



Turks and Caicos Islands Government
Ministry of Natural Resources



Environmental Awareness & Involvement

A Strategic Plan

2008 - 2011

DRAFT

CONTENTS



1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. BACKGROUND	3
3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	3
3.1 GOALS.....	3
3.2 OBJECTIVES.....	3
4. SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS	4
5. EXISTING AWARENESS CHANNELS	5
6. STRATEGY SUMMARY	7
6.1 THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS GROUP (EAG).....	7
6.2 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.....	8
6.3 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT FOR CHURCHES AND OTHER RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS	8
6.4 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT FOR COMMUNITIES.....	9
6.5 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT FOR THE TOURISM SECTOR	10
6.6 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT FOR THE BUSINESS SECTOR	10
6.7 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, DECISION MAKERS AND POLITICIANS.....	10
6.8 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT FOR MEDIA PRACTITIONERS	11
6.9 AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES	11
7. EVALUATION	11
8. SLOGANS	12
9. CONCLUSION	12
APPENDIX I	13
THE ENVIRONMENT CHARTER	
APPENDIX 2	14
PROPOSED COMPOSITION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS ACTION GROUP	14

1. Introduction

Over the centuries, humans have transformed the environment and brought about irreversible and detrimental changes in the balance of nature. As a result, living species are exposed to certain threats to which adaptation may prove difficult or impossible. Recognising the need to defend and improve our environment for the benefit of both the present and future generations, world leaders urgently call for new and innovative strategies to be put in place.

Environmental awareness represents an effective and novel strategy which provides individuals with an understanding of how they relate to the natural world. Awareness through education helps individuals and societies to resolve fundamental issues relating to the current and future use of resources, and strongly promotes the need for personal initiatives and social responsibility to achieve sustainability. It empowers people to participate in the process of sustainability through effective negotiation and decision-making. The important role of public involvement in environmental management cannot be overlooked. Instead it should be enhanced and nurtured.

The importance of environmental awareness and involvement in promoting wise environmental practices has been recognised by the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCIG). This belief is embodied in the Environment Charter signed by the then UK Minister for the Overseas Territories and by then-Chief Minister, Derek Taylor, on 26 September 2001 (see [Appendix 1](#)). This Charter sets out mutual commitments to be fulfilled by both the UK Government and the TCIG.

This Strategy is therefore consistent with the requirements and commitments outlined in the Environment Charter, namely:-

Commitment 9

Encourage teaching within schools to promote the value of our local environment (natural and built) and to explain its role within the regional and global environment.

Commitment 10

Promote publications that spread awareness of the special features of the environment in the Turks and Caicos Islands; promote within the territory the guiding principles set out above.

Furthermore the Strategy supports several actions outlined in the recently prepared 10 year National Development Plan.

This document represents a three-year action plan to increase environmental awareness and encourage environmental action throughout the TCI. The Strategy highlights present initiatives and programme gaps. Furthermore, the Strategy identifies a framework of objectives and actions to better develop, coordinate, and implement environmental programmes.

2. Background

In the TCI, tourism is the mainstay of the economy. Due to the rapid expansion of this sector the TCI has become one of the world's fastest growing tourist destinations. For years, growth has been concentrated in the main island of Providenciales. Recently, several projects are being undertaken in the other developed islands.

In 1990, the national census gave the population of the islands as 12,350. In 2001 the population was estimated at 20,000, due to a substantial increase in foreign nationals. It is now estimated that two thirds of the population are immigrants. This rapid growth in the population is placing considerable strain on the nation's social and ecological systems, as well as exacerbating the pressure on already limited resources. Moreover, the increase in infrastructural works and hotel development, undertaken to accommodate the growing tourism industry, is also placing a tremendous strain on the fragile natural environment. Therefore, it is essential to promote a culture of awareness and sustainable environmental action here in the TCI.

