



2015

ANNUAL REPORT



Protected Areas Commission

National Park, Thomas Lands, Georgetown, Guyana

Executive Summary – PROTECTED AREAS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2015

This report provides an overview of the work of the Protected Areas Commission (PAC) in 2015 and identifies key focal areas for 2016. The PAC is mandated to prepare an annual report under section 17 (1) of the Protected Areas Act of 2011 (hereinafter the Act). The Act of 2011 also established the Protected Areas Commission (PAC), and the National Protected Areas System (NPAS).

The Protected Areas Commission was able to make significant progress in 2015 despite a number of constraints. The PAC Board of Directors, appointed in January 2014 was expected to serve until December 31, 2015. However, after national elections in May 2015 the Board was dissolved.

The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner continued to support the day-to-day management of the National Parks Commission (NPC). Subsequent to the May 11, 2015 national elections, the General Manager for National Parks Commission was appointed as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs. This left a gap in the management of the Commission that was filled by the Finance Manager in an acting capacity. During 2015, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner continued to support the day-to-day management of the National Parks Commission (NPC).

The 2016 Budget was prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MNRE). A legal opinion on the implications of including Amerindian titled lands as Amerindian Protected Areas in the National Protected Areas System was prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

The Commission continued to collaborate with the EPA on the realization of the Guyana Protected Areas System (GPAS) Phase II project supported by the Government of Germany. This project has facilitated the construction of the PAC Head Office as well as a new Guest House and Wardens Quarters at Tukeit, Kaieteur National Park (KNP).

A number of upgrades to the urban parks was completed, or initiated and are expected to be completed in early 2016. The draft management plan for KNP was being finalized and a number of upgrades, maintenance and construction projects were undertaken to improve the infrastructure for staff and visitors by the end of 2015.

The Kanuku Mountains Protected Area (KMPA) Management Plan was finalised and the public review process commenced. The Shell Beach Protected Area (SBPA) Management Plan was finalised after nine months of consultation with national and community-level stakeholders.

Moving forward in 2016, the Commission will focus on the hiring of site level staff and the construction of an office in the Kanuku Mountains location. Work will also focus on the implementation of management plans for the hinterland protected areas and further implementation of the Three Parks Initiative towards transformation of the urban parks.

ACRONYMS USED

| | |
|------------|--|
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| GDF | Guyana Defense Force |
| GGMC | Guyana Geology and Mines Commission |
| GLSC | Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission |
| GPAS | Guyana Protected Areas System |
| IUCN | International Union for the Conservation of Nature |
| KCOCA | Kanashen Community Owned Conservation Area |
| KfW | Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Development Bank) |
| KMCRG | Kanuku Mountains Community Representative Group |
| KNP | Kaieteur National Park |
| KMPA | Kanuku Mountains Protected Area |
| MNRE | Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NPAS | National Protected Areas System |
| NPC | National Parks Commission |
| PA | Protected Area |
| PA Act/Act | Protected Areas Act 2011 |
| PAC | Protected Areas Commission |
| SBPA | Shell Beach Protected Area |

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | II |
| ACRONYMS USED | III |
| CONTENTS | IV |
| 1 BACKGROUND | 1 |
| 1.1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.2 SCOPE OF THIS REPORT | 1 |
| 2 OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS | 1 |
| 2.1 ADMINISTRATION | 1 |
| 2.1.1 MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS..... | 1 |
| 2.1.2 HUMAN RESOURCES AND STAFF RECRUITMENT..... | 2 |
| 2.1.3 MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARKS COMMISSION..... | 3 |
| 2.1.4 BUDGET AND WORKPLAN FOR 2016..... | 3 |
| 2.2 POLICY | 4 |
| 2.3 NATIONAL PROTECTED AREAS TRUST FUND..... | 4 |
| 2.4 PROJECT ACTIVITIES..... | 4 |
| 2.4.1 COMPLETION OF GPAS PHASE II..... | 4 |
| 2.5 PARTNERSHIPS..... | 5 |
| 2.5.1 German support for Phase III of the Guyana Protected Areas System (GPAS) Project | 5 |
| 5 | |
| 2.5.5 Support to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs for the Amerindian Land Titling | 6 |
| Project | 6 |
| 2.6 PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT | 6 |
| 2.6.1 STATUS OF URBAN PARKS..... | 6 |
| 2.6.2 STATUS OF EXISTING HINTERLAND PROTECTED AREAS | 11 |
| 2.6.3 STRATEGIC PLANNING..... | 15 |
| 2.7 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING..... | 16 |
| 2.8 WORKSHOPS, SEMINARS, AND CONFERENCES | 16 |
| 2.9 OTHER ACTIVITIES..... | 17 |
| 2.10 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016..... | 18 |
| 3 KEY WORK/PROGRAMME AREAS FOR 2016 | 21 |
| 4 CONCLUSION..... | 23 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Table 1 Board of Directors..... | 1 |
| Table 2: Staff List..... | 2 |
| Table 4: Key achievements, at a glance..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Protected Areas Act of 2011 (hereinafter referred to as the Act) established the Protected Areas Commission (PAC), and the National Protected Areas System (NPAS). The PA Act also repealed much of the National Parks Commission (NPC) Act, and brought the NPC and urban parks, such as the Zoo and Botanical Gardens, under the umbrella of the PAC. The PAC is a body corporate responsible for establishing, managing, maintaining, promoting and expanding the NPAS in Guyana. The PAC's mandate includes monitoring and regulating activities and the use of resources within protected areas (PAs); preparing, developing and effectively implementing management plans; providing support and advice to Amerindian Villages associated with PAs; and promoting public involvement in these processes.

1.2 SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report provides an overview of the PAC's 2015 programme of work and identifies key focal areas for 2016.

2 OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 ADMINISTRATION

2.1.1 MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The PAC Board of Directors was re-appointed on November 14, 2014 for the period ending December 31, 2015. At the end of the reporting period, the Board, which comprised the Chairman and six (6) members (Table 1), met three times for the year. This was due to general and regional elections being held in Guyana on May 11, 2015, and a suspension of further meetings as the new Government took office. A new Board is expected to be established in January 2016.

TABLE 1 PAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| Name | Position | Organization |
|-----------------------------|----------|--|
| Members of the Board | | |
| Mr. Shyam Nokta | Chairman | |
| Dr. Indarjit Ramdass | Member | Executive Director, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) |
| Dr. Paulette Bynoe | Member | Head, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Guyana |
| Mr. Bertie Xavier | Member | Toshao, Wowetta Village, Region 9, Representative on the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for Latin America |
| Mr. Nigel Dharamlall | Member | Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Amerindian Affairs |

| | | |
|--|----------|--|
| Ms. Andrea Mahammad | Member | Senior Land Use Planner, Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission |
| Mr. Sydney Allicock | Member | Representative of APNU, Member of Parliament |
| Ex-officio Members of the Board | | |
| Mr. Damian Fernandes | Observer | Commissioner, PAC |
| Ms. Arianne McLean | Observer | Attorney General's Chambers, Ministry of Legal Affairs |
| Ms. Sonia Reece | Observer | Guyana Forestry Commission |
| Mr. Jimmy Reece | Observer | Guyana Geology and Mines Commission |
| Ms. Patricia Bacchus | Observer | Private Sector Commission |
| Mr. Clayton Hall | Observer | |
| Ms. Shanomae Rose | Observer | University of Guyana |
| Secretary to the Board | | |
| Mrs. Denise Fraser | | Deputy Commissioner, PAC |

2.1.2 HUMAN RESOURCES AND STAFF RECRUITMENT

During 2015, the Commission saw the appointment of a Project Assistant and a Driver/Office Assistant. The Finance Officer's contract came to an end and was not renewed. The PAC was able to recruit a new Finance Officer, Ms Fiona Marshal, who is expected to take up her position in 2016.

During 2015, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner continued to support the day-to-day management of the National Parks Commission (NPC). The General Manager of the NPC, Mr. Vibert Welch, was appointed as the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs in July 2015, and Mrs. Denise Bentinck, who was recruited as the Finance Manager during the year, was subsequently tasked to act in his position.

