

island resources

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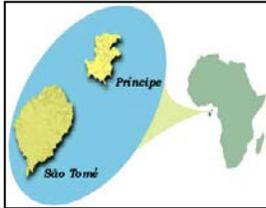
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The Year 2005 In Review

São Tomé and Príncipe Facing A 21st Century Development Challenge

The small island nation of **São Tomé and Príncipe** off the west coast of Africa is a long way from Island Resources Foundation's primary venue in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, the year 2005 found IRF's president **Bruce Potter** engaged in a number of technical consultations there, as one of the world's most indebted and impoverished (but biologically rich) countries takes on its new future as a major petroleum power.

The dual-island state (collectively referred to as São Tomé) lies in the Gulf of Guinea near the equator. With a land mass of 400 square miles and a population of about 150,000, São Tomé was a Portuguese colony until gaining independence in 1975. In the nineteenth century, coffee and cocoa plantations were established, with cocoa emerging as the economic mainstay by the time of independence. The cocoa-based economy has been in steady decline since then, but recent speculation that offshore São Tomé oil reserves may total four billion barrels of crude oil has raised hopes for the country's economic future—yet there are concerns.



For example, oil exporting may undermine the productivity of other economic sectors; additionally, while it will certainly generate significant government revenues it will not generate significant local employment. International donors and advisors have begun to make their way to the country, working with the private and public sectors on how best to manage future oil growth. IRF's Bruce Potter participated in three such missions in 2005. Two were organized by UN poverty expert, **Dr. Jeffrey D. Sachs** (director of Columbia University's Earth Institute), with funding provided by philanthropist **George Soros**.

At the same time, Potter renewed linkages with a local NGO, **Eco-São Tomé and Príncipe (ECO-STP)**, a relationship first forged by IRF's **Edward Towle** during a 1993 visit to the country sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). Towle's assignment was to assist emerging environmental organizations in São Tomé, the most prominent of which—then and now—is the ECO-STP group. It was during that trip that IRF first became acquainted with two key players in IRF's ongoing involvement in São Tomé—**Jan Hartman**, a now-retired USIA officer who maintains a home in São Tomé, and **Henrique Pinto da Costa**, a former Minister and agricultural economist who helped guide the country's transition to democracy and now heads ECO-STP.

(continued, *São Tomé*, page 2)

Sandy shoreline at a luxury resort on Ilhéu das Rôlas,
a small island off the southern tip of São Tomé

(São Tomé, continued from page 1)

Island Resources recently reinforced its long-standing, informal relationship with ECO-STP with establishment of a formal written Alliance. The agreement was undertaken to further cooperation between the two organizations. It provides a legal framework for future activities that focus on the entry of São Tomé into the global petroleum economy and the increased environmental stress likely to arise from this economic activity.

Jointly with our São Tomé partner, IRF has developed a series of community development, biodiversity conservation and tourism promotion proposals that will be submitted to potential funders in 2006. IRF program associate, **Ross van Horn**, has been extremely helpful in working with Bruce Potter on development of these concepts.



IRF president, **Bruce Potter** (left) with **Henrique Pinto da Costa**, at the signing of an Alliance between Island Resources and ECO-STP.

>> **Global Environment Outlook in Latin America and the Caribbean** >>
 In 2005, under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Foundation supported preparation of the fourth *Global Environment Outlook for Latin American and the Caribbean*, scheduled for publication in 2007.

The Global Environment Outlook (**GEO**) process is a UN response to the need for in-depth reporting on the state of the global environment, which has also evolved at regional and sub-regional levels using the same methodology and harmonized conceptual framework.

Since 2000, Island Resources has participated actively in GEO global and regional planning activities and has been designated a Collaborating Centre in the Caribbean for the UNEP GEO program. In 2005, the Foundation and UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in Mexico City signed a Memorandum of Understanding to support technical assistance by IRF to the GEO 4 process, especially for coordinating the GEO-LAC electronic networking system.

IRF's **Bruce Potter** continues to provide leadership for the Foundation's participation in GEO-4, and in this capacity he has attended several GEO-4 global meetings, including two in Nairobi and a regional meeting in Mexico City.



Pictured at the right are (l-r): Raymond Walker, Esther Georges, and Finfun Peters of the **BVI National Parks Trust**, and Noni Georges and Lloyd Gardner of Island Resources Foundation. The group was photographed at Jost van Dyke island as they returned from a field trip to nearby Sandy Cay.

In mid-year 2005, Island Resources completed the second phase of the "Sandy Cay Project" initially funded by the late Laurance Rockefeller in 2000. The project combines forward planning for Sandy Cay's future as a protected natural area in perpetuity with institutional-strengthening assistance for park and protected area management in the BVI.