There are a number of shortcomings with respect to the present means of promoting awareness and involvement. It has been noted that there are few awareness programs for High Schools and the Community College. More coordinated programmes are needed for civic and service groups. There is limited and ad hoc dissemination of information to churches. This particular group requires more coordinated programmes since it has the potential to be very influential. There is a lack of consistency in the delivery of information to divers, water sport and tour operators. Moreover, there are no programmes targeting developers, construction companies, realtors, policy makers and a number of other target groups.

This Strategy to enhance and promote public awareness and involvement in environmental management is therefore timely and appropriate. It is based on a report¹ compiled by the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), the Turks and Caicos National Trust (TCNT), the Department of Environmental Health, the Tourist Board, the Ministry of Education, The National Museum and the Government Information Service (GIS).

3. Goals and Objectives

3.1 Goals

The Strategy seeks to enhance public awareness and knowledge of the environment and encourage/foster actions conducive to environmental management and conservation.

3.2 Objectives

3.2.1 Coordination

- To establish an Environmental Awareness Action Group

¹ Draft Strategic Plan for Public Awareness and Involvement. Turks and Caicos Islands, 2003 -2008.

3.2.2 Government Support

- To improve the quality and availability of environmental information available to government departments
- To encourage all government departments to participate in environmental awareness initiatives

3.2.3 Formal Education

- To improve and support the environmental education content of the school curriculum
- To ensure that students at all levels of education in TCI are provided with environmental interventions that foster good values and an understanding of sustainability
- To improve availability and access to environmental information for teachers
- To promote tertiary levels studies and scholarships for environmental subject areas

3.2.4 Community Empowerment

- To increase awareness of environmental issues and commitment to action within communities of TCI
- To increase awareness of the tourist population so as to ensure low impact tourism
- To foster the awareness and participatory initiatives within communities of the TCI to help individuals reduce their impact on the environment

3.2.5 Partnership Building

- To foster relationships and partnerships and information sharing between government agencies, businesses, Non-Governmental Organisations, religious groups and community groups through the implementation of environmental programmes
- To ensure that industries (as defined in the table below) are aware of their environmental responsibilities and have environmental information readily available
- To encourage businesses within TCI to play an active role in environmental sustainability by adopting and promoting best practices

4. Specific Target Groups

Through a brainstorming session, key target groups have been identified. These groups fall into a number of main blocks (See Table 1). The target groups identified will be used as a guide for the creation of environmental programmes (See Section 7).

Table 1: Specific Target Groups

Category	Specific Groups
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarden School Children • Primary School Children • High School Children • Community College • Teachers • Scholarship Board
Local Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Residents • Fishermen • Farmers • Civic and Service Groups • Churches • Migrant Population
Tourist Industry (Formal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Sport Operators • Tour Operators • Hotel Operators • Restaurants
Tourism Industry (Informal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors • Taxi Drivers
Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divers • Yachtsmen • Snorkelers • Beach Users
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developers • Construction Companies • Landscaping Companies • Realtors
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet • House of Assembly • Attorney General Chambers • All Government Departments

5. Existing Awareness Channels

There are several initiatives being undertaken that support public awareness and involvement. These programmes are being implemented by both government bodies and non-government groups.

The DECR

- Produced a brochure on highlighting the importance of the Conservation Fund
- Hosts annual events such as the Junior Park Warden Programme
- Hosts stakeholder meetings and workshops on key environmental issues
- Makes regular presentations to schools
- Produces the quarterly newsletter which is published in the TIMES of THE ISLANDS magazine
- Recently implemented the Adopt-a-Beach programme

- Manages the exhibits in the recently opened National Environmental Centre
- Secured airtime on WIV
- Commemorates international environmental days
- Coordinates coastal and underwater clean-ups
- Contributes to the Eco-Corner in the SUN Newspaper
- Manages the website www.environment.tc
- Organises Fisherman's Day
- Oversees in the Micro-Projects Programme

The Turks and Caicos National Trust (TCNT)

