



Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas

# Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostic and Action Agenda

## Utila, Bay Islands Honduras

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## 1. Introduction

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### 1.1 Utila Background

Utila is the smallest of the three main islands that comprise the Honduran Bay Islands. The Bay Islands are designated as a National Marine Park, and are form the southernmost region of the Mesoamerican Reef System that contains the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere. These idyllic islands collectively draw to their shores over a million tourists annually making the Bay Islands one of Honduras' most important tourism hubs.

Utila has a population of approximately 4,000 people residing on the main island and several nearby cays.<sup>1</sup> The destination is a dive mecca boasting more than 80 dive sites. It is known for its low-cost diving, healthy reefs, regular whale shark sightings and peaceful environment.

Utila's colorful history spans centuries from the pre-Columbian indigenous settlements of the Paya to the Spanish and British colonists that fought to occupy the island over 300 years. In the late 1700s, the British relocated several thousand Garifuna, descendants of Carib, Arawak and West African people, from the Windward Island of St. Vincent to the Bay Islands. The Garifuna became first post-Columbian settlers of the Bay Islands. Later in the 1830s, waves of former slaveholders and slaves from the Cayman Islands migrated to the Bay Islands after Britain abolished slavery in 1838. This Creole community, known as native islanders, became the largest cultural group.

Through the years, each ethnic group has left their own indelible mark on Utila's rich culture. The island's unique history explains the differences in cultural identify, including language, between the Bay Islands and mainland Honduras. While English is spoken prevalently in the Bay Islands, Spanish is the official language of Honduras.

Tourism is a key pillar of the Utila's economy. Annual international arrivals vary from year to year and were reported to be 183,000 in 2013.<sup>2</sup> While Utila receives luxury visitors on dive-oriented vacations as well as domestic and regional tourists on seasonal holidays, international arrivals are predominately from the global backpacker market segment. Utila is not a cruise port of call which distinguishes the island from neighboring Roatan, and keeps its dive sites relatively less crowded.

Utila's top source markets include the United States, United Kingdom and Canada. While the most tourists cite leisure travel as the main purpose for visiting Utila, there is a growing community of foreign residents who own second homes. Peak tourist season extends from

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<sup>1</sup> 2012 Census.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/honduras/international-tourism>





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December to April. Visitation increases considerably around special events, such as the Easter holidays in April and the Sun Jam festival in August, that have been developed and are being promoted throughout the year, particularly in the off-peak season.

While there is no disaggregated data available at the time of this report about the economic impacts of tourism in Utila, all stakeholders indicate that travel and tourism contributes significantly to the economic health of the island, both directly and indirectly. The island has an active Chamber of Tourism with over 50 members from the tourism sector, including hotels, restaurants, bars, dive operators, and transport.

Utila recognizes the importance of tourism for the island and is investing in enhancing the industry's sustainability.

## 1.2 Fostering Sustainable Destinations

Tourism drives the economy and the tension between the desire for development and the need to protect natural and cultural resources. The Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas (SDAA) is convened by Sustainable Travel International and brings together a consortium of travel companies, destinations, regional organizations and nonprofits — all with a vested interest in maintaining and restoring the region's natural, cultural and economic integrity.

The Alliance aims to improve the way tourism is managed and to enhance the global competitiveness of the region, by embedding sustainability into the day-to-day management and marketing of destinations. While the geographic focus for the first two years of work is the Caribbean and Central America, the shared vision is to expand the initiative by 2017 to encompass more than 30 tourism destinations in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Utila is one of the first eight destinations participating in the SDAA thanks to the generous support of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the US Government. Utila is taking part in a six -step methodology that supports enhanced destination stewardship:

- **Step 1:** Undergo a comprehensive **evaluation** using Sustainable Travel International's Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostic (RDD)
- **Step 2:** Develop an **action agenda** to establish practical quick-win projects that address the evaluation's priority areas
- **Step 3:** Receive support with **sustainability storytelling**, designed to embed sustainability messages and content into destination-level marketing and PR programs
- **Step 4:** Gain access to an online Sustainable Tourism Professionals **educational training program** designed to build local capacity in sustainability good practices



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- **Step 5:** Commit to monitoring salient key performance indicators using Sustainable Travel International's **impact monitoring system**
- **Step 6:** Receive ongoing coaching for the **destination stewardship council** charged with implementation of action agenda

In Step 1, Sustainable Travel International's RDD facilitated a focused assessment of Utila's performance on internationally recognized indicators for sustainable destination management. This assessment provides Utila with a 360-degree profile of its current status with respect to sustainable tourism. In Step 2, the facilitators engaged destination stakeholders in developing a practical action agenda for destination stewardship that address collective priorities through quick-win projects that demonstrate tangible and measurable results in the short-term. This report presents the results of Steps 1 and 2 of the methodology, as well as updates on the other steps in the methodology.

## 2. Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostic

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### 2.1 Sustainable Destination Management

Aware of the challenges and risks presented by tourism, and conscious of the need to move all areas of economic activity towards sustainability principles, sustainable tourism has emerged as a scalable solution for destinations around the world. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), sustainable tourism should:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socioeconomic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism is meant to have a lasting and positive impact on the environment, people, and economy of a destination. The result of sustainable tourism is economic growth, cultural prosperity, and environmental conservation.



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Sustainable destination management involves balancing the needs and demands of visitors, industry, community and the natural environment through participatory planning and ongoing monitoring in order to achieve sustainability. The fundamental tenet of sustainable destination management is shared responsibility; there is no single stakeholder group that is solely responsible for generating impacts or preserving the destination’s natural and cultural heritage. Inter-sectoral collaboration is key to catalyzing the change needed to keep tourism destinations healthy over the long term.

