

Annual Report Dutch Caribbean Parks and DCNA

Saba Conservation Foundation, 2007

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. *Highlights of the Year*

1.1.1. Saba Bank Survey

The Saba Bank Project continued into 2007 with on-going SCUBA and remotely operated vehicle surveys to “ground truth” the most recent Dutch Royal Navy bathymetric survey. Port sampling of fisherman’s catches were carried out daily and several expert teams visited Saba to conduct intensive biological surveys.

1.1.2. Second Marine Park Ranger

In October, Greg van Laake arrived on Saba looking for employment. His qualifications included being a SCUBA Dive Instructor and boat captain and he was hired shortly thereafter. Greg has integrated very well into the SCF staff team as well as our various marine and educational programs.

1.1.3. Botanical Surveys

Researchers from the New York Botanical Gardens continued to conduct surveys of Saba’s various bio-geoclimatic zones to create an exhaustive inventory of the plants, lichens and mosses of the entire island. Information from this project is available to interested naturalists via a “virtual herbarium” on the internet at the following address:

<http://sweetgum.nybg.org/saba/index.html>

1.1.4. 20th Anniversary Celebrations

From October 12 until 15, the SCF celebrated our 20th Anniversary. Activities included a youth “Environmental Poster” competition, an environmental movie night, a land, shore and ocean garbage clean-up, a community barbeque at Fort Bay and a gala evening where guests were treated to a 20 year retrospective slide show and awards ceremony recognizing supporters of the SCF.

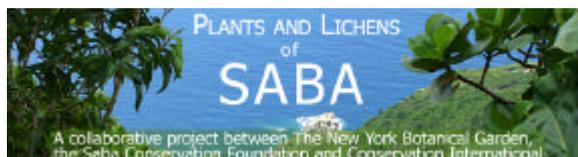
1.2. Overview of Achievements and Issues

1.2.1. Achievements

Projects

Botanical Surveys

During spring, the group of tropical plant researchers from the New York Botanical Gardens returned to Saba to continue the plant, lichen and moss surveys that started in 2006. Several of the researchers returned in October to participate in Sea and Learn as well as to collect additional samples and work with local school children on plant biology. This project is sponsored by Conservation International and the entire inventory is housed at the NYBG with a “virtual herbarium” on the internet that is accessible to anyone. The address for the website is:



<http://sweetgum.nybg.org/saba/index.html>

Saba Bank Survey

Starting in spring and continuing into early 2008, the Saba Bank Survey continued on from where the 2006 Rapid Assessment Protocol ended. Two full-time staff (coordinator and fisheries biologist) were hired to conduct survey dives, sample fishing boat catches and use a remotely operate vehicle (ROV) to investigate areas too deep to SCUBA dive. Preliminary results of this project include the identification of several new species of corals and algae, proposal to establish a conch reserve within Saba’s 12 mile jurisdiction (the Island Government has expressed support for this!) and options to manage fishing effort over the entire bank. In addition, a strategy for restricting tanker anchoring through the designation of the Bank as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area through the International Maritime Organization will be pursued.



Red Hind Survey

In cooperation with the University of the Virgin Islands, the SCF worked closely with fisheries biologists and local fishermen to assess the population and distribution of Red Hind (locally valuable fish) on the Saba Bank Atoll. This is



an on-going project and SCF has assumed the collection of data that will be incorporated within future management plans.

Information, Education and Outreach

Education Program

This was a joint program with the SCF, Sint Maarten Nature Foundation and STENAPA to provide environmental education in the local school curriculum. From the beginning of 2007 until August (when the education coordinator resigned), the project focused on plants and animals that live in the sea. Older students also had lectures on the importance of sharks, eels and rays to the ecology of the reefs surrounding Saba in an effort to reduce the incidence of irrational killing.



Sea Scouts

This is an on-going program to introduce children (age 10 to 12 years) to the international scouting program. Acquired skills include swimming, snorkelling, kayaking, knot tying, camping and bush skills. Badges are awarded as each child becomes proficient with the various aspects of living on and near the sea. Meetings are held every Thursday afternoon either at the Fort Bay harbour or on one of the various hiking trails.



