International Rafting Federation (IRF)

Practical Guide to Sustainability

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A. International Rafting Federation's Commitment to Sustainability

1. The International Rafting Federation (IRF) is committed to nurturing positive environmental, social, and economic impacts for current and future generations within all aspects of the activity of rafting.

2. This document is a "living" document that can and should be evaluated and revised on a regular basis, in response to changes in technology and the understanding of the significance of environmental sustainability in the sphere of rafting. This document will be reviewed at least once every two years as a minimum.

B. Sustainability in all Rafting

1. **Definitions of Sustainability:** United Nations' (UN) definition: "A balanced approach to environmental, social and economic aspects, providing for both present and future needs." International Olympic Committee's (IOC) definition: "When making decisions, ensure feasibility, and seek to maximise positive impact and minimise negative impact in the social, economic and environmental spheres."

2. **Introduction:**
   a. **Sustainability:**
      i. Is more than just "Green": protecting the environment is an essential part of sustainability; but it is also about the way we treat people, places and adopt and share responsible practices
      ii. Requires an integrated and holistic approach to environmental, social and economic aspects
      iii. Is a shared endeavour, even between otherwise sporting rivals or companies
      iv. Is more affordable than many think
      v. Can be started by anyone, you don't have to be experts
      vi. Can be phased in, in your own time. Every little bit helps

   b. **Rafting and sustainability:**
      Rafting has a great advantage over many other sports and activities in that the activity itself has very little impact on the environment. Floating down waterways has little to no direct effect on the environment. The majority of rafters themselves tend to be very conscious of preserving the environment - wanting the water to be clean, and free flowing; the regions they paddle through to be natural and sustainable. This naturally directs rafters and rafting along a sustainable path. Where rafting needs to focus is how the activity impacts the region off the river. For example: launch and take-out sites; impacts of people coming into the area to partake in the activity; the sustainability of all products used in the activity; the impact the activity has on the people of the region; and ensuring water quality is not compromised.

3. **Getting started - whether for an event (fun / national / international) or recreational rafting:**
   There are so many ways to get started. Start simple: pick one item from the list below and start working toward it. Add another item at reasonably spaced intervals and keep increasing what you're doing. Every little bit helps!

   These are the five focus areas of the IOC's sustainability strategy and are the practical focus areas that the IRF recommends starting with. Tick those that you are already doing and start planning for the rest:

a. **Infrastructure and natural sites:**
   i. conserve the natural environment and have a positive impact on biodiversity
   ii. minimise energy use and greenhouse gas emissions
   iii. minimise adverse impacts on land, water, noise and air quality
   iv. use long-lasting environmentally and socially responsible materials
   v. minimise waste and maximise reuse and recycling of materials
   vi. ensure access to everyone is possible
   vii. organisations' internal and external environments must foster health and wellbeing
   viii. create opportunities to leave a positive legacy for local businesses and communities

b. **Sourcing and resource management** - there are five key questions you can ask yourself when sourcing and managing equipment, goods and materials:
   i. Where does it come from?
   ii. Who made it?
   iii. What is it made of?
   iv. What is it wrapped in?
   v. What will happen to it afterwards?

   For more in depth detail on the plastic problem and what sports can do about it, read the IOC's Plastic Game Plan for Sport Guide, and for sustainable sourcing, read their Sustainable Sourcing in Sport.

c. **Mobility:**
   i. Travel and transport of people - to the location, during the activity/event
   ii. Moving goods and materials - to the location, during the activity/event
   iii. Sustainable Tourism - recreational rafting falls under tourism, and sport events also attract tourism

ci. **Workforce** - measures to implement:
   i. Establish a working culture that:
      1. is non-discriminatory
      2. provides equal opportunities for women and men
      3. reflects the diversity of the community where you are based
   ii. Provide access to guidance and training for staff on gender equality, disability awareness, healthy living, etc.
   iii. Be vigilant about health and safety standards for all those working on your behalf - your staff and also those in your supply chain:
      1. Provide incentives for staff/volunteers to travel to work by public transport, bike or on foot, carpooling and ride-share schemes
      2. When providing food, ensure there are healthy menu options, and increase the proportion of non-meat dishes
      3. Encourage staff and volunteers to exercise regularly and participate in sport or other forms of active living
      4. Consider how work experience in your organisation or event could help develop skills and education, especially for young professionals
      5. Integrate sustainability into the performance objectives of senior staff