- Developed and distributed a set of 11 module for schools called 'Our Land, Our Sea, Our People'
- Produced facts sheets and cards on TCI birds, animals, insects and nature trails
- Hosts activities throughout the year including Summer Camps, native plant sales, craft displays, activities to commemorate international environmental days and open house
- Produces a children environmental magazine called Eco Echoes
- Makes regular presentations to schools
- Conducts a Junior Membership Programme
- Contributes to the TIMES of THE ISLANDS magazine
- Manages the website www.nationaltrust.tc
- Hosts teacher's workshops
- Produces annual reports covering local environmental issues and actions
- Merchandises items including local craft, a Bird book and native plants

The Department of Environmental Health

- Hosts a school outreach programme
- Make contributions to local print media
- Organises Environmental campaigns for schools
- Hosts training in food handling
- Conducts occasional clean-ups
- Conducts Workshops on Environmental Health Issues

The Tourist Board

- Organises the Underwater Photography Competition
- Conducts the TCI Host Programme. This programme developed for companies focuses on the various aspects of tourism. It also includes an environmental component.
- Works along with the Clean-Up TCI Committee in a PR capacity
- Hosts Tourism Awareness Week
- Issues awards for environmentally friendly tourism ventures
- Undertakes beautification projects
- Manages the website www.turksandcaicostourism.com

The Turks and Caicos Museum

- Hosts Museum Day
- Produces school worksheets
- Produces the Astrolabe Newsletter
- Organises trips to Gibbs Cay
- Merchandises local craft items

The School for Field Studies

- Conducts field trips for schools
- Organises ocean-based activities for children e.g. swimming lessons
- Conducted research in key areas e.g. recycling etc.

Clean – Up TCI

- Organises the Annual Coastal Clean-Up
- Organises coastal underwater clean-up
- Implemented the ‘Don’t be a Litter Critter’ campaign

The Maritime Heritage Foundation

- Hosts the Sailing of the Sloops programme for schools
- Conducts training in traditional sloop building
- Hosts Mariner’s Week

Bush Working Group

- Produced fact sheet on the Bush
- Produced a Bush DVD

Rotary

- Conducts Community Clean-up and beautification projects

6. Strategy Summary

6.1 The Environmental Awareness Group (EAG)

There are currently a number of environmental awareness programmes being conducted locally. Many of these initiatives parallel each other and hence there is much duplication. Moreover, the current approach only reaches a very small audience ignoring the much wider pool of individuals.

A priority of the Strategy is to improve coordination of environmental awareness initiatives. Therefore, it is recommended that an EAG be established. One of the main tasks of the group is to avert unnecessary overlaps and duplication of effort and extend the delivery of environmental education programmes throughout the islands. The committee would assume the following responsibilities:-

- Coordinate and oversee the implementation of this Strategy

- Develop suitable performance indicators for each action recommended in this Strategy
- Develop a national environmental education work-plan, using the Strategy as a guide
- Endorse projects that are in keeping with the Conservation Fund
- Provide strategic direction in the area of environmental awareness and involvement
- Work closely with the TCIG to provide advice on awareness initiatives for sustainability

It is proposed that the EAG operate under the following guidelines:-

- The EAG should include government and non-government agencies (see [Appendix 2](#))
- The Group will meet every 3 months
- The Group will be co-chaired by the DECR and the TCNT
- Participation would be at the cost of the individuals of their institutions
- Subgroups can be formed around thematic issues and geographical location

6.2 Environmental awareness and involvement within the school system

The importance of environment awareness in schools and institutions of higher learning is fundamental to the development of skills and attitudes necessary to help people make sound environmental decisions throughout their lives.

Actions:-

- Research and design awareness programmes for all levels of schooling.
- Support the revision of the modules developed by the TCNT, for teachers.
- Provide support for Environmental Awareness Workshops being hosted by the TCNT for teachers.
- Encourage the formation of eco clubs in schools. Support existing clubs.
- Develop an environmental education curriculum for the Community College
- Work towards the inclusion of environmental education as part of the school curriculum.

