



Georgia

Sub - Plan for Tourism Development and Marketing for Tusheti Protected Area Complex

Olaf Malver, Ph.D.



List of Abbreviations

AMS – Acute Mountain Sickness
APA – Agency for Protected Areas
CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
CPR – Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation
GEF – Global Environmental Facility
GEL – Georgian Lari
GPS – Global Positioning System
GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HACE – High Altitude Cerebral Edema
HAPE – High Altitude Pulmonary Edema
HQ- Head Quarters
IUCN – International Union of Conservation Networks
MoEPNR – Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia
NTA – National Tourism Agency of Georgia
NGO – Non Governmental Organization
PA – Protected Area
PADP – Protected Areas Development Program
PIU – Project Implementation Unit
RA – Risk Assessment
SEO – Search Engine Optimization
STOL – Short Take Off and Landing
TIES – The International Ecotourism Society
TPAC – Tusheti Protected Area Complex
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
USD – United States Dollar
USDoI – United States Department of the Interior
USPS – United States Park Services
WB – World Bank Group
WTO – World Tourism Organization

Contents

Executive Summary	7
1 INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 The process of sub-plan development	9
2 PURPOSE.....	9
3 PROJECT BACKGROUND	11
4 THE VISION FOR TOURISM	13
5 VISION STATEMENT	15
6 GOALS FOR THE TOURISM MANAGEMENT PLAN	16
7 UPDATED EVALUATION OF TOURISM POTENTIAL.....	18
8 MARKETING PLAN.....	23
8.1 Market Analysis Summary	23
8.2 Marketing Channels	26
8.3 Marketing Objective, Strategies and Activities	31
8.4 Measuring Marketing Success	35
8.5 Future Marketing Recommendations	35
9 INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN	37
9.1 Background	37
9.2 Infrastructure Development: Objective, Strategies and Activities	39
9.3 Measuring Infrastructure Development Success	42
10 TRANSPORTATION PLAN	42
10.1 Background	42
10.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities	43
11 TOURISM TRAINING PLAN.....	44
11.1 Background	44
11.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities	45
12 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PLAN	46
12.1 Background	46
12.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities	46
13 TOURISM INCOME GENERATION PLAN.....	47
13.1 Background	47
13.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities	49
14 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION PLAN	51
14.1 Background	51
14.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities	51
15 TOURISM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN	53
15.1 Background	53
15.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities	53
16 IMPLEMENTATION OF TOURISM GUIDELINES	54
16.1 General Comments	54
16.2 Objective, Strategy and Activities	55
17 SAFETY PLAN.....	56
17.1 Background	56
17.2 Objective, Strategy and Activities	56
APPENDIX 1 - NOTES FOR A TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR BATSARA- BABANEURI PROTECTED AREAS.....	58
APPENDIX 2 – LISTS OF PARTICIPANTS, STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS	59
APPENDIX 3 - POTENTIAL OF THE WILDLIFE WATCHING MARKET IN TUSHETI.....	61
APPENDIX 4 – TOURISM GUIDELINES.....	64
APPENDIX 5 – SUMMARY OF MARKETING PLAN	65
APPENDIX 6: NOTES ON BIRD WATCHING INFRASTRUCTURE	66
APPENDIX 7 – ENVIRONMENTAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION INITIATIVES .	69
APPENDIX 8 – SUMMARY OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.....	70

APPENDIX 9 – SUMMARY OF TRANSPORT, INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INCOME GENERATION PLANS	71
APPENDIX 10 - TOURISM TRAINING.....	72
APPENDIX 11 – SAMPLE VISITOR SURVEY	78
APPENDIX 12 – SUMMARIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT & MITIGATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANS.....	80
APPENDIX 13 – SUMMARIES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF TOURISM GUIDELINES AND SAFETY PLANS	81
APPENDIX 14 - EVACUATION AND FIRST AID PROCEDURES FOR TOURISTS IN TPAC ..	82

Executive Summary

The **key findings** in this final report on tourism development and marketing for Tusheti Protected Areas Complex (TPAC) are:

1. **Strong Growth of Visitation.** The Republic of Georgia, Georgian PA's and TPAC itself have experienced a **rapid growth of visitors from 2009 to 2010**. This growth is expected for 2011 and beyond. Next year and in the near future, it is estimated that up to **10.000** tourists will visit TPAC, **40%** of those internationals.
2. **Infrastructure Needs.** **The hiking trail systems, signage and camp site infrastructure** for visitors are still not completed or not up to international standards. This completion must be prioritized in order to mitigate environmental impacts, provide good visitor services, attract visitors and take advantage of income potential for TPAC and the local service providers.
3. **Training Needs.** There is an **acute need for training of guides and other hospitality providers**. The quality of guest house services has been declining in 2010 according to local tour operators. Also, there are not enough trained guides for 2011. Training seminars and educational workshops must be planned and executed for the 2011 season and beyond.
4. **Marketing Needs.** There is an urgent need for a more modern, cost efficient and focused marketing strategy for TPAC. It is proposed that emphasis is put on **web-marketing initiatives** and more collaborative **marketing initiatives with NTA** - on both regional and national levels.
5. **Revenue Generation Needs.** Following standards from other National Parks worldwide, revenues from visitors must be collected to pay for the increased tourism capacity building. This should partly be done by collecting a **mandatory entry fee e.g. 40 GEL per international visitor**. Georgians could be asked to donate at will. Revenues could also be generated from concessions, camping fees and other usage fees.
6. **Income Management and Distribution Mechanism.** A fiscal mechanism outside APA but within the framework of the Georgian Law for **the collection of entry and concessions fees** and the disbursement of tourism development funds should be put in place immediately. These funds should primarily be used for tourism related activities in the National Park and Protected Landscape. One vehicle for this revenue mechanism could be the suggested **Tusheti Development Fund**, if legally and practically viable.
7. **Concession Auctions.** Offering **concessions** to private investors for the visitor center and other tourist related services should be prioritized in order to get additional stable income streams. This enables the park administration to focus on its core competence of park management and law enforcement.
8. **Environmental Impact Risks.** **Risk assessment** from tourism impact and **mitigation** initiatives in selected threatened tourism sites need to be put in place with immediate effect. Specifically, high use areas such as the popular **Atsunta Pass Trek**, the **Naraicho Pass Trek**, the **Oreti Lake Trek** and the **Diklo Loop Trek** should be considered.
9. **Visitor/Provider Statistics.** A coherent plan for obtaining information about visitors must to be implemented, including distribution of surveys to visitors and service providers. This will help planning future capacity building, improve marketing and services - and manage environmental impacts.

1 Introduction

This final report on Tourism Development and Marketing for the Tusheti Protected Areas Complex (TPAC) was written by this author while on mission in the Republic of Georgia during two visits in the periods of September 1 – 14, 2010 and October 4 -18.

Although outside the scope of the consultancy - but at the request of APA, the author visited Batsara- Babaneuri Protected Areas on September 10 to assess its tourism potential. Short notes on the findings are included in **Appendix 1**.

The client of the consultancy is NACRES, which is responsible for providing contract services for the UNDP/GEF funded project “Catalyzing Financial Sustainability of Georgia’s Protected Areas System”. Intended beneficiaries are the entire protected areas community in Georgia, ranging from the NTA, APA, MoENR, tour operators, NGOs involved in sustainable natural resource management, park management, and local communities who stand to benefit from tourism development in Tusheti.

1.1 *The process of sub-plan development*

Tourism Development and Marketing sub-plan for the Tusheti Protected Area Complex (TPAC) was prepared with the participation and active consultations with all main stakeholders. In the initial phase during the first visit of the author (September 1 – 14, 2010) meetings and discussions were held with APA management and staff and the TPAC administration, local service providers (Tusheti guesthouse owners, etc.), national tour-operators and officials from the National Tourism Agency. In parallel all additional information was gathered. The first draft Tourism Development and Marketing sub-plan was then prepared. During the subsequent period (October 4 -18, 2010) additional meetings were organized with various stakeholders and two separate workshops were held in Tbilisi and Alvani. The draft sub-plan was presented and discussions were held at these workshops that were attended by all main stakeholders including governmental, non-governmental and private sector (see **Appendix 2** for list of participants). Comments and suggestions received from the stakeholders during this process were fully incorporated in the final sub-plan.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this consultancy is to develop a sub plan for tourism development and marketing for TPAC in conjunction with the overall management plan, considering the other components of the PA Network Finance Plan elaborated through the obtained UNDP/GEF project grant assistance. Specifically, this work will be done in conjunction with the reclassification of TPAC and considering the results of the biodiversity and socio-economic surveys. It is assumed that this sub - plan will meet the conservation goals for the TPAC in the context of the larger PA network goals.



Trekking over Atsunta Pass

Key Mission Objectives

The **Objectives** to be met from the two missions are as follows:

Objective 1: Meet and consult with the Management of the APA and APA staff, to review and evaluate current status of infrastructure, marketing and training for TPAC – as well as discuss the current legal and zoning status of TPAC. Based on that information, update and prioritize timely infrastructure, marketing and training initiatives.

Objective 2: Obtain more updated and accurate data for tourists visiting TPAC in 2007-2010. This will be done by getting data from PA management, TPAC management, local hotel and guest house owners in Tusheti and from Georgian tour operators conducting activities in TPAC during that period. Furthermore, review of more general visitor trends to Georgia through interviews with staff at NTA, key hotels/guest houses in Tbilisi and at other PA's in Georgia in order to get a more accurate idea of the general visitation trends.

Objective 3: Prepare a feedback survey for visitors arriving in 2011 and beyond – including a relevant plan for the distribution and collection of these surveys.

Objective 4: Identify current needs and problems stemming from TPAC visitation. This will be done through interviews with TPAC management and local service providers (tour operators, guesthouse owners and others).

Objective 5: Assess the current marketing initiatives done by tour operators, NTA (local, regional and national) and other park service providers.

Objective 6: Assess the legal operational framework for current and future public and private fiscal mechanism for generations of Park revenues from user fees (visitors' fees, concession fees and others).

Objective 7: Support the hosting of a tourism management workshops for the TPAC management, APA staff and national TPAC stakeholders, as well as a workshop for local Tusheti service providers and stakeholders. Such workshops would be places to present and discuss the interim tourism development and marketing plan for TPAC.

3 Project Background

The first evaluation of inbound nature tourism to Georgia and its impact on its protected areas was made in 2000¹. The major conclusions from this report were that Georgia had a medium to high potential as a nature tourist destination for both international and domestic visitors and its primary attraction were the Caucasus mountain areas and their local people, culture and history. This has proven to be even truer today, given the rising popularity of the Republic of Georgia as a new and upcoming international travel destination.

That study also identified three main barriers to overcome, in order to optimize the nature tourism potential in Georgia and its protected areas: (1) lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, public transportation, accommodations, sanitary facilities, information and interpretation (2) lack of integrated and targeted national and international marketing initiatives, and (3) perceived and real political unrest in Georgia and the Caucasus Region as a whole.

It was suggested, however, that with intelligent and coordinated marketing efforts, significant basic infrastructure build-up and training, and an improved perception of the political stability in the Caucasus Region, the total annual tourism revenues for Georgia could significantly increase in a matter of years. Similarly, local and national visitation to most PA's in Georgia would increase. It was envisioned that such efforts would incrementally add to the operating budget and thus, in turn, economically sustain the Nature Parks and Reserves in the Georgian Caucasus, including Tusheti – and ultimately support the overall conservation goals.

Presently, a new updated tourism management and marketing plan, that considers current pressing opportunities and challenges and the present institutional set-up of the PA system, needs to be updated. This new plan should be based on the comprehensive tourism management plan that was developed in 2004 within the GEF/WB/PADP² and the changing tourist market dynamics. The 2004 document defined the tourism goals and strategies and provided specific outcomes and timing of activities to achieve these outcomes in Tusheti PAs. Due to lack of funding and management capacity, this plan was not executed fully and in the light of continuing TPAC conservation and financial challenges there is an urgent need to develop an updated tourism management plan.

The 2004 TPAC tourism management plan was intended to be implemented with all other components of the management plan for the Protected Area and was meant to be integrated accordingly. Looking forward, some progress has been made in the direction of tourism

¹ “Tourism Assessment and Work Plan for Nature/Culture Tourism to The Republic of Georgia”, Report to GEF/WB, Olaf Malver, March, 2000

² “Tusheti Nature Reserve, National Park and Protected Landscape - An Ecotourism Management Plan”. Report to GEF/WB, Olaf Malver, 2004.

management and marketing over the recent years - both at the country and PA system-level. This especially includes infrastructure development in TPAC and tourism marketing activities conducted by APA and the Tusheti PA Administration. Nevertheless, for the effective implementation of tourism objectives, further significant steps are necessary and such activities should in particular include the provision of more infrastructures and training, as well as the continuation and further development of marketing activities.

In summary, a new and revised tourism management plan today should include the following updated important components:

- **Updated Evaluation of Tourism Potential**
- **Tourism Marketing Plan**
- **Infrastructure Development Plan**
- **Tourism Training Plan**
- **Environmental Impact Assessments, Measurements and Mitigations**
- **Funding Mechanisms**
- **Information Management Plan**
- **Transportation Plan**
- **Community Development Plan**
- **Safety Plan**



Camping below Larovani Pass

4 The Vision for Tourism



A long term **Vision** for TPAC as a tourism destination should include the following **Components** to be considered successful:

Conservation Guidance

- Any tourism activities in TPAC should be guided by the TPAC conservation goals and tourism impact should be carefully and continuously assessed and mitigated before the point of maximum carrying capacity in all subareas of the TPAC.

Market and Marketing Diversity

- The risk/opportunity for Tusheti as a competitive destination worldwide should be leveraged. Most tourism in TPAC is currently taking place during the relative short early July – early September period and it is desirable to extend that time frame, even into the winter. A wide specter of activities can be considered as well. From a market impact perspective, at this point, there is a steady flow of a low volume of visitors, in 2010 more than **6.000**. This number is expected to increase to **10.000** visitors annually³. The tourist target groups are expected to follow into three main complementary categories:
 - a. National Georgian weekend and multi-day visitors requiring low cost access and more simple facilities for camping and picnicking. A majority of them will stay with local families and friends. According to APA, there is also a trend that Georgian Nationals are becoming more service demanding tourists.
 - b. Long weekend and multi-day expatriate visitors (mostly from Tbilisi and other main Georgian cities in the lowlands), demanding higher standard visitor facilities. This segment would have an interest in natural and cultural historical attractions, and use their cars to get to their attractions but would also be keen to do in multi-day hiking and horseback riding.
 - c. International visitors with a general interest in natural and cultural history, as well as physical activities, such as multi-day hiking and horseback-riding. They would be mainly from Eastern and Western Europe (fewer from the US, Israel and Japan) and require good access, safety and high standards of visitor facilities and services.

To reach these different markets a diverse set of timely and flexible marketing tools should be utilized in order to reach all of them efficiently.

Financial Long- term Viability

- A steady cash flow and revenues (some from public funds) must be considered to pay for all Park activities, including the meeting of conservation goals, education and alleviation of poverty in adjacent communities. Visitors from the three groups above could for instance pay different entrance fees, based on fair and competitive market prices - the internationals being required to pay approximately 40 GEL mandatory as an entry fee and the Georgians only paying at will. Additional substantial revenues could be generated from concessionaire fees, camping fees and other service fees. Relatively high entrance fees for internationals could only be justified by the added value of service to those visitors, such as safety, interpretation, infrastructure and

³ “Revenue Prognoses for Tusheti Nature Reserve, National Park and Protected Landscape” - initial estimates by PIU management team and Park staff from Tusheti, 2003.

quality of concessionaire services - as well as reasonable high quality private local accommodations in the Protected Landscapes.

Fiscal Efficiency

- The Park “Business Model” must be continually refined and optimized to stay competitive. For instance, most of the tourism revenues generated from entry fees, concessions, etc. should be directly and efficiently funneled into a newly established finance vehicle such as the “Tusheti Development Foundation” – if legally and practically possible. The fees should be added to both the Park and Protected Landscape tourism budgets. These funds should support the maintenance and improvements of tourism services, including conservation efforts, as they are linked to tourism activities.

Strong Community Linkages

- A key principle in the tourism planning must be that income earned by local concessionaires and other local tourism providers’ income would alleviate poverty in the surrounding communities and lessen local environmental pressures such as poaching and illegal logging. Thus, a continuous dialogue with all local stakeholders is essential.

Tourism Guidelines

- All visitations should be governed by the Park’s tourism guidelines, which should be consistent and should meet conservation needs, economical sustainability criteria and local community development goals. Such guidelines should include prohibitions as well as a positive conservation message

Improvements Through Feedback

- It is also important that the impact of visitation levels should be determined by ongoing environmental and social monitoring and assessment initiatives. Visitations could be adjusted accordingly and prudent operational and fiscal adjustments to the Park business model made.

Safety

- Finally, it is important that the Park and Protected Landscape Authorities provide a safe environment for all visitors, providing plans for communications, rescue and first aid triage of visitors. These plans must be communicated to visitors and made operational, involving Park staff, tour operators and select local service providers.

5 Vision Statement

In short, distilling these Vision Components into one clear message, it is possible to derive a **Vision Statement** for conducting Tourism in TPAC:

**“Tourism in the Tusheti Area Park
Complex Should Enrich, Protect and
Educate - and thus Create a Conservation
Legacy for Georgia - and the Caucasus”**

6 Goals for the Tourism Management Plan

The **vision** for managing tourism in TPAC should be supported by the following **goals** and all **strategies** and corresponding specific **activities** should be governed by one or several of these goals – singularly, or in combination:

Goal # 1: Support a diversified and safe tourism program that offers opportunities and activities to different segments of the national and international tourism markets.

Goal # 2: Serve as a model for the development of other similar existing and future Georgian protected areas and parks.

Goal # 3: Generate long-term, sustainable income for conservation of TPAC.

