


PDP PARKS

PDP Park Guidelines

State and National Parks are an obvious place for environmental protection, as their natural beauty is the reason for their very existence. As ecotourism increases around the world due to improved transportation, standards of living, and appreciation for the protection of natural habitats, parks are increasingly interested in optimizing their sustainability and reducing their environmental impact with such growing numbers of visitors (Chafe 2005). Thanks to Ocean Recovery Allianceⁱ, and its Plastic Disclosure Projectⁱⁱ (PDP), there is now some initial guidance on the steps that a park can take in the effort to minimize its waste profile, and in particular, its “plastic footprint”.

This document lays out guidelines to assist park operators evaluate progress towards certification from the Plastic Disclosure Project as a “PDP Park”, including a checklist to assist with planning and a scorecard. As you will see, these guidelines should be very achievable for most park authorities.

Overall sustainability of environmental impacts is important, and as a vital step in that direction these guidelines focus specifically on minimizing the park’s “plastic footprint”. Plastic is a useful and valuable resource, especially when there are many people in an area that need food and drink items away from home. However, plastic needs to be properly managed. Doing so can be an easy, but significant, step towards a more sustainable park operation. Plastic is often highly visible to park visitors and impacts the surroundings of the environment that

people come to see (Barnes et al. 2009). In this context, brands and companies who sell products with plastic are increasingly concerned about the image they leave behind; they wish to demonstrate that they are responsible corporate citizens in the community. In addition, plastic is a valuable commodity, and there are increasingly strong economic reasons for ensuring it is not wasted as a resource (Hopewell et al. 2009). Plastic takes decades or centuries to fully degrade, can cause ecosystem and health impacts, and is often the cause of much of the waste that is found as visible trash in our park environments, both on land and in the water (Barnes et al. 2009). The good news is that this is completely avoidable, and tourists who come to look at the beauty of a location are a perfect segment of society that can be ambassadors in moving towards a world with less plastic waste.

Checklist and Tips

To help minimize a park's "plastic footprint", park management should consider the following as they develops and reviews their protocols and publicity:

Checklist	Tips
<p>1. Have we considered all the situations where plastic is provided?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider items provided to tourists, sold via stores, and brought in by visitors. • Remember to think about items given for free, and those which are sold. • Consider items made of, served in, or wrapped with, plastic.
<p>2. Can plastic items be replaced/substituted with something more sustainable?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can visitors bring their own reusable bottles? • Can we provide more water via dispensers and filtered systems? • Can other cutlery be used instead of plastic cutlery (i.e., chopsticks)? • Can we use/reuse washable cutlery and plates? • Can we supply utensils and equipment without individual plastic wrapping?
<p>3. Where plastic is provided, can favorable plastics be chosen?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for high % of post-consumer recycled content of the plastic. • Use biodegradable plastic where possible (ideally with feedstock that does not come from food related crops), and only if used in conjunction with a proper composting infrastructure for this material after its use. • Use types of plastic that are readily recyclable in your area.
<p>4. Where plastic waste is generated, is it collected in an organized way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it easy for people to know where to put their plastic waste, and try to separate ALL plastic waste, not just bottles. • Ensure collection happens where the waste is generated. • Encourage park volunteers and staff to assist visitors in properly disposing of and separating waste.
<p>5. Where recycling is conducted, are you confident in the recycling process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know who picks up your recycled material each day, and where it actually goes (and what gets done with it)? • Make sure that there is a systematic process of collection, sorting and removal, and that you don't simply rely on existing municipal waste management operations to do the job of recycling or sorting if their only job is hauling and dumping waste (i.e., not making use of it).

Scorecard:

To help gauge your progress towards achieving a minimal plastic footprint at your park, measure your park's waste management and plastic generation against this scorecard. For each question, identify your score appropriately, then total your responses for an overall score. In general, if you either have no plastic, or manage plastic very carefully to minimize both reputational and environmental impacts, your park will score sufficient points to become a certified "PDP Park" by the Plastic Disclosure Project.

