



SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL  
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# Nature's Harmony Ecolodge

**STEP Documentation  
Required Criteria  
One Star Certification**

January 2011





## Introduction

This document will provide the key policy and procedural documents to satisfy the required criteria of the STEP standard for Nature's Harmony Ecolodge. Nature's Harmony is pursuing a One-Star certification under the STEP Standard.

Nature's Harmony is situated on 485 acres of undisturbed land and is surrounded by an abundance of nature and wildlife. Guests can wander almost infinite spaces and enjoy spectacular views of the Laurentian Mountains. In this beautiful secluded setting, one can only expect life to slow down to a natural rhythm.



Nature's Harmony Ecolodge features a beautiful log home with two guest rooms and two secluded log cabins, each with the comforts of home but without the environmental impact. We intend to use our home as a demonstration model for living off-the-grid. Our guests can enjoy their stay while learning about environmental sustainability and energy conservation.

The focus of Nature's Harmony is to bring people of all ages and cultures back to nature to enjoy life's simple pleasures – whether it is reading a book in a hammock, watching the sunrise over the Laurentian Mountains, singing around a campfire or enjoying the abundance of outdoor activities right at our door step. It is a place to relax and rejuvenate, whether it is spending time in solitude, enjoying outdoor activity or socializing in good company.



**Jen & Tzach Elnekave**





### 1.1.1 Business Plan

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge has a formal Business Plan that is a living document. The Business Plan is a key document identifying our goals and objectives. Specifically, the plan includes both a vision and mission statement and a concise suite of business goals. These components of the plan are documented below.

#### Vision Statement

*To become a premiere eco-destination in Ontario by fostering a commitment to sustainable living practices, respecting the land and encouraging environmental responsibility through experiential learning.*

#### Mission Statement

*Our mission is to provide our guests with an opportunity to slow down, connect with nature and enjoy life's simple pleasures while demonstrating the values of sustainable tourism and instilling an enthusiasm towards greater sustainability.*

#### Core Values

- *Environmental Responsibility*
- *Social Responsibility*
- *Foster Valued Experiential Learning*
- *Commitment to Continual Improvement*
- *Quality Customer Service*
- *Cooperative Spirit Among Peers*

#### Business Goals

##### *Outdoor Product*

Our outdoor product consists of everything that will get people outside to enjoy the wilderness. We plan to continually develop our trail system – building new trails and improving the existing trail system, which are currently used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and kicksledding. We also strive to provide a comprehensive outdoor product combined with unique experiences.

In winter 2011, we have introduced kicksledding, a traditional Scandinavian sport, which is relatively new to North America. This spring, we are planning to introduce a unique hiking experience, whereby designated trails will lead to an exclusive spot for guests to experience something creative and meaningful. It's hiking with a purpose. Examples will include:

- 1) High tea – at this spectacular viewpoint, everything will be available to make and enjoy a variety of organic teas.





- 2) Moments of inspiration – in this location, materials will be available for guests to write a letter to themselves. The letter may include inspirational thoughts, goals for the future, quotes, poetry – whatever the person feels compelled to write. A mailbox will be at this wilderness location and guests will be asked to mail themselves a letter (including the date of writing on the outside). In a year from that date, we will mail the letter back to the guest.
- 3) Music in the valley – in this beautiful location, a barrel will be available with a variety of simple instruments for people to feel the rhythm of nature.
- 4) Swinging free – this hike will lead to a couple of swings in the wilderness for guests to enjoy the simple pleasure of swinging freely while reflecting and taking in breath taking scenery.
- 5) Buried treasures – guests will receive a ‘buried treasures’ list and hike to a sand pit area to have fun searching for all the treasures on the list. When they are done, they will be asked to bury everything again for the next guests to find.

Another outdoor product we are trying to improve and expand upon is our water access and swimming options. Because our swimming access on Bay’s Bay is on provincial land, we are limited in what we can do to improve this area. To make this swimming experience more enjoyable, we would like to introduce a ‘floating on the Bay’ option, whereby swimming tubes would be available for our guests to float and relax on the water. As well, we would like to clear trails along Bang’s Creek on our property and create a couple swimming holes in specific spots along the creek. Finally, there is a pond close to the main lodge that we are currently doing research on to convert to a natural swimming pool. We have applied for a grant through the Ministry of Natural Resources under the Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program to help facilitate this project.