e. **Climate change and reducing carbon footprints:**
   i. Reduce carbon impacts of rafting through reducing needs for travel and moving goods, reducing energy consumption, using sustainable materials, following sustainable food and beverage management, and good waste management.
   ii. Compensating for unavoidable carbon emissions:
      1. Compensate for unavoidable impacts by supporting other activities that create carbon benefits
      2. Directly support energy efficiency or renewable energy schemes, or replanting projects in your local area. Being directly involved in the projects can bring wider benefits in terms of community engagement and goodwill
      3. Buy carbon credits through privately run offsetting schemes

C. Sustainability in Recreational and Race Rafting and Guide Training

There is plenty everyone can do as a rafter. Whether that is as a recreational rafter, or if you are an operator or instructor providing courses or workshops or you are a team or club training and teaching raft racing:

a. Access: ensure physical access to facilities is possible for all, meaning everyone is welcome
b. Local area: look after your local community. Employ locals where possible. Assist locals to get the training / qualifications they may need to work in the various aspects of river industry
c. Transport: getting people to the location and transport between the start and end - seek ways that keep carbon emissions as low as possible
d. Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Replace, Recycle, Remind!
   - **Refuse** - only use what you really need
   - **Reduce** - especially packaging
   - **Reuse** - try use items made from recycled material or hire or repurpose
   - **Replace** - use more sustainable alternatives
   - **Recycle** - after use
   - **Remind** - inspire and influence
e. Responsible sourcing: support local businesses and socially responsible organisations
f. Food and beverage: showcase local, seasonal produce, and provide vegetarian options and free drinking water for use with refillable bottles. Keep waste to a minimum
g. Keepsakes: ensure giveaways and souvenirs you sell are useful, reusable and/or recyclable
h. Make it easy to recycle: provide recyclable packaging and provide recycling and general waste bins
i. Health, safety and security: a safe environment is a happy environment. Assessing and managing the risks in advance can help ensure that everyone can enjoy the activity
j. Promote Sustainable Tourism: the UN defines sustainable tourism as “causing as little impact as possible on a destination’s social and natural environment and fulfilling local economic needs while maintaining cultural integrity”. Read UNWTO’s top “Tips for a Responsible Traveller”
k. Review the IRF's list of simple and realistic Sustainability Ideas for Operators, Instructors, Guides and Recreational Rafters and commit to as many as you can. This list will continually be added to.

D. Sustainability in Rafting Events

1. **Focus on the five sustainability strategies which cover environmental and social initiatives:**
    a. **Infrastructure and natural sites:**
        i. Conserve the natural environment and have a positive impact on biodiversity; Look after water, whether it's in the river or coming from taps - don't pollute it, use it sparingly
        ii. Minimise energy use and greenhouse gas emissions; Use electricity wisely, preferably green electricity
        iii. Minimise adverse impacts on land, water, noise and air quality
        iv. Use long-lasting environmentally and socially responsible materials
        v. Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Replace, Recycle, Remind
            - **Refuse** - only use what you really need
            - **Reduce** - especially packaging
            - **Reuse** - try use items made from recycled material or hire or repurpose
            - **Replace** - use more sustainable alternatives
            - **Recycle** - after use
            - **Remind** - inspire and influence
        vi. Minimise waste; Make it easy to recycle - use recycle bins, organics bins and general waste bins, all well sign posted
        vii. Ensure ways of communicating to everyone can be understood by everyone. Ensure physical access facilities are easily accessible so everyone is welcome
        viii. Ensure a safe, healthy and secure atmosphere for all (participants, officials, media, workforce and spectators) as that leads to a happy environment. Assessing and managing the risks in advance can help ensure that everyone can enjoy the event
        ix. Look after your local community; Create opportunities to leave a positive legacy for local businesses and communities; Ensure local communities are supportive and not inconvenienced (by litter, noise and congestion, or excess use of their energy and water); Recognise the importance of heritage and indigenous cultural values

