

ECOEE 2008 Newsletter #4

Reach Out

By: Courtney Mullin

"It's better to have friends than money; vices are not good advisors." Francisco Detrell, the owner of Casa Azul, a sustainable ecotourism program, told ECOEE members these words of wisdom while he was giving us management advice in Bahia de Los Angeles, Mexico. His philosophy is incredibly positive and I thoroughly enjoyed learning from him. ECOEE spent twelve days at Casa Azul and throughout the backcountry of the Sea of Cortez kayaking where we were able to see firsthand how his business is run, in addition to experiencing his leadership style which is different than anyone we have encountered this semester. Francisco not only taught us a lot about management and sea kayaking, he also taught us much about life.

As soon as we arrived to Casa Azul, Francisco informed us that his home is our home. We were to treat it with utmost respect by maintaining the cleanliness, taking proper care of his equipment and being friendly to his neighbors and community members. He was extremely kind and put a great amount of trust in us by allowing us to stay in his home and use his belongings. The least we could do was follow those simple rules.

Casa Azul is based on sustainable ecotourism, a program Francisco began eighteen years ago. This program entails three main points, including supporting local economies by using their resources to help locals make a better way of life, being ethical by protecting the environment, and getting to know the community by learning the language, hiring locals to assist in recreational events and

interacting with them. When we participated in Francisco's program, we ate out at local restaurants, shopped at local grocery stores and spoke with community members to the best of our ability. They were very courteous and it was fun interacting with them. ECOEE also used Francisco's equipment as I mentioned earlier rather than bringing our own or renting it from an American program. By supporting the locals, we gained positive relationships among the community, as well as contributed to the support of locals' families and lifestyles.

This program is marketed to a variety of individuals in a number of ways. Francisco promotes the sustainable ecotourism of Casa Azul on the radio, during television interviews, by writing articles and running courses. He is a well-known and respected man because of his relationships with others, especially community members, and his knowledge and experience in and of the field. Francisco is a member of the Wilderness Education Association and Leave No Trace, in addition to having obtained multiple supplementary outdoor certifications, running courses for the Mexican government and being in the position of an advisor for other organizations. Francisco has the right idea and is doing his part to protect and preserve the environment and support local economies.

The reason Casa Azul has done so well is because of the values Francisco lives by. He is a great person with a wonderful outlook on life. To him, "business is business and friendship is friendship." The reason money serves importance to his life is so that he can send his children to good schools where they will receive an excellent education, feed his family, and teach them values. Francisco puts everything into his program including passion and hard work. "There is no road to peace, peace is the road." (Ghandi)

Running an Outdoor Leadership School By: Emilie Litow



(NOLS Headquarters Lander, WY)

Lander, Wyoming is home to one of the first outdoor leadership programs in the United States, the National Outdoors Leadership School (NOLS). NOLS is a non-profit organization created by Paul Petzoldt in 1964. We were fortunate enough to meet with Kevin B. who is a program supervisor, Claudia who manages food and nutrition, Kevin M. who manages selling and renting equipment, and Bruce Palmer who is the director of marketing and admissions. Each of these people explained their jobs and how they contributed to the management of NOLS.

Kevin B. was the first person we meet with. He took us through the planning process each instructor goes through before taking a group out. He showed us around the NOLS Rocky Mountain Branch. He explained the multiple jobs of the staff; most of the staff has multiple skill sets they contribute to the program. One example is program supervisors typically go between the field and administration. The broad overview of his job and the instructors was insightful because it showed me just how much responsibility a lead instructor has and what it would take to be in the position of a lead instructor.

Claudia is in charge of the food and nutrition department, better known as The Gultch. She is in charge of overseeing food rations and making sure each group gets the

right rations. She receives instructors orders for foods they want pulled and then pulls it. She has edited and published the NOLS cookbook and recently began explaining the importance of nutrition to instructors. The Gultch is one of the busiest offices, and she has a regimen which works efficiently. She explained during the summer they might do two or three food pulls for different groups. Each time she does a food pull she has deadline to meet.

Kevin M. talked to us about gear rental and equipment. He impressed the importance of budgeting when ordering gear for rentals. Since NOLS rents gear to their students, they need to make sure they can make up the cost and profit from their rentals. A lot of NOLS equipment comes from Mountain Hardware because of the business relationship built between the two businesses. Kevin encouraged all of us to build good rapport with gear companies because the companies we end up working for could benefit from our relations with those companies.

