



**“Forests for People, People for Forests:
Forest-based livelihoods in the Caribbean”**

May 4th – 7th 2010

Field Trip Summaries

➤ **Nariva Swamp**

This field trip will look at government-led efforts for restoration of degraded areas of a wetland through planting of trees by communities. This intends to benefit both community livelihoods and serve as a potential model for development of a carbon sink through community reforestation.

Nariva Swamp is the largest fresh-water wetland in Trinidad and Tobago and one of the largest in the Caribbean. It is located on the eastern coast of Trinidad, and covers an area of approximately 7,000 ha. The swamp is fed by a few rivers, and also receives water from the ocean through seepage. The vegetation is diverse, including four major wetland types (mangrove swamp forest, palm forest, swamp wood and freshwater marsh).

A high number of rare species of reptiles, mammals and birds can then be found in Nariva, and several communities, comprising thousands of residents, depend on the natural resources of the area for commercial and subsistence purposes. Fishing, hunting, and cultivation of watermelons, rice, cucumbers and tomatoes are among the main activities of the Nariva Swamp communities, as well as residents of nearby villages.

In the early 1980s, illegal large scale rice farmers started using heavy machineries, digging canals to drain the wetlands, setting up fires to the forests, in order to clear the accumulated organic matter for rice cultivation. These practices highlighted the necessity to better manage and protect the Nariva Swamp. The government of Trinidad and Tobago, together with national NGOs, the National Wetland Committee, the University of the West Indies, embarked on an effort to remove squatters and illegal farmers, fill the canals and create a fire control tower at the southern end of the Nariva protected area. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was also developed. Since then, the main challenges have been to prevent and resolve the conflicts that have arisen over the use of Nariva Swamp's resources by small-scale farmers, fishermen, residents.



➤ **Fondes Amandes**

This field trip will include a tour of a hillside area being managed by a community organisation as well as a discussion with members and their key partners (from government, donor agencies, and national and regional NGOs) about the development of this initiative, its impacts on the watershed and community livelihoods, and lessons learnt.

Fondes Amandes is a hillside community developed around a former cocoa estate now partially owned by WASA, and is located in St. Ann's, a mainly middle class residential suburb of Port of Spain, adjacent to an important reservoir serving metropolitan Port of Spain.

Fondes Amandes has gained notoriety over the years thanks to its reforestation project, the Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project (FACRP) that has been quite successful in responding to the challenges posed by the degradation of the watershed. The expansion of housing development into forest areas, dry season fires, poor sanitation facilities and improper sewage disposal practices in upland, as well as poor soil and water conservation measures on hillside agricultural lands are some of the challenges that the reforestation and watershed protection initiative has addressed, through agro-forestry initiatives and activities.

Over the years, the FACRP has been involved in planting of trees for restoration of the watershed, while protecting it from bush fires, developing proper drainage and terracing. Additionally, there has been an improvement in the quality of life of the community of Fondes Amandes, through the creation of employment and the provision of basic services and facilities. Before, there was no pipe borne water in the community, which is why households used to rely heavily on river water or rainwater harvesting for their water supply. The rehabilitation of the hillside, coupled with organic farming methods, has provided food but also help to reduce the impact of soil erosion on the river.

In 2001, the establishment of the Clean Trees Organic Nursery (CTON) provided a reliable source of organic inputs to the FACRP's reforestation activities as well as to small-scale farmers and other individuals interested in organic methods of farming. It also provided landscaping and lawn maintenance services. That same year, a community shelter was constructed, and has since then served as a venue for training programmes.



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Community development, the promotion and the development of sustainable, responsible ecotourism in the St Ann's watershed, the protection of the biodiversity of flora and fauna are all key objectives of the FACRP, and this is now viewed as a model of successful community-based watershed management.



