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# RAPID ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT SERENO DE LA MONTAÑA, ESPAILLAT, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



October 2011

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TECHNICAL REPORT

RAPID ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT  
AT SERENO DE LA MONTAÑA,  
ESPAILLAT, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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In cooperation with

Alianza Dominicana de Turismo Sostenible  
Consortio Dominicano de Competitividad Turística  
Asociación para el Desarrollo de la Provincia Espaillat Inc. - ADEPE

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**DISCLAIMER**

*The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.*



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the preliminary results of technical assistance to the Sereno de la Montaña ecotourism project. Fieldwork was conducted September 20-21, 2011 by a team lead by Jerry Bauer from the US Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF). Team members included Jerry Wylie, ecotourism consultant and kayak instructor trainer, and Bienvenida Bauer, IITF volunteer. The team conducted a SWOT rapid assessment of the project's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, hiked portions of the extensive trail system, explored Río Jamao by kayak and float tubes, visited a nearby waterfall, and took photographs for use in marketing materials.

This work was in support of the Dominican Sustainable Tourism Alliance (DSTA), the Dominican Tourism Consortium (Consortio Dominicano de Competitividad Turística - CDCT), a multi-year program funded by the US Agency for International Development, the Development Association of Espaillat (La Asociación para el Desarrollo de la Provincia Espaillat Inc. - ADEPE) and the Dominican Network for Rural Tourism. Logistical support was provided by ADEPE.







## 2.0 PROJECT LOCATION

The project area is located in the mountains 35 km south of Cabarete and 35 km north of Moca in the Río Jamao watershed. Depending on the weather and road conditions, this is a 45-minute drive from each town and slightly more than a 3-hour drive from Santo Domingo. The nearest rural communities are Palo Roto to the west and Los Bueyes to the east (Map 1).

## 3.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

Starting in 1994, ADEPE received funding from USAID to implement a project “Desarrollo Agroforestal de la Cuenca del Río” to help mitigate environmental damage caused by decades of deforestation in the Río Jamao watershed. This project was very successful and in 2006 ADEPE received funding from BID to continue supporting rural and economic development of the local communities under a project titled “Ecoturístico Familiar Sostenible”. This project provided assistance to construct an ecotourism complex consisting of two five-room cabins, a restaurant and a multipurpose area. In addition, local community members would receive training to provide quality tourism services. The lodge was located near the community of Los Bueyes, about 18 km from the community of Villa Trina. As part of the project, ADEPE would assist with the establishment and legalization of a small local business “Seren de la Montaña” to manage the ecotourism enterprise and eventually develop associated local enterprises to offer an assortment of ecotourism activities. The Sereno de la Montaña lodge began operations in December 2010.

ADEPE requested funding from the DSTA “Destinos” grant program to assist with the development of the ecotourism complex, specifically to provide solar energy to the lodge and to develop microenterprises for 1) kayaking, 2) float tubing, 3) horseback riding and 4) camping/hiking. These microenterprises were to benefit local communities by creating new employment opportunities, diversifying local economic opportunities, alter unsustainable land-use to mitigate deforestation and to create an environmental awareness to help local communities to live in harmony with their environment.

## 4.0 SWOT RAPID ANALYSIS

A rapid Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats assessment (SWOT) was conducted to help guide future site development and plans (Table 1).

**4.1. Strengths.** The centerpiece of the project is a newly-constructed lodge situated in a very attractive rural setting and at an elevation where nighttime temperatures are comfortable. These facilities are rustic but functional and provide the only ecolodge in this part of the Dominican Republic. The beautiful Río Jamao is a 10-minute drive from the lodge and there is a small attractive stream just below the lodge close enough to hear the sound of the water at night. These and other scenic attractions can be reached by a system of roads and trails. The lodge has trained guides and a good website in both Spanish and English.

**4.2. Weaknesses.** The deficiencies noted, while numerous, are typical of any start-up tourism program and most are easily corrected. The website, which is the only advertising for the resort, shows recreational activities that are not yet available, since there is currently no equipment for kayaking, float tubing, or camping. Also, the waterfall featured on the website, Salto Arroyo Grande, is on a tributary of Río Jamao, about a 45-minute drive from the lodge on a very bad secondary road, so we do not consider it a “local” attraction. Thus, the webpage is somewhat misleading.

Because of its remote location, access to the lodge is difficult and requires a high-clearance 4x4 vehicle for both the north-west (Palo Roto) and southern (from Moca via Villa Trina) access points. Although the lodge is only 3 km from the paved road at the Palo Roto access, the secondary dirt road is in poor condition, steep, and involves a tricky river crossing at Playa Paraiso where Río Blanco and Río Jamao merge. The road from the south is much better, but it is longer.



The poor roads and lack of buses also require community staff to walk or ride horses up to 20 km to get to work. Clients finding their way the first time are also hindered by limited roadway signage. Plus once they arrive, there are no signs to welcome or direct visitors to the office, nor are there posters, information, or signs to direct guests to trails or other nearby attractions.

The facilities generally have an unfinished look, with no decoration or color, and are very rustic, including no hot water, ceiling fans, TV or internet. In addition, food services and menu selection are limited, there is evidence of insects and rodents in sleeping rooms, and roosters wake clients at 4:30 in the morning. These issues can be minor or major inconveniences depending on an individual customer's reactions. They will bother some people but not others.

