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TURKS & CAICOS REEF FUND REVIEW FINDS THE DOLPHIN COVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT TO BE DEFECTIVE.

10 August 2016, Providenciales, TCI – The 2016 Fiscal Year for the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) ended on 31 July 2016. “It has been an exciting and productive year,” said Don Stark, Chairman of the TCRF. “We raised over \$110,000 during the fiscal year, about \$45,000 of which was earmarked for the acquisition of a work boat for the TCRF.”

One of our most important projects completed in FY 2016 was in the area of educational outreach, an area in which the TCRF is increasing its focus. The organization completed a marine ecology curriculum for students in Grades 1-6 with assistance from the TCI National Museum and the TCIG Department of Environment and Coastal Resources and this curriculum has been adopted by the TCIG Department of Education. It is being incorporated into the National Curriculum which is currently undergoing revision. TCRF, the National Museum and DECR will conduct a teacher's workshop at the end of August to introduce their contribution to the National Curriculum.

In addition to this major accomplishment, TCRF has continued our work with the Reef Action Team at British West Indies Collegiate; this year helping 12 students gain their advanced open water scuba certification. TCRF also supported the work of a Keene (New Hampshire) University researcher to support the scuba certification of 6 Clement Howell High School students.

Another educational accomplishment was that, for the second time, the TCRF funded a local TCI student to attend one of the summer sessions at the School for Field Studies on South Caicos. In this program, students have the opportunity

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to help conduct marine biology related research and learn a great deal about the TCI marine environment.

But educational accomplishments weren't the only things TCRF accomplished in FY 2016. TCRF worked with the staff from Turtle Cove Marina to install new, permanent sea floor anchors for the channel markers from Sellars Cut to Turtle Cove Marina. The organization distributed 5,000 environmentally friendly mosquito control disks (Mosquito Dunks®) free of charge to local residents on all the inhabited islands of the TCI to help prevent the spread of mosquito borne illnesses. And, of course, the organization continues to work on the installation and maintenance of what now consists of a network of over 100 dive and snorkel boat moorings.

Last spring TCRF purchased a 30 ft. Island Hopper boat to support their on water work. This was made possible by two generous donors as well as smaller donations from the membership. The boat is being outfitted with the equipment needed to continue the mooring, coral monitoring and coral restoration work. The boat was successfully driven down from the Florida Keys in early April.

TCRF was also successful in opening up the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process used by the Planning Department to evaluate proposed new developments. This was accomplished by lobbying of TCIG when the Dolphin Cove project developers on Grand Turk submitted their EIA. Comments from TCRF and those of several expert advisors to TCRF submitted comments on the EIA to the Planning Department. TCRF and their advisors recommended Planning reject the EIA submitted as it is totally inadequate.

TCRF was also successful in gaining approval of their first grant - for a joint project with 3 other islands in the Caribbean. The focus of the 3-year project is to establish a coral nursery for critically endangered Staghorn and Elkhorn corals on all 4 islands and then use these nursery corals to restore local reefs where these two fast growing reef builders have disappeared. TCRF will be working closely with DECR to implement this research project.

“Looking forward to FY2017,” added Mr. Stark, “we are working with DECR and the Department of Culture to host the 1st Annual Lionfish Festival and Derby on Provo (October 29) and on Grand Turk and South Caicos (November 5). We will be aggressively pursuing our new coral nursery project with the goal of having at least 5 coral ladders installed and loaded with coral fragments before the end of the 2017 fiscal year. We will also be pursuing several grant opportunities through various funding mechanisms that are available to us.”

Mr. Stark encourages everyone to become a member of the TCRF to help preserve and protect the environment of the TCI. You can become a member by going to their website – www.tcreef.org/donate.html - or by contacting Mr. Stark by phone (347-8455) or email (donstark@tcreef.org).

About TCRF

Founded in 2010, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund is the only active environmental advocacy organization in the TCI. It is an all volunteer-run organization that provides funding for education, research and conservation programs to individuals, organizations and agencies that help to preserve and protect the environment of the Turks & Caicos Islands. Our goal is to have at least 85% of all funds raised through voluntary contributions from divers and snorkelers visiting the Turks & Caicos Islands directed to the Fund's programs.

Anyone wishing to donate or assist the TCRF in any way can contact them through their website, www.TCReef.org. Scuba divers visiting the islands are encouraged to make a \$10 donation through the purchase of a dive tag that can be attached to their dive gear to show their support. Snorkelers visiting the islands can show their support through the \$5 purchase of a pink or blue silicone wristband. A complete list of outlets for TCRF merchandise can be found on the organization's website.

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