

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Building Momentum across the Caribbean: The Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI) Planning Meeting

Grenada Grande Hotel, Grenada - October 21, 2011

Representatives of the ministries of finance and environment involved in the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI) met in Grenada to share advances made in each country in implementing the initiative. The meeting also provided opportunity to discuss the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund and national conservation trust funds; the idea of debt-for-climate adaptation swaps; and, plans to lay the groundwork for the next phase of the Caribbean Challenge.

The Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI) involves eight countries: The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda as well as Saint Kitts and Nevis. Five of these countries: The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St Vincent and Grenadines and Grenada have made formal commitments to protect at least 20% of the near-shore marine and coastal habitats by 2020. All eight countries are participating in the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, a regional endowment under the CCI that will provide sustainable financing for national systems of protected areas in participating countries.

Dr. Spencer Thomas, Grenada, opened the meeting providing an overview of the emergence of the Caribbean Challenge that was first proposed by Grenada and which was inspired by the Micronesia Challenge launched in 2006. In the presentation by Sheldon Cohen of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), he noted that the CCI has three pillars: **(i) CCI is an expression of high-level political will** and commitments by governments to safeguard the marine and coastal environment; **(ii) CCI is an effort to expand the funding** to support marine and coastal conservation, with an emphasis on putting in place sustainable finance mechanisms; **and (iii) CCI is an effort to accelerate on-the-ground action, such as** establishment and management of marine protected areas, training and information sharing, and climate adaptation actions.

The meeting provided opportunity to discuss issues that had been raised during consultations between TNC and government officials in the region that had revealed that while the Caribbean Challenge is considered an important initiative: (i) Governments would like to take a stronger leadership role; (ii) consideration should be given to potential expansion of the scope of the CCI, beyond just protected areas; and (iii) new financial resources beyond the initial commitments need to be mobilized.

Rob Weary, TNC, provided an update on the **Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF)**, announcing that it will be launched by the end of 2011 with the initial target for Phase I being US\$ 40 million (already US \$32 million has been secured from TNC, the German government, the GEF, and The Bahamas). The regional fund will channel money to the national trust funds of participating CCI countries, which will approve grants to NGOs and government agencies, and be overseen by a board of trustees composed of government officials and non-governmental representatives.

Debt for Adaptation Swaps were raised during the meeting as a potential innovative sustainable financing mechanism that could achieve multiple goals: (i) dramatically reduce unsustainable debt levels of small island developing states (SIDS); (ii) efficiently apply adaptation funding by donors to achieve high leverage for adaptation projects; and (iii) generate long-term flows of funding to support SIDS implementation of climate adaptation strategies, focusing on the marine/coastal environment. Such debt swap mechanisms have proven successful in developing countries around the world, including Belize. By engaging in such debt swaps, SIDS would be well-positioned to fund coastal and marine adaptation activities and provide social and economic benefits in a sustainable manner in perpetuity.

Outcomes of Discussion of Phase II of Caribbean Challenge Initiative

- * Support for a Caribbean Summit in late 2012, tentatively to be co-hosted by Hon. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada, and Sir Richard Branson, Chairman of Virgin Group, to galvanize political and private sector commitment to marine and coastal conservation.
- * Caribbean Summit Steering Committee established with first meeting to be held at end of November. Whilst the purpose and scope of the Committee is yet to be defined, it will broadly support the planning for a summit process and a possible donors roundtable to support CCI. Sheldon Cohen, TNC, was asked to follow up with governments to set this Steering Committee process in motion.
- * Interest from countries in further exploration of innovative financing tools such as the Debt for Adaptation Swaps.

Advances on the Caribbean Challenge Initiative: Country Reports

The following section summarizes the verbal country reports provided during the meeting. It is not an exhaustive list.

Bahamas. Significant effort has been focused on establishing the Bahamas Protected Areas Fund (BPAF) as the sustainable financing mechanism directly linked to the Caribbean Challenge and the CBF. The Bahamas national trust fund will provide a reliable stream of funding to the countries protected areas. Draft legislation has been prepared for establishment of the fund, which is pending consideration by Parliament. National level coordination has been led through the establishment of a national implementation committee including Bahamas National Trust, Marine Department of Marine Resources, BEST and TNC. The trust fund effort is part of a larger GEF Project currently in implementation, which will have a mid-term review in 2012.