Island Clean-up Days

The SCF continues to coordinate island clean-up days both on land and underwater. In October, approximately 100 people participated in the clean-up of the Fort Bay Road from The Bottom to the harbour, the shoreline between the stone crusher (east of Fort Bay), west to Tent Bay and within the harbour using SCUBA equipment. This project was conducted as part of the 20th Anniversary celebrations for the SCF and numerous truckloads of garbage were sent to the dump. In appreciation of all of the hard work, a barbeque lunch was provided to all the volunteers.



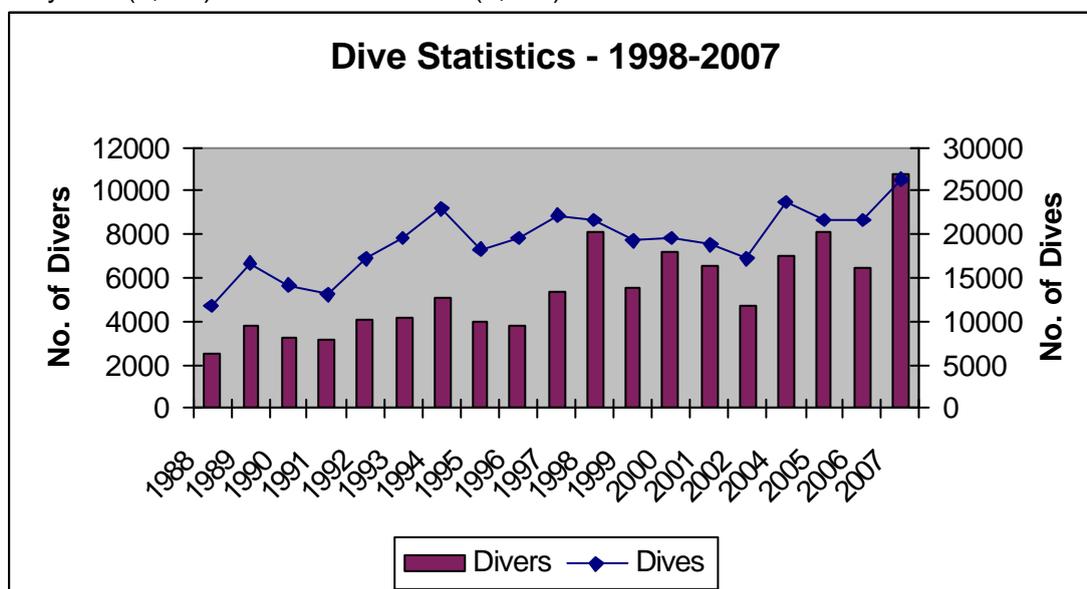
Visitors, Education and Outreach

Scientists

Several researchers visiting Saba in 2006 expressed interest in future collaborative projects relating to various ecological studies. The SCF continues to market its facilities and equipment in support of potential projects that would yield data useful to updating our terrestrial and marine management plans.

Marine Park

This was the best year since 2001 for visiting yachts. A total of 299 yachts and 2,229 passengers visited the island. These numbers were slightly up from last year. 2007 was a record-breaking year for the Marine Park in terms of divers and dives. The total number of divers was 10,712 (the first time ever that more than 10,000 divers visited the Marine Park) and the total number of dives was 26,396 (a 22% increase over last year and well above the last record in 2004). This equates to an average of 2.5 dives per diver. Snorkellers totalled 275 persons – a small increase over last year. The three most popular dive sites were Tent Reef (3,281 dives), Ladder Labyrinth (2,691) and Tent Reef Wall (2,430).



Trails

Mount Scenery continues to be the most popular trail on Saba with 668 registered hikers. The Sandy Cruz Trail (31) and Crispeen Track (26) were second and third respectively. While this census clearly underestimates the actual trail usage, no comprehensive registration is currently in place (will be established in 2008).



