



Saba Conservation Foundation Semiannual Report 2010



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1. Executive Summary

Revenue generation of the SCF is below expectations and we rely on the disbursement of the NFWF grant to ensure continued full operational functionality of the organization.

The impact of the newly introduced **Trail Compensation (Nature) Fee** yet needs to be awaited. Some administrative problems with the fee collection procedures are anticipated in the beginning. However, since all larger guest accommodations already pay the fee voluntarily, revenue increase will probably not be that significant. On the other hand, outstanding fees from visiting cruise ships are not reflected in the P&L statement and will favorably adjust the quarterly result.

During the first half of 2010, the SCF was involved in numerous projects and training courses, stretching its human resources to the limit, but increasing the institutional capacity and visibility of the SCF to the public. Efforts were made to **minimize the accumulation of staff overtime** and extra days off for working on holidays and weekends. It has proven feasible to keep the office open on weekends from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM during the high season from November to May. Staff working on weekends was given either Friday or Monday off in compensation and since it became part of the regular schedule, working hours on weekends did not count double or triple as previously the case.



The **Facebook page** has shown its value as an excellent communication tool, presently reaching well over 1,000 fans. It has replaced the **quarterly newsletter**, which seems to have outlived its purpose. Trends in this age of information overload show that individuals prefer easy digestible bits of information, rather than long summarized reports in the traditional format.

The **website** of the SCF is still not completed. Our present webmaster did not meet the set deadlines, although parts of the site are now online. Nonetheless, design and content is below our expectations. Reason could be that since the webmaster took up a new full time job, he does not have the time anymore

to complete his contract. US\$ 1,000.00 were paid up front and US\$ 2,000.00 were paid on April 9th, 2009 for the completion of a working copy. US\$ 2,000.00 are due upon completion of the website.

The **solar and wind power generation system** did not have the desired impact. Monthly electricity savings only averaged at US\$ 60.23 in comparison to last year.

There has been considerable pressure from the dive operators to establish new dive sites and to refurbish old mooring anchors. Unfortunately we ran into a series of technical problems, which did not allow us to continue with the **mooring installation project** as planned.

There has also been little progress with regards to the **hyperbaric chamber** issue. Although a contract was drafted, because of liability concerns, there is still no formal agreement with the Medical School for the use of their chamber. Although we have the assurance by the dean of the school that the chamber will be available in a case of emergency, SCF staff and the physician in charge of the chamber are uncomfortable with the present situation.

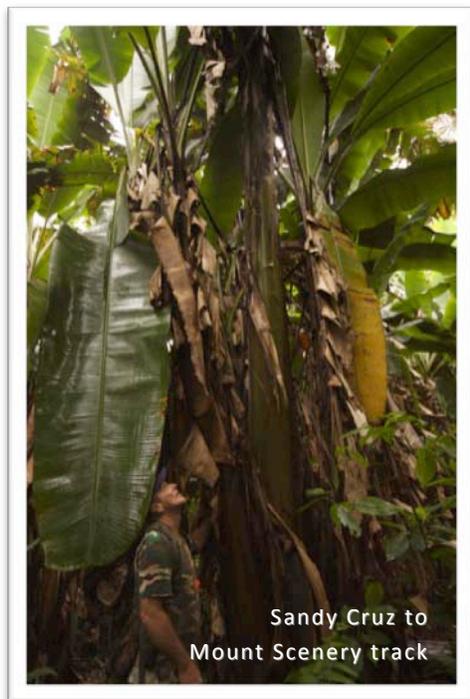
Despite this, we guaranteed the dive operators that their guests will be treated locally, with logistical and technical support by the SCF. Based on this, the dive shops agreed to continue collecting the hyperbaric chamber fee.

Broadreach was advised that dive accidents would have to be referred to St. Eustatius. Even so, the Stata chamber will not be accessible as of July 31st. In the meantime, upon request by Dr. Buchanan, a letter was sent to Dr. Joke Blaauboer, director of the A.M. Edwards Medical Centre, indicating the consent of the SCF to transfer the chamber to the hospital. Dr. Buchanan recently informed the SCF that provisions to accommodate the hyperbaric chamber in the upgraded facilities have been planned for.

With the aid of volunteers, the **construction of an outdoor activity center** behind the Trail Shop, designated as the Special Postcode Lottery Project of the SCF, commenced in January. Good progress has been made with the construction of a pond in the backyard and the leveling of the area to increase the total usable space. Funding is now needed to construct an outdoor kitchen, a fence to control free roaming goats, landscaping, solar water pump, lights et cetera. A proposal prepared to the Dutch Cooperating Foundations is unlikely of being successful, because their focus is not nature conservation oriented.



