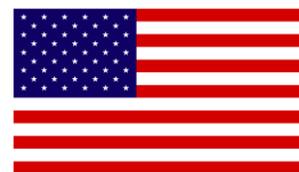


# Press Release



Embassy of the United States of America  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
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## **TWO NEW U.S. SUPPORTED ECO-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY TOURISM DESTINATIONS OPEN IN THE CENTRAL RIFT VALLEY, OROMIA REGION**

**March 21, 2013, Ziway, Oromia** – Two new U.S. government supported tourism destinations were inaugurated today in the Oromia Region. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Alliance (ESTA) project with funding from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the new community-based tourism sites in Lephis and Ziway are now ready to receive tourists. The sites were developed to present natural and historic attractions and activities in an eco-friendly manner that will maximize the benefit for the local community. The attractions and activities include traditional tukuls, the Lephis Waterfall, bird-watching, Tulu Gudo Island, viewing handcrafts made by area artisans and enjoying the fresh local grilled fish.

High-level officials from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the first official group of tourists attended the event. USAID Ethiopia Agricultural Officer Cullen Hughes commented that, “For tourism to be successful and sustainable, both the land and communities in the destination must be healthy and productive. The project’s holistic development approach has created the ideal environment for tourism growth and provides visitors with an authentic experience of Ethiopia.”

The launch event also highlighted the USAID-pioneered Travelers’ Philanthropy Program, where tourists can participate directly in local conservation efforts by purchasing solar stoves for local families or planting trees to assist with land rehabilitation. Ziway and Lephis are part of an innovative network of six community conservation areas, the first of its kind in Ethiopia. These two new sites not only create ecotourism opportunities, but will also attract other business and provide benefit to 40,000 local community members.

“We are thrilled to partner with Ethiopia in attracting responsible tourists to its new destinations. Lephis and Ziway will attract more global visitors to those already planning to visit Ethiopia’s famed historical and cultural sites. At Lephis and Ziway, travelers can also make a positive impact in the lives of local community members,” said Senior Vice President of Programs Tim Ogborn, Counterpart International, the lead implementing organization.

The ESTA project, implemented by Counterpart International, is a five-year, seven million dollar initiative that promotes biodiversity conservation through sustainable tourism and other alternative livelihoods. To date, 34 associations have been created to support sustainable livelihood generation and biodiversity conservation in the Central and Southern Rift Valleys in Ethiopia.

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