Water management and conservation for tourism facilities

Did you know that scientists postulate that the next world war will be fought over water? This may seem incredulous considering that water covers about 75% of the Earth’s surface. However the fact is this precious resource is dwindling faster than we can imagine due to pollution and the inevitable scourge of climate change. Climate change has caused erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts in some areas and makes dry areas even drier. Kenya bears the brunt of these dry harsh conditions as most landscapes even those that host game for which we are famous for, are considered arid and semi-arid. This water scarcity also translates to most tourism facilities as they are located in these critical wildlife ecosystems which are predominantly dry savannas.

Hygiene, maintenance and luxury standards of starred tourist accommodations will undoubtedly result in high water consumption if not properly checked. It is therefore of utmost importance to conserve water by any means possible.

The Ecotourism Kenya certification scheme has a set standard on water management that emphasizes on;

- Need to have a water management plan that ensured adequate monitoring using metering, and sub-metering where necessary.
• Recording the consumption based on bed occupancy (inclusive of staff members) where records can be used to set future conservation goals and detect anomalies in the water system.

• Sustainable water source that does not affect environmental flows. Many tourist facilities are located in remote areas where piped water from government supplies is not an option therefore necessitating the need to drill boreholes. In line with this, a facility should obtain a water extraction permit from the Water Resources Management Authority and adhere to the set extraction volumes.

• Use sustainable water conservation measures e.g. use of water efficient equipment and technologies (dual system toilets, adjusting single toilet flush cistern, push taps, sensors and low filter shower heads).

Image of a low flow shower head which uses less water than conventional shower heads

• Rain water harvesting

This involves collection of rain water from the surface on which it falls. Typically roofs are used as catchment areas and gutters to direct the water into storage tanks. This is an especially critical practice as it supplements fresh water supply to facilities.
• Recycling, reuse and reduction of water use.
Grey water (waste water from sinks, showers or bath tubs, laundry) can be recycled and upon compliance with set environmental standards used in cleaning vehicles or lawn irrigation.

• Use of visual aids like posters, notices and brochures to promote and sensitize staff and guests on water conservation
- Exploring use of innovative visual aids e.g. (posters, notices, brochures) and Oral/Audio means e.g. (briefings, meetings,) to promote and sensitize both staff and guests on water conservation. Commonly used are ‘TOWEL TALKS’ to reduce water used in laundry.

It is everyone’s responsibility to actively manage and conserve water in the interest of sustainability both for us as individuals and the health of ecosystems in which all biodiversity and human industries depend on.