## 2.2 Assessing Sustainable Tourism at a Destination Level

There are very few tools designed to help destination managers take stock of the collective impact of sustainable tourism efforts, and to track changes occurring in a destination over time. The **Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostic** (RDD) is one of the first global tools designed to do so. The RDD tool is designed to facilitate rapid evaluation of 4 key themes of sustainable destination management:

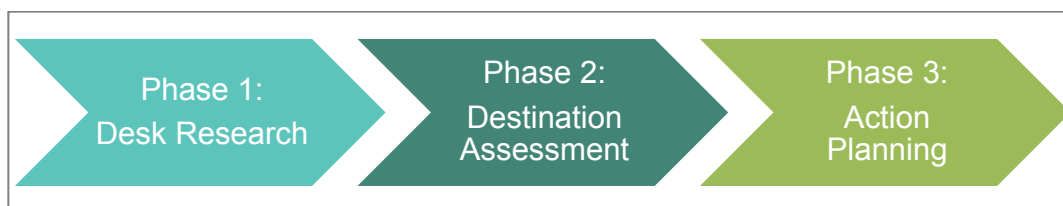
- Destination management
- Community involvement and benefits
- Cultural and natural heritage management
- Environmental conservation

Furthermore, the RDD evaluates a destination’s performance around 23 sub-themes, which are measured by 83 indicators. Each indicator is evaluated using the traffic light system in which **Green** = documentation/evidence of implementation and improving trends exists; **Yellow** = documentation/evidence of implementation exists; **Red** = no documentation exists; and **N/A** = not applicable to the destination.

## 2.3 Our Approach

Steps 1 and 2 of the SDAA Methodology involved several main components of work, as illustrated in Figure 2. Sustainable Travel International worked in close collaboration with a core team from the Honduran Tourism Institute (IHT), The Bay Islands’ Geotourism Council, Mesoamerican Tourism Reef Initiative partners including Coral Reef Alliance, and the OAS.

**Figure 1 RDD Methodology**





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The on-site destination assessment was conducted in February 2015 and consisted of extensive stakeholder consultations. Three focus group meetings were organized to gather information about Utila's current performance on each of the 84 indicators for sustainable destination management. The focus group meetings were attended by more than 45 representatives from government, the private sector and civil society. In addition, one-on-one meetings were held with key leaders and leading organizations involved in tourism, environmental conservation, heritage protection, physical planning and the provision of public services. Several site visits to key tourism attractions and sites were also organized.

During a second on-site visit in May 2015, a workshop was organized to validate diagnostic results and to identify possible interventions for addressing priority issues. A total of 32 local experts and key stakeholders attended the workshop. There was full consensus among stakeholders that the results of the diagnostic reflected their collective opinion about Utila's current situation. In addition, stakeholders prioritized issues and identified four quick-win projects to address priorities.

## 2.4 Stakeholder Engagement

A key strength the RDD methodology is engaging stakeholders throughout all phases of work – from data collection to actual assessment and intervention definition – thereby ensuring widespread understanding of the diagnostic, its value, and results. Utila can build on this work by replicating the RDD every two years in order to track changes occurring in the destination over time.

One of the recurring themes that emerged from the RDD process for Utila is the limited amount of collaboration among tourism stakeholders on the island. The RDD process supported increased collaboration by bringing stakeholders together to define shared challenges and priorities for action. Stakeholders felt hopeful that these first steps in the SDAA methodology have helped to activate a new movement towards shared destination planning and management on the island.

## 3. Destination Assessment Results

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### 3.1 Key Findings

Below is an overview of the results of the Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostic for Utila. Annex 1 presents the detailed destination assessment matrix.

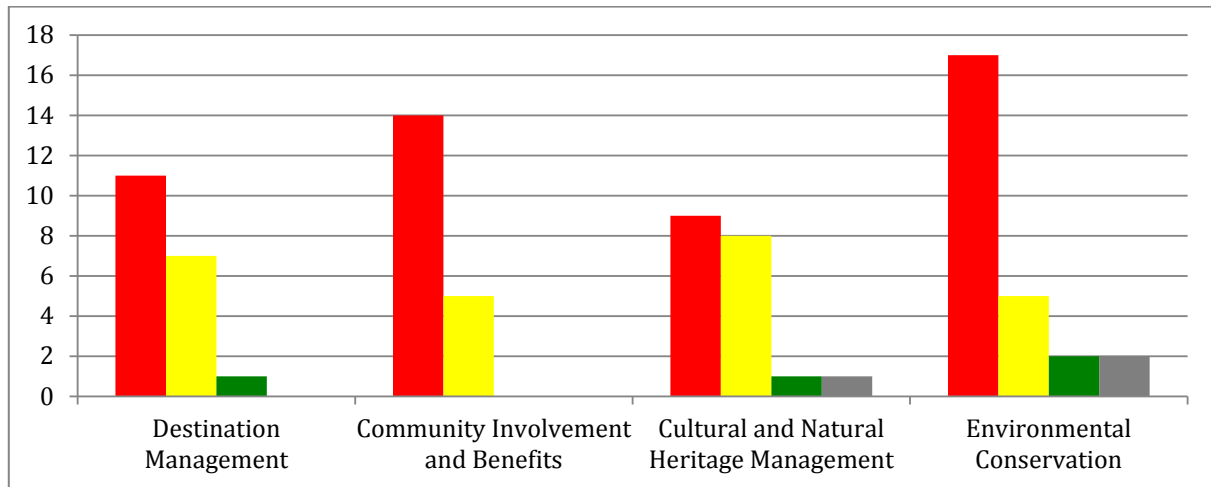


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**Table 1: RDD Indicators**

RDD THEMES	DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & BENEFITS	MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE	ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	TOTAL
Total Indicators Scored <b>Green</b>	1	0	1	2	<b>4</b>
Total Indicators Scored <b>Yellow</b>	7	5	8	5	<b>25</b>
Total Indicators Scored <b>Red</b>	11	14	9	17	<b>51</b>
Total Indicators NA	0	0	1	2	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>83</b>

