

**REGIONAL SANDWATCH SYMPOSIUM
CONSERVING THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT:
EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

4-6 December 2006

Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO

Report written by Gillian Cambers
January 2007

Sandwatch Vision Statement

Sandwatch seeks to change the lifestyle and habits of youth and adults on a community-wide basis, and to develop awareness of the fragile nature of the marine and coastal environment and the need to use it wisely

Sandwatch Slogan

Let's make Sandwatch everybody's business



INTRODUCTION

The three day meeting was organized by the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, with the support of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project network (ASPnet) and the UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean.

The Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO hosted the overseas participants providing accommodation, meals and local transportation, while the individual countries provided the participants' airfares.

The goal of the Symposium was to bring teachers and students from the Caribbean region together to (1) share information about Sandwatch activities in each others' countries, (2) exchange ideas and strengthen the Sandwatch network, and (3) plan for the future of Sandwatch.

The meeting was very successful bringing together more than 100 participants from the region.

PARTICIPANTS

Students and teachers from the following countries were represented:

- Bahamas
- Barbados
- British Virgin Islands
- Colombia
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Jamaica
- Puerto Rico
- St. Kitts and Nevis
- St. Lucia
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago

A partial list of participants is included in Annex 1

PROGRAMME

After the Opening Ceremony on 4 December 2006, country representatives presented their country activities and shared their Sandwatch experiences. In the afternoon participants divided into three small groups to discuss:

- Ways to expand Sandwatch in each country
- Ways to increase support for, and awareness of Sandwatch in each country
- Ways to expand the Sandwatch approach to other ecosystems e.g. rivers and mangroves

While the adults worked in the group sessions, students worked on designing Sandwatch logos and posters under the guidance of local art teachers.

Presentation of the country activities continued on 5 December and these were interspersed with expert presentations from the Institute of Marine Affairs and the Environmental Management

Authority. In the afternoon field trips to a local shopping mall and the Caroni Bird Sanctuary were organized.

On the third day, participants went to Mayaro on the southeast coast of Trinidad where Sandwatch demonstrations were conducted and there was an opportunity to share experiences with the Sandwatch community at Mayaro Primary School.

The programme finished with a cultural evening.

The programme is shown in Annex 2.

OPENING CEREMONY

The programme for the Opening Ceremony is included in Annex 2. Highlights from the speeches at the Opening Ceremony were as follows:

- It is extremely appropriate that this Symposium is being held in Trinidad and Tobago, since Sandwatch had its beginning at an environmental education workshop held in Tobago in 1998, during which students and teachers discovered the potential of using the beach as an open-air classroom, and put forward the idea of having a regional project with the name Sandwatch
- Sandwatch has become an unstoppable force with the publication of the Sandwatch manual and its recent translation into Spanish, the website, the newsletter, several new country initiatives, and of course this Symposium. Sandwatch is a community that extends beyond the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions.
- The fact that many of the participants to this Symposium have paid their own bills is an indication of their commitment to Sandwatch
- Sandwatch has a special role to play in this Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
- Seeing the giant leatherback turtles come ashore to nest at Matura on the east coast of Trinidad gives a feeling of touching eternity. These animals together with the sands and seas must last for ever
- The Sandwatch vision statement alludes to changing people's habits and this is very hard to do
- Our school systems emphasize exam results and there is a need to take a second look at an education system that includes the intangibles of education
- The Sandwatch successes achieved at Mayaro School need to be expanded to other schools in Trinidad and Tobago
- The Ministry of Education is committed to Sandwatch

UPDATES ON SANDWATCH ACTIVITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Highlights of the country presentations are presented here; more information is available under the individual countries on the Sandwatch website www.sandwatch.org

Bahamas

In 2004-5 the Bahamas Sandwatch group worked to restore the beach after the 2004 hurricanes by planting sea oats on the dunes and by making tourists and visitors more aware of the fragile nature of the beach-reef ecosystem. However, the task continues because in The Bahamas enforcement is a major problem, and the builder of a new house has bulldozed some of the recently planted sand dunes so that his house can be positioned right on the beach.

The group have been involved in a mangrove project and a reefball project. The students had also prepared a comic book about the environment.

Barbados

The Sandwatch group in Barbados is a school environmental group and they collect data on the beach every two weeks. The success of the project has been in making the activity fun for the students. Much has been learnt about successful ways to involve the community and the group has found that getting even one person to change his/her attitude makes the effort worthwhile.

The Education Sector Enhancement Programme is currently working to integrate subjects in the schools curriculum and this fits in with the Sandwatch approach.

British Virgin Islands

The group here has just started and about 15 students are involved. Sandwatch makes a very good foundation to link up with other projects. They have found that asking local experts to come and talk to the students has been very beneficial. They gave a graphic presentation showing how equipment such as a simple digital microscope can greatly enhance the study of science for primary school students.

Colombia

The group came from Cordoba Institución Educativa "JoséAntonio Galán" and were working with a community at San Antero, Cordoba to manage the mangrove ecosystem. Part of their project focused on reintroducing crocodiles to the wetlands since they had found that mangrove health declined as the crocodile population decreased. They had worked with the community to build nesting sites, incubate the eggs and to return the baby crocodiles to the wild. The group were interested to learn about the Sandwatch project and exchange ideas about wetland management.