### *Green/ Sustainability Initiatives*

The overarching essence of our business is to be able to incorporate ‘green’ initiatives with a desire to make a difference. Being off-the-grid, we are faced with many challenges/obstacles in our development; however, each of these obstacles presents an opportunity to learn and find a sustainable solution.

One example of overcoming these challenges was in the construction of our eco-outdoor showers. We needed to find a solution to provide showers for a large group of people without placing excessive demand on our own infrastructure. We successfully constructed artistic showers that collect rain water from the roof which is then gravity fed in to the showers. In the warmer days, the water is heated by passive heating from the sun and on the colder days, a heating system with fire has been integrated in to the design. As well, we have built three composting toilets as a more sustainable alternative to the ‘traditional’ outhouse. We are able to collect human waste and will use this compost in our flower gardens.





As we expand our business, we are continually looking for sustainable options – whether it is going back to basics or using new technology. As we find and develop more sustainable options, we will be able to provide experiential learning examples for our guests.

Here is a list of some of the ‘green’ projects on our list:

- Converting a pond into a natural swimming pool
- Construction of a cob oven
- Construction of a solar oven
- Building an in-ground cellar which will harvest ice from the winter
- Integrating a grey water system
- Expanding our garden to grow our own produce
- Constructing a greenhouse, which will also be operational in the winter
- Building a manual washing machine (operated with a bike)
- Conversion of diesel vehicles to operate on used cooking oil

The list of projects will continue to expand. Our intention is that as we expand our ‘green’ product initiatives, this will become one of the main attractions for people finding their way to Nature’s Harmony. As well, we plan to continue offering off-the-grid tours to educate and share our own personal experiences.

#### *Accommodation Expansion*

We have reached the point in our business where we feel it is time for expansion. Our ultimate goal for the future is to be able to offer a variety of simple cabins, each built with a different sustainable building technique. We want to be able to showcase and educate people on the different building styles available, while being able to accommodate our guests in these unique buildings. Some of the building styles will include: straw bale, cordwood, adobe, recycled tires, tree cabin, etc. and would incorporate a variety of alternative roof options (i.e. living roof).

The availability of additional accommodation will enable us to start hosting a variety of workshops and enable us to generate additional revenues to invest back in to our business.

We believe that the new cabin construction along with the ‘green’ initiatives presented above will help to establish Nature’s Harmony as a unique and key player in the green accommodation and ecotourism market.

#### *Event Site*


Our goal in hosting events is to be able to expand our marketing reach, showcase our product offerings, educate people on our green initiatives and celebrate nature. As well, we would like to generate additional revenue to invest back in our business.





Ideally, we would like to host four to five events a year. So far we have partnered with the Lost in the Rocks to host this established bike race. We have launched the Run Off-the-Grid 25/50 km trail run, which is being promoted as the race with the smallest footprint. Next winter (2012) we are planning to launch the first year for a snowshoe orienteering race. And finally, we are currently in discussions with the 'River and Sky' music festival to possibly partner with them as they are looking for a new venue for this event. One of the primary reasons that 'River and Sky' is attracted to our location is because of our focus on sustainability.

### 1.2.1 Policy, Metrics and Transparency



# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge was founded with sustainability at its core. We are committed to an ongoing cycle of developing a sustainability vision for the future, defining the path to reach our goals, implementing the practices essential for success and then constantly moving the yardstick to achieve continual improvement. This Sustainability Policy is designed to address the practices within the STEP Standard and is the overarching principle that all our business activities are measured against. The policy incorporates environmental, social and economic best practices to realize continual improved levels of sustainability. We meet the international best practices for worker rights (as listed in SA8000) to ensure fair, safe and healthy working conditions. We have established SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) performance targets for each STEP "practice". The use of the Natural Step framework ensures that our targets are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). In general these targets are associated with waste reduction, energy use reduction, green house gas emission reduction, water usage reduction, chemical use reduction, improved business and community economics, improved ecosystem conservation and increased use of local products and services.





# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Our Sustainability Policy is part of our staff orientation. A checklist is provided to new staff along with all of the orientation documentation. A signature is required to indicate that the new staff member has received, read and understood the contents of the orientation package.
- The entire STEP DOCUMENTATION is retained in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\STEP Documentation and is available to staff
- Our Sustainability Policy is available to our clients and the public through our website under the “Green Philosophy” link
- Nature’s Harmony Ecolodge utilizes “The Natural Step” sustainability framework for all of its decision-making processes with regard to business practices (Appendix 1.2.1)
- Staff will use the “Natural Step Decision Worksheet” (Appendix 1.2.1) for each practice and the worksheets will be reviewed at 6-month intervals to determine if best practices are still contributing to meeting goals and if goals have been met, then to go through the process of developing a new compelling vision (performance targets) for the future.
- An electronic copy of all “Natural Step Decision Worksheets” are retained in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\Natural Step Decision. Worksheets and are available to our staff to ensure they are fully aware and committed to reaching our goals





## 2.1.1 Protecting the Area



# POLICY POLICY

The following Code of Conduct Policy is intended for our guests and staff in order to sustain the unique character of the facilities of Nature's Harmony Ecolodge:

- No firearms or hunting is allowed
- No motorized vehicles are permitted on our trails
- No campfires are permitted except in designated areas
- Prevent forest fires by extinguishing matches, cigarettes and using designated campfire locations
- Recognize this is an unpatrolled wilderness area. You are responsible for your own safety. Please sign our log book to tell us where you are going and when you plan to return to ensure your safety
- Respect the natural and cultural environment and do not disturb wildlife
- No cutting or damaging trees or vegetation. Nature's Harmony has a 10-Year Forest Management Plan approved by the Ontario Forestry Association (Appendix 2.1.1)
- Respect others and eliminate excessive noise
- Minimize waste by recycling and composting all vegetable matter
- Use the designated bins for garbage, recycling and composting
- Please pick up after your pets. Doggie bags are available at the trail head location.
- Three outdoor compost toilets are available at the trail head. Human waste is collected in large recycle bins, which is covered to ensure that it does not come in to contact with soil, water or wildlife, until it is fully composted. Guests are educated on the benefits of the basic Human Nutrient Cycle by posting signs in the composting toilets. (see attached information posters for the compost toilets)
- Leave no trace






# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Our Code of Conduct is part of our staff orientation. A checklist is provided to new staff along with all of the orientation documentation. A signature is required to indicate that the new staff member has received, read and understood the contents of the orientation package.
- The Code of Conduct is posted on all of our accommodation facilities and signed at our trailhead
- Our Sustainability Policy is available to our clients and the public through our website under the “Green Philosophy” link
- An electronic copy of the “Code of Conduct” is retained in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\Code of Conduct and is available to our staff to ensure they are fully aware and committed to it





## 2.1.4 Client Education Regarding Sustainability



# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge has a solid foundation of client education regarding sustainability. We take every opportunity possible to show our guests the details of off-the-grid living and answer their questions and encourage others to decrease their reliance on conventional energy sources. Our website also provides information to our visitors about our "Green Philosophy", our efforts to date and our plans for the future to become more sustainable (<http://naturesharmony.ca/sustainability.html>). We strive to broadcast our sustainability efforts to encourage others and provide information about our successes in this field through media releases and articles

- <http://naturesharmony.ca/images/NOHFC%20funding.jpg>
- <http://naturesharmony.ca/NOHFC%20Article.pdf>
- <http://naturesharmony.ca/Off the grid Spotlight.mp3>
- <http://naturesharmony.ca/images/mediareleases/MattawaRecorder.pdf>
- <http://naturesharmony.ca/images/mediareleases/Article%20-%20Nugget.pdf>



# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Our achievements and future plans are updated on a 6-month basis and posted to our web site
- News releases and media coverage regarding our sustainability efforts are uploaded to our web site on an ongoing basis
- The "Natural Step Decision Worksheets" are retained in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\Natural Step Decision Worksheets and are available to our staff and are used as a source to document and support our efforts and achievements in sustainability





## 2.2.1 Use of Feedback



# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge is committed to using feedback from their clients and guests. We ensure that each guest that visits us has an opportunity to provide valuable feedback to us. The information gathered is crucial to evaluating our facilities and operations to determine where we are doing an adequate job and where we need to make improvements. This strategy is consistent with our sustainability policy that directs us to strive for continual improvement on all fronts.



# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- An electronic link to the online version of our Customer Satisfaction Survey is sent to our guests after their stay. This provides us with another point of contact to thank our guests for their patronage and provide them with the forum to evaluate our facility and operations
- The survey is also integrated into our website under Contact and is available to everyone
- The results from the survey are analyzed and evaluated on a monthly basis
- These results are used to determine areas for improvement and specific changes or improvements to facilities or operations are further evaluated and tracked using the Natural Step Decision Worksheets





### 3.1.2 First Aid



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge is concerned about our staff' and client's safety. Each of our individual accommodation facilities is equipped with a first aid kit. All pertinent emergency response phone numbers are posted adjacent to the first aid kits. At least one staff member trained in standard first aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation is on-site at all times when guests are present.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- A quarterly inspection of all first aid kits is documented on our safety checklist
- First aid kits are replenished with supplies as needed and on a quarterly basis
- The safety checklist is retained in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\safety checklist
- Staff members are provided with current training in First Aid and CPR as required and a record of that training is retained in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\staff training





### 3.1.3 Environmental, Health and Safety Regulations



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge meets the necessary environmental, health and safety regulations related to their facilities and operations. Many of the permits and approvals required for the operation of our business are contained in our formal business plan.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- An affidavit signed by the owner documents compliance with all necessary environmental, health and safety permits, licenses and approvals
- A list is maintained of all applicable environmental, health and safety permits, licenses and approvals complete with any expiry dates
- The permit/approval list is retained in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\permits and approvals
- The list is reviewed on a bi-annual basis to schedule any renewals or changes to permits, licenses and approvals





### 3.3.1 Fair Labor Practices



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge is committed to fair and equitable labor practices and does not discriminate based on race, sex, religion, pregnancy, or political affiliation and the company does not permit employment or contracting of the services of minors under the age of 14. We are fully compliant with the Ontario *Employment Standards Act*.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- An affidavit signed by the owner documents compliance with the *Employment Standards Act*
- All employees are paid at least the current minimum wage (Effective March 31, 2010) of \$10.25/hour and \$9.60/hour for students
- The staff list complete with proof of age and current rate of pay is retained in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\Human Resources\Staff Files





#### 4.1.1 Environmental Compliance



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge is rooted in environmental stewardship and complies with all applicable environmental legislation and associated regulations. We are first and foremost an "off-the-grid" facility and as such reduce or eliminate many of the environmental issues associated with fossil fuel heating.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- An affidavit signed by the owner documents compliance with applicable environmental legislation and regulations
- New facilities are screened against legislation and policy such as, but not limited to: *Endangered Species Act*, *Provincial Policy Statement on Natural Heritage*, *Fisberies Act*, *Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Process* and the *Green Energy Act*.
- Any conditions or actions required under any permits or approvals under these or other environmental legislation are posted at the work site and available in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\permits and approvals





#### 4.2.1 Recycling/Reuse




## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge is committed to continual improvement regarding their practices on recycling and reuse. Our purchasing policy already addresses excessive packaging, post-consumer recycled paper, closed-loop products and environmentally more friendly products. This will reduce the volume of potential waste our facility will generate. We actively recycle and reuse to the extent possible and fully utilize the North Bay Household Hazardous Waste Depot that makes products such as paint available for reuse and recycles a number of products that our current municipal recycling collection does not handle. Computers and computer peripherals are recycled using a local recycling centre once they are past their useful service life for us. We also have implemented an onsite composting program to further reduce our waste and help reuse kitchen wastes to produce high quality compost for our gardens on our property. Our guests are educated and encouraged to use our recycling and compost bins to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to recycling and reuse at our facility. We conduct quarterly waste audits to determine the quantity and percentage of waste diverted from the landfill.





# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- All products that have outlived their useful service life will be recycled under the Municipal Recycling Program that recycles:
  - Magazines & Catalogues, Business and Greeting Cards, Newsprint, Photocopying & Fax Paper, Junk mail & Flyer / Inserts
  - Aluminum and Steel Cans (eg.pop), Aluminum Foil, Aluminum Plates(eg. pie plate)
  - 
  - Plastics including
  - All food and beverage cans
  - All glass food and beverage containers, wine bottles, pop bottles, clear or coloured glass
  - All cardboard including tissue or detergent boxes, cereal boxes, shoe or packing boxes, pizza boxes
- All computers and computer peripherals that have outlived their useful service life will be delivered to **Computer Clearing House** in North Bay that salvages parts and recycles the plastics, metals and circuit boards reducing computer waste by 85-95%
- Other electronics and household hazardous wastes (e.g. Paint) can be recycled and handled at the **Household Hazardous Waste Depot** in North Bay
- Recycling containers are located within each of our buildings and are clearly labeled
- A benchmarking table is updated on a quarterly basis that documents the total amount of waste measured by volume or weight
- Recycled and composted materials are documented on the table as a total volume or weight as well as a percentage of total waste
- Waste is standardized by number of guest nights
- The benchmarking tables are available in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\waste benchmarking tables
- A target for reducing waste destined for the landfill is documented on a Natural Step Decision Worksheet and is reviewed and revised on an annual basis





#### 4.2.2 Reductions of Materials Programs




# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge recognizes and acknowledges the importance of decreasing all solid waste streams. We feel the best way to accomplish this objective is to reduce it at its source. As a result we have implemented a Purchasing and Procurement System that will ensure that we make smart choices that will reduce the amount of solid waste we bring in to our facility. A copy of our Purchasing and Procurement System is available in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\Purchasing and Procurement System.





# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- All products that have outlived their useful service life will be recycled under the Municipal Recycling Program that recycles:
  - Magazines & Catalogues, Business and Greeting Cards, Newsprint, Photocopying & Fax Paper, Junk mail & Flyer / Inserts
  - Aluminum and Steel Cans (e.g. pop), Aluminum Foil, Aluminum Plates(e.g. pie plate)
  - 
  - Plastics including
  - All food and beverage cans
  - All glass food and beverage containers, wine bottles, pop bottles, clear or coloured glass
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- A target for reducing waste destined for the landfill is documented on a Natural Step Decision Worksheet and is reviewed and revised on an annual basis





### 4.2.3 Disposal



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge strives to dispose of waste in an efficient and safe manner. We have designated a safe and secure location to store disposed waste where it will not create a health and safety issue for our staff and guests as well as ensuring that it is not exposed to wildlife. The waste is removed from the site weekly by municipal services.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- All waste that cannot be reused, recycled or composted is stored in the designated safe and secure location and containers
- Waste is collected from guest accommodations daily and any recyclable or compostable components are separated from the waste into their appropriate bins
- Waste is put out the morning of curbside pickup by the Municipality to discourage scavenging by wildlife or pets
- Larger waste items not suitable for curbside pickup are transported to the local landfill for proper disposal
- Any materials separated from the waste that can be diverted from the landfill are directed to the appropriate stream (i.e. hazardous wastes are transported to the Household Hazardous Waste Depot in North Bay)





### 4.3.1 Chemical Management System



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecologie has identified and recorded all chemicals and cleaning supplies used on site. This inventory is important to recognize the amount of toxic or non-biodegradable products are currently in use at the facility. This inventory forms the basis for our chemical reduction plan that is tracked through a Natural Step Decision Worksheet. A copy of our Chemical Inventory is available in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\Chemical Management System Benchmarking Table.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Inventory and record all toxic and non-biodegradable chemicals and cleaning products used
- Ensure appropriate storage, use and disposal as per Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) where applicable
- Prepare and update a Natural Step Decision Worksheet to set targets for the reduction of toxic and non-biodegradable chemicals and cleaning products used and review it semi-annually
- Utilize our Purchasing and Procurement System to reduce or eliminate the introduction of new toxic or non-biodegradable chemicals and cleaning products to the facility





#### 4.3.4 Laundry



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge recognizes and acknowledges that water is one of our biggest energy consumers in an off-the-grid setting and laundry could be a significant portion of water usage and energy consumption if not handled wisely. We convey our laundry policy to our guests during the orientation of the accommodation facilities and provide them with a Guest Manual that explains the reason why it is critical that water and energy are conserved and used sparingly in an off-the-grid facility. Our policy is to provide complete linens to small groups and families. For extended stays, we typically will change the linens every three days unless the guests have a different preference. We encourage our guests to follow the same laundry habits that they would use at their home. For larger groups, we supply the bottom sheet and pillow cases and the guests are responsible for the rest of their bedding or linens. Towels are not provided for the guests and they are advised of this at time of booking. It has been our experience that guests on extended stays have indicated that a change of linens at a three day interval is not necessary. We are always looking at innovative ways to lessen the energy consumption associated with laundry operations.





# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Cabin guests are informed at the time of booking that towels are not provided and that they should bring what they require for their stay
- Larger groups for the cabin are informed at the time of booking that only bottom sheets and pillow cases will be provided
- Upon arrival guests are given an orientation visit to the accommodation facilities and provided details of our laundry policy
- Full bed linens as provided for smaller groups, families and couples will be changed on an interval of every three days unless otherwise requested by the guests
- Guests are educated about the importance of wise use of water and energy in an off-the-grid facility and provided with a Guest Manual to explain the policy in more detail along with interesting facts about an off-the-grid facility





#### 4.4.1 Water Consumption Management



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge extracts potable water from an un-metered well source. However, the guest cabins are provided with a quantity of drinking water that can easily be quantified per guest night. A recent innovation is the solar-heated rainwater showers. Use of these facilities greatly reduces demand on potable water and energy. A copy of our Water Consumption Audit is available in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\Water Consumption Audit Benchmarking Table.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Maintain a record of potable water used and convert value to litres/guest night
- Maintain a record of rainwater used and convert value to litres/guest night
- Once grey water recapture system is implemented, maintain a record of grey water reuse and convert value to litres/guest night
- Utilize Natural Step Decision Worksheets for future plans to reduce water consumption





#### 4.4.3 Water Conservation Activities



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge is very conscious of water conservation issues since the main water supply is from a well system with a finite quantity of water supply. We have been actively implementing and operating water conservation strategies since inception. Some of our most recent water conservation activities are the construction of three rainwater showers and three composting toilets. The average shower requires 90 litres of potable water. Our system utilizes zero potable water and the low flow shower heads encourage reduced water volumes per shower. A side benefit is that the collection of rainwater and slow discharge reduces peak stormwater flows from the property and discourages erosion and sediment transport. Low volume flush toilets typically use 6.0 litres per flush. Our three newly constructed composting toilets utilize no potable water. A side benefit includes the use of the resulting compost in the landscape gardens on the property.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Ensure guests are aware of our water conservation efforts and update practices on our web site for public awareness
- Maintain a record of potable water used and convert value to litres/guest night
- Maintain a record of rainwater used and convert value to litres/guest night
- Once grey water recapture system is implemented, maintain a record of grey water reuse and convert value to litres/guest night
- Utilize Natural Step Decision Worksheets for future plans to reduce water consumption





#### 4.5.1 Building



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge is committed to sustainable building practices. The existing structures that were on the property are log construction built from logs harvested from the property. The establishment of a recognized Forest Management Plan for the property will ensure sustainable future use of the forest resource. A number of improvements were made to the existing facilities to establish our Ecolodge as a truly off-the-grid experience. Future expansion of cabin accommodations will be undertaken in compliance with applicable legislation and where required, an Environmental Impact Study will be conducted and submitted for Municipal review. Our future plans are to construct additional guest cabins using a different sustainable building technique in each case to highlight and provide a demonstration site of these sustainable building practices. As indicated on our website, we will use the construction of these facilities as an opportunity to offer workshops to our guests and the general public to inform them of the variety of sustainable building practices.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Utilize Natural Step Decision Worksheets for future plans to construct any new accommodations facilities
- Consult with regulatory agencies to ensure all permits and approvals are in place prior to construction
- Utilize current sustainable building practices to showcase a number of different techniques
- Take advantage of the construction process as a learning opportunity for staff, guests and the general public to foster a better understanding of sustainability
- Update our web site on an ongoing basis to provide details of the variety of sustainable building techniques used in the accommodation facilities