A final phase of the project, based on a new agreement with Laurance Rockefeller's Estate, was launched late in 2005 and is scheduled for completion in 2007.



We Remember — Alister Hughes

Island Resources Foundation lost a treasured friend this year with the death of Caribbean journalist **Alister Hughes** of Grenada. Alister's brave and responsible reporting from his homeland during some of its darkest days in the 1970s and 1980s nearly cost him his life on more than one occasion. A love of language and a love of the Caribbean guided him throughout a long life and prolific career. But it is an increasingly small group of surviving conservationists who remember Alister's involvement in the earliest days of the "environment movement" in the Caribbean.

When the first board of management of the **Caribbean Conservation Association** (CCA) was formed in 1967, Hughes was elected the first General Secretary of the organization. This was indeed fortunate for one **Edward Towle** of the U.S. Virgin Islands, who found himself—after only one year of residency in the region—inexplicably elected CCA president.



As Towle recalls, "It was Alister's wisdom, humor, and kindness (as well as his familiarity with Roberts Rules of Order!) that helped guide me through those formation years of the CCA, at a time when the environment was just emerging on the Caribbean's issue agenda. Thirty years ago Alister Hughes was an articulate voice not only for press freedom and democratic government, but also for the environment and sustainable development."

Board of Management, **Caribbean Conservation Association**, at the organization's AGM in Puerto Rico, **September 1971**. Pictured (right to left): **Alister Hughes** of Grenada; Julian Hunte of St. Lucia; Lyle Carmichael of Barbados, **Edward Towle** of St. Thomas, A.W. (Algie) Symmonds of Barbados, and D. Lloyd Matheson of St. Kitts.

People & Activities from 2005

>> **Initial Environmental Planning for Major BVI Development Project** >> Although tourism is a major contributor to the economy of the British Virgin Islands (BVI), no large-scale, land-based resort development has occurred there in recent decades.

But this is about to change with the proposed development of a new tourism resort at **Beef Island**, the sixth largest of the islands comprising the BVI archipelago. Primary features include an 18-hole signature golf course, a five-star resort hotel, major new marina facilities, and residential areas. As a result, Beef Island will shortly experience a formidable acceleration of change, principally affecting its landscape and its biological, physical, and socio-economic environment.

Operating within the framework of a new (2005) Physical Planning Act, the developer of the proposed project, **Mr. Raymond Hung**, engaged Island Resources Foundation to carry out preliminary environmental investigations of the site. The Foundation's *Beef Island Environmental Scoping Report and Resource Characterization* was prepared in November, following several months of on-site survey work by IRF's research team, which included **Jean-Pierre Bacle**, **Kevel Lindsay**, **Dr. Lianna Jarecki**, and **Clive Petrovic**.

The Foundation's report identifies major environmental issues associated with the proposed Beef Island Development Project, highlighting potential impacts to natural and historical resources and proposing priority issues to be addressed during the formal Environmental Impact Assessment process.

As the BVI embarks on this major development project, it is important to note that the Territory is also launching a new and comprehensive Physical Planning Act. The Beef Island project represents an opportunity for Government to identify an environmental planning agenda for the development that meets these new standards, while also protecting Beef Island's environment and enhancing economic growth in the Territory.



Beef Island, British Virgin Islands with Mount Alma in the background and Little Cay, Hans Creek in the foreground.

>> **Guidelines to the SPAW Protocol to Protect Endangered Species in the Caribbean** >> The *Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol (SPAW Protocol)* is the only legal instrument for the Wider Caribbean Region that protects critical ecosystems and species while encouraging sustainable economic growth.

It is a regional agreement for biodiversity management and conservation in the Caribbean and became international law in June 2000.

Under the SPAW Protocol, conservation measures are to be undertaken that (1) protect threatened and endangered species of plants and animals and (2) prevent species from becoming threatened or endangered. In support of the second objective, a new consortium of NGO organizations (including Island Resources Foundation, **Monitor Caribbean** and the **Wildlife Land Trust**) was formed in 2005, which has, in turn, undertaken the task of developing SPAW Guidelines to prevent species from becoming endangered or threatened.

With funding from the Direction Régionale de l'Environnement Guadeloupe, acting on behalf of the Regional Activity Centre of the SPAW Protocol, IRF has been designated the administrative agent for the NGO Consortium. A working group has been established which includes **Bruce Potter** and **Barbara Lausche** of IRF, **Milton Kaufmann** of Monitor Caribbean, and **Steven Swartz** of the Wildlife Land Trust of the Human Society of the United States.

