

Fisheries Division successfully hosts first MPA Summer Camp



The Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, in collaboration with the Caribbean Aqua-Terrestrial Solutions (CATS) and with the support of the CaMPAM-ECMMAN Small Grants Program (coordinated by UNEP-CEP/SPAW) has successfully conducted their first MPA Summer Camp aimed at students 9 to 13 years of age. The overall ECMMAN project is coordinated by The Nature Conservancy with funding from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) in support of the International Climate Initiative (ICI) on the basis of a decision adopted by the German Bundestag.

The Moliniere-Beausejour Marine Protected Area (MBMPA), home to the famed Underwater Sculpture Park, was the focus of this year's Summer Camp. In an effort to build community awareness, forty (40) youths from the adjacent villages of the MBMPA were selected to participate.

Students enrolled in the Camp, which started on July 7 and culminated on July 25, 2014, were exposed to many key marine topics including endangered species, fish identification, coral reefs, the harms of pollution, overfishing, invasive species and the importance of marine protected areas.

Daily activities for the students during the three-week Summer Camp were structured into two components: **In-class activities** during the morning sessions, which included lectures and video presentations, and **outdoor activities** during the afternoon sessions, which

consisted of field trips, games and field exercises such as swimming and snorkeling. This format kept the students alert and excited through unique hands-on exploration, while at the same time focusing on key theoretical aspects.

Prime Minister, Dr. the Right Hon. Keith Mitchell made a surprised visit to the summer camp during the first week, and expressed how pleased and impressed he was with the initiative.

It is the hope of the Fisheries Division that the MPA Summer Camp, apart from being highly educational for the students, will also assist in building healthy relationships between the Division and members of the Brizan, Beausejour, Happy Hill and Moliniere communities.

“The ties are stronger now and it paves the way for future Department/community collaborations concerning marine protected areas,” an official of the Fisheries Division said.

It is also hoped that instilling a sense of appreciation for marine life and coastal ecosystems among the students that live in the vicinity of the marine protected area, through fun, dynamic, hands-on learning activities, would help them to develop a sense of attachment, ownership and protective instinct towards the MBMPA. Students were also encouraged to consider the possibilities of careers in Environmental Science.

During the program's Closing Ceremony last Sunday July 27, 2014, at the Happy Hill Secondary School, participants of the MPA Summer Camp shared some of the knowledge and experiences gained during the program with Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment - Senator Simon Stiehl and Permanent Secretary responsible for Forestry and Fisheries - Mrs. Marilyn Austin-Cadore.

Plans are already underway to ensure that the Program will continue on an annual basis where this year's participants will have the opportunity to be involved by becoming Camp mentors.

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