




Save The Bays Gazette

March 2019



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Rogue developers –

BEWARE!

Anyone seeking to engage in unregulated development in the Bahamas should heed the cautionary example of Peter Nygard. For years considered untouchable, the controversial fashion designer now finds himself caught in a mire of serious legal troubles and facing possible prison time over his disrespect for the environmental and contempt for the rule of law. *SEE PG 8*

Environmental Rights • Freedom of Information • Legal Victories

Table of CONTENTS

Youth Environmental Ambassador program a smashing success 2

Bishop Michael Eldon School volunteers help monitor water quality 4

Save the Bays named partner by leading global nonprofit 5

Making it safe for children to enjoy the water 6

Bimini: A cry for mother earth 9

STB to take legal action over Oban oil refinery proposal 10

No new power plant at Clifton Pier without full pollution remediation plan 11

STB plants 15 Neem trees on GB Humane Society grounds 13

Making a splash in the name of environmental awareness 14

Making sure it is safe to go in the water 15

Fraternity brothers help monitor water quality 16

Youth Environmental Ambassador program a SMASHING SUCCESS

Groundbreaking student leadership program now has more than 200 graduates • STORY ON PG 3

They trek through woods and meander through gardens with cameras and notepads in hand. They explore the undersea world and get up close with snakes and birds. They are participants of one of the most sought after programs in The Bahamas, Youth Environmental Ambassadors (YEA).

Students learned about sharks and rays in The Bahamas through lectures lead by international experts Dr. Tristan Guttridge and Michael Scholl of Save Our Seas Foundation.

Sponsored by Save The Bays, the program now in its fifth year has trained more than 200 students who are learning today to appreciate the precious and often fragile resources of The Bahamas that they pledge to respect tomorrow.

In 2018, 33 students were participating in the program that consistently draws more applicants than it has space to accommodate. Participants experience the variety of rich Bahamian ecosystems through first-hand experiences complete with lectures and field trips.

On two Saturdays of each month, facilitators, all of whom have secured leadership training through Center for Creative Leadership, lead both theory and

practical components allowing YEAs the opportunity to learn about these systems then explore them, conducting observatory exercises, making assessments or gathering data on human impact. The program also attracts guest lecturers, and so far the students have learned about sharks and rays in The Bahamas with lectures lead by Dr. Tristan Guttridge and Michael Scholl of Save Our Seas Foundation.

Recent, expeditions included treks through Grand Bahama's most touted green

• SEE PG 3

This youth ambassador is proud of her new knowledge and achievements.

Launched in 2013, Save The Bays has more than 500 members and over 20,000 Likes on Facebook. The environmental protection aspect of its legal work is unprecedented in The Bahamas and its education and advocacy arms engage in activities including beach clean-ups, water monitoring, preservation of marine resources, training of Youth Environmental Ambassadors, Camp Eco-Explorer, talks on climate change and supporting efforts to teach every young person in The Bahamas how to swim. Save The Bays supporters say they will not rest until a comprehensive Environmental Protection Act is law.





When I reflect on the past five years, I could not be more satisfied with the reception of the YEA program, the enthusiasm displayed by our ambassadors and the overall support. **Rashema Ingraham**

• FROM PG 2

space, Gardens of The Groves, a glass-bottom sailing excursion with shark and coral reefs identification and personal interactions with a Bahamian boa constrictor. These expeditions complemented three academic sessions that focused on the connectivity of life between animals, trees and humans; a study of sharks and rays in The Bahamas; and the pine forest ecosystem.

“When I reflect on the past five years, I could not be more satisfied with the reception of the YEA program, the enthusiasm displayed by our ambassadors and the overall support,” said Rashema Ingraham YEA Coordinator. “We are always so impressed by the growth of our students at the end of each module. By then, many of them find their voices and become

advocates for the environment. It is truly a proud moment.”

Ingraham explains the competitive entry process.

“Each fall students are recommended by their teachers and guidance counsellors,” said Ingraham. “Students are then selected based on submission of two essays in which they demonstrate their understanding of the essence of Save the Bays and their knowledge of climate change and its effect on coastal communities of which The Bahamas is.”

The YEA program is part of Save The Bays education mandate. The organization has also led the demand for a strong Freedom of Information Act, transparency in government, an end to unregulated development and more. Its strong legal arm has experienced courtroom victories leading to greater sensitivity to environmental impact.



Maria Williams, a member of Youth Environmental Ambassador (YEA) program and Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Academy student, gets up close and personal with a Bahamian boa constrictor during a session of the Save The Bays program designed to nurture respect for the environment and create environment ambassadors of the future.

Bishop Michael Eldon School volunteers help monitor water quality



Save the Bays/Waterkeeper Bahamas representative Rashema Ingraham explains the procedures for measuring water quality.



BMES volunteers measure the salinity of coastal waters on Grand Bahama.



Students meticulously log their findings at each stage of the study.



**STB
participates
in islandwide
clean-up**

Members of Save The Bays joined scores of community members to take part in the Grand Bahama Port Authority's annual islandwide clean-up. The STB volunteers focused on the street side area of several main thoroughfares, which are frequently inundated with litter.