2. Recommendations



Innovative ways to increase revenue generation for the SCF need to be found urgently. The first step should be the **increase of yacht fees**. The fees are in no relation to the costs for installing and maintaining the mooring systems. Although Saba is not an ideal yachting destination, the sector should be better marketed to attract daytrippers. Other means could include the **upgrade of the Trail Shop** to make it a more attractive point of sales. Presently, the Trail Shop appears to function more as an office than an information center and a souvenir shop. It acts as the focal point for the “Saba Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals”, but if the Board decides to continue its support, there should be a formal agreement between the organizations, outlining the terms and conditions. Generally, **the operational structure of the Trail Shop should be reviewed** to maximize it’s potential. A juice bar offering refreshments and energy drinks, hosting of social events in the to be completed recreational area of the Trail Shop are some of the suggested additions. More investment intensive project activities could be the creation of a botanical garden, offering a new tour for those who don’t want to participate in strenuous hikes, e.g. cruise ship passengers, who are usually of advanced age.

The establishment of additional trails is a further means to upgrade Saba's tourism product and stabilize income generation of the SCF. In May, Tom van't Hof and James Johnson cut and demarcated a preliminary path, connecting the Mount Scenery and Sandy Cruz trails. The new trail offers outstanding natural features, a cold air vent, apparently connected to a cave system, 30 feet high banana trees, a variety of special flower species and others. Because of its high ecological value and relatively undisturbed flora and fauna, it should be carefully considered to open the trail to the public or to limit it to approved scientific research only.

Priority should also be given to the redesign of the **website**. Funding in the amount of US\$ 15,000.00 is available through the DCNA, to implement the changes to meet the recognition requirements of the Dutch Postcode Lottery, including their logo in all public outreach materials, signage and presentations of the SCF. Contact has been made with R.J. Van Oosten, a professional graphic designer, who also developed the sites for Statia and the DCNA. He indicated his interest to take on the project and already made sketches of the proposed layout. It is recommended to invite Mr. Van Oosten to Saba, allowing him an in-depth appreciation of the uniqueness of the island's cultural and natural heritage. Furthermore, the website could be a very effective tool to promote sponsorship programs (e.g. adopt a dive site/trail etc.) and integrate online payment options to utilize the 501(c)(3) charity status of the SCF as a US non profit organization for tax deductible donations.

The capacity of the battery bank and the inverter of the **wind and solar system** is underutilized. The options are to either sell the system or to upgrade it to its full capacity (e.g. adding of additional solar panels and wind mills) to become as independent as possible from the GEBE power grid. Funding for the upgrade could be sourced from the Prince Bernard Fund. If the Board decides to pursue the promotion of alternative energies, the technician of the supplier (Innovative Solar Systems Inc.) should be invited to Saba to train management and technical staff in all aspects of programming and maintenance of the system. As soon as the new hydraulic oil arrives and the hydraulic equipment has been repaired and tested, the **mooring installation project** should continue with the replacement of anchors at Twilight Zone, Mount Michel, Otto Limits, Man of War and Tent Reef Wall Red as priorities.

The defunct **hyperbaric chamber** continues to be a risk and a burden for the organization. We therefore recommend discontinuing the collection of the hyperbaric chamber fee and announcing that the SCF can no longer coordinate the treatment of dive accidents. The accumulated fees could be set aside for the treatment of local dive accidents overseas, until depletion of the funds or allocated to the relocation of the chamber to the Medical Center and its partial refurbishment. In any case, the chamber needs to be transferred as soon as possible, to avoid prolongation of the current situation for another 2 to 3 years.

It is further suggested to convert the hyperbaric chamber room to a **research laboratory**, thereby attracting universities and researchers to Saba. Paid services rendered to visiting scientist could significantly contribute to the fiscal self-sustainability of the organization. Additional and ongoing studies will improve the institutional capacity, allowing the SCF to make better-informed management decisions.



Last but not least, more emphasis needs to be given on the **monitoring of basic environmental parameters**, e.g. Reef Check, set up of a weather station on Mount Scenery, bird monitoring and other relevant protocols. For instance, based on the initial survey of Green Island in collaboration with EPIC, it is highly recommended to promote the island's designation as a nature reserve/bird sanctuary. It is thus suggested to set up a SCF Scientific Committee to guide management by developing a framework and setting research and monitoring priorities.

