GRANDE RIVIERE
Story

2013 WIDECAST Annual Meeting
Baltimore ~ February 2-3

GRANDE RIVIERE NATURE TOUR GUIDE ASSOCIATION

Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guide Association is a community based, volunteered driven organization established in 1999.
Where we are and Our Vision

To place Trinidad & Tobago as “the Premier Turtle Tourism Destination Globally”

Trinidad & Tobago “The Global Turtle Village”

Grande Riviere Village
WHO IS The Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guide Association?

The story starts with these guys.
What we do as a group:
Balancing development and conservation of regional resources to benefit Community People
FOCUS

- Research and Monitoring
  - Tag animals and collect scientific data (Research)
- Protect Habitat
- Reduce Mortality

PROGRAMMES
- Beach Patrols
- Advocacy for Protected Areas

A UNIQUE SITE

Grande Riviere has as many as 500 turtles per night nesting on a beach 1.2km which is nestled in the heart of our community of 380 persons.

Highest density nesting site globally.
Leatherback sea turtle nesting activity* for Trinidad

* As measured by local oil counts
- Mature: 1 March - 30 June
- Fledging: 1 June - 30 September
- Grande Riviere: 1 March - 31 August

2012 International Incident
The Grande Riviere Story
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 3, 2011</td>
<td>Due to the heavy rainfall caused by the two day passage of a Tropical Depression, the Grande Riviere River behaves erratically and overflows its banks. There is unprecedented flooding in the village and all fishing boats sink. The boat owned by the Grande Riviere Nature Tours Guide Association (GRNTGA) is also damaged. At this time, the river is running in its normal northerly direction. An elderly resident says that several years ago the Grande Riviere river behaved in a similar fashion, also causing severe flooding and damage to the village.</td>
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### MINISTER OF WORKS VISITS

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<tr>
<td>Dec 4, 2011</td>
<td>Minister of Works, Jack Warner visits the area and surveys the damage. The Minister’s recommendation is that the river be dredged.</td>
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### CONTACTING MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

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| Jan 2012 | Grande Riviere fishermen write a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture requesting compensation for the twenty (20) boats that were destroyed in December.  
(There has been no response to this letter to date.) |
### “DRY” SEASON

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<td>Jan – May 2012</td>
<td>Due to the absence of a dry season, the mouth of the Grande Riviere river remains open. The river still flows out to sea, but constant rainfall results in the mouth’s location shifting from east and west on a regular basis. All sand in the path of the river is washed away whenever the river mouth’s direction changes. The changing direction of the river begins to accelerate erosion of the beach.</td>
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### TURTLE SEASON OPENS

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<td>Mar 1, 2012</td>
<td>The 2012 Turtle Season commences. The Grande Riviere River now flows east of Hosang Street in the village, cutting through Zone 4 on the beach. The Grande Riviere Nature Tour Guides Association (GRNTGA) commences its nightly turtle patrols. GRNTGA is the only group recognized by the Forestry Department for turtle conservation and tours at Grande Riviere, which is a closed beach. A participant in the National Sea Turtle Tagging and Monitoring Programme, GRNTGA is also the only group given permission to collect turtle census data at Grande Riviere on behalf of the Forestry Department. It has been doing this for the last 12 years</td>
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Traditionally, Zone 4 is the largest nesting area on the Grande Riviere beach. However, due to this zone’s proximity to the river mouth, it experiences the highest loss of eggs in the nesting season. Between March and July, as a result of the Grande Riviere river’s new direction and constant movement from east to west, 1344 turtle nests are lost in Zone 4. Zone 4 is no longer the largest nesting area.
ZONE 4: THEN AND NOW

August 2006

July 2012

THE COMMUNITY IS MAROONED

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<td>June 2012</td>
<td>The change in course of the Grande Riviere river affects livelihoods in the village. People impacted include:</td>
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<td>• 40 fishermen who are now unable to navigate safely out to sea</td>
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<td>• 60 persons attached to GRNTGA</td>
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<td>• 12 persons from Sans Souci to Matelot employed by Mt. Plaisir Hotel</td>
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<td>• 25 persons employed by the Le Grande Almandier Hotel</td>
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<td>The Grande Riviere community is now marooned by river. The Ferdinand River, which is situated in the middle of the beach (Zone 3) also begins to change its course. The Ferdinand River now runs in a westerly direction behind Zone 3 and has begun to erode Zone 2 on the beach. People's property is being eroded and homes are threatened. Viable turtle nesting sites are being damaged.</td>
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FERDINAND RIVER