**NORTH BIMINI
MARINE RESERVE**

BIMINI MANGROVE



Watch the video online

www.youtube.com/watch?v=skAN-53eWcl



Save the Bays named partner by leading global nonprofit

A reputation for fearless and groundbreaking environmental advocacy has led to Save the Bays being named an official partner of one of the world's foremost environmental nonprofits – opening the door to funding and support from hundreds of environmentally conscious companies and individuals in more than 40 countries.

One Percent for the Planet is an extensive network of businesses that donate one percent of all profits directly to approved organisations that are addressing critical environmental issues. This partnership will trigger a host of benefits for STB, including

Affiliation will give local advocacy group access to funding from more than 1,200 environmentally conscious companies and individuals around the world

visibility on the One Percent website, the ability to use One Percent branding, and connections with businesses around the world that may be interested in supporting the group's work.

"This is huge," said Rashema Ingraham, Outreach Coordinator for STB. "One Percent for the Planet is known and respected worldwide. The organisation's network is extremely

wide-ranging, its branding appears on millions of products and services, and 20 percent of all consumers in the United States recognise the logo.

"With this new partnership, STB can take its advocacy on behalf of the country's precious natural resources to a whole new level. We plan to use the benefits of this affiliation to strengthen our Youth Environmental

Ambassadors program, which has already reached thousands of local children; and to increase awareness of the urgent need for sustainable, properly regulated development."

One Percent's nonprofit partners receive contributions from more than 1,200 member businesses and numerous private individuals in 48 countries around the world. Donors, in turn, have a trustworthy and accessible way to support the environment by donating to organisations such as STB which have been vetted and approved to receive funds.

Founded in 2002, it has already contributed more than \$175

million to environmental preservation and the global network continues to grow all the time.

"This is really a game-changer for our organisation," said STB Chairman Joseph Darville. "We feel it is a just reward for the groundbreaking work we have done in recent years to combat unregulated development and raise awareness of the dangers to our delicate marine and terrestrial environment posed by the scourge of industrial pollution.

"We could not be more pleased to have been chosen for this honour and we thank One Percent for the Planet for recognising the integrity and legitimacy of our work.

Eco-Schools on Grand Bahama get 'Green Flag' certification

Save the Bays executives were selected to serve on the panel of judges as three local schools presented their bids to earn the international Green Flag Award.

To be eligible for this prestigious certification, a school must accomplish the criteria under of seven steps:

- Form an eco-action team
- Conduct an environmental audit
- Create an eco-action plan
- Monitor and evaluate progress
- Link to existing curriculum
- Involve the community
- Create your Eco-Code

Each of the criteria has an associated point value. The Green

Flag requires a total of 300 points. It is the highest level award of its kind that a school can achieve and must be renewed every two years.

The judges conducted a walkabout to view each the school's implementation of their eco-action plan and gauge their readiness for the Green Flag Award. In the end, all three schools – Freeport Gospel Chapel School, Lucaya International School and Bishop Michael Eldon School – all earned the right to fly the green flag.

The Eco-Schools programme is run in The Bahamas by the Bahamas Reef Environmental Educational Foundation (BREEF).



Bishop Michael Eldon School students, teachers and administrators are proud of what the school has achieved.



Freeport Gospel Chapel students erupt with joy upon learning that they have earned the prestigious certification.

Participants learned new skills in safety.



The students showed off some of their new skills.



Volunteer Instructor Connor Marios with students.

MAKING IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN TO ENJOY THE WATER

Save The Bays partners with international group SwimTayka and Waterkeepers Bahamas to offer free swimming, first aid and life guard training to young people in Bimini. The children of Bimini can now enjoy the stunning marine environment that surrounds them with increased safety and confidence thanks to a groundbreaking partnership led by Save The Bays.



Bimini Learn to Swim Students practiced ocean survival skills with volunteer instructors on the westside of North Bimini.

STB partnered with SwimTayka and Waterkeepers Bahamas to offer free swim and lifeguard training to young Biminities, who responded enthusiastically and in considerable numbers to the opportunity to increase their self-assurance in and around the water.

"All Bahamians should enjoy the ocean, which is a sacred gift that has been bestowed upon our people," said Joseph Darville, chairman of STB. "At the same time, we want to ensure that people, and especially children, can swim, play and get to know their precious marine environment in conditions that are as safe as possible."

"So many times in the past, enjoyment of the water has been marred by tragedies that could so easily have been prevented had the proper training and life-skills been in place."

International group SwimTayka sends qualified instructors into developing communities around the world to not only to teach

both children and adults how to swim, a skill that could one day save their life, but also to educate them about caring for the open water and how to preserve it for future generations. They also teach skills that open the door to future jobs as lifeguards and swimming instructors.

The group sent qualified volunteer swimming instructors from around the world to lead the free swimming classes for the children of Bimini. The programme included instruction in basic water safety, first aid and environmental education, while important classes were also led by SwimTayka's lead drowning prevention volunteer.

