



**Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
(CANARI)**

FORESTS AND LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME



WARMMAE LETANG:

**A case study of community-based tourism within the
Morne Trois Pitons World Heritage Site, Dominica.**

Betty Perry-Fingal

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ACRONYMS

CANARI – Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
CDB – Caribbean Development Bank
COMPACT - Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation Project
DDA – Discover Dominica Authority, Inc.
DHTA – Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association
DOMLEC – Dominica Electricity Services Company, Ltd.
DYEO – Dominica Youth in the Environment Organisation
ETDP – Eco-Tourism Development Programme
EU – European Union
GEF – Global Environment Facility
NAYA – National Youth and Agriculture Association
NDC - National Development Corporation
SGP – Small Grants Programme
UNESCO – United States Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WLG – Warmme Letang Group, Inc.
WHS - World Heritage Site

1. INTRODUCTION

This case study examines the impacts on community livelihoods of the co-management arrangements for the Freshwater Lake (Warmmae Letang.¹) in the Morne Trois Pitons National Park in Dominica, which was designated a World Heritage Site in 1998.

The co-management arrangement was brokered between four main agencies:

- the Ministry of Tourism and the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry which share the responsibility for managing the World Heritage Site;
- the Warmmae Letang Group (WLG), a specially formed community-based organization, located in the village of Laudat, which was granted the right to develop revenue-generating tourism activities at the lake under Memoranda of Understanding/agreements with the formal management agencies;
- United Nations Foundation and the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme through the Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation Project (COMPACT), which was established in 2001 to test community-based approaches to managing natural resources in and around six World Heritage Sites.

The case study reviews the nature of the institutional arrangements, the enabling factors and challenges, and their impacts on the benefits to the local community. It then seeks to distil some lessons and recommendations both for this specific initiative and for other Caribbean initiatives that seek to link forest management with generation of benefits to the rural poor.

The case study is one of a series of case studies under CANARI's Forests and Livelihoods Programme which seek to analyse the relationship between the institutional arrangements for forest management (including the process of developing the arrangements) and the livelihood benefits derived by the rural poor. Specifically, the case study is an output of a regional project entitled ***“Practices and policies that improve forest management and the livelihoods of the rural poor in the insular Caribbean”*** funded by the European Commission's Programme on Tropical Forests and other Forests in Developing Countries [2007-2009]. This project is being implemented in Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Christopher (St. Kitts) & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, and Trinidad & Tobago but it is anticipated that the lessons learned will be of relevance to other Caribbean islands.

¹ Literally “rowing lake” in Kweyol

DOMINICA



2. CONTEXT AND LOCATION

2.1. Dominica

The Commonwealth of Dominica is located in the Eastern Caribbean, between the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Its total area is 754 square kilometers, and its population was estimated at 69,625 at the last census in 2001..

Dominica's economy has historically been based on agriculture but since the mid-1990s, the focus has increasingly been on tourism development as an alternative source of foreign exchange and job creation. The period from 2000-2008 marked a transition from crisis (primarily as a result of the decline of the banana industry) to relative stability but without any significant growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Funds to develop the island's tourism potential have been sourced primarily from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the European Union (EU), with the main emphasis on infrastructure development in eco-tourism sites around the country.

2.1.1 The tourism sector in Dominica

Dominica has historically not seen itself as a prime tourism destination, often citing its lack of white sandy beaches as a prohibitive barrier. In the 1990's, with the decline of agriculture, more specifically bananas, some serious efforts were undertaken to develop Dominica's nature tourism. Several cruise ship berths were built with the aid of international assistance, and the Caribbean Development Bank funded upgrades for a number of the more popular attractions, including the Freshwater Lake.

Over time, the number of cruise ship arrivals has increased steadily. Some 400,000 cruise ship visitors are expected for the 2008-2009 season. In the meantime, the number of stay-over visitors has not increased dramatically. Tour operators thus tend to focus their attention on the cruise ship business. The downside is that the cruise ships generally only operate in the Caribbean from October through May. In developing the project proposal for WLG, the assumption was made that most of the business would come from the cruise ships.

Over the past ten years, various initiatives undertaken by the Government have put a priority on community-based tourism. The primary focus, however, has been on development of infrastructure with significantly less attention paid to nurturing the community-based projects and assisting local residents in acquiring the skills needed to develop a successful tourism product. Very little attention has been paid to linking the community-based projects with the other players in the industry.

A new tourism policy, Tourism 2010, was launched in 2005 and includes a vision that states: "Dominica will pursue sustainable tourism that enriches the lives of all citizens by creating economic, social and cultural opportunities, protecting the natural resources and scenic, heritage and cultural features of the country, nurturing community involvement in tourism at sustainable levels, and by creating career paths for the young people of Dominica." One of the policy's guiding principles is to ensure that local communities play a meaningful role in the tourism sector.

2.2. Morne Trois Pitons National Park and World Heritage Site

The Morne Trois Pitons National Park, which is located in the southern half of Dominica, was created by the National Parks and Protected Areas Act in 1975 and inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1998. The Park has been described by UNESCO as comprising the best remaining examples of volcanic island eco-systems remaining in the Caribbean. The Park is 25 square miles in area and protects active volcanic areas, mountains, wildlife, clear streams, various types of tropical rainforest as well as the Freshwater Lake, which is the subject of this case study.

2.2.1 Institutional arrangements for the management of the National Park

When the Site was inscribed, primary responsibility for managing it was placed with the Ministry of Tourism while responsibility for the National Parks has remained with the Forestry Division within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry. This divided responsibility, which is described in more detail in Appendix 1, applies to all Dominica's eco-tourism sites that fall within protected areas.

2.2.2 The Freshwater Lake and village of Laudat

Laudat is the nearest village to the Freshwater Lake and the home of the Warmmae Letang Group. It is located about 4.2 kilometres west of the Lake at an elevation of about 760 metres above sea level (see Figure 1).

The 2001 census estimates the population of Laudat at 342 but villagers believe it has dropped to about 300. The level of poverty and indigence in the area is about average for Dominica at 12% and 11% respectively. A number of the villagers have been engaged for many years in providing tours to sites within the National Park. About two dozen are employed by the Rainforest Aerial Tram. A handful of others are engaged in farming but most of the population travels daily to the capital, Roseau, for jobs in the public and private sectors.

Dominica has a strong local government system, which has been in existence for over twenty years. Laudat is too small to have a Village Council but has a Village Improvement Committee (VIC), a relatively informal entity that has functioned intermittently since its inception.

