



Annual Report 2008



Co-operative Republic of Guyana

**National Parks Commission
Annual Report
2008**

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1.0 Executive Summary

Planning for the National Parks is overseen by Management and a Board of Directors, the mandate of which is to lend technical advice and policy direction to Management in the development of the parks with a view of providing recreational spaces conducive for relaxation and enjoyment; while at the same time building an awareness of the need for conservation and preservation.

The challenge is to recognize the potentials for tourism development and to realize this while at the same time ensuring the provision of recreational spaces and that the rich biodiversity, landscapes and education and awareness value of the area is maintained.

- Need for improvements to infrastructure on the various locations
- Limited access to equipment for improvement works
- Limited revenue from activities of the Parks
- Absence of a park management plan
- Theft

There is a need to start a process to develop a management plan for the Commission. Presently we are forging ahead within the limitation of resources to plan and manage the parks. This is being done through prudent management, creative ideas, and through partnerships and engagement with stakeholders.

The final goal is meeting our responsibility to provide for the people of Guyana areas of recreation for the purpose of relaxation and enjoyment.

Looking back over NPC's achievements in 2008 it is striking by how much we achieved for such a small budget.

Overall 2008 was a productive year for NPC, thanks to support from the Government of Guyana, the hard work put in by staff and associates and the support of donors and well wishers the Commission is stronger and more viable institution.

The Commission has forged strategic alliances with a wide rearrange of agencies and organizations, realizing cash commitments and in-kind support.

2008 was a decisive year. Instead of more words the Commission achieved five major wins. First we ensured that income was up and costs down. Secondly, hugely significant was the rehabilitation of the stadium in the National Park; Third, the Commission received funding from Government to install a walk in cold room at the Zoological Park worth over 2 million dollars to increase food storage capacity for the animals at the Zoo; funding was also received to rehabilitate all the lawn maintenance equipment, making 2008 the first year in nine years for the Commission to have all 9 slashers operational; thereby providing the opportunity to expand and increase the revenue base and landscape services offered. The Commission achieved its highest ever visitation at Kaieteur National Park;

These important achievements have helped to stabilise the Commission and to put it back in a independent financial standing. They present real and substantial progress and we are grateful to the Government for the support given.

Governments support has enabled the NPC to make changes on the road to improvements in addressing the maintenance and resource protection. Our recent efforts have focused on streamlining the review process and expediting funding for project and program needs at our parks. We have showed progress in this area.

In addition to receiving assistance from donor funds for the betterment of the national parks, the NPC has also undertaken a number of measures to improve our management and accountability systems. We continue to work towards improving our day-to-day practices to ensure the public receives the best possible service and results.

We feel we have gotten a bit better at identifying what our needs are and being able to justify why investments are needed to sustain our park system and programs. We try to have all of our parks and offices engaged in effort to effect and fully meet the requirements of expected performance and results.

The Finance and Admin. Sub-committee of the Board is currently working on a National Parks Commission Business Plan Initiative with guidance from various similar parks around the world. This analyzes and documents the past, present and future and will address the future financial condition of the parks. The Business Plan Initiative was conceived to take the first steps toward clarifying park financial status to a degree that we can understand the financial inputs and outputs of the parks, and identify any shortfalls or inefficiencies that need to be addressed. We are working to develop quantitative operational standards to be used as a measure of where a park should be versus current operational levels.

We are mindful of the National Parks Commission mission, and guided by the mandate that the parks be managed for public use in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired, and challenged by the goals that we have set for ourselves which are centered on rehabilitating the park and garden; strengthening our preservation programs, improving services, expanding our partnership efforts, diversifying our workforce to reflect more accurately the face of Guyana at every park, and engaging the Nation's youth in the many programs and activities of the National Parks Commission. We believe, and are confident, that this update and the plans for 2009 as articulated do in fact convey the Commissions' highest priorities at this time.