Nathalie Vallieres Martin, SwimTayka board member, said: "This week has been an incredibly enriching experience, not only for the kids but for us as volunteers as well. The kids have learnt a life skill, and they will be able to contribute to the island's drowning prevention message. We are

so grateful to our partner, Save The Bays."

The event was hosted by Rashema Ingraham, the Coastal Waterkeeper for Bimini and executive director of Waterkeeper Bahamas, which is part of a global network of organisations that aim to make as much of the world's water as possible fishable, drinkable and swimmable.

Ingraham said: "Most of our efforts centre on monitoring water quality levels and regular reporting. We recognise however that the human element is central to all of our work and that the point of swimmable water is that the community has the skills and opportunity to take advantage of it."

Ingraham said the great response from the people of Bimini has encouraged them to seek to conduct similar exercises in other communities around the Bahamas, and that she hopes that SwimTayka will continue to partner with STB and Waterkeeper Bahamas to make this a reality.



Enjoying the best of that their island has to offer



The authorities took possession of Nygard Cay and locked the fashion designer and his associates out.

Rogue developers –

BEWARE!

• FROM PG 1

Under the protection of various PLP governments – a party he has supported generously for more than 30 years – Nygard was allowed to illegally claim public property around his ostentatious coastal home with impunity, laughing in the faces of regulators and environmental advocates.

All that came to an abrupt end in late 2018, when he saw his home seized by the courts and a bankruptcy petition filed against him. Not long after, a warrant was issued for his immediate arrest.

Over the last 30 years Nygard has used unauthorised dredging and illegal marine construction to grow his property to nearly twice its original size, causing environmental destruction to nearby Clifton Bay and Jaws Beach in the process. When an FNM government finally required him to reverse the

damage in 2010, he simply bankrolled the return to power of his favoured PLP and continued to defy the law.

The legal troubles Nygard faces today are the result of his own arrogance. The bankruptcy notice came just hours after court officers and local police were forced to seize Nygard Cay following the designer's refusal to grant them access, despite a court order. The property was to be levied to satisfy the \$2.9 million debt Nygard owed to STB in relation to a string of defeats suffered in the local courts. Meanwhile, the arrest warrant was issued because Nygard failed to show up in court three times to be sentenced for contempt for repeatedly dredging the sea floor in defiance of another court order.

Nygard eventually paid the majority of his court debts, resulting in the

return of his home, however the warrant remains in place; he is to be arrested on sight by authorities in the Bahamas.

STB legal director Fred Smith, QC, called the court's actions appropriate and a reaffirmation of the sanctity of the rule of law.

"The judge has sent a message that no one is above the law in The Bahamas. For far too long, wealthy, powerful and politically influential individuals like Peter Nygard have been allowed to run roughshod over this country. They have caused wholesale environmental devastation, simply to improve their already opulent lifestyle at the expense of everyone else. What has happened to Mr. Nygard should serve as a cautionary tale, a warning to everyone who lives here that they must respect the rule of law.

"I know that many foreign investors and many

Bahamians at times are skeptical of the effectiveness of the judicial system but the reality is that perseverance and application will ultimately succeed in upholding the administration of justice. The reality is that the Bahamian judicial system works."

Mr Smith said there is now a permanent injunction against the government considering any applications or issuing any permits to Nygard for any construction on land or at sea at Nygard Cay.

"The type of poorly regulated activity undertaken by Nygard sets a terrible precedent," he said. "If all property owners in The Bahamas were allowed to artificially expand and develop their beach fronts the way he has done, it would have a catastrophic effect on the reefs, marine habitat and aquatic life that make the Bahamian waters so special and unique."

Legal challenges - next steps

Oil Pollution in Clifton Bay

With the election of the FNM government in 2017, STB was hopeful that the nation's new leaders would live up to their word and bring an end to the rampant pollution of Clifton Bay, perpetrated by a number of industrial plants in the area – none more egregious than the government's own BPL Power Station.

Unfortunately, two years later, no action has been taken. STB therefore is considering resurrecting its \$30 million lawsuit against the government for failure to halt and remediate oil pollution in the area.

The New Providence Landfill

In 2017, STB launched legal proceedings over the repeated fires that raged at the The New Providence Landfill, blanketing the surrounding communities in toxic smoke and leading to a number of serious health problems, particularly for children.

With the announcement of a new manager for the Landfill and a full remediation program, STB is taking a wait-and-see approach, and has had the lawsuit on hold for the time being, although the damages will in time have to be paid to those nearby residents who have been abused by toxic pollution for so long.

Little Harbour, Abaco

The residents are bravely resisting an attempt by the Winding Bay Resort to construct a large marina and several on-land structures which will completely alter the nature of this small, picturesque community. The project is proceeding without consultation as required by law and without any respect for the locals.

STB launched legal proceedings, but these have been hampered by the government and developer's conspiratorial applications for 'security for costs', which would require the locals to put up a quarter of a million dollars before the court even considers their case. STB has vowed to fight against this move – essentially an attempt to put the price of justice beyond the grasp of regular Bahamians – all the way to the Privy Council in London if necessary.

