



Friends of the Environment

Abaco, Bahamas

WINTER 2014

PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & ACTIVITIES SINCE 1988

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New FRIENDS Research Center on the Horizon

FRIENDS is taking the leap to create a new Research Center for Abaco. The Abaco Research Center is the culmination of 25 years of grassroots conservation work and 10 years of partnership with schools and teachers. The six bedroom facility will have a kitchen, dining space, wet and dry labs, covered outdoor workspace and a classroom. Last year, FRIENDS received a \$50,000 challenge grant from Ian & Sylvia Fair and was able to raise the funds by December 2013. Now we have a second \$50,000 challenge from the MacTaggart Third Fund to help complete the building and get programming going. Together we can provide the tools to sustain our environment well into the lives of future generations of friends of Abaco.



The Abaco Research Center (ARC) will enable FRIENDS to enhance our existing education programs by:

- Hosting local and visiting students for field courses that will connect students to ongoing research.
- Expanding FRIENDS existing environmental summer camp programs to include more sessions, field courses for high school students, and spring break camps for Bahamian and visiting students. FRIENDS held two summer camps this year in Marsh Harbour and both had waiting lists.
- Creating field activities for required high school course work in partnership with the Ministry of Education for Bahamian students.

Through ARC FRIENDS will be able to facilitate an increase in environmental research in Abaco. Benefits of this include:

- Scientists are able to provide informed solutions to conservation issues and provide perspective on questions about the best way to balance economic and environmental concerns.
- Scientists will be able to support local, national and international

conservation efforts through their research in Abaco's eight existing National Parks and marine reserves, with additional areas under consideration for protection.

ARC will be a local demonstration site for environmental technologies and sustainable building.

- FRIENDS has a grant from the Global Environmental Fund Small Grants Program to support solar panels for the site.
- FRIENDS is seeking other vendors to install environmentally friendly wares (flooring, solar hot water heater, low flush toilets, etc) for use in ARC to expose them to the wider public. Please contact us if you have a product of interest.



Preliminary exterior plans for the Abaco Research Center

How can you help?

The Mactaggart Third Fund has graciously offered a \$50,000 challenge to enable FRIENDS to complete the Abaco Research Center. We have been challenged to raise the matching \$50,000 by the end of April 2014. With this support, FRIENDS will be able to complete construction of the Research Center and start programming by the end of 2014. This means more research on critical conservation topics, new spring break programs, increased summer camps and a variety of new opportunities for students and visitors.



FRIENDS is a not for profit Society incorporated under the Bahamas Companies Act of 1991. FRIENDS is also a registered 501(c)3 organization; that means gifts to FRIENDS are tax deductible in The United States.

President's Letter



I often wonder how best to answer "what does FRIENDS do?" It is a hard question to answer simply, because FRIENDS does so much.

My usual response is, "the main focus is education." We get kids "out of the classroom and into the environment" in schools throughout Abaco. But, in reality FRIENDS affects just about everyone who lives in or visits Abaco. Summer camps and field courses have become popular over the years, they are now held in Coopers Town, Sandy Point, Moore's Island, Grand Cay and Marsh Harbour. Community outreach and partnerships with local fishermen are helping us all learn about Abaco's changing environment and in response we see more compliance to closed fishing seasons and catch limits. FRIENDS promotes national park campaigns and facilitates mooring installations at reefs for habitat preservation and diving enjoyment. Informative marine brochures have been created and distributed. Litter and native plant campaigns are on going to promote clean road sides and combat beach erosion. FRIENDS helps visiting scientists with research logistics and community outreach in hopes of inspiring students and officials. All these projects take place at the same time as fundraising efforts, because as much as we believe in the importance of what we do, it can not be done with out raising the funds to make it all happen.

What FRIENDS does and how well "it's" done is something I think of often. Recently I had the privilege of meeting a wonderful family who helped us replace the Mermaid Reef sign. They learned about FRIENDS at a Natural History Museum event in NYC! The Director of The Nature Conservancy for the Caribbean suggested they contact FRIENDS to learn about conservation efforts in Abaco! I am honored to be a part of an organization that influences conservation not only in Abaco, but beyond our home!

Once again thank you to everyone who makes "what we do" possible,

Cha Boyce

Education Program Update



FRIENDS set a new record with our Education program in 2013 - **more than 2,200 educational opportunities provided!** Students have visited mangroves, coastal areas, learned about native and invasive plants, hiked our nature trail and helped out in our new greenhouse. We also developed some exciting new partnerships, including one with Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey to raise awareness and facilitate research of the endangered Piping Plover.

The Piping Plover is a small sand-colored shorebird that is listed as endangered in the U.S. and Canada where it breeds. Although intensely studied during the breeding season, far less is known about their winter behavior, but recent research has now revealed that The Bahamas is one of their major wintering grounds. FRIENDS and CWFNJ have started a public education campaign about the important role The Bahamas plays in the life cycle of Piping Plovers. Amy Roberts Primary School in Green Turtle Cay has become a sister school with a school in Ocean City, New Jersey in order to share what the students have learned about plovers in each area.

