



CARIBBEAN CURRENTS

NEWS AND INSPIRATION FROM THE CARIBBEAN

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Kids playing at Jack and Isaac Bay Preserve, a Conservancy nature preserve in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S GREETINGS

I'm excited to offer a few thoughts and introduce our new-and-improved newsletter, Caribbean Currents. I like the new title, which grounds the newsletter geographically, and conveys a sense of forward motion, which is certainly appropriate considering all the exciting conservation work. As I write this, the world just experienced the three hottest days on record since we began using satellites to track the earth's temperature. We know these satellite records correlate with all the other ways we have available to take the earth's temperature, both today and in the distant past. Most of this heat is absorbed by our oceans, making them warmer.

As an oceanographer, I was trained to understand how ocean heat affects our climate, sea level, the intensity of tropical storms, and the integrity of ocean currents. In the last thirty years, we have come to understand, too, how temperature extremes and the rate of temperature change can affect critical ecosystems like coral reefs. So, suffice to say, I'm concerned. But I am not deterred. If anything, these warmest days reinforce the importance of our conservation work globally, especially in the Caribbean.

Fortunately, I am not alone in this determination. In the articles that follow, you'll read about inspiring conservation work that makes a difference for people and nature, and hear from those who are directly involved in carrying that work forward. Thanks to our supporters, we have a team of dedicated conservationists – scientists, policy and communications experts, community engagement specialists and others – who are putting their best ideas and efforts forward. And as you'll read, it isn't just our staff, but also our Trustees who carry our mission forward. This, above all, is why I feel determined each day. With that, I hope you enjoy this newsletter – I think it is a great way to keep all our supporters and collaborators "Current" on what our team is up to across the Caribbean.

-Dr Rob Brumbaugh



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Colorful powerboats lining the coastline of Grenville Bay in Grenada

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DEB HAALAND VISITS THE USVI

On November 12, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland visited the TNC Coral Innovation Hub on St Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, and toured the facility with TNC staff. "The Nature Conservancy and other organizations are using this facility to advance coral science to help reefs recover on a larger scale than ever before," Secretary Haaland stated.

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Secretary of the Interior, Deborah Haaland (L), in conversation with TNC's Amanda Cooper during her visit to the Coral Innovation Hub

CI & TNC MOU SIGNING

The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International (CI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on June 15 at the TNC Caribbean office in Coral Gables, Florida. The agreement signals a strategic collaboration between the two organizations that will catalyze support for Small-Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean to deliver on the Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN Climate Agreement. Dr. Rob Brumbaugh signed on behalf of TNC and Kelvin Alie signed on behalf of CI.



© Jason Koerner

Rob Brumbaugh of TNC signs MOU with Kelvin Alie of Conservation International

CORAL CARIB LAUNCH

The CoralCarib project, aimed at conserving and restoring coral reefs in four Caribbean islands, was officially launched in Jamaica on April 25, at the Pegasus Hotel. CoralCarib's goal is to increase marine biodiversity in 1,871 hectares of priority coral reef ecosystems in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica, as well as regionally through scaling.

Through CoralCarib interventions, healthier and more resilient reefs will provide socio-economic benefits to people living in the coastal zones in these areas. At launch, Executive Director of the TNC Caribbean Division, Dr. Rob Brumbaugh, said the project will use a combination of scientific data and local knowledge to identify specific areas across the Caribbean where reefs have the best chance of survival. Denise Henry, manager of Alligator Head Foundation, the Jamaican partner in the project, stated, "What will be new to Jamaica is sexual reproduction of coral, which is something that has never been successfully done here."

Nickie Myers – General Manager, The Alligator Head Foundation (AHF) speaking at the launch of the CoralCarib project in Jamaica



The German Ambassador to Jamaica, Jan Hendrik van Thiel, stressed the urgency for implementing solutions to stem environmental degradation. "The situation is dire," Ambassador van Thiel stated. "The glaciers are melting. The temperatures are rising not only in the air, but also in the sea. Weather patterns are getting erratic. We are in reaction mode all the time and the sea is getting warmer, the coral reefs are bleaching." Minister of Economic Growth & Job Creation, Matthew Samuda, expressed the Jamaican government's support for the project, noting that CoralCarib complements the government's ongoing efforts to protect the underwater ecosystem of Jamaica. Minister Samuda added that the project will bolster regulatory measures being put in place by the government to protect this ecosystem. He noted that a National Policy for the Management of Jamaica's Oceans and Coastal Zones and an Action Plan for coral reefs have been created.