**Figure 2: RDD Results**



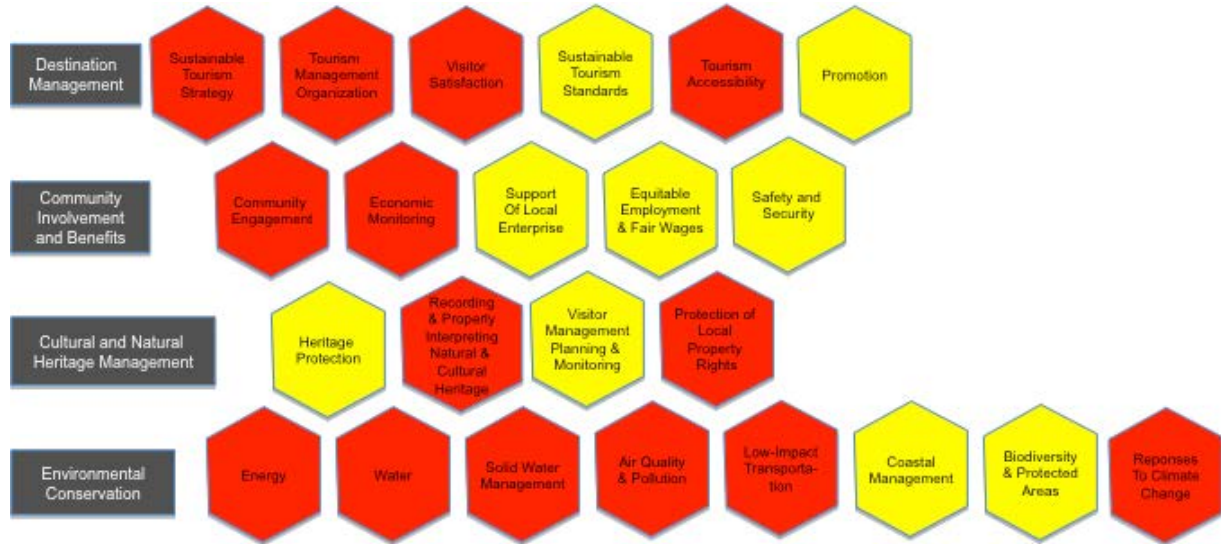
As can be seen from Figure 3: Destination Sustainability Snapshot, red is the dominant color (14 of the 23 sub-themes (61%)) followed by yellow (9 of the 23 sub-themes rated (39%)). The results indicate that Utila has made some progress on key destination sustainability issues, however there is still considerable work still to be done.





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**Figure 3: Destination Sustainability Snapshot**



### 3.2 Areas of Good Practice

The RDD process revealed some areas of good practice. Highlights include:

#### *Destination Management*

- The Chamber of Tourism has a large membership relative to the size of the destination and is actively working to collect tourism data and promote the Utila.
- The promotional messaging and marketing materials have accurately represented the products and services offered.
- The IHT is actively supporting tourism promotion for the Bay Islands and is prepared to increase support to Utila for destination marketing.

#### *Community Involvement and Benefits*

- Utila has low crime and is safe for tourists and residents alike.
- Emergency plans are in place (CODEM and CODER) and cover the main island and nearby cays.
- Wages earned in all sectors on Utila are reported to be high relative to the mainland.



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*Cultural and Natural Heritage Management*

- There is a comprehensive understanding of local languages and dialects.
- There are multiple management plans and systems in place in Utila designed to protect the natural heritage of the island. These include the Bay Islands Marine Park Management Plan, Ramsar Site Management Plan and Decreto 002 – 2004.

*Environmental Conservation*

- Effective erosion protection initiatives have been implemented in vulnerable areas (Coco reforestation along beachfronts).
- Honduras has signed, and Utila is complying, with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna.
- Coastal zone development is regulated through Decreto 002 – 2004.
- There have been efforts to improve solid waste management including adding new waste bins in public areas across the island and a program to ship scrap metal to the mainland.
- There have been beach clean ups and underwater clean ups.
- NGOs such as the Coral Reef Alliance and Bay Islands Conservation Association are actively monitoring environmental data such as ocean water quality and reef health.

### 3.3 Areas for Improvement

Through the RDD process, destination stakeholders identified some areas of risk across the four pillars of destination sustainability. Highlights include:

*Destination Management*

- Although there is a National Sustainable Tourism Strategy, the document has not been updated since 2011. Stakeholders have expressed that the plan for Utila needs to be more specific, and not rely as heavily on volunteer engagement. Additionally, the plan was not compiled with public participation (business owners) as it should have been.
- There is no *current, existing* plan to promote off-peak and shoulder season tourism
- There is no formal mechanism to compile data in one place, and report on environmental, social, economic and safety issues.
- There is no formal mechanism for collecting data and publically reporting on visitor satisfaction.
- There are no specific positions within the municipality of Chamber of Tourism where an individual, or a team, focuses primarily on the sustainability of the destination.
- There is limited support and access to mainstream areas for visitors with special needs.



