

"Great idea if you really mean it."

"Laos is a beautiful and unspoiled country, it would be great if it could remain so."

"This is a great country with the nicest people I've ever met."

### Environmental concerns

"Curb slash & burn. Laos is a beautiful country but not when its black and charcoal."

"Too much dustbin and plastics everywhere. That will be a good start to clean."

"I hope for the future that the people don't put the garbage in the street."

"I do not like that this beautiful country exports so much wood."

"[Eco-tourism] should take nothing but pictures, kill nothing but time, leave nothing but footprints."

### Lack of information

"Do you have more information on Phu Xang He?"

"Advertise the Phu Xang He National Park!"

"Make it easier for tourists to get information about the areas and the possibilities."

### Comparisons with neighbouring countries

"You have a great country and people, don't let it become like tourism in Vietnam"

"In Thailand, many formerly beautiful places have been overrun by free-spending, drinking, bad-mannered, un-cultured fools from the West."

"Don't become like Thailand as they have sold out their culture and now care more about money than sustainable traditional living."

### Transport

"The hardest thing about traveling [in] Laos is nobody knows about the bus system."

"Always bring enough tires on the bus!"

"It would be nice if we could go to Vientiane by the river."

"Make sure that the area is clear of bombs"

### Ethnic concerns

"Protection of the tribal culture."

"I would like to know more about the people, the culture, ethnic groups, etc."

"Make sure the cultural behaviour of communities is not affected [by eco-tourism]."

"J'espere que le tourisme sexuel ne touchera pas ce merveilleux pays."

### Other NBCA's

"Guided tours of Nakai Nam Theun!"

"I would absolutely love to be able to tour Nakai Nam Theun NBCA."

"I was unable to find someone in Tha Khek to take me to the Khamouane Limestone NBCA."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>A number of these issues are discussed by John Baker in a recent IUCN paper entitled Tourism Development in the Nakai-Nam Theun Conservation Area, prepared for the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR.

<sup>2</sup>Location and descriptions of these distribution points are given in Annex 2.

<sup>3</sup>Assumes an exchange rate of \$1 = 5000 Kip.

<sup>4</sup>Includes visitor fees and *pro rata* value of patrolling by NBCA and local guides, based on prevailing government salary and per diem rates.