

Graeme Hall National Park
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Questions and Answers

Is the proposed National Park needed for the South Coast?

Yes. Looking at a satellite picture of the South Coast, one can see that the Graeme Hall site is the only significant green space available between Bridgetown and the airport. It is an area that would offer recreational opportunities in a safe and tranquil environment, a place where a child could ride a bicycle without fear of traffic, and where families can gather for picnics, walks, recreational fishing, exercise, and other activities. Graeme Hall National Park would be a legacy for our children, and our children's children. Most of the lands within the proposed National Park already belong to the people of Barbados – declaring the National Park will protect these lands for the citizens of Barbados forever. Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary (GHNS) would be part of the National Park.

Graeme Hall National Park would also provide environmental buffers currently lacking in the existing 81-acre RAMSAR (Convention on Wetlands) area, and would legally protect the last mangrove forest, the last major wetland, the largest inland lake, and the most concentrated biodiversity in Barbados.

Do the people of Barbados want the National Park?

Yes. As of February, 2007, over 6,000 Barbadian citizens have signed a Petition asking the Government of Barbados to create Graeme Hall National Park. Those who sign are saying that they want to preserve the legacy at Graeme Hall in perpetuity, and that they want a safe place to go on the South Coast for rest and relaxation.

It is a mandate from the People of Barbados, a mandate that is growing in strength. More people sign this Petition every day.

Should we allow the last remaining green space on the South Coast to be further reduced in size by building additional housing and commercial ventures?

No. The Friends of Graeme Hall, and a growing number of citizens throughout Barbados believe it is time to make a stand, and do what we can to save the last remaining green space and sensitive environmental lands on the South Coast.

Housing and commercial development is important, but the great nations of the world do not focus on these things exclusively.

New York's forefathers could have developed Central Park, before the City became fully developed, but they didn't. They knew that the City would grow, and that in addition to a prosperous economy, environmental preservation, parks, museums, libraries and other cultural and recreational venues would be needed to make the City truly great.

The fact is that the South Coast has the highest density urban landscape in all of Barbados, without a significant regional public park area. While it is true that the Graeme Hall Swamp is being preserved under the RAMSAR agreement, this area is generally inaccessible to the public because it is wetland. More upland (dry) land is needed to serve the recreational needs of those who live on the South Coast.

The significance of the proposed Graeme Hall National Park to the South Coast and Barbados must not be underestimated. The National Park would define the South Coast in the same way Central Park defines New York City. Graeme Hall National Park is an extraordinary opportunity to make a vision of future Barbados come true in our lifetimes, to benefit our children, and our children's children.

Does the proposed 2003 National Physical Development Plan need to be amended in regard to the Graeme Hall National Park initiative, and in regard to appropriate land use requirements at Graeme Hall?

Yes. The current land use designations by the proposed 2003 National Physical Development Plan are in direct conflict with, or contrary to, the recommendations of the original National Physical Development Plan(s) since 1988.

In addition, this Physical Development Plan is in conflict with, or contrary to, nearly all scientific, tourism and related studies performed at Graeme Hall since 1985, including the US\$800,000 ARA Consulting Group Study in 1997.

In fact, the proposed 2003 Physical Development Plan could irreparably harm the National Park initiative if Parliament approves it. As of April 20, 2007, Parliament had not approved the 2003 Physical Development Plan.

A review of the proposed 2003 National Physical Development Plan (Amended) reveals the following:

1. Compared to the 1988 Physical Development Plan (PDP), the new draft 2003 PDP has radically reduced the areas originally classified as Recreational Open Space and Nature Reserve at Graeme Hall.

References: Approved 1988 National Physical Development Plan, Map 20, "Settlement and Land Use Policy," and Map 24, "Recreation and Conservation Policies and Proposal."

Draft 2003 National Physical Development Plan, Map 6, "Barbados System of Parks and Open Space."

