



ASHTON LAGOON RESTORATION PROJECT

Project Background

The mangroves, salt ponds, mud flats, coral reefs and seagrass beds of Ashton Lagoon are an increasingly rare and valuable natural resource for wildlife and the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In 1994, a marine-hotel-golf-course development was initiated within the lagoon, despite the area's designation as marine conservation area and the probable ramifications identified in the environment impact assessment. After a year, the project was abandoned when the development company declared bankruptcy. However, activities conducted prior to this caused catastrophic damage to the lagoon. Dredging and the construction of the marina causeway blocked water circulation within the lagoon and has led to the loss of significant coastal resources. Ecological and economic impacts include loss of habitat for wintering and migratory seabirds, water birds, shorebirds, and land birds, stagnant and turbid water in the lagoon, and cascading effects on fisheries, seagrass beds, corals and other marine life. The purpose of this project will be to enhance wildlife habitat potential for birds, fishes and other marine organisms, while also strengthening and enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable tourism development, education and outreach. This will help to ensure sustained project success with direct ecological and economic benefits.

Overall Project Goal: To restore the Ashton Lagoon environment, in order to improve bird habitat and quality of life for the local community by supporting sustainable livelihoods. Its main objectives include:

Objective 1: Restoration of Bird Habitat: Begin to restore the Ashton Lagoon ecosystem by restoring natural circulation and tidal flow of water in the lagoon. The main objective of the restoration works will be to improve the circulation in the lee of the existing interlinking causeway.

Objective 2: Monitoring and Evaluation: Monitor process of restoration of Ashton Lagoon which is the largest mangrove forest and lagoon in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Objective 3: Community Outreach and Education: Increase awareness and appreciation of the links between the environment and sustainable livelihoods and the importance of using natural resources wisely among the general public stakeholders and government officials.

Objective 4: Maintenance, Management and Restoration of Bird Habitat. Develop sustainable local tourism and livelihood opportunities for local people. One of the main outputs of this objective is to conduct local tourism workshops to develop community vision; identify attractions, stories, experiences and products; and create a draft interpretive framework graphical representation of messages, experiences, and themes, ordered hierarchically.

Status Update

The work which is led by local NGO Sustainable Grenadines Inc. (SusGren) will create breaches in strategic areas of the abandoned marina piers. This will create water circulation in the area which has been almost stagnant for the last 20 years.

Phase one of the restoration work is funded by The Nature Conservancy, through the Philip Stephenson Foundation and the Grenadines Partnership Fund through The Nature Conservancy to complete the Phase I Engineering Works at the Ashton Lagoon. The Phase I activities include the partial excavation of 5 piers to restore circulation of water both in and out of the lagoon area. Excavation activities are expected to take place between November and December 2017.

Phase II is being funded through the 5C's (with funding from KFW) and this should start early 2018. The equipment (excavator, turbidity barriers) have already been set up on the piers and construction has begun.

The main activities being undertaken for Phase I include but not limited to the following;

1. Deploying turbidity barriers (otherwise known as sediment curtains) around the sites of excavation to prevent sediment from escaping;
2. Testing material that will be excavated for contamination testing to determine whether it can be safely disposed of on the project site or at a suitable site on land
3. Disposal of excavated material in a manner that causes negligible harm to the environment. The disposal method shall depend upon the results of the contaminant testing. If free from contaminants, the material is to be placed on the seaward side of the outer causeway. Boulders will be washed so as to remove sediment prior to placement. If contaminated, the material shall be disposed at a suitable site on land.

4. Excavation of five 15 m wide breaches in the finger piers the marina structure (Gap 01 to Gap 05 shown in Drawings SWIL-ALUI01, SWIL-ALUI02 and SWIL-ALUI03) (see attached)
5. Grading channel edges to the required slope where required

The restoration of water flow in the Ashton Lagoon will allow for a variety of economic opportunities for the community.

Communication Activities

1. Mobile Advertising of the project and a note of caution was sent to the public via Digicel Services
2. Posters have been placed in strategic places within Ashton and in Clifton.
3. Bullhorn announcements about the project has been made throughout the main towns (Ashton and Clifton).
4. A press release has been sent to the main media houses (radio, paper, net)

Local Employment

The contractor has sourced a local excavator, boatmen for transporting staff to the site, watchmen and members of the community have been rostered for debris clean up.



Excavator beginning work on Pier#2



Turbidity barriers put in place for excavation.



Soil samples from each finger piers



The Philip Stephenson Foundation Executive Director, Eugen Babau and Marenco Ltd.,
Managing Director, Anthony Cooper at the Ashton Lagoon Site.