

## Chapter 5. Certification and Membership Programs

### Introduction

Certification programs are a great way for businesses to distinguish their environmental credibility among their competitors in the greater market for tourism. Some of these programs are national certifications according to tourism sector, while others are state or locally driven.

Membership programs allow businesses to show support for environmental and social goals, but do not necessarily rate their achievements. Membership programs benefit businesses because Web sites for these organizations often offer searchable databases that allow a customer to search for businesses in a geographic location that support goals of which they approve.

In addition to securing certifications and memberships, it is always a good idea for businesses to develop an overall environmental policy and flesh it out on their Web sites. This will help consumers see exactly what environmental practices tourism businesses are using to accomplish their goals.

Please note that the membership programs listed below are only those that are specifically targeted toward environmental and social responsibility.



*Bay of Fundy  
Recommended  
Experience Logo*



*On the Maine side, guides can join the Maine Association of Sea Kayak Guides and Instructors which has high standards of safety and stewardship. On the New Brunswick side, several sea kayak outfitters have qualified as Bay of Fundy Recommended Experiences. (www.Ardea-EcoExpeditions.com)*

### **Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership: A Local Model for the Whole Gulf of Maine?**

The Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership started in 1998 in an effort to bring two provincial governments, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, together for the first time to develop joint marketing opportunities. The goals included enhancing the visitor experience and producing better operators. According to Terri McCulloch, Manager of the Partnership, the idea was to unify the visitor experience on both sides of the vast Bay of Fundy, a coastal area of international significance.

Of the 1,000 or so businesses that operate in the Bay of Fundy region, about 70 have met the partnership's voluntary standard and received the label *Bay of Fundy Recommended Experience*, a dozen of them in the Fundy Isles/Charlotte County region. From a marketing perspective, the businesses are listed on Partnership brochures and the popular Web site [www.bayoffundytourism.com](http://www.bayoffundytourism.com), and they can use the *Recommended Experience* logo on any of their own materials, to help potential customers see how their business stands out from the crowd.

To become a *Recommended Experience*, two on-site business mentoring sessions result in product and marketing recommendations. Businesses seeking the designation also participate in an intensive five-day best practices tour of their fellow *Recommended Experiences* throughout the Bay of Fundy. According to McCulloch, even operators who grew up here are wowed by the experience of seeing it from a visitor's perspective. They make great connections with others in the tourism industry, and come home with a much richer perspective to share with their customers. To ensure long-term quality, the Partnership sends a "mystery shopper," (trained volunteer), to the business every few years, to quietly

evaluate everything from customer service to product delivery while posing as Joe tourist.

The Partnership's brochures state they are "dedicated to sustainable tourism and quality travel experiences in Canada's phenomenal Bay of Fundy." But McCulloch admits that the sustainability goal, now core to the Partnership, grew with time, and from participating businesses' commitment to the ecological importance of the Bay of Fundy. Not to mention that in today's tourism market, businesses with an honest commitment to sustainability have a marketing edge, something clearly not lost on the Partnership. It was time to walk the talk.

Enter a new collaboration with Dalhousie University and the Eco-Efficiency Centre out of Nova Scotia (<http://eco-efficiency.management.dal.ca>).

With participation of the Tourism Industry Associations of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the Partnership created the Eco-Business Program aimed at raising awareness about waste reduction, resource conservation and the benefits of making the right environmental choices. Several businesses in Charlotte County took advantage of the Partnership's new eco-efficiency evaluation in 2006. Evaluators walk with the business owner through all aspects of the business's infrastructure, from lighting to heating and everything in between, and compile an in depth report on the operation's eco-efficiency. The most important part of the report lies in the concrete recommendations made by the evaluators, including where they can find the necessary resources and quite literally **how to** green their operations.

It's no wonder that Parks Canada and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada recently awarded the Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership with the Award for Sustainable Tourism! As the program grows in the years to come, perhaps it can be expanded across the border and become an international model for sustainable tourism in the whole Gulf of Maine?