2. Contrary to the approved 1988 PDP, and in conflict with the suggested land use within the proposed Graeme Hall National Park, the proposed 2003 PDP Land Use Plan (Map 4) recommends predominately residential development in the upland agriculture area at Graeme Hall. This new classification is consistent with the Urban Corridor designation illustrated on Map 1 of the draft 2003 PDP.

Reference: Draft 2003 National Physical Development Plan, Map 1, "Growth Management and Agricultural Preservation," and Map 4, "Land Use Plan."

There is concern that if the proposed 2003 PDP is approved by Parliament in the near future, these changes could send a signal to potential developers that the upland lands at Graeme Hall that surround the current 33 hectare Convention on Wetlands RAMSAR site are, in fact, available for residential and other high density uses. This would effectively kill any possibility of a legitimate National Park in the last green space between the Airport and Bridgetown.

Why would the proposed 2003 (Amended) Physical Development Plan eliminate the last remaining significant green space in the most densely populated area of Barbados between the Airport and Bridgetown?

We honestly don't understand this. The common argument is that land should be used to earn the most money for the most number of people. But in this case, it doesn't make sense because the Graeme Hall site is the last chance for a Park, where families and whole communities can gather.

Desirable communities always have green spaces to improve quality of life. There is no example anywhere on Earth where wall-to-wall housing and commercial development across significant areas results in decent quality of life. In fact, companies and investors look to invest in socially and environmentally healthy communities, because they know that their employees want to live, work AND PLAY. The great cities of the world are known for their urban master plans, with planned open areas, and preservation of critical habitat.

Unfortunately, since 1988 those who favor development have allowed the National Physical Development Plan process to steadily erode the original allocation of protected lands within the proposed 240-acre Graeme Hall National Park from open space to largely commercial and residential.

The original National Physical Development Plan preserved the majority of the area within the proposed Graeme Hall National Park, but in recent years this area has been constricted to just 81 acres of wetlands, with no buffers. According to MAP 4 of the 2003 (Amended) Physical Development Plan, Government recommends residential and commercial density within the environmental buffers and agricultural lands which are part of the proposed 240-acre National Park. The Caribbean Splash Waterpark proposal was one such attempt.

Is the the proposed 2003 (Amended) Physical Development Plan a direct contradiction of the strategies, targets and objectives of Government’s National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2006-2025 (NSP)?

Yes. Goal Four of the Government’s National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2006-2025 (NSP) addresses “Building a Green Economy – Strengthening the Physical Infrastructure and Preserving the Environment” and sets the following strategies and targets.

- (Strategies 4.1) Engage civil society and the private sector in environmental management and support community –based initiatives to address environmental concerns
- (Strategies 4.3) Ensure the integrity of natural features, wildlife habitats, significant flora, protected areas, and important landscape and seascape features are maintained during the process of development
- (Strategies 4.4) Promote public education, awareness and appreciation of the direct inter-relationships among the three pillars of economic growth, social justice and equity and the environmental management.
- (Strategies 4.8) Promote sustainable land management practices.
- (Strategies 4.12) Facilitate the development of green and open space throughout the island.
- (Strategies 4.13) Establish and strengthen appropriate administrative and legislative regimes to support national environmental management objectives.
- (Strategies 4.18) Educate the population on the relationship between the environment and the well-being of each individual.
- (Strategies 4.19) Ensure the enforcement of all standards relating to environmental protection.
- (Targets 4.8) Substantial increase in the area of land allocated to, and managed as, green spaces

Clearly the proposed 2003 (Amended) PDP contradicts all of the laudable sentiments expressed in the NSP 2006-2025 as passed by Parliament. And specifically far from substantially increasing (Target 4.8) the area of land allocated to, and managed as, green spaces the 2003 (Amended) PDP will substantially decrease the area of land allocated to, and managed as, green spaces. The exact opposite!

What is the status of the Caribbean Splash Waterpark Application for Graeme Hall?