In support of this effort, and in response to the many complex issues and challenges confronting these parks, we have made a priority during 2008 to improve the quality and integrity of our natural resource base.

The National Parks Commission has had some changes and modest achievements taking into consideration the challenges faced.

2.0 Mission Statement

Managing the natural and cultural resources of the National Parks on behalf of the people of Guyana through conservation, education and awareness while affording the opportunity for open air recreation for future generations

3.0 Organization and Management

The Vision of the NPC is to develop and maintain public amenity environment, conducive to healthy open air recreation thereby affording citizens and visitors enjoyment of Guyana's natural beauty through conservation, education and awareness.

National Park

The National Park was established in 1965 and named The Queen Elizabeth II National Park to commemorate the Queen's visit to Guyana.

It was officially opened on February 5 1966 and later that year renamed the National Park when Guyana attained independence.

The National Park occupies 57 acres of land at Thomas Lands and is located on part of what was formerly Piantation Thomas.

Zoological Park

The Zoological Park was opened on January 1 1952; it is located within the Botanic Gardens and occupies four (4) acres of land.

There are currently 84 exhibits within the Zoo and 232 animals representing 39 species

Botanic Gardens

On April 3 1877 a resolution was passed by the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society to establish the Botanic Gardens.

The Gardens was established on April 4 1879 on 185 acres of land.

It currently occupies 96 acres of land extending from Vlissengen Road in the west to Sheriff Street in the east. It houses several varieties of tropical plants and many historical and cultural artifacts.

Kaieteur National Park

The Kaieteur Falls was created by ordinance No.41 of 1929 and has a size of 116.6 km sq. In 1999 the park was increased to maintain the integrity of its ecosystems as well as allow for effective management

Joe Vieira Park

This area was designated a Park on the 24th March 1982. It is situated on the West Bank of Demerara.

3.1 Organizational Chart

The National Parks Commission has a total of 115 staff across the five parks.

This includes the Administrative Staff at the Head Office and an Accounts Department;

The maintenance Department falls under the Deputy Manager / Operations Manager and consists of the Mechanical, Electrical and Building and Infrastructure Maintenance, and the Security Divisions.

These areas serve the various Parks with the exception of the Security division for the Joe Vieira Park and Kaieteur Park which is combined in the description of the Wardens.

The National Parks Commission is challenged by the absence of a Park Manager at Kaieteur National Park to supervise the day to day operations of the park.

In addition, the very limited technical staff in middle management / supervisory positions makes management of the Commission laborious as Management has to be involved in every minute aspect of the operations; this detracts from the larger matters that should be engaging the attention of upper management.

3.2 Description of Divisions and Departments

The National Parks Commission (NPC) was established in March 1972 to manage, control and develop park areas; and work in collaboration with local government authorities in the establishment of new parks.

The Commission is governed by the National Parks Act No.23 of 1977.

In 1984 the mandate for management responsibility for the Botanic Gardens and Zoological Park was given to the NPC.

The Kaieteur National Park is governed by the KNP Act Chapter 20:02 of 1929. This was amended in 1999 to extend the boundaries to 242 sq. miles and in 2000 amended to reflect indigenous people's rights to use the area for traditional and subsistence activities.

This Act constitutes a certain are of land in the vicinity of the Kaieteur Falls on the Potaro River in the county of Essequibo a National Park and provides for the control of the said park and for the preservation of the natural scenery, fauna and flora of the Park.

It further provides for use of the Park in accordance with the rules, where it is not lawful for any person to enter into, travel or encamp within the park or to build any structure therein, or to hunt, chase, catch, shoot at, kill or otherwise disturb the soil by mining or other operations within the park or to remove anything whatsoever from the park except in accordance with regulations made under the Act.

Currently NPC has under responsibility the following divisions:

- National Park
- Botanic Gardens
- Zoological Park
- Joe Vieira Park
- Kaieteur National Park

The technical / operational divisions are assisted by the Administration and Finance Divisions to carry out their respective mandates.