FISHERMEN TRY TO GET OUT TO SEA
## CONTACTING STATE AGENCIES

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| Week of July 1, 2012 | As the situation worsens, the Grande Riviere community initiates contact with several state bodies, seeking remediation.  
The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) is contacted, but they advise that the villagers notify the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation.  
The Corporation tells the villagers that a team will be dispatched to evaluate the situation. The Corporation also says that this is an issue for the Drainage Division. The Corporation later advises that its team was sent and the situation evaluated.  
In the meantime, villagers use shovels to try re-route the river. The river’s passage is now threatening to topple Mt. Plaisir Hotel onto the beach. |
DANGER TO MT. PLAISIR HOTEL
## FIRST VISITS, INCLUDING MEDIA

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| Week of July 1, 2012 | GRNTGA contacts the Drainage Division, and is told that the Division’s head will be notified.  
Mr. Joth Singh, CEO of the Environmental Agency (EMA) is also contacted, by both GRNTGA and Pierro, proprietor of Mt. Plaisir Hotel.  
Mr. Pantin, superintendent of Regional Corporation, and Terry Rondon, Councillor for Toco, visit Grande Riviere to survey the situation.  
A reporter from CNC3 TV visits and does interviews for a story. A team from the Guardian newspaper also visits and covers the situation.  
All visits highlight that the solution is to dredge the river. |
### EMA & FORESTRY VISIT

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<td><strong>Week of July 1, 2012</strong></td>
<td>On July 5, Mr. Joth Singh, CEO of the EMA, visits the site.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; On July 6, a team from the Forestry Department visits.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; Marc De Verteuil petitions the Ministry of Environment to send an excavator to Mt. Plaisir Hotel, as the situation facing the hotel worsens daily.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; Villagers contact the Ministry of Tourism, who advises that the situation does not fall under the Ministry's purview.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; Dr. Bachan, TVT Executive Director and TDC Director, is contacted. He advises that he will try to seek assistance.</td>
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### EXCAVATOR ARRIVES

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<td><strong>July 6, 2012</strong></td>
<td>An excavator from the Ministry of Works arrives in Grande Riviere, brought in by the military.  &lt;br&gt;  &lt;br&gt; The Grande Riviere villagers were not advised that an excavator was being sent.</td>
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<td>July 7, 2012</td>
<td>A mound of sand is excavated from Zone 4 and used to block the Grande Riviere River.</td>
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**WORKS BEGIN**

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<td>July 8, 2012</td>
<td>The excavator and tractor on site begin work, east of the mound that was deposited to block the river. Residents gather to watch the activities. The excavator opens a channel north of the original blockage to the river mouth, allowing the Grande Riviere river to now flow out to sea. The heavy equipment pushes sand from Zone 4 in an easterly direction and in full view of the Grande Riviere community, unearths eggs and hatchlings.</td>
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### THE MEDIA RETURNS

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| July 8, 2012 | The Trinidad Express is contacted and reporter Kim Boodram visits the site and interviews Len Peters from GRTNGA; Pierro Guerrini from Mt. Plaisir Hotel; Marc de Verteuil and Sherwin Ruiz.  
In his interview with the Express, Mr. Peters says that he regrets the loss of turtle eggs and hatchlings caused by the remedial dredging work. He notes however that the work was necessary, and was part of the ongoing attempt to find the balance between turtle conservation and the economic livelihood of the Grande Riviere community. He further notes and regrets that the relevant regulatory agencies were not present to coordinate the work.  
Mr. Guerrini tells the Express that while he agrees with the work undertaken, he believes it should have been done further west of the selected site. Mr. Ruiz tells the reporter that a different, more specific method should have been used and greater judgment exercised. |

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| July 9, 2012 | Mr. Joth Singh, CEO of the EMA visits the site.                                                                                                   41  
Articles appear in the Trinidad Express and Trinidad Guardian. |
PRESS CONFERENCE

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| July 10, 2012 | A Press Conference is held in Grande Riviere. Present are:  
• Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, Ganga Singh  
• Minister of Tourism, Stephen Cadiz;  
• Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, Ramona Ramdial  
• Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of the Environment, Anthony Rammarine  
• Chairman, Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, Keshwar Maharaj,  
• Director of Drainage, Ministry of Works, Ram;  
• Councillor Terry Rondon  
• President of Grande Riviere Village Council  

Members of the community are invited.
Letter of the day

Tears for baby leatherback turtles

It is with disappointment, anger and frustration that I write this regarding todays' incident at the leatherback turtle nesting beaches in the Caribbean.