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- Competition rather than cooperation is a longstanding issue between tourism businesses on the island that has hindered destination promotion.

*Community Involvement and Benefits*

- A formal system for engaging public, private and community stakeholders in tourism related planning and decision making, does not exist. Furthermore, data and concerns from residents are not collected and assessed.
- There is no robust, effective tool for collecting, monitoring and reporting of tourism economic expenditures.
- There is no information collected about the demographics (gender, age) of residents involved in the tourism industry.
- Policies and programs to encourage local ownership of tourism businesses is widely unknown. Additionally, there are no incentives to promote local ownership as interest rates are too high for residents.
- There is no monitoring to ensure that there is equal opportunity and pay for women, youth and minorities.
- Crisis and emergency response plans to ensure safety for residents and tourists, are inadequate and unpracticed.
- Road safety has become a challenge, diminishing the destination's appeal and affecting resident satisfaction. The high volume of motorcycles, ATVs and three-wheeled taxis driving at high rates of speed on the main road were cited as the primary cause.
- Perception of safety and security challenges in Honduras affects the destination image and visitor arrivals in Utila.
- Lack of designated place for tourists to address issues, e.g. theft, etc.; and lack of police trained to handle tourist security issues.

*Cultural and Natural Heritage Management*

- Enforcement around zoning laws and cultural resource protection is lacking.
- The rich history and culture of Honduras is hidden from tourism, and there are few existing venues to engage and learn.
- Limited cultural heritage incorporated into the destination product. There is no official inventory of cultural heritage sites, nor interpretive information available to visitors.
- There is no current strategy to market and promote cultural heritage attractions to visitors
- Limited signage and interpretation at natural attractions and sites.



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*Environmental Conservation*

- There are no programs to promote energy conservation, despite the high costs.
- There are no programs to promote water conservation or reuse. Pilot projects that have been done have a high barrier to entry due to the cost.
- There are no public records available to monitor waste collection, nor any programs to encourage/enforce recycling in the tourism sector. Solid waste management is a challenge, particularly due to limited space for disposal.
- No existing programs to educate or raise awareness about climate change and GHG.

### 3.4 Existing and Planned Initiatives

According to local leaders stakeholders, there are a number of initiatives already underway or with potential to be developed. Those initiatives provided context to meeting participants for the development of destination priorities and are listed below:

- Internet installation for the schools and public spaces, such as the park, ferry dock, airport (underway)
- Updated security system: new tourist police, more responsive and less heavy police presence, smaller guns, additional Bay patrols (underway)
- Sustainable Tourism and Climate Change Observatory is being established and will include a focus on the Bay Islands (underway)
- There are low interest (2-5%) loans available for solar installation for tourism business buildings through the Central American Development Bank (existing)
- New Western Path road to be made from recycled plastic mixed with concrete
- National Association of Engineers to study energy cost reductions (planned)
- Exploring IDB funding for water treatment system (planned),
- Studies for off-island solid waste disposal (planned)
- Upgrade Utila's airport to Category 3 to enable larger planes to land (planned)
- Implementation of integrated quality system for tourism businesses (planned)
- Noise measurement standards to be used by the municipality on inspections (planned)

## 4. Destination Sustainability Action Agenda

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Local tourism leaders treated the results of the destination sustainability diagnostic as a serious call to action. More than 30 representatives from government, private sector and civil society gathered on May 13th to develop a realistic Action Agenda to address critical sustainability issues identified from the RDD. This Action Agenda is based on the main outcomes of an action-planning workshop and serves as a practical guide for improving sustainable destination





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management. The action agenda presents **priorities** and **quick-win projects** for the next twelve to eighteen months.

The priorities and quick-win projects outlined in the action agenda represent Utila’s responses to the issues that were agreed by stakeholders to be the most urgent and important to tackle in the short-term. The quick-win projects are designed to provide immediate solutions that build on existing efforts and resources and are intended to inspire collaborative action and rapid results.

### 4.1 Shared Vision

During the first DSC meeting, stakeholders went through a visioning exercise in which they were asked to describe their vision for Utila in 10 years.

Stakeholders contributed a number of perspectives on the destination utilizing the destination sustainability pillars as a guiding framework. The key words, phrases and underlying sentiment were recorded and later reworded into a cohesive vision for the destination presented in the

#### UTILA’S VISION

Utila is a destination renowned for its friendly, helpful and united community that welcomes visitors and makes them feel at home. Utila is easy to get to and its streets are safe, clean and pleasant to walk through. Utila’s distinct cultural heritage is well preserved, celebrated and shared with everyone. The island has adequate infrastructure for residents and visitors alike, including sufficient water, well-managed sanitation and affordable energy. Utila’s economy is strong and diversified and tourism growth is always balanced with resident needs. Utila’s coral reefs are vibrant, the ocean waters are healthy, and the marine park management system is strong. The island’s youth are educated and engaged in the environmental, economic and social development of the island to ensure a prosperous future.

text box featured in this section of the report. This vision can be further edited and revised by the DSC as it sees fit. The vision will function as a “north star” to guide the DSC as it works to lead Utila towards a sustainable future.