### 5.1.1 Supply Chain Management - Policies



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge has a comprehensive and robust Purchasing and Procurement System (PPS) that is the backbone of our purchasing choices. We utilize Natural Step Decision Worksheets to document our efforts in improving our purchasing choices with regards to recycled, fair trade or eco-friendly products. Our Purchasing and Procurement System utilizes standard definitions for the terms contained within for consistency in language and meaning. Any eco-labeling is required to consist of three components: a certification standard, an independent accreditation body and an independent certification body. The overarching objective of this policy is the commitment to continual improvement in our purchasing activities.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Utilize Natural Step Decision Worksheets for future plans to improve our purchasing activities
- New purchases or procurements are evaluated using our PPS to ensure they are appropriate and further our sustainability goals
- Purchases are tracked using benchmarking tables to demonstrate continual improvement in our purchasing activities





## 5.1.2 Supply Chain Management - Suppliers



# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge has a comprehensive and robust Purchasing and Procurement System (PPS) that is the backbone of our purchasing choices. Our Purchasing and Procurement System utilizes standard definitions for the terms contained within for consistency in language and meaning. Specifically, we purchase local products where there is comparable value. Comparable value is defined as a product with the same performance at an equal price or at a cost premium of no more than 25%. The overarching objective of this policy is the commitment to continual improvement in our purchasing activities.



# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- New purchases or procurements are evaluated using our PPS to ensure they are appropriate and further our sustainability goals
- Local purchases are tracked using a summary table to demonstrate continual improvement in our local purchasing activities
- Specific goals concerning local purchasing are developed using Natural Step Decision Worksheets





### 5.1.3 Supply Chain Management - Paper



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge uses paper judiciously and does not account for a significant amount in our day to day operations. As much as possible we use paperless processes to avoid the excessive use of paper. Where the use of paper cannot be avoided, we utilize recycled/post consumer products and if there is not a suitable product in this category we use paper that is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) of Canada. FSC is an international certification and labeling system that guarantees that the forest products you purchase come from responsibly managed forests and verified recycled sources. Under FSC certification, forests are certified against a set of strict environmental and social standards, and fiber from certified forests is tracked all the way to the consumer through the chain of custody certification system. The end result is products in the marketplace carrying the FSC 'check-tree' logo.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- A benchmarking table is updated on a monthly basis that documents the total amount of paper purchased by volume or weight
- Paper purchased is further categorized to show the percentage that is recycled, percent that is post consumer content and percent that is FSC certified
- The benchmarking tables are available in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\paper purchase benchmarking tables
- Any targets for reducing paper usage or increasing the composition of recycled, post consumer content and/or FSC certified products is documented on a Natural Step Decision Worksheet and is reviewed and revised on an annual basis





## 6.1.1 Energy Reduction Plan



# POLICY POLICY

This practice goes beyond being a policy and procedure. It is the very essence of Nature's Harmony Ecolodge and is the foundation of our off-the-grid philosophy. Reducing our energy consumption and utilizing alternative energy sources has been and continues to be our greatest focus. Our facility utilizes wind and solar energy for a wide range of purposes. Our heating is provided by two woodstoves, using a renewable resource. There is also a propane furnace that is programmed to come on if the temperature drops below a certain level. Our energy is provided by eight 120-watt solar panels and a 1000-watt wind turbine, mounted on a 65-foot tower. The solar and wind energy pass through separate charge controllers which then charge a 24-volt battery system. We are constantly planning and implementing energy reduction measures to reduce the load on our alternative energy sources and striving towards sustainability. It is our policy to share our views and experience with energy reduction with clients and colleagues whenever possible through casual contact and our web site.



# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- A benchmarking table is updated on a monthly basis that documents the total energy used and produced
- Energy usage and production is further categorized into renewable and non-renewable sources and quantified as such
- Energy usage is normalized in units per guest
- The benchmarking tables are available in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\energy reduction plan benchmarking tables
- Any targets for reducing energy usage or increasing the use or production of renewable energy is documented on a Natural Step Decision Worksheet and is reviewed and revised on an annual basis





## 6.1.2 GHG Emissions and Offsets



# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge is aware of our contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and takes strides daily to reduce or eliminate our impact. We use Sustainable Travel International's GHG emissions calculator to determine our carbon footprint including our facility operations and business travel activities. This baseline provides us the means to measure our success in this area and celebrate our achievements in reducing our carbon footprint. Our carbon footprint expressed in metric tonnes is normalized in units per guest.



# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- A benchmarking table is updated on a monthly basis that documents the total GHG emissions produced using the STI Carbon Calculator
- Ensure that both operations and business travel activities are included in the calculations
- GHG emissions is normalized in units per guest
- The benchmarking tables are available in an electronic file in the main computer at C:\My Documents\STI Certification\GHG emissions benchmarking tables
- Any targets for reducing GHG emissions is documented on a Natural Step Decision Worksheet and is reviewed and revised on an annual basis





## 6.1.6 Pollution Prevention - Vehicles



# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge has already taken steps to reduce transportation-related energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. All of our activities are non-motorized and include hiking, cycling, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and most recently kick-sledding. We try to foster an environment that supports non-motorized pursuits and restrict motorized activities on our trail networks. Our adoption and implementation of purchasing local products furthers our commitment to reducing transportation related pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. We currently have an ongoing challenge to convert applicable vehicles to biodiesel which is documented with a Natural Step Decision Worksheet. Last year we hosted the Lost in the Rocks Mountain Bike Race at our facility. This event was linked with the Bike Train which is a unique initiative that packages cycling excursions using rail travel to reduce carbon footprint. A shuttle service was used to transport our clients from the train station to our facility again to reduce the carbon footprint. As demonstrated above, we have adopted a number of strategies to reduce transportation-related energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and will continue to actively pursue this goal.





# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- All events or activities are screened to determine where transportation-related energy use can be reduced or eliminated
- We evaluate means for our clients to travel to and use our facility with minimal transportation-related energy
- Any targets for reducing transportation-related energy use is documented on a Natural Step Decision Worksheet and is reviewed and revised on an annual basis such as our planned conversions to biodiesel





### 7.1.13 Philanthropy - Environment



## POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge has the STI carbon footprint calculator under our 'Sustainability' menu and guests will have the opportunity to purchase carbon offsets related to their travel and stay. We also give our event participants the same opportunity. This year for the Run Off-the-Grid, we will set up the on-line-registrations with a prompt for participants to donate an amount to help carbon-offset their travel to the event. At the end, we will contribute this money to STI's carbon offsetting program. Nature's Harmony will also top up the amount to help make the Run Off-the-Grid event carbon neutral. In 2010, one of our sponsors, 'Go Off the Grid', contributed the full amount.



## PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Guide our guests to our 'Sustainability' menu on our web site to give them the opportunity to purchase carbon offsets related to their travel and stay using STI's carbon footprint calculator
- Provide opportunities for participants of events that we host to also contribute to result in carbon neutral events
- Use a Natural Step Decision Worksheet to create local carbon offsets that our guests can be directly involved with instead of just contributing money to an offset program.





## 8.2.2 Philanthropy – Social/Cultural



# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge has found 'in kind' ways to support a variety of social/cultural initiatives. We have donated a variety of gift certificates with values ranging from \$150 to over \$500 to different events or programs. Every year our support has gone to: Discovery Routes Trails Organization, Mattawa Voyageur Days, the North East Mental Health Centre, the Capitol Arts Centre, Mattawa Tourism Coalition initiatives. We have also started to work with Mattawa Children-Youth-Families Program to begin different programming initiatives. Our first event will be a Family Day Winter Adventure at Nature's Harmony on February 21, 2011. Tzach is also an active member of the Mattawa Tourism Coalition and has volunteered his time to represent the region at the Explore Show and Great Outdoor Show in Toronto. Our policy is to lead by example.



# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Our guest manual documents the various cultural and social organizations that we support
- We offer the opportunity for our guests and visitors to contribute to these organizations that we feel make a difference
- We encourage the concept that there are different ways to give; your time, something of value (gift certificates) or money donations





## 8.2.4 Economic Development



# POLICY POLICY

Nature's Harmony Ecolodge believes in promoting the local economy by providing our guests with information about local businesses and the products and services that they offer. It is our policy to promote not only our facility but the destination as a whole and all of features and attractions that provide a diverse array of activities in our area. We sit on a number of local economic development committees and promote a cooperative environment in the community.



# PROCEDURES PROCEDURES

- Our new web site has an entire page devoted to products and services in our local community and encourage our guests to experience a full range
- Our guest manual also includes comprehensive information, along with pictures and contact information on all the activities, arts, culture & heritage, as well as, restaurant details with corresponding menus.
- We strive to maintain a knowledge base of local products, services and contact information for our community