3. Technical report: Marine Park / Terrestrial Park

3.1. Administration

- The NFWF Final Report was submitted awaiting approval for disbursement of grant in the amount of US\$ 33.000,00.
- From February 21st to 26th, 2010, Mr. Curtis Edwarda, of Windfield Financial Services, closed & prepared the 2009 books at the SCF offices for the auditors.
- Sabina II was sold to Dutchman Marine Survey & Services for US\$ 29,000.00. The vessel was handed over on April 1st, 2010.

The 2009 audit was carried out on April 12th and 13th, by Garrick de Cuba, Elizabeth de Cuba, and Ramphis Tromp, of Ernst & Young Netherlands Antilles & Aruba, supported by Mr. Curtis Edwarda.

3.2. Staff Training

Feb 22nd - 26th saw Sue and Greg in Statia at the Bird Monitoring course organized by the DCNA with participation from 4 parks: Aruba, Statia, Saba and Sint Maarten. Education Officer, Sue Hurrell, at the invitation of Ocean Conservancy, attended the International Coastal Clean-Up Conference held in Cancun from April 27th, to May 2nd. Discussions included the results from the 2009 International Coastal Cleanup Coordinator quick-takes, highlights from around the world, media training, online International Coastal Cleanup registration training, preparations for the upcoming 25th anniversary of the International Coastal Cleanup et cetera. Some very memorable moments were the updates on the "Pacific Garbage Patch" and the presentations by author Douglas Carlton Abrams on the research involved in his book "The Eye of The Whale".

Rangers Greg van Laake, Sue Hurrell and SCF Manager Kai Wulf, participated in a "Monitoring Sea Turtle

Foraging Aggregations" field course for managers on Bonaire from May 3rd to 7th and May 10th to 14th respectively. The DCNA sponsored course was held by the Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire foundation. The hands-on exercises, presentations and discussions provided in-depth insight into sea turtle biology, monitoring protocols and methodologies, including netting, tagging, necropsies, data collection and analysis for better management of these endangered species.



From the 4th-7th June Rangers James Johnson and Sue Hurrell, at the invitation of the Aruba Red Cross, attended the annual "Red Cross Disaster Management Camp" held at Baranka di Yerba in army tents set up for the camp. The camp was well attended with 42 Jr. Brigadiers, 12 adult Red Cross members and a staff of 8 Instructors. Topics covered ranged from "Helping people with Disabilities" to "Disaster Assessment", "Mass Casualty Incidents", "Start Triage", "Psychological First Aid" and "Shelter Operations". All classes had a lecture segment and a practical scenario in which the Jr. Brigadiers participated with much enthusiasm.

3.3. Marine Park and Office

- A Dive Operator’s Meeting was held on January 13th 2010 (minutes were distributed separately)
- Duncan MacRae visited Saba from January 14th to 15th, to collect data for the 2009 SCF Annual Report.
- Paul Illsley, volunteer cartographer finished the collection of trail GPS data between March 13th and 21st 2010. Mr. Illsley agreed to include the marine park boundaries in the GIS and also suggest boundaries for the Fort Bay harbor. The GIS was published on the following website for public access: <http://www.sabagis.org>.
- Shape Photographers Christian König, Henkjan Kievit and Hans Lejinse visited Saba to shoot nature images on behalf of the DCNA from March 25th to 31st. DVDs with their best shots were so far received from Mr. König and Mr. Lejinse.
- On May 27th, on behalf of Ton Ackerman and Hayo Haanstra of the Dutch government, an EEZ Draft Management Plan meeting was organized at the Eugenius Johnson Community Center, to sensitize the public and particularly fishermen about the significance of the anticipated upcoming changes and impacts on Saba’s fishing industry.

3.4. Trail Shop

Trail Shop Visitor's 2010				
Month	Tourists	Locals	Total	Comments
January	260	46	306	13th Kai visited to talk about upgrades.
February	309	42	351	Works on the pool under the cave started on January 20 th . On February 10 th the young pelican was cleaned up.
March	329	36	365	On March 23 rd Public Works fixed the cistern. The Canadians volunteers stopped by.
April	219	21	240	
May	163	21	184	

3.5. Trails and National Park

3.5.1. Canadian Volunteers

First Canadian Volunteer Group, February 24th to March 11th, 2010

Buds Mountain to last shelter Mt. Scenery: cleaned and reconstructed trail {2 days)

Maskehorne Trail: reconstructed rock steps and pruned trees at viewpoint

Sandy Cruz Trail: reconstructed rock steps and water drains (1 day)

Crispeen Track: removed loose rock soil & garbage off the trail (1day)

