

Article

Ecotourist Potential and Some Problems in the Development of the Bakhmal State Forestry

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Abstract: In the Jizzakh region, there are 4 protected natural areas and 5 state forestry enterprises, of which the Bakhmal State Forestry enterprise is of particular importance due to its great ecotourism potential. The organization of ecotourism and other special types of tourism in such natural places plays a key role not only in the economic and social development of the region, but also in the protection of natural resources. The effective organization and sustainable management of ecotourism in such territories play a crucial role not only in stimulating regional economic growth and increasing local employment, but also in ensuring the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity. In particular, ecotourism contributes to reducing anthropogenic pressure on fragile ecosystems through regulated recreational use and environmental awareness among visitors.

Furthermore, the development of ecotourism infrastructure in forestry enterprises, especially in the Bakhmal State Forestry area, can enhance the integration of environmental protection with socio-economic benefits. Scientific approaches to planning ecotourism activities, including zoning, carrying capacity assessment, and ecosystem monitoring, are essential for maintaining ecological balance.

Thus, the rational use of natural resources through ecotourism represents an effective strategy for achieving sustainable development in the Jizzakh region, combining environmental conservation with economic and social advancement.

Keywords: Ecotourism, ecotourism, stone ensembles, ecotourism objects, natural territory, recreational territory, protected territory, ecotourism route, specially protected natural territories, rural tourism, agrotourism, ethno-tourism, sports and recreational tourism.

Introduction

At present, ecotourism is considered not only as a means of ensuring employment for the population and increasing people's interest in nature, but also as a tool that contributes to the conservation of natural areas. In our republic, the organization of ecotourism routes within forestry territories and the arrangement of tourist visits to these locations have been included in state decisions and programs, and relevant routes and recommendations have been developed to date [1].

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to provide brief information about the ecotourism potential and prospects of the Bakhmal State Forestry, which is one of the five state forest enterprises in Jizzakh region. In addition, the study aims to identify opportunities and challenges in the development of specialized types of tourism in the Bakhmal State Forestry and to recommend the most optimal ways to overcome these problems[2]. Introduction At present, ecotourism is regarded not only as a means of ensuring employment for the population and increasing public interest in nature, but also as an effective tool for the conservation and sustainable use of natural areas. In many countries, including Uzbekistan, ecotourism is being actively developed within protected areas and forestry territories as part of state environmental and tourism policies. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the organization of ecotourism routes in forestry areas and the systematic arrangement of tourist visits to such territories have been incorporated into state programs and strategic development plans[3]. As a result, a number of ecotourism routes, guidelines, and practical recommendations have been developed and implemented in recent years. The main purpose of this research is to analyze the ecotourism potential and development prospects of the Bakhmal State Forestry, one of the five state forestry enterprises located in the Jizzakh region. Furthermore, the study aims to identify existing opportunities and challenges in the development of specialized types of tourism within the forestry area, including ecotourism, recreational tourism, and nature-based tourism[4]. Based on this analysis, the research proposes the most effective and sustainable approaches to overcoming identified problems and enhancing the overall efficiency of ecotourism development in the region.

Literature Review

In his monograph "Ecological Tourism of Uzbekistan" (Zarafshan Publishing House, Samarkand, 2009), M. Khoshimkhonov provided information on specially protected natural areas for ecotourism, including the eco-tourism resources of the Kitab Geological Reserve. He also described protected areas of Jizzakh region such as Zaamin National Park, the Chortangi Gorge, Uch O'choq, and Miq Fortress [5]. However, the ecotourism potential of the Bakhmal State Forestry in Jizzakh region has not been comprehensively analyzed.