Goal # 4: Improve the knowledge about the area’s cultural and natural resources among local people and the public in general, by means of educational and interpretive activities.

Goal # 5: Involve communities in tourism sector in order for them to benefit from tourism activities in and around TPAC.

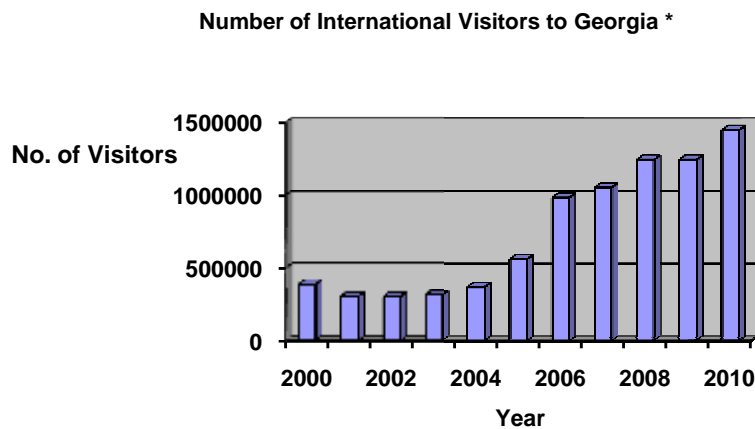


7 Updated Evaluation of Tourism Potential

Any tourist development plan must be based on current visitor statistics and trends. In other words, how many tourists can TPAC expect in the near to middle term and what would be the characteristics of these visitors? Knowing that would determine in particular marketing, infrastructure and conservation activities.

Visitors to Georgia

The number for all international arrivals to Georgia from **2000 to present** can be summarized in this graph⁴:



* 2010 is an extrapolated full year projection by comparing growth for the first 7 months of 2009 and 2010, respectively,

These are the total number of international arrivals, including business travelers, friends, relatives and also includes true international leisure tourists. To get an idea of the most recent growth in international arrivals of all non-resident travelers to Georgia for the first 7 months of 2009 and 2010⁵:

- Year 2009: 750499 Visitors
- Year 2010: 1027321 Visitors – This is **an increase of 37% overall** from 2009-10.
- The 2009 to 10: The increase of Visitors from Europe (not CIS) was **36%**.
- The 2009 to 10: The increase of Visitors from the Americas was **26%**. (This includes all countries in North, Central and South America)

The conclusions from these data are that Georgia is recently getting consistently more international visitors and the growth in 2010 was strong.

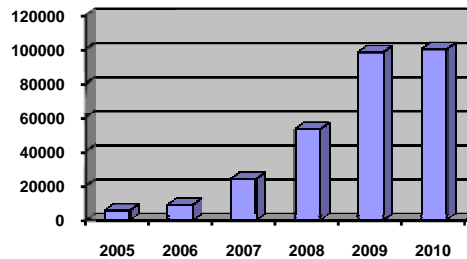
⁴ From the National agency of Statistics and the Agency of Tourism:
<http://georgia.travel/travel/index.php?page=10&sub=5&lang=2>

⁵ From the National agency of Statistics and the National agency of Tourism:
<http://georgia.travel/travel/index.php?page=10&sub=5&lang=2>

Visitors to PA's⁶:

Visitor numbers and revenues for all major PA's in Georgia had a markedly and profound increase - even before the war with Russia in 2008 and has grown in 2009 and 2010 as well. (According to data maintained by APA) These are the up-to-date numbers:

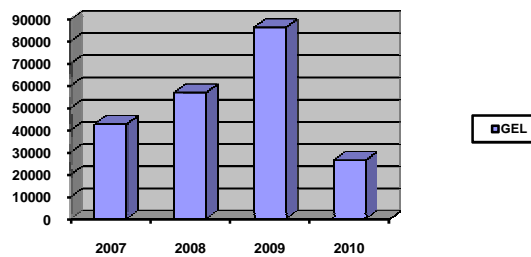
Total number of Visitors to All PA's *



* 2010 number are for the first 7 months only.

Revenue-wise these are the statistics for all Protected Areas:

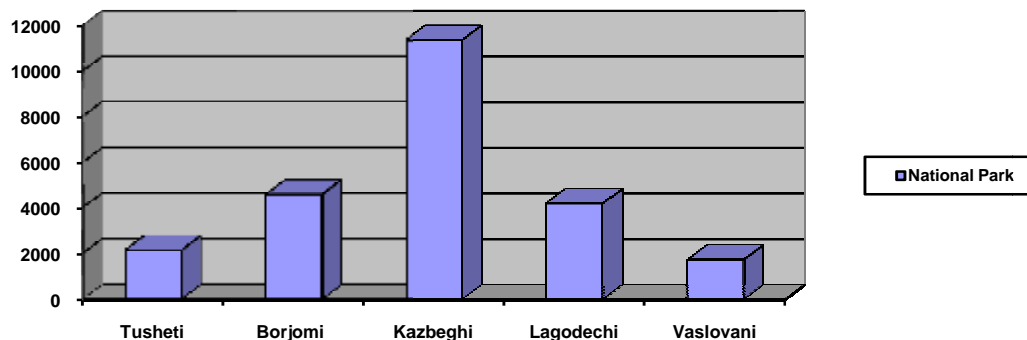
Total Revenues for All Protected Areas of Georgia*:



*2010 numbers is for the first 7 months only. The reason for the low 2010 revenue numbers, compared to 2009, could be explained by quarterly accounting cycles and/or reporting guidelines.

Data were compiled by APA, comparing different Georgian Protected Areas:

Number of visitors to Tusheti and other similar National Parks, 2009:



⁶ Data provided by APA

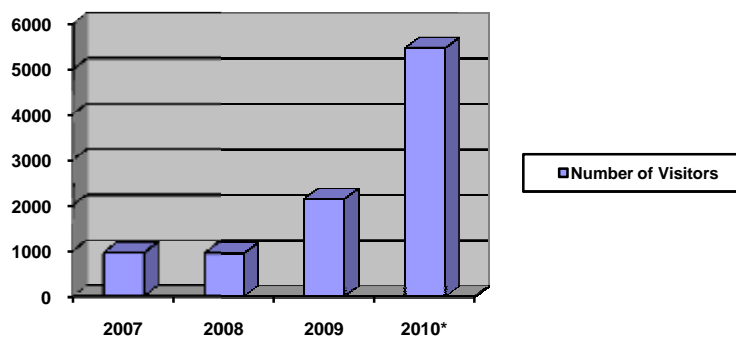
This shows that TPAC still is one of the least popular National Parks in Georgia, when compared to similar ones. It is difficult to explain with certainty why this is the case (no surveys have been made) but Kazbeghi, Lagodechi and Borjomi all have easier road access than Tusheti (day trips from Tbilisi) and Borjomi has been a National Park for a long time and had a more time to be promoted to the domestic market.

Visitors to TPAC:

Based on a) the attractive natural settings of TPAC and its unique flora, fauna and culture, b) the initial interest from expatriates and Georgians living in Tbilisi, c) the small number of foreign nature/culture tourists visiting Georgia, and 4), and the carrying capacity of proposed tourism infrastructure, park management estimated that **1200-1700** visitors to TPAC would in a neutral to optimistic scenario be expected in the first year of full operation.⁷ And it was correctly projected that that the visitor number would grow steadily thereafter.

The predictions and assumptions indeed held true, especially during the period from 2008 through summer 2010, when the Park Authorities started to collect more accurate visitation data. During the summer of 2009, Tusheti was visited by more than 2,000 visitors, despite the 2008 war and following economical crisis. And in 2010, the number of visitors started to grow dramatically – in August 2010 the total number of visitors was already up **160%** compared to all of 2009 and revenues were up **130%**:⁸

Number of visitors to TPAC from 2007 – 2010



Note that for 2010, data for the number of visitors was only collected until the end of August.

It is also worth noting that in 2009, 40% of visitors to TPAC were international tourists and the rest Georgians.⁹

Similarly, revenues from tourism activities collected by the park from rental of rooms, provision of services, catering and rental of picnic facilities at the park headquarters saw a dramatic increase in 2010. Again, the 2010 data is only collected until the end of August.¹⁰

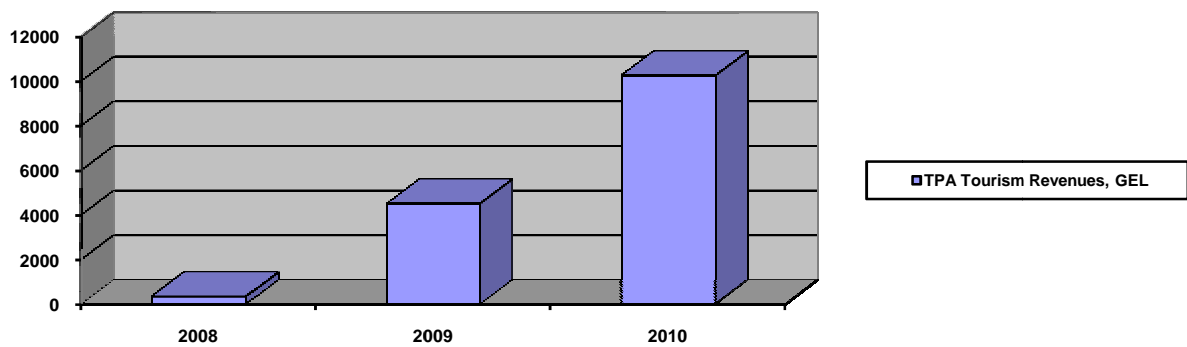
⁷ Projections made by Tusheti Nature Reserve and National Park in 2004.

⁸ Data provided by APA

⁹ Data Provided by APA

¹⁰ Data Provided by APA

Visitor Revenues collected by TPAC Administration



For 2011 and beyond, there are many reasons to believe that the annual revenues and number of visitors will grow and be even higher. Interviews with several Georgian Tour Operators serving foreign outbound operators confirmed increased 2011 reservations, bookings and interest in Tusheti and the Caucasus as an upcoming mountain tourism destination. A neutral and broad estimate for the number of TPAC visitors for 2011 total would be between **6.000-10.000** visitors – and it is prudent to guess that approximately 40% of those will – again, be internationals.

At this point it is not possible to evaluate the tourist revenues that would flow to the local communities from these increased activities – and it is recommended that a survey of local service providers and their corresponding visitor loads, prices and profit structures be conducted. For an approximate local revenue generation it can be assumed that:

- Average number of days spent in Tusheti for a visitor: **5 days** (including transport r/t),
- Average number of GEL spent locally per day: **90 GEL** (incl. transport, lodging, meals, souvenirs, etc.)

the total locally generated annual revenues could be between **2,700,000 – 4,500,000 GEL**.

Note: The visitation data above for TPAC, however, was assembled from a mixture of information from the border guards, guest house owners and visitors staying at the tourism accommodations at the Park Headquarters. A more consistent and uniform data collection approach is needed in the future to get more accurate numbers and to improve the planning process. This can be done by combing these data:

- Asking Guest House owners to submit accurate visitor statistics from their guests
- Keeping track of international visitors (and Georgians who pay at will) that pay entry fees at the Park Headquarter.
- Collecting visitor data from the Boarder Guards.
- Collecting visitor surveys at Guesthouse and at Park Headquarters.

This data would not include all Georgians (non-Tushetians) who come to visit TPAC – given that no fees or other forms of registration are required by this segment of visitors at this point of time. Perhaps a registration process for all visitors should be required for the future – given that all visitors have an environmental, economical and social impact.

Another note of caution: The international tourist markets are known to be very sensitive to outside factors - and visitation can reverse as quickly as it can rise. In Peru, during the Maoists insurgency in the 80-ies, inbound tourism dropped to almost zero – only to rebound a year after the conflict was over. Particular in today’s tourism markets - with the real-time sharing of information among tourists on the internet it is possible to reverse a visitation trend quickly. Thus, if the quality of the “Tusheti Vacation Experience” fails to live up to its current reputation, due to lower quality visitor services provided by TPAC or guest houses then there is a genuine risk that visitor numbers could drop equally dramatic.

Conclusions about Tourism Trends And Potential in TPAC:

- **2010: Tourism in Georgia overall and in particular tourism to Georgian National Parks is growing very quickly.**
- **Tusheti National Park is poised for the same growth and can expect 6.000 – 10.000 visitors in 2011 and beyond, approximately 40% of them international visitors.**
- **Tourism to TPAC could be very fluctuating and is sensitive to change in quality of the visitor experience – as well perceived and real political unrest.**

8 Marketing Plan

8.1 Market Analysis Summary

The global and general tourism trends until 2020 has been summarized by the World Tourism Organization ¹¹ - as it pertains to TPAC:

- Tourists are more physically and intellectually active now than previously;
- Tourists are becoming sophisticated in their travel habits;
- Tourists expect good value for money;
- More tourists are seeking new destinations and products;
- More tourists are taking more frequent but shorter vacations;
- There are particular tourism growth areas:
 - § Nature/Culture/Adventure Tourism
 - § “Roots” Tourism
 - § Religious Tourism

Facts pertaining global nature tourism trends^{12, 13}:

- The market is poised for long-term growth;
- The market share will grow;
- Nature tourism grows faster than the tourism industry as a whole;
- Sustained nature tourism activities builds positive nation profiles for developing countries.

The profile of an average international nature tourism/ leisure tourist is:

- Affluent - looking for high-quality services;
- Educated, interested in the guidance and knowledge from professional guides;
- Earns an average of \$50,000 yearly income (outside of Georgia);
- Average age bracket is 25-63 years;

¹¹ WTO: “Guide for Local Authorities on developing Sustainable Tourism”, 1998

¹² ARA Consulting Group, 1997

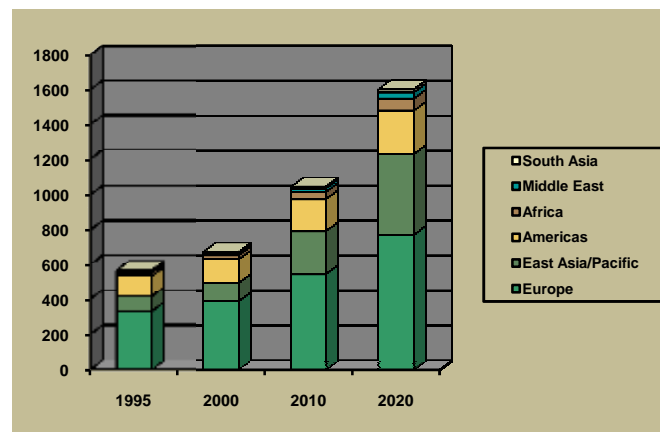
¹³ TIES (The International Ecotourism Society): “Global Ecotourism Factsheet”, 2007

- Gender: 60% traveling as couples; 56% male and 44% female;
- Interested in low impact tourism effecting the community and environment;
- Willing to spend more vacation funds if associated with an ethical business;
- Interested in mild to moderate adventures with meaningful nature and cultural experiences;
- Travels twice or more times a year.

Very little is known about the local Georgian national market for domestic travel, except that they tend not to be so active, not to travel in large groups beyond friends and relatives and to spend less on local accommodations and other services.

Outbound/Inbound trends:

Forecast of Outbound Tourism by Region: 1995-2020: Total number of Travelers: ¹⁴

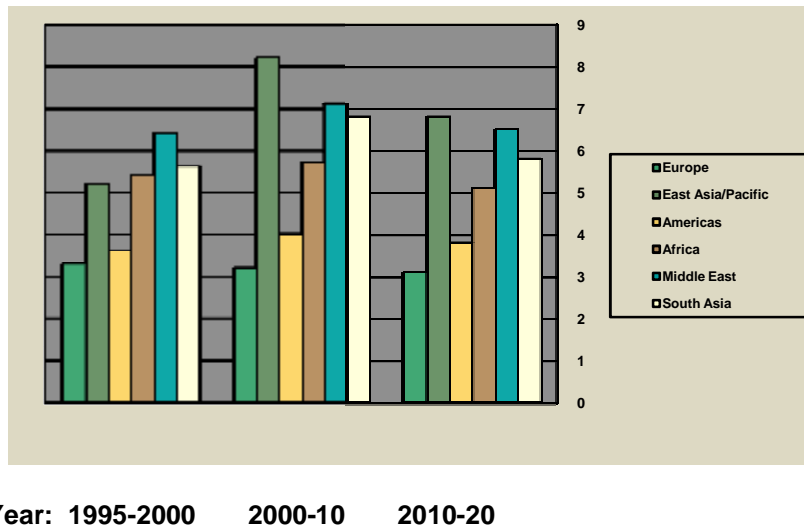


The conclusions from this chart are:

- Asian tourists will travel more and that specific market segment will grow the fastest.
- European international travelers will continue to dominate the market.

¹⁴ (Source WTO: Tourism 2020 Vision, 1998.)

Forecast of Inbound Tourism by Region: 1995-2020: Average Annual Growth Rate Percentage:



Conclusions from the international inbound market dynamics – i.e, where do travelers come from?:

- Asia/Pacific and the Middle Eastern markets will grow more than others;
- The European market will grow the least;
- Specifically, countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and other former Soviet republics will sustain growth in inbound tourism;
- Particularly, the smaller and less advanced former Soviet Republics will fare better in the mid- or long-term.

Facts pertaining to the Georgian nature tourism market:

- Georgia has high to medium potential as an tourism destination in general for both international and domestic visitors¹⁵;
- It was estimated that Georgia would receive nearly 1,000,000 yearly tourist arrivals in 2009 and beyond^{16, 17};
- The tremendous potential for nature tourism opportunities in Georgia has not been capitalized fully. Georgia and particular the Caucasus is still not known as “classic” mountain destination in the world, although it certainly could be;

¹⁵ Tourism Assessment and Work Plan for Nature/Culture Tourism to The Republic of Georgia, Report to GEF/WB, Olaf Malver, March, 2000.

¹⁶ National agency of Statistics of Georgia Report, 2010

¹⁷ From discussions with Saba Kiknadze, Minister of Tourism 2006.

