



# TRUST NOTES

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## NATIONAL PARKS RECEIVE SUPPORT

# Government Pledges \$1 million a Year

In a stunning vote of confidence, the government of The Bahamas increased their support for the country's national park system ten fold. During the budget presentation to the nation in June of this year, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham announced the annual \$1 million dollar grant to the BNT, saying the funds would "enable them to continue with the excellent work which they do promoting our cultural heritage and protecting our natural environment."

Glen Bannister, President of the BNT said "This increased support from the government shows that they have confidence in our management of the protected area system and in the plans we have to provide access and infrastructure for the people of The Bahamas."

The National Park system covers over 700,000 acres and stretches from Walker's Cay in the north to Inagua in the south. The Trust has been aggressively conducting community outreach in Exuma, Abaco and Andros as they work toward formulating management plans for the parks on these islands.

New parks are also on the

horizon as the BNT has submitted proposals for three new protected areas to government for four areas in San Salvador; Fowl Cay in Abaco; and Perpall Tract in New Providence.

The announcement of the increased subscription from the government created a tremendous feeling of elation and pride amongst the staff and officers of the Trust. "The Trust has worked for over 40 years doing great work with limited capacity," said Eric Carey, BNT Executive Director. "This increased subscription will allow us to hire needed staff to implement management plans and increase outreach and support to local communities who can benefit from sustainable tourism initiatives

in the national parks."

## Baker's Bay pledges \$1.2 million over six years

The BNT's ability to achieve its mission was further enhanced on June 25th when Discovery Land Company developers of the Baker's Bay Golf and Ocean Club at Great Guana Cay, Abaco announced a pledge of \$1.2 million to the organization.

The pledge will begin immediately with \$200k awarded annually for the first three years. Generally, the funds will be used to assist with on the ground management of national parks across the country with emphasis on projects around Great

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BNT Council and Officers receive donation from Baker's Bay. From left: Neil McKinney, Glenn Bannister, Livingston Marshall, Baker's Bay, Beverly J.T. Taylor and Eric Carey.

# New Long Range Strategy for Grand Bahama Parks Unveiled

Bahamas National Trust staff from Nassau met recently with new Executive Officers of the BNT's Grand Bahama Regional Committee and Grand Bahama staff to strategically plan for Grand Bahama's National Parks: The Rand Nature Centre, the Lucayan National Park and Peterson's Cay.

According to Karin Sanchez, new BNT Grand Bahama Regional Committee Chairperson, "The Committee was delighted with this opportunity to participate in long range planning for National Parks on Grand Bahama. We are very excited to coordinate with our colleagues in Nassau, our vision for membership expansion and participation on Grand Bahama, and to work with them in providing support for the management of these outstanding natural areas."

The three national parks on Grand Bahama feature diverse ecosystems—pine forest, mangrove wetlands, beaches, coral reefs and underwater cave systems. The BNT recently re-opened the Rand Nature Centre after extensive renovations and the building of a first class art gallery in memory of local Grand Bahama resident and artist Glory Banks. The RNC is the headquarters of the BNT on Grand Bahama and RNC Administrator and Education Specialist Mrs. Cecilia Bodie has been working with schools and the Ministry of Education to coordinate

educational programmes on the environment and to provide curriculum support and ecosystem training workshops for teachers.

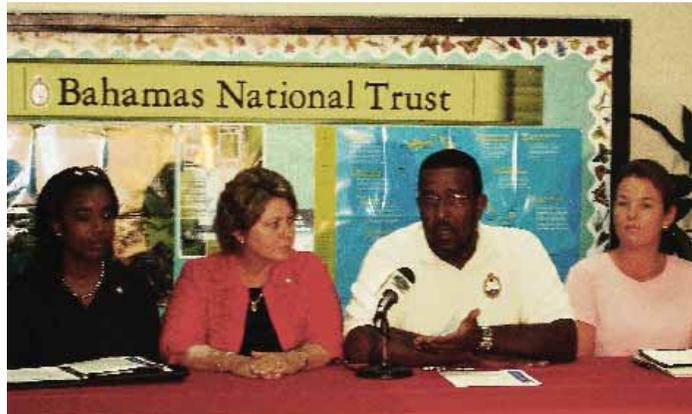
The BNT will be devoting special planning and discussions to the management of the Lucayan National Park (LNP). The park was initially made a protected area for its importance

as a cultural resource to the Bahamas. In 1986, archeologists discovered four Lucayan skeletons in one cave as well as Pre-Columbian artifacts in other areas of the park. LNP contains one of the largest underwater cave systems in the world and is invaluable as an outdoor classroom and outstanding nature experience for visitors to Grand Bahama.