### Hotel Certification and Membership programs:

- 1) **Maine's Environmental Leader program** is a green lodging certification program that allows a self assessment of environmental practices. If the property accumulates 100 points that are verified by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection during a site visit, the property receives marketing advantage rewards including use of the Environmental Leader logo, special listings on the Maine Innkeeper's Association Web site and in brochures at the Maine State Visitor Centers, and extra advertising through public service announcements about the Environmental Leaders program, [www.maine.gov/dep/oia/p2/hotels.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dep/oia/p2/hotels.htm).
- 2) **Audubon International and Terra Choice Marketing** offers the Audubon Green Leaf<sup>™</sup> Program which includes two stages for hotel involvement: educating hotels and lodging establishments about efficiencies and marketing advantages; and a rating and certification program, [www.terrachoice.ca/hotelwebsite/indexcanada.htm](http://www.terrachoice.ca/hotelwebsite/indexcanada.htm).
- 3) **Green Seal** is an organization dedicated to promoting the use of certified sustainable products and practices. For the lodging industry, this includes use of less toxic products and furnishings, as well as practices that reduce waste and chemical use. Green Seal certifies lodging properties that meet their environmental standards, [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org).
- 4) **Green Globe 21** is a "worldwide benchmarking and certification program which facilitates sustainable travel and tourism for consumers, companies and communities." Businesses may receive Green Globe certification and can use the associated brand symbol after they have gone through the assessment program. In addition to the lodging industry, Green Globe also has standards for construction, communities, companies, and ecotourism operations, [www.greenglobe21.com](http://www.greenglobe21.com).
- 5) **The Green Hotels Association** is a membership organization that offers a catalogue of environmental products and tips for lodging establishments. Most notably, the Association offers standard cards and towel rack hangers for lodging establishments to encourage guest not to have their sheets and towels laundered every day. The site also has a searchable database of members for the public to search, [www.greenhotels.com](http://www.greenhotels.com).
- 6) **Ceres** has developed mechanisms for lodging establishments to communicate their environmental performance including surveys, guest request cards, and tips, [www.ceres.org/industryprograms/ghi.php](http://www.ceres.org/industryprograms/ghi.php).



**Restaurant Certification and Membership Programs:**

- 1) **The Green Restaurant Association** ([www.dinegreen.com](http://www.dinegreen.com)) is a non-profit organization aimed at making the restaurant industry more ecologically stable. It is a membership organization that offers research, consulting, education, marketing and community organizing services. It has environmental guidelines for restaurants related to energy efficiency and conservation; water efficiency and conservation; recycling and composting; sustainable food; pollution prevention; recycled, tree-free, biodegradable, and organic products; chlorine-free paper products; non-toxic cleaning and chemical products; green power; green building and construction; and, employee education. The Association also has a self-assessment quiz for restaurants to determine their environmental efficiencies. It has certified a number of environmentally friendly products, and lists them on the Web site. To become a member of the Green Restaurant Association, businesses must employ a comprehensive recycling program, commit to not using Styrofoam products, commit to completing four environmental steps per year within the environmental guidelines listed by the organization, and commit to accomplishing one additional environmental guideline after joining the association. The Association has a searchable database of green restaurants, coffee shops, pubs, bakeries, resorts, and schools/universities.
- 2) **The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners' Association** ([www.mofga.org](http://www.mofga.org)) certifies organic farms and growers. The Web site includes a searchable database for organic farms and products by county and has lists of resources for farms and growers that are working toward achieving organic certification. Additionally, the Maine Department of Agriculture ([www.getrealgetmaine.com/](http://www.getrealgetmaine.com/)) maintains searchable resource guides and listings of local farms, orchards, farmers markets, and community supported agriculture operations. The site also contains a searchable database aimed at wholesale buyers.
- 3) **Maine Department of Environmental Protection** maintains an online listing of Maine restaurants that support sustainable agriculture and local producers, [www.maine.gov/dep/oia/p2/restaurant.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dep/oia/p2/restaurant.htm).

**Outfitter and Marina Certifications and Membership Programs:**

- 1) **Guide licensing:** In Maine, any person who receives any form of remuneration for his services in accompanying or assisting any person in the fields, forests, or on the waters or ice within the jurisdiction of the state while hunting, fishing,

**Maine Environmental Leaders: Blue Hill Peninsula Goes Green**

Five businesses in the Blue Hill/Deer Isle/Stonington area have done what it takes to become "Certified Environmental Leaders" through Maine's Department of Environmental Protection. Pilgrim's Inn of Deer Isle, the Orland House B and B and Alamoosook Inn, both in Orland, the Blue Hill Inn, and the Brass Fox located in Penobscot are proud to display the flag on their website.