At the end of the reporting period, the PAC had a staff component of 10 persons (Table 2). In an effort to improve site-level management of the hinterland protected areas, the PAC also continued its search for suitable persons to fill the site level positions for both the Kaieteur National Park and the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area (See Sections 2.6.2.1 and 2.6.2.2).

TABLE 2: LIST OF STAFF UNDER PAC EMPLOYMENT

| Name | Position | Remarks |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Mr. Damian Fernandes | Commissioner | Appointment effective from July 01, 2012 |
| Mrs. Denise Fraser | Deputy Commissioner | Appointment effective from November 05, 2012 |
| Ms. Chuvika Harilal | Senior Protected Areas Officer | Appointment effective from November 01, 2013 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Ms. Annalise Bayney | Protected Areas Officer | Appointment effective from November 01, 2013 |
| Mr. Joel Breems | Protected Areas Officer | Appointment effective from November 05, 2013 |
| Ms. Tana Yussuff | Protected Areas Officer | Appointment effective from November 05, 2013 |
| Mr. Kip Austin | Engineer | Seconded to PAC by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment with effect from September 02, 2013 |
| Ms. Persia Martindale | Project Assistant | Appointment effective January 15, 2015 |
| Ms. Parbattie Jawahir | Executive Assistant | Appointment effective July 28, 2014 |
| Mr. Marciano Castello | Driver/Office Assistant | Appointment effective October 19, 2015 |
| <u>Former Staff</u> | | |
| Ms. Anesia Isaacs | Executive Assistant | Appointed - October 15, 2012 Resigned – June 18, 2013 |
| Mr. Dexter Ceres | Driver / Office Assistant | Appointed – May 12, 2014 Resigned – August 15, 2014 |
| Ms. Carmeilta Rampertab | Finance Officer | Appointed - August 20, 2013 End of Contract – November 20, 2015 |

2.1.3 MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARKS COMMISSION

The Commission recruited a Finance Manager, Mrs Denise Bentinck, in April 2015. The position had been vacant for an extended period, with the PAC finance Officer supporting the NPC Accounts department. The appointment of the Finance Manager was extremely critical in efforts to improve the performance of the Accounts Department and strengthen financial controls within the NPC. With the resignation of the General Manager in July, Mrs Bentinck was appointed as the acting General Manager for the period July to December 2015. During this time, significant progress was made strengthening and streamlining administrative, financial, and personnel systems. However, management continued to dedicate significant time and attention on staffing shortages, equipment needs, preparation of development plans, budgetary management and restructuring of the workforce. The demanding nature of this responsibility was further compounded by the appointment of managerial staff on a number of new committees and working groups during the latter half of 2015. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner continue to support the General Manager (ag), and provide direct oversight on the urban parks work programme.

2.1.4 BUDGET AND WORKPLAN FOR 2016

The 2016 Budget, Work Plan and associated documents were prepared and submitted to the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, Ministry of the Presidency.

2.2 POLICY

In 2014, Kanashen Village applied to have its Titled Lands, approximately 3% of Guyana, declared a national protected area under the NPAS. The application was reviewed and, with support from Conservation International, a legal opinion was prepared and submitted to the then Ministry of Legal Affairs. This legal opinion has since been resubmitted to the new Government, which has signalled an intention to move forward with declaration in the first half of 2016. This process will serve as a model for establishing future Amerindian Protected Areas in NPAS.

2.3 NATIONAL PROTECTED AREAS TRUST FUND

With support from the PAC, the Protected Areas Trust (PAT) became operational in 2014. The PAC also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the PATF for the use of the Jenman Building in the Botanical Gardens as the PATF's Head Offices. The PAT began working out of the building in 2015, with the PAC providing a computer system, printer, furniture and other pieces of equipment to ensure the PAT staff were able to begin their work programme. During the course of 2015, the EUR 4M endowment from KfW under the GPAS II project and the US \$3M from the Global Conservation Fund, were transferred into the PAT Fund. This endowment will be invested by the fund manager, with returns ultimately being made available for projects within the NPAS. Clarity on the commitment of an additional US\$10M, made by the previous government, is currently being sought.

2.4 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

2.4.1 COMPLETION OF GPAS PHASE II

On September 10, 2009 the Governments of Guyana and Germany, represented by KfW, signed a financing and project agreement for EUR 5.1M to support Phase II of the Guyana Protected Areas System (GPAS) Project. Of this, EUR 4M was committed as an endowment to the PAT Fund. The remaining EUR1.1M was used to support the development of the Shell Beach Management Plan in 2014, procurement of equipment and the development of infrastructure in Kaieteur National Park in both 2014 and 2015. The project was implemented primarily by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), with the PAC contributing significant logistical and administrative support.

Project activities under Tranche I commenced in March 2012, with the majority of the interventions being completed in 2014. The official close of the project was February 2015, with projects implemented during the reporting period including:

- Completion and furnishing of new staff **quarters for Rangers** at the KNP.
- Installation of new **photovoltaic system** for both the existing and newly constructed staff quarters. These structures are 100% solar powered.
- Renovation of steps for the **Visitor's Centre**.
- Installation of concrete pad foundation and columns at the **existing Living Quarters**.
- **Equipment and furniture** for the Tukeit Guesthouse and ranger station, which was constructed in 2014.

2.5 PARTNERSHIPS

2.5.1 German support for Phase III of the Guyana Protected Areas System (GPAS) Project

During 2015, the PAC continued to collaborate with the German Development Bank (KfW), and negotiated details of funding and support for the continuation of the GPAS Project up to 2019.

Approximately Euro 4.8M was committed to further support the development of Guyana's Protected Areas System, and strengthened environmental management of surrounding community and state lands. Specifically, GPAS Phase III will focus on four main areas: 1. The provision of basic infrastructure, equipment and information needs for the management of national protected areas; 2. Support for conservation compatible livelihoods in protected areas and select communities; 3. Support for improved management of key buffer areas; and 4. The improvement of the capabilities of key stakeholders for the effective management of protected areas and surrounding buffer areas.

2.5.2 Frankfurt Zoological Society

Two International Technical Officers who were assigned to the PAC under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Frankfurt Zoological Society (a German Conservation Organisation) continued to provide support in the implementation of the work programme of the Commission. These Officers, both with significant experience in protected areas management in Africa, have thus far made a significant contribution to the finalisation and implementation of the management plans for the hinterland protected areas, and the PAC's first strategic plan. The Officers, who began working at the Commission on July 21, 2014, will be attached to the PAC for a period of three years, with the possibility of extension.

2.5.3 Argentina Technical Cooperation

A Team comprising Ms. Helena Havrylets and Ms. Paula Bergna from the Ministry of Tourism in Argentina visited Guyana during June 20-27, 2015 to discuss potential projects as part of Argentina's Technical Cooperation with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

It was proposed that the Ministry of Tourism in Argentina will provide technical assistance to the PAC in the development and implementation of appropriate tourism-related measures, in keeping with the ISO18065 International Standards. The Standard which was launched in April 2015, establishes the requirements for tourist services provided directly by NPA in order to satisfy visitors while giving priority to the NPA conservation objective.

The Ministry of Tourism in Argentina (MINTUR) has been assisting in its implementation in the most iconic natural protected areas in Argentina: Perito Moreno Glacier, Iguazu Falls and Talampaya Canyon, all of which are UNESCO heritage sites, and has secured the services of a Technician who has been elected as an ISO 18065 convener, to assist the PAC under this cooperation. The PAC is currently drafting the proposal in collaboration with personnel from the Ministry of Tourism in Argentina.

2.5.4 World Wildlife Fund-Guianas

Once again, WWF-Guianas was one of the PAC's primary partners.

WWF continued to provide funding for the strengthening of management of Kaieteur National Park, with the procurement of equipment and materials. Support was also provided to Chenapau, including training courses and studies meant to determine communities perceptions of KNP, improve awareness of policies and legislation within the Natural Resources and Environment sectors, as well as governance, resources management and potential areas of partnership with the PAC.

