

island resources

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The Year 2004 In Review

Small Island Survival

It is now ten years since the attention of the international community focused on small island developing states (SIDS) at a UN Global Conference convened in Barbados. At that time, an impressive blueprint for action was adopted, and the special needs of small island states, seeking a better balance between conservation and development, were placed firmly on the agenda of the global community. Since then, the ecological richness of insular environments—endowed with exceptional biodiversity and high levels of endemism—has been well documented. There has also been considerable interest in identifying and addressing insular “vulnerability” concerns, such as sea level rise and globalization, as these threaten island communities, their economies and environment.

Yet, despite a broader and firmer articulation of island issues by both islanders and the international community, we know that development pressures continue to intensify in small island states, populations are expanding, and climate change presents new challenges. It is also clear that island ecosystems continue to be over-exploited and natural habitats to be seriously eroded. The United Nations Environment Program reports that the Caribbean’s natural resources are diminishing at an alarming rate and that, despite more than 300 protected areas having been designated in the Wider Caribbean in the last 20 years, only about 30 percent are effectively managed.

The international community is about to assemble again—this time in Mauritius in January of 2005—to reconsider the island agenda first developed in Barbados in 1994. The forum will provide an opportunity for a ten-year review of sustainable development strategies for SIDS, while a key concern of islanders will be the lack of adequate funding to implement the ambitious “Barbados Program of Action”. And, as in 1994, one fundamental question remains: can small island states find ways to achieve truly sustainable development?

In the foreground, cactus scrub along the upper rocky ridge of Sandy Cay, British Virgin Islands, looking south to the western end of Tortola at the upper left.

>> Conservation and Sustainable Development in the BVI >>

In July of 2003, the late Laurance Rockefeller provided funding for a 2-year conservation and institution-strengthening program in the British Virgin Islands, to be coordinated by Island Resources in collaboration with a number of BVI institutions, most particularly, the National Parks Trust (NPT).

The program was designed to support the ongoing development and operation of parks and protected areas in the BVI, while also providing a framework for the future management of Sandy Cay—a small island located between Tortola and Jost Van Dyke, owned and maintained by Laurance Rockefeller for more than three decades as the oldest private-but-open-to-the-public, marine wilderness park in the Caribbean.

During the last year, a collaboration of individuals and institutions has carried the project forward within ten interactive program components, including: revision of the National Parks Act, staff and board training, exploration of new environmental monitoring strategies, NPT financial operations review, and assistance in upgrading basic park management tools such as the *System Plan* and site management plans.

These and other activities will continue during the second and final year of the program.



Noni Georges and **Lloyd Gardner** (left) are assisting the BVI National Parks Trust in revising the System Plan for BVI Protected Areas and updating the management plan for the Greater Baths National Park in Virgin Gorda. Both activities are sponsored under IRF's BVI conservation enhancement project funded by the late Laurance S. Rockefeller.



In September, an IRF monitoring team identified several turtle nests at Sandy Cay and observed an active nest site with more than a dozen eggs and one **Hawksbill turtle hatchling**, shown at the left. Findings were reported to the BVI Department of Conservation and Fisheries, the agency responsible for monitoring sea turtle activity in the Territory.

Pictured above (upper left) are **Joseph Smith-Abbott**, director of the BVI National Parks Trust, **William Moody** of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, IRF's **Jean-Pierre Bacle**, and **Finfun Peters** of the NPT's marine conservation program, at Sandy Cay in February. Periodic monitoring and maintenance trips to the island are sponsored by IRF.

Dr. Edward Towle (lower left) at the J.R. O'Neal Botanical Gardens in Tortola, with **Dr. and Mrs. Brinsley Burbidge** from St. Croix where Dr. Burbidge is director of the St. George Village Botanical Garden, and **Dr. Michael O'Neal**, chairman of the BVI National Parks Trust Board and acting president of the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College. Dr. Burbidge's visit to the BVI was sponsored by IRF as a part of its conservation program in the British Virgin Islands. The botanic gardens pictured in this photo are named in honor of Dr. O'Neal's father, Jose R. O'Neal, a recognized conversation leader who was instrumental in the establishment of the National Parks Trust in the 1960s.

>> **Laurance S. Rockefeller, Conservation Patron for the Caribbean** >> With the gentle passing this year of Laurance Rockefeller, the Caribbean lost a longstanding friend. His U.S. philanthropic initiatives and economic ventures have been extensively reported; yet, Mr. Rockefeller's parallel, low-key endeavors in the Caribbean have been equally instructive and provided successful models for both national park development and leisure industry planning.