- Georgia has great ecological and cultural strengths and potential for untapped nature tourism;

Georgia has emerged as a new and exciting bird watching destination because of its unique birdlife and the Caucasus is promoted as “One of the Endemic Regions of The World”¹⁸. A fuller description of the potential of the Wildlife Watching Market in Tusheti can be found in **Appendix 3**.

8.2 Marketing Channels

Facts pertaining to marketing channels for tourism marketing.

It is important to look at where tourists get their information about new destinations, since that will determine how to allocate funds to different marketing initiatives. A study was done among US active travelers that show what planning resources were important or not: ¹⁹

Importance of Travel Planning Resources	Important	Very Important	Combined
The Internet	39%	41%	80%
Guide Books	39%	26%	65%
Magazines	49%	12%	52%
Friends/Relatives	33%	17%	50%
Newspapers	20%	5%	25%
Travel Agents	14%	8%	22%

A more recent survey of international travelers to Georgia in 2008²⁰, found that tourists arriving to Tbilisi by air during the period of May – June 2008, got their information about traveling to Georgia from these sources:

Via friends and relatives: 34.5%
Via business partners: 25.0 %

¹⁸ BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, IUCN

¹⁹ Away.com/Outside Magazine Survey 2003

²⁰ GTZ report, submitted by BCH Research to the National agency of Tourism, Georgia, June 2008

From the Internet: **22.6%**
Experience from previous visit: 15.2%
Via a travel agency: 2.2%
Via media: 2.0 %
Travel guides: 2.0%

Two similar surveys were conducted ²¹ on February 1-22, 2010 and May 4-15, 2010, respectively, under the commission of NTA. These surveys showed that for international travelers the sources for information about Georgia were:

Friends and relatives: 61.1%
Internet: **11.5%**
Media: 2.5%
Travel agency: 1.9%
Travel fair: 0.7%

These different marketing channel surveys show that having a good referral from past visitors is the most important marketing channel. Secondly, after referrals, **the internet** is the main source of information about Georgia for attracting travelers. Having a good website for the promotion of TPAC is therefore the key to attracting new international visitors.



Tourism Target Groups for TPAC.

Marketing wise it is important to identify which type of tourists would primarily choose Tusheti as a destination to visit. These are mainly

§ Active Tourists, among them mostly:

²¹ <http://georgia.travel/travel/index.php?page=10&sub=5&lang=2>

- Day Hikers/Runners;
- Multiday Backpackers/Campers;
- Horse Back Riders;
- Mountain Bikers;
- Extreme White Water Kayakers;
- Cross Country Skiers and Snowshoers. (Helicopter skiing is not recommended due to disturbance of wildlife)

§ “Nature” Enthusiasts in General, and among those:

- Tourists with a particular interest in the unique flora and fauna of the Caucasus;
- Birdwatchers; (Although the best season is in April/May when Tusheti is closed)
- Mammal watchers;
- Entomologists;
- Geologists.

§ “Culture” Enthusiasts with an interest in:

- Folklore;
- Music/Singing;
- History;
- Handicrafts;

§ “Creative” Tourists, such as:

- Painters;
- Photographers;
- Videographers;
- Poets/Singers;

§ Tourists with an interest in religion.

§ Tourists who just want to relax in the Mountains and stay in a Guesthouse.

§ 4 – Wheel Drive Vehicle Enthusiasts.

§ Sport Fishermen (catch and release).

A Note on Winter Tourism in TPAC.

At this point, visitation to TPAC in the winter is severely limited by the access of expensive helicopter service. It is at this point of time not economically or practically feasible to keep the road open in the winter. Only tourists with financial means to pay for helicopter transport (and even that is not predicable weather-wise) would be able to go – and that market is very small. It would be easier and safer for winter enthusiast to choose Svaneti.

If in the future, there is a commercial way to establish a STOL flight with skies to fly to Omalo – that might be a feasible transportation option. Tourists coming into the Omalo Airstrip in the winter would have to stay in the vicinity of Omalo since it would be difficult to travel around in the Park. These guesthouses or tented camps would have to be equipped for winter stays and it would be an expensive proposition for the local service providers to run these accommodations during the winter.

Finally, when planning the development of winter tourism in Tusheti – safety issues has to be considered carefully – how can visitor be brought out safely in case of an emergency?

Therefore, if the Tusheti winter tourist market can justify transport, other logistical, safety and lodging costs – then it would be a desirable destination for winter outdoor enthusiasts in particular skiers and snowshoers.

Recent and Current Marketing Efforts for PA's and TPAC:

TPAC has started some good marketing efforts and has learned a lot in the process, given the lack of funds.

In 2008, the total actual budget for TPAC was 158.296 GEL and of that only 3.225 GEL was spent on marketing (brochures, posters and exhibition stands) – that is only 2 % of the total TPAC budget. In 2009 there were no marketing funds allocated to the TPAC budgets (a total of GEL 191.559) and all marketing activities were covered by funds outside the general budget.

For 2009-2010 the annual PA marketing budget (including TPAC) was 250.000 GEL (this budget was for the Eco-tourism Development Program whose large part was marketing).

Currently, the marketing budget for all PA's is allocated for:

- Production of advertising banners
- Printing of promotional posters, brochures and maps
- Promotion at local tourism fairs in Georgia in Batumi and Tbilisi and at international tourism fairs in Berlin and London
- Production of TV commercials
- NOTE: There is no budget for internet marketing and very little staff salaries to get staff to help with internet marketing

These are the recent current marketing related events/activities:

- A map/brochure of TPAC modeled after USPS has been produced and is distributed at the Park headquarters and at the tourism visitor center in Tbilisi. This marketing piece has a very good map of TPAC, a short description of selected tourism routes, a list of prohibitions and descriptions of the Park's fauna and flora;
- A web-site: www.tushetipa.ge has been built – this is a Georgian/English web-site that has not been updated since 2007 and it is not linked to any other sites;
- TPAC is mentioned at APA's web-site: www.apa.gov.ge

- The “Tusheti Guide Association” - which is a group of local guest house owners from Tusheti, has been formed and they market their accommodations collectively through the internet and brochures.
- Each year, at the end of May, a tourism festival, (Zezvaoba) is taking place in Kvemo Alvani – this event is attended by tourists, tours agencies and operators alike. It includes an exhibition of Tushetian carpets and other local handicrafts. The event is sponsored by Geocell, CHF – and others;
- Each year, in early September another “Game and Cuisine Festival” is held in Omalo – this is attended by tourists, service providers and park authorities;
- The NTA provides information about TPAC and service providers in TPAC from its information center in Tbilisi.

According to APA management, the future marketing priorities are:

- More brochures, maps and posters – however there is no distribution plan;
- More advertisement through CD and movie production – again no distribution plan;
- More TV “infomercials” and other TV promotions;

There is no specific and timely allocated marketing budget and all activities are decided on an ad-hoc basis – thus there is a need for a specific marketing plan and a budget that includes specific and timely marketing activities.

Strategic marketing considerations.

The main markets for TPAC need be considered in order to determine the appropriate marketing channels because each market segment might require different marketing initiatives.

Strategically, the first market that TPAC should target is the **local market** - that is, Georgians with a disposable income and time to spend on leisure in TPAC. The reasons for this are that it is cheaper and faster to market locally than internationally and given the lack of TPAC marketing funds short term and the need for local guest house owners to make income quickly that makes sense. Marketing to this segment should be done through local channels like posters, newspapers, travel exhibitions and events – and most of this is already done – although with a limited budget. The local market response time is short and Georgian visitation will allow local park service providers to generate revenues quickly. Local visitors do not require nor expect modern, high-end amenities, services or accommodations. Therefore, a more elaborate and costly built-up of infrastructure requirements up front is not a determining factor for a local marketing campaign.

Secondly, marketing efforts need to be made towards the **international markets**. These markets are more expensive to approach and take more time to reach. Georgia is competing against other similarly attractive destinations worldwide and the market response time is generally slower. The upside is that more revenues can be generated in the long-term from

marketing to the more affluent foreign markets. Unfortunately, the international markets are also much more sensitive to local upheaval and rumors of inferior service/experiences.

The most time- and cost-efficient way of reaching this international market directly is to build a **strong brand through the web-presence** of both TPAC, PA's and Georgia as a travel destination as a whole. Individual travelers, who are not referred by others, make most of their travel decision by research on the internet and this trend is only going to continue. In addition, any marketing strategy that TPAC follows should be coordinated with the marketing efforts done by NTA.

Another marketing channel for international visitors is indirect marketing via private Georgian Tour operators – firms that offer and operate Tusheti products to walk-in visitors or to foreign outbound resellers. TPAC should provide and proactively support these Georgian tour companies with updated and relevant marketing materials so that they can incorporate those in their ongoing foreign marketing efforts.

8.3 Marketing Objective, Strategies and Activities

Objective:

To aggressively and cost efficiently pursue national and global markets through an array of appropriate and timely marketing channels.

Marketing Strategies²²:

Strategy a. Support marketing efforts for the domestic market and concurrently begin to market to the international markets. In order to gain quick tourism operational experience and to minimize environmental impact, it is suggested to start on a small-scale and increase marketing efforts when revenues from Park fees start accumulating. Also, it is better to do a few well executed activities than to spread out to too many. Simply, a multi - pronged marketing strategy should adhere to these principles:

1. Implement easy-to-do, efficient domestic marketing programs/activities early on and with aggressive and cost efficient roll-outs.;
2. Initially, build a cost efficient strong web presence for international as well as for Georgian visitors; (In dual language)
3. At a later stage, add marketing initiatives such as annual festivals and fund raising events;
4. Many of the suggested marketing initiatives demands collaboration and joint responsibility between key stakeholders, such as APA, NTA, Local Government Administration and Tour Operators;

²² “Georgia’s Protected Areas, August 2004 Marketing Workshop, Outcome and Observation Report”, Prepared by Marie Martin, August 18, 2004.

5. Marketing should initially be directed at generating awareness and goodwill among locals and international visitors, educating inbound tour operators and generating revenues from the national and local expatriate markets;
6. The international marketing efforts should initially mainly be based on efficient web-marketing;

Marketing Activities aimed at the Georgian market

Activity #1: Produce **posters** to be distributed at public offices in Georgia, the main visitor center in Tbilisi and any other regional NTA outlets countrywide.

Responsibilities: APA. Roll- out timeframe: Year 1.

Features/Comments:

1. At springtime Year 1 - 2 months before visitors arrive to TPAC, print and distribute posters in Tbilisi, Telavi, Signaghi, Akhmeta and other key Georgian Cities. The poster should include good picture and a simple invitation to not miss this season in TPAC. The poster should have a mention about where to find out more information.
2. The poster should be in Georgian.
3. The poster should be in color and have stunning images, imbuing the spirit of “Happy Georgian Visitors in the Park”.

Activity #2: Produce **postcards** to be distributed at public offices in Georgia, the main visitor center in Tbilisi and other regional NTA outlets countrywide. At the same time the poster gets produced, produce a post card size version of the poster and leave a stack at popular places in the region. Distribute to hotels and inns or other gathering places, locally and country wide. Perhaps have some folks walk around Telavi and Tbilisi with the cards and distribute them.

Responsibility: APA. Roll- out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity #3: “**Annual Opening of the Park Festival**”. Early in the season when the road to Tusheti opens arrange a Park event, invite locals through the local and other regional news papers for that day. This event should host Tusheti foods, art or entertainment. Indicate what the festival is all about— such as a Tusheti traditional event. Invite local food suppliers to come like vintners, cheese makers, bread makers etc. Tell them they will get a chance to sell their goods and make a festival celebrating the Park.

Responsibilities: APA, Local Government and NTA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity #4: Create a “Friends of Tusheti” **National Fundraising Event** that raises monies for the Tusheti Development Fund. At a designated time in the middle of the season invite key Georgian influential decision makers and celebrities in business, art and politics - both locally and from abroad - to come to the Park and help raise funds for the Tusheti Development Fund. This event could possibly be endorsed by the office of the President of Georgia and attended by the president. This event should be covered heavily by the national and local media outlets.

Responsibilities: APA, Local Government and NTA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity # 5: Have TPAC information be available at **national travel fairs** attended by NTA and Georgian tour operators. This would include above TPAC pamphlets, CD's, short promotional movies, posters and postcards. This would include travel fairs in Tbilisi and Batumi.

Responsibilities: APA and NTA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Marketing Activities aimed at International and Local Markets:

Activity #6: Update and redesign the **TPAC visitor brochure/pamphlets** to be distributed at the TPAC entrance, other PA visitor centers, local travel agencies, Georgian tour operators, hotels, NTA outlets, local travel fairs, wineries and other tourism "hot-spots". The brochures should be used as both an informational marketing piece when prospects are thinking about visiting and a standard hand-out when visitors enter the Park.

Responsibility: APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Current revisions of this brochure/pamphlet should be:

1. Re-edit text to be educational, informative as well as exciting;
2. Better quality images should be used – a good picture is 100 times more efficient than a good sentence – thus less text and more great pictures. Use images of happy tourists in action – as well as more stunning wildlife and landscapes images;
3. The section of classification of Protected Areas in Georgia is in general irrelevant to visitors for the purpose of this marketing piece;
4. Include a section on fees for International (mandatory) Georgians (at will) and explain how these fees are collected and administered (e.g. by the Tusheti Development Fund). Also, explain how these fees are allocated and how they ultimately benefit the visitor.
5. APA should revise nature tourism guidelines by following the The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) guidelines, see **Appendix 4**;
6. Include contact information and web-links for local TPAC service providers such as the Association of Guest Houses in Tusheti and local guide services and drivers;
7. Include information and web-links of how to arrange own transportation to Tusheti – via airplane, helicopter and 4-wheel drive vehicles;
8. Include a section on the climate of TPAC and when to visit TPAC;
9. Re-edit map with actual tourism infrastructure installed, not projected;
10. This brochure should have a Georgian and an English version.

Activity # 7: Produce a simple and inexpensive black and white double paged **hand out sheet** to augment the TPAC brochure above. It should include a simple map sketch and nature tourism guidelines.

Responsibility: APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Features/Comments of the handout sheet:

1. One page with Park Rules and regulations and an opposite page with a simple map with current trails and tourism infrastructure. This map can be redone and updated when new tourist facilities are added;
2. Hiking times and distances for each trail must be included;

3. This piece should be available in Georgian, English and Russian;
4. It should be distributed at NTA outlets and the TPAC headquarters and given to local tour operators;

Activity # 8: Update the current TPAC **website** – It has not been revised since 2007.

Responsibility: APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Features/Comments:

1. The web-site should have general information on history, flora and fauna;
2. There should be an interactive map with up-to-date tourism infrastructure such as trails, campsites and guesthouse locations – as well as specific feature attractions;
3. The site should have separate slideshows on flora, fauna and cultural attractions;
4. There should be links to all guest houses in TPAC – as well as other park service providers;
5. Include a section on transportation options to TPAC and within TPAC;
6. Include Tourism guidelines, see **Appendix 4;** (Park Rules and Regulations)
7. Clarify fee information, including payment systems and fee enforcement warnings;
8. Add information and links about Tusheti Development Fund (if this is indeed the financial vehicle chosen) and “The Friends of Tusheti Association” – as a way of raising monies through donations;
9. Add information and links to other PA’s;
10. The site should be constantly updated and enhanced by a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) specialist by optimizing key search words and creating links to other related web-sites. The goal is to increase ratings on common search engines such as www.google.com and www.yahoo.com;

Additional Marketing Programs/Initiatives aimed at the international markets exclusively.

Activity # 9: TPAC information must be made available at international **travel fairs** attended annually by NTA and Georgian tour operators. This would include the above TPAC pamphlets, CD’s, short promotional movies, posters and postcards. This would include travel fairs in Berlin and London.

Responsibility: APA, local Tour Operators. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity# 10: Create an International “The Friends of Tusheti Association” **Fundraising Event** that raises monies for the Tusheti Development Fund or for any other relevant financial mechanism. At prime time in the middle of the season invite key expatriate decision makers and influential people in businesses, and the diplomatic corps to come to a festive event in the Park and help raise funds for Tusheti. This event could possibly be endorsed by doyen of the Diplomatic Corps. This event should be covered by heavily the local media outlets – and possible international media outlets.

Responsibilities: APA and Expatriate Community Leaders. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity #11: Invite representatives from large outbound tour operators and the international press to attend a **familiarization-trip event** in a couple of Georgian PA’s - including TPAC.

Responsibilities: APA, Georgian Tour Operators and NTA. Roll-out time frame: Year 3.

A Summary of the TPAC Marketing Plan can be Found in **Appendix 5.**

8.4 Measuring Marketing Success

Due to the high costs of marketing and the need to make marketing truly work and incite visitors to TPAC, it is important that TPAC define and measure its marketing successes. The aforementioned activities will be considered successful if the Park achieves these outcomes:

- An annual increase of minimum 10% of both national and foreign visitors;
- 80% of local visitors say on the feed back surveys that they will come back again;
- 80% of international visitors note on the questionnaires that their expectations were met;
- All updated web information, backgrounder, maps, brochures, tickets, events planning and questionnaires are ready before the season starts in early June;
- Web-metrics show an annual increase of 10% in visitor clicks on the TPAC web-site as well as quarterly improvements in search engine rankings;
- That information about the overall conservation efforts and guidelines is communicated well, so that there are no misunderstandings in the marketing materials - leading to negative environmental impacts.

