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OAS-DSD Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

SUSGREN ReefFix Project

The OAS-DSD ReefFix Project is an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Coral Reef and Mangrove Restoration and Watershed Management Demonstration program that works with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to restore and effectively manage coastal resources.

History of OAS DSD assistance in marine protected areas in SVG. In 1985, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (GOSVG) requested assistance from the Organization of American States (OAS) for developing tourism within the Grenadines. This led to a detailed proposal for the formation of a 'Tobago Cays Marine Park' with initial investment costs estimated at \$US 1 million¹. The Marine Park now consists of a 1,400-acre sand-bottom lagoon which encompasses the five cays. The Cays have an extensive and well-developed coral reef complexes. Major users of the area include: cruise ships (an estimated 50,000 visitors each year of which 10,000 visit the Cays); yachts (an estimated 3,000 yachts anchor in the lagoon each year); day charters (from nearby hotels); sport divers and snorkelers; and fishing enthusiasts. In 2019, The TCMP has a staff of 20 and is financially independent and sustainable collecting \$6/head and \$24/head per boat as a yacht mooring fee. Legislation reform underway will require all boats to pay the mooring fee as those that anchor are not charged.

WRI Tourism and Recreation Valuation Tool using average values indicated that the reefs in the Tobago Cays could be contributing over US\$22 million per year to the Vincentian economy.

The OAS DSD grants mentioned above supported the South Coast Marine Management Area (SCMMA) and the Tobago Cays Marine Park (TCMP) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) through the implementation of a comprehensive water quality monitoring program, improvements to the enforcement capabilities of rangers operating within those two MMAs and a targeted enforcement related public awareness and education campaign. Further, the projects re-assessed MPA gaps in fulfilment of the 20% Caribbean Challenge Initiative target. OAS, SusGren, and the *Environmental Attackers* work closely with SVG National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority.

Joint efforts of OAS and SVG sustainable development include multiple projects over the last 10 years:

- Economic Valuation of Goods and Services Derived from Coral Reefs in the Tobago Cays Marine Park
http://www.oas.org/dsd/IABIN/Component1/ReefFix/St.Vincent_Jan12-15/ReefFix-SVG.htm
- St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica. Implementation of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Enforcement Workshop. Case Study Manual Final Report
<http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/biodiversity/ReefFix/GrenadaMPAWorkshop/MPA%20Workshop%204-22-2013.pdf>
- Harmonization of Yacht Mooring Fees in OECS Countries.
<http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Biodiversity/ReefFix/Fee%20Harmonization%20Project%20Final%20Doc.pdf>
- South Coast Marine Project.
<http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Biodiversity/ReefFix/SVG%20South%20Coast%20Final%20Report.pdf>.

Additionally the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI) project assisted with *Sharing Best Management Practices for Coral Reef and Mangrove Conservation in the Grenadines and an MPA Networking Meeting*:

<http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Biodiversity/WHMSI/Sharing%20Best%20Management%20Practices%20for%20Coral%20Reef%20and%20Mangrove%20Conservation%20in%20the%20Grenadines.pdf>

http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Biodiversity/WHMSI/poster_fundacion_cethus_20131014_3-01.jpg

Current Activities. An OAS grant was awarded to Sustainable Grenadines - Grenadines NGO (SusGren). SusGren works on conservation of the coastal and marine environment and sustainable livelihoods for the people in the Grenadines focusing on strengthening civil society partners so that they can better participate in bringing about equitable change. OAS DSD has worked on several activities that include: training workshops, small project support, networking and awareness by facilitating project development and implementation with the engagement of local groups. This specific grant focused on the Junior Ranger Program with emphasis on environmental education and stewardship-building, sustainable livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and strengthening of civil society organizations. This program has enhanced human capacity (empowerment) using participatory integrated sustainable development processes.

- 1.) The OAS/SusGren Junior Rangers objective is to create Youth Environmental Leaders by having children involved in programs of environmental management. Grants from both the Organization of American States and the Phillip Stevenson Foundation continue the

program support the Nature Camp that trained twenty four new Junior Rangers.



- 2.) The OAS and SusGren hosted environmental education programs, for example with the Stephanie Browne Primary School visit to Ashton Lagoon visitor center and ecosystem (that SusGren now manages) that occurred on February 12, 2019 where 45 school

children aged 7-9 did a one-day program.



- 3.) A field trip was also conducted with the Rangers of the Tobago Cays Marine Park, SusGren and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute on turtle monitoring and coral reef health assessment. 9 green sea turtles were spotted in 2 locations. Overall reef health was good with little signs of “stony coral tissue loss disease.” The disease affects over 20 species here in Florida, and there have been reports of it spreading into the Caribbean.

In the Caribbean, coral disease outbreaks are becoming more frequent, severe, and widespread. Many factors are contributing to the problem, including pollution and nitrogen runoff from fertilizers and coastal sewer and septic systems. Scientists state a cause is the steadily increasing ocean temperatures, which have risen at least 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit in the past century, and could increase several more degrees by 2100. Elevated water temperatures can cause coral polyps to expel the algae that provide them with nutrition and spectacular color, leaving the corals bleached. With sufficient time, corals can recover from bleaching, but global climate models indicate that severe bleaching may happen annually by mid-century.

- 4.) OAS also worked with the Union Island Environmental Attackers (UIEA) an “environmental club of self-help community workers” and SusGren distributed free one hundred 1000 gallon water storage tanks to residents.
- 5.) A monitoring field trip and survey was conducted with UIEA on February 20, 2019 specific to the protection of the endemic Union Island gecko that is confined to a 50-hectare patch of forest on Union Island. This single population comprises an estimated 9,960 individuals, including juveniles, but numbers are rapidly declining as a result of rampant poaching for the illegal pet trade.



- 6.) Richard Huber met on several occasions with Mr. Kenneth Williams, Manager, Tobago Cays Marine Park to discuss several initiatives staffing and financing needs and financial sustainability. Mr. Williams made available boats and staff for three field trips for turtle monitoring and reef health assessment to the TCMP. I was pleased to see the OAS logo above the door of the main office and environmental education center.



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1. Heyman, A.M., T.J. Reigert, A. Smith, T. Shallow and J.R. Clark, 1988. Project Proposal Development of the Tobago Cays National Park. Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines and Organisation of American States. 62pp. + Annexes 1-5