### 4.2 Destination Sustainability Priorities

During the workshop, participants self-selected into three small groups focused on prioritizing sub-themes for each key pillar of destination sustainability. These small groups identified 8 priority areas from the 23 RDD sub-themes and 19 potential projects to address the priority areas. These priorities and project concepts are included in Table 2. Based on the priorities and



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potential projects, participants voted on the “quick-win” projects that they agreed were the most urgent to implement and demonstrate results over the next twelve to eighteen months. Each participant was given three votes and the results were tallied. These results are also indicated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Priorities**

THEME	PRIORITY AREA	PROJECT CONCEPT	VOTES	NOTES
<b>Destination Management</b>	Sustainable Tourism Strategy	Improved data collection and analysis	1	Priority for destination management group. Already a priority for the IHT and links with SDAA priorities.
	Sustainable Tourism Standards	Implement quality control standards and provide related training to tourism businesses	5	IHT implementation of Central American integrated system of quality and sustainability (SICCS) is in progress: funds are in place, the plan developed, and training of trainers is already complete. The next phase is planned to start by August 2015.
		Tourist Information and Assistance Center	0	Concept was put forward by two focus groups to address the quality of the tourist experience as well as safety and security.
		Improved traffic management	2	Should be addressed by Municipality. Steps have been taken to address Taxis but none to address other vehicles.
<b>Community Involvement and Benefits</b>	Safety and Security	24 hour call center for tourism issues	1	It was suggested that this could be included in the Tourism Information and Assistance center (request to CONATEL is in progress at a national level for all tourism destinations)
		Surveillance cameras on the main street	1	Suggested to proactively address safety in the busiest tourist area of the destination.
		Train local police to be tourism police	1	Mayor of Utila is already working to address by establishing a specific group of tourist police who are trained to handle tourists. A concept similar to this has already been included in national plan presented to president
		Improve fire safety equipment	1	Fire safety equipment is in poor condition. Donated in 2003.
<b>Cultural and Natural</b>	Recording and Interpretation	Providing access to natural and cultural	17	Multi-part project with several components that workshop



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THEME	PRIORITY AREA	PROJECT CONCEPT	VOTES	NOTES
<b>Heritage Management</b>	of Natural and Cultural Heritage	heritage on Utila		participants felt were best aggregated and voted on as one project.
		Improved infrastructure to increase access to key natural attractions	0	Road and trail infrastructure improvements. Challenges include private property and environmental management plans.
<b>Environmental Conservation</b>	Solid Waste Management	Reduce the Impact of Solid Waste on the Destination	15	Builds off of existing plans.
	Renewable Energy	Reactivate local energy commission	1	
		Promote availability of free assessment of businesses and low interest loans for solar panels	0	Potential conflict with the local power company agreement.
	Water	Residual water management plan	6	IDB may be developing a large-scale initiative that would cover Bay Islands and would address this issue.
		Rainwater harvesting project	13	Focused on increasing compliance with existing rainwater harvesting recommendations.

### 4.3 Quick-win Project Profiles

Destination stakeholders prioritized four quick win action projects for Utila:

1. Enhancing interpretation of Utila’s to natural and cultural heritage
2. Improving solid waste management
3. Increasing rainwater harvesting by tourism businesses and residents
4. Mitigating coastline erosion

A fifth project, improving data collection and analysis, is included at the end because it is a priority of destination stakeholders and the Honduran Tourism Institute. The first steps and activities have already been identified.

#### Project 1: Enhancing interpretation of Utila’s natural and cultural heritage



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Expected Results: Cultural and natural heritage on Utila will be captured and made easily accessible to visitors, enhancing the tourism and resident experience on the island, and improving the destination’s brand.

**Table 3: Activities and Indicators of Success – Project 1**

ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES
Develop Utila brand	Short Term	IHT, brand development expert/consulting organization	Brand developed and incorporated across marketing, signage and other materials	TBD	Viewed as a critical first step for this entire project. IHT will be including this in 2016 budget.
Developing a list of tourists Do's and Don'ts	Short Term	IHT, Hotels, Tour Operators, Roatan Geotourism Council, Bay Island Marine Park, Residents	Tourists lists posted and Changes in tourist's conduct	USD 500	Utilize existing lists from Geotourism Council in Roatan, IHT, and existing tour operators and hotels. Also include the Marine Park Management expertise to ensure this list is utilized across the Bay Islands. There are already norms for diving and whale shark interaction. Suggestion is to include these Do's and Don'ts on a video on the new ferry. If a video gets produced, it might increase costs. Consider utilizing GoBlue.
Improving signage	Short Term	Municipality, Local Artisans, IHT, Chamber of Tourism	Signs in place and maintained	TBD	Place signs at key sites and attractions. To include four types: 1) Large maps with Tourist Do's and Don'ts at Airport and Ferry Dock, 2) Direction signs to assist visitors in getting to key attractions, e.g. Caves, Pumpkin Hill, 3) Interpretive signs at key attractions, 4) Signs identifying key public institutions. Signs should be beautiful, professional, and incorporate local Utilan culture. Incorporate branding. Suggestion: utilize wood as base material.





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ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES
Developing a destination map	Short Term	Compass Maps/other company, ZOLITUR, DSC, IHT, Chamber of Tourism	Maps available	USD 800	Printed map designed for distribution to highlights attractions in the destination, available for sale to tourists.
Developing a Guidebook for Utila	Short Term	Community Representatives, Lonely Planet, Trip Advisor, IHT	Guidebook available	USD 5,000- USD 10,000	Use My Roatan as a model. This process includes collection of information, validation workshops, design, publication, distribution. DSC is proposed as the coordinating body for this project.
Training women's group as tour guides	Short Term	IHT, Women's Groups (Alianza de Mujeres Emprendedoras), Municipality, Oficina de la Mujer	Women working as tour guides	USD 2,000	Incorporate local knowledge into the training. Utilize INFOP to design workshops based off of the Utila Guidebook. Two week long program, including mock tours and more. INFOP costs are only for travel expenses. May need to meet national requirements.
Developing a Destination APP	Short Term	APP developer (TBD), IHT, ZOLITUR	App available for download and number of downloads	TBD	Offers to develop the APP for Utila have been made. The DSC should investigate the details of the offer to further to understand how this may reduce the costs of getting the APP developed. Research options via travel guides, such as Trip Advisor City Guide, Lonely Planet, Honduras Tips, The Voice Magazine etc.