Blackbeard's Cay

In 2015, STB won a landmark court case in which the attraction known as Blackbeard's Cay was ordered shut down by the Supreme Court of The Bahamas because it proceeded without the proper permits and approvals. Nevertheless, the former PLP government refused to enforce the court order, and the developer continued to do as it pleased. Unfortunately, despite high hopes that the new administration would uphold the rule of law, the status quo has remained. STB is therefore considering its options – which include applying to commit the relevant Cabinet Ministers to prison for contempt of court in ignoring an order of the Supreme Court.

• Save The Bays has been fighting since 2013 against Nygard's egregious environmental crimes and brought a number of legal actions against the fashion designer and the politicians who allowed him to get away with it. Though the fight has been long and hard, several recent court victories have encouraged the group to believe that in the end, justice will prevail.



Bimini: A cry for mother earth

By Joseph Darville | STB Chairman

A recent trip to Bimini, Cat Cay and Ocean Cay, by a team from Save The Bays has us asking more questions of this FNM government than we can find answers to. Day and night, the all too familiar sound of pilings being continuously driven into the ocean bed can be heard echoing across Bimini as an extension to the cruise ship pier takes place.

Back in 2014 Save The Bays fought the destructive resort over its proposed mega-pier, knowing very well that the island was too small to bring a 1,600 person ship, and that the demand for travel to Bimini at that volume was unsustainable in any case. The case got all the way to the Privy Council; but we were thwarted at the eleventh hour when the resort mysteriously managed to produce the relevant missing approvals overnight along with government signatures.

In the end, our worst fears were confirmed: the cruise ship stopped coming after a year, yet 12 pristine reefs were suffocated in the process, coastal erosion soared, beaches on the west side of Bimini disappeared overnight, fish stocks dwindled, and the infrastructure on the island proved it could not cope with overflowing trash, a lack of water and electricity on an already overextended island and resort.

So why is the pier being extended yet again? Were the public or environmental agencies made aware of this and whatever happened to the mitigation measures dating back to phase 1 of the development, never to be heard of again? Bimini has no new clinic, no new

school, no sea defenses, no improved infrastructure, despite the promises. It did just get a fire truck, but that was courtesy of some American home owners who raised funds after the mail boat caught fire and not from the resort.

So what exactly did Bimini get in exchange for the loss of 650+ acres of mangrove forest and how has that end of the island managed to "grow" to three times the size of what was actually purchased by Gerado Capo as Bimini Bay Resort back in 1998 under the Quiet Titles Act through Ingraham's Government? Which brings up the question, How was Bimini's biggest piece of real estate, 650 acres plus, sold legally under that Act to a foreign investor? The Sound as it's known to Biminities, was once not so long ago, the home to the rare small sawtooth shark, millions of shrimp, turtles as well as the marine hatchery for multitudes of other species. Now you are lucky if you see anything except silted up, muddy water from all the development, dredging and run off, with not a single boom in sight to protect our waters.

My heart bleeds for what successive governments have sold off, favouring the mighty dollar over Mother Earth's diverse marine eco habitats. Which brings me to another question, Just how much land has the resort created? And if the ocean bed cannot be sold, only leased from the government, then surely the land created on and from the sea bed should only be up for lease and not for sale for millions of dollars that are going into foreign ownership hands resulting from

real estate companies selling million dollar homes. How are Biminities and Our Bahamaland benefitting?

The beach road that once was the gateway to East Wells, where generations after generations have gone for crab, or to see a rare Bimini Boa, or to fish in peace and quiet, has been systematically deliberately destroyed by OPAC, Capo's construction company, in order to create "private beach fronts" for its multi-million dollar beach homes starting at \$3 million, with a private road and security checkpoint behind the homes, making it inaccessible to all but home owners.

Let's not forget that in Hurricane Irma, dozens of the resort's floating docks from the Bahamas' biggest mega-marina burst open spewing tons of polystyrene particles into the ocean making, it look like Bimini had had its first major snowfall. The resort made a show of clearing it up on the morning Prime Minister Minnis was arriving to assess the damage as Bimini's protest groups' videos of the spill went viral through various international environment agencies. A year on, the same type of floating docks are back in place as if waiting for it to happen all over again, while to this day, polystyrene is still washing up on our shores, some chunks several feet long, being ingested by fish and birds. Oh Bimini, how we miss the days when this special little island in the stream could be described so aptly by Dr Martin Luther King as the "Promised Land". If he were to see his Promised Land now, he would shed tears of blood!

Along the islands created upon the extensive seabed, the little mangrove

propagules by the hundreds, if not thousands, are popping their two-leafed heads above the shallow water, as if to say, "Please, please spare us so we can do the task entrusted to us by the Creator."

Who in God's name and on behalf of the people of the Bahamas is monitoring what is continuing to happen in North Bimini Bay? Who is monitoring what is happening on South Cat Cay and Ocean Cay, where the identical savage

and wanton destruction of the sea beds is taking place?

Who, pray tell me – is it the BEST Commission on behalf of the Prime Minister? Is it the Ministry of the Environment? Is it the elected representative for these areas of The Bahamas? We never see any of these entities in these areas to witness the ungodly devastation of our precious environment, seabed, mangroves, coral reefs and all marine life dependent upon these ecosystems.