Trail Shop to Museum: cleaned trail reconstructed trail & removed garbage

North Coast Trail: cleaned & reconstructed rock steps

Mt. Scenery first Scenic View: cleaned & reconstructed trail {2 days}

Kelby's Trail: cleaned & reconstructed rock steps (1 day)

Troy Hill Trail to Sandy Cruz: pruned trees opened viewpoint at Carla Nardi bench (1 day)

Second Canadian Volunteer Group, March 20th to April 3rd, 2010

Troy Hill Trail to Sandy Cruz: constructed rock wall & rock steps

Bottom Mt. to Tara Ground: brushed out and reconstructed trail

Tara Ground to Bottom Mt.: brushed out trail and reconstructed rock steps

Spring Bay Trail: built trail & repaired water drains

North Coast Trail: cleaned trail, removed loose rocks and other debris

All Too Far Trail: reconstructed sections of the trail

Trail between Lower- & Upper Hell's Gate: brushed out trail & removed garbage

3.5.2. Community Service

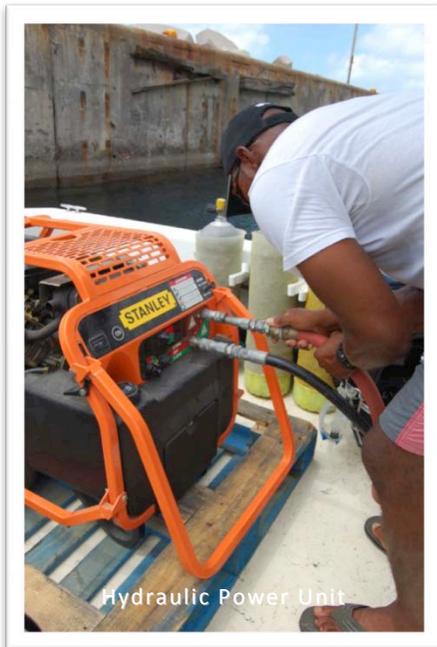
Ray Simmons:

- Cleaned trail from Buds Mountain until third shelter on Mt. Scenery
- Cleaned Paris Hill trail
- Cleaned trail from Trail Shop to museum

Jerome Heyliger:

- Dug holes to plant flamboyant trees at Cove Bay

3.6. Equipment



There have been continuous problems with the **hydraulic mooring installation equipment**. The faulty quick coupler was replaced and 20 gallons of new hydraulic, vegetable grade oil were ordered. However, firstly the power unit didn't function properly, idling much too high and when refilling the hoses, the cooling fan dug itself into the hydraulic oil tank, thereby damaging it and causing the oil to spill. A new oil tank was ordered and mounted by Travis Barth. Additional hydraulic oil had to be ordered at a cost of \$481.00. The equipment is now expected to be fully functional by the beginning of July.

There were also problems with the **solar and wind power generation system**. The inverter constantly shut down the entire system during cloudy or windless periods. Hence the computer server had to be taken off the solar and wind circuit, defeating its purpose of having a functional office, even during GEBE power cuts. There isn't any expertise on the island to service the complex setup and considerable time was spent studying the programming of the various controllers. Nevertheless, a bypass was laid, providing the inverter with grid power whenever needed. Since then the batteries have been equalized and the problems have subsided.

3.7. Monitoring and Research

Katharine and David Lowrie, in partnership with the nature conservation charity EPIC (Environmental Protection in the Caribbean, based in Sint Maarten) returned to Saba for a second and final year of **breeding seabird surveys** between May 19th and 25th. Together with the SCF staff they surveyed breeding seabirds around Saba's coastline and offshore islands and within the forested-scrubby interior. The results are to inform the first comprehensive Seabird Breeding Atlas of the Lesser Antilles. The project extends from Grenada to Anguilla. Every island within the study area is surveyed twice to obtain records for the year-round breeding seabirds (Brown Boobies, Magnificent Frigatebirds etc.) and the migratory seabirds that return to the island chain specifically to nest.



May's school visits combined with presentations by David and Katharine Lowrie, during which Katharine explained to 5 classes at the Sacred Heart Elementary School and 3 classes from the Comprehensive School, how to recognize the various seabirds seen around Saba and their importance to the island. Katharine and David gave another well-received presentation to the staff of the SCF and other interested persons.

Orchid expert Mike Bechtold, in collaboration with resident expert Dr. Steward Chipka, visited Saba for the 6th time since 2004, to validate Howard, R.A.'s. 1974 work, Flora of the Lesser Antilles, one of the last known records of indigenous Saba orchid species.