Materials and Methods

In this research, a methodology was applied that takes into account the expected changes in the coming years in determining the development of ecotourism infrastructure in the lands of the Bakhmal State Forestry. Based on this approach, tourism development was studied as an integrated infrastructure system. By considering expert opinions, methods such as observation, comparison, empirical research, comparative analysis, and expert evaluation were used to determine the directions for the development of infrastructure components. Furthermore, priority tasks related to the development of ecotourism in the Bakhmal State Forestry of Jizzakh region were identified, and specific recommendations for improving infrastructure were developed. This study employs a комплекс (integrated) methodological approach aimed at assessing the current state and future development prospects of ecotourism infrastructure in the territory of the Bakhmal State Forestry in the Jizzakh region. The research framework is based on a systems approach, where ecotourism is considered as a multi-component infrastructure system that includes natural resources, transport accessibility, service facilities, and management mechanisms. In order to ensure the reliability and comprehensiveness of the research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied. Primary data were collected through field observations conducted within the forestry территории, focusing on the condition of natural

landscapes, existing tourism infrastructure, and patterns of tourist use. These observations were complemented by empirical research methods, including the collection of descriptive and statistical data related to visitor flows, resource use, and environmental conditions. A comparative analysis method was used to evaluate the current state of ecotourism infrastructure in Bakhmal State Forestry against similar forestry and protected areas, allowing the identification of strengths, weaknesses, and development gaps. In addition, expert evaluation methods were employed, involving consultations with specialists in the fields of forestry, tourism, and environmental management. Their opinions were used to assess the перспективные направления развития ecotourism and to prioritize key infrastructure components.

Results and Discussion

According to the World Tourism Organization, Uzbekistan was expected to become a leading tourist region in Central Asia by the beginning of the 21st century, with about 15% of tourist routes implemented in the country [6]. Today, these predictions are being confirmed.

Uzbekistan is now attracting tourists not only with its rich historical cities and routes associated with great scholars, but also with routes that combine various types of specialized tourism, including nature-based tourism, gastronomy, handicrafts, national sports, and ecology. For example, in recent years, hundreds of new routes related to agro-tourism, gastronomic tourism, rural tourism, and ecotourism have been opened, and it is planned to establish thousands of accommodation facilities in rural areas and recreational zones [7].

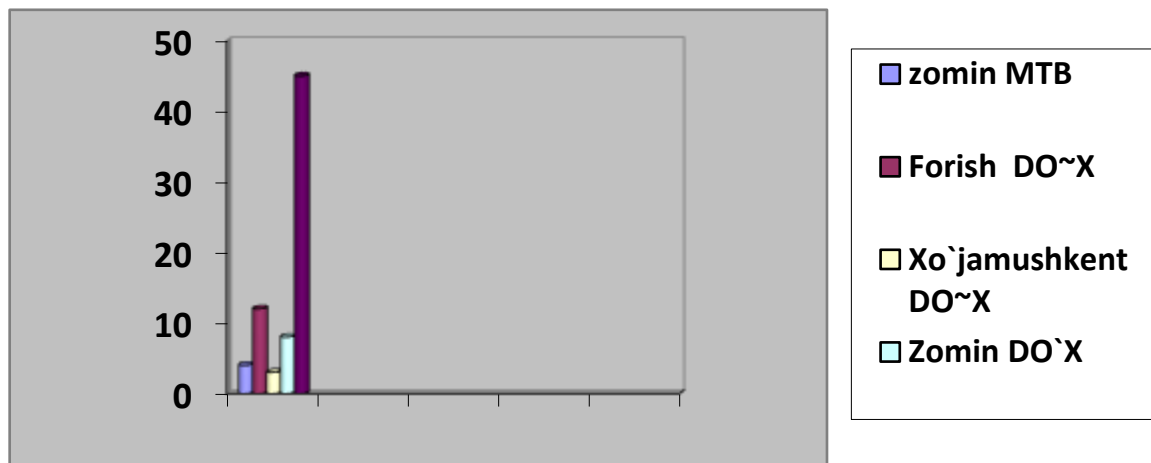


Figure 1. Ecotourism facilities of the regional forestry enterprises and the Zaamin National Park

The organization and development of tourism in protected natural areas is widely practiced in foreign countries. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment of the Republic of Vietnam has recently launched the initiative "Passport to Vietnam's National Parks." This initiative aims to create mechanisms to support the development of ecotourism in national parks and nature reserves, encourage tourists to explore and appreciate the values of forest ecosystems, gradually establish sustainable financial mechanisms, and attract visitors to national parks and reserves with developed tourism infrastructure.

