

Species Conservation

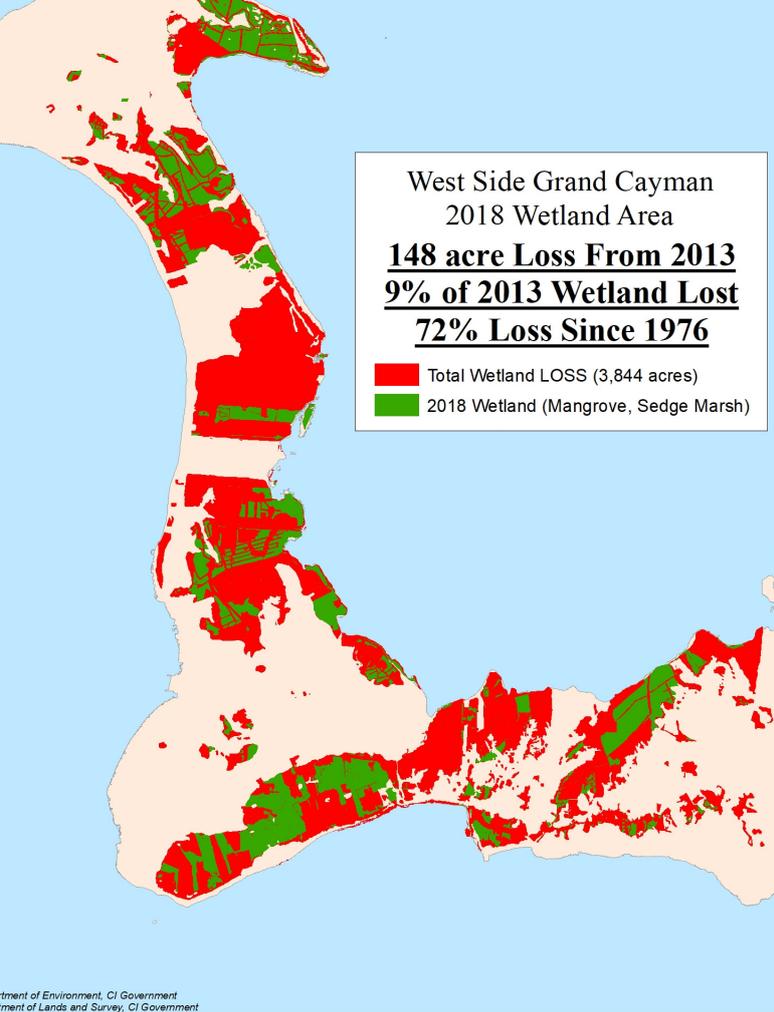
Creating a Safe, Healthy
Environment for the people of
George Town



Project Proposal:



South Sound Mangrove Park and
Tarpon Alley Trail



This proposal aims to raise awareness of the development proposals affecting Cayman's seasonally flooded South Sound Mangrove Basin and the urgent need to retain this primary habitat and set aside a wildlife reserve and corridor to protect the natural environment for the safety, health and wellbeing of the people who live in the South Sound basin.

2018 Wetland Status

Mangroves

are rich in biodiversity and the South Sound wetlands basin is at imminent threat of being extinguished by development. A huge variety of wildlife lives or breeds in this mangrove ecosystem, and in our interior they provide habitat for hickatee's, tarpon, tadpoles and other juveniles and are home to an array of nesting, breeding and migratory birds(Fn.1).

Habitat

When mangrove forests are cleared valuable habitat is lost, displacing the wildlife and threatening the survival of myriad species.

Science

As well as carbon sequesters, the forests are also a potential source of undiscovered biological materials that could benefit mankind, such as antibacterial compounds and pest-resistant genes, which are also lost when mangrove forest habitat areas are cleared.



Infrastructure concerns



According to recent CPA minutes, the NRA estimate that the construction of the proposed roads corridor [purple] is anticipated for the medium-term horizon (5-10 years) given the pace of current development occurring to the North and South of the proposed road.