Laudat is well-situated to take advantage of the growing emphasis on nature tourism given its proximity to Dominica's main natural attractions. It is the most popular starting point for hikes to the renowned Boiling Lake and the village road also leads to trails to the Freshwater Lake, the Titou Gorge, the Boeri Lake, the East Coast Lookout, Morne Micotrin and Morne Watt. Laudat is also located along the historic Chemin L'Etang (Lake Road) trail, the former east-west coast 'main road' which east coast villagers had to use to reach Roseau prior to the construction of motorable roads in the 1960s,

Laudat's proximity to some of Dominica's most dramatic attractions has meant that a number of villagers have worked as tour guides for many years. The guides have generally operated independently while some work for Roseau-based tour operators or the Rainforest Aerial Tram, also located near Laudat. Several efforts have been made to encourage the guides to form an association, but these have not been successful.

In 2003, the Rainforest Aerial Tram opened at the outskirts of the village. The Tram employs twenty-five individuals in varying capacities, including maintenance and cleaning. It employs five locals as guides and another thirteen from outside the area. The Tram is aimed primarily at cruise ship passengers and closes down in the off-season. Recently it has developed tour packages, but these have not included the Freshwater Lake.

There is one guesthouse in the area. The other tourism-related activity engaged in by villagers is vending drinks, snacks and souvenirs to visitors who pass near the village.

Laudat also has the potential to increase its agricultural output at a time when new attention is being paid to agriculture in light of the steeply rising cost of imported food. The Laudat area is not appropriate for banana farming but is good for growing cocoa and coffee, vegetables, root crops and raising small animals. These are all products that can link directly to the tourism sector and, in particular, to the food service offered by WLG.

2.3. The Warmmae Letang co-management arrangement

Chronology of development of Warmmae Letang Co-Management Arrangement

- 1975: Morne Trois Pitons declared a national park under the National Parks and Protected Areas Act (1975)
- 1996-2000: Physical improvements made around the Freshwater Lake
- 1998: Morne Trois Pitons National Park inscribed as a World Heritage Site
- 2001: COMPACT established in Dominica
- 2002: WLG formed as a community group and registered with the Village Improvement Committee

- June 2002: WLG submitted proposal to COMPACT
- January 2003. WLG proposal approved
- November, 2004: WLG incorporated as a not-for-profit company under the laws of Dominica (a prerequisite to disbursement of COMPACT funds)
- December 2004: Initial tranche of funds disbursed
- April 2005: Three-year agreement signed with Forestry to allow use of the Lake area (not clearly delineated- an issue recently raised by Forestry)
- September 2005: Three-year lease signed between WLG and Ministry of Tourism for use of part of the Ministry's facility near the Lake.
- February 2005 First WLG report to COMPACT
- 2006: Visitor fee reduced from US\$2 to EC\$2 (US\$.74)

2.3.1 Inception phase

In response to the new restrictions imposed under the designation as a World Heritage Site, the communities around the Site were encouraged by COMPACT to develop new eco-tourism initiatives. One such initiative was development of The Warmmae Letang Group (WLG). The initiative was also in keeping with the direction being pursued by the Ministry of Tourism, which was implementing a multi-year EU-funded Eco-Tourism Development Project, a project aimed at spreading the benefits of tourism to communities around the country.

When COMPACT was launched in Dominica in 2001, the Coordinator carried out meetings with communities bordering on the World Heritage Site to inform them about the goal of the Project, which was to identify livelihood opportunities using a community-based approach. He encouraged them to develop proposals that could be funded. In December of that year, a capacity building session was also held for communities interested in pursuing this opportunity. In the case of Warmmae Letang, the members of the community subsequently formed a group and proposed the concept of operating a boating project on the Freshwater Lake. Boating had been done on an individual basis before this, but this was the first effort to turn it into a commercial venture.

The boating concept was first suggested by the Group's current Managing Director. He believed strongly in the project's potential, envisioning that it would bring hundreds of tourists to the Freshwater Lake. He even imagined building a wedding chapel on a small island in the middle of the lake. Working as tour guides for the lake was appealing to a number of community members who were already doing tours to various sites in the National Park.

The COMPACT Coordinator held several meetings with the group as they attempted to sort out the details of the project and decide on a group leader. The Coordinator recalls that early on there was an intense power struggle within the group that only ended when the other contender for leadership decided to drop out of the group, leaving the current Managing Director in charge. The original group included 13 members but had dropped to nine by the time the proposal was submitted to COMPACT. By this stage, the group had formalized its structure, electing a chairman (later to become the Managing

Director), a deputy chairman, a secretary and a treasurer. They had also registered as a community group with the Village Improvement Committee.

After several unsuccessful attempts by the group to prepare a proposal, the Coordinator determined that the group members did not have the capacity to develop an acceptable proposal. The group applied for and was given a Planning Grant, which allowed them to hire the services of a consultant to prepare the proposal on their behalf. This proposal was submitted in June, 2002.

2.3.2 Implementation phase

With the assistance of the COMPACT Coordinator and the consultant, the project proposal was submitted and then approved by COMPACT's Steering Committee in January 2003. The long-term objective of the Project was described as "development of an eco-tourism product that would impact positively and in a sustainable manner on the Morne Trois Pitons National Park and, in so doing, generate income for the group members and the village community".

The product was to include hiking and boating as well as operation of a small restaurant. The EC\$81,355 (US\$30,132) grant obtained from COMPACT in 2003 was to be used for training group members about the area's flora and fauna, how to conduct boat tours safely, group dynamics, project management and key aspects of the hospitality sector. It was also to cover the cost of boating equipment and kitchen equipment as well as preparation of a marketing plan. The group members were expected to contribute "sweat equity", i.e. their labour and management skills on a voluntary unpaid basis. If successful, many villagers were expected to benefit in terms of income from participating as tour guides, employees in the restaurant and suppliers of produce and craft items.

Conditions for accessing the funding included a requirement that the Group register as a not-for-profit company and enter into formal agreements with the Forestry Division and the Ministry of Tourism for access to the Lake area and use of the facility there.

It was not until November 2004, with the help of an advisor described by group members as "a prominent person of the Roseau Valley", that the Group successfully registered as a company. The advisor then introduced them to an official of the Eco-Tourism Development Programme who conducted a community meeting on the benefits of eco-tourism and offered the group her encouragement. The first tranche of funding was finally disbursed to the group in December 2004.

When the group submitted its first report to COMPACT in February of 2005 (see Box 2), training in boating had begun, and plans for training in tour guiding, first aid, project management and implementation, group dynamics and the tourism industry were in place.

Box 2: WLG's report to COMPACT: February, 2005

WLG's first report to COMPACT stated that the reality was much different from what had been anticipated. WLG described the challenges it had faced as being primarily bureaucratic red tape, citing the need to negotiate agreements with both the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture/Forestry Division before it could begin operating.

WLG claimed it had received very little support from the Local Coordinator of COMPACT after the project approval was granted. According to the Report, "The Warmmae Letang Group was repeatedly being criticized of being divided and troublesome, by the Local Coordinator."

By early 2005, group members had completed several areas of training, including identification of local flora and fauna, kayaking, boating, first aid, project management, group dynamics and key aspects of the tourism industry. WLG had not yet started offering tours but appeared to be ready to begin.