Our Prime Minister just returned recently from the

United Nations, touting the need for support for our nation to protect, and mitigate against the ravages of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise. Yet we continue to allow foreign entities to come in and extensively demolish those systems which form the very first defence against natural forces.

I earnestly pray that we awaken to our God-entrusted stewardship and protect what has been so graciously and unconditionally gifted to us.

Saving our sharks

Save Our Seas talks sharks and its importance to marine life to students

At the invitation of Save The Bays, experts from the international marine conservation advocacy group Save Our Seas Foundation (SOS) visited The Bahamas to tell

students about the vital importance of sharks to marine ecosystem.

Attendees, all participants of STB's groundbreaking Youth Environmental Ambassador's program, also learned about the types of sharks found in Bahamian waters, and income generated

annually from shark dives and tours.

Since 2003, Save Our Seas has funded over 200 projects in over 50 countries across the globe. Each project strives for deeper understanding and more innovative solutions in marine research, conservation and education.



STB to take legal action over Oban oil refinery proposal

STB legal director Fred Smith, QC, said the group intends to take legal action against the controversial Oban oil refinery and storage facility that is proposed for East Grand Bahama.

Smiths said the government would be gravely mistaken to think the Oban project can be “shoved down the throats of Grand Bahamians”.

“Save The Bays is going to launch a judicial review against the Oban deal,” he said. “We are not going to sit back and have this foisted upon us secretly by a centralized, dictatorial Office of the Prime Minister anymore.”

Smith said the proposed project has been a disaster from start to finish and should be scrapped immediately.

A signing ceremony for the deal was signed in February 2018. However, it was later revealed that this was only “ceremonial” and Oban Energies president Satpal Dhunna had already signed an official official Heads of Agreement with

government away from public scrutiny.

At the time, STB expressed serious concerns that the deal was signed without an Environmental Impact Assessment, and that to locks the government into the project, regardless of what the EIA finds.

The HOA stated, “The parties agree that the government shall not have the right to terminate these heads of agreement based upon any EIA report, but instead shall work with the developer to mitigate any concerns.”

That document has since been scrapped following the revelation of the secret signing, and amid serious concerns about the background of some of the developers, who had faced fraud and other charges in the United States.

Smith called on Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis to “stop signing secret agreements with backdoor deals, centralized government control, [and] failing to respect Family Islanders’ visions or goals,



Above: STB legal director Fred Smith, QC, testing water quality along the pristine coastline of East Grand Bahama.



The untouched beauty of East Grand Bahama, where developers propose to locate the Oban mega-refinery.

or local government, or plans for the future of their community”.

Examining the value of the project, Smith said the development does not contribute to the public treasury, despite the massive tax concessions and Crown land provisions in the HOA.

A fishy deal

STB has called on the government to scrap the disastrous Oban oil refinery proposal

No version of the proposed Oban oil storage and refinery proposal for East Grand Bahama should be considered by the FNM government, Save the Bays has warned.

Ahead of proposed renegotiation talks with the developers, STB chairman Joseph Darville said “even an idiot” can see the

construction involved would “wreak havoc” on surrounding ecosystems.

He also lambasted the government’s attempt at coverup, following reports that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project is complete, but being withheld until a new Heads of Agreement is signed.

“This, in itself sounds most fishy. Even an idiot, without the least understanding about our marine ecosystems, would

realise that even the minimum incursion for establishing an oil refinery, storage facilities and mega ships birthing, even with the most sophisticated and modern machinery, would wreak havoc on some five ecosystems comprising the proposed areas. Presently, those areas are home to a multitude of varieties of sea life; all will all be wiped out with the very first application of dredging machinery.


“Why are we even entertaining any discussions related to such activity, when worldwide we are seeing dramatic departure from digging into the belly, bosom and breasts of Mother Earth to bring up outdated and damaging sources of energy? We should

instead, like wise and sensible small nations are now doing, utilise the natural resources daily available to us to not only obtain energy for our own consumption, but also be in a position to supply it to other entities in the region.

“If we are in the very least concerned about leaving an environmentally sound and safe country for future generations, we must cease forthwith from selling their birthright for the proverbial pot of porridge. It would take one accident, explosion or oil spill to further destroy the area, as well as the entire extent of the south shore of Grand Bahama. The putrid smells from the refineries will forever create health problems, resulting in deaths, across

the entire island,” Mr Darville said.

“Finally, why are we venturing into the destruction of our natural protections against ever increasing and dramatic climate change effects by damaging or destroying the very first barriers against storms and rising seas? We tout the serious consequences on small island nations at the United Nations, yet at the same time we are inviting entities to come in and obliterate protections that they cannot impinge upon in other places. Greed and avarice bring these entities to our shores and we fall prey to their dangling trinkets and magnified false promises of great wealth. It simply must stop.”



The government's cursory attempts to contain the oil leaking from Clifton Pier into the sea are clearly not working.

No new power plant at Clifton Pier without full pollution remediation plan

Save the Bays denounced the government for signing a deal with Shell North America for a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility at Clifton Pier in the absence of a full remediation plan and a path to renewable energy.