The trails are poorly designed, in bad condition and likely to erode. The major trail along Río Jamao is littered with debris, trash, and clothing from recent flooding.

Since there is only about 350 meters of river where kayaks can be used, a distance that can be paddled in 5 minutes or less, the use of kayaks is seriously limited. So this is more "playing in kayaks" than "kayaking" in the traditional sense.

Currently, there is no an emergency contingency or rescue plan and food services are very basic.

**4.3. Opportunities.** The project has tremendous potential for attracting local and international visitors, with Río Jamao as the primary attraction. However, because kayaking is limited, float tubing will probably be the most popular river activity. We believe the extensive trail system for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking will be an important but secondary attraction. The potential for camping is unclear, but could be popular with local school and church groups.

Two new areas that the lodge may want to explore are trails training and agritourism. It could become a regional or national training center for trails design and construction, using its facilities to house and feed students and working on their trails network. It could also take advantage of local farms to develop educational tours involving honey production, cheese-making, and citrus. In addition, local crops could be grown on-site to supplement the lodge's menu and educate city-dwellers and visitors from northern climates.

Another potential market is ATV tours from the resort areas on the north coast. Currently some of these groups are visiting the nearby waterfall at Salto Arroyo Grande. As recreational equipment becomes available, they might also visit Río Jamao for floating/kayaking and even use the resort to hike the short trail or as a lunch stop. This could make a nice addition to the current tour and support local communities. A marketing effort will need to be made by the community to negotiate these concepts into a tour.

**4.4. Threats.** There are several potential issues that could adversely affect the project. The most obvious and threatening to infrastructure and personal safety is flash flooding. The debris we observed scattered along the riverbank, more than 10 feet above the normal water line, clearly demonstrate that flooding can disrupt water sports, destroy trails and equipment, and endanger the lives of visitors. It can also affect the quality of the water and scenery along this attractive waterway. The long-term effects of continued deforestation in the watershed will only magnify these problems. The storms that produce these floods can also damage the roadway and prevent visitors from reaching the lodge.

Crowding is certainly not an issue now, but it could become a problem in the future, especially if this area becomes popular with 4x4 tours from coastal resort areas. Large, noisy groups could cause conflicts with other users.

Accidents are always a threat with water-related sports. This is particularly true with moving water, even on shallow, gentle rivers such as Río Jamao. Although kayaking should be prohibited in areas with rapids, people will make mistakes, push their limits, and break the rules. One major concern is that kayakers will be tempted to go downstream to play in the rapids, where they could capsize and have accidents. In addition, boats can be damaged, paddles lost, and extra effort will be required to return the equipment upstream. Kayaks not securely locked can also be stolen.



Table I. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) assessment.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functioning basic lodge facilities</li> <li>• Attractive rural setting</li> <li>• Río Jamao nearby</li> <li>• Variety of trails</li> <li>• Small stream with falls below lodge</li> <li>• Local guides available</li> <li>• Good website</li> <li>• Lack of competition</li> <li>• Community support</li> <li>• Availability of local fruits &amp; vegetables</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor road condition and difficult access</li> <li>• Limited roadway signage</li> <li>• Rustic facilities</li> <li>• Limited food services</li> <li>• No informational or interpretive signs</li> <li>• Limited advertising</li> <li>• Poor trail design and maintenance</li> <li>• No recreational equipment</li> <li>• No camping facilities</li> <li>• Guides need more training</li> <li>• Limited communications</li> <li>• Flood debris and trash along river bank</li> <li>• Noisy roosters in the morning</li> <li>• Salto Arroyo Grande waterfall is not a local attraction</li> <li>• Limited kayaking on the river</li> <li>• No guide uniforms</li> <li>• Difficulties for search and rescue in case of accidents</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water sports (kayaking, tubing, swimming)</li> <li>• Hiking and mountain biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Camping</li> <li>• Agritourism</li> <li>• Center of excellence for trail design &amp; construction</li> <li>• Summer camp for local school groups</li> <li>• Use of local fruits and vegetables for meals</li> <li>• Develop home gardens for restaurant produce</li> <li>• Offer Río Jamao visit and/or lunch at the lodge for current ATV tours</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damage and accidents due to flash flooding</li> <li>• River water contamination</li> <li>• Road access reduced by storms</li> <li>• Deforestation upstream</li> <li>• Overuse and crowding</li> <li>• Water-related accidents</li> <li>• Food-borne illnesses</li> <li>• Theft of kayaks</li> </ul>



## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following short- and long-term actions are recommended to respond to issues summarized in the section above.

**5.1. Marketing.** The strengths identified, especially the beautiful rural setting and Río Jamao, should be featured in a coordinated marketing effort. These promotional activities should be based on a market positioning statement that answers the following questions:

- Who are you?
- What business are you in?
- Who are your customers?
- What are their special needs?
- Who is your competition?
- What makes you different?
- Who are your potential partners?
- What unique benefits do you deliver?

An example of a market position statement developed for a national park in Panama is presented in Annex C. Based on a statement such as this, a coordinated set of marketing materials should be developed that accurately reflect the lodge, its ecotourism activities and potential clientele. These can include rack cards, multi-media programs using video and still images, posters, and large banners, as well as information and digital photos for free advertising on websites such as Google Earth, Yahoo Maps, Trip Advisor, and Wikitravel. A set of high-quality, high-resolution digital photos should be obtained as soon as possible for the development of these materials. Photos should show families enjoying all the area's attractions and potential recreational activities, as well as the lodge facilities. (A set of about 25 high-resolution photos taken during this assessment was given to ADEPE).

