



# SAINT LUCIA NATIONAL TRUST

TEL: (758) 452-5005/31495 P.O. BOX 595 CASTRIES, ST. LUCIA WEST INDIES  
FAX NO: (758) 453-2791 Email: natrust@candw.lc Website: www.slunatrust.org

**Patron: Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy  
Governor General of St. Lucia**

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## PRESS RELEASE

### Reclaiming our Wetlands

Forty-five (45) strong moved in with their gloves and garbage bags ready to do battle with the debris that had defaced the wonderful wetlands at Savannes Bay. After about an hour and a half, the hard work of the volunteers yielded thirty-six (36) bags of garbage and other debris including a stove and tyres were piled onto a truck. Unfortunately, the volunteers discovered a turtle shell among the debris. Ms. Yvonne Edwin, the Fisheries Assistant on site noted that the season was closed and it was obvious that the Hawksbill Turtle was freshly slaughtered and all its meat was extracted.



Garbage piled up for collection at Savannes Bay



All saddened by the discovery of a turtle shell

The cleanup activity held in the South of the island on Saturday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> was in observance of World Wetlands Day. The activity was organized by the Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) in collaboration with the Forestry and Fisheries Departments. Mrs. FERIA Narcisse-Gaston of the Forestry Department told the group that “Wetlands are important for numerous reasons; various animals use wetlands for reproduction, migration and feeding; they also serve as a sponge and help prevent flooding and wetlands also help to purify water”. She also mentioned that the Mankote Mangroves which was also scheduled to be cleaned is recognized internationally because it is a Ramsar site. According to Mrs. Narcisse-Gaston the 1971 Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

At the end of the cleanup the organizing agencies urged the fishermen present to play their part to keep the mangroves pristine. They were also told that talks have already begun with the relevant agencies to explore obtaining a proper garbage receptacle and arranging for regular collections so as to avoid a reappearance of the unsightly waste that had taken over the wetlands.



VP (in red) and members of the Aupicon Charcoal Producers

The group then proceeded to Mankote Mangroves about 5 minutes away from Savannes Bay. There we met about ten (10) members of the Aupicon Charcoal Producers who were already busy cleaning up the area. Vincent “Jeg” Clarke, Vice President (VP) of the group proceeded to share how the charcoal producers sustainably used the mangroves to maintain their livelihood and how the practice had been in his family for many generations. However, Mr. Clarke pointed out that many times members of the group are abused by individuals who continue to indiscriminately dump

their waste at Mankote. The SLNT took the opportunity to inform the group that it will liaise with the relevant agencies to put the necessary measures in place to deter persons from this illegal practice.

Mr. Clarke informed the group during his talk that it would take approximately one week to restore Mankote Mangroves, nonetheless, some measure of success was felt after about 45 minutes when the group was able to fill the truck with refuse from the mangroves. Thereafter, the volunteers were invited to the Trust’s Southern Office at the Maria Islands Interpretation Centre to unwind and enjoy some delectable refreshments.

Thanks to all volunteers who worked diligently to restore the wetlands on World Wetlands Day. Participants included members, friends and staff of the SLNT, staff of the Forestry and Fisheries Departments, the Lutheran Church, the Aupicon Charcoal Producers, Caribbean Youth Environment Network, David Davis of CM Touring and John Charles, the truck driver.

Special thanks to Invest Saint Lucia (formerly known as NDC) for providing the truck which immediately hauled away all garbage that was collected from both Savannes Bay and Mankote Mangroves.

*The SLNT Champions Fair Helen’s Patrimony*