



PACIFIC  
ISLANDS  
INSTITUTE



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# Sustainability Plan

## LEGAL COMPLIANCE

Pacific Islands Institute, Ltd. (PII) is in compliance with all Federal, State, and Local regulations for all services and commits to abide by all necessary permit conditions.

PII is a registered travel agency (TAR# 6716) by the State of Hawai`i.

## SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Pacific Islands Institute's mission is to providing positive cultural interactions; to ensuring our programs are culturally and environmentally sensitive; to involving local people in decision making; and to protecting, sustaining and respecting indigenous cultures and environments.

This mission and its sustainability plan guide its operations and demonstrates its commitment to Hawaii Ecotourism Association's ecotourism principles as follows:

## NATURAL AREA FOCUS

Pacific Islands Institute provides direct, personal nature experiences in its travel programs. Through hikes and walks, snorkel and kayak trips and tide pool explorations, PII introduces its groups to the unique attributes of local natural environments. Always respectful, PII teaches its visitors about the region and the living things there.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Through annual donations, membership fees and attendance/entrance fees, Pacific Islands Institute contributes to the organizations that care for the environments in which we visit and related organizations in general. The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, Kawainui, National Parks Conservation Association and Conservation Council for Hawai`i are just a few organizations that PII supports.

In addition, PII staff, as a group and individually, participate in volunteer work to support the environment. Beach clean-ups, removing invasive plants from rainforests, and rebuilding ancient fishponds are some of the activities supporting the environment.

## **SUSTAINING THE COMMUNITY**

Pacific Islands Institute believes in ongoing, positive contributions to the communities in which they operate. PII partners with upstanding ecotour operators in the community with similar sustainable missions to work with its clients. In addition, PII tries to use local businesses as much as possible to provide meals to its clients.

By engaging the local community in decision making of what to share, how to share and who to share information, PII ensures their tours have minimum or no impact (unless positive) on the community. PII has two scholarships to support local communities in which they operate ("Pacific Islands Institute/Diana W. Lockwood Memorial Scholarship" at Hawai'i Pacific University for Pacific Islanders and "Pacific Islands Institute Scholarship" at University of Hawai'i in the Hawaiian Studies department for advanced degrees.)

## **OPERATING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

Pacific Islands Institute employs environmentally sustainable practices to ensure that their activities do not degrade the environment. The waste management hierarchy of REDUCE, REUSE and RECYCLE underpins its operation. Examples of these practices follow:

In their office, PII has programs for recycling paper, magazines, cans, etc. Simple ideas such as using both sides of a sheet of paper and using a mug or water bottle are second-nature to the staff. Whenever possible, PII uses the least amount of disposable packaging and containers. Computers and lights are turned off at the end of the day to save electricity. CFLs are used throughout the office.

Information is sent electronically to its clients or can be found on its website in order to reduce printing and mailing. PII discourages clients from using plastic water bottles and encourages a reusable bottle with local tap water explaining that Hawai'i's water is some of the best in the world. PII buys locally when providing meals for its guests. Our guide brings trash bags to pick up trash along trails.

### **STAFF MANAGEMENT**

Pacific Islands Institute employs local students and staff based on their knowledge and qualifications in the field of ecotourism or related industries. Independent contractors who guide our clients on excursions are experts in the areas of their fields and provide accurate information to ensure quality of ecotourism experiences to its clients. PII encourages staff professional development.

*Training:* Ecotour guides and client contact staff are trained so that they have working and accurate knowledge of the ecology, cultural heritage, conservation issues, and health/safety preparedness of the sites visited.

### **STAFF MANAGEMENT, CONT'D**

*Guide Qualifications* : Each of the company's guides is selected with consideration to their knowledge and experience of topics outlined in the environmental management operating principles. PII guides demonstrate knowledge of ecological and cultural heritage of the area, knowledge of environmental management issues and practices of the area, and knowledge so that advice may be given to consumers in regard to protecting the environment. Each has provisions for safety and emergency preparedness and possess current first-aid and CPR certification. PII uses local experts (academics, scientists, culturalists) to share information to its clients.

### **INTERPRETATION MANAGEMENT**

Pacific Islands Institute provides all consumers with accurate information and foster a better understanding and appreciation of the ecological and cultural heritage of the place being visited.

PII uses independent contractors whose full-time work is the area of expertise in which they share their knowledge with our guests. (example - for the volcano tours, we have a volcanologist as the guide.)