However, we do not recommend using the Salto Arroyo Grande in any marketing. This attraction is not nearby and not located on the Río Jamao, so its use in promoting the lodge is misleading. Also, the current trail and stairs to this waterfall are not well constructed and are very dangerous, waiting for an accident to happen.

Marketing efforts should accurately reflect the lodge's strengths and weaknesses. However, negatives can be turned into positives. For example, the remoteness means "no crowds", limited food selections is "family-style dining," no TV or internet means "relax and leave the modern world behind", and rustic facilities can be promoted as "back to nature" or "4-star camping without the tent."

Souvenirs such as hats, T-shirts and postcards with a logo can also help promote the lodge.

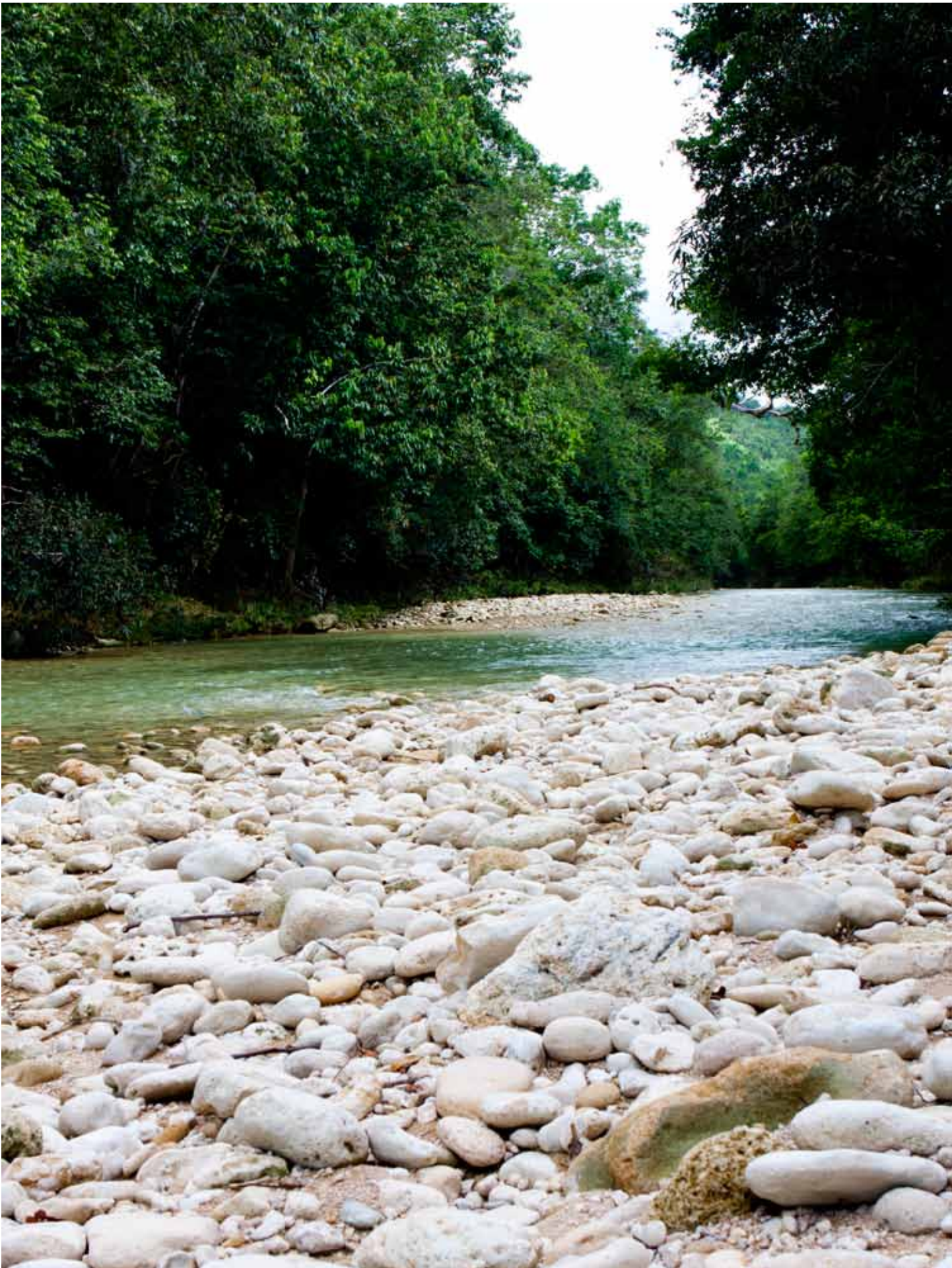
**5.2. Water Recreation.** Water recreation consists of floating a small portion on the Río Jamao with kayaks, float tubing and general water play and swimming (Map 3).

There are two areas where kayaking is feasible: The 350-meter section upstream from the proposed camping area and at La Playita, a large quiet pool 350 meters downstream. However, if taken downstream, boats would have to be pulled up through a small rapids or carried back along the trail. Kayaks are not recommended for use below La Playita except under strict supervision and at suitable water levels.