The project is funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) which has committed €8.5 million. Since 2022 IKI has been implemented by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) in close cooperation with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) and the Federal Foreign Office (AA). The Nature Conservancy is working with six regional partners across these four countries—Fundación Dominicana de Estudios Marino (FUNDEMAR) and the Fundación Grupo Puntacana of the Dominican Republic; Alligator Head Foundation, Jamaica; Acuario Nacional de Cuba; and the Haiti Ocean Project and Initiative for Environment and Integrated Development in Haiti.

THE BAHAMAS HOSTS NORTH AMERICA CABINET AND COUNCIL RETREAT

The powdery white sand beaches and emerald-green seas of Grand Bahama Island were the backdrop for the North American Region's Volunteer Cabinet and Leadership Team retreat in March. More than 40 TNC staff and volunteer cabinet members from the North America Region and Caribbean Division convened on the northernmost island of the Bahamian archipelago to learn about the vital work taking place in the Caribbean and how it contributes to the organization's progress toward TNC's 2030 Goals.



The retreat consisted of collaborative workshop sessions, field visits and team building activities. During the workshops, participants explored new approaches to working together with the Caribbean Division and discussed strategies to accelerate TNC's conservation impacts in the Caribbean and beyond. Participants visited several environmental and historical sites including Dover Sound, where mangrove ecosystems were severely damaged during Hurricane Dorian in 2019. Staff and volunteers planted mangroves during the field visit, part of a larger and ongoing mangrove recovery effort.

Staff and volunteers took advantage of some of the tourism-related opportunities such as snorkeling, scuba diving and marine educational tours, and attendees also experienced authentic Bahamian cuisine, cultural expressions and entertainment. The retreat offered a space to strengthen working relationships between staff and programs from throughout the North America Region, and elevate solutions to some of the Caribbean's greatest challenges and support the scope of work across geographies.

HAITI SHOWCASES BIODIVERSITY AT COP15

The Nature Conservancy collaborated with Haiti's Ministry of the Environment to host an event and a booth at COP15 in Montreal, Canada in December. The event entitled, "Caribbean Marine Biodiversity: Celebrating Haiti's Success," highlighted Haiti's significant progress towards sustainability with the declaration of new marine protected areas and achieving the 20x20 Goal. Haiti was also credited with establishing a National Conservation Trust Fund to provide long-term financing for biodiversity conservation in the country.



WATER FUNDS PROJECTS PUMP MORE THAN 500,000 M³ OF WATER IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



The Water Funds projects in the Dominican Republic have successfully generated more than 500,000 cubic meters of water, benefiting thousands of people in the city of Santo Domingo and neighboring communities. Major water consumers such as aqueducts, hydroelectric plants, and bottling companies voluntarily agreed to contribute funds for the conservation of the water-producing area, for the purposes of ensuring a continuous and adequate supply of water. This approach creates a shared responsibility between the residents of the upper and lower communities of the basin, resulting in the improved health of all ecosystems, generating benefits for those who depend on these natural areas.

“This is a financial mechanism in which the government and corporations involved in providing water services are investing, but the communities are also benefiting,” states Francisco Nuñez, Central Caribbean Program Director. “Not only because they see that there is more water in the rivers for their agricultural and livestock production, but also, because through water funds, we are facilitating resources for them to reforest and restore critical ecosystems and improving their economic livelihoods by improving their productive capacities.” Surface runoff is defined as the water that flows over the land surface, due to rain before reaching a body of water that stores or transports it, such as a lagoon or river. The benefits of reducing or helping stop runoff in degraded landscapes by avoiding deforestation, for example, can be quantitatively estimated in units comparable to those consumed by large users like bottling companies in their processes. The core premise of this approach is that the volume of water from the captured water is available for other processes of the hydrological cycle, such as percolation for aquifer recharge. It also means less water dragging pollutants into freshwater ecosystems, more water available for vegetation growth, and less impact of water during extreme weather events.

