



Friends of the Environment

Abaco, Bahamas



Vol. 17, Issue 1

Environmental Activities Since 1988

Winter 2010

Size Matters! Lobster Pride Campaign



After a year of planning and meeting with stakeholders, our SIZE MATTERS campaign is officially launched! This campaign is designed to instill pride in Abaco people regarding their relationship with local lobster (crawfish) populations in order to preserve them for the future.

Abaco Fishermen will agree to stop fishing undersized lobsters (lobsters with a tail length less than 5 ½ inches) and the community will stop buying them and receiving them as gifts. Our strategy will employ a social marketing approach in which a variety of marketing materials will be created and distributed to the Abaco community such as posters, billboards, measuring tools, bumper stickers, and buttons. There will be a lobster mascot costume that will make appearances at various public events. Puppet shows will be a feature not just for schools but adults as well. These materials will bear key messages that will invoke a sense of pride and a need to discontinue behaviors that are threatening the lobster populations.

Education, awareness and enforcement alone cannot stop juvenile fishing. No longer can we just blame the fishermen, the community must also be a part of the solution and agree to stop accepting them freely or buying them at a reduced price. One juvenile lobster saved may mean thousands more in the future.

Our hope is that Abaco fishermen will employ more sustainable fishing practices and set the pace for other fishermen in the country. In order for this campaign to be a success, we need your help. To find out how you can be involved by volunteering or donating, please contact d'Shan Maycock at dmaycock@friendsoftheenvironment.org

Incoming and Outgoing Board Members

FRIENDS would like to welcome Jody Albury and Chovez McBride to our Board and sincerely thank our exiting board members, Ann Pleydell-Bouverie and Della Kelly. Ann was a long time member on the FRIENDS Board and has played an instrumental role in the recycling and terrestrial programs. We would like to thank them for making the commitment to help preserve Abaco's fragile environment.



Chovez McBride

Chovez is the Director of Finance, Marketing and Sales for The Abaco Club on Winding Bay. He is the father of three boys and enjoys sports, fishing, and enjoying Abaco with his family. We are happy to have him on board!



Jody Albury

Jody has lived in Marsh Harbour his entire life and has been a bonefishing guide for the past 4 years. He is a founding member of the Abaco Flyfishing Guides Association and is committed to conservation efforts in Abaco, specifically pertaining to bonefish habitat. Welcome aboard Jody!

Inside this issue:

<i>Abaco Teachers visit Island School</i>	2
<i>Reef Ball</i>	2
<i>Ten for 10 Fundraising Campaign</i>	2
<i>FRIENDS Education Program</i>	3
<i>President's Message</i>	4

Upcoming Events:

- Bird walks: North Abaco—1st Saturday of each month, Central Abaco—3rd Saturday of each month
- March 6th—Reef Ball
- March 24th—Energy Conference and Trade Show
- April 16/17—Central Abaco Lionfish Derby
- April 23rd—Earth Day: "Conserving Abaco's Spiny Lobster"

Don't forget to check our online calendar for more events!

Fowl Cay National Park Approved!



An aerial view of the Fowl Cays, looking north. The park includes the area between the cays and the barrier reef to the East. Fishing is prohibited in the park.

After 34 years, the Fowl Cays have finally become a national park. It has been a long journey, with many people contributing along the way. The saga started in 1975 with Dr. Storr, a marine biologist and second home owner on Elbow Cay. Dr. Storr recognized the value of protecting Fowl Cay reef for the future and wrote a proposal on behalf of a now extinct organization called The Abaco Conservation Society. In it he described schools of fish so thick they hid the reef from view.

Since then, many Abaco residents, along with FRIENDS, have appealed for the proposal to be accepted and the reef area to be formalized as a national park. In 2006, FRIENDS

partnered with the Bahamas National Trust to put together a revised proposal, which included hosting a number of community meetings throughout Abaco. The proposal was re-submitted to the Government in 2007, and recently approved and announced by the Prime Minister in November 2009. This means the park is a no-take zone, which allows for the animals within to grow to larger sizes, increasing their reproductive capability and benefiting the areas around the reef.

Any infractions can be reported to David Knowles, Bahamas National Trust's warden in Abaco (367-6310).

FRIENDS Sends Abaco Teachers to Visit Island School

By Amanda Pennell, Every Child Counts

Upon receiving a scholarship to attend a teacher's conference at the Island School in Eleuthera, my nerves began to set in. While I was thrilled to learn and experience this very coveted and well-respected program, it occurred to me that this conference would be mostly attended by science teachers; and as I am a special education teacher at Every Child Counts here in Abaco, I became anxious but excited as I began my adventure! Although at ECC our teaching is done "hands on" and we expose our students to as much of our beautiful and natural environment as possible, my expectations surpassed anything I could have possibly imagined!