In Shell Beach, WWF facilitated the hiring of a skilled-professional Cuso volunteer, Mr Suresh Kandaswami, with specific responsibility for improved Shell beach management for 2 years. During the reporting period the Officer worked full time at Shell Beach - the first PAC presence at this new PA – during the marine turtle monitoring project. As a result, monitoring was expanded and strengthened to ensure the collection of more scientifically robust data. Additionally, WWF funded a two part training programme for six GMTCS Rangers and 10 community representatives. This increases the experience and pool of persons available for turtle monitoring and subsequent on the ground SBPA management, as well as fostering participation from the wider Shell Beach community.

With financial and logistical support from WWF a *Charette* (tourism assessment) was conducted from February 8-14, 2015. The *Charette* brought 34 experts in a broad range of areas including landscape architects, tourism professionals, resource managers and planners primarily from U.S., Canada, Guyana representing several government, non-profit, and private enterprise. The primary purpose of the charrette was to focus broadly on tourism in Guyana's protected areas system and provide recommendations on Tourism products, sustainable development, infrastructure, and management. The charrette consisted of a 3-4 day site visit followed by two days in Georgetown to synthesise idea and develop recommendations.

In addition WWF-Guianas provided support for the construction of a sea turtle exhibit at the entrance of the Zoological Park (including a life-sized leatherback turtle) and the building of a Black Caiman sculpture made of scrap iron and recycled tires.

2.5.5 Support to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs for the Amerindian Land Titling Project

As part of the Amerindian Land Titling Project, field investigation visits were conducted to Santa Rosa, Village, Region One, during March 19-22, 2015, Nappi and Yupukari Villages, Region Nine, during April 08-13, and Maururanau Village during November 19-22, 2015 to discuss the Villages' application to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs for extension of their titled lands. The PAC participated in these visits to provide support to the Ministry in protected area concerns as the proposed extensions by the Villages extend into the Shell Beach and Kanuku Mountains Protected Areas.

2.6 PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT

2.6.1 STATUS OF URBAN PARKS

There are four urban parks in the National Protected Areas System: The National Park, The Zoological Park and the Botanical Gardens, all located in Georgetown, and the Joe Viera Park located on West Bank Demerara. The infrastructure and facilities of these parks are aged and require significant repairs and upgrading. A plan to restore the Park, Zoo and Gardens, called the

Three Parks Initiative, was developed in 2013, and was one of the major areas of focus for the Commission in 2015.

2.6.1.1 THREE PARKS INITIATIVE

The implementation of the *Three Parks Initiative* continued in 2015, with the aim of revitalizing the National Park, Zoological Park, and the Botanical Gardens. Under this Initiative, several upgrades to the urban parks were implemented in 2015. These upgrades included:

- The elevation of and compaction of low areas in the Parks are being carried out on a continuous basis. Several areas in the Botanical Gardens and National Park benefited directly from the donation of mud and builders rubble from private individuals and from the Ministry of Public Works.
- The second installment of “Art in the Park” was completed. The addition of a 6 foot Black Caiman created from discarded tyres is part of a larger installation called the “Reptile Walk”. This installation will feature four (4) reptiles – Black Caiman, Anaconda, River Turtle and Iguana – created exclusively from recycled and discarded materials.
- Zoo Camp hosted 106 children over 5 weeks. In addition to arts and crafts, nature walks and games, the campers were also treated to field trips to the Mangrove Restoration Project in Cove-en-John and the Yarakabra Forestry Reserve on the Linden Highway.
- Completed a raised, paved all weather walkway leading to a new picnic area in the National Park.
- Completed the creation of the “Guyana Pond” in the National park. The pond was dug following the outline of the map of Guyana. The material excavated from this pond has been stockpiled adjacent to the pond and is being used to construct “Roraima Hill” following the outline of Mount Roraima.
- Completion of a raised, paved all weather walkway in the Botanical Gardens. This walkway will feature a raised central dais supporting a three tiered fountain and will extend outwards in four directions thereby increasing the areas of the Gardens accessible to the public. The fountain was donated by New Thriving Guyana Inc.
- Nine (9) employees participated in and graduated from a six month long literacy programme sponsored by the Ministry of Education.
- The PAC hosted several activities within the Parks to encourage family oriented activities within the Parks. These included Earth Day Celebrations, Plant Sales, Tree Planting activities, “It’s MY Zoo Day”, Earth Day Celebrations, Allied Arts Steel Band Competition, BANKS DIH Fishing Competition, National Go-Kart Derby and the Christmas Family Festival.
- All of the urban parks were given an aesthetic lift using landscaping and natural materials, such as bamboo, to provide a cohesive outlook and enhance the visitor experience.

2.6.1.2 REVENUE GENERATION

The three urban parks being targeted under the Three Parks Initiative saw a general increase in revenue in 2015. Both the Zoological Park and the National Park saw slight increases in revenue earned when compared with 2014. However, it should be noted that the potential earnings for the National Park were significantly undercut in 2015 due primarily to aged machines malfunctioning regularly. Several large landscaping and maintenance jobs were cancelled due to lack of machinery to complete the tasks. It is anticipated that much of the old machinery will eventually have to be replaced, as they are beyond their expected lifespan.

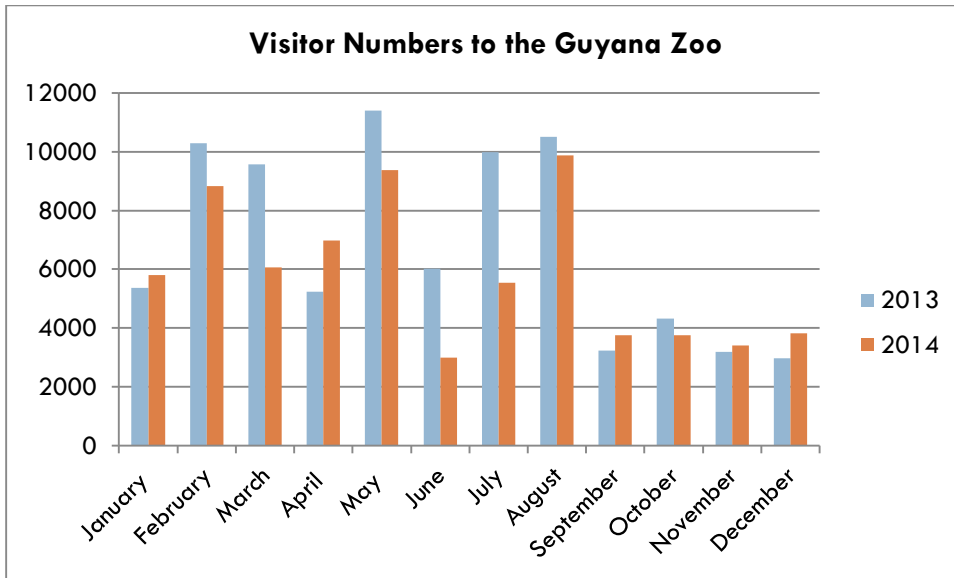


Figure 3. Visitor Numbers to the Guyana Zoo.