"We were already doing many of the things required for green certification," Gerry Freeman at the Brass Fox said. "The biggest step was to change over to 0% emission energy." Did it wind up costing him a lot each month? "No, because our usage went down so much with all the other changes that we made. Our bill remains about the same, but we can feel so much better about the world we are leaving to our children and grandchildren."

Simple changes for the inns included towel and sheets reuse cards, switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs, increasing composting, and using low phosphate cleaners. More extensive changes involved new heating systems and plumbing fixtures, buying Energy Star appliances, and locating eco-friendly replacements for standard supplies such as plastic kitchen containers.

All businesses have written and publicized an environmental policy and most of their websites talk about the steps that they are taking to help preserve and conserve the world around them. Alvion Kimball at Orland House Bed and Breakfast said that this program is "a snowball rolling the right way... it's an educational process, and the state has incentives that move us along." If Alvion and others have their way, it won't just be the Blue Hill Peninsula going green it will be the whole state.

trapping, boating, snowmobiling or camping at a primitive camping area, must be a licensed Maine Guide. For more information on becoming a Maine Guide, contact that Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, 207-287-8000 or [www.state.me.us/ifw/licreg/guide.htm](http://www.state.me.us/ifw/licreg/guide.htm). Maine Guides can also apply for “Master” certification. Information is also available through [www.maine-guides.com](http://www.maine-guides.com) an independent Web site. The Maine Guides Web site offers a searchable database for consumers to find an appropriate registered guide within the field of interest.

- 2) **The Leave No Trace (LNT)** organization ([www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)) is a nationally recognized program that provides guidelines and principles for participating in outdoor recreational activities with minimal environmental impact. The program is open to any individual to receive LNT certification at the Trainer and Master level. The Leave No Trace Center provides customized trainings for groups, organizations, and businesses involved in outdoor recreational activities or equipment sales, as well as on-line teaching tools. Several organizations in Maine provide trainings and can be contacted through the Leave No Trace organization. Members receive a 10% discount on merchandise and educational materials.



*Bird Watching on the Bold Coast of Maine  
(N. Springuel)*

- 3) **The National Association for Interpretation** ([www.interpret.com](http://www.interpret.com)) is an organization dedicated to furthering professional heritage interpretation. The organization offers certification programs for the Interpretive Planner, Interpretive Manager, Heritage Interpreter, Interpretive Trainer, Interpretive Guide, and Interpretive Host. There are multiple trainers in Maine and Canada. The Web site also contains resources, conference and event listings, and publications for interpreters.
- 4) **Maine Professional Guides Association (MPGA)**, started in 1979, is composed of Registered Maine Guides who strive to enhance the standards of the guiding industry. They are professional guides dedicated to promoting a quality, ethical and legal outdoor experience for all, [www.maine-guides.com/](http://www.maine-guides.com/).
- 5) **Maine Association of Sea Kayak Guides and Instructors (MASKGI)** is a non-profit organization of sea kayak guides, outfitters, and instructors dedicated to raising professional standards for guiding and teaching sea kayaking on the Maine coast and who embrace the highest of professional business practices and conduct. Members pledge to practice and promote safe and responsible sea kayaking along the coast of Maine, and practice and promote low impact travel and camping techniques, [www.maine-seakayakguides.com/](http://www.maine-seakayakguides.com/).
- 6) **Maine Wilderness Guides Association (MWGA)**, a new organization of guides and sporting camp owners founded in 2004, seeks to provide a unified voice for the profession of wilderness guiding while maintaining the highest ethical, educational, environmental standards, and to advocate for the preservation of remote woods and waters. Through cooperation with landowners and land managers, both public and private, MWGO is striving to establish a reputation of inclusiveness and integrity.

- 7) **ATV Maine (Alliance of Trail Vehicles of Maine)** ([www.maineatv.org](http://www.maineatv.org)) ATV Maine is a network of participating ATV riding clubs and organizations that promote responsible riding and the development and maintenance of trails to minimize environmental impact and protect water quality. Business members receive recognition in the organization’s newsletters and a plaque to display at their place of business.
- 8) **The Maine Snowmobile Association** ([www.mesnow.com](http://www.mesnow.com)) is an organization designed to promote snowmobiling as a safe, fun, winter outdoor sport. Many of the affiliated clubs also secure landowner permission for trails and take on the responsibility for trail maintenance, grooming, and bridge building.
- 9) **The Maine Marine Trade Association** ([www.mmtaonline.com/](http://www.mmtaonline.com/)) sponsors the Maine Clean Marina’s and Boatyards Program, which is a voluntary, "beyond compliance" program dedicated to promoting best management practices in boatyards and marinas. The Program focuses on five areas of concern for boatyards and marinas: Stormwater Management, Boat Maintenance & repair, Fueling Activities/Petroleum Control, Waste Recycling, Disposal & Storage and Boat Pumpouts & Sewage. Facilities are certified following a process that includes taking a pledge, completing a self-assessment and submitting to an independent verification.