Although tubers could hike upstream for a longer trip, the best place to start is at the camping area. This would take them down through an easy rapid and into the beautiful pool at La Playita, where they could relax and swim. From there, they have the option of continuing downstream for nearly 1 km through a series of rapids and pools backed by steep cliffs. With a stop at Barranca Blanca pool for a swim, this would take 30-45 minutes. At the end, they could either walk 600 meters back upstream to the camping area, or hike up a steep trail to the resort, a slightly shorter distance.

Suitable locations for rope swings may be possible at La Playita and Barranca Blanca where large trees overhang deep pools. However, these should be inspected often and supervised by guides to avoid accidents.

Providing small nets would allow visitors the option to try catching freshwater shrimp that live under the rocks in the river.





However, care should be taken to warn visitors of the dangers of flash flooding, which could cause the river to rise suddenly, sweeping them downstream or trapping them on the other side of the river. Signs warning of flash flooding should be placed at client entry points to the river. We also recommend an emergency evacuation plan be developed.

A staging area for river activities should be established near the proposed camp site and include parking, bathroom, storage for kayaks and float tubes, a first aid station, and an informational kiosk with a map, regulations, and safety information for visitors.

**5.3. Recreational and Safety Equipment.** The significant potential for recreation on Río Jamao can only be achieved if proper equipment is available. Playing on the river will be the primary attraction. We recommend the purchase of two or three double kayaks, one to two single kayaks, and a minimum of 20 float tubes along with 35 life jackets (US Coast Guard approved, Type III) in various sizes. Since proper fit is critical for safety, extra life jackets are needed for size selection and to cover losses and damage. Also, when advertising water sports, kayaking should be presented as “family fun-in-the-water” rather than “river kayaking.” Specific recommendations for kayaks and float tubes are presented in Annex A.

In addition, we recommend that safety equipment be available and that the guides receive lifeguard and safety training. (This could be done by the local Red Cross). Annex B contains a list of water safety equipment. The guides should have this equipment readily available at all times.

In order to test the level of interest in mountain biking, two or three mountain bikes and helmets should be purchased. These could perhaps also be used for transportation by guides who have to travel long distances from their homes.

Since it is not clear how much interest there is in camping, we do not have any recommendation for camping equipment at this time.

**5.4. Signage and Sign Plan.** Proper signage is urgently needed along the roadways leading to the resort, at the entrance, and throughout the property to provide direction and information for visitors. Signs and route markers are also needed for all trails. In addition, interpretive signs and materials should be developed to explain the area’s natural resources and connect visitors to this special area. In order to design these signs, a comprehensive plan should first be developed. This plan will develop a central interpretive theme or message that will serve as the organizing principle and identify specific interpretive and management objectives.

**5.5. Trails and Trails Workshop.** The poor condition of the trails requires immediate attention to avoid environmental damage and accidents. The best way to improve these trails is to organize a week-long workshop on trail design and construction and host it at the lodge. The trainees can then fix problems with existing trails, some within 100 yards of the dining hall, as well design and build new trails.

**5.6. Agritourism.** Farm-based products and activities should be developed as part of the community-based tourism program at Sereno de la Montaña. This could include tours of local orchards and farms, participating in traditional farm activities, and cooking classes. This would not only provide income for locals, but expand the range of recreational activities for visitors. In addition, local farm products could be used in the lodge restaurant and offered for sale as souvenirs. Local crops can also be grown on the property and interpreted for visitors.

**5.7. Food Services.** Enjoying food, especially locally-produced foods and traditional dishes, is an important part of the visitor experience and help define an area’s unique “sense of place.” But a poorly prepared meal, or even worse –food poisoning—can quickly ruin a trip. Therefore, it is critical that the restaurant operate at the highest level of sanitation and professionalism at all steps in food preparation from “farm to fork.” Therefore, the restaurant staff should be trained and evaluated for menu planning, cooking techniques, serving and table preparation, and perhaps most importantly, sanitation—including cleaning, refrigeration proper heating/cooling, storage, and clean up.

**5.8. Local Art.** Locally-produced art and photographs of local scenery could be used to decorate bare walls at Sereno de la Montaña. The lodge could offer free lodging to artists and photographers in exchange for their work and also serve as an art gallery by selling items.