6.3 Environmental awareness and involvement for churches and other religious organisations

Churches and religious organisations, besides being very influential, are very effective in transferring information to large sects of the TCI populace. It is therefore imperative that programmes be designed for this particular group.

Actions:-

- Conduct research and note the practices and policies of various religious groups that have dealt with environmental issues over the years.
- Using information from the previous point, design and implement Church-based community environmental projects.

- Conduct awareness workshops for Pastors and leaders of the various groups within the Church.
- Invite Pastors and religious leaders to participate in national environmental awareness initiatives
- Prepare a comprehensive awareness package including scriptural excerpts, music and sermon guides on environmental themes for distribution.

6.4 Environmental awareness and involvement for communities

Community support for environmental initiatives ensures their success. Communities need to be empowered to take action to bring about positive changes in their surroundings.

Actions:-

- Encourage the formation of Community Action Groups throughout the TCI. Enhance the capacity of existing groups.
- Produce and distribute a handbook (purpose, operation guidelines) to the various Community Action Groups.
- Host radio programmes to discuss community environmental issues.
- Encourage these groups to undertake small community improvement projects. Community Action Groups could work along with non-governmental organisations such as Rotary and Kiwanis.
- Create awareness materials and convene training sessions for non-governmental organisations
- Promote the Belonger Business Prospectus.
- Promote use of the Conservation Fund as a source of funding for small community projects.
- Through Community Action Groups conduct an environmental awareness drive for various members of the community e.g. farmers, fishermen, housewives, etc., focusing on issues such as protected areas, wetlands, biodiversity, waste disposal, green practices, sustainable farming and fishing practices, environmental laws and regulations.
- Re-activate the Bush Working Group
- Encourage Community Action Groups to express their views and concerns by writing to newspapers (environmental version of '*Dear Editor*').

6.5 Environmental awareness and involvement for the tourism sector

Tourism underpins the economy of the TCI. This industry is very dependent on a good quality environment; however, at the same time the industry greatly impacts the environment. It is therefore important for programmes to be developed for this target group.

Actions:-

- Develop best practices and safety regulations for the various tourism based activities e.g. dive and tour operations.
- Create awareness materials.
- Promote environmentally friendly tourism initiatives, by issuing awards etc.
- Convene awareness workshops, focusing on sustainable tourism, local environmental laws and regulations etc.
- Encourage the formation of associations for the informal tourism sector. Through these associations the EAAG can gain insights into the problems facing the various groups and can plan and implement appropriate programmes.

6.6 Environmental awareness and involvement for the business sector

Businesses play an important role in environmental management and conservation by adopting environmentally friendly practices and by providing adequate training for employees.

Actions:-

- Promote the greening of businesses.
- Develop a Greening of Businesses Prospectus for various private sector groups in the TCI e.g. construction, landscaping, architects etc.
- Create an environmental awareness programme specifically for businesses
- Produce TV documentaries.
- Develop and promote joint-venture environmental projects between businesses and other groups.
- Encourage businesses to sponsor and erect bill-boards featuring environmental themes

6.7 Environmental awareness and involvement for government agencies, decision makers and politicians

Government agencies and politicians have an important role to play in national environmental management here in the TCI. The decisions and policies created and implemented by these two groups can significantly impact the environment.

Actions:-

- Host environmental training programmes for the staff of various government departments
- Make environmental information readily available to government agencies e.g. create and distribute newsletters and brochures

- Conduct workshops for decision makers
- Encourage decision makers to be a part of radio and television programmes aimed at discussing environmental issues
- Encourage government staff to visit the Protected Areas

6.8 Environmental awareness and involvement for media practitioners

Media houses are critical in the transmission of messages and information. Equipped with environmental information they can enhance the knowledge base and transform perceptions of the public about the environment.