**Overall Membership and Certification Programs:**

- 1) **The Maine Department of Environmental Protection offers the Maine Smart Tracks for Exceptional Performers and Upward Performers or “STEP-UP” program** (<http://www.maine.gov/dep/oc/stepup/index.htm>). The program offers three tracks for businesses to incorporate environmentally friendly practices into their business operations, become leaders in their fields, and then share their successes to the public and other businesses. The benefits to the business include recognition from the state, technical assistance from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and mentoring from other environmental leaders.
- 2) **The New Brunswick Environmental Leadership Award program:** Sponsored by the New Brunswick Department of the Environment since 2001, citizens may nominate New Brunswick

individuals, businesses, communities, or organizations that have “demonstrated outstanding commitment, contribution and leadership to the enhancement and/or protection of the environment” for the New Brunswick Environmental Leadership Award; designed to promote long-term, voluntary commitment to environmental stewardship in New Brunswick. The program recognizes six categories: Lifetime Achievement, Youth (individual, group, class or school), Individual Citizen, Business, Communities, Groups, and Organizations, and Media.. Available online in PDF format [www.gnb.ca/0009/0369/0006/EL\\_A-E.pdf](http://www.gnb.ca/0009/0369/0006/EL_A-E.pdf).



*Most whale watching businesses in the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine support strict standards to avoid disturbing marine mammals. Island Quest in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, runs trips focused on natural and human history. (N. Springuel)*

- 3) **Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility** ([www.mebsr.org](http://www.mebsr.org)) “is an association of businesses committed to creating a new business climate that recognizes that long-term, sustainable profitability is directly linked to acting in a socially responsible, ethical and compassionate manner.” The organization has a searchable database for best management practices according to industry type or behavior category and a searchable database of members. MEBSR also has a workplace self assessment tool to enable businesses to improve social conditions at the workplace.
- 4) **The Earthcheck** organization ([www.earthcheck.org](http://www.earthcheck.org)) has developed widely accepted standards and assessment tools for the following industries to use in assessing their environmental sustainability: accommodations (which is required to achieve Green Globe status), administration offices, adventure activities, airports, coach and bus companies, cruise vessels, ferries, greenhouses, manufacturing, communities and destinations, railroads, resorts, restaurants, transportation, vehicle rentals, and vineyards and wineries.
- 5) **Sustainable Tourism International** ([www.ecocertification.org](http://www.ecocertification.org)) has put together a Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program (STEP) with NSF International, a public health and safety corporation. The program establishes four steps for tourism providers to go through to achieve certification. This certification is open to tour operators, accommodations, attractions (such as museums), transportation service providers, and community-based tourism groups. Tourism providers who achieve eco-certification either by completing the self assessment or by being professionally audited can use the STEP logo in accordance with established policies.
- 6) **The International Ecotourism Society** ([www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org)) is a “global network of [tourism] industry practitioners, institutions and individuals helping to integrate environmental and socially responsible principles into practice.” The organization has facts and information about ecotourism, provides educational opportunities for members, lists expert speakers, and includes a searchable database of lodging, tour operators, and travel services that have signed a code of ethics related to responsible travel.
- 7) **The Environmental Choice Program in Canada** ([www.environmentalchoice.com/English/ECP%20Home/](http://www.environmentalchoice.com/English/ECP%20Home/)) certifies environmental leaders among products in over 300 categories. These products are given the EcoLogo™ trademark. The Web site describes the criteria and process for achieving the EcoLogo™ trademark.
- 8) **A Simple User’s Guide to Certification for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism**, by Amos Bien, the International Ecotourism Society, 2004. “This guide to certification is designed for those who have heard about certifying sustainable tourism and ecotourism and want to understand how it works or how to begin the process.” 24 page booklet can be ordered on the following Web site [www.ecotourism.org/](http://www.ecotourism.org/).