Project 2: Improving solid waste management

Expected Results: Solid waste management will improve, particularly recycling, leading to healthier ecosystems and a more appealing tourist destination.



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**Table 4: Activities and Indicators of Success – Project 2**

ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES
Purchasing and installing recycle bins	Short-Medium Term	Municipality, NGOs, IHT, ZOLITUR, Schools, Health Community Center, Solid Waste Collectors.	Re-collection data and solid waste classification reports	USD 16,521.78  (USD 6,521.78 Cost of Containers)	Work with NGOs and solid waste collectors is already in progress. Tela recycle bins can be used as a model, can be done with the help of local artisans.
Recycling policy – supported by the Municipality.	Short-Medium Term		Landfill status monitoring implemented		
Start negotiations with local businesses and local distributors to apply plastic bottle and aluminum cans regulations	Short-Medium Term		Number of students being educated on waste management and working on recycling activities		ZOLITUR can provide assessment
Collect information about solid waste classification to unify a database for Utila as input for PET recycling project	Short-Medium Term		Plastic Bottles (inbound-outbound)		ZOLITUR can provide assessment, work has already been conducted by NGOs
			Coastal clean up results		ZOLITUR can provide assessment
			Data provided by follow up program of recycling and waste management initiatives		ZOLITUR can provide assessment
Request support from Businesses and projects that have environmental licenses (Environmental license responsibility)	Short-Medium Term		UMA can coordinate		



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Project 3: Increasing rainwater harvesting by tourism businesses and residents

Expected Results: Water consumption reduced on the island

**Table 5: Activities and Indicators of Success - Project 3**

ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES
Promote the creation of a Municipal ordinance to enforce implementation (Include in Plan de Arbitrios)	Medium-Long Term	Municipality	Ordinance created and enforced	To be determined	New constructions aren't currently required to comply
Education Campaign - Guidelines for rain water harvesting	Medium-Long Term		Amount of buildings with rainwater harvesting system	To be determined	
Create database of people/businesses already doing rainwater harvesting	Medium-Long Term		Water consumption statistics	To be determined	

Project 4: Mitigating coastline erosion

Expected Results: Coastal zones management and monitoring will improve ensuring long-term health of coastal ecosystems

**Table 6: Activities and Indicators of Success – Project 4**

ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES
Erosion and Coastline status Diagnostic/assessment	Medium Term	NGOs, ZOLITUR, Municipality, IHT, ICF, SERNA	Mapping (reanalysis)	USD 25,000.00	ZOLITUR / the Climate Change and Tourism observatory (Send to NGOs, CORAL, STI) - Should be done by the CT-PNMIB
Mangrove and turtle grass monitoring	Medium Term		Mangrove coverage		Already being done by NGOs



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ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES
Mangrove Restoration Project	Medium Term		No. of produced / planted (plants)		Being Requested by UMA, IHT and ICF will provide assistance. Consider future expansion to other plants/agriculture and integrate with IICA
Evaluation of solutions for coastline protection / erosion control	Medium Term		Statistics		ZOLITUR / the Climate Change and Tourism observatory (Send to NGOs, CORAL, STI)
Enforce regulations	Medium Term				Enforcement is limited
Education Campaign - Guidelines and procedures manual (develop documents and allow public access to the information )	Medium Term				Consult Land Zoning Plan 002-2004 and other laws

Project 5: Improving tourism impact data collection

Expected Results: Leverage data for more informed decision-making around key destination management priorities, such as better understanding the economic impact of tourism on the island, visitor source markets, etc.

**Table 7: Activities and Indicators of Success – Project 5**

ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES
Train DSC sub-committee and university and/or high school students on IHT data collection and reporting methods	Short Term	IHT, ZOLITUR, UPN, Ferry Companies, Marina Mercante, Airlines, Chamber of Tourism, NGOS, Municipality	Number of people trained and implementing IHT data collection methodology	USD 600	Training costs may be feasible through CORAL. Costs are mainly travel costs for trainer.
Develop and implement reporting	Short Term	Sustainable Tourism Observatory	Dashboard in place and utilized by DSC for	N/A	This can be developed in conjunction with STI and should be integrated with





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ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES
dashboard in conjunction with the Sustainable Tourism Observatory in La Ceiba		in La Ceiba, IHT, STI	decision making		IHT’s national system
Collect and report on data	Short Term	IHT, Sustainable Tourism Observatory in La Ceiba	Data is collected regularly and community awareness of key indicators increases	To be determined	Ongoing collection costs are To be determined

**Next Steps**

The implementation of these action projects will be led by Utila’s newly formed Destination Stewardship Council (DSC). The DSC sub-committees will develop work plans for each project.

## 5. Destination Stewardship Council

As a result of the Honduran Tourism Institute’s (IHT) leadership, and with the support of the SDAA project, Utila stakeholders have decided to form a Destination Stewardship Council (DSC). This is aligned with the recommendations and the work that emerged from the RDD process in Roatan in 2013 and reflects the latest in the IHT’s working model to develop similar stewardship councils in key destinations throughout Honduras.

The first step the destination stewardship council needs to take is to meet to review the selected projects and to determine which activities it can prioritize in the short term within the existing budget of \$5,000 USD that IHT has committed to provide as seed funding for the activation of the quick-win action projects.