The Island School prides itself on teaching environmental sustainability, leadership training, and place-based learning through a truly experiential program. Words can hardly describe this remarkable school. Although the school was not in session while I attended over the summer, all the facilities were available to us.

Solar and wind power were one of the first things spotted on the Cape Eleuthera Campus. The buildings are simple, yet efficient. Beautiful gardens are grown right on campus and large meals from those gardens are served "family style" and all trash is composted and recycled. A team of dedicated and enthusiastic staff were among the necessary pieces of the puzzle at this amazing location for this program.

We were thrown into learning, just as high school students are. We experienced in a week what normal Island School students get to experience in a full semester. Our days were busy and fun-filled. We had the opportunity to explore and learn as much as possible about Eleuthera by experiencing it first hand. This included diving and snorkeling every day, sea kayaking and even swimming in the famous Ocean Hole in Rock Sound! Experiential learning was strongly emphasized throughout the week. The students who attend the Island School are given opportunities to temporarily stay in a settlement, with a Bahamian family, and to truly embrace the culture.

Inspiration was contagious from the moment we set foot on the Cape Eleuthera campus and I was enthusiastic to bring what I learned and experienced at the Island School to Every Child Counts! I noticed many similarities between Eleuthera and Abaco. I was inspired by these similarities and it is my hope that one day we may carry out some aspects of the Island School here in Abaco.

After I returned from Eleuthera, I began the 2009-2010 school year with ideas and plans to further my students' interest and respect for their environment, as well as fostering leadership qualities within our students.

Our weekly science lessons have expanded to getting out in the field and growing a garden as an example of sustainability, as is done at the Island School. Perhaps one day the aquaponic tanks will make it to Abaco as well! Another eco-project that we've worked diligently on at Every Child Counts is recycling scrap paper into handmade journals. We completed the process by selling our journals at local art markets and a local café in Guana Cay.

I am proud to say that our class has made as many environmental strides as possible throughout the start of this year and I hope to see even more for the future. I am forever grateful for an amazing experience to bring to my home here in Abaco!

By Anistacia Seymour-Dawkins, Central Abaco Primary School

When I think about sustainability I think The Island School. When I think about developing ones holistic potential, what comes to mind? The Island School stands out.

Yes, The Island School experience is one that has changed my mindset. This experience took us as educators to a place where we could connect with our Creator. It gave us the opportunity to experience the works of Our Creator's handiness and explore avenues of protecting and preserving it for generations yet unborn.

Early morning thoughts and exercise along with the fostering of lifelong friendships with educators from The Bahamas, Canada and The United States were all GREAT! Diving up the different species of conch and observing the bio-diesel production along with the rearing of tilapia, capturing and dissection of the Lionfish were all GREAT! Snorkeling and viewing the wonders of the sea was a SUPER experience. I will do all in my power to educate and promote the conservation of our Creator's handiworks.

SUPER THANKS! to Friends of the Environment for allowing me the opportunity to experience The Island School. This indeed was an experience that has changed my life and one no one can ever pay for.

Ten for Ten in 2010

Since its inception in 1988, FRIENDS has played a number of roles – placing mooring balls at local reefs, working with the Bahamas National Trust on creating and managing Abaco's national parks, supporting scientific research, starting recycling programs and creating an interactive educational program that gets local children out of the classroom and into their environment. In addition to these core projects we are starting a new program with local bone fishermen to increase education about best practices and to preserve Abaco's fragile flats that are crucial to continuing this sport. FRIENDS is also launching an exciting Pride campaign that will focus on sustaining the local crawfish population by creating mutually beneficial restaurant and fisherman certification programs. The conservation results from this campaign will far exceed our initial objectives, as our national partners plan to replicate these certifications throughout the Bahamas. We are making a difference not only for Abaco but for the entire country!

With all that FRIENDS currently does, in the face of increasing development pressures, changing government regulations and constrained marine and terrestrial resources we need to be doing more – more education, more meetings and programs, more to protect this place that we love. FRIENDS is going to make the difference for Abaco's future.

Recognizing this need, FRIENDS with the help of The Nature Conservancy and a several generous donors have created a Ten for Ten challenge to those who truly love Abaco. We are asking 10 donors to commit to \$10,000 for Abaco; \$5,000 a year for two years. Those dollars will be matched by challenge donors.

We know you understand that the environment is what makes Abaco special and if we lose our environment we lose it all. If you are interested in making this commitment to Abaco's future please contact Kristin at kwilliams@friendsoftheenvironment.org.