    b. **Sourcing and resource management:**
        i. There are five key questions you should ask yourselves when sourcing equipment, goods and materials:
            - Where does it come from?
            - Who made it?
            - What is it made of?
            - What is it wrapped in?
            - What will happen to it afterwards?
        ii. Support local businesses - this brings improvements to the region and reduces transporting of materials
        iii. Support socially responsible organisations - this helps those organisations to get stronger
        iv. Products should have a minimal impact on human health and the environment when being made or being used
        v. Food and beverage - showcase local, seasonal produce, and free drinking water. Ensure there are healthy options, and increase the proportion of non-meat dishes

vi. As packaging is a major issue in terms of waste management and resource use, try minimising it wherever possible, and aim for recycled and recyclable materials
vii. Keepsakes - ensure giveaways and souvenirs are useful, reusable and/or recyclable
viii. Use certified products, avoid waste, ensure recycling is happening, ensure the waste is properly disposed of
ix. Read the IOC's Plastic Game Plan for Sport Guide.pdf for more detail on the plastic problem and what sports can do about it
x. Read the IOC's Sustainable Sourcing in Sport for more details on sustainable sourcing

c. Mobility:

This can often have the biggest carbon footprint of an event.

i. Travel and transport of people - to the location. Flights and long distances by road may be unavoidable in getting athletes, officials and supporters to the location. Try keep this to a minimum. Where practical, use high-speed trains rather than flights. Look at ways to offset what you can
ii. Travel for planning purposes - instead of travel use virtual meetings
iii. Moving goods and materials - to the location, during the activity/event; Good planning is essential here so as to minimise this. Use companies that operate modern low-emission fleets. Use rail, rivers and sea instead of road and air
iv. Transport - during the activity/event. Walking, cycling and public transport are healthier and more sustainable ways to move around. Reduce numbers of journeys, plan carefully
v. Try to ensure accommodation is close by or on easily usable public transport routes
vi. Use fuel-efficient or low emission vehicles where possible
vii. Sustainable Tourism - sport events attract tourism. The UN defines sustainable tourism as "causing as little impact as possible on a destination's social and natural environment and fulfilling local economic needs while maintaining cultural integrity". UNWTO's top "Tips for a Responsible Traveller"

d. **Workforce** - repeating B.3.d above, possible measures to implement:

i. Establish a working culture that:
    1. is non-discriminatory
    2. provides equal opportunities for women and men
    3. reflects the diversity of the community where you are based
ii. Provide access to guidance and training for staff on gender equality, disability awareness, healthy living, etc.
iii. Be vigilant about health and safety standards for all those working on your behalf - your staff and also those in your supply chain:
    1. Provide incentives for staff/volunteers to travel to work by public transport, bike or on foot, carpooling and ride-share schemes
    2. When providing food, ensure there are healthy menu options, and increase the proportion of non-meat dishes
    3. Encourage staff and volunteers to exercise regularly and participate in sport or other forms of active living
    4. Consider how work experience in your organisation or event could help develop skills and education levels, especially for young professionals
    5. Integrate sustainability into the performance objectives of senior staff

e. **Climate:**
   i. Reducing carbon impacts of rafting:
      1. Travel and moving goods (see Mobility above)
      2. Energy consumption (see Infrastructure and Natural Sites above)
      3. Materials (see Sourcing and Resource Management above)
      4. Food and beverage (see Sourcing and Resource Management above)
      5. Waste (see Sourcing and Resource Management above)
   ii. Compensating for unavoidable carbon emissions:
      1. Compensate for such unavoidable impacts by supporting other activities that create carbon benefits
      2. Directly support energy efficiency or renewable energy schemes, or replanting projects in your local area. Being directly involved in the projects can bring wider benefits in terms of community engagement and goodwill
      3. Buy carbon credits through accredited and legitimate offsetting schemes

2. **Communicate about Sustainability:**
   a. Shout loudly about what you are doing and encourage others to do more. It is important to take advantage of the efforts put into these events to spread the message that organising greener, more sustainable events is possible. This is an essential part of the process
   b. Use the event to encourage environmental awareness and education about sustainability and clean water within the local and international rafting community by using the athletes, sponsors, local governments and education facilities to promote sustainability, locally and world-wide