8.5 Future Marketing Recommendations

It is strongly recommended that TPAC does the following for their future marketing activities:

- When widening marketing to the international market, coordinate efforts with similar PA's and Parks such as Lagodekhi, Borjomi and Vashlovani.
- The Georgian Park System's marketing efforts are coordinated with Georgia's national efforts to attract international visitors to Georgia. If nothing else, the national parks should be promoted as one of the many key Georgia attractions;
- Prior to the international marketing roll-out, all important infrastructures are in place, and the relevant web-sites are updated – this should be applicable for the APA website as well as for the TPAC web-site;
- Each year's local marketing planning process should start 6 months prior to a new season opening so there is time to produce materials and arrange programs. So if the season for visiting starts in June, planning should begin no later than December of the previous year, and any production of collateral should be planned to be completed by end of April/early May;
- The Park measures and compares its marketing failures and successes with other Georgian PA's to help further understand what works and what does not when attracting visitors. This marketing information is obtained from the visitor surveys;

- The key for success of most TPAC marketing initiatives is based on collaborative efforts between public and private stakeholders and institutional processes aimed at further such collaboration is imperative to establish.



Hiking through Chontio

9 Infrastructure Development Plan

9.1 Background

In **Ecotourism Management Plan** (Olaf Malver 2004) it was advised to introduce infrastructure, activities and interpretation facilities that addressed the needs of the key target groups of local Georgians, in-bound international visitors, and expatriate guests. It was envisioned that the tourism infrastructure locations should be made within the context of the overall work plan, financial constraints and the overall administrative capacity.

One of the key strategic recommendations in the original 2004 tourism development plan was that a few trails and camp sites would be built early on in the total infrastructure roll-out. This advice was made to generate some initial revenues and gain experience with small number of tourists quickly - with a modest amount of initial investments and less environmental impact risks. It was then envisioned at a later stage that more costly overnight accommodations and comprehensive trail systems should be constructed. In other words, the philosophy was to start incrementally by providing some initial service value to tourists in the field and also to gain experience from environmental assessment and mitigation from tourism activities in the TPAC.

In the actual infrastructure launch, however, it was instead decided to put much of the resources and efforts allocated for infrastructure build to be spent on the construction of the Park Headquarters/ Interpretation Center in Omalo. This center was inaugurated in 2008 and included tourist accommodations, lecture facilities and a cafeteria. Outside the center in Omalo, some interpretation signage, a few trail markers, and toilets were put in place – but there was no rebuilding/construction of the hiking and horseback riding trail system (as depicted on the maps supplied to the visitors). Furthermore, the “camp sites” that were built did not include international standard campsites with access to drinking water, common toilet facilities or waste disposal.

The author of this report travelled several times through TPAC with tourist groups in the summers of 2007 - 2010 and noted these basic infrastructure shortcoming/challenges: (although this is not an exhaustive list)

- Trash and toilet paper from private backpacking groups are starting to collect on select mountain meadows used as camping areas;
- Erosion from multiple parallel trails from hiking/horseback riding activities is beginning to show;
- Some interpretive signs and tabloids are starting to fall apart and needs to be repaired;
- Several trail signs with distances are wrong or misplaced;
- Most hiking and horse back riding trails are not maintained;
- Some interpretive tabloids are physically placed so that they are difficult to read: they should be close a road/path so that visitors can stand close to them and read without difficulty.

- Trash is starting to collect on the trek from Omalo to Atsunta Pass, at Oreti Lake and along the Shenako-Diklo- Shenako Trek;
- Trail signs are very far apart and there are only few trail markings in the high country;
- There are some new toilet facilities constructed – but they are not near running water to keep them hygienic and acceptable for use in the long run;
- The hiking bridge over Chagma Alazani between Omalo and Shenako is falling apart and is not safe for horses or hikers alike;
- The information center buildings structure in Omalo needs maintenance;
- The lighting inside the Interpretation Center works only intermittently, making the interpretation experience inferior;
- Local car roads are deteriorating;
- There are only very few foot bridges for hikers/horseback riders in the TPAC- forcing hikers to cross dangerous river on foot or on horse back;
- There is no sustained presence of rangers on patrol in the Park on a regular scheduled basis;
- For people that are staying at guesthouses, there are very little trail infrastructure for day excursions.

In summary, at this point in TPAC, there is currently very little structures or facilities for day hikers, back packers and horse back riders to make these activities safe and enjoyable. More importantly, with the increased numbers of tourist expected in the future, the trails are not built to last and the deterioration of the natural environment is starting to show and will only increase, if not attended to. These infrastructure shortcomings have been confirmed by conversations with the management of both the National Park and Reserve and the Tusheti Protected Landscape– they both mentioned the critical need for improved trails, roads and camping facilities. Local tour operators are also concerned about the lack of good infrastructure.

Furthermore, since it is suggested to charge international visitors an entrance fee to pay for some of these suggested infrastructure improvements – it is important that these visitors get a fair value for what they pay for. They expect value for their fees in the form of good visitor services, safe trails and excellent campsites – and they want an enjoyable experience in an environment that is well preserved and protected.

Notes on the spatial planning of infrastructure with regards to specific bird watching places in TPAC, see Appendix 6.

9.2 Infrastructure Development: Objective, Strategies and Activities

Objective:

Offer safe and functional infrastructure facilities – all up to international standards - throughout TPAC.

Strategies:

Strategy a. Most importantly, firstly focus on maintaining/repairing existing tourism infrastructure that is already in place;

Strategy b. Design a fee collection system early on - collection may primarily be done at the Omalo Gate;

Strategy c. Construct in-the-field infrastructure and provide services that are economical, sufficient, enhances the experiences of the visitor and at the same time help prevent negative environmental impact;

Strategy d. Before building any major campsites and larger trail systems in the Park, it is important to start an environmental monitoring program at select visitor sites, see **Appendix 7**;

Strategy e. Address firstly the hiking/horseback riding/wildlife viewing market that stay overnight in Tusheti villages – then subsequently meet the infrastructure needs of visitors who plan multiday camping excursions and longer trips outside the villages in TPAC;

Strategy f. Build trails and campsites first then secondly focus on overnights shelters w. toilets/visitor platforms;

Strategy g. Repair existing roads within TPAC so that they are safe for 4 wheel vehicles bringing visitors to local guest houses;

Strategy h. Build infrastructure such a trails and campsites up to safe and environmental acceptable international standards;

Strategy i. The built-up of the TPAC infrastructure involves activities in the Park as well as the Protected Landscape – and **coordination** between these two administration entities is **crucial** for the successful outcome of the overall infrastructure development.

Specific Infrastructure Development Activities, Responsibilities and Time Frames:

Activity # 12: If adopted, post large and clear signs at the main road into Omalo, close to the Park headquarter informing visitors about the new **fee collection** scheme (Internationals mandatory and Georgians at will) and establish a fee collection booth at the Park headquarters. The signs should be in English and Georgian.

Responsibility: APA/TPAC Administration. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 13: **Maintain and repair** already installed signs, trail makers, interpretation plaques as well as structures such as the Park Headquarter, ranger stations and toilets.

Responsibility: APA/TPAC Administration. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 14: Establish environmental monitoring at selected sites where the nature is fragile and more tourism, such as: Kvakvhidi Camp, Oreti Lake Camp and the Diklo Loop.

Responsibility: TPAC Administration. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 15: Build minimal but good quality infrastructure for **weekend and multi-day visitors** who want to do **day-hikes** or enjoy nature close to villages and guesthouses (this would include picnic sites, day-long trails, signage, trail markers and placement of thrash cans). The priority on this roll-out should be to construct and mark a day hiking trail system in the vicinity of the villages of Omalo, Diklo Chiso, Shenako and Dartlo (and other villages that have guest houses) for day hikers staying overnight in these villages.

Responsibilities: TPAC Administration and Local Government. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 16: Restore and mark existing **horse back riding trails for day rides** in the central part of TPAC. The area around the villages of Omalo, Diklo, Chiso, Shenako, Dartlo or other villages that have guest house accommodations should be prioritized to support these enterprises. Again this would be for people who stay overnight in the village guesthouses in TPAC. This would include permanent trail markers, signage (interpretation, distance signs and plaques with maps) and trekking/horse back riding bridges.

Responsibilities: TPAC Administration and Local Government. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 17: Construct or rebuilt **hiking/horseback riding trails for multiday hikers** inside TPAC. This would initially entail these routes:

- The Atsunta Pass - Omalo Traverse;
- The Naraicho Pass - Gomestari Trail;
- The Girevi – Kartsapi Pass- Larovani Pass – Girevi Loop;
- The Kartsapi Pass - Gometari Alazani Trail;
- Oreti Lake Loop from Omalo to Kumelaurta.

These trails would include permanent trail markers, signage (interpretation, distance signs and plaques with maps) and trekking/horse back riding bridges. Ultimately, all trails in the TPAC should be constructed like this.

Responsibilities: TPAC Administration and Local Government. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity # 18: Construct international standard **camp sites for overnight campers** at all original planned campsites according to the 2004 TPAC ecotourism management plan. These campsites should have campsite markings, access to water, thrash cans, toilet facilities and picnic benches and table. These are the approximate camp site areas that were originally suggested – the specific locations has to be decided by the Park Authorities:

- Khiso/Alazani River– 10 Tent Sites
- Khiso Gorge - 5 Tent Sites

- Sanale Ridge – 5 Tent Sites
- Cheso Gorge – 5 Tent Sites
- Mt.Tebulo – 5 Tent sites
- Etalta – 5 Tent Sites
- Ortskali – 5 Tent Sites
- Sakorne - 5 Tent Sites
- Aguerta/Diklo- 5 tent sites

The reason for a 5 tent size campground is that this is generally the minimum number for most group bookings from tour operators – and low enough to minimize environmental impact. If no impact, perhaps the number of sites could be expanded, but initially it is suggested to keep this low.

Responsibilities: TPAC Administration and Local Government. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity # 19: Repair and maintain key car roads in TPAC, in particular Omalo – Girevi, Omalo – Jvarbozeli and Abano Pass- Omalo. This is especially important for the last stretch from Parsma to Girevi and the road from Abano Pass to Shrolta.

Responsibility: Relevant Governmental Agency. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity # 20: Construct ranger shelters that have not yet been built according to the 2004 tourism management plan. This will make it easier for rangers to do their job monitoring tourism activities and have more permanent patrolling in the field.

Responsibility: APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 3.

Activity # 21: Construct **overnight shelters** for visitors according to the 2004 management plan. This would be shelters at:

- Oreti – 8 beds
- Alazani Tave – 8 beds
- Mt Makratela – 8 beds
- Mt. Tebula – 8 beds
- Samkure Peak - 8 beds

Note: The construction of overnight shelters should have the lowest priority – since these are relatively expensive to construct and are fixed structures as well. Fixed structures can do most environmental harm and can not be easily removed. The reason for a maximum of 8 beds is that is minimum of what tour operators would find desirable for their groups.

Responsibility: TPAC Administration. Roll-out timeframe: Year 3.

Activity # 22: Built **sightseeing platforms** w. interpretation signs at:

- Mt.Makrakela
- Mt. Samakhe
- Kodori Gele Pass
- Sakorne Pass
- Kue (For Wild Goat Viewing)
- Keseloebi (For Wild Goat Viewing)
- Kvemo Omalo (For Wild Goat Viewing)

Responsibility: TPAC Administration, Roll-out timeframe: Year 3.

A Summary of the TPAC Infrastructure Development Plan can be found in **Appendix 8.**

9.3 Measuring Infrastructure Development Success

The suggested roll out of tourism infrastructure will be considered successful if:

- The environmental impact from constructing and using new infrastructure such as new trails and campsites is minimal as measured by the environmental assessment initiatives at selected sites;
- The infrastructure constructed does not deteriorate and is kept maintained;
- 80% of international visitors say on the feed back surveys that the entry fees paid correspond to the quality of tourism infrastructure provided by the Park;
- 80% of local visitors note on the feed back surveys that the provision of infrastructure was of a quality that they expected.



Interpretation in Upper Omalo

10 Transportation Plan

10.1 Background

Access to TPAC is one of the main barriers towards successful long-term tourism development. It takes two to three full days to hike from lower Kakheti to Tusheti and the only way to drive to Tusheti is over the Abano Pass (2926 meters above sea level). It can only be done safely in 4-wheel drive vehicles and with experienced drivers. The road is particularly dangerous during and after rain and snow fall and when there is still permanent snow pack on the northern side of the Abano Pass. The only time period to cross by car is from late June through October due to snow at the higher elevations.

One alternative to driving is to charter an MI-8 Helicopter – but this is a very expensive proposition and the helicopter is not expected to be used on a regular basis as a mode of transportation for tourists. Using helicopters, although fast and safe, are also a very weather dependent transportation alternative. They do, however, provide extra safety in case anybody needs to be evacuated quickly and for future winter tourism development, helicopters could play a very important role.

Another flight option is to take an airplane. In the fall of 2010, an Antonov 2 fixed wing aircraft was put into service between Natakhtari and Lower Omalo. In 2010, several flights were subsidized by the NTA and with a fully subsidized flight; a one-way ticket was only 70 GEL per person. It is uncertain whether this subsidy will continue in 2011 and if not, the ticket price for a flight to Omalo one-way will be approximately 250 GEL per person - for a full flight – something that some international visitors could afford, but not many locals. Also, these flights are often cancelled because of only marginal inclement flying conditions.

Thus, transportation to Tusheti needs to improve if the area wants to attract more tourists. Svaneti, a similar and “competing” Georgian mountain destination has seen a very rapid growth of tourists in 2009 and 2010. The Georgian Government has supported the building of a modern airport in Mestia and it is planned to upgrade the airport so it can be serviced by larger airplanes. If this happens, Svaneti could experience an even stronger influx of tourists.

It could be argued that the airstrip in Omalo should be upgraded in the same way. However, in the short term, limited access at this point might be a natural way to control a too quick and destructive tourism development. The carrying capacity of TPAC is still uncertain and possible impact of receiving large amounts of tourists has not yet been established. Also, it would be detrimental to the long-term successful development if Tusheti got a bad reputation before it was built up to minimal acceptable tourism standards. So it might be a proper transportation development strategy to first develop capacity inside TPAC before a more convenient access was provided. Over the next couple of years it is therefore suggested that the stretch of road from Pshavi to Omalo is being upgraded to handle traffic by 4-wheel drive minibuses safely. The local authorities have already stated the need to upgrade the road.²³

10.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities

Objective

To provide several safe and affordable transportation alternatives for bringing visitors and locals to TPAC.

Strategies:

Strategy a. Make the Alvani-Omalo road more safe in places that are currently marginally passable;

Strategy b. Make the road passable for larger four - wheel drive mini-buses and not only jeeps, in order to lower the transportation costs and increase passenger capacity;

²³ Conversation with the Governor of Tusheti

Strategy c. Repair and maintain the road for a longer period of time in order to extend the Summer/Fall tourism season;

Strategy d. Allow and support STOL flight and helicopter alternatives at their current levels.

Activities

Activity # 23: Repair and maintain the road from Alvani to Omalo so that: a: The driving time up to Omalo from the Kakheti is cut from 5 – 6 hours to 4 - 5 hours. b: A 4 wheel drive minibus can drive safely on the road, and c: The road is open from early June to Late October.

Responsibility: Relevant national agency. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 24: Market the new the STOL flight option and coordinate bookings between suppliers of clients in order to fill up the flights to maximum load capacity.

Responsibilities: APA, NTA, Georgian tour operators and local guest house owners. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 25: Design safety procedures and emergency communication protocols for helicopter rescue operations. Such procedures/protocols should be distributed to tour operators, TPAC staff and guest houses.

Responsibility: APA in cooperation with relevant agencies. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

A Summary of the TPAC Transportation Plan can be found in **Appendix 9**.

11 Tourism Training Plan

11.1 Background

Georgian tour operators repeatedly noted²⁴ that one of the biggest hurdles for successful tourism development in TPAC is availability of well trained professional guides and other local tourism service providers. The situation is so dire, that in 2011 some of these operators will not be able to offer Tusheti guide services for walk-in clients who are interested in guided tours. All English speaking guides currently available have already been booked for large inbound tour groups expected to arrive in 2011.

Similar conversations with local Government officials indicated that training of local people is of the highest priority – in particular of the staff in the now more than 24 local guest houses in Tusheti – and growing!

Georgian Tour operators also mentioned that in 2010 there were several incidents where clients in guesthouses did not receive the proper hospitality service that they felt they deserved and had paid for.

²⁴ Interviews with Georgian Tour Operators.

Recent and Planned Tourism Training Initiatives: (this is not an exhaustive list – other initiatives might have taken place)

- In 2010 Department of Tourism (presently the National Agency of Tourism) organized English language courses for Tusheti guesthouse owners.
- In July 2010, the NGO Elkana experts conducted the evaluation of guesthouses in Tusheti.
- It is planned that twice a year (before and after the season), the local TPAC administration and locals service providers will meet and discuss in particular training needs and other tourism issues that might come up.

11.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities

Objective

Train local tourism stakeholders involved in TPAC to be able to offer both international and national visitors a quality visitor experience on par with other international mountain destinations – while still adhering to TPAC’s conservation and other development goals.

Strategies

Strategy a: Prioritize an **immediate** training of Park Personnel, including Rangers, other Park Staff and personnel from APA. This will enable the Park staff to understand visitor needs and threats and to serve visitors well. Offer advanced courses as well – and achievements in these courses should be the basis for future staff promotions.

Strategy b: Provide basic tourism training for all service providers connected to TPAC. This includes guesthouse owners and staff, guides, vehicles drivers and other tourism support personnel. Training will enable locals to provide optimal services to visitors and create a pool of service minded prospective concession holders.

Strategy c: Identify different training needs for different target groups to make training efforts more targeted and efficient, see **Appendix 10**.

Strategy d: Design a tourism training program, which incorporates training of National and Local trainers (The Multiplier Effect).

Strategy e: Keep training needs up-to-date and train new people as needed on a recurrent basis.

Strategy f: Harmonize training for staff in Tusheti with training of staff in other National Parks in Georgia. Training programs should be managed and coordinated by the Agency of Protected Areas- in cooperation with NTA.

Activity # 26: In the first year, a detailed tourism training curriculum managed by the APA should be designed and implemented. Such a curriculum should target all tourism stakeholders, including: rangers, all park staff, local service providers inside and outside the TPAC, prospective concessionaires and APA staff.

