



## ANGUILLA NATIONAL TRUST

# P R E S S   R E L E A S E

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### IMPROVING THE MARINE PARKS SYSTEM PROTECTED AREAS

In an effort to improve the Marine Park system through better management and information (and as a first phase in a two-phase project), the Anguilla National Trust (ANT) and the DFMR has collaboratively developed a project that will assess the status of the ecological integrity of the marine Parks and other key nearshore sites as well as the socio-economic conditions and stressors affecting the Parks. Increasing public awareness to raise the profile of the important coastal environment within Anguillian society is integrated throughout.

In 1993, five marine parks were established in Anguilla. All five of these Parks are located on the north-northwest side of the island. Three of the Marine Parks surround the offshore cays of Dog Island (10km<sup>2</sup>), Prickly Pear (33km<sup>2</sup>), and Sandy Island (5km<sup>2</sup>) while the remaining two lie adjacent to Anguilla's mainland at Little Bay (1km<sup>2</sup>) and Shoal Bay-Island Harbour (19km<sup>2</sup>).

The Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources is currently responsible for the management of these Parks under the Marine Parks Act (1982) which is further supported by the Marine Parks Regulations (1993), the Fisheries Protection Act (1986), and the Cruising Permit Act (1980).

While the DFMR is responsible for enforcing the laws and regulations that govern the Marine Parks no managing body has been designated by the GOA. Although the Department has been installing and maintaining mooring buoys, has erected signs on the coastline (within the boundaries of the Parks), and has designed and distributed brochures on mooring buoys, these activities are being done informally because they fall within the general mandate of promoting sustainable use of the marine environment and not because they are the managing agency. Moreover, this quasi-managerial role has been *ad hoc* since no management plans actually exist for any of these Parks. At the same time, the Executive Council of the GOA has agreed that management of the MPs must be improved and that vesting responsibility to the ANT is one possible solution. Based on the minutes of the Executive Council meeting and an agreement to assign management responsibility to the Trust, the ANT is currently seeking to build its capacity to assume a more active management role. The 2007-2008 budget for the organisation includes (*inter alia*) allocations for the hiring of three Park Wardens, purchasing of a patrol vessel and a four-wheel drive truck, SCUBA diving equipment, training for SCUBA diving and boat captaining, and for fuel for the vehicles.

This project builds on other programmes and initiatives that have been implemented and/or managed by the ANT, the DFMR, or other government departments. That is, with funds provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (United States) (US\$24 000) and the Government of Anguilla (US\$71 000). A total of 40 mooring buoys were installed and are currently being maintained by the DFMR. The

purpose of the initiative was to prevent and limit damage caused by indiscriminate anchoring on sensitive benthic habitats.

The Anguilla Coastal Resource Assessment, Monitoring, and Management (ACRAMAM) Project is currently underway (2005-2007). The project was funded in part by OTEP (£133 183 of the total £165 000). It aims to build capacity for Anguillian environmental stakeholders to implement integrated nearshore and coastal zone management. This will be accomplished through improving basic resource assessment and monitoring techniques and developing an information framework that can be used by decision-makers during their everyday and extraordinary activities. One of the major outputs of the project is the development of a GIS-based Coastal Resources Information System.

A socio-economic assessment of Anguilla's Shoal Bay-Island Harbour Marine Park was conducted (2005-2006) and recently completed. Funded by the United Nations Environment Programme-Caribbean Environment Programme and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association (US\$2000), the project involved collecting and analysing information on the views, perceptions, and uses of the Marine Park by visitors to the area as well as by residents of the communities bordering the Park. Information was collected through a literature review, resident and visitor surveys, and key informant interviews. Staff from the ANT and the DFMR were trained in socio-economic assessments (SocMon Caribbean) during a week-long workshop sponsored by UNEP-CEP and NOAA in mid-2005 in St. Lucia. A technical report was written (*Linking the Social with the Natural: a socio-economic review of Shoal Bay-Island Harbour, Anguilla*) and results were disseminated to MP stakeholders. The usefulness of the exercise in determining the level of awareness, management capacity, as well as of the various types and levels of MP usage has been significant. Expanding the assessment to cover all Marine Parks will help with understanding the views, needs, and behaviour of Anguilla's MPs and the information will contribute to the development and implementation of Park Management Plans.