At the same time, the existing potential and ongoing projects are expected to elevate Bakhmal district into one of the key tourism destinations in New Uzbekistan [8]. By the end of the current year, nine tourism projects with a total value of 22.2 billion soums are planned to be implemented in Bakhmal district of Jizzakh region. This was reported by the Tourism Committee to a correspondent of Kursiv Uzbekistan.

According to the district administration, as of October 1, four projects worth 7 billion soums have already been commissioned, while construction and installation works on the remaining projects are ongoing. Bakhmal district borders Tajikistan and the Samarkand region. Its total area is 1.86 thousand square kilometers, and its population is 174.2 thousand people. Nearly 50% of the territory consists of mountainous areas, making ecotourism one of the main directions for regional development.

The district has dozens of pilgrimage sites such as Novqa Ota, Usmat Ota, Bog'imozor Ota, and Khoja Kondalang, as well as more than 68 archaeological monuments. In addition, there are nine villages with high tourism potential in the area [9].

In 2024–2025, a working group established by the Bakhmal forestry administration conducted an ecotourism assessment of the forestry lands. As a result, locations suitable for the construction of tourist accommodation facilities and the development of ecotourism routes were identified. According to the findings, approximately 50 hectares across 13 sites were found to be suitable for such development (Figure 2).

In Bakhmal district, it is proposed to specialize the territory of “Boyqong’ir” village in the “Muzbuloq” citizens’ assembly area based on a master plan for **luxury tourism** (including chalets and premium recreation facilities), as well as to utilize forest areas as ecological walking trails[10].

It is also planned to grant the status of a “**Tourism Village**” to “Boyqong’ir” village by actively involving the local population in tourism activities.

Additionally, the children’s camp located in the “Qutlig’obod” citizens’ assembly area of Bakhmal district is proposed to be used as an accommodation facility during the off-season period.

Furthermore, apple orchards in Bakhmal district are to be transformed into tourist attractions, offering visitors national and branded apple-based products throughout the year [11].