“There is a commitment from the community to protect the investment that is being made. They allow us to use their land that scientists have determined are critical for water production. They allow for those places to be restored and planted with native and endemic trees in perpetuity, while we help them improve conditions for sustainable livestock and agricultural production on the mountains,” says Digno Pacheco, a farmer in one of the communities served by the project, who sees the benefits of the program’s collaborative approach. “In this small town, there is not much work, and we see the benefits of undertaking this cocoa farmers’ project, because in the future we can harvest cocoa, more people can work, and our economic situation can improve.”

This is just one of the accomplishments of the Water for the Future Water Funds initiative being undertaken with TNC, the Coca-Cola Company and Bepensa Dominicana at the Haina River in the DR. Other Water Fund successes include private sector commitment to transfer their reforestation programs to long-term conservation in high watersheds and the integration and training of more than ten important communities in the upper basins of Greater Santo Domingo.

[**Watch Our Video**](#)

2022 IMPACT REPORT

The Caribbean Impact Report 2022 has been published and shared with the public on Nature.org and our social media platforms. The print version is now available, as well as a Spanish language version of the report.

The report captures in words and photos The Nature Conservancy's inspiring conservation work across the Caribbean in 2022. It is divided into three sections: Marine management/30x30 goals, Coral restoration and Climate adaptation, and Technology meets conservation.

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BLUE ECONOMY ACCELERATOR PROGRAM IN THE BAHAMAS

The Nature Conservancy Bahamas Program and the Access Accelerator Small Business Development Centre (AASBDC) have signed a memorandum of understanding that forms a four-year, \$400,000 strategic partnership to fund up to 25 blue economy businesses. The Blue Economy Accelerator Program will focus on providing knowledge, training and technical support for these businesses while increasing awareness of blue economy business prospects for owners of Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). The program was created with the goal of encouraging sustainable economic development within the blue economy and of generating new employment by advancing entrepreneurial and innovation support to businesses who have a positive impact on the marine environment.

Representatives from The Nature Conservancy Bahamas and the Access Accelerator, Small Business Development Center pictured at a MOU Signing for The Blue Economy Accelerator Program.



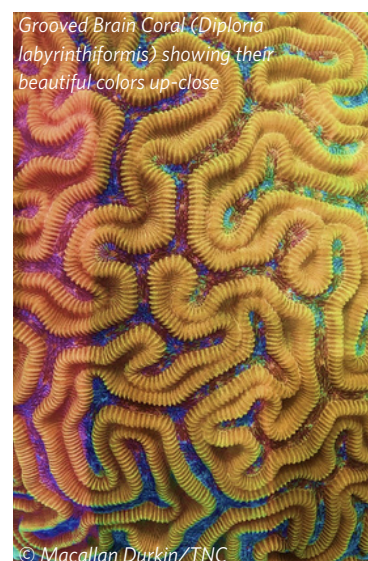
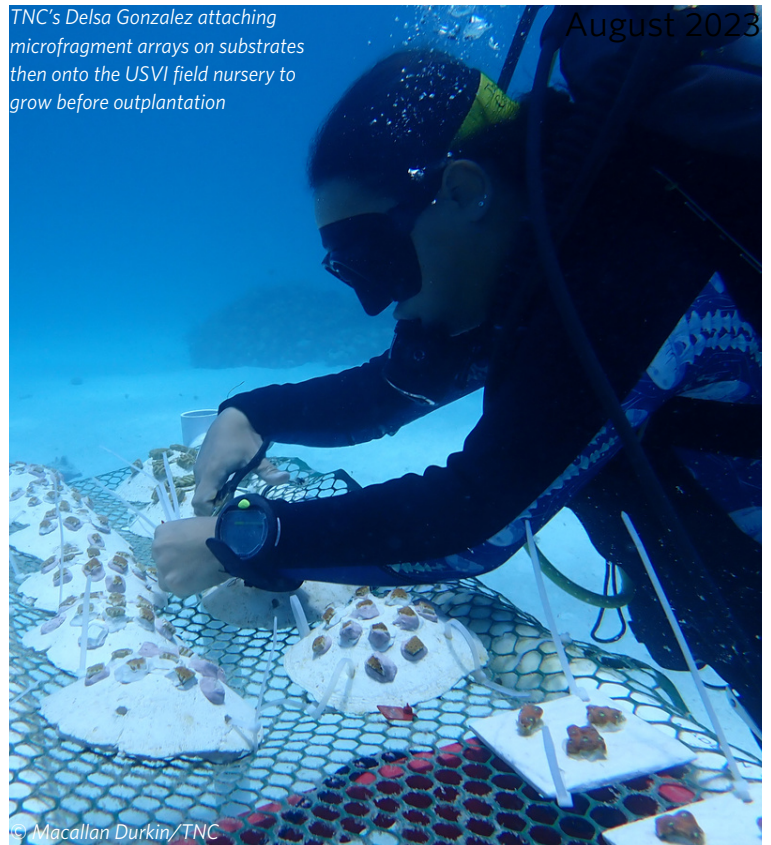
The strategic focus on MSME development for the blue economy will play a vital role in developing viable “reef-positive” businesses that protect and restore critical natural resources for The Bahamas. The Blue Economy Accelerator Program is one of the interventions within the Impact Funding for BahamaReefs program, a long-term blended finance initiative led by TNC in collaboration with the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR) and other strategic partners. Over the course of the project, TNC will continue to support the development and implementation of investible opportunities in the blue economy to tackle climate change, support coral reef health and strengthen local communities.