The extremely polluted Pier forms part of Clifton Bay, the birthplace of STB and focus of many of its environmental preservation efforts. Chairman Joseph Darville said he was very alarmed to learn that the government had chosen to locate yet another power plant in the area.

"Clifton Pier has become a toxic wasteland, where hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil and other pollutants are allowed to

seep into the ground and water without any of the industrial companies located out there lifting a finger," Darville said. "Now we learn that a sister company of one of these industrial giants has been given a contract to build yet another power plant in the area."

The STB chairman said that while an LNG power generation facility would no doubt be a huge step up, in environmental terms, from the heavily polluting diesel and bunker-C fuel-burning turbines currently operated by Bahamas Power and Light, natural gas is nevertheless highly volatile

and can be susceptible to explosions if not handled properly.

"LNG can be a very dangerous substance to work with, and so any such facility must put in place the absolute top standard of safety protocols and operate according to the highest international standards," he said. "And, though it may be much cleaner than burning oil, LNG is still a petroleum-based, nonrenewable fuel.

"Around the world, the progressive trend is to use LNG in combination with solar or some other form of renewable energy, and then to slowly decrease the

use of natural gas and increase reliance on renewables.

"STB expects the final agreement with Shell to include a clear pathway and firm deadline to 100 percent reliance on renewable energy in the near future.

"In addition, we absolutely insist that the company commit to fully remediating the horrible pollution at Clifton Pier, which is the subject of ongoing legal proceedings between STB and the government.

"Indeed, it is hard to see how the Minnis administration could possibly have struck a deal in good faith without including such a provision; it would amount to adding insult to injury and a slap

in the face of all the regular Bahamians who live in the area, swim in and fish the waters of Clifton, and whose lives have been negatively impacted by the toxic sludge emitted from the industrial area."

Darville said the government should make the Shell LNG deal public immediately so Bahamians can see what has been agreed to in their name.

"Hopefully it is not another Oban-style deal, which is kept secret from the public only for it to be revealed, when it is already too late, that the government has agreed to provisions that are potentially disastrous for the environment," he said.

Environmentalists disturbed by gov't approval of oil drilling

STB challenged the FNM government over its unexpected decision to approve Bahamas Petroleum Company's (BPC) exploration period, a move that would allow the company to drill an exploratory well before December 2020.

BPC said in a statement that it received formal notification from the government as to the "term of the second exploration period of the company's four southern licenses in the territorial waters of The Bahamas, confirming that the second exploration period of

the licenses is extended until 31 December 2020".

The government did not make a formal announcement.

STB Chairman Joseph Darville made it clear that the group is against any drilling in Bahamian waters, and expressed his continued concern with the government's decision.

He also said it was also "disturbing" that the company broke the news.

"When you have a foreign entity breaking the news like this locally it is extremely disconcerting," he said.

"Any sort of news about something significant and potentially dangerous of an event that would take place in our waters, I

would have thought, and I think all of us would have thought the announcement would have come initially from the government, that this was going to be extended."

He continued, "Every news media should be puzzling about that," he said. "That is absolutely disturbing."

According to Darville, the Bahamian people should have been allowed to have their say by way of a referendum.

He said, "We are adamant that if any oil drilling is going to be done in our waters – because... we survive on our pristine waters, whether it is going to be from when tourists come or whether it is going to be from

our marine resources in the water – Bahamians should have a say into whether or not we are going to take that potential catastrophic [risk of] accident with respect to our clean waters."

BPC advised that the government has engaged Black & Veatch to consult on environmental issues related to the drilling.

The company said it is in discussions to enlist a farm-in partner to assist with the initial exploration.

"The confirmation from the government of The Bahamas that the current term of our four southern licenses extends to 31 December 2020 provides the company with a certainty

of tenure over the company's licenses, replacing any perceived above ground issues with complete clarity in fact and law," BPC's CEO Simon Potter said.

"This position has been arrived at following extensive government consultation and whilst this has taken the company a while to establish, there is now a very clear two-year window to advance plans for and to drill an exploratory well providing certainty to potential partners as we move forward in our farm-out discussions.

"Today's news will add considerable impetus to this process."



DIRECTORS

Dedicated on preserving the environment of The Bahamas for future generations.



William Hunter



Kirkland Bodie



Peter Douglas



Hon. Nicholas F. Brady



Joseph Darville



Stuart Cove



R. Craig Symonette



Paco Nunez



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Save The Bays chairman Joe Darville and volunteers till the earth to plant Neem trees to provide shade for the increasing number of domestic animals being taken to the Grand Bahama Humane Society.

STB plants 15 Neem trees on GB Humane Society grounds

Save The Bays took its “greener is better” message to a different kind of platform far from the halls of government and the courts, right to the Grand Bahama Humane Society.

The organisation planted 15 Neem trees on Humane Society grounds to help create shelter for the increasing number of animals housed there.

