

An NPS Caribbean Resource Protection Strategy

The Caribbean Strategy is a comprehensive planning effort designed to provide for long-term protection and perpetuation of U.S. National Park Service (NPS) natural and cultural resources in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. It is a process designed to build support for appropriate stewardship of the Caribbean resources. Although the extent of NPS Caribbean properties is minor compared with that of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico governments' and private holdings, NPS visibility and influence in protecting key natural and cultural resources are significant and vital.

The Caribbean Strategy idea evolved from the realization that many of the resource values within the various Caribbean parks and adjacent areas have declined in recent years. NPS holdings in the Caribbean include Virgin Islands NP at St. John and Hassel Island at St. Thomas, Buck Island Reef NM and Christiansted NHS at St. Croix, and San Juan NHS on Puerto Rico. It was determined that those resources require greater attention and protection from a variety of threats if they are to continue to be the principal examples of natural and cultural resources in the Caribbean. The best approach to protect those resources is through a comprehensive and systematic process in which everyone that benefits from the resources can participate in their protection.

To develop that process, the NPS assigned Ro Wauer to the Caribbean for a three-year assignment. Ro is a career NPS employee with extensive experience in resource management as a field ranger, interpreter and superintendent, Regional Chief Scientist and Resource Manager, and was the Washington Office Chief of NPS Natural Resources for five years. Ro has settled on St. Croix with an office at the Cooperative Extension Service, University of the Vir-

gin Islands.

The process began with the identification of seven broad areas of concern, the establishment of a coordinating committee, and the formulation of seven resource groups. Resource group participants will develop a series of concise action plans to address specific concerns within the seven categories. These action plans later will be presented at public forums where concerned individuals will have an opportunity to participate.

Afterwards, the revised and completed action plans will be presented to an assemblage of key Congressmen, conservationists, and other pertinent peoples who will be asked to endorse the actions called for and to support followup management activities, including the acquisition of new and necessary funds.

The timeframe for the fully implemented Caribbean Strategy process may take years, but the initial steps that lead to a "constituency" conference should be completed by early 1988. In the meantime, all feasible short-term actions required to correct resource problems in the parks will continue; all of the ongoing and new actions will be written into the broader range action plans.

In summary, the Caribbean Strategy process includes the: (a) documenting of all the pertinent resource concerns and activities completed and ongoing, (b) incorporating all prevention and mitigation activities needed for short-, mid- and long-term resource protection, (c) utilizing all pertinent organizations and individuals in the process, and (d) building a constituency through which all the necessary support and resources can be obtained.

Ro Wauer