The National Parks Commission's functions are to:

- Maintain and regulate the use of any designated park so as to leave it unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations
- Make recommendations to the National Trust to achieve the conservation of the natural beauty of any area of land in Guyana and to carry out such acts as the National Trust directs for the purpose of attaining the objectives of those recommendations;
- Collaborate with local government authorities in developing any area of land subject to the control of any such authority for the purpose of affording to members of the public opportunity for open air recreations;
- Provide to local government authorities maintenance services in respect of Parks on such terms and conditions as the Commission sees fit
- Give general advice to the Minister or any statutory body in relation to the provision or improvement of opportunities for the enjoyment of the country side by members of the public.

4.0 Summary and Review of Current Year's Programme

4.1 Division 1 –

National Park and Joe Vieira Park

The National Park and Joe Vieira Park serves to provide areas of relaxation and recreation for the public. It offers arenas for various sport disciplines as well as picnic areas and open spaces for relaxation. In addition to providing and maintaining places for enjoyment the Parks also serves in other areas of environmental education and cooperation's.

Administration

- addressing the maintenance and resource protection
- reorganized the Accounts Department; reinstating the Stock Control Clerk
- addressed a number of cases with the Ministry of Labour on disciplinary matters
- a high level of incompetence was found at the level of supervisory staff and a marked resistance to change
- implement Code of Conduct for the National Parks Commission
- reviewing organizational structure of the Commission
- implemented performance appraisal

Infrastructure

- enhancement to park and gardens ongoing with the installation of park and garden benches acquired from donors
- improvements to signage on parks
- many improvements to stadium area and other areas of park (fully funded/supported by Government)

Education and Awareness and Inter-Agency Collaboration

- The general population has a reasonable understanding of the rich biodiversity they live in. However, many still contribute to environmental pollution, mainly due to limited knowledge of how to take care of the natural inheritance. Therefore it is important to increase environmental awareness and knowledge, promote attitude changes, and motivate the general public and key actors to take positive actions to help support conservation.
- Coordinated activities between the National Parks Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency in observance of International Day of Biological Diversity

Staff Development

Staff was exposed to training opportunities in the following areas:

- counterfeit note detection by the Bank of Guyana
- Trained staff in emergency response specific to fires;

Corporate Support

- agreement signed with GT&T for the redevelopment of Play Land in National Park
- collaborating with Rotary Club of Stabroek for Park amenities development; e.g. seating, bins
- Public Consultation held in April on *Self Sustaining Parks & Gardens*

Major Activities held in the National Park

- Children's Mash parade
- Republic Day Activities
- Kite Flying, Easter Holiday- Sunday / Easter Monday
- Independence Celebrations
- Arrival Day Celebrations
- Emancipation Day Celebrations

- There were also several games of cricket and a number of shows and various events held in the Stadium area

- In the *Sport Fields* several disciplines are practiced including cycle training and matches, athletic training, football and the opening of the Rugby Season with the Bank DIH Sevens Tournament was hosted.

The National Park assists the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre with therapy sessions by allowing the use of the ponies by the children this enables an essential part of the physical rehabilitation therapy for the young patients in need of our services

In addition to improving the state of their physical and mental condition it also doubtlessly provide a source of much enjoyment and enrichment in their lives.

Security Issues

- Challenges continue in this division. Currently installing security systems received under the 2008 budgetary release on all locations;
- The main load wire for powering the National Park was vandalized in September; suspected to be internal sabotage; matter reported to the Police
- Following a series of reports of criminal activities in the National Park; a *secured parking* service was implemented

Finance

Like all other parks and gardens around the world resources are always never enough. In January the Commission was severely challenged as all the locations were running in overdraft from week to week. Revenues were below the required amount to make the difference from subvention to be able to meet expenditure per month and basic operating expenses were in doubt.