Administration

Over the course of 2007, 4 Comprehensive School students performed “job shadowing” with SCF staff to learn about Marine Park activities such as patrols, mooring maintenance, yacht check-in and office duties. This program is intended to provide students with workplace experience, an understanding of the function of SCF on Saba and potential career options in the field of environmental conservation.

20th Anniversary

In mid-October, the SCF celebrated its 20th Anniversary. The 4 day event included an environmental poster competition with local school children, environmental movie night (The Great Warming), harbour/shoreline/hillside garbage clean-up, volunteer barbeque and gala evening with a 20 year retrospective of SCF achievements, awards presentation to past supporters and a roll-out of the future direction of the organization.

Equipment

Hyperbaric Chamber

Facility equipment maintenance was performed in accordance with the Divers Alert Network (DAN) specifications. In addition, operator and tender training continues to be an on-going procedure. Medical and engineering experts from DAN were on Saba in October to conduct an assessment of all SCF hyperbaric chamber equipment, maintenance procedures and operating practices. Several upgrades were recommended and these will be completed over the coming years when funding can be secured. The chamber continues to be fully functional 24 hours per day and 7 days per week for the safety of visiting and local SCUBA divers.



Moorings

Continual maintenance of dive and yacht moorings is a core responsibility of the SCF Marine Park staff. A total of 31 dive moorings were operational at the end of the year – two less than in 2006. These failures are the result of anchoring pins that cannot be replaced until specialized drilling equipment arrives on Saba in 2008.

Additional yacht moorings were installed this year so that now a total of 10 at the Ladder-Wells Bay anchorage and 4 east of the Fort Bay harbour are available for the safety of visiting vessels and protection of the marine environment.



The Marine Park boat continues to require routine maintenance.

Trails

While no major purchases were made to support the trail maintenance program, some hand tools were replaced.



SCF continues to work with the “Canadian” as well as other (such as the St. Kitts and Tennessee) volunteers who have been coming to Saba for several years to complete major trail construction and repairs. In 2006, five groups (six to eight members each) contributed over 5,000 hours of volunteer work under the supervision of the Trail Ranger.

On-going cleaning and maintenance throughout the year continues to be completed by contract workers supported by Saba Island government funding and by local island volunteers from the Saba University School of Medicine.

Education

Uniforms and hydration water backpacks were purchased for each of the participants in the Sea Scout program. With financial assistance from Child Focus, life jackets were provided for each child and two double kayaks were purchased for the Sea Scout program.

Office

With the loss of the central air-conditioning unit for the Fort Bay office, four split A/C units were purchased and installed (one for each office). A new 2 wheel drive diesel truck was provided by USONA.

Monitoring and Research

Water Quality Monitoring

SCF continues to routinely collect and monitor various baseline water quality parameters within the Marine Park. These data will be provided to researchers working on the local coral reef ecology.

Research Collaborations

Discussion with Scripps Institute of Oceanography to establish a research program on Saba for marine water quality monitoring is on-going. A formal proposal was submitted for funding in 2007 and review is pending. The SCF continues to promote our facilities as a "remote field station" for research institutions to facilitate complete environmental studies. Data from future projects will be used to develop and update resource management plans on Saba.

Law Enforcement, Policy and Legal Issues

Staff continue to patrol the Marine Park and trails as part of its role in nature management. Currently, the Trail Ranger has special agent status and the SCF works with local police and government authorities to address Ordinance violations.

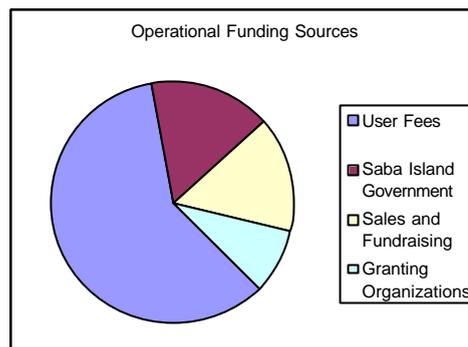
1.2.2. Issues

Staffing

With the loss of Stichting DOEN funding and one of the Marine Park Rangers in late 2006 and the assumption of the in-school environmental education program in 2007, SCF staff and budgets are extraordinarily taxed. By the end of 2007, this situation had been somewhat relieved with the hiring of a second Ranger and a consultant to assist the Education Coordinator with preparing lessons. The implementation of the Nature Fee and support from USONA provided the financial resources to support this program.

