



# ANGUILLA NATIONAL TRUST

## Preservation For Generations

### Eco-Corner

### Making the Connection: converting words into action

Although there has been some controversy over whether the Native American leader, Chief Seattle, actually said these famous words, they are still profound and they continue to resonate with much truth:

“This we know; the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.”

How often, when asked to describe the outdoors, do we picture a brilliant golden sun, turquoise waves with white frothy tops lapping on an empty, white-sand beach, birds gliding through the pale blue sky, and trees providing shade for little creatures that scuttle on the ground. How many times do we put people into that picture? Too often we separate ourselves from the natural environment in which we exist. Sometimes we do not realise that our actions have a direct impact on almost everything that surrounds us; that what we are doing to the environment, we are doing to ourselves. And it is because of this close relationship and interconnection that it becomes so important that we become more aware about what we are doing and more active in ensuring that we are not destroying the very areas and resources on which we depend for our own survival. Increasing our knowledge, asking questions, and being actively involved in discussions and decision-making are all part of that process.

Over the past half year, letters regarding issues of public concern – whether they be over the proposed planning bill, the level and/or direction of development (primarily tourism-related), or even the increase in criminal activity and violence – are surfacing. These letters may be interpreted as the public’s recognition that their voices must not only be *heard*, but perhaps more importantly, *listened to*.

In the 17 March edition of *The Anguillian*, a letter from the West End Concerned Group to the Hon. Chief Minister Mr. Osbourne Fleming was published. The Group wanted to make their views and concerns about the activities occurring in and affecting their community known to both Government and the rest of the island.

Their concerns centred on three main issues:

1. The Viceroy Project and its effects on beach access, flooding, and air quality;
2. The Temenos Golf Course Project and issues related to a jetty being used by fishermen and the potential for degradation (and even destruction) of the surrounding marine environment; and
3. Shoal Bay West, the proposed marina project, and the contribution of tourism developers to community development.

On Wednesday 22 March, a meeting was held in West End and was chaired by government representatives. Issues raised by the Concerned Group came to the front once again. After some discussion, the officials agreed to conduct site visits in order to assess the situation.

An article in the 30 March *Anguillian* reviewed a statement made by the Hon. Chief Minister on 23 March at the Ronald Webster Park. During his speech, he described Anguilla as “the America of the Caribbean” – prosperous with a bright and exciting future. Perhaps even the envy of the rest of the region. He mentioned the moratorium on large-scale development, the Flag Luxury Golf Course, the Vice Roy Projects, the Altamer expansion project, and stress these projects have placed and continue to place on the

#### About the Anguilla National Trust

The Anguilla National Trust was established in 1993 to act as custodian of Anguilla’s heritage, preserving and promoting the island’s natural environment and its archaeological, historical and cultural resources for present and future generations. It is in the business of ensuring the sustainability of Anguilla’s heritage. The ANT is a dynamic people-centred organisation working in collaboration with public and private sector entities to manage Anguilla’s natural social and cultural heritage.

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workforce. He talked about the proposed Junk's Hole project and the Savannah Bay/Sile Bay project, and how "people are literally fighting to come to Anguilla." Public consultations were held prior to the submission of any detailed assessments (environmental or otherwise) by the developers. Some of the meetings were well-attended. Others, not so much. Perhaps this was due to feelings that the Anguillian voice is not strong enough to elicit change or feelings that "as long as it is not in my backyard" it is not important. But everyone has a voice and there is strength in numbers and if it is happening in Anguilla (given the size of the island), then it is in your backyard.

Environmental or social activism is sometimes equated to radicalism. Remember hearing stories of people across the world climbing bridges, waving banners, and refusing to come down? Or tying themselves to trees? Or chaining themselves to bulldozers? But it does not have to be – and it usually is not. It is as simple as asking questions (there are no wrong ones), making sure they are answered appropriately and adequately, and pushing for change when change is necessary to ensure that the decisions that are made and policies and programmes that are implemented are in the best interest of all of Anguilla.

It is encouraging to see community groups emerging and to see them clearly outlining their concerns about activities that are being conducted and their impacts on the environmental integrity and social fabric of the island. These community groups, however, have tended to emerge in response to something – for example, environmental degradation or negative pressures on society. They have tended to be reactive instead of proactive. This is partly because we do not completely understand the impacts we are having on our environment (natural, cultural, social, economic, and/or political). But should we have to wait until the effects of our activities and decisions are felt within the community and by the environment before we decide to become involved? We have to start asking important questions, even if the answers are not yet known. We need to look long-term and act in a way that is in the best interest of both society and the environment.

There is only one planet. We have one chance to get it right. We should make sure that we make the most of it and do the best we can for it. Every person has a role to play and the potential to make a real difference. It is important that we do not forget this.

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**Eco-Corner is a regular feature provided by the Anguilla National Trust in co-operation with The Anguillian. The Anguilla National Trust welcomes questions, comments, and suggestions. If you would like to voice your opinions and/or concerns, please contact the Trust at 497 5297 or at [axanat@anguillanet.com](mailto:axanat@anguillanet.com). Together we can make a difference. *Preservation for Generations.* **