Mr. Rockefeller's early support of the Caribbean Conservation Association is less remembered now than it was in 1965 when he sponsored a major conference for Caribbean leaders at Caneel Bay in St. John, where for the first time "conservation" was the focus of a regional gathering. Two years later, as a direct result of these consultations, the Caribbean Conservation Association was established with its first five-year program fully funded by Mr. Rockefeller.

Mr. Rockefeller was the first patron of Island Resources Foundation, his initial \$25,000 donation in 1972 providing the start-up funding for the organization. We are very grateful for his early guidance and assistance and for his continuing support for more than three decades. He made a difference, and we shall miss him.

>> **USVI Wetlands Survey Completed** >> In November, Island Resources Foundation submitted to the VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources its Phase I report for an inventory of Virgin Islands wetlands. The report included recommended assessment procedures for water quality, sediment coring, bacterial contamination and nitrification, and vegetative community characterization for the wetlands of the U.S. Virgin Islands. In demonstration of the utility of these measures, samples had been collected from 130 wetland sites over the previous two years.

IRF's partner for the project, the Conservation Data Center at the University of VI, developed an Index of Biological Integrity based largely on mapped conditions in watersheds, which was applied to 18 (of 51 total) watersheds in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Reference works used in this study, results of the various tests and demonstrations, and recommendations derived from them have been compiled by IRF on a CD-ROM, which is available on request. This includes land cover maps of the Territory in ArcView format. Contact project manager Bruce Potter at bpotter@irf.org to request a copy.



IRF biodiversity coordinator **Kevel Lindsay** surveys a wetland on the south coast of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

People & Activities from 2004

> > **Reefs at Risk in the Caribbean** > > *Nearly two-thirds of coral reefs in the Caribbean are threatened by human activities*, according to scientists at the World Resources Institute (WRI) in a recently released report entitled *Reefs at Risk in the Caribbean*. Although a vital component of nature's defense against the ravages of storms, such as those of the 2004 hurricane season, reefs are subject to multiple threats from over-fishing and pollution/sediment runoff from land-based sources. According to lead author Lauretta Burke, additional threats put even more reefs at risk, including threats of coral bleaching from warming oceans, coral disease from new pathogens and increased hurricane activity.

The report utilized WRI's Reefs at Risk Threat Index, which employs geographic information system (GIS) data to determine reef degradation from specific sources. Additionally, the authors examined the value of coral reefs in providing goods and services, estimating an annual net economic value in 2000 of between \$3.1 and \$4.6 billion for the region. The WRI analysis points to the high value of this marine resource, but notes that governments are not investing enough to protect Caribbean reefs and if not properly managed, the rate of loss in the region will continue.

IRF research assistant Hillary Nobles and president Bruce Potter contributed to background work for the *Reefs at Risk in the Caribbean* project. The Foundation has a limited number of copies of the 80-page report available at our Washington, DC office; additional copies may be requested from WRI (contact Lauretta Burke at lauretta@wri.org).

> > **Disaster Management in the Caribbean** > > In less than a month, 3 major hurricanes (Frances, Ivan and Jeanne) tore through Caribbean islands and left billions of dollars in physical destruction and untold human heartache, principally in Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, the Caymans, Cuba, and the Bahamas. The damage to natural ecosystems—reefs, wetlands and forested watersheds—was also extensive and has yet to be fully assessed by national and regional institutions.

Just prior to this year's hurricane season, IRF completed two studies for the Caribbean Disaster Response Agency (CDERA) in Barbados, with IRF investigators Bruce Potter and Lloyd Gardner carrying out capability assessments of natural disaster programs in Barbados and Grenada. As the Caribbean now struggles to recover from this year's natural disasters, it is clear that regional agencies like CDERA, along with the international community, must continue to support and build capacity in these small island states as the forces of nature once more underscore their extreme vulnerability.

> > **Eighth Islands of the World Conference** > > The Eighth Islands of the World Conference of the International Small Islands Study Association (ISISA) was held on Kinmen Island in Taiwan in November, with over 120 papers presented in the sparkling new Kinmen Island Social Welfare and Convention Center. Major themes of the meeting focused on governance and decentralization for small islands and eco-tourism, including the special Taiwanese addition to the field: "military eco-tourism".



Delegates to the Islands VIII International Conference in Taiwan interact with Sichuan Dancers at a cultural event, including **Noni Georges** (second row at the far left). Ms. Georges presented a paper on development in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) using solid waste management in the British Virgin Islands as an indicator of sustainability.

According to IRF president Bruce Potter, who attended the "Islands VIII" conference with his wife Kincey, hospitality for the 80 foreign participants was unrivaled. The conference closed with approval of the eight-point "Kinmen Declaration", to be presented at the Mauritius Meeting of Small Island Developing States in January of 2005. The 2006 meeting of ISISA will be held on the island of Maui, Hawaii.