#### *Natural Resources*

- As PII programs are educationally focused, its guests want to know and learn about each area they visit, hence environmental and ecological information is standard discussion, however the depth of information depends on the focus of the tour.
- PII clients are provided with information about proper behavior and their responsibilities when visiting natural areas and encountering wildlife.
- PII provides detailed information about each officially established protected natural area visited by its clients.
- PII's tours and other related activities promote a constructive interaction between consumers and nature and involve minimal disturbance to wildlife.
- PII provides its consumers with information about environmental issues and initiatives in each of the regions in which it operates for tours that focus on the environment.

#### *Cultural Resources*

PII works with local cultural communities to ensure that cultural sensitivities are taken into account, cultural protocols are respected and implemented, and cultural obligations are respected. Cultural leaders in the communities generally accompany our clients to villages and sacred sites.

## **INTERPRETATION MANAGEMENT, CONT'D**

### *Wildlife*

- PII generally does not access the same trail more than 1-2 times a month.
- PII groups stay on trails and guides are knowledgeable about plants and wildlife in the areas in which they lead.
- Wildlife are observed from appropriate distances, undisturbed, and avoided at sensitive times, e.g., such as mating, nesting.
- Clients and staff are prevented from feeding wild animals, while food and trash are always securely stored to avoid attracting wild animals.
- If venturing off-trail, fragile terrain and terrain that is critical to wildlife are avoided.
- Guides who lead off-trail tours are knowledgeable of which plants are most resistant to trampling and may educate their consumers accordingly.
- The introduction or transporting of non-native species is avoided.
- The removal or extraction of cultural or historic structures or artifacts as well as rocks, native plants or other natural objects is not permitted.

## **INTERPRETATION METHODS**

Ecotourism products shall include at least one face-to-face and static interpretation opportunities that allow visitors to learn more about the natural and cultural resources of the area being visited. Pacific Islands Institute believes in experiential learning.

### *Face-to-face interpretation*

- PII's strength is in interpretation and in finding the most appropriate person to share their expertise with its clients.
- Operation/tour is led by a trained guide.
- Tour includes educational talks or lectures by experts.
- PII provides other interactive educational activities, e.g., music, cultural ritual, hula, craft activities.

### *Static/non-personal interpretation*

- PII does not use self-guided trails, all tours are guided with an expert
- PII provides pre-travel educational material - printed, electronic, or web-based
- PII provides printed materials including brochures, educational fact sheets and interpretive leaflets
- PII has reference material held in a small library or holding
- Tour may include audio-visuals and/or hands-on activities
- Tour may include displays with interpretive signage and/or brochures

### **ACCURACY**

To the best of their knowledge, Pacific Islands Institute finds resources whose information is correct and accurate.

- Content used for interpretive materials and activities has been checked for its accuracy by reference to credible sources and is relevant to both the site and audience.
- Professional persons/ knowledgeable local practitioners who have high association with the site are typically the guide interpreters for groups.
- Interpretive sources include reference books, scientific journals, scholarly films and documentaries

### **CONSUMER EVALUATION MANAGEMENT**

The company monitors its operations and continuously analyzes and acts upon the feedback provided by clients and employees.

#### *Content*

- Pacific Islands Institute is highly evaluated by its clients.
- Cultural Interpretation meets or exceeds consumer expectations
- Ecological Interpretation meets or exceeds consumer expectations
- Quality of the Experience/Consumer Satisfaction meets or exceeds consumer expectations

#### *Evaluation Methods*

- Staff engages in discussions with clients and gives feedback with suggested changes as needed
- PII seeks the views and opinions of its vendors and suppliers
- Media reviews of the product are seen in articles written about PII's travel programs
- PII engages in phone calls and correspondence with clients for feedback
- Completion of survey questionnaires/formal consumer surveys are encouraged by PII
- Written visitor comments including compliments and complaints are requested
- Formal written peer review: PII has been a past recipient of the HTA's Keep It Hawai'i award (for cultural tours) and HEA's Ecotour Operator of the Year (for natural and cultural tours).

### **MARKETING MANAGEMENT**

Through its marketing materials Pacific Islands Institute provides accurate and responsible information about its tours. PII will not promote any images, activities, etc., that disrespect nature and culture. The following points are core to how PII operates and differentiates its educational eco/cultural tours from more commercial tours offered:

- The natural and cultural resources of the area or site, e.g., rare species
- The formal status, if any, of the site, e.g., National Park, World Heritage Area.
- The main nature-based activities provided
- The range/style of interpretation provided with qualifications of guides/ experts
- The number of people in typical group (i.e., tour) activities is generally smaller
- Behavior that will minimize damage to the environment
- Behavior that is appropriate in culturally sensitive areas