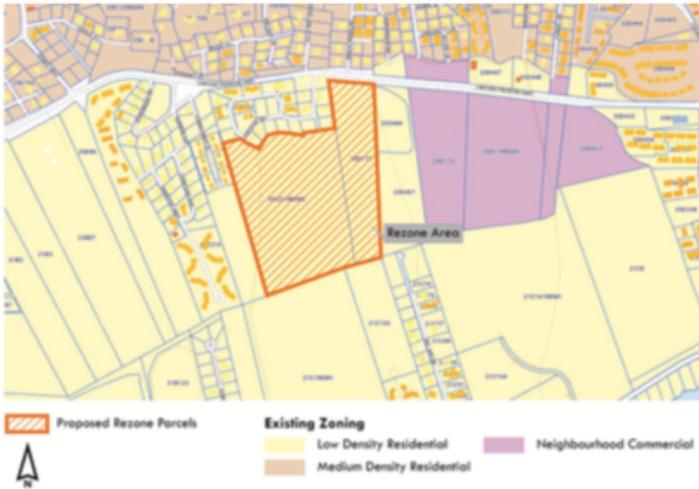
The South Sound basin functions as a water catchment and storage basin which provides flood controls and storm-water retention. Surface water is stored in the wetlands, which provides a natural mechanism for reducing flow velocity and flooding. This basin also contributes to the maintenance of water quality in the South Sound Lagoon. [see *Memo dated 30 January 2015 from the DoE, Water Authority and National Roads Authority, to the Ministry of PLAHI*].



PUBLIC NOTICE

REQUEST FOR ALTERATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1997

The Central Planning Authority (CPA) is considering a request for alteration to the Development Plan 1997 (RZ20-0007) for the following: Block 20D Parcel 171 and Block 20E Parcel 213REM3 from Low Density Residential to High Density Residential. These parcels are located to the south of the Linford Pierson Highway.



The DoE have raised concerns about proposed development projects which are part of a 620-acre wetland basin where 500 acres have been granted planning permission for various residential developments both to the south of Linford Pierson Highway and to the north of South Sound Road.

Development Concerns

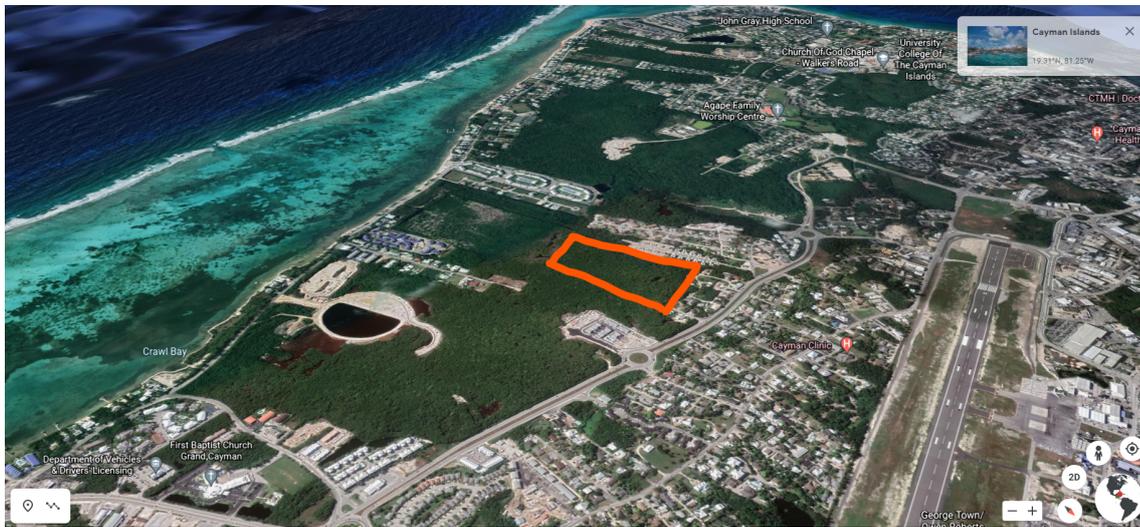
Remaining parcels of untouched mangrove forest sit to the south of Linford Pierson Highway. These parcels are zoned low-density residential or neighbourhood commercial. Randyke Gardens is an existing low income housing project with a long history of flood issues.

Applications to rezone and clear lands for low-level to mid-level housing or neighbourhood commercial development have been submitted ahead of the area zone review anticipated under Plan Cayman. This policy document, in particular the utility of an Area Plan for the South Sound catchment (not currently contemplated on p.35 of the National Planning Framework) and a long-range stormwater management master plan for this basin is critical. These regional stormwater plans are to be part of a larger Capital Improvement Programme and paid for through the Infrastructure Fund.

Waiting for a complete zone review could ensure better decisions for the country and it's people and into the future such as the Tengah eco-development in Singapore's new 'forest' town (see Fn.1) - a concept featured in April 2021 by the World Economic Forum.



Impending Threats



Following the acquisition of protected mangrove wetlands in 2019 for the National Housing Development Trust (NHDT) a rezone application for HD zoning has been joined to the Yarl development (see public notice on pg 4 of this document). These lands are very low lying wetlands which are seasonally flooded.