Funding

As of 2007, operational funding is provided from the following sources: user fees, Saba Island Government support and fundraising and sales. Funding for capital expenditures was provided by USONA, Prins Bernhard Fonds and Divers Alert Network. Please see **Section 4. Financial Reporting** for details.



1.3. Relationships with Other Organisations

1.3.1. Saba Island Government

During 2007, SCF continued its liaison with the Saba Island Government by providing in-person, bi-monthly information updates to the Executive Council. SCF also routinely invites government representatives to all public events in order to build support. These efforts have resulted in increased funding for SCF from the Saba Island Government and a greater prominence of the Foundation's role in the management and protection of the island environment.



1.3.2. Local Stakeholders

SCF continues to build cooperative rapport with local fishermen, dive shops and hotel operations. This is accomplished through greater communication and affording mutual respect. This has resulted in short-term gains, such as increased compliance with environmental management rules and regulations as well as long-term benefits that include greater compliance with fees, regulations, etc. in order to fund the protection of Saba's natural resources.

1.3.3. Outside Stakeholders

During 2006, SCF continued its long-standing relationship with the Bruce Trail Association (Canada), Lipscom Group (Tennessee) and Small Island Voice Backchat (St. Kitts). Volunteers from these organizations come to Saba regularly to provide expertise and labour with the reconstruction of local historic trails. This work adds immensely to the enjoyment and safety of visiting tourists (hikers) and locals (farmers, goat herders, etc.) alike.

1.3.4. USONA

In cooperation with the Department of Environment and Nature, and Conservation International, SCF administered a study to conduct detailed surveys of the Saba Bank. This project will result in the development of a Management Plan for various activities



(fishing, vessel anchoring, etc.) on the Bank. The purchase of hiking trail safety equipment (radios, hydration packs, stretchers, sing-in kiosks, whistles, etc.) was approved after a review of policies and procedures for managing the trails.

For the Marine Park, proposals to purchase specialized underwater drilling equipment and mooring supplies were also successful. All of these projects were funded by USONA.

1.3.5. Divers Alert Network

Representatives of the Divers Alert Network (DAN) were on Saba in October to complete a comprehensive assessment of the Hyperbaric Facility. This included equipment testing and maintenance and a review of existing policies and procedures. Following the assessment, a detailed report was provided that re-affirmed the Hyperbaric Facility as completely safe and functional. Several upgrades (including replacement of the air storage tanks and piping, installation of extra isolation valves and purchase of new gauges) were recommended and the SCF is securing funding to complete these.



1.3.6. Prins Bernhard Fonds

The Prins Bernhard Fonds continued its support of the hiking trail maintenance program by providing funding to purchase new hand tools. These tools are used by the various groups of volunteers that return each year to Saba to complete major trail (re)construction projects.



1.3.7. DCNA

The SCF continues its membership in the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance as a member of the Board of Directors. Provisions for transferring money into the Trust Fund were made in 2007. One DCNA meeting was attended in May.

2. Management

2.1. Board

During 2007, a number of Board changes took place. Robbie Hassell and Peter Sloterdijk both decided to resign.

As of the 31 December 2007, the SCF Board was made up of the following members:

Chairperson:	Johanna van't Hof
Treasurer:	Franklin Johnson
Secretary:	Carl Buncamper
Members:	Menno van der Velde
	Karen Hodge
	James Wright