The DSC will need to develop work plans for each project and appoint responsible parties for overseeing the implementation of the project. A sample work plan format is presented in Table 8 below. The NGO, Coral Reef Alliance has agreed to facilitate this process as part of their ongoing work on a variety of initiatives in Utila and the Bay Islands.



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**Table 8: Sample Work plan format to be developed by DSC**

NO.	TASKS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TARGET START	TARGET END	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
1	Develop and sign an MOU between all relevant partners.	DSC Coordinator	2/2/15	3/2/15	Signed MOU
2	Develop implementation plan for all key activities		3/3/15	4/1/15	Implementation Plan
3	Town hall meetings		4/2/15	5/2/15	Meetings held, community understanding increases

The structure of the DSC in Utila will be based on the general structure for all DSCs in Honduras as proposed by the IHT. Figure 5 illustrates the structure. The structure includes a board, a paid coordinator position, and sub-committees.

**Figure 4: Destination Stewardship Council**

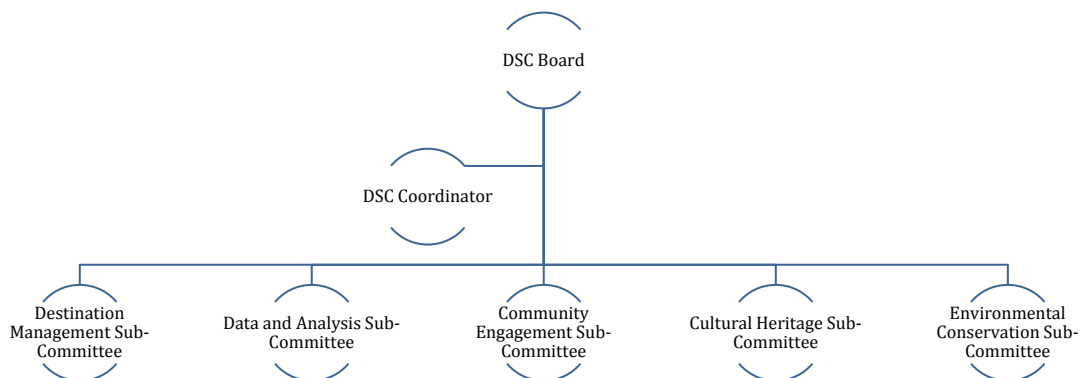


Table 9 provides a preliminary list of the institutions and members who will be involved in the DSC board. This list of potential DSC board members was developed as part of an action planning workshop held in May 2015. The list is intended to be preliminary and can be updated by the DSC in the future. The intention of the IHT is to keep board size small in order to be effective in managing the destination, and to maintain larger membership in the sub-committees.

**Table 9: DSC Board**

RESPONSIBILITIES	SECTOR	ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Sustainable Tourism Strategy	Camera de Turismo	President	Alice Hill
	Local Businesses	Real Estate (Remaxx)	Mark Smith



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Tourism Management		Restaurants/Bars	TBD
		Dive Sector (Utila Dive Buoy Project)	Lucie Brown
		Transport Sector (Airlines, Ferry, Taxis, etc.)	TBD
Tourism Accessibility		Hotels	TBD
		NGOs	UCF Representative
Quality Standards	Municipality	Mayor of Utila or designated party	Troy Bodden
	Communities	Community Representative - Eastern Harbor	TBD
		Community Representative - Cays	George Jackson
	Law Enforcement	Director of Justice	TBD
	Education	District Director	TBD
	Health and Sanitation	Director of the Health Center	TBD

The preliminary members of each sub-committee are included in Tables 10 to 15. The members of each sub-committee will be reviewed and revised during the second meeting of the DSC in June 2015. The sub-committee members will likely be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis based on need and effectiveness.

**Table 10: Destination Management Sub-Committee**

RESPONSIBILITIES	ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Sustainable Tourism Strategy Tourism Management Tourism Accessibility Quality Standards	DSC Coordinator	Leah Berry
	Municipality / Mayor	Troy Bodden
	Chamber of Tourism	Alice Hill
	Municipal Tourism Unit	Vita Melendez
	Municipal Catastro Unit	Shawn Deras
	Municipal Environmental Unit	Rosalia Argueta
	Geotourism Council	Luis Chevez
	ZOLITUR	Sotero Medina
	Community Leaders	Shelby McNab
	Taxi Association	TBD
	Ferry	TBD
	Airlines	TBD

**Table 11: Destination Marketing Sub-Committee**

RESPONSIBILITIES	ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Destination Branding and Marketing	Chamber of Tourism	Alice Hill
	Local Marketing Consultant	Adam Bilter
	GoBlue	Luis Chevez



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	IHT	TBD
	Municipality / Mayor	Troy Bodden
	Travel Agencies	Frank Morgan
	Hotels	TBD
	Restaurants	TBD
	Bars	TBD
	Real Estate	TBD
	Dive Shops	TBD

**Table 12: Tourism Data Collection Sub-Committee**

RESPONSIBILITIES	ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Visitor Satisfaction and Economic Impacts Monitoring	Chamber of Tourism	Alice Hill
	DSC Coordinator	Leah Berry
	ZOLITUR	Sotero Medina
	Immigration	Guido Zelaya
	Marine Mercante (Coast Guard)	TBD
	Municipal Tourism Unit	Vita Melendez
	IHT	TBD
	Sustainable Tourism Observatory in La Ceiba	TBD