WLG reported to COMPACT at this time that it had popular support in the community and had established good relationships with a number of other institutions. An important partner was Whitchurch Tours, a key player in Dominica's cruise sector, which agreed to include the Group's tours in its marketing to the cruise sector.

2.3.3 Institutional arrangements for management of Freshwater Lake

Forestry Department and Ministry of Tourism

The management arrangements are complex as a result of the divided responsibility between the Forestry Department and the Ministry of Tourism for management of all of Dominica's eco-tourism sites that fall within protected areas. The result is that:

- WLG has a lease agreement with the Ministry of Tourism for use of the facility on-site which does not specify usage rights in any detail. WGL has a separate agreement with the Forestry Division (see Appendix 2) giving permission to carry out designated activities within the National Park. The agreements were signed in 2005 and are for a period of three years.
- The two Ministries have established a Working Group that meets periodically to discuss areas of mutual concern.

COMPACT

The COMPACT programme is another key player in these management arrangements. It required that the community group register as a not-for-profit company and to enter into agreements with the Forestry Division and the Ministry of Tourism for access to the Lake area and use of the facility there before any funds would be disbursed. It also was responsible for overseeing implementation of the project it funded. COMPACT therefore had and has an important degree of influence, even control, as to how the WLG operates.

Discover Dominica Authority

The Discover Dominica Authority (DDA) is responsible both for enforcing standards for providers of tourism services and for marketing Dominica. DDA also offers tour guide training and did train WLG's members. DDA recently conducted a needs assessment

for this and several other community-based projects. The DDA is interested in seeing how it can assist with better coordination and cooperation among the players in the tourism sector.

Tour operators

Two tour operators had established relationships with WLG, Whitchurch Tours and Wacky Rollers. Both depend primarily on the cruise sector for their business. They marketed the Warmmae Letang tours to the cruise lines and arranged tours on behalf of the cruise ships.

2.3.4 Key project activities and outcomes

The enabling or preparatory activities focused mainly on:

- registration of the community group as a non-profit company;
- negotiating formal written contracts with the Forestry Department and the Ministry of Tourism;
- accessing the COMPACT grant;
- training of WLG members including in identification of local flora and fauna, kayaking, boating, first aid, project management, group dynamics and key aspects of the tourism industry;
- establishing relationships with tour operators

Activities specific to trying to achieve the objective of the community-based tourism initiative focused on providing boat and kayak tours on the lake, hiking tours on the trails, and providing catering services at the Visitors Centre.

The results of the activities since the official commencement of the project under the lease agreements are unclear. According to WLG's Managing Director, the project has survived this long on the sale of tours to locals and the sale of food. He stated that the business does not depend on the cruise sector. He could not supply precise numbers for the project's operations, but it is clear that the projections in the project proposal for visitor numbers were far from being achieved.

Interviews with WLG's Managing Director, both former and present COMPACT Coordinators, Forestry officials, officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Discover Dominica Authority, and several tour operators revealed a common perception that the performance of the project has been very disappointing (see Appendix 3 for detailed description of the current status of relationships between WLG and its partners). Most WLG members have dropped out and others hired to act as guides have left as well. While ten tour guides completed the training and qualified for certification by the NDC, most of them left the group after the disappointing performance of the project in the first year. The remainder left more recently. Several who took other jobs still help out when they have free time. Some of the women who worked in the kitchen stayed the longest. At the time of writing, the Managing Director and his wife are the only ones continuing to participate in the project.

3. KEY ENABLING FACTOR AND CHALLENGES CONTRIBUTING TO THE OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

3.1. Enabling factors

3.1.1. Growing focus on tourism development as driver of the economy

Dominica's economy over the past eight years has gone from a state of crisis to a period of relative stability but still lacks any significant growth. As the banana industry has continued to struggle, the Government's plans have looked increasingly to tourism as an alternative source of jobs and foreign exchange.

Since the mid-nineties, the Government of Dominica has been seeking and obtaining funds to develop its tourism potential. The primary sources of funds have been the Caribbean Development Bank and the European Union. Most of these funds have gone to develop infrastructure in eco-tourism sites around the country.

The Government recently developed a new tourism policy, *Tourism 2010*, which contains a vision that focuses heavily on natural resources and community involvement. The vision states: "Dominica will pursue sustainable tourism that enriches the lives of all citizens by creating economic, social and cultural opportunities, protecting the natural resources and scenic, heritage and cultural features of the country, nurturing community involvement in tourism at sustainable levels, and by creating career paths for the young people of Dominica."

One of the Policy's guiding principles is to ensure that local communities play a meaningful role in the tourism sector. A project like that of the Warmmae Letang Group is in accord with the stated policy and as noted earlier, Laudat, is well-positioned to take advantage of the emphasis on nature tourism given its proximity to Dominica's main natural attractions

3.1.2 Donor Initiatives and funding support for communities

As noted above, the Government has successfully received assistance from the Caribbean Development Bank and the European Union to advance its policy goal of developing eco-tourism. More recently, the Government has received funds from the European Union to develop a National Trail, a project intended to further enhance the eco-tourism product. The National Trail will link to trails in the Freshwater Lake area.

In line with the Government's efforts, the COMPACT Project and the GEF Small Grants Project have also encouraged communities around the island to take advantage of local natural attractions to provide economic opportunities for community members.

However, while communities have been encouraged to get involved with tourism, the investment needed to nurture these groups through the early stages of their development has not matched the investment in infrastructure. Most of the groups have struggled once the original support from the Government or the donor agency has ended.

3.1.3 Access to key influential persons

WLG, or at least its Managing Director, successfully used key influential persons to help it move forward during the early stages. Such key persons include:

- The past and current COMPACT Coordinator
- An advisor, described by the group as “a prominent person of the Roseau Valley”, who helped the group to successfully register as a company. The advisor then introduced them to an official of the Eco-Tourism Development Programme.

Although these contacts provided significant short-term benefits, one interviewee indicated that over-reliance on the political process may have been to the detriment of long-term institutionalised arrangements.

3.2 Challenges

Some of the key challenges facing the WLG are inherent to the project and some relate to the individuals involved and their skills and commitment to the project’s success.

3.2.1 World Heritage Site

In spite of the funding that the World Heritage Site facilitated, operating within the World Heritage Site has presented the WLG with some challenges because of the need to strictly limit the types of activities that may take place within the WHS. The National Parks, by law, must close at 5:00 pm. Groups who have asked to hold moonlight picnics by the Lake have had to be turned away.

3.2.2. Seasonality of Tourism

The seasonality of the tourism business in the Caribbean has also been a drawback for the WLG. For the 2008-2009 season, only one cruise ship will be docking in Dominica between May 1 and October 31. The Rainforest Aerial Tram has closed for the entire period. The Tram and most tour operators lay off their staff during the off-season. For a group like WLG, with its small visitor numbers, this long lay-off period, would be devastating, especially if it was depending on cruise business as anticipated in the original project.