Recently, the BNT out of concern for the safety of visitors to the park closed the Gold Rock Creek Bridge. The bridge had been repaired numerous times but recently suffered damage from the hurricanes that affected Grand Bahama. Although, there is additional access

through another path to the beach, several tour operators have expressed concern over the closing of the bridge.

Eric Carey, BNT Executive Director commented, "We are completely committed to the replacement of the Lucayan Bridge with a first class structure that is complemented by interpretive signage which will make the Lucayan National Park come alive. We are fully aware of the concern of tour operators and are working with the Ministry of Tourism, the



*Pictured from left: Tamica Rahming, Director of Parks, Lynn Gape, Deputy Executive Director, Eric Carey, Executive Director and Karin Sanchez, GB Regional Committee Chair met to discuss strategic planning for Grand Bahama.*

Grand Bahama Port Authority and the local business community to coordinate fundraising and planning for the replacement of the Gold Rock Creek Bridge."

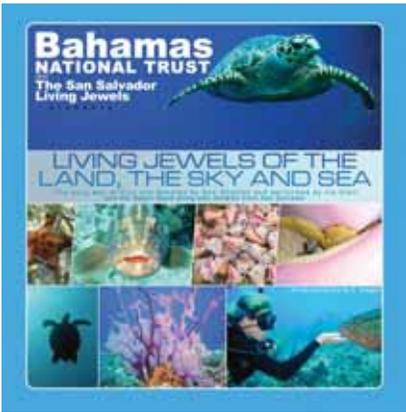
While in Grand Bahama, the BNT, met with a number of organizations and individuals, to bring them up to date on the BNT's vision for the Grand Bahama National Parks. "We were well received by our partners in Grand Bahama," commented Lynn Gape, Deputy Executive Director. "Our meeting with the Grand Bahama Development Company was especially beneficial as we identified several areas where they can assist us with planning for the future in the Lucayan National Park and the Rand Nature Centre."

The Grand Bahama Regional Branch was established in the early 1980s to facilitate the Trust's expanding presence on Grand Bahama. It has played many critical roles over the years from helping with the day to day management of the three heavily-used national parks on Grand Bahama to spearheading special projects and fund raising drives.

For more information on how you can get involved with the BNT on Grand Bahama call the Rand Nature Centre at 242-353-5438 or email [bnt@bahamasnationaltrust.org](mailto:bnt@bahamasnationaltrust.org)



*The bridge at the Lucayan National Parks has been declared unsafe by engineers.*



## Living Jewels of the Land, Sea and Sky

"Living Jewels of the Land, Sea and Sky" is a new song being promoted in partnership by The Trust and The San Salvador Living Jewels, a local organization whose primary goal is to establish and support a National Land and Sea Park on San Salvador. The BNT submitted a proposal for a National Park on San Salvador in May of this year and the CD is part of the ongoing campaign to assist in the establishment of the park.

Living Jewels of the Land, the Sky and Sea is a song about the Crown Jewels of the Bahamas. The song's message is to conserve "the living jewels of land, sky and sea" such as corals, seabirds, conchs and iguanas and sends a message about the perils of over fishing, habitat destruction and pollution.

"We are very excited to release this song with its catchy beat and conservation message to the Bahamian public," said Tamica Rahming, BNT Director of Parks and Science. "This wonderful song reminds us that people come from all around the world to see our wildlife and its diversity and reminds us that we need to protect our living jewels."

The song was written and donated by Ron Shaklee, a geography professor who has been visiting San Salvador for many years. It was recorded by Ira Storr and the Spank Band with the children of San Salvador. Copies of the new single are available on CD at The Bahamas National Trust on Village Road.



## BNT message told at Crab Fest 2007

The Nature Conservancy and Andros Conservancy and Trust joined the BNT in bringing festival participants information on the Andros National Parks, Kerzner's South Andros Marine Project and other pressing conservation issues. The BNT launched its new game challenging participants to identify animals and plants and answer questions on their life cycles and habitats. The game was a big hit with youngsters attending the festival. Pictured are Shelley Cant, BNT Education Officer and Tamica Rahming, BNT Director of Parks with young enthusiastic Androsians.

