



MINISTRY OF TOURISM

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW CONSERVATION INITIATIVES AT GRANDE RIVIERE

A high level team of Government officials led by the Honourable Stephen Cadiz the Minister of Tourism and the Honourable Ramona Ramdial the Minister of State in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, visited Grande Riviere Beach on **Friday September 28, 2012.**

The team met with representatives of the community, the Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guides Association, the Institute of Marine Affairs, and the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, to forge a path forward for the rehabilitation of the beach area.

The beach is still under threat and remedial corrective action must be taken within sufficient lead time prior to the turtle nesting season in March.

In July this year the river was re-routed, after periods of very heavy rainfall, in order to safeguard the community and the turtle nesting activity on the beach itself. Re-routing of the river was necessary to prevent severe damage to the coastal community and future turtle conservation efforts.

Presently, there remains a wide chasm of water on the beach front that poses a problem for viable turtle nesting and is also an immediate threat to the Mount Plaisir Estate Hotel that is located nearby.

After much discussion, it was decided that a collaborative approach will be used and the following measures were agreed upon:

SHORT TERM

- 1) By the end of October 2012 the chasm of water will be filled; using material gathered from the Grande Riviere Beach. This period was chosen as there was late nesting and as such this will ensure no disturbance of nests in any of the zones.
- 2) The filling of the chasm will be done under close supervision by senior personnel on-site.
- 3) Prior to any action being executed, the community tourism groups will be notified.
- 4) The beach profile study done by the Institute of Marine Affairs will be reviewed by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

MEDIUM TERM

- The river appears to be changing course so a scientific study needs to be undertaken to facilitate further conservation planning. The river needs to be de-silted and the integrity of its vegetation returned by replanting forest trees.
- Conducting of an Environment Impact Assessment and a Certificate of Environmental Clearance in the area prior to any engineering works being undertaken to regulate the shifting river course.
- Investigation to be launched into illegal logging along the river as well as a study on the wildlife resident in the area.

It was also decided that the Grande Riviere area be designated under law as a national wildlife park and this drive will be jointly spearheaded by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

Minister Ramdial also indicated that game wardens will be recruited to do policing on a variety of beaches to mitigate against poaching of the leatherback turtles and their abuse.

The Ministry of Tourism recognises and supports the dedication and passion of the Grande Riviere Tourism Organisation, Nature Seekers, Turtle Village Trust and all other community groups working to deliver sustainable development of local communities along with the conservation of natural resources within the communities.

Indeed, the Ministry of Tourism has joined with the non-governmental organisation Turtle Village Trust in working towards making Trinidad and Tobago the premier turtle tourism destination globally.

September 30, 2012

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