3.2.3 Institutional arrangements

Although the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the government agencies could be counted as an enabling factor, the process of obtaining these and the reservations of both agencies about the arrangements must be counted among the challenges. The MOU between Forestry and WLG (Appendix 2) was the result of a Cabinet decision, which WLG’s Managing Director described as “an uphill battle that required intervention at the political level”. The tone of the agreement itself reveals some concern on the part of Forestry officials about the co-management concept. The reminder, in bold, that this is a World Heritage Site implies that officials had some reservations but were compelled to comply with the Cabinet decision.

WLG’s Managing Director also noted that the Ministry of Tourism officials were less than eager to lease facilities to WLG, presumably because of doubts about the group’s ability to run a successful business. Nevertheless, an agreement was eventually

reached. The agreement is consistent with the Ministry's policy of encouraging community-based tourism and was followed up with technical assistance from the Ministry's staff.

The reservations of the two key government agencies in allocating even this level of rights and responsibilities because of concerns regarding the capacity of the CBO are significant. It is uncertain whether in practice additional rights and responsibilities would have been allocated if WLG had proven its capacity to assist with management.

3.2.4 Leadership

The group's leader, the Managing Director, has undoubtedly demonstrated a consistent commitment to the project. He continues to try to meet the company's outstanding commitments, soldiering on after all his members have departed. He described the early problems the group faced in getting agreements to use the Lake and facilities as "boulders in the road." He was determined to overcome them and eventually did, relying heavily on political support to succeed. This reliance may, however, have been to the detriment of building a sound working relationship with the officials with whom he had to work.

At some point in this process, it appears as if the Managing Director's commitment to the project led him to believe he owned it. This made it difficult for him to accept advice from others and prevented him from reaching out to potential partners who could have helped him develop a customer base. Suggestions to partner with a tour operator, for instance, were seen as attempts at a hostile takeover.

While it was reported that some group members left when they felt the Managing Director was not being fair with them, it does not appear that these members challenged him directly or were prepared to take on additional responsibilities. Others simply left when the project failed to produce sufficient income. The Managing Director apparently made no serious effort to re-engage these members and relied on hiring staff instead. The community concept got lost along the way.

This trend is not unusual within the Dominica (or indeed Caribbean) NGO community; as noted by the former COMPACT Coordinator, "the answer is to drop out, not to try to change things, once the leader is viewed as being unfair."

3.2.5 Governance and participation of WLG members

Twelve villagers, five men and seven women, first formed the group to develop the project for the Freshwater Lake. By the time the project proposal was submitted to COMPACT, the group included just nine members. By 2007, the group was down to two men and four women. Presently, just the Managing Director and his wife are still actively participating. Over the life of the project, as many as twenty community members either participated in or supported the group.

The former COMPACT Coordinator recalls meeting with a sizable group of enthusiastic villagers in 2001 and 2002. He facilitated several meetings where he assisted in resolving conflicts. The Group selected the present Managing Director as their leader in a democratic process. In 2004, group members were still attending meetings and

participating in training sessions. By the time the present Coordinator took over in 2005, however, the Group had lost most of the men. He recalls meetings were only with the Managing Director and three of the women, including the Group's Secretary. The Secretary, who also acted as office manager, remained with the Group until a recent maternity leave.

Group members elected officials to handle the various tasks of governance when the company was registered in 2004, but it does not appear that the officers assumed the relevant roles and responsibilities of their positions. The Treasurer, for instance, never took responsibility for the Group's finances.

There is a consensus among stakeholders that the inability of the Group to generate adequate revenue within the first year to provide a reasonable income to the members was a key to the sharp decline in participation. Several stakeholders also attribute the failure of the Group to improve its performance, and therefore the level of participation over time, to the attitude of the Managing Director, who was described consistently as resistant to accepting advice and suspicious of other's motives.

In his 2005 Report to COMPACT, the Managing Director acknowledged that the Group was being criticized as being divided and troublesome. At the time, the COMPACT Coordinator was being told by members that the Managing Director was not being fair with them.

At least one stakeholder involved in the early efforts to help the Group get established felt that the presence of grant funds created a certain amount of jealousy within the community. She reported that negative feelings may well have been fueled by the large, unauthorized expenditure for a second-hand vehicle.

3.2.6 Capacity building

Although some initial training was done, it was only in the inception phase rather than ongoing and there does not appear to have been an assessment of or funding for emerging capacity building needs.

3.2.7 Unrealistic expectations of livelihood benefits in the short-term

It appears that the expectations of the livelihood benefits in the first couple of years may have been unrealistic in spite of the initial COMPACT feasibility assessment. It should be noted, however, that the COMPACT advisors do not have specific tourism expertise. On the other hand, the advisor from the Ministry of Tourism did identify the need for more capacity building in order to achieve the full potential, but did not have the resources to provide it.

However, there is a general consensus that the project is still viable if properly managed and attempts are underway to re-launch it under the auspices of a newly composed Village Improvement Council, which is in the process of developing a new business plan.

4. DEGREE AND TYPE OF PARTICIPATION AND IMPACTS ON LIVELIHOODS

4.1 Type of participatory arrangement

The management arrangements are governed by formal written contracts specifying use of the forest and related resources by WLG. However, these contracts only provide for use and do not give the CBO rights to participate in management decision-making. As such, it can be characterised as a fairly low level of participation where WLG is given controlled permission to carry out specified activities that will fulfill objectives of the Government. This is characterised as 'functional participation', where participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision-making, but tends to arise only after major decisions have already been made by external agents. At worst, local people may still only be co-opted to serve external goals".(Bass et al 1995) The management objectives and activities are carefully specified by the government agencies and WLG must operate within these conditions. It also appears that WLG's capacity to participate was extremely limited at the outset and that little attempt was made to build this during the project period.

4.2 Livelihood Benefits and Costs

The limited records and reports from the project make the benefits and costs difficult to quantify but the following represent those that emerged from the desk review and interview process

4.2.1 Human (e.g. education, skills, knowledge, health)

In terms of human development, the Project can claim some success. Ten tour guides qualified for certification by the NDC and received training in safe boating operations, including CPR. The women who operated the kitchen and dining facilities have significantly improved their skills and are now capable of offering professional-level catering services. The Managing Director indicated that he has learned a great deal about the challenges of managing a tourism business. However, there is no data as to whether these skills were applied elsewhere once the project became dormant.

4.2.2 Social (e.g. family, community and wider social networks and relationships)

Laudat is a small community, almost all of whose residents have long historical connections with the village as well as numerous family ties among each other. This has often led to the creation of factions who compete for control of the limited resources in the area. In the case of the WLG, such a split did occur, and suspicions about each other's conduct and motives continues some five years after the project was first approved. The women members, who provided the food service, in contrast appear to have formed a successful subgroup and did remain with the project long after most of the men had departed.

