

## **Another step towards strengthening management of NEMMA, Antigua and Barbuda**

Antigua and Barbuda's largest marine reserve, the North East Marine Management Area (NEMMA), is about to receive much needed funding to further develop management of this diverse and unique area. The project is part of a regional programme: '*Climate Resilient Eastern Caribbean Marine Managed Areas Network (ECMMAN)*' that aims to improve management capacity within OECS countries for existing marine managed areas (MMAs) and strengthen abilities for establishment of additional MMAs. The EAG was successful in its proposal and bid for funding of €77,934.57 made available by the the Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Management Network (CaMPAM)-ECMMAN Small Grant Programme for the first of this two-phase, four-year project.

The project: "A multi-faceted approach to strengthening the management of NEMMA", is a collaboration between The Environmental Awareness Group (EAG) and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, through the Fisheries Division and the Environment Division. The first phase of the project will run until mid-2016.

Main objectives of the project include increased educational and public awareness campaigns regarding MMAs; gathering scientific data on the status of species and habitats; updating information on utilization by and value to users. Objectives will also encompass aspects of strengthening management skills, both within the communities surrounding the marine reserve as well as for the existing NEMMA management authority.

As the project's core focus is the marine environment it will be a great complement to the mostly terrestrial work that the EAG, with support from the Government and international partners, has been conducting over the last 19 years through the Off-shore Islands Conservation Programme.

Through gaining further understanding of the interaction among users and natural resources within NEMMA, the project hopes to ensure that users' needs are met while maintaining and, where necessary, re-establishing the ecological balance. A true sense of sustainable utilization is essential and is the only way that will allow nature to continue to provide the invaluable services it does for humans, the environment's caretakers.

Development of the project proposal was built upon the extensive consultation and work carried out by past and present projects related to management of protected areas, sustainable use and alternative livelihoods. This included a review of the existing NEMMA management plan developed in 2006 under the OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods project. The proposal further considered national mandates that have been developed based on the country's commitment to various charters that establish regional and global frameworks for environmental management, such as St. George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The effectiveness of the project will depend on the support of Antiguan and Barbudans, particularly those that use the area and live in the communities surrounding NEMMA. It is an opportunity for voices to be heard, for several issues to be brought to the fore-front and for solutions to be explored.

Funding for this project is provided by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), piloted by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and administered by the UNEP-CEP (United Nations Environment Programme—Caribbean Environment Programme) Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Program, its Regional Activity Center (SPAW-RAC) and the CaMPAM.

The EAG would very much like to thank the agencies that have made this project possible, with particular recognition to CaMPAM for awarding EAG with the grant. We look forward to working with CaMPAM and strengthening relationships and collaboration among local agencies, and regional

counterparts in the other participating Caribbean countries (Dominica, Grenada, St.Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & the Grenadines).

For more information about the EAG, our projects and how to get involved please visit our website [www.eagantigua.org](http://www.eagantigua.org).