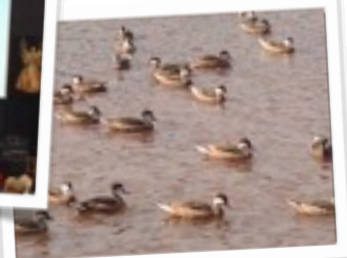
Save the Date

- February 15**, Hope Town Reef Ball
- March 1st**, Marsh Harbour Reef Ball
- March 21 - 23**, Great Abaco Family Fitness Weekend, Treasure Cay
- April** - National Coastal Awareness Month
- April 22nd** - Earth Day
- June 7th**, Rocking with FRIENDS, Firefly Sunset Resort
- July 3rd-25th**, - Summer Camps (tentative date)

FRIENDS Thanks Friends

- Turtle Trot**, HG Christie Real Estate, Hope Town Inn and Marina, Hummingbird Cottage Art Center, Sunny and Don Meinhold, PROMPT (Paradise Race Organization, Management, Promotion & Timing)
- ASAC**, Royal Bank of Canada, JS Johnson, New Vision Ministries, MP Renardo Curry, Dave Steadman, Nancy Albury, Perry Maillis, Woody Bracey, Ministry of the Environment, Great Abaco Express
- Science Fair**, Bahamas National Trust, New Vision Ministries, Abaco Tourist Office, Insurance Management, Albury's Ferry, The Nature Conservancy, Disney's Animal, Science and Environment, Bellevue Business Depot, Judges: Joy Chaplin, Marvin Russell, Canishka Alexander, Eunice Mills, Michelle Mikula, Wendy Bishop, Reg Patterson, Mike Lightbourn.
- Advertising and Awareness**, Coastal Angler Magazine, The Abaconian, Abaco Cruiser's Net, Conch Salad TV, Steve Dodge and Cruising Guide to Abaco, Click242 Nature

Sixth Biennial Abaco Science Alliance Conference



ASAC Event Stats

Students attending	139
Teachers attending	9
Number of registrants	50
Talks given	16
Research Posters presented	5
Field trips	2

Support from Royal Bank of Canada and JS Johnson made student participation possible.

If you would like to support ASAC 2016, please contact us at info@friendsoftheenvironment.org or 242-367-2721.

Your contribution could help ensure the participation of a local high school or community group.

The Abaco Science Alliance Conference (ASAC), started by FRIENDS in 2004, was designed as a biennial forum for sharing research conducted in The Bahamas and to bridge the gap between scientists and the community. ASAC has become a unique event where researchers, community members and students congress on important issues in Bahamian conservation.

The Sixth Biennial ASAC, held on January 16-18 at New Vision Ministries in Marsh Harbour, combined a variety of talks and research posters and included field trips to Bahama Palm Shores for bird watching and Gilpin Point to view recently discovered fossils. Presenters included national groups such as The Bahamas National Trust, Community Conch and the Cape Eleuthera Institute. Some presenters traveled from as far as Arizona and New Jersey to attend the conference.

FRIENDS hopes to encourage more research for educational purposes and to stimulate the use of these findings in local environmental management decisions. The new Abaco Research Center will help to place a larger focus on research and build a growing database of knowledge about Abaco's environment.

FRIENDS is also inviting researchers working in Abaco to contribute to an annual "Abaco Research Report", which will be compiled and distributed to local and national government officials and the community in order to share the information with those who are unable to attend conferences or otherwise access the information. By doing so we aim to help raise awareness of key habitats and species in Abaco that require conservation and could be impacted by the development of our island.

Why Join FRIENDS (or renew your membership)?

Your contributions to FRIENDS:

- * Provides environmental education to create a new generation of responsible citizens and environmental stewards*
- * Reduces invasive species and promotes biodiversity*
- * Conserves Abaco's habitats and natural resources for future generations to enjoy*
- * Supports our amazing quality of life in Abaco*

Please use the enclosed envelope or visit our website make sure you are a member for 2014!

www.FriendsoftheEnvironment.org

Science Fair Focuses on Human Impact on Marine Resources

FRIENDS held their first Science Fair in 2003 and since then it has grown into an event in which public and private schools from across Abaco participate. The science fair theme of "Human Impacts on Marine Resources" enabled FRIENDS to raise awareness of the threats to our marine resources and encourage students to develop creative strategies for addressing those threats. Jared Dillet, head of the Bahamas National Trust's national *Conch* conservation campaign, was the keynote speaker. This is the only district wide science fair currently held in Abaco.



Congratulations to the following schools:

Lower Primary Division: 1st – Hope Town Primary,

2nd – Man-O-War Primary, 3rd – Agape Christian School

Upper Primary Division: 1st – Hope Town Primary, 2nd – Angel's Academy, 3rd – Man-O-War Primary

Junior High Division: 1st – Agape Christian School, 2nd – Forest Heights Academy

Senior High Division: 1st – St. Francis de Sales, 2nd – Agape Christian School, 3rd – Forest Heights Academy



Approximately 250 students and 17 teachers attended, in addition to members of the community. Thanks to all of the participants and volunteers for their hard work, and thanks to sponsors: Bahamas National Trust, Abaco Tourism Office, Insurance Management,

Bellevue Business Depot, New Vision Ministry, Albury's Ferry, The Nature Conservancy and Disney's Animal Programs and Environmental Initiatives for their support that allowed FRIENDS to present prizes and assist with transportation costs for schools!

**Friends of the Environment
is calling you to**

GO NATIVE

Help make our environment healthy and beautiful by removing invasive plants and planting native in 2 easy steps!

1. Remove invasive Hawaiian Seagrape from your property and take a picture.
2. FRIENDS will GIVE YOU some native plants to replace what you took out.

Email photos to Olivia Patterson:

Olivia@FriendsoftheEnvironment.org

We can promote businesses who join on social media. Call us if you have questions! 242-367-2721



This project is supported by the GEF Small Grants Programme
<http://www.sgbahamas.org/>

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.

FRIENDS' Contact Information

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