2.2. Committees

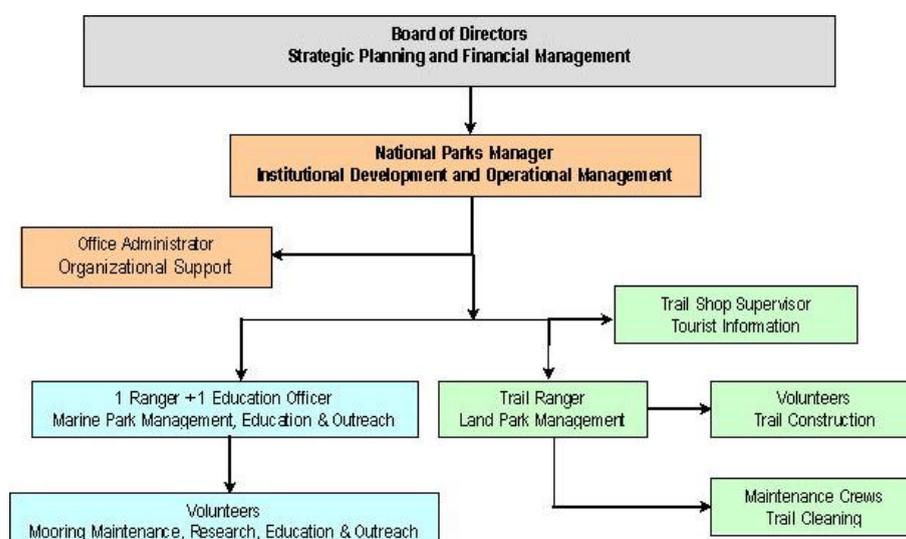
No Board committees were struck in 2007

2.3. Staff

Only one staff change occurred for the SCF during 2007 – the hiring of a second Marine Park Ranger.

Volunteers continue to assist Terrestrial Park staff with trail maintenance and Marine Park staff accomplish mooring maintenance, research and monitoring, building upgrades (electrical and mechanical) and office administration.

2.3.1. Staff Organisation



2.3.2. Staff training

The Parks Manager and Education Ranger attended the DAN Hyperbaric Chamber Training Course in April and both received certification for the inspection and replacement of acrylic windows and emergency procedures such as fire, power loss and medical emergencies.

2.4. Organisational objectives

In 2004, SCF set its program objectives for the next 35 years to contribute toward overall institutional building and increase effectiveness in nature management. These objectives remain relevant to the SCF today and should continue to guide the programs of SCF in the coming years. These objectives are a guide to program, project and activity prioritisation as follows:

GOAL	JUSTIFICATION	ACHIEVEMENTS / PROGRESSION
To work towards an environment where nature is protected	This goal focuses on developing the necessary management tools and instruments for the protection of nature parks as well as endemic and keystone species. It also focuses on coordinating key inputs into policy and legislation with government agencies	Draft nature management plan started in 2007.
Build awareness and support for nature management objectives	In order to establish the tools and instruments to support nature management it is important to build public awareness, as well as support for nature management through education, information and communication programs.	Draft nature management plan started in 2007.
Strengthen management capacity	In order to effectively realize the organization's objectives management tools, outreach and education programs are required. All members of the organization must share a common vision. Expected outcomes, must be achieved by appropriately skilled and qualified personnel to carry out respective tasks. Strengthening management capacity also means securing necessary financial and technical resources in order to function effectively, as well as developing financial and technical networks regionally and internationally.	Continued work with current and potential funding agencies to develop appropriate project proposals. Continued work internally to rationalize the business plan so that activities reflect available funding resources.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Integrated management plan for Land Park and Marine Park

Management plans are important as a guiding document for protected area managers. These help to ensure that the Protected Area's long term vision and strategy are captured and can be used to guide management activities. This ensures continuity of

management effort and allows stakeholders and other interest groups to understand and participate in the planning process. According to IUCN, management plans are an essential step towards ensuring the proper management of protected areas. Anticipated future changes in the Antillean government highlight the need for such documents in order to better define the goals and objectives of the Park and to clarify management objectives and strategies. This will allow the Park success to be measured and its management effectiveness to be assessed. It will also assist both staff and board by providing a solid framework for reference, decision making and planning.