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Guana Cay and The Abacos, for joint educational initiatives with the Abaco based Friends of the Environment, and capacity building for the BNT. Thereafter, the second three-year grant will be awarded contingent on the successful achievement of the above mentioned goals and the overall performance of the organization.

The Trust visited the development earlier this year and were impressed with the Bakers Bay's efforts to follow the best environmental management practices and especially the goals and objectives of the projects environmental impact assessment and environmental management plans.

"This is a very significant contribution to the enormous task before us. We acknowledge that the development at Baker's Bay will have an impact on the natural environment." Mr Glen Bannister, BNT President, said, "however the developers have demonstrated a commitment to very high environmental standards. They have an aggressive environmental management plan that has already effected the removal of most of the invasive species on the cay and restored the affected habitats. Furthermore, they have exceeded many of the conditions set by the Bahamas Environment Science and Technology Commission (BEST) and appear very open to novel approaches that respect and protect the environment."

According to Tamica Rahming, Director of Parks and Science for the BNT, "This grant from the Discovery Land Company will assist us in implementing our management plans for the Abaco parks. Abaconians

## Executive Motors Aids Trucks Purchase

The Trust recently purchased two Toyota HILUX trucks for conservation project work. Executive Motors gave assistance with the ordering, shipment and a price discount. Funding for the purchase came from the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants coordinated by US Fish & Wildlife Service International. The trucks will be used to implement conservation projects on Inagua and the Northern Bahamas (Andros, Abaco, Grand Bahama and New Providence). Additional funding for the Inagua truck came from the Global Environment Facility and Archie Carr Centre for Sea Turtle Research.



Barry Pinder, Sales Manager Executive Motors and Eric Carey, Executive Director.

have provided us with excellent suggestions for their parks and this grant will greatly assist in making their vision come true.

# Visitor-friendly Improvements at Union Creek Reserve

BNT Deputy Executive Director, Lynn Gape and Tamica Rahming, Director of Parks and Science recently traveled to Inagua to discuss upgrading the facilities at Union Creek Reserve in order to provide improved infrastructure for visitors and residents of Inagua.

Participating in the discussions were Drs. Alan Bolten and Karen Bjorndal of the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research, who have been conducting sea turtle research at Union Creek for over 30 years.

Initial discussions proposed a plan that would include interpretive signage, a covered seating area and the introduction of a composting toilet. The BNT is also investigating the building of a visitor center which could provide accommodation for researchers on Inagua as part of the overall plan. A proposed outline of suggested nature-oriented activities for Union Creek and the surrounding areas is also being completed. Some of the activities that are being developed are kayaking trips to Sheep Cay or Roller Cay, hiking across Red Pond to freshwater ponds and bird watching at Union Creek, where one can see Greater Antillean Bullfinches, Bahama Parrots and American Oystercatchers along the rocky shore.

Union Creek has been the site of internationally famous sea turtle research and the creek itself provides a safe environment for juvenile green and hawksbill turtles

who spend four to five years of their lives in the creek feeding before heading out to live in the oceans. "The story of Union Creek is one of the great successes in our BNT history," said Lynn Gape, Deputy Executive Director. "We want to share this story with guests and residents who visit Union Creek and make it part of the visitor experience."

"The Trust wants to provide a standard for national parks around the country," said Tamica Rahming, Director of Parks and Science. "We feel that improved signage to create an awareness of the scientific research conducted at Union Creek, as well as working with the community to develop activities that utilize the environment of the reserve without negatively impacting the sensitive research area will serve as a model for other parks in the country."

The Trust held a special community

meeting in the evening featuring Dr. Bjorndal who gave a presentation on the 33 years of research that has taken place at Union Creek. Lynn Gape, BNT Deputy Director ended the program with a presentation that highlighted the resources that are protected in the Inagua National Park and encouraging residents to identify needs they have in developing sustainable tourism initiatives that would use the parks. "During our 33 years of research at Union Creek, the people of Inagua have always welcomed us warmly and we are delighted to work with the Trust in developing sustainable tourism initiatives at Union Creek," said Bjorndal.

Dr. Bjorndal and Bolten serve as scientific advisors to The Trust and Dr. Bolten is the chair of the BNT's Scientific Advisory Committee.



*Pictured from left are Henry Nixon, Dr Karen Bjorndal, Tamica Rahming and Dr Alan Bolten.*



**Bahamas  
National  
Trust**

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