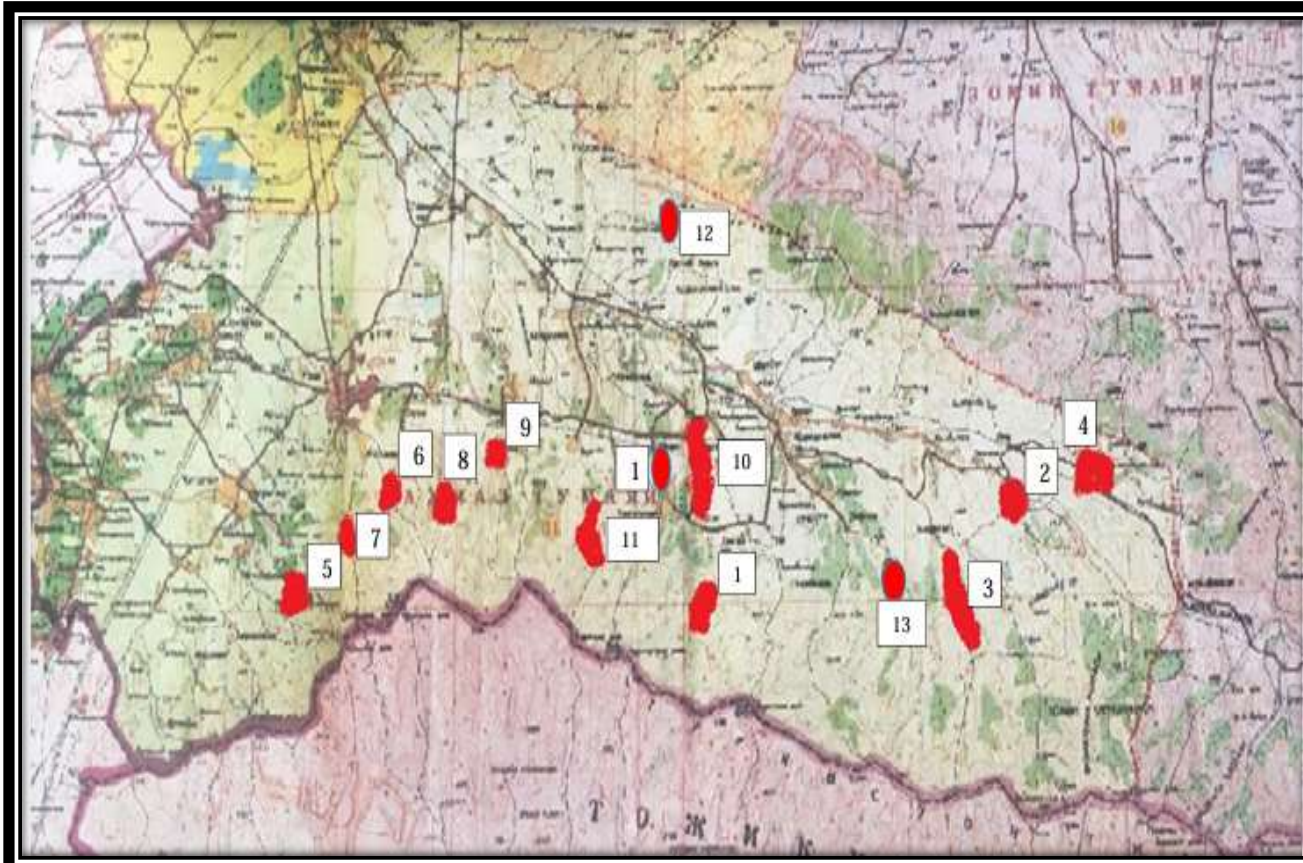


Figure 2. Proposed locations for the establishment of ecotourism areas in the Bakhmal State

Forestry:

1. Qoropchi Soy (Oyqor) – 5.0 ha
2. Zartepa (Guralashsoy) – 3.5 ha
3. Boyqong’iroy – 5.0 ha
4. To’g’انبuloq site – 5.0 ha
5. Do’lana Camp – 5.0 ha
6. Quchchisoy – 7.0 ha
7. Zarkhanasoy – 7.0 ha (Qutlug’obod Citizens’ Assembly Area)
8. Qizilsuv (Novqa Citizens’ Assembly Area, Oqtosh village)
9. Chinor Ota (Mug’al village)
10. Dang’arasoy (Bakhmal Rural Citizens’ Assembly Area) – 2.0 ha
11. Jom-Jom Soy – 5.0 ha (Nushkent Citizens’ Assembly Area)
12. Galdirovut forest area (Molguzar Ota pilgrimage site)
13. Ko’kjar forestry division

In order to develop ecotourism, agro-tourism, and extreme tourism in Bakhmal district, the implementation of major tourism projects is planned for 2025–2030. In particular, an ecotourism cluster

called “BAXMAL ECO VILLAGE” will be established on 40 hectares in the Muzbuloq citizens’ assembly area, adjacent to the Zaamin–Bakhmal State Nature Reserve.

Within this cluster, the construction of a 3-star hotel, accommodation facilities built from light and environmentally friendly materials, tourist trails, scenic viewpoints, camping and glamping zones, yurts, and eco-houses is planned.

In addition, wellness and tourism centers will be established in mountainous areas located at an altitude of 2,000 meters above sea level, including nine villages such as Boyqong’ir, Muzbuloq, and Jom-Jomsoy. As part of these projects, the construction of three hotels (with a capacity of 420 beds), about 100 villas (chalets), and service infrastructure is planned.