Specific focus was then given to revenue generation with the addition of services and entertainment opportunities and a review for improvement of current revenue earning areas.

Below shows the financial position of the Commission as at December 31, 2008 vs. January 15, 2008

	<i>as at January 15, 2008 - GYD</i>	<i>as at December 31, 2008 - GYD</i>
National Park	deficit (2,460,170.)	1,961,839.
Zoological Park	deficit (466,710.)	1,722,768.
Botanic Gardens	deficit (378,453.)	826,000.
Kaieteur National Park	4,878,522.	9,751,407.

4.2 Division 2

Botanic Gardens

The Botanic Gardens serves to provide areas of relaxation and recreation for the public. It offers arenas for various sport disciplines as well as picnic areas and open spaces for relaxation. In addition to providing and maintaining places for enjoyment the Parks also serves in other areas of environmental education and cooperation's.

Routine works continued in the Botanic Gardens on the maintenance of the landscape; this was further made possible with the increase in landscape maintenance equipment such as pressure washer, water pump, brush cutters and chainsaws.

Visitor associated activities were arranged for the over ten thousand visitors who visit the gardens and activities such as plant sales, musical concerts at the Band Stand kept many visitors returning.

Works at the nursery continued with the production of various species of plants for sale and landscape purposes and landscape services continue to be provided

Revenues-generated from the Botanic Gardens were-in sufficient to carry out repairs and infrastructure works. Inadequate funds made it impossible for major maintenance works to be carried out. These included desilting the manatee ponds, revetment, repairs to the stores, construction of a secure safe room to store equipment and the resurfacing of roads leading to the Kissing Bridges and bandstand.

4.3 Division 3

Zoological Park

- secured a veterinarian from the Ministry of Agriculture for the Zoo
- reviewed and reduced over-time at the Zoological Park
- Re-implemented half yearly examinations and preventative treatment for employees at the Zoo at risk of zoonotic diseases
- Trained staff in emergency response specific to fires;

Planning & Development

- pursuing additional funding for the Harpy Eagle Flight Cage –
- pursuing additional funding for the Aquarium –
- secured funding for the improvement of habitats for the animals at the Zoo

Education and Awareness

▪ *Nature School*

The Nature School in the Zoological Park on an average has five thousand students passing through the School and Zoo for a structured lesson and practical session per annum.

Everyday two schools are brought into the Zoo with the “Zoo Bus” a 36 seater bus which was made possible through donations from several Zoos, and likeminded organizations.

The kids are brought from as far as the West Coast, West Bank, East Coast and East Bank and spend approximately 2 ½ hrs. per session.

Materials and teaching aids are prepared by the Nature School Lecturer; other materials such as posters, colouring books etc. are supported from various donors such as World Wildlife Fund-Guiana’s (WWF) which are distributed to the students for their class rooms.

Every Wednesday, the Environmental Protection Agency does a guest feature and presents a lesson on a particular environmental topic to the visiting class.

- Conducted several environmental workshops for kids on conservation of wildlife
- Installed 64 information signs in the Zoo received by donation from Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago
- secured funding for the repairs and expansion of the nature school

In addition to the Nature School Classes there is also a reference library that students preparing for CXC and Common Entrance use to assist them in completing assignments and course work.

▪ *Zoo Camp*

Every year the Zoological Park holds a Camp called the "Zoo Camp" which runs for four weeks with altering aged kids, 6-9 and 10-14;

This is designed to have the children engaged in meaningful fun exercises while at the same time learning something that has an impact on society and the environment.

One Camp runs for a week and consists of several activities such as field trips, tree plantings, feed the manatees, educational videos, pony rides, lecture and activity (question & answer) sessions etc.

Various guest speakers are also invited from the Guyana Horticulture Society, the Environmental Protection Agency etc.

This is supported also through donations of materials, snacks and volunteering of time.