The Group lacked skills in conflict management so that rather than deal with differences in an open manner, members would simply leave and voice their complaints to others. A cost to the community has been the animosity and suspicion created between the Managing Director and many of the former group members.

4.2.3 Physical

The physical improvements around the Freshwater Lake were made independently of the Group's project and were part of the earlier CDB tourism development project. Through that project, the Government developed a reception facility with car park and had a good quality road built over the 2.5 miles between Laudat and the Lake. These improvements did not lead to success in the project but do remain available if this project can be revived or if another entity is given the right to use the Lake. The Ministry of Tourism has had plans for several years to provide some additional infrastructure, including a boathouse and vending booths. The contracts are being finalized, and the expectation is that the additions will be in place by the end of 2008.

4.2.4 Political (access to and influence over decision-making processes)

The Managing Director led the negotiating processes with the key Government agencies responsible for the area. While he has complained about the difficulties of the negotiations, he feels that he was able to establish effective relationships with key agencies and with political leaders in the area. The former COMPACT Coordinator believes the Managing Director's over-reliance on political leaders may have been to the detriment of establishing effective working relationships with key officials in the Forestry Division and the Ministry of Tourism. This appears to be borne out by his reluctance to contact these officials for guidance or assistance when the project ran into difficulties.

4.2.5 Financial

The financial benefits of the project appear to have been minimal, just enough to keep the project afloat for the three year period of the agreements with Government. During the WGL's better days, benefits accrued to some of the villagers who were able to sell eggs, chicken, vegetables and ground provisions to WGL. WGL also employed persons as tour guides and security guards who were not Group members and contracted with locals for transport. The overall financial impact of these activities was modest at best and has become minimal as participation in the Group has dwindled.

The Managing Director reports that the project is in debt and that he is struggling to continue offering services in an effort to pay them off. He secured a loan of EC\$2,164 from a local insurance company to cover the cost of repairs to the jetty and the boats, and it is questionable whether he will be able to repay it. Some income was generated by the project, both for the members who remained and the several who were employed. The overall impact of income from the project has been modest, but exact figures are not available. The potential of the tour guiding aspect of the project still seems viable based on the figures in Box 4 below. No figures were available for the catering aspect but it appears that it covered its costs and made a small surplus.

Box 4 The Project Numbers

The project proposal used a tour price of US\$27, assumed that with three boats and three kayaks, they could accommodate up to 24 persons at a time and assumed that the Group would be operating at 80% of its carrying capacity within the first year. The proposal also took account of seasonality and dropped that to 20% in the off-season.

Forestry put a limit of 30 persons per hour on the Lake. Assuming 6 hours of operation, the capacity would be 180 persons a day.

When they started operating, WLG was charging \$US20 a person. When added to the tour operators' charges and the cruise ship's mark-up, the charge to the customer reached US\$90. This forced WLG to drop its price further, negotiating a fee of US\$14 for Whitchurch and US\$10 for Wacky Rollers.

Even with the reduced fees, the potential is there to earn US\$1,000 a day at 50% of capacity just from cruise passengers. Stay-over visitors and local groups would supplement those numbers.

The Managing Director feels he has personally sacrificed considerable potential income by remaining with the project for so long.

Although the area was protected prior to the designation as a World Heritage Site, local community members traditionally used the area for hunting, fishing, farming and logging under the supervision of the Forestry Division. Once the Park became a World Heritage Site, most of those activities were prohibited so this may represent a livelihood cost to the villagers; however no estimates are available on the scale or value of these activities.

Villagers have continued to use the Park for hiking and for fishing. The Lake has been stocked with two types of tilapia.

4.3 Allocation of benefits

It is difficult to assess the benefits that accrued to the wider community but most seem to have been targeted directly to members. The benefits to the group members have been primarily in skill development and gaining a better appreciation of what is needed to succeed in the tourism industry. Skills development was fairly well distributed among the members, except that it seems that only the Managing Director played a leadership role and benefited from the learning related to business management.

Some of the most significant costs of the project's failure to develop a successful tourism operation are the increased scepticism on the part of key Government officials and members of the community itself about the value and wisdom of community-based tourism projects, especially those within protected areas. While the official pronouncements continue to speak in favour of this approach, the individuals working with the communities express concern about the level of handholding necessary and the lack of resources to provide that level of support over the longer term.

While there is a consensus that the concept of the Group's project has potential benefits, there is agreement that the Group, as now constituted, cannot continue and would not be able to realize any of those potential benefits. The danger is that the

resource will be turned over to a Roseau-based tour operator who may or may not employ local community members in its operation.

4.4. Sustainability of the revenue-generating activities

The project has supported jobs such as tour guide, caterer, security guard and bus driver. All are potentially sustainable once the product is properly packaged and the necessary marketing is done. The number of sustainable jobs might be few at the beginning but could grow over time as the business is developed. While Dominica's tourism sector relies heavily on the seasonal cruise business, there is a consensus that the Lake could do much more to attract local and regional visitors in the off-season by expanding the nature of activities. There is considerable opportunity for using the area for educational purposes with respect to the history and geology of the area and its biodiversity.

5. Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from the Warmmae Letang co-management arrangement are consistent with those from a number of other community-based tourism projects in Dominica and throughout the Caribbean (Geoghegan 1997). Geoghegan highlighted a number of pitfalls and identified factors that contributed to making such projects successful.

Of particular relevance to the Warmmae Letang Group are the identified characteristics of a sustainable community tourism project, which were not carefully considered at the inception of the Warmmae Letang co-management arrangement. These characteristics include:

- mechanisms for gathering baseline data and ongoing monitoring and evaluation;
- project based on a realistic assessment of institutional capabilities;
- project success independent of factors affecting traditional tourism;
- project is resilient and has an independent base of support and channels for marketing;
- existence of a pre-identified market for its products and services; and
- is economically viable and has a strategy to achieve financial autonomy.

The Warmmae Letang experience presents five main lessons and recommendations which are likely to be applicable to other collaborative forest or protected area management arrangements in the Caribbean islands.

5.1 Community-based tourism projects must be viewed and developed as businesses.

A non-profit/NGO governance structure and world-view does not optimise the outcomes of a community-based tourism project where success depends on a business-like approach. Either a for-profit company or a cooperative would be more appropriate. During the development stages of the project, both in planning and early management,

someone with related business experience should be involved. This person may be a mentor and not a member of the group, but the individual must be in a position to make effective recommendations to the group. There should be a realistic timetable for the business to get started and grow. Only the minimal number of persons needed to get the business started should be employed at the outset. This number can expand once the business is on a sound footing.

5.2 A tourism business requires attention to product development and marketing in order to succeed.

The Warmmae Letang initiative failed to pay sufficient attention to this aspect of the business, apparently believing that an attractive natural resource would attract visitors and encourage them to spend their money with minimal effort by the community. Tourism is a highly competitive business that requires constant tuning, revising and expanding in order to respond to customers' needs and desires. Getting and keeping customers requires the use of a variety of strategies, including outreach, promotion and advertising. With the limited resources available to community-based projects, it is imperative that they use existing networks and develop partnerships with other players in the sector if they are to reach customers in sufficient numbers to be profitable.