Barb Lausche—who under the auspices of IRF's Sandy Cay project drafted new National Parks legislation for the British Virgin Islands—will be drafting the proposed guidelines, working with the NGO Consortium in coordination with the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme office in Kingston, Jamaica and the SPAW Regional Activity Centre in Guadeloupe.

The project is particularly urgent given that plant and animal species in the Wider Caribbean represent the greatest concentration of biodiversity in the Atlantic Ocean Basin, but more than 75% of all regional species are threatened by habitat loss or modification.

We Remember – Roy Thomas

Roy Thomas and the late **Laurance Rockefeller** launched a labor of love more than 35 years ago at an uninhabited, treeless but heavily vegetated island in the British Virgin Islands known as **Sandy Cay**. At the time, Roy Thomas—a graduate of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, England—was engaged in the design and landscaping of two of Mr. Rockefeller's Caribbean properties, Caneel Bay Resort in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Little Dix Bay Resort in the British Virgin Islands. But Sandy Cay was something quite unique and apart from other commercial ventures or philanthropic activities undertaken by Mr. Rockefeller in the Caribbean.

His desire at Sandy Cay was to “grow a wilderness”, in effect, to lend horticultural assistance to Nature in order to create a managed-wilderness island, which Mr. Rockefeller thereafter maintained as an informal park and low-key recreational facility open to the public. In this horticultural experiment on a grand scale, he was assisted by his associate, Roy Thomas, whose role in the successful development of Sandy Cay is inestimable.

While coordinating planning activities for Sandy Cay's future, IRF worked closely with Roy, particularly during the last five years. We came to know him as a unique individual, extremely talented in his chosen profession and ever willing to share his insightful recollections and common-sense wisdom. His love for this one special place will long be remembered, especially by those who will care for, value, and find pleasure at Sandy Cay in the future. Roy Thomas died in October at his home in Woodstock, Vermont.



Roy Thomas, on the beach at Sandy Cay, BVI, his “favorite place on earth”.

Island Resources Foundation, 2005

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◆ A two-year grant to IRF from the University of Puerto Rico was successfully completed this year under the leadership of principal investigator **Carlos Ramos**. Ramos and IRF were part of a collaborative, multi-institutional research program designed to improve science-based management of coral reef ecosystems.

Carlos's recent work in Puerto Rico builds on his more than five years of erosion and sedimentation investigations in St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands. Throughout the Caribbean, the steady rise in sediment-loading rates resulting from land use development is contributing to long-term decline in coral reef cover. In order to better understand this process, Dr. Ramos has developed a GIS-based sediment budget model that assesses the effects of land development on the rate of sediment loading into the marine environment.

◆ A first grant of \$2,500 under the **Judith A. Towle Environmental Studies Program for the Eastern Caribbean** was awarded jointly in 2005 to the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society and the St. Christopher Heritage Society. The Towle Fund was established in 2004 with a \$70,000 grant from the Mukti Fund to the Community Foundation of the U.S. Virgin Islands, which administers the endowment. The Fund honors the work of IRF vice president, Judith Towle, and supports environmental activities in the U.S. and British Virgin Islands and in St. Kitts and Nevis.

◆ In December, the director of the **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment** notified IRF that it was one of the participating organizations in the Millennium Assessment to be recognized by the prestigious **Zayed Prize**, which honors former President Sheikh Zayed of the United Arab Emirates.

More than thirteen hundred scientists and research organizations contributed to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which the Zayed Prize Jury described as a "landmark study" demonstrating that the degradation of ecosystems is progressing at an alarming and unsustainable rate. The prize is valued at \$300,000.

◆ IRF founding president and current chairman of the Board of Trustees, **Edward Towle**, underwent a second leg amputation during 2005, which has limited the scope of his physical activities but not the breadth of his intellectual curiosity or the range of his commitment to the Foundation and its mission. He plans to return to the British Virgin Islands in 2006.

◆ IRF biodiversity specialists, **Jean-Pierre Bacle** and **Kevel Lindsay** continued development of a series of environmental assessments and terrestrial resource characterizations for **McComb Engineering** in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Their studies are based on intensive field surveys documenting the extant natural environment as part of permit applications under USVI Coastal Zone Management legislation.

Field work in 2005 concentrated on the western end of St. Thomas at Botany Bay, an area scheduled for major tourism development. Over 2,700 trees with a diameter of at least six inches were identified, tagged and mapped by the team of Bacle and Lindsay, in an effort to preserve as many as possible during the ensuing construction phase.

◆ For further information about any of the programs, publications or products of specific projects addressed in this report, please write to us at 1718 P Street NW, Suite T4, Washington, DC 20036 or send an email to irf@irf.org.

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- *For islands, it is not a question of environment vs. development but of environment plus development for survival in face of pressures from outside.*
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