

Friends of Graeme Hall Inc.

www.graemehallnationalpark.org

3 Warners Terrace

Christ Church

Barbados

October 31, 2008

The Editor
The Nation Newspaper
Fontabelle
St. Michael

Dear Sir,

The Friends of Graeme Hall (FOGH) note with concern the recent press reports that the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary (GHNS) will be closing on December 15, 2008.

FOGH is a group of concerned citizens in Barbados who support the Government of Barbados in preserving and managing, in perpetuity, the Graeme Hall Swamp wetland (a Natural Heritage Conservation Area and Ramsar Site) and the agricultural upland buffer as a multi-use green recreational open space, with the potential to become a National Park.

The GHNS occupies approximately 35 acres of an 81 acre Wetland which has been designated a Natural Heritage Conservation Area (NHCA) in the Physical Development Plan 2003 (PDP). The rest of the Wetland is principally owned by Government. According to the PDP this designation applies to features and locations that are important to the natural and physical heritage of the island. The essential goal of this designation is to **retain, protect and enhance** these features for future generations. (PDP 2003 Section 4-1).

On 11 April, 2006, The Graeme Hall Wetland was also designated Ramsar Site No. 1591. This designation sets out the landscape characteristics that recommend the elevation of its status to that of "International Importance to Wildlife". This recognition automatically positions The Graeme Hall Swamp as a positive focal point for new education, tourism, and environmental initiatives.

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As a signatory to the Ramsar Convention, the Government of Barbados accedes to four main obligations set within the community of sovereign states. These are:

1. Maintain the ecological character of the Site (Article 2)
2. Include wetland conservation considerations within the national land-use planning, so as to promote, as far as possible, the wise use of wetlands (Article 3)
3. Promote the conservation of wetlands in their territory through the establishment of nature reserves on wetlands.
4. International cooperation in support of preservation of wetlands that transcend national boundaries (Article 5)

We believe that the impending closure of the GHNS is a threat to our Nation achieving the stated obligations and objectives of the NHCA and Ramsar designations. We urge all the parties concerned to work together to find a solution that will ensure that the entire Wetland and buffer lands will be **retained, protected, enhanced and managed** for the benefit of our country and future generations

Yours faithfully,
Friends of Graeme Hall Inc.