Bruce was not part of the Rocky Mountain Branch of NOLS; he worked for the national office. He had different information and a different spin on NOLS than the previous people we had talked with. He covered NOLS mission, values, and purpose. Through him we learned NOLS has programs in 42 states, 17 countries, and 19 locations worldwide. He discussed the process of becoming an instructor

to us and how many instructors typically worked for NOLS. He discussed the management of all the branches and how they work together to accomplish goals and projects for NOLS.

Visiting NOLS and learning about their outdoor leadership programs was extremely beneficial for me. I gained a lot of knowledge on running a program and business. I was impressed with the maps on all the walls for

planning and how each department worked together with each other at the Rocky Mountain Branch. Learning about the how the national office was run was beneficial because I was given information on how to become a NOLS instructor and what an administration job entails. NOLS is a worldwide organization and management has to be precise and efficient otherwise NOLS will not continue to exist.

Eco-tourism in the Eyes of Francisco Detrell By: Derek Hofeldt



(Francisco!)

Francisco Detrell was ECOEE's person guide while in Baja California, Mexico both in the front country and backcountry. He is responsible for eco-tourism becoming a part of Mexico. In his own words: eco-tourism is an ethical compromise with tourists to use local resources and support local business while visiting different cities throughout the world. This is the most sustainable way of travel, it keeps businesses functioning so that as a tourist one can come back time after time and continue to use these local resources. He also added that service to the environment is a big part of his business. Leaving a place in better condition than when we found it. We did this while sea

kayaking in Baja California by picking up trash at every beach we went to, and there was a lot of trash to be picked up. At our last stop before heading back to Casa Azul, where we stayed while in the front country of Baja, we gathered nearly 20 garbage bags full of litter and took them, via kayak, to a nearby shore and dropped them off with one of Francisco's many friends who worked for a local conservation company who, in-turn, loaded them on his truck and hauled them to the dump.

Another way that we supported the locals was hiring Francisco. He is a local of Ensenada located in the northern half of Baja where he runs his business from and

raises his family. Us hiring Francisco helps him keep his business alive which in-turn stems out and helps other people and businesses in and around the area. Witnessing him while traveling through Baja made it clear that he was very well known and liked by so many locals. Every mom and pop type of store or restaurant that we stopped at had people greeting him with a big smile and a hug. He was a great example of why it is important to learn the language to build relations outside of

business relations. What he did with our ECOEE group and what he does with many other companies and outdoor adventure clubs is simply try to spread the business throughout the entire community by bringing more and more visitors to Baja for eco-tourism.

Being the “head-honcho” of eco-tourism in Mexico has only one downfall in Francisco’s opinion, there is nobody at his status to replace him if he ever chooses to retire.

What is Leadership?

By Stephen Gilbert

While being on this expedition and observing our instructors and the group, it is easier to pinpoint certain qualities that make a great leader. Leadership is more than just having the power to make the final decisions, there are many skills and traits that a great leader must have and all being equally important.

One of these skills is decision-making and judgment. As a leader you have to make the best quality decision and considering some of the circumstances it may have to be made in a short amount of time. By using the decision- making model it is easier to use your judgment in picking the correct answer (identify the problem, identify the variables, then use the correct model). When using your judgment remember that every action has a reaction, so weighing out all the pros and cons is crucial.

Enthusiasm is a trait that leaders most possess as well. When you are implementing these decisions you must show great enthusiasm to sell your decision, if you are not enthusiastic about the decision you made then the

group or participants will more than likely question your decision.

Safety and risk management is crucial skill for leadership. Prevention is the best method of risk management but accidents do happen. It is best to have a plan incase something happens so there is some procedure that you can follow instead of trying to make things up on the spot.

Technical skills are an important aspect of leadership. You can’t teach something if you yourself don’t know it or ensure the safety of your participants if you don’t know the in-and-outs of what you are doing. Proficiency in particular outdoor activities, experienced-based competency, and personal certifications are a necessary for any outdoor leader.

One way of being an effective leader is choosing the appropriate leadership style. While being on ECOEE for three months I have noticed that there are certain leadership styles that should be used in certain situations. The four types of situational leadership (selling, telling, participating, and

delegating) are based on the idea that leadership activities are based on either tasks or relationships. As leaders, or facilitators, of the day we all have found out that you must be flexible to what goes on during your day.

