

# GRADUATE THESIS DEFENSE AND LECTURE SERIES

## Environmental Studies Department

Presenting Pete Parker

### TOURISM IN DEQIN, CHINA: A CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**When: Tuesday February 28, 2006, 4:30pm to 6:00pm**

**Where: BBC 126**



**About Pete Parker:** I graduated from the University of Idaho in 1999 with a degree in Environmental Science. Afterwards I spent 2 years in Nepal working for the National Parks Department through the US Peace Corps. It was in Nepal I realized the need to incorporate the interests of resident communities within environmental conservation plans, especially in developing countries. To me, creating a symbiotic relationship between protected areas and local communities is the most crucial and difficult issue facing environment planners and managers throughout the world. I have traveled throughout Southeast Asia observing such interactions. This thesis research is an analysis of introducing nature tourism as a means of providing for both the local community and the environment in Southern China.

#### **Abstract:**

Conservationists are increasingly turning to tourism to provide economic alternatives to natural resource consumption. Where tourism offers a viable, less environmentally damaging form of economic development than traditional extraction practices, there are often drastic accompanying adverse social effects. To develop a sustainable form of tourism, it is important to identify and incorporate local social, cultural, economic, and environmental values and goals in any planned development. This research assesses the attitudes and perceptions of local residents toward tourism and conservation efforts in Deqin, China. Deqin is part of a World Wildlife Fund biodiversity hotspot and a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a population that is 80% Tibetan. Local residents in the Deqin area generally have a positive perception towards the social, cultural, economic, and environmental effects associated with tourism development; however, equal and democratic participation in the planning and management of tourism has been minimal. This case study research utilized interviews, informal surveys, participant observation and document review as vehicles of analysis to identify the underlying beliefs behind participation in the tourism industry in Deqin and the surrounding area.