▪ *Zoo Volunteers*

The Zoo is supported by a group of young people called the "Zoo Volunteers" who visit primarily on weekend and holidays and assist in three main areas which include:

- ✓ "Policing of the Grounds" – this involves patrolling the grounds of the Zoo to ensure that visitors don't tease, poke, feed and injure the animals.
- ✓ Cage-side Talks – this involves the identification of specific species of animals and giving visitors a brief on the interesting facts of that species.
- ✓ Conducted Tours – groups of visitors can request a Tour of the Zoo either on specific species or a complete tour of the Zoo (as is requested)

▪ *Visitation*

The Zoological Park continues to attract a constant flow of visitors with an average visitation of approximately ten thousand persons per month

During the course of the year several special groups also visit the Zoological Park.

Corporate Relations

- refurbished aquariums at Zoo with the assistance from the Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago

4.4 Division 4

Kaieteur National Park

Kaieteur National Park, Guyana's first national park and legally protected area, is currently managed by a Board of Directors chaired by Shyam Nokta. The NPC is the implementing arm of the Board.

A major project during this year was securing funds for the development of a comprehensive Park Management Plan that will encapsulate the entire Kaieteur Park and is projected to be a key transformative factor in the tourism industry. The project is being funded by World Wildlife Fund and the Government of Guyana

Most importantly, is the fact that all the restructuring is done without compromising the ecology and biodiversity of the area

INCREASING NUMBERS OF VISITORS

Apart from 2007, which saw a visitor in-flow of 4,512, 2008 has recorded one of the highest number of visitors - 4,253, to the site. This is double the visitor in-flow of preceding years, except for 2007. The very significant increases of visitors over the last few years is a solid indicator of the increasing international awareness of the site as a tourist destination zone of great appeal, which we ascribed among the many natural attractions, to the country's dynamic role in initiatives to combat global climate change and protect the environment.

The NPC is on a drive to educate visitors on the extensive attractions, quite apart from the magnificent Kaieteur Falls, that the site offers, because most persons just view the 741 feet single-drop waterfall and then leave, without taking the time to discover the many wonders in the unique and breathtaking landscape, natural habitat to some of the world's rarest - sometimes only species of flora and fauna, various eco-systems, and the sheer spellbinding, experience of Guyana's tropical rainforest.

THE VISITOR ARRIVAL CENTRE

Among the many plans for improvements to the site is a visitor arrival centre, which is a stop-off point that work will commence shortly on. Visitor centres are a critical component of most, if not all, parks and protected areas and this new facility reflects the 'green' theme compatible with the Kaieteur Park.

The multi-purpose facility at the Kaieteur Park, when completed, will provide a comfortable lounge area, an interpretation room, wherein a warden will give visitors an audio-visual briefing on big screen that incorporates the many facets and attractions of the site; printed literature and exhibits on Guyana as a tourist destination in general, and in the Kaieteur Park in particular; indigenous craft and other souvenirs.

A cafeteria will also provide mainly Guyanese food and beverages, because the priority is showcasing the local culture. There will also be a modern administrative block, with power being generated through a solar system.

The focus of the restructured tourism format is multi-pronged, and among the several targets is the provision of wealth-creational opportunities for indigenous communities by providing markets for their

unique arts and craft, and maximizing their potential for growth and development within their own natural habitat so that their traditional mores and existential systems are not jeopardized.

For those who are desirous of extending their visit beyond the regular two-hour site visit can be housed in a small guest house that can comfortably accommodate a group of ten persons.

The guest house, which is managed by the National Parks Commission, was specially constructed to coincide with the visit of then Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau.

SUSTAINING ECO-SYSTEM IS OF PRIMARY CONCERN, however, the concern that the pristinity and the delicate eco-systems of the environs are not endangered or degraded in even the minutest way. "With Kaieteur we have to balance two things. Kaieteur has its own intrinsic beauty that has been the perennial pull-factor from a tourism stand-point. But Kaieteur is also an extremely important area for Government, basically from a nature and bio-diversity standpoint; and there are species there that cannot be found anywhere else in the world, which hold intense interest for international researchers and nature-lovers.