In November 2006, the ANT and the DFMR participated in a workshop focussing on leadership issues within governance of protected areas. During this regional workshop, participants were encouraged to approach protected areas management from a success standpoint. That is, the premise of the workshop was that significant achievements have been made in parks and protected areas management in the insular Caribbean and that such achievements can create a culture of success that is essential if capacity is to be built.

This particular project (*Enhancing MPA management in Anguilla – Phase I*) lays the foundation for further development of the Marine Parks system in Anguilla. That is, it will provide the information that will allow for a comprehensive gap analysis to be completed (for both marine and terrestrial protected areas). The purpose of this analysis is to determine the adequacy of existing protected areas and it will be based on scientific projections on how much protection is required to ensure habitat representation as called for within the national context and international guidelines. Community and stakeholder meetings will also be held in order to develop zoning and management plans with the former addressing user conflicts while at the same time ensuring that biological/ecological systems, processes, and integrity are maintained. A comprehensive monitoring programme will also be developed – thereby providing a means for measuring the success of MP management initiatives. Both biotic and socio-economic indicators would be included. Similar work has been conducted in a number of other Caribbean islands including the British Virgin Islands, Grenada, and Jamaica with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy.

Socio-economic and biological information, however, must inform the analysis and this data has not yet been collected. This project seeks to address this information gap.

The ANT and the DFMR has discussed this project with other government departments (including the Department of Environment) and the Anguilla Tourist Board and both fully support and endorse the initiative.

As the first phase of a much larger initiative, this project seeks to provide the information and the foundation for the development of a marine protected area network that serves to protect the integrity of Anguilla's marine and coastal habitats while at the same time to allow for appropriate and wise use. In effect, Anguilla's Marine Parks will be converted from what are essentially "paper parks" into fully-functioning, well-managed, and community-supported protected areas. With a number of other Caribbean islands (including other UKOTs) implementing similar strategies, Anguilla will be part of a regional initiative to better manage the coastal environment on which the region is so dependent.

To facilitate the creation a functioning, well-managed Marine Parks network that conserves the health and integrity of Anguilla's marine and coastal habitats through a process that is open, adaptive, participatory, and based on sound scientific information.

1. An **ecological assessment** of the status of Anguilla's benthic habitats within and outside of Marine Parks' boundaries.
  - a. An **ecological survey** of Anguilla's benthic habitats within Marine Park boundaries as well of identified, key habitat sites (based on earlier ground-truthing exercises and GIS mapping activities)
  - b. **Technical report** – ecological assessment based on the field survey findings
2. A **socio-economic assessment** of communities bordering Anguilla's Marine Parks and other users of the areas including visitors
  - a. **Literature review** of historical and current use of the areas, the ecology, physical geography, and any other relevant information about the Parks (as documented in reports, articles, manuals, or notes)
  - b. **Key informant meetings**
  - c. **Resident and visitor surveys** regarding Marine Park use and perceptions
  - d. **Validation meeting**
  - e. **Technical report** – socio-economic assessment of the stakeholders of Anguilla's Marine Parks
3. **Local awareness** of the importance and purpose of Anguilla's Marine Parks and the marine and coastal environments are raised.
  - a. **Resident surveys** regarding their knowledge of Marine Parks as well as of marine and coastal environments
  - b. **Brochures**
  - c. **Jingles/skits**
  - d. **Documentary**
  - e. Newspaper **articles**
  - f. **Presentations** to primary and high school students
4. **Plan of Action** for Marine Park management  
**Recommendations** for Marine Park management