Assessing Ecotourism from a Multi-stakeholder Perspective
– Xingkai Lake National Nature Reserve, China

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Ecotourism

- Ecotourism: the complexity of the definition
  - Natural setting
  - Contribution to conservation
  - Community development
  - Environmental education
  - …

- New relationships between people and environment

- An instigator of change
  - Changes in tourism experience
  - Changes in livelihood methods
  - Changes in resource allocation and utilization
  - Changes in management regimes
  - …
Ecotourism and protected area

- Ecotourism can contribute to the sustainability of protected areas
  - Conservation and development
  - Wellbeing of local communities
  - Awareness of the value of environment and natural resources
- Ecotourism has been practiced in different forms in many countries, many at protected areas
- There is a call for ecotourism development in many nature reserves in China
Ecotourism assessment model

Integrated resource use

- Economic, social benefits
- Cross cultural respect
- Financial support to conservation
- Environment protection
- Integrated resource use

Tourism
- Provision of services
- Tourism impacts
- Restrictions
- Monitoring/research
- Outreach programs

Management policies/organizations

Community
- Enforcement of use zones
- Environment protection

Environment
- Monitoring/research
- Environment education

(Ross & Wall, 1999)
## Parameters to assess ecotourism management

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<th>Management Organizations</th>
<th>Core management agency and its character</th>
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<td>Land and resources ownership structure</td>
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<td>Management structure</td>
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<td>Management Policies/plans</td>
<td>Policies/plans on environment/resource conservation</td>
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<td>Policies/plans of community participation in resource conservation</td>
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<td>Policies/plans on community participation in ecotourism</td>
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<td>Management operation</td>
<td>Resource use monitoring (zoning)</td>
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<td>Environment quality monitoring</td>
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<td>Environmental education program for community and/or tourists</td>
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<td>Tourism monitoring</td>
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<td>Tourism service provision</td>
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Research Objectives

• Assess ecotourism of Xingkai Lake NR through examining the relationship between tourism, community and environment
  – Current tourism development
  – Management structure and key management issues
  – Community participation in ecotourism

• Identify areas for improvement
Research Methods

- Key informant interviews
  - Community members
  - Key officials at the provincial forestry department
  - Management officials of the NR
- Field observations from April 2010 to October 2010
- Review of related policies, regulations and development plans
Xingkai Lake National Nature Reserve
Xingkai Lake National Nature Reserve
Xingkai Lake National Nature Reserve

• Year of importance
  – 1986, established
  – 1994, became a National Nature Reserve
  – 1997, join the North East Asian Crane Site Network.
  – 2002, designated as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance
Current Tourism Development

• Tourism developed around Xingkai Lake NR in recent years
  – In 2009, the total number of visitors to all tourism spots in Xingkai Lake area reached 930,000
  – The total tourism income was RMB 2.3 billion.
  – Strong seasonality
  – Within province clientele

• Major attractions and activities
  – Beach and water activities at the Big Xingkai Lake
  – Wetland exploration at Small Xingkai Lake
  – Bird and flower watching
  – Xinkailiu historical site
The Management Structure

- Jixi Municipal Government
- Provincial Forestry Department
- Xingkai Lake National NR Management Agency
  - Office
  - Public education
  - Tourism Management
  - Environment Protection
  - Research
  - Operation

Manage

Xingkai Lake National NR

Own

- Baipaizi County
- Xingkai County
- Xingkai Farm
- 856 Farm
- 857 Farm
- 8510 Farm
- Xingkai Aquaculture Company

Collective Owned

National Owned
Major Management Issues

• Lack of funding for preservation
• Tensions between preservation and development
• Multi-management authorities
  – The provincial forestry department
  – The management agency
  – The local government
• Ambiguity in landownership
  – Land and water area within the NR owned by different parties
• Alternative livelihood methods for the local fishing community
The Local Fishing Community

• Xingkai Lake Aquaculture Company
  – Established in 1951
  – 522 employees
  – An annual catch of 1200 tons
  – Small Xingkai Lake as the major working area of the Company
  – Since 2003, under the administration of the management office of Xingkai Lake NR
The Local Fishing Community

• Livelihood methods
  – Fishing as the primary livelihood methods
  – Small amount of agriculture and weaving activities
  – Support from national low-income supplements

• The depletion of fishing resource caused by over fishing
  – Income from fishing activities is not sufficient to sustain the livelihood of its employees.

• Attitude toward ecotourism and participation
  – Positive attitude toward ecotourism
  – Not know how to get involved
  – Hope the government or the management agency could help them to benefit from ecotourism
Ecotourism Assessment

Tourism

- Limited community participation and economic benefits
- Construction/maintenance of facilities; tourism services
- Limited environment education; limited tourism use

Management policies/organizations
- Fishing management
- Zoning; Restrictions
- Monitoring/research

Community

Environment

Fishing activities
## Assessment of Ecotourism Management

| Management Organizations | Core management agency and its character | The Reserve Management Agency  
Government agency |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land and resources ownership structure</td>
<td>Land and resource separately owned by seven parties (Figure 3)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Key stakeholders | The Management Agency  
Provincial Forestry Department  
Municipal Governments  
Governments at County and Village level  
Xingkai Lake Aquaculture Company and its employees |
| Management structure | As shown in Figure 3 |
| Sources of income | Funding allocated from Jixi Municipal Government |
| Management Policies/plans | Policies/plans on environment/resource conservation | Management Regulations of the Reserve  
Working Policies of the Management Agency of the Reserve  
Plan for the Reserve (including zoning plan) |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policies/plans on community use of resource</td>
<td>Fishing Regulations of the Reserve</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies/plans on ecotourism development</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policies/plans of community participation in resource conservation</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Policies/plans on community participation in ecotourism</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Management operation</td>
<td>Resource use monitoring</td>
<td>Zoning plan is monitored regularly</td>
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<td>Environment quality monitoring</td>
<td>Regular monitoring and reporting</td>
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<td>Environmental education program for community and/or tourists</td>
<td>is constructed and operated as the tool for environmental education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourism monitoring</td>
<td>Monitoring of tourist number for paid area, including museum and boating service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourism service provision</td>
<td>Limited, including museum and boating services in small. Most catering and accommodation are provided outside the Reserve.</td>
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Conclusion

• Xingkai Lake National NR has the potential to provide quality ecotourism experience
• The multi-stakeholder management style and the ambiguity of landownership within the NR provide structural difficulties for the management and operation of ecotourism
• The local fishing community urgently needs livelihood alternatives
• Current relationships between people, resources and tourism have yet to provide the mutual benefits necessary for successful ecotourism
Conclusion – Community

• Participation in ecotourism could provide an alternative livelihood opportunity for the local fishing community

• Positive attitude toward ecotourism and interests in participation are identified among community members

• The current community involvement is low mainly due to the lack of participation mechanism

• Management programs and government policies should be developed to facilitate community participation in ecotourism
  – Support necessary labors for ecotourism
  – Replace fishing activities as the major livelihood method for the local community
  – Develop positive synergetic relationship between tourism, environment, community
Thank You!