5.3 A tourism product that is located within a protected area presents special challenges.

Protected areas are by their nature prized assets and likely to attract visitors. Likewise, because the public interest requires that activities within these areas be carefully controlled, a tourism project within a protected area is subject to a range of restrictions. Research must be done in advance to find out what the restrictions are and which agencies must be consulted before the project can proceed. When planning a project within a protected area, the community will need assistance with the negotiations with the relevant governmental agencies and will need to allow the time necessary for those negotiations to be concluded. In the case of Warmmae Letang, obtaining a Cabinet decision, a time-consuming and highly political process, was required before approval could be given for the group to access the area.

5.4 Internal conflict may derail the project unless there is an agreed set of rules and processes and the capacity to implement them.

While not all scenarios can be foreseen nor all conflicts avoided by having clear rules that are understood and agreed to by all members, there are well-established fundamental rules that all organizations rely on to help keep things running smoothly, which were not set in place for WLG. These include:

- establishing norms on regular group meetings with agendas and minutes.
- agreeing on the process for selecting and changing leadership and for resolving differences that may arise;
- determining how responsibilities will be shared among members
- policies for how decisions regarding expenditures will be made and how revenue and expenditures will be recorded and reported. Transparency with finances is critical to keeping the trust of both members and donors.

5.5A community-based tourism project is unlikely to reach its full potential within the average 1-3 year project timeframe, so will need support and assistance for several years.

The time needed for a community-based project to become fully independent may vary somewhat, but experience has shown that these projects need time to develop. During this early phase, the group should have access to ongoing training and technical assistance. The group needs a mentor who can also act as an intermediary with those high-level government officials and urban businessmen who may be intimidating to rural people. The mentor may also need to intervene periodically to keep the project on track and help resolve internal conflicts.

6. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WARMMAE LETANG CO-MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

6.1 Restructuring of WGL

As noted in the lessons and recommendations above, a non-profit structure is not optimal for the development of a collaborative entrepreneurial small-scale tourism enterprise of the kind envisaged at Warmmae Letang. A cooperative or for-profit structure would be preferable. Dominica has a fairly strong cooperative history and has both a Government department and a national level organization that can provide technical support to help in developing a cooperative.

Additionally the scepticism of community members would have to be overcome after the disappointment of the initial WGL experience. Recommended interventions would include a visioning exercise, a strategic planning initiative and a series of training and technical assistance interventions aimed at improving skills in group process, conflict management, product development and marketing.

6.2 Reviewing and revising the institutional arrangements

It is recommended that the current formal and informal arrangements be reviewed in a participatory fashion, with revisions being made if needed to enhance transparency and accountability and enhance livelihood benefits.

The Government has been discussing for some time the development of a National Park Service, vesting full management authority for the National Parks in one entity. Were this to become a reality, the institutional arrangements would be simplified for co-managing the Freshwater Lake. In the meantime, the Forestry Division remains supportive of allowing the community to retain management of the area. At the time of writing, it is not clear whether the Ministry of Tourism is also willing to continue the lease arrangement for the facilities community group since it feels the Group has not lived up to its commitments and has required too much hand-holding.

The other important aspect of institutional arrangements that must be handled differently is the development of close working relationships with other key players in the tourism sector, including the key Government entities, the DHTA and individual hotels and tour operators.

6.3 Seek additional sources of external assistance for WLG

6.3.1 Financial

While Phase II of the COMPACT Project may have funds that could otherwise have been available for the Group, the failure to account for the funds already received make that highly unlikely. The only way these funds could be made available would be if a newly structured organization whose members had proven management/business skills were to take over the project. Likewise, the Group's track record makes it unlikely that other donor funds would be available to them.

Assistance for a new entity could come from COMPACT or Friends of the World Heritage Site. The Dominica Social Investment Fund is also potentially a source of grant assistance to the community, but the project would have to be broad-based and focused on reducing poverty with an emphasis on young people. Indirect beneficiaries, such as those providing produce for the kitchen would have to be included.

6.3.2 Marketing

The Discover Dominica Authority is interested in assisting the community-based projects by helping them develop better relationships with the rest of the sector. They are also encouraging the DHTA to do more to promote the community-based activities.

6.3.3 Partnerships

The Forestry Division remains committed to the concept of community involvement in managing the Freshwater Lake and would provide support in negotiating a new agreement if the group can be reconstituted in a way that gives them confidence that the group is likely to succeed.

The GEF/SGP/COMPACT office is encouraging the formation of an association of the communities around the World Heritage Site so that they can support each other.

The DHTA and the Rainforest Aerial Tram are two local entities that offer possibilities for developing tour packages and doing joint advertising.

Both the National Association of Youth in Agriculture (NAYA) and the Dominica Youth in Environment Organisation (D-YEO) have developed projects for the community. The NAYA project for sheep raising is underway while the proposal for holding an Oxygen Festival at the lake is still in development. Both organizations are interested in assisting the community and are looking at other possibilities, such as an agro-tourism project with a focus on cocoa processing.

6.4 How benefits could be measured on a consistent basis

It should be fairly straightforward to measure the benefits of the Warmmae Letang initiative on a continuous basis although funding would need to be allocated for this and

for the collection of some baseline data. A perceptions and expectations study within the wider community would be a useful baseline against which to measure the overall achievements of the group in terms of benefits accruing to the wider community. It would also identify areas in which the group may need to improve its transparency and accountability to group members and, where appropriate, the wider community.

Financial benefits can be measured by tracking the number of visitors, the amount visitors spend at the site, and the number of community persons deriving income from the project, through wages or sales. This can be further broken down into tourist visits, local visits and special events. However, this would require the implementation of a comprehensive yet simple record-keeping system, which WLG does not yet have in place.

Other indicators of social or human livelihood benefits can be measured by the number of participants in the group, the number benefitting from training and how the skills are applied in and outside of the group, the various roles participants play in the organization, the number of regular meetings held, the keeping of appropriate records, and the transition in leadership over time.

The sustainability of the project can also be evaluated by looking at the number and quality of the organization's relationships with key stakeholders, including political, governmental, donor, and private sector players, especially those in the tourism sector.

6.5 How can benefits be optimized and costs minimized?

The general and specific recommendations above are all intended to contribute to optimising livelihood benefits and minimising costs. However, the following can be considered as critical to any initiative of this kind:

- an upfront analysis of the potential for the success of the project, both in terms of the potential use of the resource and the capacity of the group to create value from the resource, A baseline survey of community expectations and perceptions of livelihood needs and priorities would also be useful;
- development of a coherent plan for the implementation of the project which takes account of the existing strengths and weaknesses of the institutional partners and seeks to build on the former and address the latter;
- clear roles and responsibilities for the institutional partners, whether formalized or not, combined with systematic efforts to build trust between all key partners.

