EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Environmental Assessment (EA) is an environmental management tool that has been recognized and implemented globally since 1970. It is a process by which the identification, prediction and evaluation of the key impacts of a development are undertaken and the information gathered is used to improve the design of the project and to inform the decision making process.

The guidelines for Environmental Assessment are needed to

- guide ecologists in their works to promote best practices.
- inform project managers and clients about the role of ecology in Environmental Assessment and help them to set appropriate briefs and budgets.
- guide the determining authorities in assessing ecological statements accompanying EAs.

In the above background the present study, carried out to study the impacts of overall tourism in the State, will be a baseline for such environmental impacts study in the near future. The state has, no doubt, enormous potential for attracting tourists, but the inflow of tourists in the state is very limited as compared with the other states having similar rich biodiversity and variety of tourism attributes. The reasons are not only due to infrastructure bottlenecks, but also due to the lack of proper management as well as lack of publicity.

It is important to mention that the visitors’ arrival in future will also depend on the marketing strategies adopted, infrastructural development and increase in visitors’ facilities at the destination areas. As it is clear from the visitors’ surveys, those visitors responded the reason for not coming again to the site being lack of infrastructural development and basic facilities at the site. This is important for the planners to take into consideration such factors as these not only affect...
the visitors’ arrival but also have many direct and indirect impacts on the local economy and on the environment, because lack of such facilities and infrastructure cause the increase in accumulation of solid wastes and littering at the site thereby reduction in the aesthetic appeal of the place. In addition, these deficiencies will cause a pressure on the available environmental resources at these tourism destinations, like Ratapani WLS, Kerwa catchments area, Bhojpur etc, which are rich in bio-diversity (forests and fauna).

As a result of the growing number of visitors, it was important to determine the profile of visitors, more specifically the socio-economic characteristics of visitors and examine their levels of experience at the sites, as it is a major indicator of present condition of environment and its available resources. These information were analysed considering the future expansion and development of the tourism for the areas selected in particular and elsewhere in general. Visualizing the perspective of the environmentalists, planners, managers etc. an attempt has been made to explain the overall results in context of the issues relevant to the tourism-environment interface in Madhya Pradesh. The visitors’ socio-economic profiles and their experience have been assessed and then an attempt has been made to examine the perception of the local people based on the primary data obtained through the surveys. Various parameters like flora, biotic assessments have been evaluated during the study. The land use pattern for the area has been illustrated according to the census 1991. The recent data as per census 2001 were not available till date, so a valid comparison and any conclusion could not be done.

The overall results show that at present there is no significant negative impact of tourism at the selected sites, but the study and the corresponding recommendations are of importance for the implementation of sustainable tourism in the area considering the
future growth of tourism in the study area. The local perception and the
visitors’ surveys for finding out their experience, willingness to pay
and expenditures during the visits give an in-depth knowledge of the
present and future environmental issues with respect to the
forthcoming tourism scenario of the area. Regarding the negative
impacts on physical environment, locals perceived that littering and
inappropriate disposal of wastes (especially polythene, papers and
food materials etc) is a major problem at present. They also gave high
rank to the damage to the vegetation of the area. The results of the
floral study although did not show any significant difference with
respect to Importance Value Index (IVI) values for controlled area and
the uncontrolled area, but the impact as perceived by the locals might
be important for Kerwa, which is endowed with biodiversity and the
visitation here is due to the natural value (biodiversity) of the place. So
any future planning for the promotion of tourism in the area should
take such perceptions and points into consideration. It is also important
to mention that locals perceived very low rank for the major issues like
pressure on resources and ecological imbalance. This is due to the lack
of knowledge among villagers for such issues, and their low education
level. Regarding other categories of impacts of tourism, locals
perceived that the tourism also has some positive impacts in the area,
in terms of more plantation programmes and measures for conservation
of woodlands. On the issue of socio-cultural environment, they argued
that tourists disturb the peace of the area through shouting, blowing
horns, rash driving and making comments etc; such behaviour has also
promoted crime in the area. On the economic aspects, they believe that
tourism has promoted seasonal dependency, and has created seasonal
jobs, which are responsible for the addition income for most of the
locals, engaged in it during the peak visitors’ seasons. For minimizing
the negative impacts of growing tourism in near future, they are willing
to participate in and contribute to the conservation measures and the
government planning and new projects.
Regarding economic contribution of the tourism activities in the area, it is important to mention one example of Kerwa, where tourism activities has generated an economic benefit of more than Rs 73 lakh to the local people; this has been calculated directly from the visitors’ survey at Kerwa, the destination where still tourism has not been explored to its full potential and no management is present to control or promote tourism. Thus tourism can provide boom to the economy of the area. In order to obtain more recreation facilities for future, interpretation centers and more information about the natural values of the area, they are willing to pay an additional fee for better visitation and experience. The production and consumption characteristics of the area have been illustrated; these give an overview of the demand for resources in the area based on which the economic, ecological modules for regional development have been proposed qualitatively. These models are important for the evaluation of the tourism impacts in future and tourism planning for the area. The recommendations emerging for the research work are important from the viewpoints of tourism development in the area in future.