Two of the three Leatherback turtles that were killed were nesting females. The third, a male, was attempting to mate and was killed. The third turtle was nesting. The eggs that are laid will now be lost.

It is hard to believe that in 2013, an incident of this magnitude could occur. The loss of these turtles is a tragedy that will not be forgotten.

JULY 10 – MEDIA COVERAGE

Turtle tragedy...thousands of hatchlings crushed to death

There is no single incident that has caused more concern than the turtle nesting beach tragedy that occurred on July 9. The incident involved two Leatherback turtles and one Loggerhead turtle.

The Leatherback turtles were nesting on the beach when they were killed. The Loggerhead turtle was killed while attempting to mate with a female. The incident has sparked outrage across the region.

JULY 10 – MEDIA COVERAGE

Pope Francis to visit the Caribbean

Pope Francis is scheduled to visit the Caribbean in November. The visit is expected to draw a large crowd of faithful and tourists alike.

The Pope's visit is a significant event for the region, and it is expected to have a positive impact on the economy.
JULY 10 – MEDIA COVERAGE

Rondon happy with work at Grande Riviere

EMA: Only a few hundred turtles lost
SIGN OF BEACH RECOVERY – JULY 10

JULY 11 – MEDIA FRENZY CONTINUES

Emotions run high
JULY 11 – MEDIA FRENZY CONTINUES

TEARS OF THE TURTLES

This can never happen again.

These were the words of Ministry Manager Stephen Cadiz, who was on the scene at the Grand Riviers beach that was devastated by the wind and weather, crushing a sea turtle nesting area and killing hundreds of hatchlings. The operation was carried out by the Department of the Environment and Labour which caused the destruction and is currently investigating the incident.

Cadiz said there was a lot of damage to the turtle nesting area, and that the hatchlings were killed due to the strong winds. He also said that the Department of the Environment and Labour is currently investigating the incident to determine what caused the destruction.

JULY 11 – MEDIA FRENZY CONTINUES

Turtle hatchlings tragedy

Cadiz: The problem was communication

While the news of the turtle hatchlings tragedy continues to make headlines, the real issue is the lack of communication between the various parties involved. This lack of communication led to the destruction of the turtle nesting area and the loss of hundreds of hatchlings.

Kim Goodman

Ministry Manager

March to August nesting season

Cadiz said he understands the issues and stated that the lack of communication is a major problem that needs to be addressed. He added that the Department of the Environment and Labour is currently working on a plan to prevent similar incidents in the future.

While the news of the turtle hatchlings tragedy continues to make headlines, the real issue is the lack of communication between the various parties involved. This lack of communication led to the destruction of the turtle nesting area and the loss of hundreds of hatchlings. The Department of the Environment and Labour is currently working on a plan to prevent similar incidents in the future.
MINISTRY LAUNCHES PR CAMPAIGN

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INCREASE IN VOLUNTEERS

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<td>July 16, 2012</td>
<td>GRNTGA says that before this event, there were no turtle conservation volunteers for the 2012 season. Post the event, the group has received requests from 75 persons to become turtle conservation volunteers.</td>
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JULY 16 – NEW SLANT IN MEDIA COVERAGE

Works Ministry should have applied for a CEC

Under wraps
IN SUMMARY

From a Conservation perspective Zone 3 needed to be protected as it currently accounted for 45% of the nesting on the beach...

Mr. Peters of the Turtle Village Trust indicated that the threat is even bigger than that as the other end of the beach threatens zone 1 and this also needs to be solved. The reality of the situation is that if this is not addressed there may be no nesting beach for sea turtles to nest on next year (2013). From a Social and Economic perspective jobs and infrastructure needed to be preserved so the risks needed to be mitigated.

I think that we all need to take away a major lesson from this. Environmental issues are sensitive issues and we cannot afford the luxury of sensationalisation as the fallout may have far reaching consequences. Travel agents in the United States had indicated that they cannot sell Trinidad and Tobago and so we had to face the fall out to our ecotourism industry and the possible consequences to the people of Grande Riviere who depend on this industry for their livelihoods.

What is required is that we deal with issues based on fact. We owe it to our country and our community conservationists who toil night after night to be more responsible.

I close with the hope that all of us will strengthen our collective resolve and commitment to this beautiful place and the species we seek to protect. There is need for greater dialog and respect among stakeholders and Government Agencies. Today, I see the future of accomplishment through cooperative effort.
TODAY

Video
CONTACT US

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