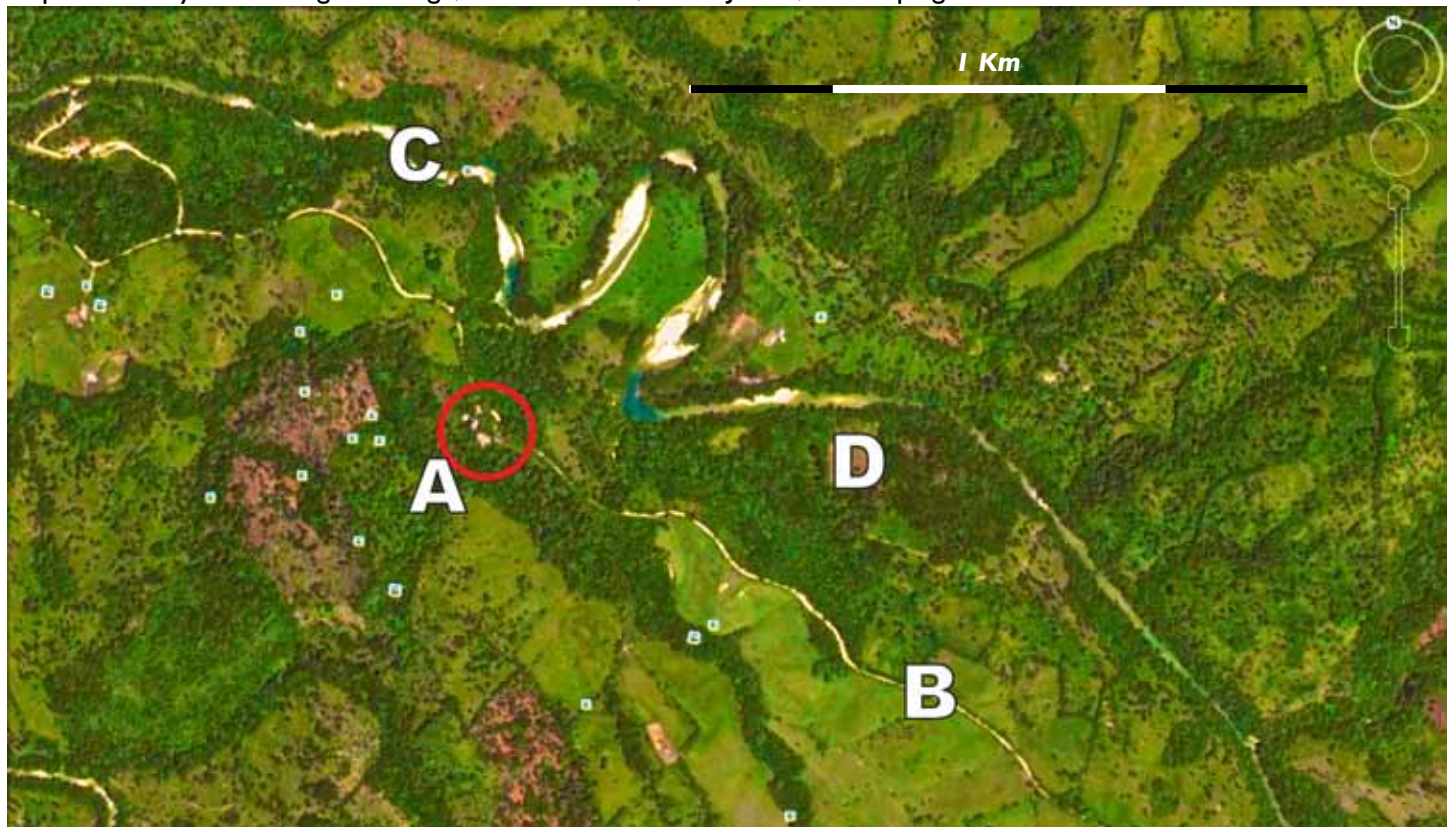


# MAPS

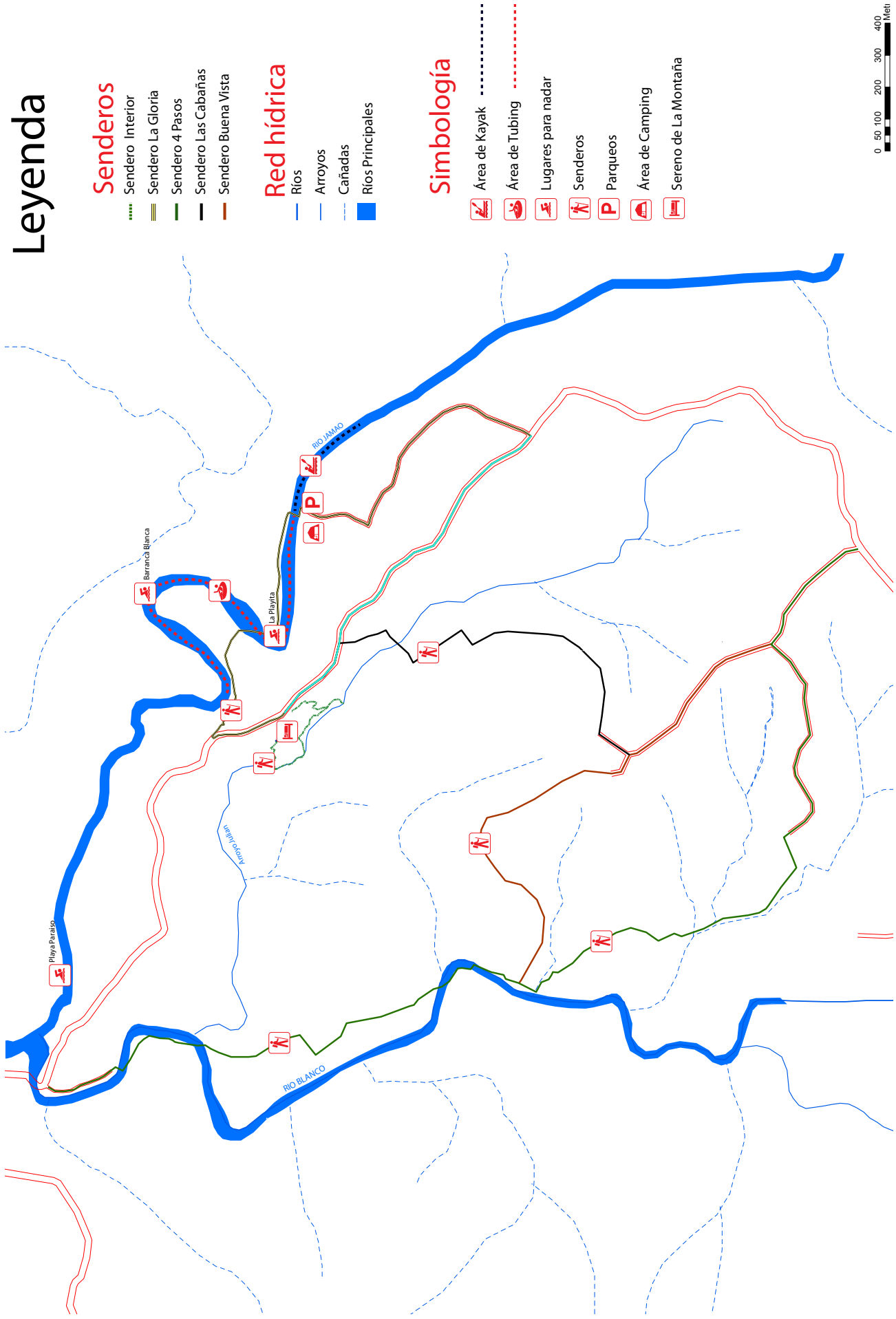
Map 1 – Location of the project area.