APPENDIX 1
STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Stakeholder	Overall Role, Rights & Responsibilities	Responsibilities Re: WLG	Comments
Division of Forestry	Supervision of National Parks; Enforcement of National Parks and Protected Areas Act (1975), the Forest Act (1958) and the Forestry and Wildlife Act (1976)	Make regular inspections of the area, approve initiatives to be undertaken by WLG, provide direction on the upkeep of the trail, discipline members who violate Forestry regulations and engage in regular meetings with WLG's management.	Forestry has carried out regular inspections; meetings have been with one of two group members only; MOU officially expired April 30, 2008; Forestry has not taken a position on extending or re-negotiating the MOU (Attachment 2)
Ministry of Tourism	Implementation of the Government's tourism policy; primary responsibility for managing the World Heritage Site; management of facilities located at eco-tourism sites; participating in developing tourism standards; providing guidance to community-based tourism projects	Compliance with lease agreement for part of the facility located at the Freshwater Lake; providing technical assistance to WLG re: business development	Lease agreement due to expire September 1, 2008; Ministry has noted that WLG is required to provide 3 months' notice of intent; Ministry has not stated if it will continue the Lease; work is about to begin expand the facilities at the lake
Discover Dominica Authority	Coordination of development of tourism standards and enforcement of established standards; providing training in tourism-related activities, such as tour guiding; managing destination marketing	Provide tour guide training and certify guides; conduct needs assessment; offer advice on how to improve marketing effort; assist in establishing relations with others in the tourism sector;	DDA has recently taken a more active role in identifying the needs of community-based tourism projects and assisting in meeting those needs, e.g., co-sponsoring a community tourism workshop

Stakeholder	Overall Role, Rights & Responsibilities	Responsibilities Re: WLG	Comments
COMPACT	Encourage sustainable livelihood activities; enhance capacities of community-based organizations and NGOs in co-management of protected areas; encourage cooperation and partnerships among stakeholders; encourage innovative technological approaches to community monitoring of natural resources and share lessons learned	Providing funding and guidance to WLG in meeting its objective of providing sustainable livelihoods for community members based on appropriate use of the natural resources of the WHS	There has been a breakdown in relations because of the lack of financial accountability for funds disbursed. The COMPACT Project, being implemented through the GEF Small Grants Programme, does not have the HR capacity to meet the Project's stated objectives.
UNESCO	Establish a local Steering Committee for the WHS to provide guidance on the management of the WHS	Providing guidance on how to optimize the benefits of the World Heritage Site while protecting its integrity; encouraging mutual support among communities bordering the WHS	The Steering Committee was once actively engaged in looking for ways to promote the WHS and attractions like the Freshwater Lake but has been dormant since 2005
DOMLEC	Authorized to access water for hydroelectricity and carry out works at the Freshwater Lake in furtherance of that right	Consulting with WLG re: any activities that affect the Lake and its water level	There has been little or no communication between DOMLEC and the WLG
Warrmae Letang Group. Inc.	Authorized to use the area around the Freshwater Lake for boating and hiking; required to collect visitor fees and account for same to Forestry; authorized to use part of the facility for an office and to provide a food and beverage service; required to maintain property and provide security	WLG is obliged to maintain the site and to issue site passes and collect fees on behalf of Forestry from visitors. The amount has been reduced from US\$2 to EC\$2 (US\$.74) per person. WLG is also to maintain the building and provide 24 hour security.	Relations with other stakeholders have deteriorated significantly over the course of the last three years

Stakeholder	Overall Role, Responsibilities & Rights	Responsibilities Re: WLG	Comments
Tour Guides	Provide tours to visitors	As group members, the guides were obligated to use the training they had received to enable WLG to offer high quality tours	By dropping out of WLG as soon as they did, the guides seriously undermined the success of the project.
Village Improvement Committee	Propose and implement development projects in the community	Act as a facilitator between the leadership of WLG and other community members	The VIC has not yet intervened in the project but some interest in seeing what can be done to save the project for the community has been generated as a result of the case study.

APPENDIX 2

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE FORESTRY, WILDLIFE AND PARKS DIVISION AND WARMMAE LETANG GROUP INC.

Date: 14 May 2005

Re: Approval for Warmmae Letang Group Inc. to operate their boat rowing project on the Fresh Water Lake subject to terms and condition their (sic) within by the Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division as directed by Cabinet Decision for the duration of three (3) years effective April 1, 2005.

This is an agreement between Wammae (sic) Letang Group Inc. (first party) and the Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division (second party). Both parties have agreed to honor this agreement.

Wammae Letang Group Inc. should honors (sic) these following conditions stipulated therein:

- (A) Inspections will be carried out by designated forestry officers when necessary.
These inspections include the site, account, operation and where needs be, request from the National Parks Superintendent and Director of Forestry.
- (B) Cleanliness should be maintain (sic) at all times around the designated site and will not be at the cost of the division.
- (C) All visitors/clients must be in possession of an appropriate user fee before the group can rendered it (sic) services to any potential clients. Park Wardens are to be engage (sic) fully in the operations of the Group.
- (D) Safety Precaution must be of paramount importance in the group's operations, example the wearing of life vests during the tour
- (E) Site Integrity should be maintain at all time (sic) – **Remember** – this is a “**World Heritage Site**”
- (F) The group is responsible for the payments of all utilities assign (sic) to them or under their jurisdiction.

- (G) Any new initiatives to be undertaken and any unusual incident/s taking place or observe (sic) should be communicated at the soonest possible time to the Forestry Division
- (H) No loud music allowed, infra structural development, plants introduction etc must not take place within any National Park of Dominica.
- (I) Group members should be familiar with SRO 54 of 2004
- (J) Instructions will be given from a time to time basis from Forestry Division Officers during their monitoring activities.
- (K) A monthly royalty be paid to the Forestry Division by the group amounting to one (\$US2.00) per person receiving any of the services being provided by the group. Such will be considered as an Environmental Rehabilitation Fund to safeguard resource use and any environmental disaster possibly to occur due to the presence of human activities on such a fragile ecosystem.

The Forestry Division should honor these following conditions stipulated therein:

- (A) Supervising of the site regularly
- (B) Providing directives in the upkeep of trail specifically.
- (C) Discipline group member (sic) and the company by extension who violate stipulated rules and Regulations
- (E) Engage in meeting the group management committee/leadership regularly.

Parties: Warmmae Letang Group Inc. and Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division both agrees (sic) to the above

Eric Hypolite – Director of Forestry, Wildlife and Parks	Date
Eustace Bertrand Director - Warmmae Letang Group Inc.	Date

APPENDIX 3

State of relationships between WLG and its major partners at May 2008

Interviews with WLG's Managing Director, both former and present COMPACT Coordinators, Forestry officials, officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Discover Dominica Authority, and several tour operators revealed that the actual performance of the project has been very disappointing. Most members of the group have dropped out and others hired to act as guides have left as well. The Managing Director and his wife are the only ones continuing to participate in the project.