Actions:-

- Produce and distribute environmental information on a regular basis.
- Host environmental awareness workshops for the Media.
- Encourage environmental journalism by issuing awards.
- Agencies responsible for environmental conservation and management should work along with the Media to produce awareness materials.

6.9 Awareness and involvement for the preservation of historical and archaeological resources

The term environment refers not only to biophysical elements such as flora, fauna, water and air but also includes socio-economic arrangements and cultural systems. Of the 33 Protected Areas in the TCI, 4 are areas that highlight our cultural heritage. In addition to these 4 areas, there are a number of archaeological sites across the archipelago. Preservation of these areas therefore constitutes part of environmental management. This portion of the Strategy will be conducted under the auspices of the TCNT.

Actions:-

- Conduct an inventory of existing archaeological sites and additional historical sites.
- Develop signs for key archaeological sites. Encourage businesses to adopt such sites.
- Develop a Junior Archaeological Programme for schools.
- Embark on an awareness campaign to promote the 4 established Areas of Historical Interest.
- Develop a plan for the preservation of additional historical sites.
- Encourage businesses to sponsor trips to these unique areas

7. Evaluation

The EAG will establish performance indicators against which the levels of success or failure of the actions proposed will be measured. However, to determine the overall effectiveness of the Strategy a national awareness survey should be conducted at the conclusion of 2011. The survey should seek to ascertain among other things how much individuals know about their environment, attitudes towards the environment and levels of involvement in environmental initiatives within each of the target groups identified.

8. Slogans

Slogans are effective tools to hang public awareness around. Here are a few useful slogans (based on Protected Areas) to be used during the awareness activities outlined in Section 7:

- Protected Areas – Keeping Nature Beautiful
- Take only pictures, Leave only bubbles
- Let us enjoy our Protected Areas
- Wetlands for Life
- Keep wetlands wonderful
- Community in partnership for parks
- National Parks are our national treasure – Guard them well
- Protect your home – protect ours (picture of an animal)
- We don't know what we've got till it's gone
- Coral reefs are good for business – Protect you interests
- Here today gone tomorrow
- Conserve today, reap the reward tomorrow
- Protect Fish Nurseries
- Don't squander our wealth
- Protected Areas, protected futures

9. Conclusion

The Strategy serves as a guide for the coordination of initiatives aimed at national environmental awareness and involvement. The success of the proposed actions detailed relies on a high degree of flexibility and cooperation among the various groups within the TCI society. Moreover, assistance for international organisations such as UNESCO, UNEP, and the Caribbean Conservation Association is also pivotal to the success of this initiative.

Environment Charter


TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

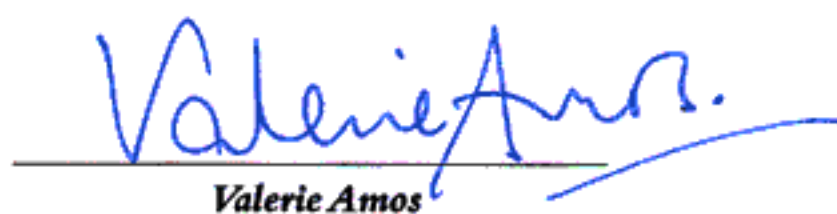


Guiding Principles

*For the UK government, for the government of the Turks and Caicos Islands
and for the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands.*

- 1 To recognise that all people need a healthy environment for their well-being and livelihoods and that all can help to conserve and sustain it.
- 2 To use our natural resources wisely, being fair to present and future generations.
- 3 To identify environmental opportunities, costs and risks in all policies and strategies.
- 4 To seek expert advice and consult openly with interested parties on decisions affecting the environment.
- 5 To aim for solutions which benefit both the environment and development.
- 6 To contribute towards the protection and improvement of the global environment.
- 7 To safeguard and restore native species, habitats and landscape features, and control or eradicate invasive species.
- 8 To encourage activities and technologies that benefit the environment.
- 9 To control pollution, with the polluter paying for prevention or remedies.
- 10 To study and celebrate our environmental heritage as a treasure to share with our children.


