

**UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies
Training and Research Programme**

JNCC Research Contribution Project Report

**Turks and Caicos Islands Invasive
Lionfish Control Program**

2010

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PROJECT REPORTING FORM

● CONTACT

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If you have suggestions for improvement of this form, your feedback would be appreciated:

COUNTRY: Turks and Caicos Islands

PROJECT TITLE: Turks and Caicos Islands Invasive Lionfish Control Program.

REPORTER: Name, Organization, Contact Details.

(v tick if same as APPLICANT)

Wesley Clerveaux: Department of Environment and Coastal Resources.

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Providenciales Turks and Caicos Islands

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION: How did the project go? What were the HIGHLIGHTS and OVER-ACHIEVEMENTS of objectives? What CHALLENGES did you encounter? How were these RESOLVED?

HIGHLIGHTS and OVER-DELIVERY

The primary project aim was to increase the awareness of the problematic invasive lionfish, while encouraging a response from the private and public sectors to capture and eradicate the species. A variety of small projects were conducted to assist in the public education and physical capture. When first discovered in 2006 in the Turks and Caicos Islands, only three (3) lionfish were observed, by 2010 lionfish had invade the TCI waters as well as the Caribbean.

In 2009, the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR) invited a representative of REEF to educate the public about the Lionfish. In 2010, the JNCC funded a cross-territory (TCI, British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands) project that would educate, monitor and eradicate the lionfish. At this time, representatives from REEF suggested that capturing lionfish was most easily conducted with clear dive bags and nets while scuba diving. This activity was encouraged by local dive companies that created a lionfish hunting dive package. The DECR obtain eight-teen (18) sets of equipment for use on the three main islands.

However, some islands of the TCI are primarily involved in commercial fishing. In order to combat the species more effectively, the DECR has encouraged local fishers to get involved in the eradication of the species using local fishing techniques. In 2009, the

DECR endorsed a year tournament to capture and submit as many lionfish as possible. Local fishers and dive operators captured 1,167 Lionfish. In order to continue the support, funding from the JNCC allowed for a one-day derby to be conducted on the three main islands (South Caicos, Grand Turk and Providenciales) for local fishers and the general public to capture as many Lionfish as possible in a single day. Commercial fishers, dive operators and local community members worked hard to capture more than 200 lionfish.

The Lionfish captured during these tournaments were use at “tasting” events throughout the islands. The tasting events allowed for the public to understand that Lionfish could be used through a means of consumption. At local events such as the a local dog show in June, IGA tasting in July and the “Race for the Conch”, lionfish was served to the general public to confirm the fascinating taste and availability of the product.

The TCI continued support for the local consumption of lionfish through the creation of a TCI Lionfish Recipe Book. The book was created to provide local recipes that incorporate the invasive lionfish. Fifteen (15) recipes were submitted and included in the book that is currently available for purchase at the local bookstore.

In order to make sure the public was well advised of the activities of the DECR Lionfish campaign, a page was created on Facebook (Turks-&-Caicos-Lion-fish-public-awareness-campaign). The page was specific to the lionfish project and includes photos, tables, contact information, reporting information, important links and up and coming events.

Public outreach was the overall concept of the campaign. In order to reach as many visitors, business operators and local community members, a double sided tri-fold color brochure has been created that will be provided at dive operations, excursion facilities, hotels, local markets and Government building. In addition a three panel retractable banner has been created for the use at education programs, business operations and community activities to provide a constant reminder of the invasive lionfish and how the TCI has confronted the problem.

PROBLEMS and RESOLUTION

There was some initial difficulty in obtaining enough Lionfish for the tasters, but was quickly rectified with the collection of Lionfish at tournaments.

Plans included the review of a mechanical devise for the capture of the Lionfish. Unexpected changes in the current staffing afforded for the inability for this device to be developed.

OUTPUTS: With reference to the FUNDS APPLICATION form, did your MAIN OUTPUTS achieve their EXPECTED OUTCOMES?

ACTIVITY	ACTUAL OUTCOME	COMMENTS
1Development of a Facebook page	The page on Facebook was created that allowed anyone of interest in the Lionfish Campaign of the Turks and Caicos Islands to log on. The page included photos, article links and open forum discussion. FACEBOOK: Turks-&-Caicos-Lion-fish-public-awareness-campaign	

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/edit/?id=134193143278494#!/photo.php?pid=249883&id=134193143278494&fbid=138484486182693>

2 One-day Derby “Lionfish Bounty Hunters” Campaign

A 1-day derby or Lionfish Hunt took place on July 24, 2010 on Providenciales, Grand Turk, South Caicos and Salt Cay. The activities were well received on the islands with a landing of approximately 250 Lionfish. It promoted the DECR’s efforts to eradicate the lionfish by encouraging fishermen, diver operators and the general public to take part.