The leadership styles that I saw most on ECOEE were delegating and telling. Delegating is a good type of leadership when you have a low relationship day and task day. This style was mostly used in backcountry situations where all we had to do was get to the next campsite, but also could have been used in front country situations by delegating someone to help set up kitchen or tents. Telling leadership style was used on our busy days. This happened when we had a lot of lessons to get done and a little amount of time to do them.



(Best leaders are made with a little captain in 'em)

Aztec Adventures: A great organization with a long and rich history

Written by Jake Yard

After our enlightening stay as a camp consular at L.A. County Science School, we were on our way South to once more stay with the very accommodating Jim Lustig. Jim works through Aztec Adventures a recreation, university based program. This program

was started during the school year of 1976-1977 by an ambitious man named Garl. The first trip was a cross-country skiing trip that was a booming success. From then on they began to build upon the notion of the adventure recreation demand of the area and university. Canoeing, backpacking, and climbing trips were also very prevalent means of enrollment. The trips began to build rapidly and success so it was no surprise when they furthered the bill even more, including Mexico. For years the trips were ran with very loose regulations, seeming more like a booze induced road trip than a college hosted trip. This program was hosted in such a manner until the mid 1990's. The group up until this point was seldom concerned with sustainability and promoting ecotourism. These aspects are concerned with supporting local economies, befriending the locals as you travel, and supporting strict Leave No Trace standards. The individual to turn their program around in such a positive manner was the famous Francisco Detrell. Francisco is the individual in which we ended up taking a superb sea kayaking trip in Baja California. Jim was touched by the way in which Francisco ran his life and his business.

Soon after the drinking and disorganization had all but vanished. The program runs trips every weekend and charge a decent price for the experience the participants received. They now host trips to areas between Alaska and Mexico, doing most of the ssame activities that they originally started with. Although the activities are the same the way in which they are

handle is definitely a little different. They have trip leaders, interns, and faculty specialists that attend the trips with the students.

The trips run fairly expensively once you get past the weekend excursions. This is evident once you get down to the budget specifics. Each year Aztec Adventures has to turn over a profit of \$230,000 to just make budget and break even. The climbing wall creates no income for the organization, which is in the recreation center and costs a staggering \$60,000 alone to operate yearly. The state sadly only grants the program \$110,000 a year, which does not even start to pay the salaries of all the employees involved.

Marketing! Marketing is crucial to this program that relies upon it so heavily for its success annually. Jim stated that since the beginning of Aztec Adventures the method that remains the most effective is still word of mouth. It seems that there are sure a lot of people all around talking about the trips, which end up receiving a steady increase in participation. I was super impressed with the fact that the universities ethno diversity directly correlates with the programs enrollment. It is great to see this due to the fact that our underrepresented groups are still very sparse in the recreation field.

Overall I was impressed with many things about this program dubbed Aztec Adventures. The faculty as long as the long lasting history, the enrollment, and the course content are all pieces of a very sweet pie.



(Most gear was borrowed from Aztec Adventures)

Management of Aztec Adventure By Stephen Gilbert

Before we left San Diego we sat down and interviewed Jim Lustig who runs San Diego State University's outdoor recreation program; Aztec Adventure. Aztec Adventure is a unique outdoor adventure program that allows not only students but also community members to be involved in many outdoor recreational programs.

The 34,000 students at SDSU, and community members, have the opportunity to go rock climbing at Joshua Tree, canoeing on the Colorado River, and whale watching or backpacking in Baja California. Some of the other programs offered are Yoga, surfing, sea kayaking, horseback riding, and even fishing. Out of the 34,000 students about 12,000 are members at the Aztec Recreation Center. There recreation center is not like the one here at WIU were you pay for membership through your student fee, instead you have to sign up to become a member. The fee is only \$17 a month and the

facility is almost open 24 hours a day. The size of their recreation center is massive (it is about the size of Western's rec. center plus Western Hall) and houses a variety of work out machine, basketball courts, and even a climbing wall.

The most unique quality that is found in all the programs offered at Aztec Adventure was the cooperation of the professors, and encouragement, to send their students on these programs. Professors will work with Jim to get their students involved. Designing courses that give the students school credit, or even offering extra credit, for those who participate, does this. The Kinesiology, Cultural Studies, and Recreation are just a few examples of the departments who participate in the programs.

