

UNESCO COMMUNITY SANDWATCH COMPETITION

September 2004 – May 2005

Background

Sandwatch seeks to contribute to the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development through involving school students, with the support of local communities, in the enhancement and wise management of their beach environments in small island states.

Sandwatch Competition

An inter-regional Sandwatch competition was launched in September 2004, open to primary and secondary school students from schools involved in the Sandwatch Project in Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific countries. This competition, entitled 'Community Sandwatch,' offered substantial cash prizes. The objective of the competition was for students to plan, design, implement and evaluate a community-based beach enhancement project using the scientific beach monitoring methods that are an integral part of the Sandwatch project.

The responses and entries to this competition clearly validated the relevance and usefulness of the Sandwatch approach which is summarised in four steps: **M**onitoring beach changes, **A**nalysing the results, **S**haring the findings and **T**aking action (MAST).

“Animals on the Beach: An Opinion Poll”, “Operation Love Your Beach”, and “Footprints in the Sand” were among the titles of school projects. Judges had a difficult task choosing winners from the 30 outstanding beach enhancement projects submitted by 25 schools from eight Caribbean island states/territories and one Pacific island state. At the primary level, first prize went to Nikao Maori School, Cook Islands and at the secondary level, to Castries Comprehensive Secondary School, St. Lucia.

One jury member summed up the entries as follows: “The entries were inspiring and illustrate . . . ways in which Sandwatch has become integrated across school curricula. They provide many different examples of education for sustainable development in action ranging from a Cuban school which focused on enhancing the understanding of construction workers at a beachfront hotel about caring for the beach environment, to a school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines which restored a degraded coastal area and ensured the local community adopt their project, thereby providing for continuation after the competition. Schools in The Bahamas and Cook Islands demonstrated perseverance and ingenuity when their beaches were destroyed by hurricanes/cyclones. Sandwatch is an activity in which students with special needs, such as autism, can get involved, as shown by a Cuban entry.”

Entries from Primary Schools

Bahamas: Hope Town Primary School, Abaco, students planted sea oats on recently restored sand dunes and prepared a brochure to guide visitors on conserving the coral reef.

Bahamas: Yellow Elder Primary School, Nassau, New Providence, students focused on beach littering and called on a local TV station to publicise the need for an industrial sized garbage bin at South Beach

Cook Islands: Nikao Maori School, Rarotonga, different groups of students surveyed beach users to find out what changes they would like to see; worked with the community to plant trees to slow down the erosion; and promoted recycling by providing bins for different types of litter

Cuba: Escuela Primaria Urbana 'Angela Landa', Old Havana, Havana City, students worked with the community to clean the beach and inspired the community to continue with the work after the competition finished

Cuba: Don Mariano Marti Navarro, Old Havana, Havana City, students wrote poems, word puzzles, and stories about the beach and prepared a bulletin about caring for the environment

Cuba: Escuela Primaria Seguidores de Camilo y Che, Matanzas, students focused on public awareness about the beach through radio programmes, brochures and festivals

Cuba: Escuela Vocacional de Arte, Alfonso Pérez Isaac, Matanzas, students created murals, held meetings, wrote poetry and sent messages to everyone in the community about caring for the beach

Entries from Secondary Schools

Barbados: Coleridge and Parry School, students conducted community surveys to determine changes needed in the beach and set up a committee to publish a book about their project

Barbados: Ellerslie Secondary School, students focused on finding out whether horse riding and un-tethered dogs threatened the safety and comfort of beach users on the west coast

Cook Islands: Mauke School, Mauke, students worked on assessing the changes to Anaraura Beach after a new hotel was built there

Cuba: Escuela Secundaria Básica Rubén Bravo Álvarez, Havana City, students worked with their community to clean the beach, publicize their activities on TV and create a cleaner crab mascot

Cuba: IPVCE Comandante Ernesto Ché Guevara, Santa Clara, different groups of students worked on raising the community's level of awareness about caring for the beach; influencing the community's view of the beach; cleaning up the beach; working with hotel

construction workers to raise their awareness and understanding of the natural ecosystem

Cuba: Escuela Mártirez de Familia Romero, Sancti Spiritus, students worked with the community to raise awareness about the need for a clean and healthy environment

Cuba: IPVCE Frederico Engels, Pinar del Rio, students made several recommendations including re-vegetation and the implementation of development guidelines to conserve the beach

Cuba: Secundaria Básica Camilo Torres Restrepo, Havana City students, worked with the community to clean the beach, and so inspired some visiting tourists that they donated 20 computers to the school

Cuba: IPVCE José Martí Pérez, Holguin, students assessed several beaches in the Bay of Gibaro and identified various issues

Cuba: Escuela Especial Dora Alonso, Vocacional de Arte Dominica del Amo, Secundaria Básica Jose Antonio Echeverría, students aged from 7-17 years, and including those with special needs - such as young people with autism - worked to educate the community and clean the beach

Dominican Republic: Centro Educativo Las Américas, students measured the beach and dunes at Caldera, Baní over a 3-year period

San Andres Archipelago: Institucion Educativa Técnico Departamental Natania, students identified garbage and solid waste disposal as one of the major problems facing beaches in their island and visited other schools to share information about the problems

St. Kitts and Nevis: Sandy Point High School, students planned to construct billboards encouraging the wise use of the beach, as well as garbage bins and a wooden shed for to facilitate proper disposal of garbage (a Planning Department refusal prevented implementation)

St. Lucia: Castries Comprehensive Secondary School, students identified pollution from the nearby Choc River as a major issue and focused environmental education activities on residents living near the Choc River, as well as other groups

St. Lucia: St. Joseph's Convent Secondary School, students monitored Vigie Beach over a 3-year period and worked with other groups to improve the beach with trees, signs, garbage bins and clean-ups

St. Vincent and the Grenadines Bequia Community High School, students, focused on the Paget Farm area of Bequia, monitored the water quality and then worked with the community to clear the drain, erect silt traps and beautify the area; subsequently the community took over the project