Map 2 – Vicinity of the lodge. A-Lodge, B-Access road, C-Río Jamao, D-Camping area.



Map 3 – Trails, roads and tourism attractions in the vicinity of the lodge.





# PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1 - Roadside signage directing visitors to the lodge is limited and needs to be upgraded.



Photo 4 – One of the two lodge buildings with sleeping rooms.



Photo 2 – The reception office and parking area need signs to welcome and direct arrivals.



Photo 5 – The sleeping rooms are rustic and undecorated but comfortable.



Photo 3 – The lodge dining room and kitchen.



Photo 6 – These empty walls in the dining hall are excellent locations for photographs, maps, and local information.





Photo 7 – Many of the hiking trails surrounding the lodge are on existing dirt roads, but some are simple footpaths like this which are steep and poorly constructed.



Photo 10 – Kayaks such as this are suitable for casual water play on the quiet sections of Río Jamao.



Photo 8 – The small stream below the lodge has many attractive pools and interesting dripstone features.



Photo 11 – Tubing will be the most popular way to enjoy Río Jamao.



Photo 9 – The area proposed for camping on Río Jamao needs considerable work.



Photo 12 – The large pool at La Playita is an excellent place for swimming, tubing, and perhaps kayaking.



Photo 13 – Río Jamao below La Playita is very scenic and has several good rapids for tubing.



Photo 14 - The deep pool at Barranca Blanca has a large overhanging tree that is a perfect location for a rope swing.



Photo 15 - Salto Arroyo Grande is a 45-minute drive from the lodge.

## ANNEX A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FLOAT TUBES AND KAYAKS

### Kayaking

Since kayaking on the Río Jamao will be primarily a casual play activity, the type of kayaks is not critical. Any plastic sit-on-top kayak will be adequate for use in the planned kayak area. Double kayaks have seating for one or two paddlers. Optional seats for back support are not needed since limited time will be spent in the boats. Shorter kayaks, 8-12 feet in length, are much easier to transport and carry.

We recommend that two or three double kayaks and one to two single kayaks purchased, along with suitable life vest (US Coast Guard approved, Type III) in various sizes. One single kayak should always be available for the guides to supervise tourists and for emergency needs.

A good double kayak option is the Malibu Two made by Ocean Kayaks. At 12 feet long and 58 pounds, it is the shortest and lightest of the double kayaks and has a retail price of US\$599. A cheaper alternative would be a Spitfire single kayak made by Emotion Kayaks which is 8 feet long, 38 pounds, and sells for US\$155 wholesale, or the Emotion Tandemonium double kayak which is 13 ½ feet long, 67 pounds, and US\$485 wholesale.

We believe that the Emotion Spitfire, single-seat kayaks are available on the local market in Santo Domingo.

Photo A2 - Examples of double Kayaks (Seats not recommended). A-Malibu Two by Ocean Kayak, B- Tandemonium by Emotion Kayaks.

A



B



Table A1 gives specifications for nineteen sit-on-top plastic kayaks from three companies.

Table A1. Kayak Specification Summary.