CORAL OUTPLANTING SUCCESS IN THE USVI

The staff at The Nature Conservancy's Coral Innovation Hub, on St. Croix, USVI, has been doing amazing scientific work in support of TNC's ambitious coral restoration goals. This May, the Coral Hub team collected gametes from 21 colonies of the brain coral, *Diploria labyrinthiformis*, a species hit hard by stony coral tissue loss disease. Gametes were brought back to the lab, and, through assisted sexual reproduction, the team produced over two million coral embryos! Roughly half were released back to the natural reef, while the remaining embryos were settled in the lab to be grown for outplanting the next season.

Between October 2022 and April 2023, the Hub's team of marine scientists outplanted over 13,000 corals to restoration sites at Buck Island Reef National Monument and in St. Croix's East End Marine Park. Over 2,000 coral settlement substrates (the material upon which coral grows) containing year-old coral recruits were also outplanted. This was accomplished with the support of TNC divers, as well as partners from the National Park Service and USVI Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

"This was our first year outplanting at scale and we had amazing success. With help from our partners and TNC divers from all over, we outplanted a total of 13,580 coral fragments from eight species!" explained Jessica Ward, Virgin Islands Coral Program Director. Funded by a combination of public grants and private donations, the Hub is focused on innovating and scaling coral restoration methods to support biodiversity and local fisheries, as well as enhance coastal resilience by absorbing wave energy offshore and reducing coastal erosion.



NEW CHAIR OF TNC CARIBBEAN BOARD OF TRUSTEES

We are pleased to announce Alicia Miñana de Lovelace as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees for the TNC Caribbean Division.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico with Cuban ancestry, she has strong personal ties to the Caribbean and began her term as chair in February 2022. Alicia earned a biology degree from Princeton University with a minor in Latin American Studies, before graduating from UCLA Law School. She has a long and distinguished history of philanthropic and volunteer work, including her roles as the founding chairperson of the board of directors and volunteer attorney of the Learning Rights Law Center. The center is a nonprofit formed by UCLA law graduates that assists low-income families, advocates for their children with learning disabilities, and supports children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems.



She is on the board of Human Rights Watch and a vice-chair of its nominations and governance committee. Last year, Alicia was elected Chair of the UCLA Foundation Board of Directors, which oversees \$5.1 billion in total assets.