As of April 20, 2007, Mr. Matthew Kerins (developer of the Waterpark) has appealed the apparent denial of his application by the Chief Town Planner. Mr. Kerins has retained powerful consultants inside and outside of Barbados to assist in his appeal, and has in fact come up with lucid and well thought out responses in regard to the technical deficiencies of the application. However, Mr. Kerins is unable to address the specific land use policy conflicts within Government, given that the proposed 2003 (Amended) National Physical Development Plan has not been approved by Parliament, nor has he addressed the fundamental issue on land use incompatibility as it relates to scientific and historical land use recommendations by various studies over the past 30 years. Mr. Kerins is a fighter, and he will continue to fight for a Waterpark at Graeme Hall in an attempt to salvage his investment to date despite the fact that 6,000 citizens have signed a Petition in favour of a National Park for the area.

It should be noted that many are in favor of a Waterpark, but not at Graeme Hall. The general consensus is that there are more appropriate places in Barbados for such a facility.

Would the recreational areas, such as the bicycle trails, exercise stations and picnic areas of the new National Park outside of the Nature Sanctuary be free to the public?

Yes.

Who are the Friends of Graeme Hall?

The Friends of Graeme Hall Inc. (FOGH) is a nonprofit, charitable non-governmental organization (NGO) that supports the proposal to create a 240-acre National Park at Graeme Hall. Support for FOGH comes from citizens and public-minded companies. This proposal has attracted considerable public support not only from the residents of Graeme Hall and surrounding districts, but from all across the country.

So far, the Petition in support of creating Graeme Hall National Park has attracted in excess of 6,000 signatures, and is still growing.

Who, and what, is Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary?

Owned by Mr. Peter Allard, Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary (GHNS) is a privately funded organization that owns 34.25 acres of prime wetlands within the boundaries of the proposed 240-acre Graeme Hall National Park. GHNS operates a community and visitor centre with a boardwalk, large bird aviaries, environmental education facilities, and other community activity venues.

Who are the main partners who are responsible for the Graeme Hall National Park Initiative?

The Graeme Hall National Park Initiative relies on three partners for creation, project development, and operations:

1. The Government of Barbados (provider of legal protections, management, oversight)
2. The Friends of Graeme Hall (citizens oversight and local/international fundraising partner)
3. The Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary (private-sector donor and management partner)

The primary objective is for all partners to agree that creation of the National Park is an opportunity to create a legacy for the people of Barbados, to work together to establish legal protections, budgets and a work plan.

Should the Government of Barbados lead the legal formation of Graeme Hall National Park?

Yes. The majority of the land at Graeme Hall is owned by the people of Barbados, and is not a private project that requires a private-sector application to the Chief Town Planner.

Instead, formation of Graeme Hall National Park must be led by the Government of Barbados, as it is the only legal entity that can facilitate permanent legal protection of the land through formal declaration of the National Park. To assist this process, FOGH and GHNS have formally offered financial, technical and management resources to design, build and operate the environmental and recreational aspects of the new Park.

Has a plan been developed for the site?

Yes. The Ministry of Energy and Environment has been developing a Master Plan for Graeme Hall, and in September 2006, FOGH submitted a Reference Guide to supplement the development of the Master Plan. This Reference Guide, including maps, combined with a subsequent December 2006 proposal to Prime Minister Owen Arthur, outlines a specific plan to declare, finance, improve and operate the Graeme Hall National Park using public and private resources. The Guide, and maps, can be found at www.graemehallnationalpark.org.

Would the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development remain within the proposed National Park?

Yes. Most of the lands for the new Park are administered by the Ministry already as agricultural lands in conformance with Goal Four of the National Strategic Plan. The National Park initiative would enhance Ministry operations by funding key drainage civil engineering works, improve Ministry facilities based on their needs assessment, and integrate low-impact recreational opportunities and improvements within the agriculture lands.