"If we do not get the balance right, the very tourism that we are trying to promote will contribute to degradation of this natural environment and the eventual loss of some of these rare species: so there is need to implement regulatory and protective systems and protocols, with strict adherence enforced by the wardens. Non-compliance will be met with severe punitive measures."

"We are trying to have a balance between tourism development and conservation and protection of our ecosystems. We cannot sublimate one to the other; especially in view of the fact that the immediate environs of the falls, which is the ultimate tourism destination, is very sensitive; and for that reason we only allow guided tours. No one can just wander around on their own, which also takes into account the safety aspect."

"There are many threatened species there, and tour guides will point out those species to visitors. Sometimes the sheer volume of visitors requires that we stagger the tours so that no one tour guide is overwhelmed by numbers, which we keep at a maximum 15 per group. Also, if the group gets too big, this could negatively impact the trails and the sensitive species peculiar to that environment; so we have put measures in place that are ensuring efficient management of the site in accordance with the stated guidelines."

The logistical framework that will form the parameters of the infrastructures for the amenities, which would all be contained within those guidelines; through the planning exercise, zoning of the 63 thousand hectares of the park, especially the Kaieteur top, is being examined.

These exercises are being undertaken in collaboration with some international experts, who have been provided courtesy of OAS, World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, the Smithsonian Institute, among others, which are all organizations that have contributed in significant ways to the preservation of Guyana's eco-systems.

Kaieteur National Park Management Plan

Launched on June 25 2009

"Preserving the bio-diversity is the major consideration. Kaieteur Falls itself is a sight to behold, but then Kaieteur Park extends beyond the waterfalls and is not the only attraction, magnificent as it is,"

"As an institution, the National Parks Commission gains its revenue from visitor arrival fees, which is a small contribution in the context of the total cost of a Kaieteur tour, because that revenue goes back into maintaining and sustaining the site, paying the wardens, et cetera.

"We have had at least one wedding at the Kaieteur Park that assumed an added dimension because of the amazing ambience of the natural environs, and we are looking at promoting tasteful events that would not negatively impact the environment."

Over time we want to increase our complement of staff, again with a focus on providing employment opportunities to local Amerindian communities. Hinterland communities are offered first opportunities during our recruitment drives. We provide training in collaboration with Iwokrama, with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) acting as the implementation agency in projects that are funded by the German government – Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, and the Government of Guyana.

In collaboration with the Guyana Tourism Authority we propose to design and embark on a programme to train additional wardens who will be required to be on call for sudden influxes of visitors, because the responsibilities of the regular wardens are expansive and extend beyond serving as tour guides.

Wherever these training opportunities arise for our wardens, we also include indigenous community members, because they are the traditional guardians of our rainforest, and they are best suited to work with us. We also want guides who can do a comprehensive and engaging tour of Kaieteur, because without adequate interpretation service the experience is not complete and the visitor would be short-changed.

The overland trip to the Kaieteur Falls, with a preliminary stop at facilities provided at Tukeit, followed by a climb to the escarpment, is an even more thrilling experience than the in-flight trip, because then Guyana is experienced at first-hand in all its wondrous and natural beauty.

Wardens are stationed at Waratuk waterfalls, which is the boundary of the Kaieteur Falls. Basic accommodation is also provided at that stop for overland travelers. However, the administration is in the process of constructing a guest house at Tukeit, which is at the bottom of the falls, and that facility will be able to provide comfortable accommodation for overland visitors.