From June 11th to 18th, 2010, with assistance from the SCF and Dr. Jennifer Rahn, he continued work with currently identified orchids on Saba, **document the location of orchid populations** and assess their relative health in terms of growth, flowering and fruiting.

3.8. Law Enforcement, Policy and Legal Issues

In it's last meeting, the Board decided to expedite the transfer of part of the sulfur mine property, donated to the SCF, to the heirs of Mrs. Murphy, as agreed years ago. The SCF's attorney was advised accordingly. However, as of June 30th, the matter still could not be pursued, since the file apparently still is under notary Gysbertha.

3.9. Information, Education and Outreach

Environmental Education continues in both Sacred Heart Elementary School and Saba Comprehensive School on the subject of "The Environmental Calendar"

January focused on National Bird Day with seabird recognition, February saw Climate Change being the focus for International Polar Bear Day. Much interest was shown by both teachers and students, such that Grade 3 took part in fund-raising activities in order to be able to "Adopt a Polar Bear" with the WWF.

March and April school visits concentrated on Earth Hour and Earth Day in preparation for Earth Day activities on April 24th.

3.9.1. Earth Day

To commemorate Earth Day on April 24th, the Ranger- and Snorkel Club planted 2 lime and 11 flamboyant trees at The Level in Windwardside and at Cove Bay. More than 30 students, parents, volunteers, SCF Board Member Karen Hodge and all staff participated in the very successful event. Sponsored by Child Focus, the Business Association, Tourist Bureau, Lions Club, Aids Support Group, Foundation Social Workplace, Organoponics Farm, Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, organized by the Burendag Committee, Lions Club and the SCF, the Earth Day program further included a breakfast with fresh coffee, organic tea, cookies and the now famous Dutch Poffertjes for the opening at the Eugenius Johnson Center, Farmers Market with games and fun for young and old, harvesting and learning at the Organoponics Farm, and a Lions Club and Leo's beautification project, planting trees, shrubs and flowers at the community center. The event ended with a wine tasting and movie night, showing the spectacular BBC Blue Planet series.



3.9.2. International Day of Biodiversity



To raise awareness about key issues, promote action and to celebrate biodiversity, all parks of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) held an Open Day on May 22nd. The Saba Conservation Foundation (SCF) organized staff guided boat trips and a hike to showcase the organization's conservation work, as well as to explore the fascinating unique flora and fauna of Saba, above and underwater, followed by refreshments and snacks at the Fort Bay offices and the Trail Shop at Windwardside. Ideal weather conditions led the participants along Sandy Cruz, one of the famous and most popular trails of the island. After the hike, some took the

opportunity to join the second boat trip to Green Island, which is hosting a large and regionally important breeding population of Noddies, Sooty and Bridled Terns, and resident Brown Boobies, estimated at over 400 individuals, packed on the tiny island. The sea bird watching was complemented by a snorkeling excursion in the calm seas at the pristine reefs near the island, Diamond Rock and Torrens Point. The events were well attended and received very positive response, resulting in the call for more frequent activities of this kind.

3.9.3 World Environment Day

On June 5th, SCF staff participated in the GEBE Green Expo event, to explain and demonstrate energy saving methods. The SCF booth provided specific biodiversity and general parks oriented information. Free International Year of Biodiversity stickers, postcards and books etc. were handed out to the mostly younger audience.



3.9.4. Snorkel Club and Ranger Club

Activities continue with good progress in swimming, snorkeling and kayaking skills by both groups. Land work has consisted of knot tying (in preparation for camping trips/survival shelter building, first-aid training and callowan building.

4. Travel

Kai Wulf attended the **DCNA Board meeting in St. Maarten** from May 19th to 22nd, 2010 (A detailed report is available through the DCNA secretariat, though minutes have not been distributed yet) Upon invitation, Mr. Wulf falso attended the **EEZ Management Plan conference in Bonaire** from June 1st to 2nd. The purpose of the conference was to elaborate on the draft management plan for the Dutch Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Caribbean. 4 representatives from Saba participated in the conference. Particularly important for Saba was that priority will be given to declare the Sababank a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA), which will allow for stricter regulation of the area, e.g. prohibiting tankers from anchoring on the bank. Another priority will be the designation of the Dutch Caribbean EEZ as a Marine Mammal Sanctuary, in conjunction with the French Caribbean islands. Commissioner Johnson stressed that the to be established joint committee managing the EEZ, must not interfere in the issuing of fishing licenses for the Sababank. It is envisioned to finalize the management plan before October 10th.