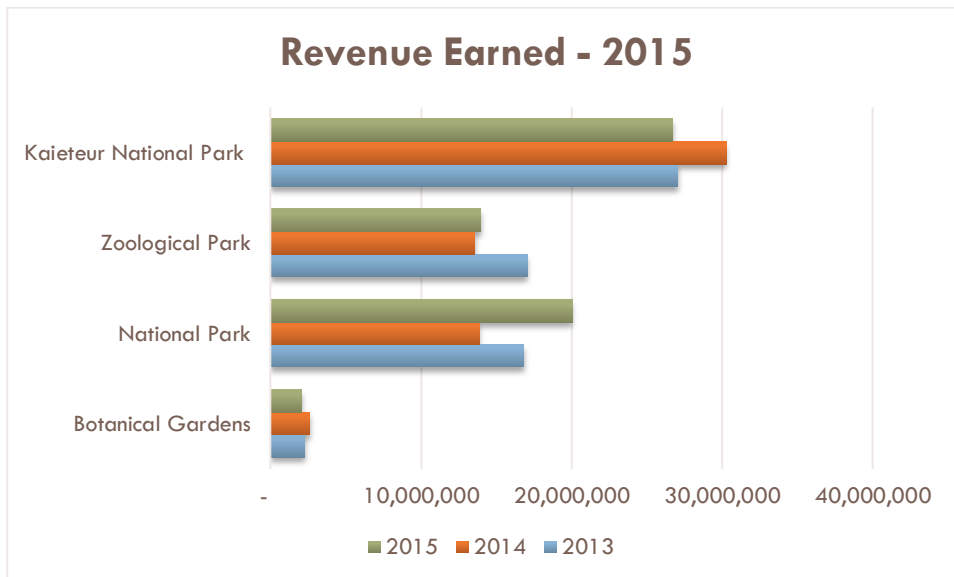


Figure 4. Revenue generated by the PAC

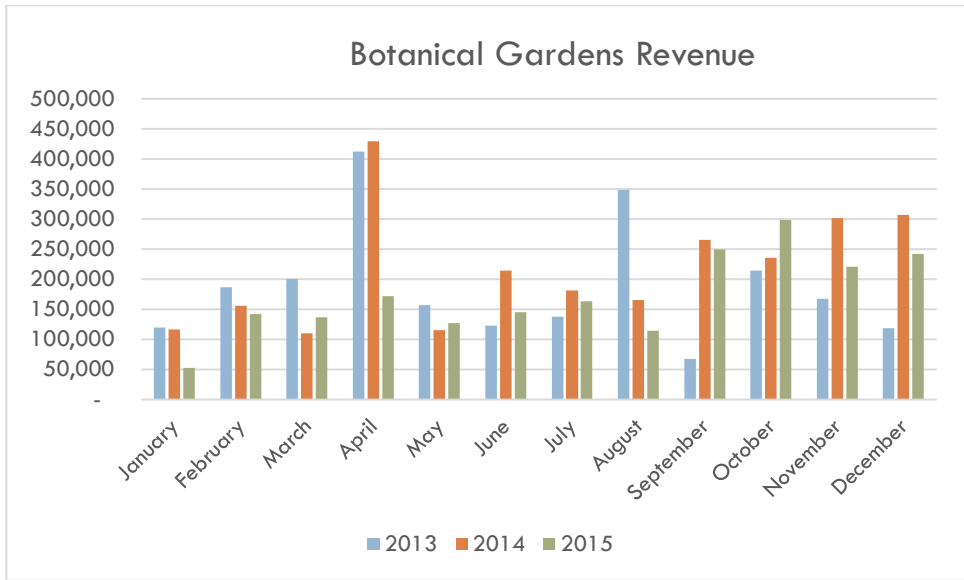


Figure 5. Revenue generated by the Botanical Gardens

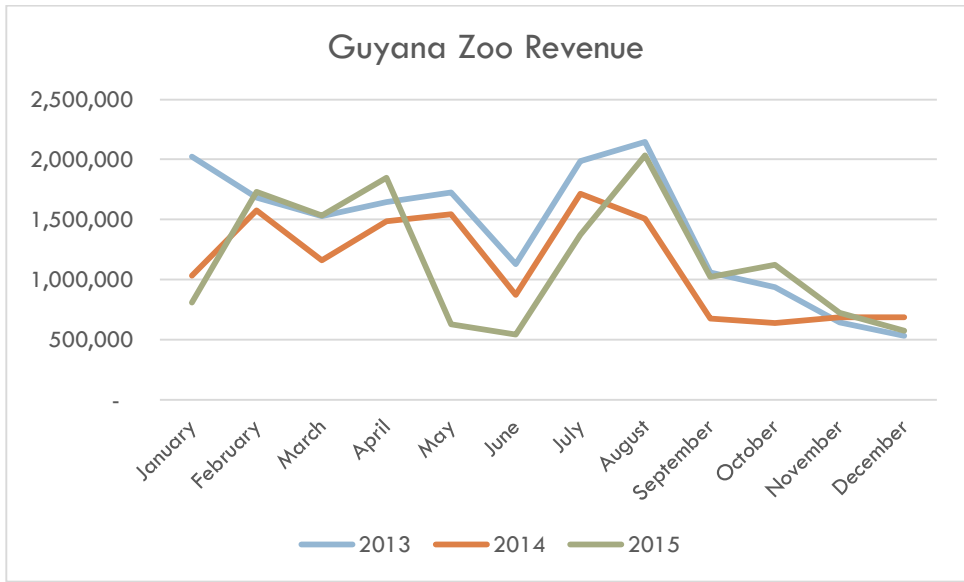


Figure 6. Revenue generated by the Guyana Zoo

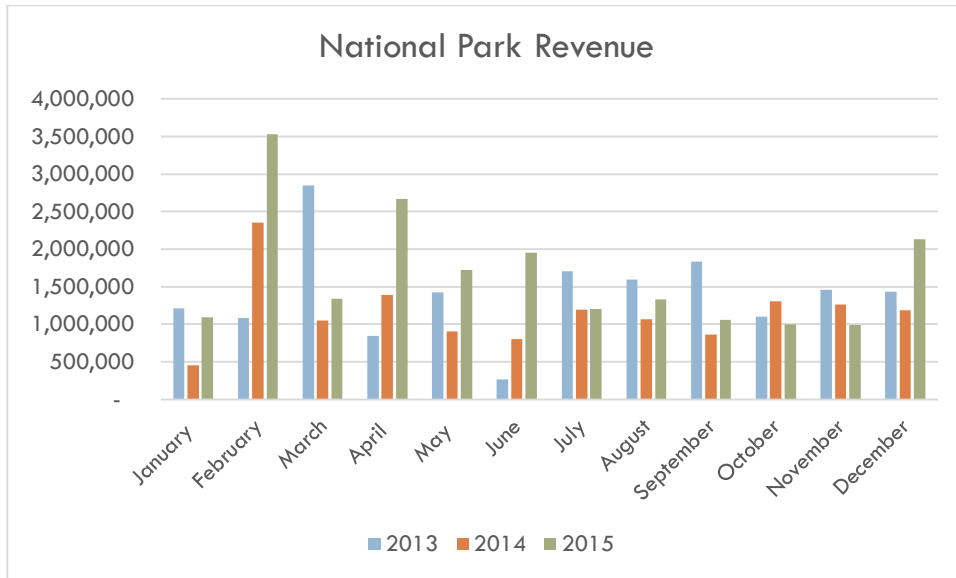


Figure 7. Revenue generated by the National Park

2.6.1.3 PARTNERSHIP WITH PUERTO RICO MANATEE CONSERVATION CENTRE

Following the rescue of a stranded young manatee along the Lusignan Coast, several private individuals provided support to the PAC to assess and house the animal. Upon an initial assessment by Dr. Nicholas Waldron, it was concluded that the animal needed specialized care. In response to a request for assistance circulated throughout the international academic community, Dr. Antonio A Mignucci-Giannoni – Director and Catedratico of the Manatee Conservation Programme in Puerto Rico sent **Ms. Carla Rivera-Perez** from his Institute to provide any assistance Molly the Manatee needed. Ms. Perez was assisted by Dr. Waldron, students from the University of Guyana and the Guyana School of Agriculture to conduct a full medical assessment of the Manatee and provide specialized care.

2.6.1.4 COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL AGENCIES AND NGO'S.

The PAC partnered with several agencies over 2015 for several projects:

Environmental Protection Agency

July – Rescue of an Ocelot from Berbice.

July – Assessment of the Holding Areas allotted to a captive Jaguar on the Essequibo Coast, assessment of capture methods for a large band of capuchins along the West Coast of Demerara.

Guyana Marine Turtle Conservation Society

February, October – Rescue of injured/ stranded marine turtles.

University of Guyana – Necropsy of Pigmy Sperm Whale found along the coast.

World Wildlife Fund – Guianas

July/August – Provided Volunteers for the Annual Zoo Camp.