With so many programs offered Jim has quite the responsibility in maintaining and running these programs. Like so many other places we have been too budget seems to be the worst enemy of supervisors. Outing expenses can reach up to \$250,000 a year, the cost of paying the staff and buying new equipment can reach up to \$60,000, and still having to generate Jim's salary, it is very important to keep the students coming. Jim has some help from the government each year by getting a small subsidy totaling \$110,000, but he still has to generate a large sum of money to break even. The team building courses, weekend trips, and membership fees are what Jim relies on to make budget.

The trips are designed not only to give the participants the time of their lives, but also to help them meet new

people that are interested in the things they are, develop a closer relationship to the outdoors, gain an appreciation for different cultures, and to inspire personal growth. This all depends on what program you sign up for and the duration of the program, but there is one thing guaranteed that you will have fun and remember for the rest of your life.



(Jim Lustig with ECOEE)

“Be the Change You Want to See”

-Ghandi

By Courtney Mullin

Before becoming a member of ECOEE, I have to admit that I did not protect the environment or respect others to my fullest potential. I did not purposely do anything, however, I failed to think about the impacts I was causing. For instance, this past summer I worked in Alaska and began a rock/shell collection. As the summer ended and I had to leave Alaska, I could not bear to leave this collection behind and all of the memories that were attached, so I sent it home to my house in Iowa. Because of my actions, others will never be able to admire those rocks and shells, and more importantly, I took away potential homes for some animals. In the past, I also was

not very considerate of others while recreating in the sense that if I was having a good time conversing with someone, laughing or being loud in general, I would not stop to think that maybe someone else was trying to enjoy the peace and quiet or the sounds of nature. Furthermore, I saw nothing wrong with taking pleasure beside a warm campfire. Now, thanks to ECOEE, we students have had the privilege of learning Leave No Trace principles throughout our travels and understand the importance of practicing them.

Leave No Trace is an educational program that encourages recreationalists to lessen their impact on the environment by practicing best principles. These seven principles include, plan ahead and prepare, leave what you find, be considerate of other visitors, respect wildlife, minimize campfire impacts, dispose of waste properly and travel and camp on durable surfaces. In order to get a better idea of the seven practices, we were each assigned two of the principles and were required to teach our fellow classmates about them in the three different ecosystems we visited. Learning about Leave No Trace was great because we improved our behavior and will be able to practice these principles and spread the word for the rest of our lives.

Planning ahead and preparing before participating in a recreational activity is extremely important. We learned that very quickly when we were forced to stay in expensive hotels rather than free or cheap campsites. To add, as leader of the day, it was vital that we come up with multiple backup plans in case anything was to fall through. Otherwise, we suffered the consequences and wrath of an unhappy

group and an even unhappier instructor. This Leave No Trace principle has taught me to look at the whole picture and make sure to cover all of the details before embarking on an adventure.

The next Leave No Trace principle, leave what you find, has taught me to preserve artifacts, flowers and other objects for others to enjoy. If everybody thought they could take a few, the impact on the environment would be much greater, which could eventually lead to the extinction of some plants. Picking flowers could also conduct the spreading of invasive species that compete with native plants in a specific ecosystem. It's important to respect the environment and to remember to wash all clothing and equipment when traveling from place to place to avoid spreading certain species. Leave what you find for the gratification of future generations.

Being considerate of other visitors is also extremely significant. Towards the beginning of the course, our group was typically loud on the trail and disrespectful to other visitors. Once again, it was something we did not intend to do, but we knew it was something we needed to work on. While we were in Joshua Tree National Park on our three day solo, each of us experienced the other side of the coin. Multiple visitors of the park were rambunctious and disturbing to the peacefulness and solitude of our unique experience. We did not feel as though we were the only ones in the park because of their disrespectful behavior. After that experience, we have really strived to be more considerate of other visitors.

Respecting wildlife is also a principle that needs to be taken into consideration. We were guests in their

home this semester and we had to remember to treat them with respect. The volume of the group was an issue for this principle too because often times animals would be scared away. To add, we absolutely could not feed wildlife and tried to avoid their habitats at all costs so not to disrupt them.