Responsibility: APA, Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

The tourism training should become an integral and recurrent component in the overall training curriculum for the Protected Areas.

More details about the TPAC Training Plan can be found **in Appendix 10.**

12 Information Management Plan

12.1 Background

TPAC still does not know whether visitors had a good time and therefore a useful tool is needed to get constructive and quick visitor feedback. Conducting surveys enables Park Management to improve services and let guest house owners and guides know what should be enhanced in their offerings as well.

It is equally important to know specific visitor profiles, so that future marketing efforts can be adjusted and focused on the actual market segments. Also, it would be useful to know how the service providers and local communities perceive tourism so that TPAC can support their activities accordingly and ultimately increase the benefit for the locals.

Ultimately, the gathering of this data should be done for all PA's in Georgia and integrated in a larger data management system.

12.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities

Objective

Design intelligence gathering systems in order to enhance the visitor and service provider experiences in TPAC, optimize marketing, measure and evaluate Park tourism management and ultimately benefit locals, visitors and the environment alike.

Strategies

Strategy a: Conduct continuing TPAC visitor surveys, to be distributed at the TPAC headquarters all season.

Strategy b: Conduct ongoing surveys among guesthouse owners, concessionaires and other service providers to get feedback on these entities' experience with the visitors.

Strategy c: Conduct surveys among locals in the Tusheti communities to get feedback from their experiences with tourism in TPAC.

Strategy d: Collaborate with other PA's in Georgia, implementing similar surveys so that a more comprehensive Georgia PA comparative visitor analysis can be done.

Activities

Activity # 27: Produce 2000 printed questionnaires, see suggested version in **Appendix 11**, to be distributed to as many visitors as possible (Georgians and internationals alike) at the Park entrance. This information should in particular be used to evaluate staff performances, quality of visitor infrastructure and visitor trends. The survey should also be available on-line on the revised TPAC web-site. The survey should be available in English and Georgian. This intelligence gathering would be an ongoing activity.

Responsibility: TPAC Administration, Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 28: Produce a minimum of 300 questionnaires in consultation with local stakeholders in order to solicit feedback from local service providers and locals in general regarding the impact they observe from tourism activities in TPAC. This exercise should be done on an annual basis and the results should be presented by TPAC management and discussed at the semi - annual local community stakeholder meetings in Akhmeta. (or Alvani)

Responsibility: TPAC Administration, Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity #29: Establish database management systems (recommended to coordinate with other parks to leverage costs and data uniformity) which track visitor patterns, their impact and their revenue streams – as well as feedback from local stakeholders, see Activity 27 and 28 above.

Responsibility: APA Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

A Summary of the TPAC Information Management Plan can be found in **Appendix 9**.

13 Tourism Income Generation Plan

13.1 Background

Nature tourism in TPAC is ideally defined as activities to natural areas conducted in such a manner that the areas preserve their ecological balance - long-term. This kind of tourism becomes an alternative to traditional consumptive tourism, which can be very insensitive to the natural environment and in some cases even to lead to its destruction.

Such a strict definition of nature tourism is difficult to achieve since any kind of nature travel will bring humans in contact with nature and affect the environment in some way or another. The basis for successful tourism is therefore to minimize this impact and at the same time justify this kind of nature experience for visitors and locals - economically and socially.

Environmental impacts are linked to social and economical sectors of the surrounding communities and these communities' willingness to be involved in the tourism initiatives. It is therefore paramount to protect biological diversity and find non-consumptive uses of natural resources in a socio-economical acceptable way for the local population. Nature tourism conducted in responsible manner could achieve that if the visitors pay a fair price for the product they come to enjoy and "use" and therefore a mechanism to generate long-term incomes from entry fees and concessions fee must be set in place.

In 2007, an attempt was made to collect fees from international and Georgian visitors to TPAC. This attempt failed mainly due to resistance from Georgian tourists that had for years visited TPAC without paying any entrance fee requirements and resisted the new payment regime as well. It was difficult to administrate who were actual tourists planning to spend time in TPAC and who were people who were just visiting their summer homes as usual. So the entry fee collection was abandoned for all visitors, including internationals.

This year, however, informal conversations with a dozen of foreign tourists in TPAC by the author revealed that there would be little or no objections to collect fees of 20 – 30 USD per person to visit TPAC. This can be accepted as long as the visitors received something in return from these payments – such as a beautiful and unique area to visit, protection of the area, camping facilities and trails and printed maps and informational material. Most travelers know and accept that all over the world, entry fees are collected in Natural Parks – ranging from a symbolic entry fee to large fees in the hundred of dollars per visitor.

The TPAC annual budget is currently very modest and the conservation goals are not met due to insufficient funding. Additional funds outside the traditional budget are needed to pay for tourism infrastructure improvements and marketing - as well as for the impact assessment and mitigation. It is therefore necessary to collect tourism revenues to augment the budget from the increasing number of visitors.

During interviews with several Georgian tour operators conducting tours in TPAC the issue of fee collection was also received positively by all - again, **as long as value-added services were added in conjunction with introducing these visitor fees**. In other words, infrastructure and other services had to be in place to justify gate fees. One concern among tour operators was that they needed 1- 2 years of prior notice for any new fees to be charged so that they could incorporate those costs in their budget quotes to their foreign incoming tour operators in a timely manner.

There is also some concern that a new entry fees for internationals might deter more tourists from visiting Tusheti and that would hurt the local service providers financially. There was a fear that the tourists might choose other “free” destinations (like Svaneti or Kazbeghi) in Georgia instead. However, in general there is a support of an introduction of a fee for internationals – income support increased tourism activities and for protection of the Park.

A conundrum still remains: Entry fees are needed to build more tourist infrastructure and services – but by paying a fee, the visitor already expects the facilities to be there. So some kind of fiscal “jumpstart” to built acceptable campsites, trails and signage before the introduction of fee needs to be considered. This could possibly be a one time funding from donor organizations or from the National Budget.

In the 2006 TPAC management plan it was suggested that the Park also generate revenues from concession fees from service providers. When the park headquarters was constructed, the Park management decided to offer rooms, catering food and providing guide services and other tourism services for a fee – but still this has not been a very successful enterprise. The staff and rangers who were involved in providing hospitality services were not trained well to do this properly and it also took time away from their core duties as rangers in the field. The TPAC management has realized this and is currently submitting concession bids for these services from interested parties in order to secure annual income streams to the Park budget.

TPAC and APA management is currently discussing alternative financial mechanisms for collecting fees from tourism activities. One idea would be to create a tax exempt financial vehicle – the Tusheti Development Fund²⁵. Such fund would be a revolving fund outside the APA and the idea would be to have entry fees and others go through this fund and then to circulate those back into the budget to support tourism related activities. The management of the fund would be represented of both Park Authorities and Local Government since tourism activities in TPAC are taking place in areas governed by both administrations. The institutional detailed workings and framework for this fund needs to be further determined.

NB: The author of this report requested information from NTA and APA of whether there actually is a document (or documents) which mention any prohibitions for charging an entry fee for internationals in Tusheti - or for that sake any other PA in Georgia. The result from these inquires was that no such documents exist. Further research into this issue is recommended.

The payment of entry fees should be made at the Park Headquarter in Omalo but other payments outlets could be considered – for instance park tickets could be purchased at the APA office in Tbilisi or the NTA visitor centers countrywide. An entry ticket from the visitor would be a receipt and proof of payments.

How these payments are checked and enforced needs to be discussed carefully as well. It should be made clear to the international visitor that if there is no proof of payment that the visitor could be requested to pay a fine.

13.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities

Objective

Generate long-term, sustainable income from tourism activities for conservation of TPAC.

Strategies

Strategy a: Implement a fee structure for a variety of activities and services and make the fee structure simple to implement;

Strategy b: Initially only ask for mandatory entry fees from internationals and just in-kind donations from Georgian Tourists – just to make the fee collection system more simple and manageable in the start;

Strategy c: In addition, there should be a per person per night using established campsites that would apply to international as well for Georgian campers. It would be illegal to camp anywhere else;

Strategy d: There should be scientific research fees, special event fees and concession fees as well- to be negotiated on a case-to case basis;

²⁵ Draft Report by Nino Saakashvili: “Tusheti Development Fund – Founding Preconditions, Directions and Action Mechanisms” September 2010, – GEF/UNDP

Strategy e: All these fees should reflect fair market prices – i.e. what different users would be willing to pay. If there is a feedback from visitor surveys indicating that these fees might cause a sharp decline in visitation, then they should be adjusted down accordingly;

Strategy f: A majority of all entry fees collected should be recycled back into tourism related budget activities in TPAC and should be jointly managed by TPAC and local authorities;

Strategy g: Solicit bids for concessions for accommodation, cafeteria, services and retail outlets at the Park headquarters – this should be a high priority item to generate income quickly.

Activities:

Activity # 30: In Year 1, publish, implement and enforce fee collections for TPAC as outlined below:

Responsibility: APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

<i>Type of Tourism Fees</i>	<i>Residents of Georgia</i>	<i>Foreigners</i>
<i>Entry Fees to TPAC Required</i>	<i>0 GEL</i>	<i>40 GEL</i>
<i>Park Camp Site Fee/site day</i>	<i>10 GEL</i>	<i>10 GEL</i>
<i>Concession and other Usage Fees:</i>	<i>To be negotiated on a case to case basis.</i>	

Activity # 31: In year 1, establish the Tusheti Development Fund, which is the financial vehicle for receiving fees and distributing monies earmarked for tourism development activities in TPAC

Responsibility: Relevant non-governmental organizations/relevant governmental agency. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

A Summary of the TPAC Income Generation Plan can be found in **Appendix 9**.

14 Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Plan

14.1 Background

Integrating conservation- and tourism development projects such as the one proposed in the TPAC have some inherent down side risks:

- Surface and underground water pollution in TPAC can result from poor disposal and treatment of sewage and solid waste material from tourist activities. Such improper disposal of waste can also lead to the spread of diseases, affecting the fauna and flora – as well as the adjacent communities;
- The generation of economic benefits to the local communities and residents may be limited if the people employed in the tourism enterprises and activities are from the outside. This could result in resentment vis-à-vis the outside labor force. There could also be an economical loss if most of the products used in the local tourism activities are imported goods and resources;
- Uncontrolled use by visitors of natural areas may lead to their deterioration. Improper viewing of wildlife, for example, may be disruptive to animals' behavioral and breeding patterns. Graffiti, vandalism of structures may spoil later visitor's experiences;
- There can be a degradation of the local cultural heritage and a loss of a sense of cultural identity if there is an undue commercialization and modification of local arts, crafts and traditions. Imitation of some of the behavioral patterns of tourists by local people may result in loss of local cultural values and traditions. Lack of respect for local values by tourists might cause anger among locals;
- It is very important that tourists are informed about how to behave around holy places and signs explaining how to behave should be posted; (In English as well as Georgian)
- Tourism areas may become unattractive because of the inappropriate design of tourist facilities, ugly advertising signs and littering by tourists;
- Currently there is no management plan for disposal of garbage in TPAC. Garbage is being sporadically collected in villages and burned;

14.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities

Objective.

The objective is to protect the natural resources of TPAC by measuring and mitigating impacts from tourism activities.

Strategies

Strategy a: Early on, conduct a Risk Assessment Analysis of the environmental threats that tourism activities have on select tourism sites in TPACs.

Strategy b: Set architectural guidelines for infrastructure development in TPAC to ensure that the traditional aesthetical architectural values are preserved in TPAC. There should be guidelines in place to ensure that reconstruction of old buildings as well as construction of new ones follows certain building codes and includes esthetic considerations. This will ensure a harmonious tourism infrastructure development in TPAC, following traditional building styles.

Activities

Activity #32: Conduct risk assessment (RA) and implement timely and action specific methods for measuring threats and mitigating them. See **Appendix 7** for a draft Risk Assessment of planned tourism activities at selected specific sites in TPAC. These are just a suggested RA and Mitigation Initiatives.

Responsibility: APA and Local Authorities. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity # 33: Write up architectural guidelines for designs, codes for reconstruction or building of new structures.

Responsibility: TPAC administration, Local Municipality, National Cultural Heritage Agency. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

A Summary of the TPAC Environmental Assessment and Mitigation Plan can be found in **Appendix 7**.

15 Tourism Community Development Plan

15.1 Background

One of the main tourism development goals for TPAC is to improve the knowledge about the area's cultural and natural resources among local people and the public in general, by means of educational and interpretive activities. Another goal is to involve communities and local peoples adjacent to TPAC in order for them benefit economically from tourism activities in TPAC.

Since the inception of TPAC, the local population has since been involved in a plethora of tourism related activities. A successful Small Grant's Program supported, among other things the restoration of several guesthouses in Tusheti.

Workshops in areas such as hospitality training and quality standards for accommodations have been arranged and there is an ongoing community dialogue between locals and the TPAC administration. However, there is currently no formal plan strategy on how to engage with the locals to address tourism related issues.

NB: The strategy and activities for community development should be initialized by TPAC management and designed in consultation with the local administration in Akmetha.

15.2 Objective, Strategies and Activities

Objective

Inform, educate and involve the local communities about tourism issues to make them benefit and be responsible stakeholders in the process.

Strategies and Activities

Strategy a: Keep an ongoing community dialogue.

Activity # 34: On a biannual basis (or as needed in case of urgent issues coming up), keep people from adjacent communities informed about tourism related issues in TPAC and solicit feedback from them as well. This can be done through local meeting venues.

Responsibility: Park Management. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity #35: Continue supporting the formation of a local tourism stakeholder association and arrange regular meetings (at least 3 times a year: before, during and after the tourist season) where visitor issues are discussed and community leaders are informed about TPAC activities.

Responsibility: Park Management. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity #36: Support the Association "Friends of Tusheti Protected Areas" to provide voluntary support activities within TPAC and in the adjacent communities.

Responsibility: Park Management. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity #37: Produce a semi-annual TPAC tourism newsletter to be distributed through the adjacent communities.

Responsibility: Park Management. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Strategy b —Support local tourism businesses

Activity #38: Continue to solicit small grant proposals to support local tourism projects. At the same time, offer specific grants that reflect the needs of TPAC, i.e. if there is no proposal for a horseback riding operation in the Park, offer one.

Responsibility: Park Management. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity #39: Draft concessionaire contract templates for local service providers. Inform and educate potential local concessionaires about these contracts and how this kind of business is done and can benefit all. Identify businesses that can be offered as concessions to local.

Responsibility: Park Management and APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity #40: Conduct tourism business training seminars for locals that have expressed an interest in such an offer. Annual seminars should be conducted.

Responsibility: NTA, Park Management, APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Strategy c —Support Local Art

Activity #41: Arrange for an annual art festival at the Protected Area headquarter. Park Management should invite local artists (e.g. singers, dancers and musicians) to perform and/or sell their local folk arts. Special visitor entry fees for such an event should go directly to the local artists. Support the retailing of high-quality local handicrafts and artisan foods at the headquarters visitor center – all proceeds should go directly to the local producers.

Responsibility: Park Management. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

Activity #42: Identify high-quality, locally-made and branded products, set quality control guidelines, and help the certification of such products. These products could be sold at the Park Headquarter, as well as to other outlets i.e. in Tbilisi. Apart from bringing in some income, this will raise the awareness of TPAC and its local neighbors.

Responsibility: Park Management, local NGOs/donors. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

A Summary of the TPAC Tourism Community Development Plan can be found in **Appendix 12.**

16 Implementation of Tourism Guidelines

16.1 General Comments

Guidelines of how tourists should conduct themselves in TPAC are an important part of managing and educating the public and ultimately meet the TPAC conservation goals. Such guidelines should address the conservation issues and must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

Tourism guidelines are for international tourist and locals alike and all tourism stakeholders should be keen aware of them. At this point they are not visible on printed materials, web-sites and maps that are given to visitors.

Currently, on the TPAC visitor pamphlet there is a list of what is **prohibited** such as extraction and damage of natural resources and carrying firearms - but good tourist activities not only about what is prohibited but also what is beneficial. Also in the current directives of how to behave as a tourist there is no mention of how to interact appropriately with the local population. This needs to be addressed. The www.tushetipa.ge web-site has no tourism guidelines either.

16.2 Objective, Strategy and Activities

Objective

Formulate, implement and disseminate the highest international standards possible for visitor tourism guidelines. In doing so, it is important to take local, economical, legal and political conditions into consideration.

Strategy a: Follow and disseminate the TIES²⁶ **Code of Conduct** for tourism in TPAC to tourists and TPAC stakeholders alike. These are:

“Ecotourism is about *uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel*. This means that those who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should follow the following ecotourism principles:

- Minimize impact.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate”

See **Appendix 13** for Suggested Tourism Guidelines for visitors to TPAC

Activity # 43: Produce, initially 2000 printed copies (1000 in English and 1000 in Georgian) (and more as needed) of these guidelines to be given to visitors, local service providers, tour operators and local decision makers. Shortly thereafter, post these guidelines on fixed signs at the Headquarters, the Visitor Center, campsites and visitor shelters. Incorporate these guidelines into the general information pamphlet, marketing materials and post them on the TPAC and APA websites.

Responsibility: APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 1.

²⁶ www.ecotourism.org

Activity # 44: Incorporate the implementation and enforcement of these guidelines in the Ranger training curriculum, as well as, in the educational materials for all other TPAC staff members, concessionaires, staff from the APA and local tourism providers.

Responsibility: APA. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

For a Summary of the Implementation of Tourism Guidelines, see **Appendix 13.**

17 Safety Plan

17.1 Background

When a tourist visits TPAC it should be the responsibility of the Park to provide a framework for communication, triage and evacuation in case of a medical or other emergency situation. Such procedures should facilitate or enable any visitor to be brought safely and quickly back to modern medical facilities in Telavi or Tbilisi. It is one of the key value propositions that the Park brings for and justifies it charging an entry fee/ It is also a good-will service that the Park should avail to the local people living in TPAC during the summer.