2.3.4.1 Human Resources

While ten tour guides completed the training and qualified for certification by the NDC, most of them left the group after the disappointing performance of the project in the first year. The remainder left this past year. Several who took other jobs still help out when they have free time. Several of the women who worked in the kitchen stayed the longest.

2.3.4.1 Evolution of institutional arrangements and relationships

Relations with COMPACT

COMPACT encouraged the group to form and develop the project, but by the time WLG submitted its 2005 Report to COMPACT, the Group complained that the then Coordinator had not been sufficiently helpful. An early dispute with COMPACT had arisen when the Managing Director used funds to purchase a second-hand vehicle, an expense outside the approved budget. Financial accounting has remained an issue throughout the life of the project.

The present Coordinator has expressed frustration in attempting to obtain an accounting for the grant funds. No reports have been submitted since the first one in February of 2005. While the Managing Director contends that he provided COMPACT with a bundle of receipts and cancelled cheques, the Coordinator has told the Managing Director that this is not an acceptable form of reporting.

The Coordinator is aware that the group has suffered because of its limited capacity to manage conflict and to take the steps needed to keep the group together but feels he does not have the expertise or resources to assist the group with these problems.

Relations with Forestry

The Memorandum of Understanding between Forestry and the WLG (Attachment 2) was developed by the former Director of Forestry. The current Director and the Superintendent of Parks have had little involvement with the project and very little information about the Group and how the project has evolved over the past several years.

The Forestry Officer responsible for regularly visiting the site reported that he has had difficulty meeting with WLG's Managing Director for the past six months as he has not been at the site. The Officer has been unable to inspect the WLG's books or collect the funds due. He understands that the number of visitors has dropped significantly over this period. On the positive side, the Officer noted that the site has been well-maintained since WLG took over, and the litter is being managed well.

The Managing Director has acknowledged that his relationship with the Forestry Division has broken down. His explanation is that he does not have enough funds to pay the EC\$2 fee due to Forestry, but he acknowledged that he has made no attempt to discuss the problem with Forestry officials. The Superintendent of National Parks has indicated that he understands the project has encountered difficulties and has stated a willingness to waive the fees temporarily if approached.

Disputes between the Managing Director and Forestry officials have also developed regarding what activities are appropriate for the Lake. The Managing Director proposed putting in a second jetty, an initiative Forestry opposed, and he wants to use electric motors for days when the wind is too strong for rowing, also a proposal unacceptable to Forestry. He has also suggested developing the island in the middle of the lake into a wedding chapel but has not pursued that idea.

Relations with the Ministry of Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism is leasing part of the facility it manages at the Freshwater Lake to WLG. The Ministry has also employed a Community Tourism Business Development Officer to work with community-based tourism projects around the country. WLG's relations with the Ministry of Tourism are minimal at this time primarily because of recent changes of personnel within the Ministry. The Community Tourism Business Development Officer who had worked with the Group over a period of years has moved on, and no one else in the Ministry has assumed responsibility for that role. The Officer noted that while working with the group, she often found them either unable or unwilling to adopt suggestions for developing the business. She noted that all of her meetings were one-on-one with either the Managing Director or one of the women, suggesting that the group concept was no longer operational.

An official of the Ministry has expressed frustration with the WLG's current situation citing the group's unrealistic expectations of instant success and their inordinate need for hand-holding and pampering. The official acknowledged that the group needs assistance to get back on track.

Relations with Discover Dominica Authority

The Discover Dominica Authority (DDA) is responsible both for enforcing standards for providers of tourism services and for marketing Dominica. DDA also offers tour guide training and did train WLG's members. DDA recently conducted a needs assessment for this and several other community-based projects and concluded that they suffer from many of the same problems, especially in the area of marketing. According to one officer, the Group doesn't understand the basic things and needs to be spoon-fed. There is also a perception that the Managing Director is the wrong person for the frontline role. The DDA is interested in seeing how it can assist with better coordination and cooperation among the players in the tourism sector.

Relations with Tour Operators

According to the Managing Director, the project has survived this long on the sale of tours to locals and the sale of food. He stated that the business does not depend on the cruise sector. He could not supply precise numbers for the project's operations, but it is clear that the projections in the project proposal were wholly unrealistic.

Without staff to row the boats and act as tour guides, the project has not been able to provide reliable service to the cruise sector. The two tour operators who had established relationships with WLG, Whitchurch Tours and Wacky Rollers, reported having similar experiences. Both depend primarily on the cruise sector for their business. They marketed the Warmmae Letang

tours to the cruise lines and arranged tours on behalf of the cruise ships. Over the past six months, they would arrive on-site only to be told that they could not be accommodated despite having notified the Managing Director in advance.

One of the operators, Wacky Rollers, reported that this happened several times, leading the manager to become concerned about the impact on her company's reputation. She tried various attempts to assist WLG in improving its product, but she found resistance to accepting her advice. She also found that the quality of the tours being offered fell below par as more recently, the guides, who were not from the village and didn't seem to have been fully trained, have not been providing information on the area and have seemed uninterested in connecting with the visitors in any meaningful way.

Relations with Others

The DDA is encouraging the Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association (DHTA) to do more to promote community-based activities. The DHTA has also recognized that it could be doing more to work with the community projects.

Another NGO, the Dominica Youth in the Environment Organisation (DYEO) has submitted a project proposal to the Friends of the World Heritage Site for an Oxygen Festival featuring sporting activities at the Lake as a way of promoting it to Dominicans

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PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Mr. Eustace Bertrand – Managing Director, Warmmae Letang Group, Inc.
Mr. Dave Williams – Superintendent of National Parks, Forestry Division
Mr. Cyrille John - Assistant Forestry Officer
Mrs. Esther Thomas - Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Legal Affairs & Civil Aviation
Mrs. Martha Joseph – (former) Community Tourism Business Development Officer
Ms. Gloria Shillingford, UNESCO Representative
Mr. Errol Harris – (former) Coordinator of COMPACT
Mr. Albert (Panman) Bellot – Coordinator of COMPACT and GEF/SGP
Mrs. Doreen Francis – Director of DOMSAVE and Finance Officer-COMPACT
Ms. Maxine Alleyne – Marketing Officer, Discover Dominica Authority, Inc.
Ms. Lolita Raffoul – Marketing Officer, Discover Dominica Authority, Inc.
Ms. Samantha Letang, Quality Assurance Officer, Discover Dominica Authority, Inc.
Mrs. Judith Pestaina, hotelier and former President, Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association
Ms. Amber Rolle, Manager, Wacky Rollers (WRAVE Inc.)
Ms. Connie Guiste, Marketing Officer, Whitchurch Tours
Mr. Rawlins Bruney – Chief Engineer, Dominica Electricity Services Company, Ltd.