3 Tasting Events

The invasive Lionfish is reported to have a similar taste to that of Snapper, DECR implemented tasting events targeting both local restaurants and the general public. Tasting events took place for public activities such as the dog show and IGA, one-day derby; as well as at national activities such as the “Race for the Conch”.

4 Lionfish Fishing Trips

Local dive operators were encouraged to participate in the monitoring and removal of the lionfish from the TCI waters. Dive operators have now established Lionfish Dive trips, where visitors are encouraged to participate in the protection of the marine waters by capturing Lionfish. The operators explain the importance to the visitors and get them involved in the Lionfish Hunter.

5 Acquiring Lionfish Kits

A total of eight (8) Lionfish Kits were obtained from “REEF” to assist local dive operators and community members to capture the invasive species from the reefs within the Protected Areas.

6 Licence to capture Lionfish

A special license was created by the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR) to allow individuals to be able to capture the invasive within or outside of the National Parks. There has been 71 licenses granted.

7 Creation of a Lionfish Recipe Book

A local Lionfish Recipe Book was created to encourage the consumption of the invasive species. Fifteen (15) recipes were submitted and included in the book that is currently available for purchase at the local bookstore.

8 Creation of a local Lionfish Brochure

The Turks and Caicos Islands was initially attempting to create a regional brochure about the invasive lionfish. However, with the limited input from the cross-territories, the DECR created a local brochure specific to the TCI and its initiatives towards the monitoring and eradication of the species. Five thousand (5000) brochures were printed for distribution at the local dive companies, resorts, public displays and Government offices.

9 Retractable Poster available for educational

Often the DECR is requested to conduct educational activities at local schools, business establishments and community activities. In order to continue the public display and acknowledgement of the issue, a set of retractable posters that can easily transport have

meetings
SFS

been created for availability at events.

10 Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute in 2010

Dr. John Claydon, post director of the School for Field Studies (SFS), presented the outcome of research that was conducted in collaboration with the DECR at the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) in November 2010. His topic was "The Invasive Red Lionfish in Shallow Habitats of the Turks and Caicos Islands".

INFORMATION: This final section is, in some ways, the most important part of this form. Provision of this information will enable us to pursue further funding and support for conservation projects in the Overseas Territories.

I ATTACH the following, by way of INFORMATION:

(Please v tick appropriate boxes, and attached necessary information as necessary)

- Brief QUOTATIONS from the Project Manager / individuals involved with this project, which may be used freely by JNCC to promote and publicized the conservation achievements of this project through suitable media:**

"This project presented the opportunity to improve the awareness throughout the island that lionfish is a big threat to the marine ecosystems of the Turks and Caicos Islands. The community at large is better informed and more eager to participate and share their knowledge on strategies the DECR should consider in resolving the issue. This project is a great example of community / stakeholder involvement in conservation issues."

- PHOTOGRAPHS or VIDEO CLIPS and full details of associated photo-credits, which may be used freely by JNCC and other OTs, to promote and publicized the conservation achievements of this project through suitable media.**
APPENDIX A

- A scanned copy and / or web-address of any NEWS ITEMS, PUBLISHED ARTICLES arising from this project.**

http://tcfreepress.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1617:disaster-in-the-making-lionfish&catid=18:local&Itemid=26

http://tcfreepress.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1057:decr-lion-fish-tournament-and-restaurant-program&catid=18:local&Itemid=26

http://tcfreepress.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1621:turks-and-caicos-to-go-on-the-hunt-for-lionfish&catid=36:island-guide&Itemid=76

http://tcfreepress.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1390:decr-gets-grant-to-help-curb-lionfish-invasion&catid=34:environment&Itemid=75

http://tcfreepress.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1690:lionfish-hunters-take-on-invaders&catid=34:environment&Itemid=75

http://fptci.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2379:lionfish-recipes-can-help-save-ecosystem&catid=28:lifestyle&Itemid=72

- A copy of any EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS, books, brochures, pamphlets or posters, arising from this project.**

APPENDIX B

- Details of any WEBSITE or WEBLINKS arising from this project.**

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/edit/?id=134193143278494#!/photo.php?pid=249883&id=134193143278494&fbid=138484486182693>

- Details of any COLLABORATION or PARTNERSHIP, local or international, which contributed to the success of this project.**

The School for Field Studies (SFS) collaborated with the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR) with the capture lionfish. Dr. John Claydon, post director, presented his finding at the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institutes (GCFI) in November 2010 at Puerto Rico.

APPENDIX C

- Details of any other unexpected benefits arising from this project, such as CONSERVATION AWARDS, PUBLIC SUPPORT, VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION or SPONSORSHIP.**