BRAND/MODEL	Length	Width	Weight	EXTRAS	PRICE
<b>Company: OCEAN KAYAKS</b>					
1) Frenzy	9'	31"	43	Seat extra	\$429R
2) Big Yak	9' 8"	34"	47	Seat extra	\$499R
3) Caper	11'	31"	45	Seat and back rest, front hatch	\$749
4) Scrambler II	11' 6.5"	29.5"	49	Seat extra	\$499R
5) Prowler IIT Angler	11' 5"	30.5"	54	Adjustable foot pegs Bow hatch, tank well, Perimeter lines	\$899R
6) 7) Prowler I3 Angler	13' 4"	28"	54	Bow hatch, small hatch, seat extra, perimeter lines	\$799R
7) Prowler I3T Angler	13' 6"	29.5"	56	Adjustable foot pegs Bow hatch, tank well, Perimeter lines	\$949R
8) Malibu Two double	12'	34"	58	Seats extra	\$599R
9) Malibu Two XL double	13' 4"	34"	61	Small child fits in center, seat & back rest	\$879R
10) Zest Two EXP double	16' 4"	30.5"	70	Seats extra	\$899R
<b>Company: WILDERNESS SYSTEMS KAYAKS</b>					
11) Tarpon 100	10'	30.5"	64	Adjustable foot pegs Two small hatches Nice seat & back	\$699R
12) Tarpon 120	12' 3"	30"	64	Same as 100 plus larger front hatch	\$879R
13) Tarpon 130T double	13'	34"	69	Flip seat back rest, 2 small hatches	\$849R
14) Tarpon 140	14'	28"	68	Adjustable foot pegs 2 hatches, nice seat and back	\$979R
<b>Company: EMOTION KAYAKS</b>					
15) Spitfire	8'	30"	38	Flip back rest	\$155W
16) Temptation	10' 3"	30"	44	Flip back rest, front hatch	\$312W
17) Mojo	12' 4"	32"	52	Adjustable foot pegs Front hatch, flip back rest	\$435W
18) Tandemonium double	13' 7"	36"	67	Canvas seat & back Small hatch	\$485W
19) Grand Slam	14' 5"	30"	69	Adjustable foot pegs Canvas seat & back Front hatch	\$525W

R = retail cost; W = wholesale cost

## Float Tubes

As suggested by highly-successful commercial tubing operations on the Caves Branch River of Belize, there are two basic options for float tubes: simple rubber inner tubes or fancier vinyl float tubes designed specifically for rivers, with covers to protect them from sharp rocks (Vinyl tubes without covers are not suitable for shallow, rocky streams such as Río Jamao). The vinyl tubes can also come with a mesh covering for the bottom of the opening to support small children. The rubber inner tubes can also be fitted with seats to cover the larger openings and keep floaters well above rocky river beds.

Table A2 summarizes the pros and cons for each type of tube. Photos A1-A3 show examples of different tubes.

Table A2. Float Tube Specification Summary.

TYPE OF FLOAT TUBE	PROS	CONS
Rubber inner tube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• Locally available?</li> <li>• Very durable</li> <li>• Easily repaired</li> <li>• Optional seats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less flotation</li> <li>• No handles for support in rapids or for carrying</li> <li>• Heavier</li> <li>• Metal valve can poke user</li> </ul>
Plastic float tube with cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed for river tubing</li> <li>• Handles for support/carrying</li> <li>• Maximum flotation</li> <li>• Optional cover for opening</li> <li>• Plastic valve</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately expensive</li> </ul>

One big difference is that the vinyl float tubes are larger, provide more flotation and have a smaller opening, so they are more stable, safer and give a higher, more comfortable ride, especially in low water. However, smaller sizes are recommended for children so that they can reach the water to paddle with their hands. They also have handles for holding on in rough water and carrying.

Tube Pro ([www.tubeproinc.com](http://www.tubeproinc.com)) manufactures both rubber tubes and vinyl float tubes with protective covers in two sizes: TP44 with a 110 cm diameter and 35 cm opening, and the TP48 with a 120 cm diameter and 40 cm opening. Both have a retail price of US\$119. The Pro Tube rubber inner tubes, which are specifically designed for river use, also come in two sizes: 103 to 110 cm in diameter with a 50 cm opening, and a smaller 78-83 cm diameter tube (center opening size not specified) and sell for US\$33-35 retail. Optional tube seats for these rubber inner tubes, which we recommend, are US\$15.

A slightly less expensive vinyl tube is offered by Northwest River Supply ([www.nrsweb.com](http://www.nrsweb.com)). The NRS Wild Rivers tube is 114 cm in diameter with a 46 cm opening and sells for US\$105 or US\$115 with a mesh floor. Their protective shell is thicker than Tube Pro's and covers the entire tube. They also sell foot pumps for US\$35 and commercial-grade hand pumps for US\$200.

Although more expensive, we recommend the vinyl float tube with covers because they are lighter, larger, and have handles for carrying and holding on in rapids.

Photo A1 – Types of float tubes: A. NRS Wild River Tube with mesh floor; B. Tube Pro TP48 with protective cover; C. Tube Pro 44” (110 cm) rubber inner tube with optional seat.



A



B



C



Photo A2 – Tourists preparing to use vinyl float tubes at Cave Branch River, Belize. Note the blue protective coverings and carrying handles.



Photo A3 – Tourists at Cave Branch River, Belize with rubber inner tubes. Note the difference in the size of the central openings from the photo above.

## ANNEX B. SAFETY AND RESCUE EQUIPMENT FOR RIVER ACTIVITIES

Safety of the visitors and guides is of utmost importance. The operators must assure the safety of the visitors and have safety and rescue equipment readily available at all times in case of an accident. This should consist of, as a minimum, the following items (Figures B1-B6). This equipment is available at many sources that sell lifeguard equipment such as [www.lifeguardstoreusa.com](http://www.lifeguardstoreusa.com).

