

OPAAL Project

The Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) is currently functioning as the National Implementation Coordinating entity (NICE) for the OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods (OPAAL) Project, with responsibility for:

- (i) preparing national annual work plans and budgets
- (ii) day-to-day implementation of project activities at the national level
- (iii) managing/ supervising the implementation of local site activities in collaboration with the Site Implementing Entities (SIEs) and beneficiaries of livelihoods subprojects, and
- (iv) liaising directly with the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU) of the OECS on matters relating to project implementation.

Project Overview

The OPAAL Project is a regional initiative aimed at coordinating, complimenting and integrating protected area (PA) management in the Eastern Caribbean region. The five-year project, which is being executed by the OECS-ESDU, hopes to ultimately create a system of Protected Areas (Pas) comprised of sites that will protect ecologically important biodiversity in the OECS.

Through the OPAAL project, member states will be able to better manage selected demonstration sites and maintain livelihoods that will not compromise the availability of the resources in these areas for future generations.

The Project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the World Bank; Fonds Francais pour l'Environnement Mondiale (FFEM); the Governments of the OECS States and the Organisation of American States (OAS) (for the St. Lucia component only.)

OPAAL Objectives

Global Objective

To contribute to conserving biodiversity of global importance in the OECS by removing barriers to the effective management of protected areas, and to increase the involvement of civil society and the private sector in the planning, management and sustainable use of these areas.

Development Objective

This project, when implemented will contribute to the economic development of the participating member states (PMSs) by:

1. Strengthening existing and creating new protected areas

2. Providing environmentally sustainable economic opportunities for communities living in the surrounding areas.

Participating Member States

The PMSs of the OPAAL Project and their selected demonstration sites are:

St. Kitts and Nevis – Central forest Range
Antigua and Barbuda – North Sound Islands
Dominica – Cabrits National Park (marine component)
Saint Lucia – Pointe Sable Management Area (proposed)
St. Vincent and the Grenadines – Tobago Cays Marine Park
Grenada – Annandale Forest

Profile: Saint Lucia Demonstration Site – Pointe Sable Environmental Protection Area

Pointe Sable, located along the southeast coast of Saint Lucia, near Vieux Fort, is the demonstration site for the Saint Lucia component of the OPAAL Project.

Four coastal ecosystem types, namely coral reefs (including the longest fringing reef in St. Lucia), mangroves (designated RAMSAR sites under the Convention on Wetlands, and including the largest mangrove ecosystem in Saint Lucia), offshore islands, and sea grass beds are found in the area as well as over five endemic species of reptiles and amphibians on the offshore Maria Islands. The Maria Islands is the only location in the world of the very rare and endemic species of grass snake (*Liophis ornatus*) as well as the zandoll te (*Cnemidophorus vanzoi*), the Maria Islands ground lizard.

The area currently includes five marine reserves, long sandy beaches, an artificial reef, an offshore sandbank, a Wildlife Reserve, and five historic sites covering over 350 hectares of land and sea.

For further information on the OPAAL Project, please visit the website of the OECS Environment and Sustainable Development Unit at

www.oecs.org/esdu/