Fish & Food Fiesta on the Boulevard, Soufriere, Dominica

CATS COMPONENT 2
Management of Coastal Resources and Conservation of Marine Biodiversity

Caribbean Aqua-Terrestrial Solutions
Four successful Fish and Food Fiesta activities have been held in Dominica since its inception in December 2016. The broad goal is to develop a sustainable community tourism product that will increase revenue generation for the community and raise awareness and responsible stewardship for the management of the biological and cultural resources of the Soufriere Scotts Head Marine Reserve (SSMR). The program targets a wide range of stakeholder groups in the community including: rural women, farmers and fishers within the marine protected area (MPA) space, local restaurants and guest house owners, artists and music business houses, the village council, and police. It is expected to become the major tool for attracting support in awareness building for the SSMR. Its highlights include the sale of fish and food produced within the MPA- utilizing both exquisite and mainstream recipes, musical entertainment with cultural presentations, and an appreciation for marine resource conservation.

CATS has played a critical role in assisting the Local Area Management Authority (LAMA) of the Soufriere Scotts Head Marine Reserve (SSMR) develop its management capabilities towards achieving sustainable financing of the marine reserve and the building of strong constituencies to protect the vulnerable ecosystems critical to the health of the system. Since its inception, the event has generated a new wave of sensitization and awareness of the SSMR, the role of the LAMA, and interconnectedness of the hinter-/upland areas with coastal marine ecosystems. The event has been endorsed by the ‘Fisheries Division’, Ministry of Tourism, and the ‘Parliamentary Representative’ for the area, Ms. Denise Charles.

Fish and food fiesta activities are planned jointly between the CATS Marine Program Officer and a committee of vendors set up for that purpose. Consistent with CATS Ride to Reef management concept, the activity provides the opportunity to bridge the link between farmers who operate in the watershed areas, fishers exploiting a wider niche within the local market for disposal of their catch, and local vendors who engage in the selling of
fish/food to the public. Additionally, the event provides the following benefit to the SSMR communities:

I. Increase in revenue for both LAMA, vendors, fisher and farmers within the Soufriere marine protected area

II. Improvement in community awareness, appreciation and understanding of the functions and importance of MMAs to local communities

III. Creation of a network of support for marine management and awareness programs

IV. Increase in training for women in fish culinary and events management and planning

V. Increase in sustainable tourism activities in the SSMR

Each fish and food fest event has brought more than 600 patrons to the SSMR communities to enjoy fish, foods and musical entertainment. An average of six (6) vendors lined the street with vending stalls to display their prepared foods and fish. A variety of local foods including roast plantains, breadfruits, fry dasheen, garlic bread and fish meals including fish roti, fish balls, creole fish, broth, steam and fry fish are also available for sale. The event is also supported and promoted by DIGICEL, one of Dominica’s major telecommunication giant and the local brewery, Kubuli Beer. To date, a number of other corporate business houses are showing keen interest in working with the LAMA to develop the event into a major food festival in the south of the island. Local DJs and artists provide a blend of music that promote strong cultural identity of the area and help increase public involvement in the management of the resource.
CATS was very happy to assist in the launch and to support these events and remains committed to strengthening the capacity of the LAMA and local community to maximize profit levels. Average profits gains for the two first event ranged between XCD 820-850. When asked to give their opinions on the fish food fiesta activities, one vendor gleefully stated that ‘I value this as one of the most important event in Soufriere for a long time and an opportunity to make monthly income. Patrons have been equally enthusiastic, calling on an increase in frequency of the events and corporate support for it.

How will fish and food fest activities contribute to the fulfillment of CATS’ objectives?
Fish and food fiesta increases awareness of the marine reserve and create important links between various stakeholder groups. The resulting partnership has the potential to enhance the implementation of both the communication strategy and management plans for the reserve, both of which were developed through CATS support. Increased revenue generation opportunities will likely improve LAMA’s ability to manage the existing infrastructure of the marine reserve and enhance the sustainable financial management goals of the SSMR, which is a top priority of CATS’ support.