➤ **Private forestry initiatives, south-central Trinidad**

This field trip will visit two private forestry initiatives in central Trinidad to explore practices being applied and lessons learnt. This initiative is coordinated by the Forestry Division of the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

- 1- The first site to be visited is an estate in Manzanilla owned by Mr. Motilal Guyasingh. The impressive 8 hectare estate won him the Special Award of Conservation of the Environment at the annual National Agricultural Entrepreneurial Competition 2009. Below is a description of the estate written by the judges justifying the nomination.

“A number of considerations were brought to bear when the elderly Mr. Guyasingh was considered for this special award. The general ambience of bird sounds, excellent forest tree cover, signs of wildlife feeding, and clean water were immediate indicators of good conservation practice. His deliberate measures to encourage the presence of bats at the ‘bat house’ and the astute articulation of their connection with seed dispersal, biological control, and increased floral diversity on his estate also spoke to his consideration for this special award. His non-use of chemicals, work with a diverse gene stock of mangoes, facilitation of access to seed trees by the Forestry Division and provision of wild forest seedlings also weighed in as major factors. His move to non-extractive use of the estate as a tool for education of university and other tertiary-level students and outdoor passive recreation for visitors were contributing factors.

It remains a rarity to find those who are not dedicated to the “Almighty Dollar”. Embodying all the considerations was Mr. Guyasingh’s deep passion for his robust and majestic trees. He sees in them much more than financial value.”

- 2- The second estate spans 102 acres and is located on the 16 ½ Mile Mark Four Roads Tamana. The estate was originally an abandoned cocoa estate and over the years, the farmer planted some first class timber species and also agricultural crops like citrus and banana that would yield immediate cash return. Mr. Salandy’s estate also won him Best Agroforestry Estate 2008 in the first year of the annual National Agricultural Entrepreneurial Competition.



➤ **Permaculture, Wa Samaki Ecosystem**

This field trip will visit a permaculture site to view practices being applied and lessons learnt. Permaculture (permanent agriculture) is a term created by Australian Bill Mollison to describe a land use system that is modelled after natural eco-systems. It refers to the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems that have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems. The Permaculture philosophy is one of working with rather than against nature and is applicable in urban, suburban, and rural environments and offers a proactive approach to addressing the escalating environmental crisis.

Wa Samaki Ecosystems, a privately owned company promoting the practice of permaculture is located in Freeport within the Central Range of Trinidad. Agriculture practiced within this area went through successive stages of tobacco, sugarcane and citrus with much of the land currently being used for short crops or slowly being turned into housing. Back in 1997, the initial Wa Samaki project was the starting of the fish farm to produce fish for the ornamental trade and now features a plant nursery, a large collection of heliconias, decorative bananas, among others, as well as a variety of tropical fishes. Wa Samaki has also been providing landscaping services since 2007.



➤ **Nature Seekers**

Nature Seekers (NS) is a local community-based organisation located on the Toco main road, in Matura, on the east coast of Trinidad. NS was formed in 1990 with the objectives of reducing negative impacts on the endangered leatherback sea-turtles through community beach patrols and ecotours.

Nature Seekers manages one of the 55 reforestation projects in Trinidad & Tobago under a co-management arrangement with the National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. Nature Seekers has the responsibility to reforest five hundred acres of land that was either burnt or deforested over a period of time. The plan is to accomplish this over a ten (10) year period at the rate of fifty (50) acres per year. The project started in November, 2004. Community involvement and participation at all stages are encouraged.

Additionally, under the CANARI Action Learning Projects (ALPs) in Participatory Forest Management, Nature Seekers has been identified as one of the Community-based Organisations (CBOs) to contribute to the strengthening of civil society organisations. The overall objective of the ALPs is to support the improvement of the socioeconomic and environmental benefits that can be derived from forest management by analysing, promoting and building capacity for participatory planning and management of forest resources at the regional, national and local levels.

Nature Seekers is also part of the Matura to Matelot Network (M2M), established in 2000 with the aim of fostering communication and participation, and facilitate collaboration among CBOs. The M2M had identified some of its priority actions area as the development of a community-based tourism plan for the Matura to Matelot area, and the protection of its cultural heritage.