2.6.2 STATUS OF EXISTING HINTERLAND PROTECTED AREAS

Currently, there are three hinterland protected areas under the jurisdiction of the PAC, namely: (a) The Kaieteur National Park, (b) The Kanuku Mountains Protected Area, and (c) The Shell Beach Protected Area. Draft management plans have been finalised and a public meeting, as required under the PA Act, was held for the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area. The draft management plan for the KNP is currently being restructured and streamlined, following which the public review process would be initiated. The PAC also continued its consideration of Kanashen Village Council's application to have its Titled Village lands be declared as an Amerindian Protected Area under NPAS.

From December 8-10 an Ecological and Threat Monitoring workshop was held in Georgetown to identify monitoring priorities for all three of the hinterland protected areas (KNP, KMPA, and SBPA). A total of 23 individuals participated in the 3 day workshop including scientific experts, policy makers, and community members. The results of the workshop will be finalized and released for further comment early in 2016.

2.6.2.1 KAIETEUR NATIONAL PARK

Visitation to KNP was down approximately 7% at 6,548 in 2015 from 7,059 in 2014 (see Figure 5). A reduction in visitation to KNP was expected due to reduced visitation surrounding the election. The visitation was further impacted by two suicides which occurred within two months of each other and collectively resulted in the closing of the park for 13 days to allow search and recovery efforts to be completed by GDF and the Guyana Police Force.

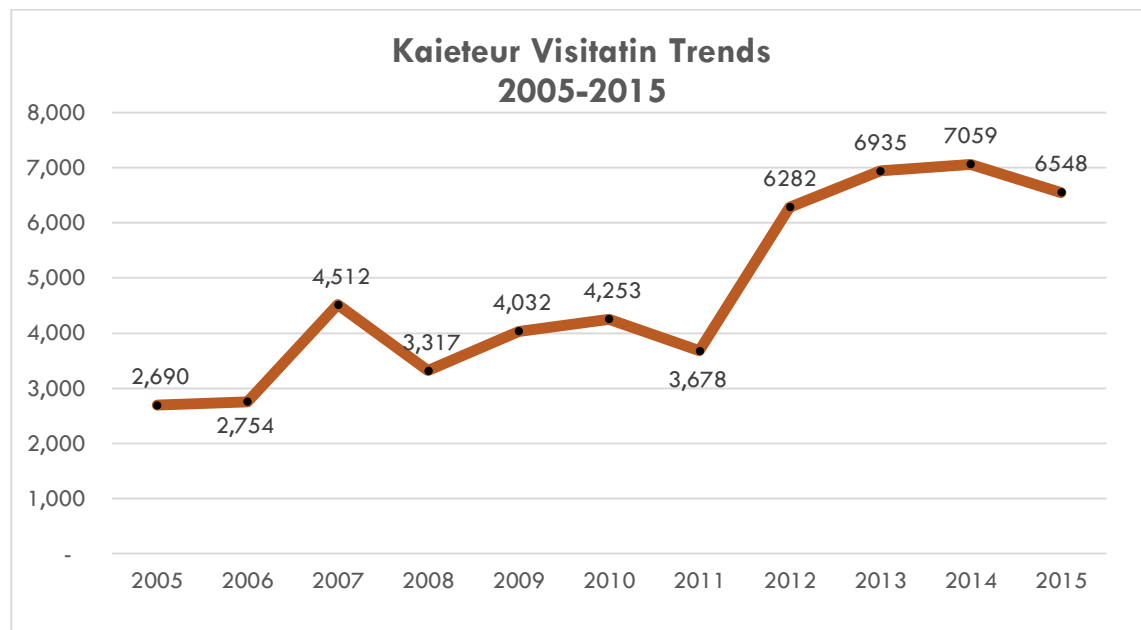


Figure 5. Visitation trends at the KNP for the last 10 years.

For 2015 the focus for KNP was to continue to enhance visitor services, infrastructure, and overall management of the park. Additional focus was placed on improving staff accommodations and

employment conditions. As a result of the suicides at KNP additional measures were implemented to improve visitor safety, these included formalizing existing tour safety procedures, rerouting tours, and requiring airlines to provide the manifest to park staff upon arrival. Additionally, the PAC coordinated with the Ministry of Health to assist Park staff with coping with these tragedies and ensure that appropriate support is provided. The PAC continues to work with the Ministry of Tourism to take steps to reduce the likelihood of additional suicides at KNP.

In 2015 eight staff were hired for KNP (7 Tour Guide/Wardens, 1 Senior Warden). The presence of the Senior Warden at KNP has greatly improved site level management. Two staff were terminated and a two additional staff resigned in 2015. At the end of 2015 there were 8 staff at KNP including the Senior Warden. One additional Tour Guide/Warden is currently assigned to the Guyana Zoo. High levels of staff turnover continued to be an issue in 2015. With staffing needs increasing with the implementation of the management plan additional measures including providing additional training, increasing recreation opportunities (TV, DVDs, games, etc), and implementing turnaround system were implemented to improve morale and increase staff retention. In addition the annual Ranger/Guide training will be expanded in order to meet current and future staffing needs

The following projects and activities were undertaken or completed to improve visitor services, park management, and staff morale:

- Implementation of Log Books for all KNP Assets and infrastructure. The log books include a schedule for required maintenance (daily, weekly, monthly) to ensure appropriate maintenance is undertaken.
- Completion of all remedial works at Tukeit.
- Installation of Benches at Tukeit Guest House
- Furnishing of Tukeit Guest House and Wardens quarters. Including all beds and bedding, cooking and cookware for guests and staff.
- Completion and furnishing of Staff Wardens Quarters.
- Installation of solar power system at Staff Wardens Quarters
- Installation of Satellite TV at KNP for staff.
- Installation of a VHF radio communication system for KNP. The system includes 5 handheld VHF radios and two base stations at Tukeit and KNP top and allow communication with all KNP facilities in the park.
- Completion of a design and floor plan for an exhibition center at the Visitor Arrival Centre, which will target visitors to KNP with promotional material on Kaieteur, the National Protected Areas System, and Guyana in general. This design has also been identified as having the potential to be used for similar permanent exhibitions at key tourism sites, including Ogle Airport, the Guyana Tourism Authority, Lethem, etc.

