



IWCAM Project Coordination Unit

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MEDIA RELEASE

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The IWCAM Project - Working towards an Integrated Approach to Management of our Watersheds and Coastal Areas

Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face the challenge of having high population densities, poor land use, urbanization and increasing development (particularly for housing and tourist resorts). The result is increasing pressure upon underlying aquifers and surface water. Polluted rivers eventually empty into the sea, leading to deterioration in coastal water quality and its attendant problems – negative effects upon our health, the destruction of coral reefs and other vital coastal habitats. These problems affect us all.

In order to address these problems, a project, which could have far reaching implications for SIDS, was approved by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in 2004. It is called the *Integrating Watershed and Coastal Area Management (IWCAM) in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Caribbean* project. The Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), located on the Morne Fortune, is home to the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) which was established in May last year with the appointment of Vincent Sweeney as Regional Project Coordinator (RPC). By November 2006 the unit was fully staffed.

The overall objective of the IWCAM project is to strengthen the commitment and capacity of the participating countries to implement an integrated approach to the management of watersheds and coastal areas. The thirteen participating SIDS are: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Grenada, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Five project components will: undertake regional management, coordination and evaluation of IWCAM objectives; demonstrate technological and management approaches and policy and legislative reforms within selected “hotspots”; identify impact indicators for measuring IWCAM efficacy and implement a programme of measurement and monitoring which will drive policy reforms; and establish networking, sharing of knowledge, and partnerships within the Caribbean SIDS for IWCAM.

Mr. Sweeney stresses that the setting up of the PCU “now makes available to participating countries, a cadre of dedicated staff to service the project.” Full-time project staff include, in addition to the Regional Project Coordinator, Sasha Beth Gottlieb - Technical Coordinator, Una McPherson - Administrative Officer, Donna Spencer - Communications, Networking and Information Specialist, and Magnalia Goldson - Bi-lingual Administrative Assistant.

In 2007 the IWCAM project will be conducting a number of regional activities and assessments as well as supporting implementation of nine demonstration projects located in eight different countries: Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas (two sites – Exuma and Andros), the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba and Jamaica.

Saint Lucia's Demonstration project is located in the Fond D'or Watershed Area and aims to protect and value watershed services and develop management approaches. It is being managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Other Demonstration projects will focus on groundwater protection in St. Kitts, reef protection in Tobago, waste management at marinas in the Bahamas, sewage treatment in Antigua, and industrial waste in the Dominican Republic. Watershed management, including land use conflicts will also be the focus in Cuba, Jamaica and the Bahamas.

The project also emphasizes the integration of IWCAM activities in those islands without demonstration projects and support for the preparation of national Integrated Watershed Resource Management (IWRM) plans, such as those being prepared in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and in Grenada.

Stakeholder participation is an important aspect of the IWCAM project. An integrated approach is only possible if the various sectors come together to tackle the challenges faced. Mr. Sweeney, RPC, states that "emphasis will continue to be on adding value to other regional initiatives, building sustainable partnerships, and integrating IWCAM into on-going programmes at the national and regional level." Participating islands will also benefit from planned training activities and exchanges and the development of appropriate information management systems.

Additional information on IWCAM may be found on the project website: www.iwcam.org

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