One of our largest issues on this trip was minimizing campfire impacts. For awhile, we did not understand the reasoning behind it and wanted to have campfires all of the time. Finally, after some members started a fire in the danger zone of the Wind River Mountains, we received a momentous lesson on why we should not have fires. From that point on, we made it our duty to destroy every campfire ring we came across in order to maintain the pristine environment of the beautiful backcountry.

Pack it in pack it out. That was the motto behind disposing of waste properly. We were taught the correct procedures of digging catholes and latrines, in addition to disposing of dishwater properly, and remembering to always wash our hands. By practicing this principle, the environment suffered less of an impact and the health and sanitation of everyone were maintained.

Lastly, ECOEE practiced the final Leave No Trace principle, travel and camp on durable surfaces. We stayed on the trails in single file lines whenever they were available to avoid creating wider trails in more areas. However, in pristine areas, we would spread ourselves out to prevent new trails from forming and would make sure to hike in places where there was little to no vegetation.

Leave No Trace are principles that I will abide by for the remainder of my life. I will also encourage others to

practice them, and by doing this a larger population will become more aware of the benefits to our environment. Spreading the word and setting a positive example for others to see is the best way to improve the natural world and lessen our impact. Be the change you want to see.

Eco Tourism in Baja California

By: Ryan DeBoer

Eco-tourism is a fairly new concept that is now being put into effect in places all over North America. It is an idea that is just now starting to be used in the US, but has been becoming more and more popular in Baja California Mexico. Eco Tourism is designed to promote sustaining the environment while using it. It also focuses on supporting the local economies and using local resources for particular groups. Our ECOEE group used Eco tourism for our sea kayaking trip to Baja California that lasted 8 days.

Our group went through a business run through San Diego State University called Aztec Adventures. Aztec Adventures was built by taking students down to Baja each spring break and allowing them to party for an entire week. The man who runs Aztec Adventure is Jim Lustig and Jim was introduced to Eco tourism by a man named Franciso Detrel. The spring break trip was the trip that funded the rest of the SDSU outdoor program for years. After meeting Franciso and learning how much that spring break trip hurt the environment and how much that went against what an outdoor program's philosophy should be, Jim decided to

find new ways to fund the SDSU outdoor recreation program.

Our ECOEE group participated in one of these new programs. We went sea kayaking for 8 days and we used Francisco as our guide. Having him on as a guide helped in many ways. He was a very inspirational person and motivated all of us to become better outdoor leaders. He also knew the area very well and the signs of danger in the area, especially the weather patterns like wind that can make sea kayaking dangerous. Finally, he knew a lot about the local flora and fauna populations and the signs they leave behind. Hiring a native of Baja California to be our guide falls under the use of local resources category of eco tourism.

Our group supported the local economy by purchasing most of our groceries in the town we would be kayaking in which turned out to be Bahia des los Angeles or the Bay of Angels. Some dairy products were purchased in the US before crossing the border. Beyond the food purchases, our group went out to local restaraunts and bought a lot of souvenirs from both Bahia des los Angeles and from Ensenada. Not only did we go out to the restaurants, but we attempted to use the local language and to become friends with the locals. I personally had a few conversations with Fernando, who was our waiter at a local restaurant called Guillermo's and he was a very nice man. Finally, our group was kayaking in a protected area. Both the land and the water were protected and home to a very diverse array of life. Seeing and experiencing this magnificent place changed my way of thinking forever

about the effects I have on land when I'm using it. I was happy to be a part of a group that leaves no garbage behind, and in fact we even picked up about 20 small garbage bags of man-made garbage from various beaches around the Bay of Angels. We had also planned on helping out the environment by cleaning up injured sea turtles, but were unable to do so because it was a Mexican conservation holiday week.

Nonetheless, I was happy to learn about Eco tourism and to be a part of it. Using local resources, supporting the local economy, and maintaining a low amount of environmental impact while using the land and water really made our Baja trip a more memorable one. It's hard to process so early after our trip is over, but I'm sure my sea kayaking trip to Baja has provided me with new ideals and ways of practice that can transfer over into my outdoor activities here in Illinois and make for a more sustainable use of our ever-shrinking wild lands.



(Casa Azul, Baja California)



(Everybody on top of Wind River Peak, 13,192 ft.)

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our newsletter.

We hope you all enjoyed the adventure!!!

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