To the left, a display welcoming delegates to the Eighth Islands of the World Conference, sponsored by the International Small Islands Study Association (ISISA) on Kinmen Island in Taiwan.

The Global Islands Network (GIN) took advantage of the attendance of a majority of its Directors (including IRF's Bruce Potter) at the ISISA meeting to convene its own board meeting in Taipei. GIN is a worldwide Internet-based information network that was established to provide easy access to available information on sustainable island development. Current members of GIN number over 125 (IRF is a charter member), including UNESCO, UNEP, and IUCN. Many of GIN's future projects and prospects are linked to insular biodiversity conservation and to the development of an Island Atlas, both of which will be advanced at the January 2005 SIDS meeting in Mauritius.



Island Resources Foundation's president **Bruce Potter** represented the Foundation at the international meeting and can be glimpsed in the sea of delegates below, in a white shirt at the far right of the second row.

Island Resources Foundation, 2004



The **Mukti Fund Board of Trustees** in Charlestown, Nevis
(left to right) Dr. Martin Dupuis, Judith Towle, Thomas Fox, Michael Dively, William Moody
(Not pictured, Weston Milliken, who joined the board in 2001)

>> **Establishment of the Judith A. Towle Fund for Environmental Studies in the Eastern Caribbean** >> Since 1991, IRF vice president Judith Towle has served on the board of the Mukti Fund, a private, U.S.-based philanthropic foundation, which, for two decades, has concentrated its long-term grantmaking program in the Caribbean nation of St. Kitts and Nevis. Over the years, Island Resources Foundation has also enjoyed a close working partnership with the Mukti Fund that both furthered Mukti's goals in St. Kitts and Nevis and supported IRF's ongoing work with conservation NGOs in the Eastern Caribbean.

Judith Towle retired from the board of the Mukti Fund this year, and in appreciation for her contributions, the Mukti Fund made a \$70,000 grant to the Community Foundation of the U.S. Virgin Islands for establishment of

the *Judith A. Towle Fund for Environmental Studies in the Eastern Caribbean*. This Endowment Fund will honor Towle's work, interests and commitment to advancing conservation and sustainable development in the Caribbean. As administered by the Community Foundation, the Towle Fund will provide annual grants for environmental studies, internships, workshops, and related activities in the U.S. and British Virgin Islands and in St. Kitts and Nevis, the Caribbean islands that most reflect Judith's long-term interests and work in the region. The first Towle grant will be awarded by the Community Foundation in 2005.

A new history of the Mukti Fund, entitled *The Mukti Fund in St. Kitts and Nevis, 1983-2004: How A Small Foundation Can Make A Difference*, is available upon request. Contact Judith Towle at jtowle@irf.org.

>> News Briefs >>

◆ Congratulations to **Dr. Joth Singh**, the 2004 recipient of the Euan P. McFarlane Award for Outstanding Environmental Leadership in the Insular Caribbean. Since 1988, Island Resources Foundation has annually presented this \$1,000 award to an exceptional conservation leader in the Caribbean. Dr. Singh, a national of Trinidad and Tobago, currently serves as the executive director of the Barbados-headquartered Caribbean Conservation Association, an assignment that continues a career dedicated to environmental work in the Caribbean.

◆ A prior-year recipient of the McFarlane Award is **Alissandra Cummins** (honoree in 1991), currently director of the Barbados Museum, founding president of the Museums Association of the Caribbean, and recently elected new president of the International Council of Museums, the first Caribbean official to hold this prestigious post.

◆ Congratulations to IRF's **Carlos Ramos-Scharrón**, who this year fulfilled requirements for a Ph.D. degree from Colorado State University. His dissertation—*Measuring and Predicting Erosion and Sediment Yields on St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands*—was based on studies carried out earlier under IRF's auspices in St. John.

◆ At year's end, IRF's Board of Trustees welcomed two new members. **Barbara Lausche**, an international environmental lawyer formerly affiliated with the World Wildlife Fund and the World Bank, has most recently worked with IRF in the British Virgin Islands, where she drafted a new National Parks Act. **Nicolas Drayton** is currently head of The Ocean Conservancy's Caribbean office in St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands and in December was named the 2004 Coastal Zone Person of the Year by the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

When you become a member of **ISLAND RESOURCES FOUNDATION**, you join a committed group whose contributions provide a steady and reliable funding source for the Foundation's programs.

Join us today and see how much more we can do to ensure the survival of small islands.

Your U.S. tax-exempt donation will assist us to:

- ✓ Apply sound science to environmental problem solving in islands
- ✓ Strengthen the technical skills of islanders and the collaborative capacities of island institutions
- ✓ Improve the availability of information resources for and about islands
- ✓ Educate international agencies and donor institutions about the uniqueness of islands

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