

Bahamas Mid-Size Project Summary Report

“Development and Effective Management of Marine Protected Areas in The Abacos”

The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) has led the implementation of the Mid-Size Project, which seeks to advance the efforts of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative. *The project was supported by a UNEP-CEP/CaMPAM grant with funding from the Italian Cooperation Agency to assist the countries associated to the Caribbean Challenge.* The summary gives a snapshot of the project’s progress based on 4 management components;

Management Planning

This is the first attempt to develop management plans for numerous Protected Areas (PAs). BNT has partnered with key organizations and Government Departments to ensure the requirements of a General Management Plan are met. The following activities have been completed to-date;

- Engaged Local Government Officials in the management planning process to build support for the project, and for involvement in management planning activities (Dec 2011).
- Established a core management team amongst BNT, The Department of Marine Resources (DMR), Friends of The Environment and scientists to assist with identifying existing data relevant to constructing management plans.
- Contracted a writer to consolidate data for the completion of two (2) management plans for the 4-Marine Parks and 2-Marine Reserves in Abaco managed by BNT and DMR respectively.
- Conducted two (2) management planning meetings/workshop.
- Conducted four (4) community meetings.
- Completed the 1st draft of 2 management plans for Walker’s Cay National Park, Black Sound Cay Reserve, Fowl Cays National Park and Pelican Cays Land & Sea Park, and the No Name Cay & Crab Cay Marine Reserves.

Evaluation and Monitoring

The Bahamas has concluded Reef Check as the standardized coral reef monitoring tool for MPAs. The Bahamas National Trust certified seven (7) individuals from Bahamas Customs, The Department of Marine Resources, The Bahamas National Trust, Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organization and Dive Guana, in the



Photo 1: Town Meeting in Cooper’s Town, North Abaco.



Photo 2: Director of Parks, David Knowles, illustrates locations of Abaco MPAs on map @ Town Meeting.



Photo 3: Reef Check EcoDiver Training participants with Trainer Lakeshia Anderson. BNT Parks Planner (front left)

Reef Check EcoDiver Training Course in Abaco, 21st – 23rd March, 2012, followed by Reef Check surveys in the Fowl Cays National Park. This training increased monitoring capacity to twenty-four (24) in-country, with twelve (12) residing in the Abacos.

Utilization of GIS and its layers

The Bahamas National Trust, in an effort to establish a functioning GIS Unit, has identified key individuals within the organization to undergo training. A total

of five (5) representatives from BNT and DMR completed training in GIS Fundamentals I & II (26th – 30th March, 2012). GIS equipment and software has been purchased to enable the work of the newly formed unit.

Improvement of Community Involvement and Stakeholder Opinion

Education and outreach are critical to effective management of Protected Areas. Through the management planning process, community meetings and engagement with local governmental officials (Dec 2011 – Mar 2012) have aided in creating a sense of ownership and lasting support for PAs. Input from communities has facilitated the development of management plans and educational materials.

For more information contact Lindy Knowles, Bahamas National Trust, lknowles@bnt.bs



Photo 4: Reef Check participant conducts practice survey @ Mermaid's Reef, Abaco



Photo 5: GIS Fundamentals Training Participants with Trainer, Kerry-Ann Mahabeer (right) of Spatial Innovision Ltd, ESRI JA.