According to the results of 2024, Bakhmal district was visited by 46.2 thousand foreign tourists and 203.2 thousand domestic tourists. The export of tourism services reached 6.6 million US dollars. Currently, the district has 547 accommodation facilities (with a total capacity of 3,470 beds), 325 camping sites, 200 family guesthouses, 20 hostels, and 1 sanatorium in operation.

Approximately 50% of Bakhmal district consists of mountainous areas, which creates broad opportunities for the development of ecotourism. At the same time, the district has more than 10 pilgrimage sites, 68 archaeological monuments, and 27 natural streams, which provide opportunities for developing pilgrimage and historical tourism [12].

At present, the village of Novqa, located in the Novqa citizens’ assembly area of Bakhmal district, has been granted the status of a “**Tourism Village.**”

The existing potential and ongoing projects are expected to elevate Bakhmal district into one of the important tourism destinations in New Uzbekistan. In Bakhmal district of Jizzakh region, nine tourism projects with a total value of 22.2 billion soums are planned to be implemented by the end of the current year[13]. This was reported by the Tourism Committee to a correspondent of Kursiv Uzbekistan.

According to the district administration, as of October 1, four projects worth 7 billion soums have already been commissioned, while construction and installation works on the remaining projects are still ongoing.

Bakhmal district borders Tajikistan and the Samarkand region. It covers an area of 1.86 thousand square kilometers and has a population of 174.2 thousand people. Nearly 50% of the territory consists of mountainous areas, which makes ecotourism one of the key directions for regional development[14].

The district has dozens of pilgrimage sites such as “Novka Ota,” “Usmat Ota,” “Bog’imozor Ota,” and “Khoja Kondalang,” as well as more than 68 archaeological monuments. In addition, there are nine villages in the area with high tourism potential [15].

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan prohibits the organization of ecotourism routes in specially protected natural areas, it would be appropriate to revise this legislation in accordance with current requirements. In other words, based on the study of international experience, the establishment of ecotourism routes to natural sites such as rock formations, caves, waterfalls, and gorges in protected areas would contribute both to the conservation of nature and to its economic support. Furthermore, it would also support the socio-economic development of remote mountainous settlements located around protected areas. Despite the favorable policies and initiatives implemented by the government to support ecotourism, investment in this sector remains relatively low. Coordination between local authorities and businesses is often fragmented, and many regions develop tourism in an uncoordinated manner. To fully realize the potential of ecotourism, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation between government authorities, local communities, and the private sector. This will help ensure the sustainable and environmentally responsible development of the sector.

On the other hand, what do ecotourists seek? They aim to experience interesting and unique ecosystems, observe a wide variety of wildlife, and witness the natural growth and distribution of endemic plant species with their own eyes, as well as to photograph or scientifically interpret them. Taking this into account, the following aspects should be considered for the development of tourism in the Bakhmal forestry area:

- Conducting an inventory of natural sites;
- Creating favorable conditions for visitors at sites with tourism potential;

- Developing road infrastructure leading to natural attractions;
 - Improving the local population's culture of interaction with tourists;
 - Enhancing the capacity of personnel in the field of ecotourism;
 - Developing new ecological routes;
 - Promoting ecological sites and routes widely;
 - Attracting potential investors to the sector;
 - Encouraging pluralistic institutional structures and improving the intermediary role of state forestry management bodies in supporting the development of other institutions;
 - Conducting detailed assessments of professional requirements and developing a critical mass of expert knowledge to meet projected needs;
 - Strengthening the technical and professional skills of forestry staff through appropriate training programs;
 - Developing and implementing joint projects between forestry institutions and existing research organizations and development institutions to create and adapt technologies to combat desertification, watershed degradation, and other environmental problems;
 - Sending forestry personnel to foreign countries with advanced ecotourism practices for professional training;
- Organizing seminars and training sessions on ecology and ecotourism for communities living around forestry areas.

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