10th Annual Reef Ball Fundraiser



Going green, Help us celebrate!

Mark your calendar. Bring your dancing shoes!

**Saturday, March 6, 2010 at
The Abaco Beach Resort Pavilion
Doors open at 6:30pm**

Tickets (\$100) available online, from FRIENDS Board and staff, or at Java Café in Marsh Harbour
You can also reserve a table (\$50)!

All funds raised at the Reef Ball will go towards environmental education in Abaco and getting students out of the classroom and into their environment. We thank you for your support! We absolutely could not do the work that we do without you.



Above: Some of the individuals responsible for inspiring FRIENDS 10 for 10 campaign: (Right to Left) Carol Muscato, Joyce Coleman, Kristin Williams (FRIENDS), Cathy and Brad Rustermier.



What's New with the Education Program?

Almost 200 students attend environmental summer camp! Discovery Club commences in Marsh Harbour, Cyber students snorkel Mermaid Reef, Coral Reef Presentation at Long Bay School, Long Bay students join Rollins College to remove invasive plants at Crossing Beach, FRIENDS hosts high school intern, Fourth Biennial Abaco Science Alliance Conference held.

FRIENDS hosted an intern this past October. Shavantae Pedican is an 11th grader from S.C. Bootle High School. She has an interest in Marine Biology, yet she was very helpful in all aspects of FRIENDS' work.



Shavantae said: "I really did enjoy working there, helping out and everything. I see why [my teacher] loves being a part of the organization. I thank God I was placed there with a wonderful group of people. Wouldn't want it any other way!"

This spring, Discovery Club will be focusing on Weather and Endangered Species badges. Discovery Clubbers are organized into groups of "Explorers" (ages 7-9) and "Guardians" (ages 10-13). Spaces fill up quickly! Call for more information.



Marsh Harbour Explorers learn how to record weather with volunteer Alana Carroll.



Guardian Aurora shows off her wind vane made during Discovery Club's weather badge session.



Students attending the 4th Biennial Abaco Science Alliance Conference in January learned about the importance of fish "pee" from Dr. Craig Layman of Florida International University. Seventeen research projects were presented through talks and posters on topics such as conch conservation, small island tourism, fossil discoveries and human impacts on the environment. Students from Abaco Central High, SC Bootle High, Forest Heights, Cyber Learning Center, Man-O-War Primary and Hope Town Primary attended. A big thank you to Royal Bank of Canada, Marsh Harbour Branch for sponsoring their participation!



Above: Sandy Point campers learn to recycle!

Above, right: Sandy Point campers inspect the inhabitants of mangrove roots in their own "backyard".

Right: North Abaco campers investigate the water quality at a local dock.



President's Message



Dear FRIENDS,

As we find ourselves entering a new decade I wish to thank you for your continued support of Abaco's environment. The last ten years has seen FRIENDS grow from a small group of dedicated volunteers in Hope Town to a much larger Abaco-wide organization with an active board, a full-time staff, national recognition, an education center, and well-respected programs that continue to educate locals and visitors about this special island that we call home. From its grass-roots origins and those first few dedicated founders FRIENDS has placed special emphasis on the terrestrial and marine ecosystems of Abaco, and has pledged its commitment to sharing with others techniques for living on this amazing island while simultaneously showing respect to the world around us.

FRIENDS has grown in ways that few could have imagined. From lionfish-cooking demonstrations to green-building seminars, from supporting scientists to teaching after school conservation clubs, from the restoration of Crossing Beach to the promotion of sustainable development and reusable energy, everything we do promotes the conservation of our island home. On a daily basis FRIENDS employees may meet with a prospective developer about best practices, help a home owner determine the best native plants for landscaping, visit a school to share about fishing regulations and conservation of our marine resources, or help a scientist with logistics to get to a remote reef or creek system.

Where do you fit in? As members of FRIENDS, you make all of this important work possible. Your donations and membership fees allow FRIENDS to preserve and protect the very island we inhabit. As full-time or part-time residents I am sure that you have witnessed senseless destruction in your corner of Abaco. Your donations ensure that FRIENDS can continue to educate developers, government officials, heavy equipment operators, adults and school children how make the very best decisions for Abaco's future. In addition to financial contributions, so many of you volunteer countless hours to our programs. We start this new decade with a hearty thank you for all of your time, donations, encouragement and support. Working together, we can ensure that Abaco continues to develop in a sustainable way, and that we will always be able to share our home with the conch, grouper and parrots that typify all Abaco has to offer.

Jim Richard

President

We encourage you to renew your membership by sending in the enclosed membership envelope. Thank you in advance for your support – we could not do the work that we do without you!