“Grand Bahama has had so many challenges with a slow economy and one storm after another hitting the island including most recently Hurricane Irma,” said Save The Bays Chairman Joe Darville. “The result has been that many who are displaced or out of work have turned to the Grand Bahama Humane Society, giving up their pets because they simply could not afford to feed and care for them. The Humane Society grounds are large, but there is little shade and with the larger than usual numbers of four-legged residents, staff and volunteers were in a quandary.”

Save The Bays took a chunk of the budget usually reserved for Earth Day when members plant trees on school grounds on various islands and purchased 15 trees from Abaco Neem. They were shipped to Freeport and volunteers from Save The Bays planted them. Grand Bahama Humane Society Executive Director Tip Burrows said they could not be happier.

“We are really thrilled about this wonderful and timely donation,” said Ms. Burrows. “In the summer it gets so hot out in the dog play area, and we want them out of their kennels. We are looking forward to the trees flourishing and providing a canopy of shade for the next few years, maybe even by this coming summer.”

Darville said the trees were specifically selected for their properties and to support local growers.

“Neem is called Nature’s Pharmacy,” he said. “The trees contain all sorts of medicinal properties. They also keep mosquitoes at bay and most importantly for all the Spots and Fidos in the care of the Humane Society, they provide shade.”



Save The Bays volunteers plant 15 Neem trees on the gardens of the Grand Bahama Humane Society, taking the organisation’s message of greener is better to new grounds where a four-legged population will enjoy the shady outdoors.



Cahlin Bannister, a student at Bishop Michael Eldon School, Freeport, waters a tree during the planting of 15 Neem trees at the Grand Bahama Humane Society. The trees were imported from Abaco Neem farms.



Cooperation is key to winning the race.

Making a splash in the name of environmental awareness

For the second year running Waterkeeper® Bahamas hosted Splash Mania, a first-of-its-kind event with kayak races, a paddle-board competition, kiddie games, beach volleyball and a full slate of water-related activities.

Waterkeeper® Executive Director Rashema Ingraham said the event, held at the Manta Ray Village Restaurant in Silver Point Beach, Williams Town, aimed to spread the word about environmental awareness while providing a “fun” playing field for residents and tourists.

“Although we focus on environmental work and environmental protection, we want Bahamians, we want tourists to also enjoy these ecosystems that we work to protect,” she said. “And one way of doing that is to get them in the water to have a good time in a safe environment.”

Ingraham said that for the second year, several

major sponsors returned and some new sponsors came onboard.

These included: Save the Bays, Grand Bahama Nature Tours, Fast Track Management, Aliv, Subway Restaurant, Ocean Reef and Yacht Club, Out to Sea, Pelican Bay Hotel, Bellevue Business Depot, and Chances Games. New sponsors are Sanitation Services, Dolly Madison, and Kelly’s True Value.

There were various race categories for children, teens, and adults, pairs and teams/groups.

Ingraham said that the team races are very popular. “We are so excited that so many companies, fraternities, and sororities are participating in the teams,” she said.

In addition to the races, there was a kayak obstacle course and a beach obstacle course competition. The first 30 people registered also got a free lunch.



One of the teams shares an inspirational moment.



The day was about competition, but also about teamwork and fun.



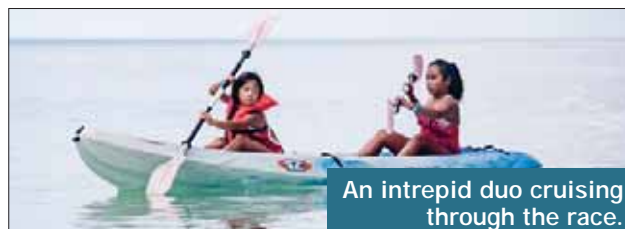
Teams get set to tackle the obstacle course.



Waterkeeper Bahamas Executive Director Rashema Ingraham addresses the crowd to kick off the event.



Two young contestants in the child category work to catch up with the girls' team.



An intrepid duo cruising through the race.



Organisers of the event strike a pose on the beach.



It was a day filled with laughter and enjoyment.



Waterkeeper® Bahamas, a close partner of Save The Bays, is one of over 300 members and affiliates of the Waterkeeper® Alliance, a global network focused on promoting waters that are swimmable, fishable and drinkable. Around the world, Waterkeepers are on the frontlines of the global water crisis, patrolling and protecting more than 2.5 million square miles of rivers, lakes and coastal waterways on six continents.



Minister of State for Grand Bahama, Senator Kwasi Thompson (center), along with Bertha Duncanson from the Department of Environmental Health, Rashema Ingraham (Waterkeeper® Bahamas) and Joseph Darville, Chairman of Save The Bays Bahamas. *BIS/LISA DAVIS*

Making sure it is safe to go in the water

MEMBERS of Waterkeeper® Bahamas met with senior Grand Bahama officials to discuss concerns about the water quality around Taino beach.

This came after abnormalities were detected during Waterkeeper's® routine testing in the area, the first of its kind in The Bahamas.

Minister of State for Grand Bahama, Senator Kwasi Thompson said the government is extremely concerned that the beaches are safe not only for residents, but for visitors coming to the island.

