

# Collaborative Park Management

## *Partnerships, Financing and Ecotourism at Komodo National Park*

Indonesia's current trend towards decentralization has prompted the government to promote collaborative management in national parks and protected areas. This new initiative is aimed at enhancing the role and responsibility of the various stakeholders in park management, to better gain the support of local communities, as well as to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the management itself. The collaborative management structure is site-specific, in general involving the local government, local communities and other key stakeholders. The government has taken this initiative as a policy and will soon issue a guideline which will further promote the implementation of collaborative management.

Komodo is one of the first to have this initiative in place and has also been selected as a pilot site to test new park financing mechanisms. This creates an exciting opportunity for the Conservancy to work with key stakeholders to implement an innovative new structure for park management, financing, and ecotourism.

The Conservancy and the Komodo Park Authority have completed a 25-year management plan which concludes that ecotourism is the best strategy to achieve self-sustainability for the park. A joint venture with an Indonesian company is formed to manage tourism that will eventually cover the cost of park operations. Local people will be trained as tour and dive guides and other services, and will be able to supplement



A diver at Komodo National Park examines corals ©Burt Jones and Maurine Shimlock/Secret Sea Visions

income by designing and selling handicrafts.

The sustainable financing strategy will increase the revenue from park entrance fees and user fees for selected activities, such as diving and dragon watching. A large share of this revenue will be used to support park initiatives such as enforcement, zoning, monitoring, and staff training. The project will also channel a portion of park revenue to local development initiatives. Under this plan, Komodo could be self-sufficient within seven years.

In the next year, the Conservancy will: 1) establish guidelines for sustainable eco-tourism; 2) improve the park's tourism facilities and create a tourism marketing strategy; 3) develop a plan to ensure that park revenue will provide long-term financial security for the park and

benefit local communities; and, 4) conduct studies to determine Komodo's carrying capacity for tourism activities.

This innovative strategy has the potential to ensure the lasting protection of Komodo's rich biodiversity, create a sustainable source of income for local communities, and serve as a model for other parks in Indonesia.

Komodo National Park encompasses nearly half a million acres of land and ocean area. Best known for its famous Komodo dragons, the park is also one of the world's richest marine habitats. Although Komodo is protected by law, its biodiversity remains threatened by inadequate funding for park management and a lack of incentives for local communities to use the park's resources sustainably.