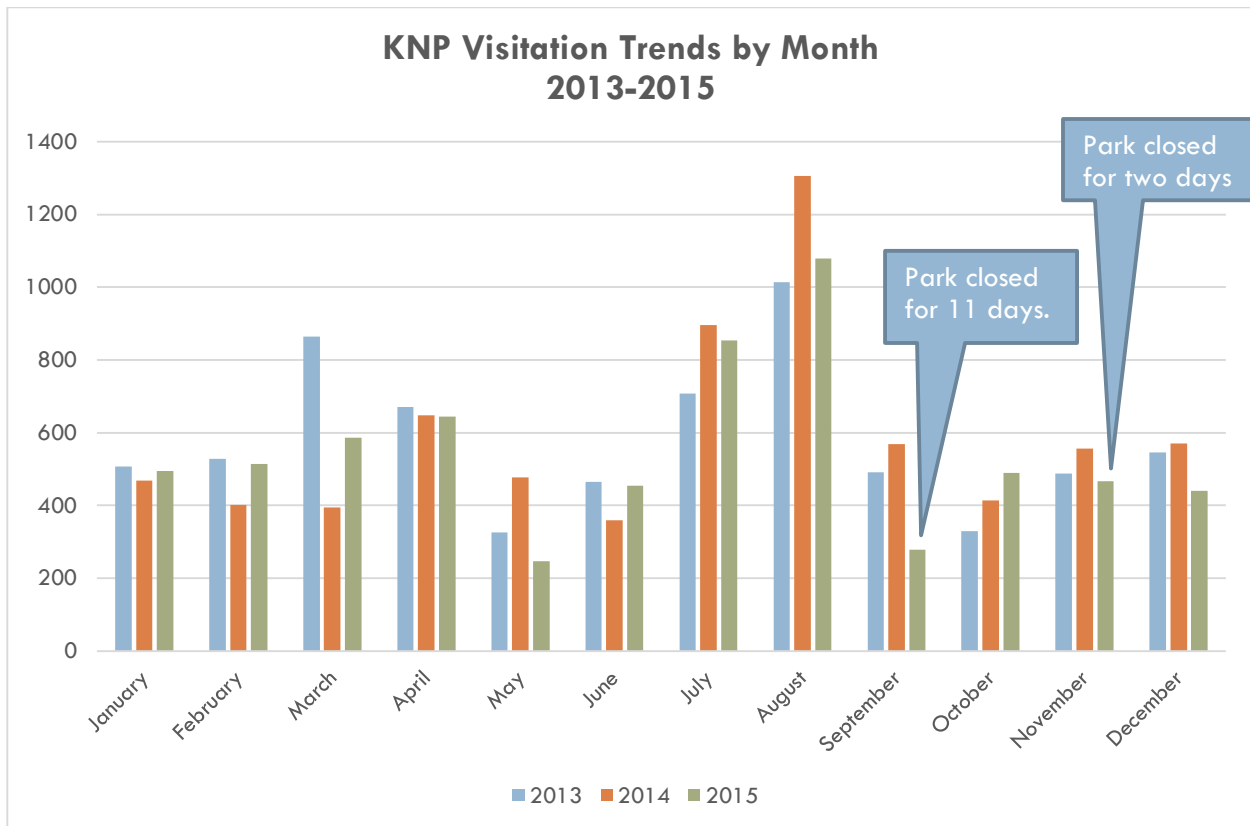


Figure 6. Monthly Visitation Trends for 2013-2015

Illegal mining continued to be a threat in 2015. A river dredge operating between Amatuk and Waratuk was observed operating in the park in March and moving up to Waratuk. In addition to being observed operating in there are numerous reports of the dredge operating at night in the park as well as extensive photo documentation of bank undercutting and altering of the natural river flow in the park. Despite numerous requests for assistance there was no meaningful enforcement action by the end of 2015.

The Draft management plan for KNP was completed and a copy was provided to the Toshoo of Chenapou for review. A public meeting with the community will be scheduled early in 2016.

2.6.2.2 KANUKU MOUNTAINS PROTECTED AREA

The draft Kanuku Mountains Management Plan, 2015-2019, was presented at a public meeting on January 13, 2015 as part of the review process outlined in the Protected Areas Act 2011. Following the January 27, 2015 deadline for comments, the plan was finalised and printed for distribution.

The PAC commenced implementation of activities under the first year operational plan for the KMPA. Community outreach visits were conducted to the 11 KMPA villages during April 26 to May 03, and August 30 to September 05, 2015. A poster highlighting the five management programmes and activities planned for completion within the next five year was developed and used in the outreach sessions. A Community-focused Frequently Asked Questions booklet on the PAC and NPAS was also finalised and circulated to communities.

During October 26-31, 23 persons were trained as part of PAC's warden/ranger training programme. The trainees were selected based on the applications received by the PAC for the Senior Warden/Warden positions advertised for the KMPA. Villages from which applications were not received, were also given the opportunity to participate in the training. Of the 23 candidates that were trained, nine were shortlisted by the PAC for interviews during December 01-02, 2015. Of the persons interviewed, Mr. Francisco Gomes was identified for the Senior Warden position while Ms. Jessica George, Moco Moco and Shurland Davis, Karasabai, were identified as PAC rangers for the KMPA. Given the shortage of staff at the KNP, Mr. Octavius Hendricks, St. Ignatius, and Mr. Gary Demetro, Moco Moco, were identified as PAC rangers to fill the short-term need at KNP, following which they will be transferred to work in the KMPA.

A workshop was held during December 08-10, 2015 to identify monitoring priorities for the NPAS including the KMPA. Jaguars/Puma, Key Game Fish Species, Turtles, Hydrological System and Mixed Forest were identified as the five main Focal Ecological Targets that need to be monitored by the PAC for the KMPA, particularly as they relate to overharvesting (traditionally and illegally) and water quality. Opportunities for stakeholder collaboration were also identified and discussed during the workshop.

The PAC renewed its rental contract for a building in central Lethem, Region 9, which will function as a basic site office and staff quarters for the KMPA operations. Procurement of office equipment and supplies is currently ongoing. The PAC is also working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure that the Office is used by the EPA for its work in the Region, as the Agency does not have a presence in the area. The PAC also secured a plot of land in Lethem which was identified for the construction of a site level office, to be funded under GPAS Phase III, as a long-term mechanism for the improvement of the PAC's site level presence.

During October 30-31, 2015, the PAC participated in the Rupununi Business Forum and Expo. Following this event, the PAC provided financial support to the KMCRG for the hosting of its Annual General Meeting on December 11, 2015. The Commissioner of the PAC updated the KMCRG on the activities that were completed in 2015 and provided an overview of the initiatives planned for 2016. Areas of potential cooperation between the Commission and the KMCRG were also identified and discussed.

The PAC, with support from the FZS, also participated in the Rupununi Christmas Fair which was held on December 12, 2015. Support was provided for the purchase of Trophies for the Winners, First and Second Place Medals, Prizes for 5 Categories and Printing of Flyers for the event. At the Fair, the Commission also used the opportunity to strengthen its linkages with craft persons and artisans from the Rupununi area for the marketing of products at the KNP and Guyana Zoological Park.

2.6.2.3 SHELL BEACH PROTECTED AREA

A MoU between the PAC, World Wildlife Fund and the Guyana Marine Turtle Conservation Society, for the implementation of the 2015 Marine Turtle Monitoring Project was developed. Unfortunately, the MoU was not signed during the Monitoring period, however, the MoU will be signed for the 2016 season. The 2016 Turtle Monitoring Proposal was developed and submitted to WWF for approval.

PAC and GMTCS jointly conducted sea turtle monitoring at Almond beach from mid-February to July 31, 2015. During this project, data collection template that was prepared for the season took into consideration the SWOT data needs and templates from Suriname and French Guiana.

The PAC commenced implementation of activities under the first year operational plan for the SBPA. Community outreach visits were conducted to the 11 Amerindian stakeholder communities during October and November, 2015. A poster highlighting the five management programmes and activities planned for completion within the next five year was developed and used in the outreach sessions. A Community-focused Frequently Asked Questions booklet on the PAC and NPAS was also finalised and circulated to communities.

Two capacity building workshops were conducted for the Amerindian Stakeholder communities' representatives by PAC at the Shell Beach Protected Area during April 12-24, 2015 and May 31-June 10. Topics included information of the SBPA, Guyana Protected Areas System, SBPA Management Plan, turtle conservation and monitoring, human and jaguar interaction, GPS data collection, beach profiling and basic first aid and survival training. Dr. Evi Paemelaere, Country Coordinator of the Panthera Jaguar Programme conducted the session on Human Jaguar Interactions while the Guyana Defence Force conducted the training on first aid and water survival skills.

An enforcement action was carried out in Santa Rosa on May 7 and 8th, 2015 as a result of reports that turtles were being hunted on Tiger Beach. PAC and EPA conducted a joint investigative visit to Santa Rosa. After which an off-shore visit of Tiger Beach was conducted to assess the beach activities.

2.6.2.4 KANASHEN COMMUNITY OWNED CONSERVATION AREA

A legal opinion on the implications of including Amerindian Protected Areas (APA) in the NPAS was prepared by a Consultant for the PAC, with financial support from Conservational International-Guyana. The opinion was submitted to the MNRE, and the Ministry of Legal Affairs, through the MNRE, for review and endorsement. Following the election of the new Government, it was resubmitted to the Ministry of the Presidency for consideration. The opinion examines the Amerindian and Protected Areas Acts is meant to guide the PAC's engagement with Kanashen Village on the implications of its land being subject to the laws and regulations of the NPAS.

During September 25, 2015 to October 02, 2015, the PAC, CI-G, and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, visited the village to provide an update on the status of the application and to complete the draft management plan for the area as required by the Protected Areas Act 2011.