WEBINAR EDUCATES ON NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

On March 23, TNC donors and trustees experienced an exclusive virtual journey to Grenville Bay, Grenada, to learn how TNC is using state-of-the-art science and community engagement to address climate challenges through conservation and restoration of coral reefs, mangroves and watersheds. The webinar was moderated by Jan Glendening, TNC's Managing Director for the North America Region and was a joint endeavor between the Eastern Caribbean program, Caribbean Marketing team, and North America Region Marketing staff.

Nealla Fredericks, TNC's Eastern Caribbean's Climate Change Project Manager, and Dr. Natainia Lummen, Senior Nature-Based Solution and Community Resilience Specialist, took listeners on an inspiring visit to Grenville Bay and the surrounding communities, and piqued the curiosity of participants who raised excellent questions about the work and the approaches TNC is using to address the challenges in Grenville Bay.



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Nealla Fredericks, Eastern Caribbean Climate Change Project Manager posing with mangrove propagules

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FORMER TRUSTEE RECEIVES NATIONAL HONOR



A devoted environmental conservationist in the Dominican Republic, and a former board member of The Nature Conservancy's Caribbean Division, Dr. Rosa Margarita Bonetti de Santana, known to most as Doña Pirigua, has received one of her country's highest honors. The President of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Luis Abinader Corona, conferred the Decoration of the Heraldic Order of Christopher Columbus in the degree of Commander to Doña Pirigua for her extraordinary work and dedication to the defense of the environment. The order of Christopher Columbus is awarded for service to the Dominican Republic through humanitarian, artistic and scientific merit.

In congratulating her, Maria Paula Miquel of the Propagas Foundation, of which Pirigua is president, said, "We hold this distinction with honor, dignity and the duty to persist in promoting national reflection on environmental issues, leaving a legacy for future generations." The Nature Conservancy offers its most sincere congratulations to Doña Pirigua on receiving this significant national recognition. We are grateful for her advocacy and contributions to preserving the natural heritage of the Dominican Republic.

RESILIENT ISLANDS ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

The Resilient Islands Project, implemented in partnership with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies aims at reducing risks from natural disasters fueled by climate change and strengthening the resilience of coastal communities. It is having a tangible impact in the three target countries —the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Jamaica with the support of the International Climate Initiative (IKI). In Miches, Dominican Republic, we engaged farmers at the La Yeguada River watershed to restore approximately ten hectares of cattle ranchlands, which will reduce sediment pollution in the river and coastal waters. In Jamaica, we conducted a mangrove replanting project in selected areas to assess the feasibility of using mangroves as nature-based solutions to protect the Old Harbor Bay communities from storm surges and scoped work with communities to advance extensive mangrove plantings this year. In Grenada, we are building a climate-smart fisher facility for the Soubise community.



The fisher facility should be in use by the end of this year, benefitting dozens of fishers whose gear is at risk during storms, and improving the fishing communities' resilience to climate-related risks. This project has been a journey of transformational partnerships, which has embraced multiple perspectives and solutions, created a replicable model, brought awareness to the risks posed by climate change, and unlocked solutions, creativity, and support for walking the challenging path toward a resilient future.

UNEP CITY ADAPT TRAINING

In Kingston, Jamaica, TNC conducted a training program titled “EbA for Urban and Peri-urban Spaces: Using Nature-Based Solutions as a Key Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Advancing Sustainable Development in Jamaica” under the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) CityAdapt Project. Eighty-five participants from 20 institutions, including government and civil society, explored how Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) solutions can help to build community resilience and support people who reside in urban and peri-urban areas.



During the 20 hours of training sessions, participants engaged with material that illustrated how these areas benefit from integrating conservation, management, and restoration of ecosystems and degraded landscapes to reduce the impacts associated with climate change. The workshop exceeded its goal for the number of participants, and two universities in Jamaica have already expressed strong interest in using the training material in their undergraduate and post-graduate courses.

Elizabeth Emmanuel, an international development expert facilitated the workshops. The CityAdapt program encompasses a series of climate change adaptation projects in cities in Latin America and the Caribbean, and we are grateful for the chance to play a role in implementing this UNEP-sponsored program of work in Kingston.