**Table 13: Cultural Heritage Management Sub-Committee**

RESPONSIBILITIES	ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Protection of cultural heritage	Buccaneers	Patrick Flynn
	Vice President of Chamber of Tourism	Rita Whitefield
Inventory and interpretation of cultural heritage	HQTV	Shelby
	UCF	TBD
Visitor management planning and monitoring	Allianza de Mujeres	Bessie Chirinos
	Carnival Committee	TBD
	Municipal Tourism Unit	Vita Melendez
Protection of land rights	UMA	TBD
	Baseball Stadium Group	TBD
	Futbol Stadium Group	TBD



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**Table 14: Community Involvement and Benefits Sub-Committee**

RESPONSIBILITIES	ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Community involvement and benefits	Municipal Police	Robert Bernard
	National Police (Tourism Police)	TBD
	Coast Guard / La Naval	TBD
Security	Capitania de Puerto	Francisco Lainez
	Immigration	Guido Zelaya
Support to micro and small tourism enterprises	Community Leaders from 5 neighborhoods	TBD
	Allianza de Mujeres	Bessie Chirinos
	Chamber of Tourism	Alice Hill

**Table 15: Environmental Conservation Sub-Committee**

RESPONSIBILITIES	ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Energy, water, solid waste management	Iguana Station / FIB	Luis Cheves
	BICA-Utila	Maria Arteaga
	CORAL-Utila	Pamela Ortega
	Whale Shark Oceanic Research Center	Cat and Owen
Coastal zone management	Municipal Environmental Unit	Rosalia Argueta
Adapting to climate change impacts	Community Leaders from 5 neighborhoods	TBD
	Dive Centers	TBD
	Vida Mejor	TBD

## 6. Destination Monitoring

The DSC and stakeholders expressed a strong interest in utilizing data to make improved decision-making around destination management. Through a UN World Tourism Organization initiative, a Sustainable Tourism Monitoring Station will be established at La Ceiba. The station, currently scheduled to become operational in August 2015, will monitor selected sustainability criteria and indicators. Stakeholders from the IHT and NGOs in Utila expressed that this station is best positioned to monitor Utila, along with other Bay Island destinations. Therefore, Utila’s DSC sub-committee on Tourism Data Collection will work closely with the station to ensure that an adequate monitoring system is put in place that takes into account Utila’s priorities. Ideally, the monitoring system for Utila will incorporate monitoring of the implementation of the quick-win action projects. The outcomes of on-going destination sustainability monitoring should be



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communicated widely, and used to inform and shape policy and planning, ultimately influencing spending and the prioritizing of investments at a national level.

## 7. Destination Sustainability Story-telling

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The IHT plans to increase marketing for Utila under the umbrella of the Bay Islands. Stakeholders in Utila, particularly tourism businesses, expressed interest in leveraging the Bay Islands brand, as long as it does not compromise the ability to promote Utila's distinctive attractions, e.g. highlighting that Utila is one of the best places globally to see whale sharks. In the Destination Marketing meeting held in May 2015, several key steps were agreed:

- Utila will develop its own distinct brand
- Utila's brand will be aligned with the wider Bay Islands brand umbrella under development by IHT
- A website and (potentially) a mobile app will be developed specifically for Utila
- Destination stakeholders will cooperate in shared marketing efforts
- The DSC Marketing Sub-committee, in conjunction with the IHT, will coordinate the aforementioned steps.

In support of the destination marketing initiatives, and as part of Step 3 of the SDAA methodology, destination story-capture activities were conducted during two separate on-site visits. Interviews with key sustainable tourism advocates, community leaders, and civil society representatives were video-recorded. Additional destination footage was also captured on site visits throughout Utila. The footage was used to produce a short video by GoBlue Central America. The video clip will be circulated online through Go Blue Central America's website, and potentially through the IHT, Sustainable Travel International and other SDAA partners. The link to the video clip: <https://www.facebook.com/GoBlueCentralAmerica/videos/940526682677721/>.

Stakeholders agreed that the story capture activities could help to communicate:

- Sustainability challenges faced by the destination
- Steps being taken to address those challenges, including the formation of the destination stewardship council and the development of an action agenda
- Progress being made by the destination over time that will complement data gathered for destination monitoring system

The initial intended audience includes stakeholders in Utila, the other Bay Island destinations, and the general population of Honduras. The footage captured to date has also been submitted to Sustainable Travel International for inclusion in broader marketing initiatives for the SDAA at an international level.





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The SDAA will continue to support the IHT, GoBlue Central America and the DSC marketing sub-committee as they work to promote the destination in fresh and creative ways.

## 8. Conclusion

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Utila's first-ever Rapid Sustainable Destination Diagnostic and Action Agenda and the establishment of the Destination Stewardship Council represent important first steps for moving tourism the island towards a sustainable future. This 2015 destination sustainability snapshot of key sustainable destination management indicators is the most comprehensive evaluation of Utila's tourism sector conducted to date.

The value of this rapid destination sustainability diagnostic is to use its results to inform priorities, policy and local action. The Action Agenda developed by local stakeholders outlines agreed to priorities and quick-win projects for the next twelve to eighteen months. The establishment of the DSC will serve as the primary mechanism for ensuring implementation of the Action Agenda and sustaining inter-sectorial cooperation beyond the conclusion of the quick-win projects.

It is important to reiterate that tourism stakeholders felt hopeful that this project kicked off a process that has the potential to become a game-changing movement for shared planning and management of the destination under the stewardship of the IHT.

We applaud Utila for taking a leadership role in the pioneering group of tourism destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean that are committed to increase destination competitiveness by embedding sustainability into destination level strategies and day-to-day management.

## Annex 1 – RDD Analysis Matrix

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RDD\_Matrix\_Utila\_Final.xlsx (submitted under separate cover)