The large area of lands (+35 acres) to be affected in the South Sound wetlands mirror a similar development project Lakeside Villas - an affordable housing project on the Esterly Tibbetts Highway developed as a public-private partnership reclaiming adjoining land for the NHDT. The outlined NHDT lands (5 acres) remain *filled* and mainly *undeveloped*.

The NHDT owns many acres of large undeveloped tracts of higher filled lands eg George Town Central (4.47 acres), Bodden Town (5.83 acres), Northside (10.9 acres) and East End (38 Home Lots). With a waiting list of 200 homes and only 32 applied for in the George Town district, focusing on land that is already serviced by infrastructure and is ready to develop should be a priority over destroying critical mangrove habitat (see Fn.2).



Market Research



- Exeter Development : future retail shopping centre (**40.09** acres)
[CPA Item 3.2 Block 20D Parcels 173, 174Rem1, 175 and 452, 447, 448 and 451 \(RZ14-0005\).](#)
- Downtown Reach by Sixtees Properties : phases 1 & 2 underway, phase 3 (**6.4** acres) 97 UNITS (approved), phase 4 deferred (pending HD rezone).
Website: www.downtownreach.ky
[CPA Item 2.6 Block 20D Parcel 471 \(P21-0163\).](#)
- Yarl by Pro Plus Development : HD rezone application (pending), speculative land clearing (adjourned), phase 1 planning application for 104 UNITS (pending) (**10.53** acres).
Website: www.proplusrealestate.com/yarl
[CPA Item 2.8 Pro-Plus Constructions Ltd. Block 20D Parcel 171 \(P21-0066\).](#)
- National Housing Development Trust (NHDT) 20E 213REM3 acquired Jan 2019 (**24.55** acres) : HD rezone application (pending). Development plan not known.
- Ken Thomas / Milton Morrison (**4.793** acres) : 31-lot subdivision (amendment). [CPA item 2.9 Block 20E Parcel 83 Rem3 \(P20-0750\).](#)
- Island Developers Ltd (**22** acres) : 32-lot subdivision (amendment)
[CPA Item 2. 1 Block 20E Parcel 87 \(F05-0528\)_\(P15-0580\)_\(P14-0615\).](#)
- Cayman Enterprise City (**50+** acres) : PAD approval
[CPA item 2. 1 Block 21B Parcel 28 Rem 1 \(F15-0228\)_\(PAD15-0001\).](#)

***Anticipated mangrove habitat loss for
proposed development listed
= 158.36 (acres)***

nature may have the solutions your city is looking for | IUCN



In June 2020, the NCC and the DOE penned a paper entitled "Seizing the Moment to Transition to a Greener Economy" which included 5 ideas and as part of this green initiative proposal those concepts have been incorporated where possible with scope to expand (see Fn. 3)



Sustainable Tourism

As we look to reopening the tourism industry, we must use this window of opportunity to make changes which promote and deliver a high-quality, truly sustainable tourism product, with a larger and more diverse set of employment opportunities for Caymanians.

1



Increase tourism offering by expanding protected areas, completing National Parks and developing visitor infrastructure for recreation and nature tourism.

2



Develop carrying capacity plans for our most popular attractions so that they can be managed for sustainable tourism once we reopen.

3



Mandate the development and implementation of a national certification programme for guides, improving the quality of our offering.



Sustainable Mobility & Transport

No one is looking forward to sitting in stand-still traffic again. Our roads can be repurposed, retrofitted and redesigned to make our journeys quicker and more pleasant as well as reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution.

1



Accelerate the National Roads Authority's Complete Streets initiative by building and protecting green corridors and segregated bike lanes.

2



Lead by example by facilitating staggered hours of work and encouraging regular working from home under normal conditions.

3



Grant further duty and licensing concessions to electric buses, scooters, bikes and other low-emission vehicles.



Project Goals : South Sound Mangrove Park and Tarpon Alley Trail

To identify environmental opportunities, costs and risks in all policies and strategies.

-  A Mangrove Retention Policy to apply to all developments that sit within the South Sound drainage basin, to be incorporated into Plan Cayman and the CPA Landscape Guidelines.
-  A Wildlife Corridor either side of the future roads corridor - 20ft setback of land to be reserved and reforested where applicable on each side of the road corridor. In the absence of an area stormwater management plan, this wetland swale can be reserved to comply with the stormwater drainage swale requirements observed and recommended by the Dept of Environment, NRA and Water Authority.
-  A National Park with nature trails and bike corridor- acquire 20E 213REM3 from the NHDT. The land is not fit for NHDT purpose.
-  Comply with UNFCCC obligations to protect and enhance green house gas sinks and reservoirs under the NCL. Partner with local NPOs for financing acquisition and conservation of local wetlands that sequester carbon and provide habitat and biodiversity co-benefits which organisations (such as CIG, developers) can use to offset their carbon footprints (Fn.4).
-  Increase LPP to 20% for all large developments in areas that include critical mangrove habitat.
-  No high density rezoning in South Sound basin without an Environmental Impact Assessment- major infrastructure threat