17.2 Objective, Strategy and Activities

Objective

To ensure that all visitors have a safe experience from an emergency medical perspective.

Strategies and Activities:

Strategy a. Enable immediate emergency communication between a victims party and local authorities.

Strategy b. Facilitate emergency evacuation, treatment and hospitalization

Strategy c. Establish emergency first aid/triage capacity in TPAC from June to September.

Activity # 45: Design and distribute an Emergency Communication Plan. Such a plan should include prioritized emergency contact numbers for:

- i. Park Authorities Locally and in Tbilisi
- ii. Police
- iii. Boarder Guard Authority
- iv. Local Medical Facilities
- v. Helicopter and Airplane companies
- vi. Vehicle Transport Providers

This plan should be posted at HQ and key components should be mentioned in the Park pamphlet that all visitors will be offered at entry. It should also be distributed to all tour operators, guesthouses operators, and other park service providers.

Responsibility: Park Management. Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity # 46: Design a plan for timely , on-site treatment, evacuation and hospitalization. The key generic component in such a plan is outlined in **Appendix 14** and should be adapted to local conditions.

Responsibility: Park Management Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

Activity # 47: Train and enable select park staff, guides and select guest house staff in advanced first aid – per the training plan - see page 56 in the TPAC training plan matrix. This would include provision of advanced first aid kits to be used in such emergency situations.

Responsibility: Park Management Roll-out timeframe: Year 2.

For a Summary of Implementation Tourism Safety Plans, see **Appendix 13.**

For detailed First Aid and Evacuation Procedures for Victims in TPAC, see **Appendix 14.**



Horseback Riding Near Diklo

APPENDIX 1 - Notes for a Tourism Development Plan for Batsara-Babaneuri Protected Areas

- Given the popularity of Lagodekhi NP and the growth in local Georgian nature tourism to places easy to reach from Tbilisi – it is expected that a similar nature tourism development scheme in BBPA could be successful.
- A thorough inventory of Nature Tourism opportunities for BBPA needs to be done before a Tourism Management plan is prepared.
- The quality of the local road to Batsara could be problem attracting visitors and an assessment of whether and how to improve it should be done.

If reclassified so that tourism is allowed:

- A limited number of campsites should also be built and managed privately by concession arrangements with strict environmental guidelines.
- A limited number of day hiking/horse back riding trails should be constructed.
- A trekking trail connecting Batsara with TNP should be considered – given the opportunity to market the Kazbeghi – Shatili- Atsunta – Omalo – Lower Khakheti Trans Caucasian Hike on the international adventure market.
- Environmental tourism impact assessment/mitigation measures should be put in key places prior to finishing tourism infrastructure.
- The marketing channels for BBPA should be primarily Web-based and in collaboration with other marketing activities of NTA which targets the Georgian market.
- A visitor fee system for internationals should be instituted, as suggested for TPAC. Georgian can pay at will.
- Local adjacent communities should be consulted and supported in building local guest house services and how they can benefit from tourism activities in BBPA.

APPENDIX 2 – Lists of participants, stakeholder workshops

Agency of Protected Areas

Tbilisi, October 12, 2010

1. **Lasha Moistsrapishvili** – Deputy Chairman, APA
2. **Mariam Mrevlishvili** - Deputy Chairman, APA
3. **Anzor Gogotidze** - Director of Tusheti protected areas
4. **Tea Barbakadze** – Head of Planning Division, APA
5. **Lali Tevzadze** – Head of Development Division, APA
6. **Ana Shubitidze** - UNDP/ GEF Project Manager
7. **Kristina Nachkebia** - UNDP/ GEF Project Assistant
8. **Ivane Vashakmadze** – Tourism National Agency of Georgia, Deputy Chairman
9. **Lela KhartiSvili** – ELKANA Rural Tourism Project Manager
10. **Natia Kobakhidze** - GIZ Sustainable Management of Biodiversity Project
11. **Paata Shanshiashvili** - USDO/ITAP Coordinator
12. **Nino Markozashvili** - FFI/NACRES Assistant Coordinator Georgian Carnivore Conservation Project
13. **Irakli Shavgulidze** - NACRES
14. **Giorgi Chkheidze** - NACRES

Information center of administration of Tusheti protected areas
Village Alvani, October 15, 2010

1. **Koba Maisuradze** – Governor of Akhmeta municipality
2. **Anzor Gogotidze** – Director of Tusheti protected areas.
3. **Ia Chvritidze** – Director of Tusheti Tourism Association “Tusheti Guide”
4. **Nino Beladidze** – Director of the Association “Friends of Tusheti protected areas”
5. **Vaja Kardlidze** – Guesthouse “Sargili”, Vilaage Verkhvovani
6. **Vaja Shabalaidze** - Hotel “Tusheti”, Village Omalo
7. **Ekaterine Abaloidze** – Guesthouse “Khomito”, Vilaage Tchesho, also the owner of the horses.
8. **Eldino Jangulashvili** - Guesthouse “Jikhi”, Village Tchesho.
9. **Usup Tighvadze** – Guesthouse compex “Kruiskari”.
10. **Lamzira Gotaidze** – Guesthouse “Shtrolta”, Village Shtrolta
11. **Anzor Kritiuli** – Guesthouse “Lamata”, Village Verkhvovani.
12. **Nodar Ididze** – Guesthouse in Village Maso.
13. **Levan Gogotidze** - Guesthouse, Village Tchala
14. **Nani Arshaulidze** – Guesthouse “ Keselo”, Village Omalo.
15. **Gela Bakhutidze** - Guesthouse “Kamsuri”, Village Omalo.
16. **Badri Kochlamazashvili** – Sole entrepreneur, small enterprise for the packaging of Tushetian cheese.
17. **Soso Babulaidze** – Owner of the hotel and auto transport
18. **Girogi Chkheidze** - Project co-coordinator, NACRES

APPENDIX 3 - Potential of the Wildlife Watching Market in Tusheti²⁷

Mammals

First, it should be noted that Tusheti is rich in mammal species that have potential tourist value. Almost all carnivores that are found in Georgia (and the Caucasus) are also found in Tusheti. The same is basically true for ungulates too. In addition, Tusheti has the only more or less viable wild goat population in Georgia.

The potential of wildlife watching in respect of large carnivores is extremely limited in Tusheti and indeed in all Georgia. Hence it may be only by chance that a visitor see a wolf or bear in Tusheti. Bears are normally relatively easier to spot in spring that is outside of the main tourist season for Tusheti.

With respect to ungulates, wild goat and tur are primarily target species for nature-based tourism. However, tur has a limited potential in Tusheti as far as wildlife watching is concerned. These animals typically remain in very high altitudes, in remote and not easily accessible areas during the summer. During this period a tur viewing trip (i) would involve a long and difficult trail to get to the tur habitats, and (ii) would be minimum 2-days long since turs are relatively easy to see during early morning hours. Some visitors may still choose one of these trips. But it is notable that other protected areas such as Lagodekhi and Kazbegi have a significantly higher potential of tur watching.

On the other hand wild goat watching has many advantages:

- There are several places in Tusheti from which wild goats may be observed throughout the summer;
- All the potential observation points are easily accessible; one of them is at village Omalo;
- The probability of observing wild goats is generally quite high;
- Wild goats would be observed from a distance using scope or binocular, and with the aid of specialist equipment they can be filmed too;
- Observing the wild goats from specially designated and organized observation points and with certain regulations would not have any impact on the animals;(this also means that the animals may be observed for extended periods of time)
- Wild goat observation would not require any special measures such as organizing feeding sites, salt leaks etc. Visitors would be able to observe wild goats in their natural environment, on the forest openings, meadows and rocks or scree.

The above demonstrates that the wild goat has the greatest potential for wildlife watching development in Tusheti. However certain measures need to be taken for the successful development of wild goat watching and a number of very important conditions must be met to ensure that the activity is ecologically friendly. These may include:

- Strict protection of the sites and the species;
- Set up and implement an effective wild goat monitoring scheme;

²⁷ Tusheti Biodiversity Assessment Report, NACRES, 2010 – in Progress

- Closely monitor visitor numbers and evaluate potential impact on the species as well as on other biodiversity;
- Provide relevant training for the guides and rangers;
- Provision of necessary equipment;
- Establish visitor behavior rules at the observation points and strictly enforce them;
- Advertise the wild goat watching as one of the tourist products offered by TPAC and organize relevant information materials; (publications, maps, interpretation boards, etc.)
- Organize observation points to make observation more comfortable and enjoyable (e.g. build a small deck, etc).

The best sites for organizing observation points for wild goat watching include Kue, Keseloebi, and Kvemo Omalo.

Birds

Below we evaluate the bird watching potential of Tusheti according to certain criteria:

Target species	According to the available information 6 of the 8 target bird species are found in Tusheti including: Caucasian snowcock, Caucasian Black Grouse, Caucasian Chiffchaff, Green Warbler, Great Rosefinch and Red-fronted Serine.
Possibility of seeing the target species	The Great Rosefinch appears to be rare in Tusheti and only breeds in remote areas; in April and May during which time Black grouses are typically easier to observe, Tusheti is inaccessible; Snowcocks are relatively easy to observe but this would require a long walk or ride to get to the sites. Other target species are common in Tusheti.
The probability of seeing the target species	Among the main target species visiting birdwatchers may be guaranteed to see Caucasian chiffchaffs, Green warblers, and Red-fronted series. There is a high probability of seeing Caucasian Snowcocks and Great Rosefinches too provided the visitor is prepared to devote sufficient effort to get to the sites. Spotting a Caucasian black grouse will be totally up to a chance.
Access road and transportation within the PA; distance from the capital	The distance from Tbilisi to Tusheti is only 220 km. however the road is difficult and is only open in the summer season (any future air travel is also likely to be confined to this season). This means that during the best birdwatching time for Georgia Tusheti is largely inaccessible. Some birdwatchers may not be prepared to walk or ride a horse on long distances to reach some of the best birdwatching sites within Tusheti.

In conclusion, considering all of the above, we conclude that the potential of bird watching for Tusheti is limited. On the other hand, the possibility of observing many endemic, rare or otherwise notable bird species in Tusheti should be promoted to attract visitors with wider interests (Category 2 visitors above). The “bird observation” element would significantly enrich the overall visitor experience.

Butterflies

The abundance and diversity of butterflies is remarkable in Tusheti. Special insect surveys need to be conducted as almost nothing is known about this or other invertebrate fauna of the region. However, even a very superficial assessment has shown that some very interesting butterfly species are found in Tusheti. The noteworthy species include the rare Apollo (*Parnassius apollo*), and the endangered endemic Caucasian Apollo (*Parnassius nordmanni*). Future studies will certainly reveal many more interesting species but it is already clear that butterfly abundance and diversity can be one of the attractions for visitors in Tusheti. Notably many travel agents offer combined bird and butterfly tours. As the summer progresses birds become more difficult to observe while butterflies on the contrary become more abundant.

APPENDIX 4 – Tourism Guidelines

- Be culturally sensitive and respect local customs
- Allow enough time in each place to appreciate it
- Travel by your own muscle power where possible
- Be careful not to introduce exotic plants or animals
- Stay on the track (trail)
- Leave an area cleaner than when you found it
- Don't exploit an area when food gathering
- Don't disturb wildlife or wildlife habitats
- Don't pick any flowers or move any artifacts
- Familiarize yourself with local regulations
- Don't use soap or detergents in natural water bodies
- When traveling, spend money on local enterprises
- Consider the implications of buying plant and animal products. Find out if they're rare or endangered, taken from the wild, and if the trade is approved of by local authorities
- Don't encourage illegal trade by buying products made from endangered species.
- When you return home, foster and generate a natural and cultural understanding of the places you have visited.
- Consider the environmental and cultural effects of your visit. Provide feedback to tour operators, your travel agent, friends and government agencies

APPENDIX 5 – Summary of Marketing Plan

Market	Activity	Roll-Out Year	Responsible Entity
Georgian	#1 Posters	Year 1	APA
Georgian	#2 Postcards	Year 1	APA
Georgian	# 3 Opening Festival	Year 2	APA, Local Authorities & NTA
Georgian	#4 National Fund Raising Event	Year 2	APA, Local Authorities & NTA
Georgian	#5 National Travel Fairs	Year 1	APA & NTA
Georgians & Internationals	#6 TPAC Pamphlet	Year 1	APA
Georgians & Internationals	#7 TPAC hand out sheet w. Map and Regulations	Year 1	APA
Georgians & Internationals	#8 Web-site and web-development	Year 1	APA
Internationals	# 9Int. Travel Fairs	Year 2	APA, Local Tour Operators
Internationals & Expatriate Community	#10 Fundraising	Year 2	APA & Expatriate Community Leaders
Internationals	#11 Familiarization Event	Year 3	APA, Local Tour Operators and NTA

APPENDIX 6: Notes on bird watching infrastructure

When setting up trails, campsites, platforms and other infrastructure elements, it is important to take into consideration where the best bird watching places are²⁸:

Ø Along the Zemo Alvani – Omalo Road.

Visitors that are generally interested in birds may be offered a stop at a number of places along the road, which would also be short breaks along the rather tiring long way. During these breaks visitors will be given an additional opportunity to observe birds and maybe update their bird lists. On the pass, snowcocks can only be observed or heard early morning or in the evening. If the purpose is to see or at least hear the snowcocks visitor would need to stay on the pass overnight. However considering the high altitude and associated poor visibility due to frequent foggy and generally unpredictable weather conditions, not many visitors may wish to camp there. On the other hand one advantage of this site is that it is accessible by car. Overall the potential of this route in respect of bird watching is generally lower compared with other sites in Tusheti.

Ø Omalo and Nearest Surrounding Areas.

It is important to note that any visitor to Tusheti could see as many as 50 different species of birds without travelling far from Omalo. Among the birds that can be observed with high probability are not only birds of prey and vultures (griffon and black vultures, bearded vulture, etc) but also three of the bird watching target species Caucasian chiffchaff, Green warbler and Red-fronted Serin.

Ø The Omalo – Tsitel – Mta Area

This area is rather difficult and many birdwatchers may not want to walk and carry the typical bird watching gear (scope, tripod, etc.) along the rocky trail. The bird diversity that can be seen here is not remarkable. However the section from Omalo to “Kue” (where interpretation boards are located) could still be developed as a birdwatching trail. Visitors may have an opportunity to first observe smaller breeding birds such as passerines, then proceed to Kue and observe bearded and griffon vultures from the Kue observation point. These birds are often seen perching on the rocks on the Samekhe (Sonekhe) hillside just opposite the Kue observation point (preferred perching rocks can be easily distinguished by white spots of birds’ droppings).

Ø Oreti Lake Area

The ornithological importance of the lake Oreti area in addition to the birds commonly found in Tusheti (e.g. large raptors) is primarily associated with the two endemic species Caucasian Black Grouse (*Tetrao mlokosiewiczii*) and Caucasian Snowcock (*Tetraogallus caucasicus*).

²⁸ The birdwatching potential of these routes was evaluated in the biodiversity assessment component of the same project.

However, it is very difficult to observe black grouse during the main tourist season in Tusheti, the summer. The best time to observe black grouse in the Caucasus is April to May that is during the lek. In summer these birds are largely invisible most of the time as they are mostly confined to the Caucasian Rhododendron (*Rhododendron caucasicum*) shrubbery.

Therefore, with respect of black grouse observations this site (as well as the whole of Tusheti) has a very limited potential. The snowcocks on the other hand can easily be observed in the scree just above lake Oreti. Snowcocks are usually active during the early hours as well as in the evening, during which time they can be observed as well as listened to. Visitors that are interested in seeing these birds should be advised to camp at the lake and the next morning walk up the hill above the lake to maximize their chances. One of the advantages of this site is that visitors may go quite near the birds without disturbing them. There are also chances of observing golden eagles hunting the snowcocks.

The meadows around the lake are intensely used for livestock grazing and movement. Both sheep and sheep dogs disturb the birds. If this disturbance could be removed or at least reduced chances of observing the snowcocks would increase significantly.

In summary, the Oreti lake area is one of the best sites in Tusheti for observing Caucasian Snowcocks and also other birds due to the following two reasons: (1) the site is not very far from Omalo and (2) combined with the spectacular scenery and views this route can offer one of the best visitor experiences.

Ø Atsunta Pass Area

Atsunta is one of the most attractive sites for visitors for a number of reasons and the popular trail going over to Khevsureti also passes through this area. The bird watching potential should be considered only in combination with other features because the trail is too long and tiring to develop it as a separate bird watching route. Nevertheless in addition to other birds the chances of spotting Caucasian snowcocks and Great Rose finches should still attract visitors who are generally interested in birds. If observing birds is a primary purpose the route may be planned so that it becomes less tiring for the visitors. For example:

Day 1. Drive from Omalo to Ghirevi. From Ghirevi to the foot of Atsunta by horses. Overnight at camp site.

Day 2. Early morning walk to Atsunta to observe birds. Return to the camp before dark. Overnight at camp site.

Day 3. Observe birds around the camp site at dawn. Leave for Ghirevi by horses. From Ghirevi drive back to Omalo.

NB. The pass is at 3,400 meters above sea level. The weather can be unpredictable; visibility is affected by frequent rain and fog. Hence observation time may be extremely limited.

Ø Alaznistavi–Borbalo Area

Omalo-Borbalo route is popular among the visitors. But some visitors may find it rather long and exhausting. It may be planned so that it creates better opportunities for visitors to enjoy the scenery and observe the local wildlife. The birds that can be seen include generally attractive species such as large raptors and also Caucasian black grouse that appear to be

quite common but as mentioned above they are extremely difficult to spot during the main tourist season. Only especially lucky visitors may get a chance to see these birds during the summer. Therefore the route has a limited potential to attract birdwatchers. But the bird diversity that can be observed in general is an important asset of the route.