2.6.3 STRATEGIC PLANNING

The strategic plan of the Protected Areas Commission and the National Protected Areas System was prepared based on input from the Senior Management staff of the PAC/NPC. One of the Technical Officers attached to the PAC through the FZS has been leading this process. The plan was finalised following review by the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, Ministry

of the Presidency, and key donor agencies. One thousand copies of the plan has been printed, with financial support from the FZS, for distribution to all relevant stakeholders.

2.7 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The PAC continued to emphasise development of its human resources in 2015, with a series of capacity-building and training initiatives. These initiatives included:

| Training course | Topics covered | No. of Trainees | Target groups | Date |
|--|---|-----------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Quick Books | Staff trained on all aspects of setting up and using Quickbooks software, including: How to setup a company file, chart of accounts/inventory lists/ fixed assets/ vendors/ customers, manage accounts, reconcile bank accounts, and generate reports | 8 | Accounts Staff | May 15 |
| Inventory and Stores Regulations | In-house training in all aspects of the Government Stores Regulations – recording, | 7 | Storekeepers, Accounts Clerks, Stock Control Clerk | July 29 |
| Ranger/Tour Guide Training at Shell Beach | PA Act, GPS use, basic first aid, leading tours, natural history of the PA, beach profiling, human-jaguar interaction, and survival training. | 23 | Residents of communities neighbouring the SBPA | April 12-24 2015; May 31–June 10 |
| Ranger/Tour Guide Training at KMPA | PA Act, biodiversity conservation, protected areas, basic ranger-based monitoring, map reading & compass use, GPS use, and basic first aid. | 23 | Residents of communities neighbouring the KMPA | October 26-31 |
| Literacy and numeracy | Alphabet, Phonics, Grammar, Numerology, Personal Information, Budgets, Money Management, Saving Money, Housing, Personal Safety, Health, Your Environment. | 8 | NP, BG, Zoo | July 2014 – August 2015 |
| Customer Service Training | Self-Analysis, Understanding Your Organisation; the Customer; The Telephone; “How to be a Customer Service Champion” | 19 | NP, BG, Zoo, KNP, Head Office Staff | November 30 – December 1 |
| Procurement | Training Symposium on NPTAB’s procurement guidelines | 5 | Staff involved in the procurement process | November 9 |

A number of additional training programmes are scheduled for the beginning of 2016 including ranger and tour-guide training at Kaieteur National Park, as well as first aid training for key urban park and headquarter staff.

2.8 WORKSHOPS, SEMINARS, AND CONFERENCES

The Commission was represented at the following key meetings:

- Amerindian Land Titling Project Meeting at MoAA (January 12, February 06, April 01 and September 10)
- Kanuku Mountains Protected Area Public Review Meeting at PAC Office (January 13)
- Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment Sector Review Meeting at Herdmanston Lodge (February 04)
- International Seminar on Protected Areas Management in Washington DC and Missoula Montana (July 06-26)
- Caribbean Climate Online Risk and Adaptation Tool (CCORAL) (August 17-21)
- Regional workshop: Meeting of Directors and authorities of Protected Areas of the Member Countries of ACTO in Bogota Colombia (October 13-14)
- Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) for application to Amerindian Land Titling Project Meeting at UNDP Office (October 27)
- GEF Small Grants Project Country Programme Strategy Meeting at UNDP Office (November 18)
- Littoral de Guyane sous influence Amazonienne (LiGa 2015) in Cayenne, French Guiana (November 24-28)
- Conservation Agreements Meeting at PAC Office (December 18)
- Climate Resilience Strategy and Action Plan (December 13-14)

2.9 OTHER ACTIVITIES

The PAC hosted its third annual Christmas Family Festival and Tree lighting on December 16, 2015.

The Commission also participated in World Environment Day activities, University of Guyana Career Day (April), CYEN Biodiversity Day (May), and Rupununi Expo (October/November).

2.10 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

| 2015 Key Achievements | Description |
|-----------------------|--|
| Shell Beach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A MoU to be signed among the PAC, World Wildlife Fund and the Guyana Marine Turtle Conservation Society, for the implementation of the 2015 Marine Turtle Monitoring Project was developed. • PAC and GMTCS jointly conducted sea turtle monitoring at Almond beach from mid-February to July 31, 2015. • A proposal for the 2016 turtle monitoring season was developed and submitted to WWF for approval. • The PAC commenced implementation of activities under the first year operational plan for the SBPA. A poster on the management plan and a Community-focused Frequently Asked Questions booklet were developed and used in the outreach sessions. • PAC and EPA conducted a joint investigative visit during May 07-08, 2015 following reports on poaching of sea turtles and eggs on Tiger Beach. The matter was also reported to the Police Force for follow up action. |
| Kanuku Mountains | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft Kanuku Mountains Management Plan, 2015-2019, was presented at a public meeting on January 13, 2015. Following the January 27, 2015 deadline for comments, the plan was finalised for printing. • PAC commenced implementation of activities under the first year operational plan for KMPA. Community outreach visits were conducted to 11 KMPA villages during April 26 to May 03, and August 30 to September 05, 2015. A poster on the management plan and a Community-focused Frequently Asked Questions booklet were developed and used in the outreach sessions. • Of the 23 candidates that were trained as part of PAC's warden/ranger training programme, nine were shortlisted by the PAC for interviews during December 01-02, 2015. Mr. Francisco Gomes was identified for the Senior Warden position while Ms. Jessica George, Moco Moco and Shurland Davis, Karasabai, were identified as PAC rangers for the KMPA. Mr. Octavius Hendricks, St. Ignatius, and Mr. Gary Demetro, Moco Moco, were also identified as PAC rangers to fill the short-term need at KNP, following which they will be transferred to work in the KMPA. • A workshop was held during December 08-10, 2015 to identify monitoring priorities for the NPAS including the KMPA. Jaguars/Puma, Key Game Fish Species, Turtles, Hydrological System and Mixed Forest were identified as the five main Focal Ecological Targets that need to be monitored by the PAC for the KMPA, particularly as they relate to overharvesting (traditionally and illegally) and water quality. Opportunities for stakeholder collaboration were also identified and discussed during the workshop. • PAC renewed its rental contract for a building in central Lethem, Region 9, which will function as a basic site office and staff quarters for the KMPA operations. • PAC secured a plot of land in Lethem which was identified for the construction of a site level office, to be funded under GPAS Phase III, as a long-term mechanism for the improvement of the PAC's site level presence. • During October 30-31, 2015, the PAC participated in the Rupununi Business Forum and Expo. Financial support was also provided to the KMCRG for the hosting of its Annual General Meeting on December 11, 2015. • PAC, with support from the FZS, participated in the Rupununi Christmas Fair held on December 12, 2015. Support was provided for the purchase of Trophies for the Winners, First and Second Place Medals, Prizes for 5 Categories and Printing of Flyers for the event. |

