

The Sandwatch project at the IPVCE Ernesto Guevara a Decade on, by Daniel Bulgado Benavides, IPVCE Ernesto Guevara, Cuba

Sandwatch has continued for a decade now at the Caibarien and Isabela de Sagua beaches, located in the north of the province of Villa Clara. A number of different activities have been conducted, focusing on environmental education and towards environmental planning for the coastal zone. These plans also contain provisions to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change on coastal ecosystems in the coming years.

Students have undertaken surveys of the plants and animals on the beach. The results of these surveys show that although laws exist to protect beaches and sands, these laws are not always fully implemented. Fishing activities in zones bordering the beach are also impacting the marine ecosystem which is already under pressure from the invasive lion fish. The students have communicated the results of their findings to beach users, coastal communities and decision makers and their concrete results are contributing to changes being made in the laws and regulations. The students have also shared their knowledge about invasive species like the lionfish with these groups. A sample survey table is shown below.

Beach	Birds	Reptiles	Molluscs	Plastic	Paper	Wood	Metal	Glass
Caibarien	16	18	37	33	42	15	27	12
Isabela de Sagua	35	20	30	45	55	60	25	30

However, there is always more work to do. We call upon organisations like UNESCO that promote peace and the rejection of damaging and destructive policies that result in the loss of biodiversity and undermining of environmental stability, to help support the provision of additional garbage bins; more educational programmes for beach users including the supply of materials like posters; and to hold workshops, conferences and debates targeting beach users and coastal communities to take action to protect the beach.

Sandwatch has been active at the IPVCE Ernesto Guevara in Cuba since 2001