"It is really a top priority for the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Health and for the entire government to make sure that our beaches remain safe," he said. "Tourism is our number one industry, so we do not take these incidents lightly."

Reacting quickly to the Waterkeeper® Bahamas report, Thompson said that the government, through the Ministry of Environment in Grand Bahama immediately conducted their own independent testing. Thankfully, they found that the abnormalities had dissipated.

"We want to inform the public that as a result of what was found, the results of the testing the water levels were normal," he said.

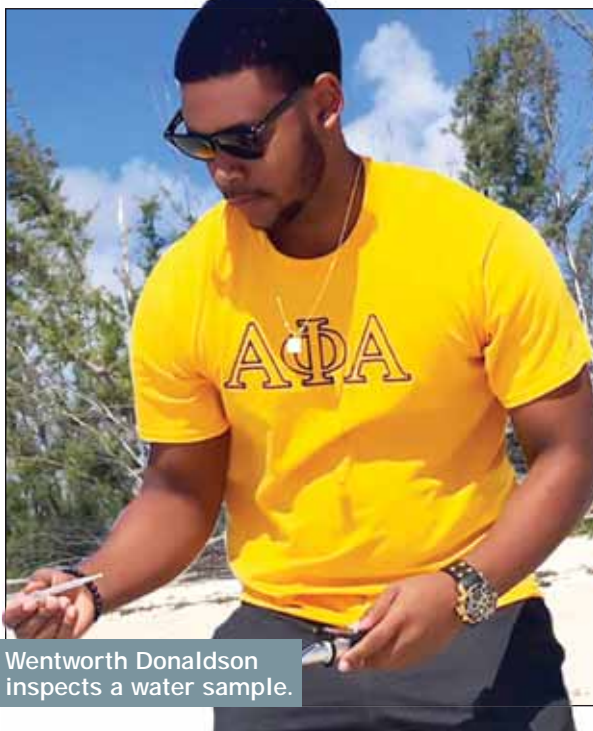
Bertha McPhee-Duncanson, Chief Health Inspector from the Ministry of Environmental Health in Grand Bahama, noted that analysts from Environment Monitoring Risk Assessment Department (EMRAD) collected 15 samples along Taino Beach, beginning from the dredging area of the sea wall, ending at Stoned Crab Restaurant.

"We did two analyses – a chemical analysis, which was consistent with seawater, we also did a microbiology analysis and the samples were sent to our lab in Nassau. We got the results, and they were consistent with the quality that is acceptable for bathing water," said Duncanson.

Waterkeeper® Bahamas will continue testing the waters at various sites around the Bahamas and report back to officials for further evaluation, in an effort to ensure that the public is always safe in the water.



Fraternity brothers Brett Jones and Kevin Turnquest II, collect water samples with a little help from a canine friend at Xanadu Beach.



Wentworth Donaldson inspects a water sample.



Jhirmal Greene uses a refractometer to test the salinity of the water sample.



Fraternity brothers help monitor water quality

Waterkeeper® Bahamas is on a mission to educate the entire population about the importance of clean water. The latest partner in this effort is the Sigma Beta Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and members volunteered to take part in one of the environmental group's groundbreaking water-monitoring programs on Grand Bahama.

One of Alpha Phi Alpha's aims is providing service and advocacy to communities. Helping ensure that Grand Bahamians have drinkable, swimmable water is seen a way to fulfil this objective. As part of the training, fraternity brothers were briefed on beach monitoring; beach safety; public education and the importance of clean water for communities.

"Waterkeepers Bahamas is one of over 300 members and affiliates of the Waterkeeper® Alliance, and is focused on promoting waters that are swimmable, fishable and drinkable," said Rashema Ingraham, WB Executive Director. "While most of our work involving monitoring and reporting is very serious, we also want to build

awareness on the importance of clean water and its impact on human health and the vitality of the ecosystems around it."

Ingraham is part of a team that tests water at 17 public beaches on Bimini, Grand Bahama and western New Providence, on a regular basis. In addition to monitoring water quality, the organisation hosts a number of educational and community projects, including Splash Mania, a first-of-its-kind event with kayak races, paddle-board competition, kiddie games, beach volleyball and a full slate of water-related activities.

Kevin Turnquest Jr., Treasurer of Sigma Beta Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, called the water monitoring experience "amazing". He said:

"It served as a great display of the levels of bacteria typically found in our waters, on a national and international scale and how we rank in proportion to them. These are things we usually think about in an abstract sense, but to actually see it and see the process was very cool."

The volunteer water-monitoring program was introduced to the public

Members of the Sigma Beta Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity with Waterkeepers Bahamas Executive Director, Rashema Ingraham.

last year and has attracted several groups. The brothers of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity have only helped to extend Waterkeeper's service to the community.

Explaining how this volunteer program can offer a greater appreciation for our environment and the roles that unseen toxins play, Turnquest said, "It can be a wonderful teaching experience particularly with young students to stimulate interest in the scientific and research oriented fields."

The water monitoring program is a partnership between Waterkeepers Bahamas and an international organization called Swim Guide, which maintains up-to-date beach and water condition reports on 7,000 beaches around the world. Reports are available at SwimGuide.org.