BARBADOS LAUNCHES MARINE SPATIAL PLAN PROCESS

On January 18, the Government of Barbados launched the Marine Spatial Planning Process with an official ceremony. Dr Rob Brumbaugh, Executive Director of TNC Caribbean spoke at the launch and stated TNC’s support for the Barbados MSP.

[Watch More](#)



© Shane Gross

A scuba diver swims alongside a Green Sea Turtle in the Barbados Marine Sanctuary

TRUSTEES' VOICES

In this segment, we hear from our trustees about TNC's work in the Caribbean.

"As a trustee from the TNC Caribbean Division's beginning, I have seen tremendous conservation growth and development of our programs in the Caribbean. Notable achievements include the Coral Innovation Hub lab in St. Croix and the planting of mangroves in Grenada, but perhaps most significant is the building of working relationships on the ground to advance community resilience. The establishment and promotion of the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund has been a monumental achievement, and it has been exciting to see the financial benefits distributed to the country trust funds. Most gratifying to me has been meeting the people and staff who work so hard to protect conservation on these precious islands."

Susan Smith – Trustee (2010 – 2022)

"I am so proud to have been on The Nature Conservancy's Caribbean board from almost from the beginning. The accomplishments have been huge! I always love the annual impact reports, but this new one (2022) has me even more awestruck! The impact is indeed outstanding. Being on this board has been a chance for me to interact with and learn from world class scientists and collaborators who have done so much to support positive change, such as the coral lab aimed at producing more resilient corals, mapping of corals, as well as mapping mangrove coverage and mangrove health. Our work with helping fishers become more sustainable and our work with climate and biodiversity solutions is imperative, as is supporting communities in finding and implementing local solutions! Thanks to the Caribbean staff for making the difference in our world through conservation!"

Jonnie Swann – Trustee (2012 – 2022)

"TNC is amazing at bringing science to solutions for nature." Reflecting on her years of service as a founding Caribbean board member, Cathy also shared, "Eleven years of relationships, interactions with the sea, nature, and people. Eleven years of laughter, thought-provoking discussions, silent contemplations, and sometimes tears. Eleven years of being a part of something bigger than myself, humbling experiences, and special times. I will never be able to express my gratitude."

Cathy Rustermier – Trustee (2010 – 2022)



GRENADA CELEBRATES WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY



© Pink Reel

A school girl smells a plant at the Grenville Bay nursery


In observance of World Environment Day, TNC's Eastern Caribbean team collaborated with local partners and communities in the Grenville Bay Area of Grenada to host educational visits at a community plant nursery that TNC supports in Soubise, St. Andrew. More than 130 primary school students, teachers, and community members participated. The event included a tour of the nursery facility and visitors participated in interactive, hands-on learning activities that helped to build awareness about TNC's work in the Grenville Bay Area. These activities also showed visitors how they can be directly involved in conservation efforts that help to adapt to our changing climate. The event introduced the newly

interpretive features of the plant nursery including interactive displays and educational posters. "As an individual passionate about environmental conservation, it was gratifying to have the opportunity to engage with young minds and instill in them a sense of responsibility towards our planet," explained Kendon James, Technical Officer with Windward Islands Research & Education Foundation (WINDREF). "One of the most striking aspects of the day was witnessing the students' enthusiasm and eagerness to learn."


Natainia Lummen, Senior NbS and Community Resilience Specialist at TNC, expressed that raising environmental awareness and sharing actions individuals can take are necessary. "As we introduced them to concepts such as Adaptation, Climate Change and Nature based Solutions, we were able to learn about changes they are observing in their communities and share small actions they can take to adjust behavior as well as minimize the impacts they are experiencing."

Following the tour, participants enjoyed art and craft exercises, trivia, and games, all in the theme of World Environment Day. In keeping with this year's global theme of reducing plastic pollution, participants upcycled discarded plastic bottles to create planters to grow seedlings in their school and home gardens.

The Grenville Bay community plant nursery is part of a program of work called At the Water's Edge (AWE), which was established to support coastal resilience actions including growing mangroves and other native coastal plants for a "living shoreline" erosion reduction project, and other actions designed to reduce climate-related impacts to the vulnerable communities surrounding Grenville Bay.

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