APPENDIX 7 – Environmental Risk Assessment and Mitigation Initiatives

These are selected areas and activities where the introduction of tourism into TPAC could possibly be harmful, how these risks could be measured and what specific precautions could be made to ameliorate these undesirable impacts. The table below shows specific risk and measurement and mitigation activities.

RISK	MEASUREMENT	MITIGATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance of wildlife (Mountain Goats) from hiking in the Chigho Gorge Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor change in wildlife behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit Hiking and Camping in Chigho Gorge and Sanane Ridge Limiting Camping at Chicho Gorge and Sanane Ridge Camp Sites
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Littering at campsites/visitor shelters, picnic areas and sightseeing platforms throughout the Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure amount of litter from tourism activities Obtain feedback about littering from visitors from questionnaires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install more “No Littering Signs” in dual language at impact sites Put up more trash cans. Increase supervision and enforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollution by disposal of human waste at camp sites and visitor shelters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure E-coli bacteria in groundwater adjacent to campsite/shelters Obtain feedback about human waste disposal from visitors from questionnaires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of toilets with containers that gets regularly emptied – not septic tank toilets Use of compost toilets with closed systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance of wildlife by car/truck/horse traffic on road on the Pirikiti Road from Omalo to Cheso 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor change in wildlife behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit car/truck traffic Use more horses/pack trains instead on road
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance of wildlife In forests South of Omalo on Hiking and horseback riding trails to Oreti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor change in Wildlife behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop or limit the number of visitors on trails Omalo - Oreti
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance of wildlife near Diklo Gorge trail and camp site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor change in wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit the number of hikers and campers in the Diklo Gorge Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local concern of inappropriate behavior by visitors, such as disrespecting customs and traditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct surveys to measure increased dissatisfaction among locals vis-à-vis foreigners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct information workshops with the local communities Increase enforcement and visibility of eco-tourism guidelines to educate visitors about appropriate conduct
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing distrust by local communities about the benefits of ecotourism opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor local attitudes towards ecotourism plans and initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase provision of practical, realistic and factual information about the prospect of the eco-tourism industry Inform locals about concession opportunities Inform locals about B&B development through small grants program Hire more locals Buy more local goods.

APPENDIX 8 – Summary of Infrastructure Development Plan

Target Audience	Activity	Roll-Out Year	Responsibility
All Visitors	#12 Infrastructure for Fee Collection	Year 1	APA/TPAC
All Visitors	#13 Maintenance/Repair	Year 1	APA/TPAC
All Visitors	#14 Set up of Environmental Monitoring Systems	Year 1	TPAC.
Visitors Staying in Tusheti Villages	#15 Building of Trails/Signage for Day Hiking Trips	Year 1	TPAC and Local Government
Visitors Staying in Tusheti Villages	#16 Building of Trails/ Signage Horseback Riding Activities	Year 1	TPAC and Local Government
Multiday Hikers, Campers and Horseback Riders	#17 Building of Trails/Signage for Hikers/Riders	Year 2	TPAC and Local Government
Multiday overnight Hikers and Riders	#18 Construction of Camp Site Facilities	Year 2	TPAC and Local Government
All Visitors	# 19 Repair and maintain Key Roads	Year 2	Relevant governmental agency
All Visitors	# 20 Construction of Ranger Shelters	Year 3	APA
Multiday, Hikers and Campers and Horseback Riders	# 21 Building of Overnight Shelters	Year 3	TPAC
All Visitors	#22 Construction of Sightseeing Platforms	Year 3	TPAC

APPENDIX 9 – Summary of Transport, Information Management and Income Generation Plans

Transport:

Mode of Transport	Activity	Roll-Out Year	Responsibility
Vehicles	# 23 Repair and Maintain the Alvani- Omalo Road	Year 1	Relevant governmental agency
STOL Flight	# 24 Market STOL Flights to Omalo	Year 1	TPAC, NTA and local Guesthouses
Helicopter	#25 Design Safety Protocols/ Helicopter Evac. Procedures	Year 1	APA in cooperation with relevant agencies

Information Management:

Target Group	Activity	Roll- Out Year	Responsibility
Visitors	№ 27 Produce and Distribute Visitor Surveys	Year 1	TPAC
Local Stakeholders	# 28 Produce and Distribute Local Stakeholder Surveys	Year 1	TPAC
TPAC Administration	# 29 Establish Data Management Systems	Year 2	TPAC

Income Generation:

Area of Activity	Activity	Roll – Out Year	Responsibility
Income Generation	# 30 Publish Implement and Enforce Fees	Year 1	APA
Financial Vehicle	# 31 Establish the Tusheti Development Fund	Year 1	NGO in cooperation with relevant governmental agency

APPENDIX 10 - Tourism Training

Training Target Groups and Areas of Training Needs

Target Groups:

- Park Rangers
- TPAC & Protected Landscape Staff
- Agency of Protected Areas
- Local Guesthouse Owners and Staff
- Local Concessionaires
- Locals Guides
- National Tour Operators Staff

Areas of Training Needs:

- General knowledge of National Park and Ecotourism
- Hospitality Training/Guiding
- Languages
- Interpretation/Presentation
- Outfitting
- Visitor Safety/First Aid
- Marketing/Sales

Specific Training Plan

A roll-out schedule below shows a matrix of training needs for different target groups and when these training activities should start in the TPAC tourism planning process. Annual refresher courses should be considered.

		Target Groups						
		Rangers	TPAC & Protected Landscape Staff	APA-Staff	Guest House Owners & Staff	Concessionaires	Locals Guides	Tour Operators Staff
Training Needs	General Knowledge	YEAR 1	YEAR 1	YEAR 1	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 1	YEAR 1
	Hospitality/ Guiding	n/a	n/a	n/a	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 1	YEAR 1
	Languages	n/a	YEAR 1	n/a	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 1	YEAR 1
	Interpretation/Presentation	n/a	YEAR 1	n/a	YEAR 2	YEAR 2	YEAR 1	YEAR 1
	Outfitting	n/a	n/a	n/a	YEAR 1	n/a	YEAR 2	n/a
	Wilderness First Aid	YEAR 1	n/a	n/a	YEAR 1	n/a	YEAR 1	YEAR 2
	Marketing & Sales	n/a	n/a	n/a	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 2	n/a

Curriculum Contents for Courses for Different Training Needs

Course: General Knowledge about National Park and Tourism

Curriculum Contents:

- Steps in the Zoning of a Protected Area:
- Enforcement of regulations: legal basis, patrols, role of communities, and origin of regulations
- Concepts: 1) operational plans, 2) carrying capacity, 3) limits of acceptable change, 4) enabling legislation for PA 's in Georgia, 5) biodiversity conservation, 6) sustainable use and 7) sustainable yield
- IUCN Classification of Protected Areas;
- Tourism: 1) economic importance 2) tourism products and 3) interests of tourists

Course: Hospitality Training and Guiding

Contents:

1. Preparation for the visit

- Collecting and / or using visitor information: origin, food preference; medical information; interests
- Prepare list of responsibilities to be used with incoming groups

2. Preparing the tourist

- Receiving and welcoming the visitor on arrival
- The tour of the Tusheti Visitor Center and orientation about the tourism guidelines
- Preparing the agenda for the tourists: discussion of tour selected; the program of evening entertainment, logistics planning
- Conduct and dress expected of Rangers and Guides
- Preparation for the tour (general) points of contact; schedule ; safety

3. Managing the tourist

- Guiding on the tour: role of communicating information before and during briefings
- The “WOW!” factor in planning
- The arrival/departure

4. Evaluation

- Follow up after a tour and when the tourist leaves: database management
- Development of self evaluation and tourist satisfaction questionnaires

5. Preparations of Programs of Interest

- Demonstrate an ability for story telling to groups
- Explain key conservation issues and or points of historical interest to groups
- Prepare information sessions on TPAC policies to tourist groups/community

6. Interpretive trail guiding and development of a trail guide

- Layout and location on the map
- Identifying points of interest and developing the narrative text for each point
- Mapping the points of interest and keying it to trail guide.
- Preparation of the field guide to the trail
- Types and preparation of points of interest signs or number

Course: Interpretation

Contents:

- How to demonstrate an ability to act as an appropriate host for tourists
- How to prepare and execute interesting evening programs for visitors at the Visitor Center
- Management of interpretive trails and preparation of information booklets
- How to pick a single interpretive trail and prepare an illustrated backup text with interpretive notes

Course: Guiding / Outfitting

Contents:

1. Trip Planning

- Qualities of the effective trip leader
- Planning an appropriate agenda for a group of visitors:
- Planning the menu
- Cost and time planning (logistics)
- Preparing an equipment checklist
- Planning for safety on the outing
- Consideration of legal obligations of the leader
- Packaging, storing and preparation of food for the trip
- Planning for stopovers
- Preparing an activity schedule for the trip
- Recording the events
- Planning an evaluation questionnaire for use of visitors on trips

2. Field Exercise on Leading Excursions:

- Prepare two trip plans of 3 days each for a group of 6 persons for an overnight hike and for a horse back riding trip
- Assume leadership role in implementing the trip with tourist visitors.

Course: Wilderness First Aid

Wilderness First Aid engages in the realities of backcountry patient-care. The need for outdoor leadership when confronted with the possibility of a first aid crisis and the management of environmental threats become apparent.

Contents:

- Principle Body Systems - Homeostasis
- Shock & Backcountry Management of Shock
- Emergency Action Principles
- Accessing Doctors /Primary Survey
- Secondary Survey (Complete Assessment)
- Obstructed Airways (Adult, Child, Infant)

- Rescue Breathing (Adult, Child, Infant)
- CPR (Adult, Child, Infant)
- Backcountry Realities of CPR
- First Aid kits and Supplies
- Backcountry water disinfecting
- Soft Tissue Injuries (Wounds & Cleaning, Burns and Blisters)
- Head and Spinal Cord Injury Management (Immobilization and Evacuation Issues)
- Minor Head Injuries (Eyes, Ears, Nose, Mouth, Dental)
- Musculoskeletal Injuries (Sprains, Strains, Fractures, Reduction and Improvised Splinting)
- Medical Conditions (Poisoning, Allergic Reactions, Seizures, Diabetes, Stroke, Gastrointestinal vs. Acute Abdominal)
- Environmental Emergencies (Thermoregulation - Hypothermia and Hyperthermia, Cold Related Injuries, Water Related Injuries, Lightning)
- Second Aid and Evacuation (ground / water / helicopter)
- Trip and Safety Issues
- Course Debriefing and Exam
- Wilderness Out-trip (overnight with scenarios)

Course: Marketing and Sales

Contents: Step 1 (Required)

- Basic Marketing Principles
- International and Tourism Market Trends
- One-on-One Sales Techniques

Step 2 (Optional)

- Product Branding
- Market Channels
- Marketing Metrics
- Production of Design Briefs
- Telemarketing

Course: Languages

Content:

Step 1 (Required)

- Basic Conversational English
- Basic Russian
- Basic German

Step 2 (Optional)

- Basic Reading English
- Basic Reading Russian
- Basic Reading German

Step 3 (Optional)

- Advanced Conversational English
- Advanced Conversational Russian
- Advanced Conversational German

APPENDIX 11 – Sample Visitor Survey

Visitor Survey

Welcome to Tusheti Protected Areas! In order for you and future generations of visitors to enjoy Tusheti we ask you to kindly fill out the information below.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Male _____ Female _____

Age _____

No. of People in your Party _____

Date of Entry , DD/MM/Year : _____/_____/_____

No. of Days spent in Tusheti _____

Activities while visiting the Park /Protected Landscape:

Hiking

Horseback

Riding

Camping

Wildlife

Viewing

Other _____

How did you hear about Tusheti?

From: Friends/Relatives _____

TV and Radio _____

Travel Agents _____

Newspapers _____

The Internet _____

Other, which one _____

Were your expectations met?

Yes _____

No _____

Will you return to Tusheti?

Yes _____

No _____

What did you in particular like about your visit to Tusheti:

What did you NOT like about your visit to Tusheti?

What should be improved about the tourism services in Tusheti?

Thank you for your input!

Park Management

APPENDIX 12 – Summaries of Environmental Assessment & Mitigation and Community Development Plans

Environmental Assessment & Mitigation:

Target Area	Activity	Roll-Out Year	Responsibility
TPAC	# 32 Conduct EA and Mitigation	Year 1	TPAC, Local Government
Protected Landscape	# 33 Set Architectural Guidelines	Year 2	TPAC, Local Government, National Cultural Heritage Agency

Community Development

Target Group	Activity	Roll-Out Year	Responsibility
Local Communities	#34 Hold biannual meetings	Year 1	Park Management
Local Tourism Stakeholders	#35 Support Tourism Stakeholder Ass.	Year 1	Park Management
Volunteers	# 36 Support “Friends of Tusheti Protected Areas”	Year 1	Park Management
Local Communities	# 37 Produce of Semi-annual Newsletter	Year 2	Park Management
Local Communities	# 38 Solicit Tourism Small Grant Proposals	Year 1	Park Management
Local Service Providers	# 39 Offer concessions for TPAC services	Year 1	APA/Park Management
Local Communities	# 40 Conduct annual Tourism Training Seminars	Year 1	NTA, APA/Park Management
Local Communities	# 41 Hold Art Festival and Sales of Art	Year 1	Park Management
Local Communities	# 42 Promote Sale of Local Products	Year 1	Park Management, local NGOs, donor organizations

APPENDIX 13 – Summaries of Implementation of Tourism Guidelines and Safety Plans

Implementation of Tourism Guidelines

Target Group	Activity	Roll-Out Year	Responsibility
All Stakeholders	# 43 Create and Distribute Tourism Guidelines	Year 1	APA
All Stakeholders	# 44 Incorporate Guidelines in Training of Stakeholders	Year 2	APA

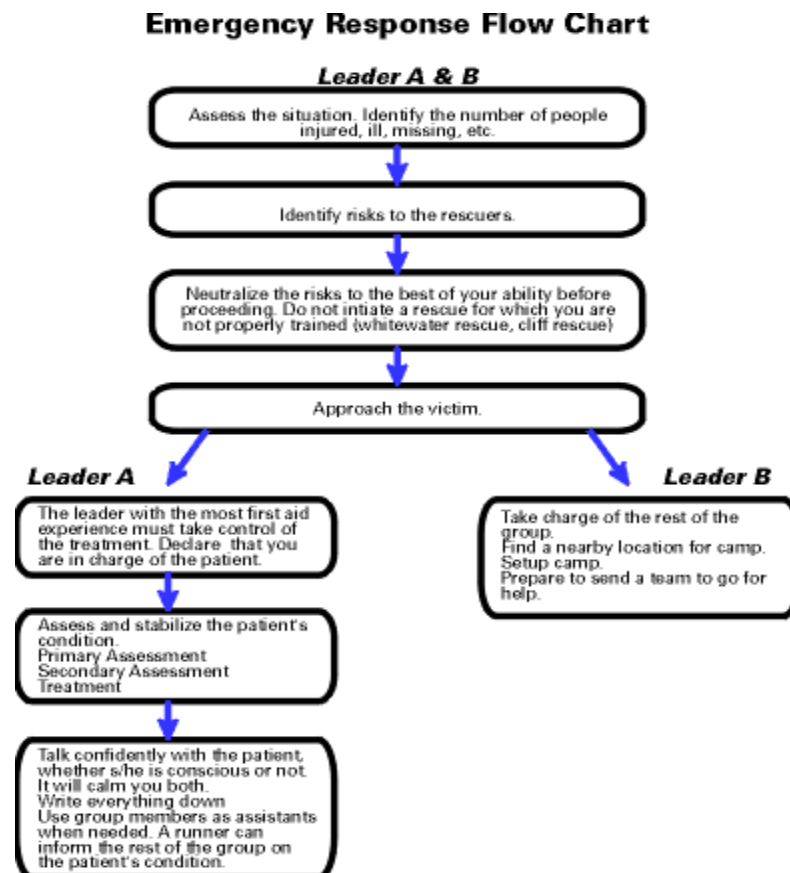
Safety

Target Group	Activity	Roll- Out Year	Responsibility
PA Staff and Service Providers	# 45 Design and Distribute an Emergency Communication Plan	Year 2	TPAC
PA Staff	# 46 Design and Distribute a Triage and Evacuation Plan	Year 2	TPAC
PA Staff and Service Providers	# 47 Establish Emergency First Aid Capacity	Year 2	TPAC

APPENDIX 14 - Evacuation and First Aid Procedures for Tourists in TPAC

These procedures are tools for a caretaker taking responsibility for a victim. A TPAC caretaker could in be an emergency first aid trained Park staff member, a tour leader or another service provider operating in TPAC.

A basic approach to handling emergency situations is shown in the following flow chart form.



Medical Emergency/Safety Procedures consist of **four** parts:

- 1. Preliminary Evaluation of Trauma/Injuries**
- 2. First Aid**
- 3. Evacuation**
- 4. Search**

1. Preliminary Evaluation of Trauma/Injuries

The care taker must intimately understand certain realities about injuries and illness injury (serious or minor) if they are to deal with them effectively. Most trips are 2-24 hours to two days from having professional medical help arrive at their accident site. The group is dependent upon the care taker to take full charge of the situation—the care taker must care

for the physiological and psychological needs of both the victim and the group. A care taker who puts him/herself in danger physically or emotionally for the "good of the victim" is a liability to the victim and to the group.

These realities suggest certain leadership strategies. First and foremost, the care taker must stay calm and inspire confidence in the group and in each other that the situation is being handled in the best way. Talk through every step confidently and speak out loud. This way care taker can fill in each other's omission and nothing will be rushed into. Depending on the nature of the emergency, it may be productive to ask the group for suggestions, they may have good ideas. However, there are also times when opening up the discussion too much only bogs down the issue and prevents people from taking the necessary immediate actions.