FRIENDS' Mission: To preserve and protect Abaco's terrestrial and marine environments in order to achieve sustainable living for the wildlife and people of Abaco, Bahamas.

Officers:

President, Jim Richard
Vice President, Cha Boyce
Secretary, Cha Boyce
Treasurer, Charlotte Dunn

Directors: Justin Higgs, Diane Claridge, Laura Davis, Tim Higgs, Bernadette Hall, David Knowles, Anne Albury, Reg Patterson, David Price, Jody Albury, Chovez McBride

Staff:

Executive Director, Kristin Williams
Office Manager, Anita Knowles
Education Officer, Pride Campaign Manager, d'Shan Maycock
Program Coordinator, Olivia Patterson
Special Projects, Lindsey McCoy

Committee Heads:

Education, Laura-lee Davis, Justin Higgs
Internal Affairs, Jim Richard
Marine Parks & Preservation, Cha Boyce
Data Coordinator, Nan Kenyon
Waste Reduction, Bernadette Hall
Keep Abaco Beautiful, Bernadette Hall
Reef Ball, Cha Boyce
Terrestrial Parks & Preservation, Anita Knowles & David Knowles
Website, Robert Bethel
Sustainable Development, Charlotte Dunn

FRIENDS' Contact Information

Education Center:

#2 Conservation Lane
Marsh Harbour, Abaco

Tel: (242) 367-2721 Fax: (242) 367-0722

e-mail: info@friendsoftheenvironment.org

website: www.friendsoftheenvironment.org

Mailing Address:

PO Box AB-20755
Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Bahamas

FRIENDS is a not for profit Society incorporated under the Bahamas Companies Act of 1991.

FRIENDS Thanks Friends

Abaco Science Alliance Conference Ruth Saunders, Barbara Foreman, Royal Bank of Canada, North Rock Water, New Vision

Ministries, Simone Bowe, Jeritzen Outten, Kent LeBoutillier, Sawyers Soft Drinks, Chris Smith, Glender Knowles, Brian Kakuk, Nancy Albury

KAB Awards Ceremony Wonderland Gardens, Roscoe Thompson, Kathy Key, Leslie Rolle, Frederick Jones, Paula Rolle, The Snap Shop

Pride Campaign Attila Feszt, Zyandric Jones, Desmond Bootle, Ruth Saunders, Abaco Gold, The Snap Shop, Gayle Cottman, Michelle Bailey, SC Bootle High School, Enid Gardiner, Laterah Rietsma, Moore's Island All Age School

Moorings Maintenance Mark and Patti Gonsalves, David Rees, Troy Albury, Lambert Albury

Recycling Abacays/Carib Freight, Deans Shipping, Michael Albury, Tropical Shipping, Guana Freight, Juliette Deal, Troy and Maria Albury, Nippers, Bristol Wine and Spirits, Brenda Claridge, A & K Liquors, Albury's Ferry, The Crossings, D N R Sports Pub, Bustin Bight, Adele and Tim McDonald, & the island wide volunteers!

Invasive Plant Removal Long Bay School, Bahamas Waste, Rollins College

Dolphin Research John Durban, Holly Fearnbach, BMMRO, Marsh Harbour Importers and Exporters, Adam Love, Harbourview Marina, Abaco Petroleum, Marsh Harbour Marina, Sea Spray, JR's Cart Rentals, John and Aubin Haestad

Bird Walks & Audubon Christmas Bird Count Dr. Woody Bracey, Barbara Foreman, Reg Patterson

Internal Affairs David Price, Attorney at Law

Mermaid Reef Sign Aly Boyce, Brian Higgs

Nature Trail Steve Knowles, Rollins College

Photography Brian Grossenbacher

Website Robbie Bethel

Please check FRIENDS' website to see those **BUSINESS DONORS** who have so generously given their support this year.

Abaco's 2010 Lionfish Derbies

FRIENDS is hosting a lionfish derby in Central Abaco. We are also partnering with Lionfish Derby-REEF in their efforts for the 2nd Annual Lionfish Derby in Green Turtle Cay. The purpose of these derbies is to raise awareness of the general public about lionfish and to help control the lionfish population. Events such as these are currently the only mechanisms in place to remove significant amounts of lionfish from our waters. We feel these actions can truly assist in maintaining a conservative population of lionfish throughout our islands. If you are interested in participating or need more information please contact Kristin at kwilliams@friendsoftheenvironment.org.



April 16th & 17th

Central Abaco Derby:
The Marsh Harbour
Marina & Jib Room

June 18th—19th

Green Turtle Cay
Derby: The Green
Turtle Club