Zero Plastic Footprint Scorecard

- 1) Are plastic bottles sold within the park? Points _____**
- 0** - No plastic bottles sold
 - 1** - Plastic bottles sold, with 100% recycling, AND the brand(s) selling them are part of the collection/recycling process with volunteers, signage, messaging and active programs to make sure that everything gets recycled
 - 2** - Plastic bottles sold, with 100% recycling, but without "brand" participation in the collection/recycling process
 - 3** - Plastic bottles sold, with "unorganized" recycling
 - 5** - Plastic bottles sold, with no recycling or reuse
- 2) Are plastic plates provided within the park? Points _____**
- 0** - No plastic plates provided
 - 2** - Plastic plates provided, washed and reused
 - 3** - Plastic plates provided and 100% recycled, knowing the end-process for recycling and use
 - 4** - Plastic plates provided and recycled, not knowing the end-process for recycling and use
 - 5** - Plastic plates provided, with no recycling or reuse
- 3) Are Styrofoam plates or cups provided within the park? Points _____**
- 0** - No Styrofoam provided
 - 3** - Styrofoam provided and 100% recycled, knowing the end-process for recycling and use
 - 4** - Styrofoam provided and recycled, not knowing the end-process for recycling and use
 - 5** - Styrofoam provided, with no recycling or reuse *[Note: Styrofoam is very hard to recycle because most communities do not have economies of scale to do so.]*

- 4) Are plastic utensils provided within the park? Points _____**
- 0 - No single-use plastic utensils provided
 - 2 - Plastic utensils provided, washed and reused
 - 3 - Plastic utensils provided and 100% recycled, knowing the end-process for recycling and use
 - 5 - Plastic utensils provided, with no recycling or reuse
- 5) Are plastic cups provided within the park? Points _____**
- 0 - No plastic cups provided
 - 2 - Plastic cups provided, washed and reused
 - 3 - Plastic cups provided and 100% recycled, knowing the end-process for recycling and use
 - 5 - Plastic cups provided, with no recycling or reuse
- 6) If T-shirts are given away or sold, are they made from recycled PET bottles? Points _____**
- 0 - If sold, and using 100% recycled material
 - 2 - If sold, and over 20% is recycled material
 - 5 - If sold, and only virgin material is used
- 7) Are plastic souvenirs sold? If so, do they contain recycled content? Points _____**
- 0 If no plastic souvenirs are sold
 - 2 If plastic, and made from 100% recycled plastic
 - 3 If plastic, and at least 50% of the materials are from recycled plastic
 - 4 If plastic, and more than 20% recycled plastic is used (but less than 20%)
 - 5 If plastic, but no recycling or recovery
- 8) If memorabilia is sold, is it wrapped in plastic (this includes shipping from the manufacturer of the product)? Points _____**
- 0 - If no plastic wrapping
 - 2 - If plastic wrapping is used, but 100% is recycled
 - 4 - If plastic wrapping is used, but there is no recycling
- 9) Are plastic bags used for shopping items or other purchases? Points _____**
- 0 - If no plastic bags are used
 - 2 - If plastic bags are used, but 100% recycled
 - 3 - If compostable bags are used, AND there is composting infrastructure to compost the bags
 - 5 - If plastic bags are used, but there is no recycling

QUALIFICATION SCORING – 8 Points or Lower (with a goal of zero)

In order to qualify for the use of a PDP Park logo, and approval of meeting PDP Park guidelines, with certification, your total score must be lower than 8 points. If you would like to be certified, and use the PDP Park logo in your marketing material, website, etc., please contact us to self-register, along with your scorecard as per the items above.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please contact us at:

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Plastic Disclosure Project

ⁱ The focus of Ocean Recovery Alliance is to bring together new ways of thinking, technologies, creativity and collaborations in order to introduce innovative projects and initiatives that will help improve our ocean environment. This includes creating business opportunities for local communities when applicable, in order to address some of the pressing issues that our ocean faces today. One of its projects, announced at the Clinton Global Initiative, is the Plastic Disclosure Project. The group is part of the United Nations Environment Programme's Global Partnership on Marine Litter, and this program is now being adopted by the World Bank's Global Partnership for Oceans. www.oceanrecov.org

ⁱⁱ The Plastic Disclosure Project is similar to that of carbon disclosure, whereby companies, organizations and events annually report their plastic use or waste accumulation. By having metrics for measurement, it is easier to assess and then manage the use of plastic in a more efficient manner, with our communities, and the environment, as the benefactors. Five main ways of improving plastic's use include less waste in the supply chain, more recycling within the business operations, more recycled content in the material, new design, and the use of new materials. This project is operated by Ocean Recovery Alliance. www.plasticdisclosure.org The PDP Park program is relevant to ocean protection; everything runs downstream, and even if a park is inland, if environments are clean at the "top," there is less chance that waste will find its way to rivers, streams, and communities along the way.

Barnes DKA, Galgani F, Thompson RC and Barlaz M (2009) Accumulation and fragmentation of plastic debris in global environments. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society Biological Sciences* 364: 1985-1998.

Chafe Z (2005) Consumer Demand and Operator Support for Socially and Environmentally Responsible Tourism. Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development (CESD) and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) Working Paper No. 104, Washington DC.

Hopewell J, Dvorak R and Kosior E (2009) Plastics recycling: challenges and opportunities. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society Biological Sciences 364: 2115-2126.