Derek H. Taylor
TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS
26 September 2001


Valerie Amos
UNITED KINGDOM
26 September 2001

Commitments

The government of the UK will:

- 1 Help build capacity to support and implement integrated environmental management which is consistent with the Turks and Caicos Islands' own plans for sustainable development.
- 2 Assist the Turks and Caicos Islands in initiating, reviewing and updating environmental legislation.
- 3 facilitate the extension of the UK's ratification of Multilateral Environmental Agreements of benefit to the Turks and Caicos Islands and which the Turks and Caicos Islands has the capacity to implement (and a desire to adopt).
- 4 Keep the Turks and Caicos Islands informed regarding new developments in relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements and invite the Turks and Caicos Islands to participate where appropriate in the UK's delegation to international environmental negotiations and conferences.
- 5 Help the Turks and Caicos Islands to ensure it has the legislation, institutional capacity (technology, equipment, procedures) and mechanisms it needs to meet international obligations.
- 6 Promote better cooperation and the sharing of experience and expertise between the Turks and Caicos Islands, other Overseas Territories and other states and communities which face similar environmental problems.
- 7 Use UK, regional and local expertise to give advice and improve knowledge of technical and scientific issues. This includes regular consultation with interested non-governmental organisations and networks.
- 8 Use the existing Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories, and promote access to other sources of public funding, for projects of lasting benefit to the Turks and Caicos Islands' environment.
- 9 Help the Turks and Caicos Islands identify further funding partners for environmental projects, such as donors, the private sector or non-governmental organisations.
- 10 Recognise the diversity of the challenges facing Overseas Territories in very different socio-economic and geographical situations.
- 11 Abide by the principles set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (See Annex 2) and work towards meeting International Development Targets on the environment (See Annex 3).

The government of the Turks and Caicos Islands will:

- 1 Bring together government departments, representatives of local industry and commerce, environment and heritage organisations, the Governor's office, individual environmental champions and other community representatives in a forum to formulate a detailed strategy for action. (See Annex 1).
- 2 Ensure the protection and restoration of key habitats, species and landscape features through legislation and appropriate management structures and mechanisms, including a protected areas policy, and attempt the control and eradication of invasive species.
- 3 Ensure that environmental considerations are integrated within social and economic planning processes; promote sustainable patterns of production and consumption within the territory.
- 4 Ensure that environmental and environmental health impact assessments are undertaken before approving major projects and while developing our growth management strategy.
- 5 Commit to open and consultative decision-making on developments and plans which may affect the environment; ensure that environmental impact assessments include consultation with stakeholders.
- 6 Implement effectively obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements already extended to the Turks and Caicos Islands and work towards the extension of other relevant agreements.
- 7 Review the range, quality and availability of baseline data for natural resources and biodiversity.
- 8 Ensure that legislation and policies reflect the principle that the polluter should pay for prevention or remedies; establish effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
- 9 Encourage teaching within schools to promote the value of our local environment (natural and built) and to explain its role within the regional and global environment.
- 10 Promote publications that spread awareness of the special features of the environment in the Turks and Caicos Islands; promote within the Turks and Caicos Islands the guiding principles set out above.
- 11 Abide by the principles set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (See Annex 2) and work towards meeting International Development Targets on the environment (See Annex 3).

Appendix 2

Proposed Composition of the Environmental Awareness Action Group

The Department of Environment and Coastal Resources
The Department of Environmental Health
The Planning Department
The Cultural Commission
The Turks and Caicos National Trust
National Parks Environment Advisory Committee
Fisheries Advisory Committee
Tourist Board
The National Museum
Rotary
Kiwanis
Representative from the Council of Churches
Bush Working Group
Turks and Caicos Hotel and Tourism Association
Clean-Up TCI
The Media