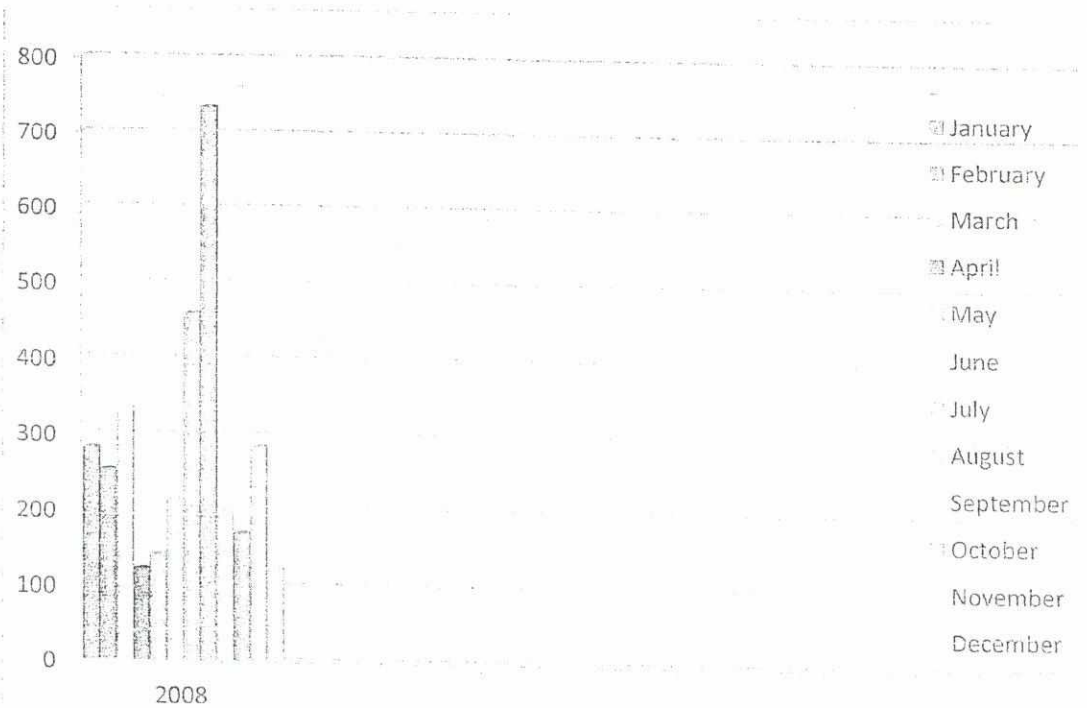
SECURITY AND COMMUNICATIONS FACTORED IN

Security is also factored in, and the administrators are at all times vigilant and have made provisions for the security of guests and their possessions. Also, all of the wardens are supernumerary constables with requisite training with the Guyana Police Force.

The challenge for the future is to maintain the delicate balance between preserving this pristine environment and allowing Guyana to benefit from sharing this treasure with the world.

Table showing number of visitors to Kaieteur National Park during 2008

Month	2008
January	281
February	253
March	334
April	122
May	141
June	214
July	459
August	735
September	201
October	170
November	284
December	123
Total	3317



5.0 Appendices

5.1 Budgeted and Actual Recurrent Expenditure: *attached*

5.2 Budgeted and Actual Capital Expenditure:

item	Location	Cost GYD
All terrain vehicle	Kaiteur National Park	1,834,000.
Bob cat	NPC	5,800,000.
Security system	National Park	2,196,557.
Rc2 1700 Rotary Slasher	NPC	1,434,000.
Brush cutters	NPC	561,480.
Sthil 025 chainsaw	NPC	143,760.
Industrial freezer	Zoological Park	2,928,490.
Water pumps	NPC	181,770.
Pressure washers	NPC	830,000.
Gear boxes and accessories	National Park	1,089,943.
Total		17,000,000.

Conclusion

There has been a marked resistance by certain staff members to change; change as it relates to management as well as operations.

Further there has been deliberate refusal to carry out instructions and to implement projects to the benefit of the Commission. This of course has not only affected the Commission internally but also the publics' perception of our ability and vision.