Benefits



- **Biodiversity** - protecting habitat with wildlife corridors (see Fn.5)
- **Commuting nature trails will enhance health and wellness and comply with PAHO's Strategic Plan (see Fn.6).**
- **Educational and scientific urban nature park with wilderness trails for tourists.**
- **Safe bicycle and jogging trail connector for Red Bay-Prospect-George Town commute will alleviate traffic.**
- **Combat climate change with 4x higher carbon sequestration properties.**
- **Helps to lower air and soil temperature providing a dense canopy against the hot sun and contributes to meeting Paris Climate Agreement Targets (see Fn.7).**
- **Complements drainage in an area subject to seasonal flooding and provides stormwater flood insurance risk management solution as a result of global warming (see see Fn.8).**
- **Ability to re-prioritize NHDT low income homes on higher lands that provide better infrastructure and flood security.**
- **Randyke Gardens, Yarl and future Half-way Pond developments will benefit from a nature park for wellness, flood mitigation and drainage, alternative bicycle commute and human equality to meet the recommendations outlined in the February 2021 UK Dasgupta Report (see Fn.9).**



Conclusion

In 2020, the world came together in the hope of finding solutions to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is our hope that by looking after our natural environment and implementing a green initiative we can protect communities and thrive in a long-term sustainable partnership with our unique wildlife habitat for the betterment of all.





Policy:

- Species Conservation Plan for Mangroves, S17 of the NCL
- Cayman Islands Environment Charter (Fn.5), now in it's 20th Year.
- Plan Cayman and the National Planning Framework
- UN Climate Change carbon credits (Fn.6).
- Meets United Nations SDG Goals 3, 11, 12, 13 and 15

Resources:

1. Tengah Singapore's new 'forrest' town : <https://www.weforum.org/videos/22070-singapore-s-new-forest-town-could-change-urban-living-for-ever>
2. National Housing Development Trust Dec 2019
<https://www.caymancompass.com/2019/12/04/almost-200-applicants-awaiting-low-cost-housing/>
3. DOE NCC Seizing the Moment : <https://cnslibrary.com/wp-content/uploads/Seizing-the-Moment-to-Transition-to-a-Greener-Economy-5-June-2020.pdf>
4. Island Offsets : Nonprofit NGO created to preserve the history and biodiversity of the Cayman Islands <https://islandoffsets.org/about/>
5. Broadhurst's Berksoy legal submissions for Mangrove Habitat Protection pg 152
<https://www.planning.ky/wp-content/uploads/meetings/Mcpa0621.pdf>
6. PAHO- Health In The Americas : A Prospective View of Health Pg35
<https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/34321>
7. Paris Agreement Climate Change <https://youtu.be/WiGD00gK2ug>
8. Dr. Robert Muir-Wood of Risk Management Solutions.
<https://www.caymancompass.com/2005/01/21/the-easy-part-is-over-recovery-will-be-hard/>
9. Dasgupta landmark review outlining the economic importance of nature
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/02/economics-failure-over-destruction-of-nature-presents-extreme-risks>
10. 10 Principles of the Cayman Islands Environment Charter
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaPCZ_lwv3Q
11. UN blue carbon credits <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/blue-carbon>
12. Florida nature bike trails <https://www.floridarambler.com/florida-bike-hike-trails/best-florida-bike-trails/>

Appendix:

The DoE were not consulted prior to the gazetting of the South Sound road corridor which was prior to the NCL coming into effect. However, in 2015 the DoE wrote a memo (attached) which was also signed by the Water Authority and a representative from the NRA to the ministry with responsibility for roads outlining the departments' concerns over the looming drainage issues for South Sound. These concerns have been reiterated at every available opportunity, such as in the attached review of the Enterprise City PAD application in 2018.

Contact: Melanie Carmichael | Sustainable Cayman

Phone: (345) 926-7735

Email: sustainablecayman@gmail.com

In Feb 2021 Boris Johnson said:

"This year is critical in determining whether we can stop and reverse the concerning trend of fast-declining biodiversity. Professor Dasgupta's Review, makes it clear that protecting and enhancing nature needs more than good intentions – it requires concerted, co-ordinated action.

As co-host of COP26 and president of this year's G7, we are going to make sure the natural world stays right at the top of the global agenda. And we will be leading by example here at home as we build back greener from the pandemic through my 10 point plan."



Protect our Paradise