- Stay calm--take a minute before rushing into action.
- Plan a course of action.
- Care for the group as well as any victims. Prevent further harm to anyone in the group.
- Enlist the help of the group (both leaders and participants).
- Become a "friend" to the victim.
- Take psychological care of the victim.
- Err on the side of safety; do not let the client dissuade you from your better judgment.

2. First Aid

Description

The first stage of wilderness medicine begins with an assessment of the injury or condition. Primary assessment is used to quickly determine if a patient is in a life-threatening situation and to provide immediate emergency care. Secondary assessment is the thorough evaluation of a patient after life-threatening circumstances are relieved. Then follow actual first aid procedures according to the health conditions.

Primary assessment

A **rule of thumb** for the first steps of primary assessment, recommended by the Wilderness Medicine Institute, is the ABCDE procedure. It stands for Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Disability, and Exposure assessment. First, a patient's airway should be checked by close observation of whether or not air can move in and out and any obstructions to breathing should be alleviated. In unconscious people the tongue can often fall to the back of the throat and block breathing and the head should be tilted back and the lower jaw raised to alleviate the obstruction. If neck or spinal cord injuries are suspected, the head must be handled with extreme care to avoid further injury to the delicate spinal cord. In these cases, the lower jaw can be pulled forward to open the airway. If the neck is severely out of alignment due to an injury or fall, it may be gently realigned to free the airway.

After the airway is cleared and breathing is ensured, a patient's circulation is checked by noting the pulse of the carotid artery, on the neck, the pulse of the femoral artery in the front

groin, and by listening to the heartbeat. If pulse is lacking, **cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR)** may be required, which requires chest compression and mouth-to-mouth breathing. Circulation checks include surveying a patient for bleeding. If severe bleeding is present, it should be stopped by direct pressure to the injured area, and by elevating the wound level to the heart if possible.

Disability assessment means checking for damage to the spinal cord, particularly in the cervical region of the neck. Assessment of exposure determines if environmental conditions, such as heat or cold, are immediate threats to a patient's life, which may require actions such as seeking shelter or covering the patient with protective clothing.

Secondary assessment

During this stage, a thorough **physical examination** of the patient is made from head to toe to determine the extent of injuries or problems. Caretakers performing the assessment should write detailed notes in order to inform physicians or emergency workers later. Patients are thoroughly interviewed to determine the scope of problems and any previous medical issues that might be related. Patients should be spoken to calmly to determine their mental states and how well they respond to stimuli. Vital signs such as heart rate and respiration rate should be noted and monitored. The skin should be carefully observed for injuries, **boils, rashes**, and discoloration. Red or flushed skin may indicate **fever** or heat-related conditions, while pale or blotchy skin can point to **shock** or **hypothermia**. A bluish tint to the skin may mean a lack of oxygen. Contact lenses should be removed from patients in cold conditions, as they can freeze to the eyes. During secondary assessment the patient should be closely monitored over time until improvement is noted or further treatment decisions are made. At all times in wilderness injuries, shock must be watched for and immediately treated.

Wounds and burns

In wilderness situations wound management strives to stop bleeding, prevent infection, and speed healing. Bleeding from wounds should be controlled by direct pressure. Wounds and burns should be cleaned gently and thoroughly, treated with antibiotic ointment, and covered with bandages to avoid infections. Wounds that have high risks of infections, such as large cuts, open fractures, and animal bites, should be watched closely.

External and internal bleeding

External bleeding should be stopped by direct pressure, such as firmly applying a clean bandage or compress to an open wound. Secondary pressure may be applied to pressure points, such as the large arteries in the upper arm or groin, to slow bleeding. Tourniquets are recommended only in life-threatening situations, as they can cause complications and infections. Symptoms of internal bleeding include dizziness, fainting, rapid heartbeat, weak pulse, **and shortness of breath**, thirst, loss of color, vomiting blood, blood in the feces or urine, and severe pain or swelling in the abdomen. If internal bleeding is suspected, medical help should be sought immediately. With all cases of significant blood loss, shock must be carefully considered.

Cardiac arrest

Cardiac arrest in the wilderness may require CPR, although CPR is less effective in remote regions that lack access to the **life support** technology that ambulances quickly supply. CPR should be administered to patients who have suffered near drowning, hypothermia, lightning strikes, and drug overdoses. CPR generally should not be administered in the wilderness if it endangers the rescuers, if the time of the cardiac arrest is unknown, if the patient appears to be dead or rigor mortis has set in, or if cardiac arrest was caused by severe trauma or lethal injuries.

Head injuries

Head injuries that do not cause loss of consciousness in the victim are rarely dangerous. Short-term loss of consciousness following head injuries is known as **concussion**, and these patients should be closely monitored for 24 hours, including waking them every three hours during sleep to check for mental alertness. For head injuries that cause prolonged unconsciousness, the airway and cervical spine must be protected. Severe brain injury is indicated by relapses into unconsciousness, bad headaches, bleeding from the ears, clear fluid draining from the nose, vomiting, persistent disorientation, personality changes, seizures, irregular heartbeat and breathing, and unequal or unreactive pupils. Severe head injuries must be treated by seeking immediate medical help or evacuation.

Spinal cord injuries

If spinal cord injuries are suspected, patients must be immobilized. Some expeditions or rescue teams may carry special splints or vests in their medical kits. If no such equipment is available, *spineboards* may be fashioned from available materials such as backpacks, poles, or ice axes to prevent unnecessary movement of the injured backbone.

Fractures and dislocations

Wilderness care for fractures recommends **immobilization** by using splints and slings. If manufactured splints and slings are not available in the medicine kit, they can be improvised by using natural materials, ski poles, ice axes, clothing, or parts of backpacks. In the case of dislocations, standard wilderness procedure is to splint, tape and stabilize the injury in the current position. However, if circulation or nerve function is impaired, or if the injured person is in extreme pain, relocation may be necessary by realigning the injured area. Relocation is most effective if it is done immediately following the injury, before stiffness or muscle spasms set in.

Altitude sickness

Symptoms of altitude sickness include **headache**, nausea, **fatigue**, vomiting, and bluish skin. Ataxia, or loss of muscular control and balance indicates more severe altitude sickness. Altitude sickness can occur at altitudes above 8,000 feet. The best prevention of the condition is allowing plenty of time for acclimatization at high altitudes, drinking plenty of fluids, and eating a diet rich in carbohydrates. **Aspirin** or **acetaminophen** may be taken, while the drug acetazolamide (Diamox) can relieve symptoms of mild acute mountain sickness (AMS). Other related conditions, which can cause death, are high altitude cerebral **edema** (HACE), which causes fluid accumulation on the brain, and high altitude **pulmonary edema** (HAPE),

which causes fluid in the lungs. The main treatment for acute mountain sickness is to rapidly descend to lower altitudes. In some cases oxygen may be available to ease symptoms.

Problems from cold and heat

Frostbite is localized tissue damage from exposure to cold, and is remedied by the slow warming of exposed parts, preferably in heated water. Hypothermia is the condition resulting from lowered body core temperature, and is a common affliction in wilderness medicine. Mild hypothermia occurs when the body's core temperature (measured rectally) falls from normal to 95°F (35°C) Fahrenheit. Moderate hypothermia gives temperatures between 90-95°F (32.2-35°C), while severe hypothermia occurs when a body's core temperature falls below 90°F (32.2°C). Symptoms include severe shivering, confusion, apathy, drowsiness, slurred speech, and impaired reflexes, and progresses to the point of unconsciousness.

Even cases of the mildest hypothermia must be cared for closely. Patients in whom hypothermia is suspected should be immediately warmed by gently removing wet clothing and providing dry clothing, blankets and shelter. They should be monitored for body temperature changes. Severe hypothermia cannot be remedied in the wilderness; victims must be immediately and gently evacuated. Warming severe hypothermia victims too quickly is dangerous. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) may be initiated on victims of severe hypothermia who have cardiac arrest. In cases of near drowning, hypothermia must always be suspected.

Illness from heat includes heat exhaustion and the more severe heat **stroke**. Symptoms include confusion, rapid weak pulse, cramps, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, headache, and high measured temperatures. Sweating may or may not occur, and the skin may be clammy and blotched. The principle treatment for heat illness in the wilderness is immediate cooling of the patient, by providing shade, fanning, sponging and immersion in cold water. Heat exhaustion will correct itself with enough rest and water. Heat stroke is life threatening and requires immediate cooling and rehydration with fluids, preferably intravenous ones. Prevention of heat illness includes proper conditioning, protective clothing, and avoiding **dehydration**.

Insect, reptile, and animal bites

Wilderness medicine must deal with an array of bites and stings, from bears, snakes, reptiles, spiders, scorpions, bees, fish and ticks. Prevention includes knowledge of the threats in the region being explored, as well as packing appropriate supplies such as bee sting kits for anaphylactic shock and snakebite kits for venomous attacks. The goal of treatment is to stop bleeding, prevent infection, and alleviate envenomation, or exposure to poison. The Sawyer Extractor is a suction tool used to remove snake venom, while the Epipen and Ana-kit are available by prescription for anaphylactic shock due to stings and severe allergic reactions.

3. Evacuation

Evacuation of a patient may be a crucial decision in the wilderness, depending upon the severity of an injury or condition, the difficulty of moving the patient, the time considerations involved, and the availability of outside help. In general if a patient with severe symptoms is

not improving despite care then evacuation becomes necessary. The Wilderness Medical Society lists symptoms that require postponing travel or evacuating patients:

- progressive deterioration with symptoms of **dizziness, fainting**, abnormally slow (bradycardia) or fast (tachycardia) heart rate, labored breathing, poor mental status, progressive weakness, constant vomiting or diarrhea, intolerance of oral fluids, or recurrent loss of consciousness due to head injuries
- debilitating pain
- inability to sustain pace due to medical problems
- passage of blood by mouth or rectum
- symptoms of serious high-altitude illness
- infections that get worse despite treatment
- chest pain that is not musculoskeletal in origin
- psychological status threatening the individual or group

If a patient cannot be moved without risk of further injury, then other members of a party, preferably two or more, should be sent to get outside help. When requesting outside assistance, the safety of incoming rescuers and time constraints should be weighed. Requests for outside help should be made in writing, and include an assessment of the patient and situation as well as a detailed location of the incident. In some regions, helicopter evacuation may be an option, and should be used if an injury is life-threatening.

During evacuation patients must be handled with extreme care, as well as insulated from heat, cold and further injuries. Larger wilderness expeditions may have special devices available for transporting injured members, while smaller parties may have to improvise transporting devices by using backpacks, ropes and other available materials.

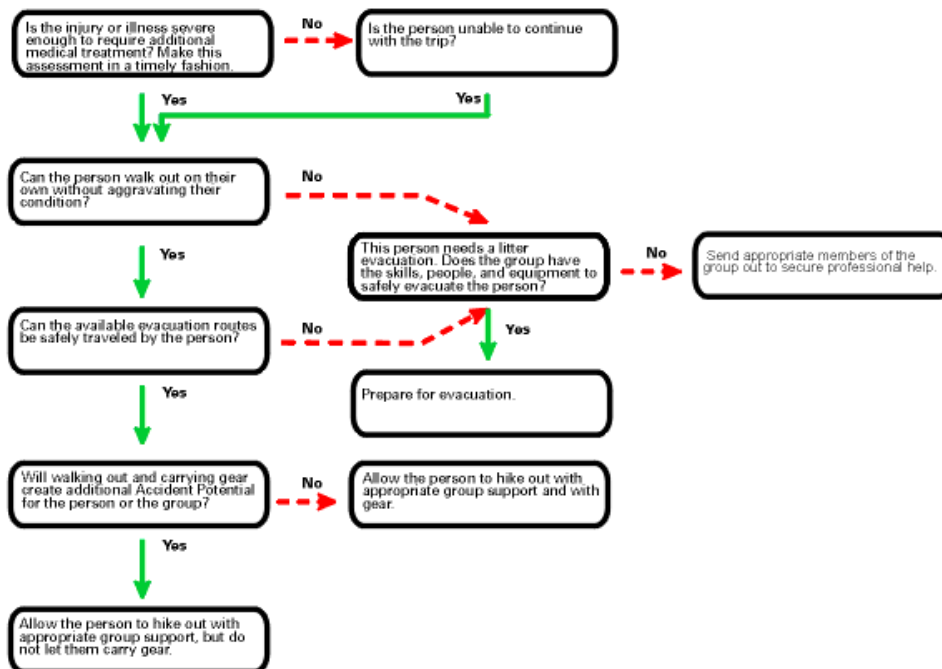
Evacuation Procedures - when to Evacuate:

Evacuation is used as a general term for transporting someone from a trip. In most cases we think of this as caused by a medical problem. It can also be the result of psychological problems, a family emergency, or the assessment of the trip leaders that the person's behavior poses a threat to themselves or others in the group.

If someone needs to be evacuated due to injury or illness, the primary concern is for the safety and health of the patient. When assessing the need for an evacuation, think both about the patient's condition and how rapidly medical attention is needed. For example, it may take 2 hours for the patient to walk out on under their own power. Whereas to send two people out for help (2 hours), get a rescue squad to the trailhead (1 hour), hike back in (2 hours - unless driving in is possible), and hike back out (2 hours+) will mean over 7 hours before the patient is evacuated. Their injury may need treatment sooner than that.

You also consider your resources, do you have the necessary equipment, manpower, and experience to safely evacuate the person given the current trail and weather conditions. If you do evacuate the person, take the time to plan out the best route keeping in mind patient condition, distance, terrain, etc. Depending on the situation, you might choose the shortest route, the quickest route, or a longer route that poses less threat to the patient's condition. Use the evacuation flow chart to determine how to deal with an evacuation situation.

Evacuation Plan Flow Chart



Review and familiarize yourself with contents of first-aid kit against check list.

-Emergency phone numbers. Before leaving on any trip make certain you have in you're the emergency phone number for each of the following:

- a. An emergency communication plan provided by the Park Authorities.
- b. Phone number of the victims kin.

Plan what to do when you get to the road head.

- A. Arrange for transportation to emergency medical facilities.
- B. Contact local ground operator for assistance in the following:
 1. Arranging transportation to medical facilities.
 2. Contacting a doctor or emergency room.
 3. Gathering the client's luggage and valuables.
 4. Taking over management of evacuee's care and assistance.
 5. Taking care of any local legal requirements.
- C. Consideration if local ground operator' staff not available.
 1. Attempt to contact their office by radio, phone and leave answering machine with information detailing the situation, your proposed plans, and your needs.
 2. Arrange for transportation to medical facilities.
 3. If necessary, contact a doctor or medical facilities.

Evacuation Preparations

1. Consider the circumstances
 - a. Severity of injury
 - How soon does the patient need to be in the hospital
 - b. Distance to road head
 - Distance to the phone or additional help? Distance and time considering a rate of travel of 1-2 miles per hour?
 - c. Difficult of terrain or water condition
 - When will you reach the rough country or shore? In the beginning when you are fresh or later, when you are exhausted
 - d. The group's abilities and experience
 - f. Weather
 - Will you be able to deal with deteriorating weather?
 - g. Communication possibilities with available rescue services.
 - h. transportation schedule
 - Who will meet you at the road head or shore line? Plan for mechanical failures.
 - i. Suitability of landing of loading site for Doctors

2. Determine what type of evacuation is the best for the patient. These are some common evacuation possibilities.
 - a. Walking
 - Easiest and least complex.
 - b. Simple carries
 - Injury dependent but can be faster and easier than litter carries.
 - c. Litter
 - Require larger groups, at least 8 people slow, but safe and effective.
 - d. Request more manpower
 - Consider starting for road head or shore line and meeting support in route or using porters.
 - e. Pack animal, horse, mule, donkey
 - f. Vehicle
 - g. Helicopter or plane

Communications:

If you do not have access to radio or telephone communication, messages must be delivered on foot and are generally one way. Make them accurate, concise and complete. Determine whether messengers should be sent; designate messengers and leader.

1. Sufficient messengers to be safe and effective
2. An experience and trustworthy person leading the group. Consider; physical stamina, night travel, navigation and first aid skills, foul weather, and experience.
3. Written instruction: Evacuation and Medical Report Form.
4. Arrange for the evacuation party;

- a. Enough manpower to be safe and effective
- b. Prepare for extenuating circumstances
 1. Food
 2. Extra clothing
 3. Sleeping bags
 4. Marked Maps
 5. Money

Emotional Maintenance of the Group.

First, assure the physical health of the group. This includes mild exercise (an effective tool to relax and relieve stress), food, water and shelter.

Begin the process of emotional healing by debriefing the group immediately. Encourage and allow people to verbalize their feelings and emotions, while avoiding a critique of any individual. Support and understanding are vital. Attendance and speaking, although strongly encouraged, is voluntary. The debriefing should include, if at all possible, all the members of the group.

Open communication between all involved is vital to avoid misplaced suspicions, ill-will, or feelings of guilt. This is the beginning of the ongoing process of understanding trauma or grief. Your goals are the short term is to create acceptance that the feelings and emotions being experienced are normal, to reduce feelings of guilt or inadequacy, to restore physical well being, and to protect the victims from additional stress. This can be accomplished by providing appropriate verbal and non-verbal support and reassurance and careful listening.

It is important to note that any critique of cause, blame or performance can produce incriminating comments which could later be used in court. There is a need to minister to those involved in the incident, but temper this with a realistic assessment of legal effects of what might be said in an emotionally charged atmosphere. Statements made in the field, even comments among leaders/guides will most likely become evidence in a court case.

4. Search

When a person is missing, the leader needs to develop a search plan. This plan includes the following:

- Do not endanger the rest of the group to conduct a search. Only search to the extent that the group is equipped and competent for.
- Search groups should include at least two people.
- Start the searches from the point at which the person was last seen.
- Leave two persons at the point at which the person was last seen.
- Ensure that no one else gets lost. Arrange meeting times and places for all groups to check in, or use walkie-talkie for check in.
- Monitor the condition of the search group to make sure that no additional emergencies occur.
- Decide at which point should outside help be sent for.

Decide at what point the group needs to abandon search.