- ✳ **On the ground:** Since CCI was launched, Bahamas has established 6 protected area, with West Side of Adros being the largest.
- ✳ **Successes:** Continuing expansion of network, collaboration on implementation, linkages with invasive species and linkages with building national capacity.
- ✳ **Challenge:** Getting the sustainable financing mechanism established as per original schedule. The CBF is behind schedule with concern that this will impact on the GEF project mid-term evaluation.

Dominican Republic received GEF funds to focus on sustainable finance, including establishment of the national protected areas trust fund. The national trust fund has been established as well as revision of laws for protected areas. Eight projects have been approved for funding and implementation in 2011. A trust fund capitalization strategy will be published in the near future and then will move towards implementation. The Master Plan for the national protected area system is near completion and endorsement, and is currently being revised by the Ministry of Environment, with stakeholder input. Activities have been undertaken to improve management effectiveness of protected areas, including a project with CAMPAM to develop a guide on establishing MPAs and marine practices.

- ✳ **On the ground:** Established 30 new protected areas in 2009.
- ✳ **Success:** Has already surpassed 20% CCI target on marine and coastal protected areas.
- ✳ **Challenge:** Enforcement of protected areas.

Grenada. The National Systems Plan for Protected Areas was approved by Cabinet. Activities are focused on improving management effectiveness including monitoring and evaluation as well as enhancing community engagement in management planning.

- ✳ **On the ground:** Three marine/coastal protected areas established: Moliniere, Sandy Island Oyster Bed, Woburn Clarks Court. Additional priority areas being considered for protection: e.g. Levera, South Coast of Grenada, and Carriacou
- ✳ **Success:** Priority protected areas identified.
- ✳ **Challenge:** Enforcement of protected areas.

Jamaica. Protected Areas Master Plan is nearly complete. It is presently being reviewed by the protected areas committee after which there will be consultation, revision and endorsement by Cabinet. A GEF project is underway to support the CCI. A mooring buoys program is being carried out in Palisadoes/Port Royal.

- ✳ **On the ground:** nine new marine protected areas ("fish sanctuaries") have been established.

St Kitts and Nevis recently commenced work on planning marine protected areas. Discussions have been initiated on feasibility of establishing a new trust fund or using existing trust funds to link to the CBF.

- ✳ **On the ground:** central forest reserve protects all land above 1000 feet which equates to more than 20% of St Kitts.

St Lucia. A study has been initiated to inform priority locations for protected areas. A committee was established in 1995 that manages activities of divers, fisherman, yachts etc for the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA), the one MPA that currently exists in the country. SMMA has a trust fund and management authority established under the Fisheries Act. There are plans to expand the geographic scope of SMMA. St Lucia is participating in the GEF Eastern Caribbean sustainable financing project and Caribbean Biodiversity Fund.

St Vincent and the Grenadines. National Parks and Protected System Plan adopted by cabinet in May 2010. It proposes several new MPAs. For existing MPA Tobago Keys no management plan is yet in place. Stakeholder consultations have been held to identify funds to match the pledges made for the CBF. A Debt for adaptation swap concept was presented to the Finance Ministry in 2010 by TNC as an opportunity for sustainable financing. An economic evaluation of protected areas is underway. A willingness to pay study for protected areas was completed in 2010. Progress is being made toward gazettelement of a new marine and coastal protected area: South Coast Marine Park. SVG is working with TNC on a project entitled "At the Water's Edge", centered on enhancing resilience to climate change and strengthening ecosystem-based adaptation.

Caribbean Challenge Initiative

For further information on the CCI contact: Sheldon Cohen, Director of External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy's Caribbean Program and Interim Coordinator of Caribbean Challenge Initiative, scohen@tnc.org.

For further information on the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, National Conservation Trust Funds, Sustainable Finance Mechanisms, including debt for adaptation swaps contact: Robert Weary, Director, Conservation Finance, Caribbean Program, The Nature Conservancy, rweary@tnc.org.

Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) promotes action for island conservation and sustainable livelihoods by inspiring leadership, catalyzing commitments, facilitating collaboration among all islands. The Partnership is recognized as an implementation mechanism for advancing conservation of island biodiversity by the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity. Commitments include the Caribbean Challenge, the Micronesia Challenge, the Coral Triangle Initiative and the emerging Western Indian Ocean Coastal Challenge and the Global Islands Database. For more information on GLISPA, please visit: www.glispa.org.

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