Dominica

The Young Environmental Protectors Group of Goodwill High School had embarked on a series of environmental activities including beach clean-ups, hiking and camping trips, and installing benches at beauty spots. Dominica had also recently embarked on a River Care programme that sought to restore and maintain Dominica's river resources. This had been launched during a 2006 summer camp involving more than 1,000 students who had planted trees and cleaned stretches of rivers whilst also learning about proper garbage disposal and wise land-use practices. The activity will continue in 2007 with more in-depth river monitoring.

Dominican Republic

The Sandwatch project had recently been revitalised with a training workshop for teachers and students from 13 educational centres along the south coast of the island; a committee had also been established to support the project and plans drawn up for several activities, including a

competition, exhibition and creation of a national database. There are plans to extend Sandwatch to the north coast and eventually to other ecosystems.

Participants from other countries were very interested to learn that in order for secondary students to graduate in the Dominican Republic they have to complete 60 hours work on environmental community service.

Grenada

The country was still working to recover from the damages wrought by Hurricanes Ivan and Emily. These events had focused attention on the environment and the Sandwatch group felt that while they could do a lot, other groups besides schools must also get involved. Recent floods in St. Georges, the capital, after heavy rain, emphasised the need for ongoing awareness.

Guyana

Following the sad death of the Sandwatch Coordinator, Mr. Avery Butler, Sandwatch was being re-launched in Guyana in three schools. Possibilities were being explored to link Sandwatch with the Shell Beach project, a 90-mile stretch of beach in Guyana where there is an ongoing conservation effort for the four species of marine turtles that nest there.

Jamaica

Following a Sandwatch training workshop in Jamaica in 2005, ways to use the community as an entry point for Sandwatch are being explored at three sites: Runaway Bay in St. Ann, Hellshire in St. Catherine and Roselle in St. Thomas.

St. Lucia

The Sandwatch group in St. Lucia have monitored Vigie Beach for several years and have compiled a data base for this site (see their report under the country activities on the website). Land degradation that may lead to desertification is also a serious issue in St. Lucia and this can be tied into the Sandwatch project.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The Sandwatch group in Bequia continue to execute a wide range of activities ranging from beach monitoring, to water quality testing at a polluted drain, to recycling. The group has become widely known for its activities and has made active efforts to get other schools involved. The group has recently started to work with a community at Richmond in St. Vincent who harvest gravel from the river mouth, and to work with them to establish how much gravel can be removed without eroding the beach.

Trinidad and Tobago

The Sandwatch team at Mayaro Primary School have been extremely successful in integrating Sandwatch into the school curriculum. Each teacher is given specific guidance and they are finding successes e.g. Sandwatch students are more analytical when it comes to learning mathematical concepts such as the metric system. They have also worked to involve other schools, especially in Tobago.

FUTURE PLANNING FOR SANDWATCH

During the Symposium, participants worked in small group sessions to plan future Sandwatch activities. Three groups were defined, each with two moderators. Participants then chose their own group according to their particular interests.

Group 1: Identify ways in which Sandwatch can be expanded in your country

The group identified the following ways to expand Sandwatch:

- UNESCO National Commissions need to discuss Sandwatch with Education Officers and to ensure they are fully aware of the initiative and informed about its potential
- Involve Education Officers and Education Coordinators from different areas of the country in Sandwatch
- Use meetings and conferences to do presentations on Sandwatch
- Involve Parent Teacher Associations
- Target schools located in coastal areas first after which the involved schools can spread the word to other inland schools by word of mouth to friends and colleagues
- Integrate Sandwatch into staff development sessions
- Provide more hands-on training for teachers about Sandwatch
- Target students in teacher training colleges
- If Sandwatch is first established as an extra-curricular activity, use the benefits and successes as ways to bring it into the classroom
- Utilise summer schools and summer programmes to carry out Sandwatch activities, and train older students so that they can become trainers for younger students
- Encourage schools to produce their own Sandwatch newsletters

Group 2: Identify ways of increasing support for, and awareness of Sandwatch in your country

This group started by identifying some major obstacles:

- Insensitivity of decision-makers
- Lack of political will
- Lack of knowledge about the environment
- Waste of resources
- Loss of identity among small, outer islands
- Teacher schedules are overloaded

They then identified some ways to increase awareness about Sandwatch, while emphasising that this must include politicians and the wider community:

- Fully utilize the media
- Create publications and national newsletters
- Place information about Sandwatch in areas used by tourists
- Link up with hotels and resorts
- Involve service clubs in Sandwatch community outreach
- Hold town hall meetings with non-governmental hosts
- Jingles
- Have high school students undertake mandatory community environmental service
- Webcasts on Sandwatch
- Environmental cadets programme for school leavers in order to target this “lost group” of 18-25 year olds
- Create an instructional DVD on Sandwatch
- Involve children with special needs
- Utilize other programmes and projects such as www.floatingclassroom.com

Group 3: Identify ways to expand the Sandwatch approach to other ecosystems e.g. rivers and mangroves

The group emphasised that an approach should show the integration of ecosystems and how they link with and impact on beaches. Their recommendations were as follows.