Is it true that the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary has offered to donate most of its land to the new National Park if the Government of Barbados declares the 240-acre Graeme Hall National Park?

Yes. The Sanctuary owns 34.25 acres, and has offered to donate 25 acres. As some of the most pristine and biodiverse lands on the island, the land includes the largest inland lake and the largest mangrove forest in Barbados. A map showing the proposed boundaries of the parcel can be found at www.graemehallnationalpark.org under Media Downloads.

Was the Government of Barbados under a deadline to accept the GHNS land donation offer?

No. Contrary to a recent article in The Advocate, the formal letter of proposal to the Government of Barbados respectfully requests that the 25-acre land donation offer by GHNS to the proposed National Park be considered and resolved before March 1, 2007. The reason: There are significant fiscal and tax consequences (FY2006-07) to Mr. Peter Allard, owner of the Sanctuary, if the donation is accepted after this date. The generous nature of this offer justifies the request for consideration by March 1, 2007, as a matter of courtesy to Mr. Allard. However, given the potential benefit to the people of Barbados, it is not a deadline.

In addition to the proposed land donation by the Sanctuary, what other support is being offered to Government?

1. If the National Park initiative is a commitment that the Government of Barbados will adopt, the Friends of Graeme Hall will initiate a Bds. \$6,000,000 capital campaign from local and private international donors to match public international grant funding to pay for recreational infrastructure improvements. All monies raised will be allocated to the Park – fundraising overhead costs will be underwritten by the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary.
2. Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary and the Friends of Graeme Hall will assist the Government of Barbados with professional grant development and related technical services to help maximise funding from foreign agencies, individuals, and foundations. These funds will be allocated to National Park infrastructure development, and related stormwater and emergency wastewater containment projects that would benefit the South Coast, as outlined in the Reference Documents at www.graemehallnationalpark.org.
3. The Friends of Graeme Hall and Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary will provide support for professional park design and development and will provide subsequent management services to the Government of Barbados for the new bioreserve and recreational/community elements of the new National Park. Both Partners are committed to the highest quality of management, as reflected in the existing facilities at the Sanctuary, and will carry this commitment forward to the new National Park.

Fundraising for improvements for a National Park is an unusual role for the Friends of Graeme Hall and the Sanctuary, and one that has encouraged both organizations to examine their priorities very carefully. Rigorous examination of these priorities confirms the mission: The RAMSAR wetland site at Graeme Hall, plus its upland agricultural buffers, is arguably the most significant biodiversity and agricultural centre on the island, and in need of formal legal protections, in perpetuity, and requires help from the private and NGO sectors. In addition the recreational and educational needs of the South Coast need significant open space.

Where will money come from for the National Park?

Final budgets have not been formally defined between the Partners as of January 15, 2007, however, a pro-forma budget was submitted in December, 2006 to the Government of Barbados that outlines scope of work and potential fund sources.

Since most of the land already belongs to the people of Barbados and Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary has indicated its willingness to be incorporated into, and assist with, the development and operation of the Park, much of the development cost for recreational improvements will be financed with grants and bequests from local and international donors. Development costs associated with the recreational fishing, agricultural, architectural and civil engineering solutions for wastewater and stormwater are eligible for available funding from the United Nations Development Programme, Global Environmental Facility of the World Bank, European Union, and other sources. The Graeme Hall National Park project includes in-kind capital investment within the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary (this will be taken into consideration by grant funders). Lands within the proposed National Park, generally west of the Sanctuary lands but not owned by the people of Barbados or by the Sanctuary require a negotiated settlement for incorporation into the National Park. Most of these private lands are already within the RAMSAR site designation, and the Graeme Hall 100-year floodplain.

Potential operational support for the National Park would come from special events and programmes, support from the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary and other private partners, the Government of Barbados, and, if approved, from eventual World Heritage Site annual operations funding.

UPDATE: As of June 1, 2007, the Allard Offer and support from the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary has been suspended.