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| Kaieteur | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of management of operations and assets through employment of a Senior Ranger and implementation of new measures to track assets and routine tasks. • Installation of Photovoltaic system, completion of furnishing, and habitation of the new staff quarters at KNP Top • Completion of remedial works and furnishing of Tukeit rest house and ranger station. • Completion of Visitor Learning Centre Design plans for KNP or other location. • Replacement of 3 bridges, construction of new boardwalk and stairs at VAC, and maintenance of tourist infrastructure to improve the tourist experience. • Implementation of measure to improve staff morale including improved turnaround time and installation of satellite TV. • Hiring of 8 staff (7 Warden/Tour Guides 1 Senior Ranger). • Improvement of communication for emergencies and management with installation of VHF base stations at all manned outposts and purchase of a satellite phone. |
| Urban Parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The elevation of and compaction of low areas in the Parks are being carried out on a continuous basis. Several areas in the Botanical Gardens and National Park benefited directly from the donation of mud and builders rubble from private individuals and from the Ministry of Public Works. • The second instalment of “Art in the Park” was completed. The addition of a 6 foot Black Caiman created from discarded tyres is part of a larger installation called the “Reptile Walk”. This installation will feature four (4) reptiles – Black Caiman, Anaconda, River Turtle and Iguana – created exclusively from recycled and discarded materials. • Zoo Camp hosted 106 children over 5 weeks. In addition to arts and crafts, nature walks and games, the campers were also treated to field trips to the Mangrove Restoration Project in Cove-en-John and the Yarakabra Forestry Reserve on the Linden Highway. • Completed a raised, paved all weather walkway leading to a new picnic area in the National Park. • Completed the creation of the “Guyana Pond” in the National park. The pond was dug following the outline of the map of Guyana. The material excavated from this pond has been stockpiled adjacent to the pond and is being used to construct “Roraima Hill” following the outline of Mount Roraima. • Competition of a raised, paved all weather walkway in the Botanical Gardens. This walkway will feature a raised central dias supporting a three tiered fountain and will extend outwards in four directions thereby increasing the areas of the Gardens accessible to the public. The fountain was donated by New Thriving Guyana Inc. • Nine (9) employees participated in and graduated from a six month long literacy programme sponsored by the Ministry of Education. • The PAC hosted several activities within the Parks to encourage family oriented activities within the Parks. These included Earth Day Celebrations, Plant Sales, Tree Planting activities, “It’s MY Zoo Day”, Earth Day Celebrations, Allied Arts Steel Band Competition, BANKS DIH Fishing Competition, National Go-Kart Derby and the Christmas Family Festival. • All of the urban parks were given an aesthetic lift using landscaping and natural materials, such as bamboo, to provide a cohesive outlook and enhance the visitor experience. • The PAC hosted its third annual Christmas Family Festival and Tree lighting on December 16, 2015. • The Commission also participated in World Environment Day activities, University of Guyana Career Day (April), CYEN Biodiversity Day (May), and Rupununi Expo (October/November). |
| General Administration & Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five (5) Year Strategic Plan completed and implementation was initiated. This plan guided the preparation of the 2016 work plan and budget which was completed and submitted to the Ministry of Finance through the Ministry of Natural Resources. • PAC Financial Policy and Procedures Manual drafted. • Senior Ranger recruited for Kaieteur National Park |

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|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The recruitment process for site level staff (another Senior Ranger, four (4) Rangers) and a Human Resources Manager was completed. The Senior Ranger and four Rangers were intended for the Kanu ku Mountains Protected Area. However, as an emergency measure, for the peak period of the Christmas holidays and in view of the upcoming Independence celebration period two of the Rangers were assigned to KNP to assist with the Tour Guide Services at the Park.• A Finance Manager for National Parks Commission was recruited.• Quickbooks software was installed for the processing of financial transactions. (Prior to this the National Parks Commission accounting system was manual).• Support was provided to the PAC Board meetings held in the first quarter of the year prior to its dissolving.• Terms of Reference for the consultancy on the Merger of the National Parks Commission and the Protected Areas Commission were reviewed in the light of the completed strategic plan. |
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3 KEY WORK/PROGRAMME AREAS FOR 2016

The work of the PAC is guided by its 2015-2019 Strategic Plan. Under the Plan, the work of the PAC is divided into the thematic areas: Administration and Management; Finances; Benefits and Partnerships; and Awareness and Outreach. The strategic plan covers all sites under NPAS (urban and hinterland parks), with key strategic objectives including increased national pride and a sense of ownership of Guyana's natural and cultural heritage; improved education and awareness about the environment, Protected Areas, and our national patrimony; strengthened administrative and management systems at the Commission; and increased benefits to communities and the public in general.

The strategic objectives and priorities in each of the thematic areas are as follows:

Programme 1: Administration and Management

To ensure the effective and adaptive management of the NPAS, its biodiversity and its resources through the following actions:

Strategic Objective 1.1: To ensure a full complement of capable staff

1. Recruit Site Level Staff for SBPA
2. Recruit Human Resources Manager and Procurement Officer
3. Conduct Ranger Training at SBPA
4. Conduct Law Enforcement Training for Rangers at Kaieteur National Park and KMPA
5. Conduct Advanced Ranger Training for KNP and KMPA Rangers (including monitoring)
6. Conduct Training in ecological monitoring methods for KNP and KMPA Rangers
7. Conduct Training of Head Office Staff in Professionalism
8. Conduct SMART Training for head office technical staff

Strategic Objective 1.2: Improve the commissions administrative and management systems and procedures

1. Implement consultancy to prepare for NPC merger with PAC.
2. Conduct Conservation Threat Management Plan Progress Update Workshop
3. Prepare Operational Manual and Standard Operating Procedures to improve administrative systems throughout the PAC and NPAS.

Strategic Objective 1.3: To increase knowledge for PA management related decisions (research and ecological monitoring)

1. Update research priorities
2. Circulate research priorities
3. Support research
4. Develop site level SOPs for researchers
5. Develop literature database

Strategic Objective 1.4: To improve site level planning, implementation and monitoring

1. Implement year 1 of KMPA and KNP and SBPA management and operational plans
2. Develop law enforcement programmes for each site
3. Develop and initiate monitoring programmes for each site, including regular fly overs
4. Establish functioning Site Level Management Committees

Strategic Objective 1.5: To improve the legislative framework for effective management of NPAS

1. Prepare template agreement for protecting traditional rights of communities around PAs
2. Prepare sustainable resource management agreement template
3. Establish and equip office for Shell Beach Protected Area
4. Elaborate infrastructure plan
5. Continue support materials, equipment and infrastructure procurement and maintenance

Programme 2: Finances

To ensure the appropriate, transparent and efficient use of financial resources while ensuring the financial needs of the NPAS are met through the following actions:

Strategic Objective 2.1 To improve financial management systems and procedures

1. Further refine and fully implement Financial Procedures Manual
2. Manage KfW funds

Strategic Objective 2.2 To raise funds for the work of the PAC and the management of NPAS

1. Continue to engage with corporate entities and potential private donors to raise funds for projects within the urban parks, with specific emphasis on projects focusing on Guyana's 50th independence anniversary.

Programme 3: Partnerships and Benefits

To encourage stakeholder support for NPAS management while also improving benefits for present and future generations through the following actions

Strategic Objective 3.1 To ensure that PAs continue providing benefits to communities

1. Continue to support livelihood development in stakeholder communities including purchasing of craft
2. Continue to support community led events and activities

Strategic Objective 3.2 To ensure that communities and partner agencies are actively involved, engaged and supportive of effective PA management

1. Provide Community training in monitoring, tour guiding and health and safety in Shell Beach
2. Visit communities to update and discuss PA management and PA Act issues

Programme 4: Awareness and Outreach

To promote national and international awareness, knowledge and support for the NPAS through the following actions

Strategic Objective 4.1 To increase appreciation and support internationally for Guyana's NPA's

1. Promote and share the Strategic Plan with potential international partners.
2. Investigate options for international recognition of NPAS and/or its components, including RAMSAR, UNESCO World Heritage and Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs).

Strategic Objective 4.2 To increase knowledge and appreciation of the National Protected Areas System

1. Conduct Environmental Education workshop for miners in Region 8
2. Develop materials for school groups (posters, brochures, books etc) Region 9 - KMPA
3. Establish school nature groups

4. Prepare booklets/ leaflets for Communities on Protected Areas
5. Run community awareness events

4 CONCLUSION

Despite constraints to the implementation of the PAC 2015 work programme such as staff turn-over and the absence of an approved 2015 Budget for a major portion of the year, significant progress was achieved.

Moving forward in 2016, the Commission will be guided by its five-year strategic plan. In keeping with the objectives and priorities set out in the plan, focus will continue to be placed on implementing the first year of the management plans for each of the hinterland protected areas, and completion of the public review process and the finalization of the KNP management plan. Further recruitment, training of staff and procurement of equipment to enhance the capacity of the Commission to carry out its mandate will be undertaken.

The work of the Commission will also focus on the establishment and equipping of site offices, communication facilities at the hinterland protected areas, as well as more frequent visits and closer relationships between the PAC and surrounding urban and hinterland communities. Initiatives to support livelihood development in the stakeholder communities will continue, helping to ensure that they benefit from the Protected Areas.

Public education efforts will continue with the development of awareness and education material on the hinterland protected areas towards enhancing public knowledge and increasing national pride in Guyana's protected areas.