3.2. Develop and lobby for legislative protection of Saba's nature and environment

Over-arching legislative protection for the nature and environment of Saba has been under discussion since 1999. Recent incidents of hunting for iguanas and removal of native plants are just a few examples of the need for a made-on-Saba mechanism to protect our plants and animals. Once the legislation is passed, the Island Government can enact laws to ensure that Saba remains the Unspoiled Queen.

3.3. Board management strengthening

For many years the Saba Conservation Foundation has benefited from the stability of long standing Board members who served the organisation well. As SCF continues to define its relationship with DCNA, BZK and other regulatory and funding agencies, we will require a much higher level of due diligence and strong leadership on the part of the Board. By recruiting members with a wide range of environmental, cultural, administrative and business experience, the interests of the SCF will be secured.

3.4. Update website

The website has not been effectively updated since June 2005. The website is often the first point of contact for prospective visitors who want information about Saba's parks and read recent news articles and for researchers, academics and other interested parties. The website sections under the annual report, programs and research information should be updated. This should be considered a critical part of the awareness campaign for local, regional and international communities.

3.5. Suggested SCF Communication strategy[‡]

GROUP	DETAIL	OBJECTIVES	WEBSITE	LIST SERVERS	ANNUAL REPORT	NEWSLETTER	E-NEWS	BROCHURE, LEAFLETS	SIGNAGE	PRESENTATIONS	MEETINGS	PRESS /TV/RADIO
Government	Executive Council	Promote nature as good business and value to the island economy	•		•	•	•			•	•	
Government departments		Developing practical solutions to conservation and management issues	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	
Tourism	Tourism Boards, FCCA , associations, trade shows, airlines, travel agents, resorts	Establish Saba as a premier hiking and diving destination in the Caribbean with a reliance on eco-tourism	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•
Local Activity groups	Hikers, dive operators, kayakers, yachts, fishermen	Emphasise the need for practical hands on conservation effort on the part of the industry to protect the flora and fauna of Saba.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tourists	Visiting tourists, volunteers	Importance of conservation and visitor role in conservation management	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Research Institutions	International, regional	Stimulate relevant management orientated research into issues of interest to SCF	•	•	•	•	•					
Private sector	Companies, individuals, business associations	Value of SCF (to their business) and fund raising	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Islanders	Islanders, especially special interest groups such as fishermen	Stimulate interest in SCF, educate about conservation management and build support for management decisions	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Funders	Current/future funders, foundations, individuals	Build donor confidence in SCF and donor cultivation	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	
International conservation	Regional institutions, international NGOs, conferences	Promote conservation management activities and build relationships with other similar initiatives	•	•	•	•	•			•		•
Local Education	Schools and school children	Educate about the environment and need for conservation	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•

[‡] When developed and published, the SCF Management Plan will also play an important role as a communication tool for government, tourist groups, local activity groups, research institutions, private sector, funders and international conservation bodies.

4. Financial reporting

4.1. Balance sheet

Balance sheet as at December 31, 2007

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ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings	85,766
Accounts Receivable	3,602
Other Current Assets	79,913

Total Current Assets 169,281

Fixed Assets

Marine Park, Office and Trail Equipment	751,870
Depreciation	(256,162)

Total Fixed Assets 495,708

TOTAL ASSETS **664,989**

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Current Liabilities

Liabilities	15,326
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Total Current Liabilities 15,326

Equity

Opening Balance	651,796
Retained Earnings	12,973
Net Income	(15,106)

Total Equity 649,663

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY **664,989**

4.2. *Income vs. expenditure*

Statement of income for the year ended December 31, 2007

(in Netherlands Antillean Guilders)

2007

Income

Dive fees	140,763
Chamber fees	36,171
Nature fees	14,309
Yacht fees	19,912
Grants	87,095
Saba Bank Project	232,497
Fundraising	9,994
Sales	40,570
Other Income	14,333

Total Income **595,644**

Expenses

Marine Park maintenance	57,657
Trails maintenance	57,996
Hyperbaric maintenance	25,218
Office maintenance	71,789
Personnel	192,076
Saba Bank Project	145,225
Other expenses	60,789

Total Expenses **610,750**

Net Income **(15,106)**