- River systems (River Care): measurements could include water quality, pollution, biodiversity, flooding, sedimentation and turbidity, and peoples' livelihoods
- Mangroves: measurements could include bio-indicators and water quality
- Coral reefs and seagrass beds: measurements could include seagrass density, bio-indicators (e.g. starfish, sea cucumber), fish, temperature and salinity
- Forests: measurements could include soil type; numbers, density and types of trees
- History of each ecosystem: it is important to find out how a particular ecosystem has changed over time (over decades and within living memory)
- Interaction with the private sector and business sector is also important through meetings and workshops and involving more people in a participatory fashion
- Partnering with other projects is also crucial
- One recommendation was to prepare a teaching module illustrating practical ways of getting the community involved in Sandwatch

VISIT TO MAYARO AND CLOSING CEREMONY

On 6 December the participants travelled to Mayaro where they had the opportunity to meet with the Sandwatch group from Mayaro Primary School, including the School Principal, and to learn first hand about their achievements. The support of the parents was a significant factor in the success of Sandwatch.

Due to heavy rain it was impossible to conduct the demonstration sessions on the beach as had been planned, instead the sessions were conducted indoors. Dr. Charmaine O'Brien Delpesh, assisted by her team from the Institute of Marine Affairs, demonstrated how to measure beach profiles using an engineer's level to those participants who were already knowledgeable about basic Sandwatch methods. Mr. Herman Belmar from St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dr. Gillian Cambers from Puerto Rico conducted a brief introduction on Sandwatch methods for those persons just starting out with Sandwatch.

The Hon. Penelope Beckles, Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, spoke at the Closing Ceremony of the Symposium in Mayaro. She said that in the Caribbean region, where 40% of the population live within 2 km of the sea, coastal resources are especially important. International coastal clean-ups have shown that plastics originating from recreational activities are the major source of garbage on the beach. She stressed the importance of partnerships in environmental management such as the co-management of the leatherback turtles in Trinidad – a partnership between government and communities. In this context Sandwatch is a very important project involving partnerships between youth, schools and communities to care for their beaches.

Finally after several votes of thanks, the Symposium was concluded, although the participants still had one surprise in store for them – a cultural evening featuring pan, jazz, parang, comedy and extempo combined with a selection of the country's culinary delights.

Annex 1 Participants List

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Annex 2 Programme

4 December 2006

Opening Ceremony

08.30-10.30 National Anthem and Prayer

Opening Remarks: Mrs Marcia Riley

Welcome: Ms. Susan Shurland, Secretary-General, Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO

Cultural Activity

Greetings: Dr. Alleyne, Ministry of Education

Greetings: Ms. Ushio Miura, UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean

Cultural Activity – Parang, St. George’s College

Guest Speaker: Dr. Gillian Cambers, University of Puerto Rico Sea Grant College Program

Cultural Activity

Feature Address: Mr. Valentine Wheeler, Ministry of Education

Cultural Activity – Mayaro Government Primary School

Presentations

Vote of Thanks: Mr. Andy Paul, National Sandwatch Coordinator

10.45-12.30 Country Presentations

12.30-01.30 Lunch

1.30-2.00 Presentation: Ms. Charmaine O’Brien Delpesh, Institute of Marine Affairs

2.00-3.30 Country Presentations

3.30-4.0 Break

4.00-7.0 Small Group Discussions followed by Plenary Discussion
Student Activity: Designing of Sandwatch logo and poster

7.00 Dinner

5 December 2006

08.30-09.00 Presentation: Dr. Yvette Guy, Environmental Management Authority

09.00-09.30 Presentation: Ms. Marcia Tinto, Environmental Management Authority

09.30-10.00 Country Presentations and discussion

10.00-10.30 Break

10.30-12.30 Country Presentations and discussion

12.30-01.30 Lunch

1.30-2.00 Presentation: Mr. Herman Belmar, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

2.00-7.00 Field trips:
Shopping at Trincity Mall
Caroni Bird Sanctuary

7.00 Dinner

6 December 2006

06.00 Depart for Mayaro

08.30-09.30 Arrival and breakfast at BPTT Resource Centre

09.30-10.30 Welcome Ceremony

Prayer and National Anthem

Greetings: Ms. Susan Shurland, Secretary-General, Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO

Greetings: Ms. Ushio Miura, UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean

Cultural Activity: Mayaro Government Primary School

10.30-11.00 Break

11.00-01.00 Sandwatch Demonstration Advanced: Dr. Charmaine O'Brien Delpesh, Institute of Marine Affairs
Sandwatch Demonstration Beginners: Mr. Herman Belmar and Dr. Gillian Cambers

01.00-02.00 Lunch

02.00-02.30 Closing Ceremony

Feature Address: Hon Penelope Beckles, Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment

Vote of Thanks: Mr. Andy Paul, National Sandwatch Coordinator

3.00 Return to Port of Spain

7.00-10.00 Cultural Evening