3. **Commitment statement:**
   a. If an Organiser is committed to running a sustainable event they should write up a commitment statement which they can present to other stakeholders as they move forward in the planning

4. **Planning for Organisers:**
   a. **Before the event:**
      Most of the ecological footprint reduction can be completed through good planning from the very beginning as that is when you set in stone the overall framework of the event. Review the IRF's Sustainability Ideas for Rafting Event Organisers and commit to as many as you can. This list will be continually added to.

   b. **During the event:**
      During the event, the organisers need to make sure that the strategies agreed with the venues' managers and other stakeholders are properly implemented. They will also need to assist attendees and participants in their own individual efforts to contribute to the event's ecological footprint reduction.

   c. **After the event:**
      Assess what worked and didn't work. Work out how to improve for next time. Communicate the results to relevant people (venue's managers, participants, etc) and especially the IRF so it can be shared far and wide to other event organisers.

E. As an athlete - what can I do?

Start small and simple. You can make changes in your own life to cut down on plastic waste. You can have an even bigger impact by becoming an advocate for change - encouraging sports fans, sponsors and organisers to reduce, reuse and recycle.

1. Take action yourself - with a few simple actions you can make a big dent in your plastic footprint. Make a commitment to:
    a. Refuse single-use plastics
    b. Opt for reusable alternatives like refillable water bottles and reusable bags
    c. Recycle whenever you can
    d. Choose sportswear made from natural fibres or recycled plastic
    e. Follow the IOC's seven steps to reduce microfibres when washing sportswear (Page 29 - Plastic game plan for sport guide)

2. Ask others to act - ask your sponsors, suppliers, sports federation and event organisers what they're doing to cut down on plastic waste. If they don't have a good answer, encourage them to take action. You can start by sharing this document.

3. Spread the word - as an athlete, your face may be recognised by many in your sport or region. Show your commitment and encourage other athletes, sports fans and spectators to cut down on plastic. You can start by taking the Big Plastic Pledge, a new campaign involving athletes from across the world. See www.bigplasticpledge.com for more and sign up!

F. Notes:

Avoid biodegradable and degradable

Do not be tempted to use 'biodegradable' plastic. This is only biodegradable under controlled conditions in an industrial composter at high temperatures and needs to be collected separately. If it ends up in landfill or the ocean, it will pose the same problems as conventional plastic. Biodegradable plastic often isn't recyclable or compostable. Degradable plastic (sometimes called oxodegradable or photodegradable) is just plastic that will break down into smaller pieces faster. Not a viable or long term option. **Use compostable or recyclable.** And if you use compostable do not put in usual waste. Many landfills do not have the correct conditions to compost.

G. Resources:

- IOC's Sustainability Essentials series of guidelines (current series' documents are listed below but more will be added in the future):

  1. Introduction to Sustainability - https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/What-We-Do/celebrate-olympic-games/Sustainability/sustainability-essentials/IOC-Sustain-Essentials_v7.pdf

  2. Sports For Climate Action - https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/What-We-Do/celebrate-olympic-games/Sustainability/sustainability-essentials/SUSTAINABILITY-ESSENTIALS-ISSUE-2.pdf

  3. Sustainable Sourcing in Sport - https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/What-We-Do/celebrate-olympic-games/Sustainability/sustainability-essentials/SUSTAINABILITY-ESSENTIALS-ISSUE-3-final.pdf

  4. Plastic Game Plan for Sport - https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/What-We-Do/celebrate-olympic-games/Sustainability/Plastic-game-plan-for-sport-guide.pdf

  5. Sustainability Management in Sports - https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/What-We-Do/celebrate-olympic-games/Sustainability/sustainability-essentials/SUSTAINABILITY-ESSENTIALS_v6.pdf

- http://learninglegacy.independent.gov.uk/documents/pdfs/sustainability/cp-london-2012-sustainability-guidelines-for-corporate-and-public-events.pdf - originally developed by the London 2012 Organising Committee expressly for smaller-scale, individual events such as conferences, seminars, promotional launches and celebrations, as well as sports events.