- 1) Rescue Tube - A 40 or 50 inch red color Rescue Tube with 'GUARD' written on it, with a durable strap running through the entire tube and a cutaway feature making for a tight and comfortable arm rest while guarding. Cost about \$40 each.
- 2) Rescue Can - The rescue can should be red color, durable, light weight, and made from hard plastic. It should have a heavy duty line and nylon shoulder strap with hook and loop closures and hand grips. Cost about \$60 each.
- 3) Lifeguard Fanny Pack - Made of durable, tear resistant, nylon construction, including a heavy-duty adjustable waist strap and 2 or 3 compartments. This pack can be used by the guides to carry emergency first aid supplies. Cost about \$6 each.
- 4) Emergency Whistle – High quality, red or yellow color with ability to be heard over water and long distances. The whistle should have a lanyard strap for the guide to put it around his neck. Cost about \$5 each.
- 5) Trauma Bag (First Aid Kit) - A red color, strong, durable, multi-pocket bag with shoulder strap. This bag should have first aid/emergency supplies that cannot be carried by all the guides at all times. It should be close to the water activities so it is available when needed. Cost about \$50 each.
- 6) Stokes litter – The stokes litter (ridged or folding) is a mobile transportation device designed to safely transport non-ambulatory personnel from the site of an accident to a safe location where emergency evacuation can take place. Expensive, \$400-\$500.
- 7) Walkie Talkies - Walkie talkies are an easy and economical means for communications between the lodge and the guides in the field. They have a range up to 15-20 km. Cost is about \$30-\$40/pair.

Figure B1. Rescue Tube



Figure B2. Rescue Can





Figure B3. Lifeguard Fanny Pack.



Figure B4. Emergency Whistle



Figure B5. Trauma Bag



Figure B6. Stokes Litter

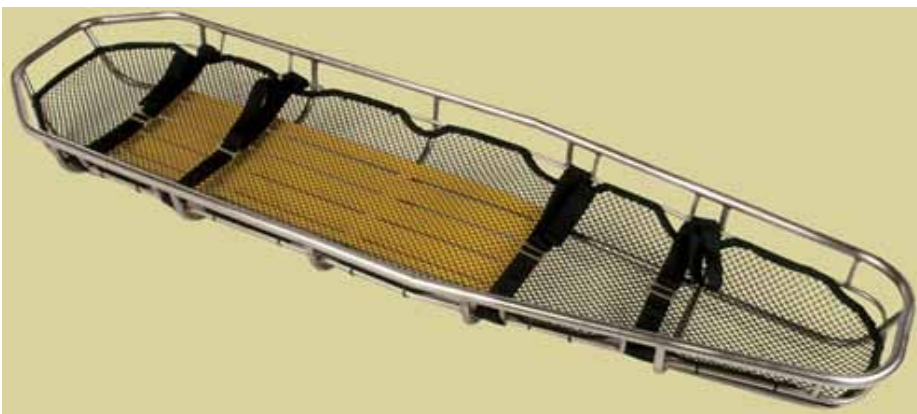


Figure B7. Walkie Talkies



## **ANNEX C. EXAMPLE OF A MARKET POSITIONING STATEMENT**

A Market Position Statement is a useful business tool that defines how you wish to be perceived. It forms the core of all marketing efforts and should address the following questions (modified from Beckwith 1997):

- Who are you?
- What business are you in?
- Who are your customers?
- What are the special needs of your customers?
- Who are your potential partners?
- Who is your competition?
- What makes you different?
- What unique benefits do you deliver?

An illustrative example is provided below from a national park in Panama (Wylie 2001). Although it is consistent with the park's legal mandates for environmental protection, it focuses on visitors, their needs, and what unique benefits the park provides to them as consumers of experiences. It reflects, for example, that the park is in the outdoor recreation, education and entertainment business (sometimes referred to as "edutainment.") In addition, it recognizes that it is the only national park in Panama with a World Heritage Site. Such a label carries considerable weight, and is certainly a big part of the reason why a cruise ship tourist, with only a few hours to spend, would want to visit.

*The San Lorenzo Protected Area, consisting of both the resource base and the public agencies and community partners responsible for its protection and management, is in the business of conserving world-class natural and cultural resources, providing recreation and educational opportunities to the visiting public, and providing sustainable, community-based tourism as a tool for conservation and economic development for local residents and adjacent communities.*

*Special needs of visitors include access to resources, need for high-quality information, and convenient access due to time constraints. Cruise ship tourists, in particular, have very limited time and they may prefer instead to invest it in tours that are shorter and more predictable. Similar Spanish Colonial ruins are also available at nearby Portobello.*

*For local visitors, this area offers some of the only access to public beaches anywhere near Colon. On a much more limited scale, opportunities for observing wildlife are available closer to Colon at the Lake Gatun Recreation Area. Flatwater kayaking on a large, undeveloped river can only be done within the SLPA; the closest alternative is the section of the Chagres River near Gamboa, which is a much tamer experience.*

*In sum, the SLPA offers the best chance of any protected area in Panama of seeing a wide range of wildlife, having access to the Caribbean coast, and at the same time visiting a World Heritage Site. And although outside the park boundaries, it is also easy to see the Gatun Locks during the same visit, which is unique in having all three locks at a single location and in providing visitors at closer and better view of the ships.*

### **References**

Beckwith, Harry. 1997.

*Selling the Invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing.* Warner Books, N.Y.

Wylie, Jerry. 2001. *Developing a Tourism Image for the San Lorenzo Protected Area, Panama.* Report prepared by the US Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry for the USAID/Panama in cooperation with the Panamanian Center for Research and Social Action (CEASPA).