ST.VINCENT & THE GRENADINES ENVIRONMENT FUND



2015 - 2024 REPORT



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Everywhere you look there are brilliant, passionate people working to create positive environmental change. Small amounts of funding, strategically directed, can supercharge this work.

BEN GOLDSMITH, FOUNDER, CONSERVATION COLLECTIVE

OUR STORY

The St.Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund (SVGEF) or "the Fund", established in 2015, is dedicated to raising funds and actively managing projects that contribute to environmental preservation. Born from the collaborative vision of Bryan Adams, a stalwart in Mustique's conservation, Louise Mitchell, former Chair of the St Vincent and the Grenadines National Trust, and UK philanthropist Ben Goldsmith, the Fund has thrived as a beacon of environmental stewardship. Ben Goldsmith is also the visionary behind the wider initiative, Conservation Collective, which establishes similar foundations around the world, many in the Mediterranean and as far East as Sri Lanka.

Starting at a time when environmental awareness was still relatively low in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the SVGEF has provided a beacon of leadership in the protection of our natural heritage. In the spirit of reflection and gratitude, this report commemorates our achievements and charts a course for future endeavours. As we stand united as guardians of our environment, the SVGEF remains steadfast in preserving the natural treasures that define St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Fund initially focused on raising awareness for endangered sea turtles, achieving its first victory on January 1, 2017, with the government implementing a new law making it illegal to kill sea turtles or disturb their nests. Prince Harry commended the leading role of Louise Mitchell and the SVGEF in making this happen during his Royal Visit to commemorate Queen Elizabeth's 90th birthday. The Fund is grateful to the role of Hon. Saboto Caesar, Minister of Fisheries in securing this sea turtle protection.

The Fund's first grant in 2016 was to Fauna and Flora to protect the endangered Union Island Gecko, working together with Jenny Daltry of Fauna and Flora and Fitzgerald Providence, Director of Forestry. By 2018, with the Fund's support, the gecko gained protection under the international convention preventing trade in endangered species, CITES, halting its international trade and leading to a population rebound and increased awareness for Chatham Forest and the species that reside therein.





From left to right: Andre Iton, Director SVGEF | Louise Mitchell, Co-Founder SVGEF | Dr. The Honourable Ralph E. Consalves, Prime Minister of St.Vincent and the Grenadines | Bryan Adams, Co-Founder SVGEF



Our successes are rooted in partnerships with organisations and people like Fauna and Flora, Union Island Environmental Alliance, Hand 2 Earth, the Fisheries Division, Department of Forestry, National Parks Authority, Fundacion Cethus, Kirk Grant, Carla Daniel, Conservation Collective, Blue Marine Foundation, EPIC, Action Bequia, and the Mustique Company.

The generous support from our Steering Committee members and other backers, along with technical and financial aid from Conservation Collective, made these achievements possible.

OUR VISION

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund is a non-profit company registered in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to support sustainable initiatives to promote the preservation of the natural heritage and biological diversity of the islands.

OUR STRATEGY

We believe in fostering a collaborative approach with members of the community to ensure that the people become good custodians of nature. We raise funds from individuals with personal connections to the multi-island archipelago, who have been touched by its nature and who are driven to protect it.

The Fund works with local and international organisations that are best placed to address the environmental concerns in the state. We give grants to organisations, experts, individuals, and associations already actively engaged in conservation.

Through our partners, we work to protect and restore the natural environment and seek to build among Vincentians a greater sense of belonging to and custodianship of our natural world. Our collaborative efforts involve us embracing as partners or grantees other NGOs, community leaders, individuals, and government agencies.



St. Vincent & the Grenadines Environment Fund is a member of Conservation Collective, a global network of local foundations funding effective grass-roots conservation initiatives to protect the environment, restore nature and safeguard against climate change

2015-2024

AT A GLANCE



"

The SVGEF puts resources into preserving the biodiversity of our special island archipelago, through working with communities to foster pride in our natural heritage to ensure its protection in the context of rising pressures of development and climate change.

LOUISE MITCHELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SVGEF





SVGEF TIMELINE

Highlights from our 9 year journey

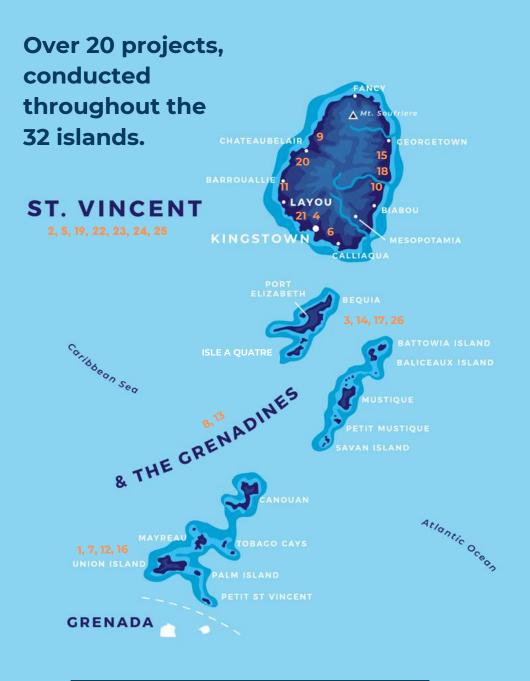


We do this work

to preserve **nature** and

MAP OF PROJECTS

- 1 Union Island Gecko Protection
- 2 Sea Turtle Ban
- 3 Whale and Dolphin Conservation in
- Bequia and Barrouallie
- 4 Vetiver Project
- 5 Former Turtle Fishers Compensated For Putting Down Nets
- 6- Botanical Gardens to propagate
 Soufriere Tree and Lignum Vitae Tree
 7 Protecting the Union Island Gecko
 and Pink Rhino Iguana
- 8 National Avian Education Programme
- 9 Model Garden Project
- 10 20,00 Soursop Trees project RVA
- 11 Whale watching start-up business in Barrouallie
- 12 Union Island Turtle Monitoring
- 13 Protecting Grenadines Seabirds
- 14 SVGEF support of farming and fishing communities in response to COVID 19 15 - Sea Turtle Associated Livelhood Programme 16 - Frigate Island Eradication of **Invasive Species** 17 - Water Security in Bequia -Paget Farm Well Restoration 18 - Sans Souci Organic Farm, **Educating Students on** Sustainable Farming 19 - Sustainable Fisheries Management Plan 20 - Cumberland Nature Trail -**Restoration and Upgrade** 21 - Leeward and South Coast Sea **Turtle Project** 22 - An Inventory of Fresh and **Brackish Water Fish** 23 - Sea Camps 24 - Sea Turtle Monitoring Network 25 - Digifish - Tracking Fishing Vessels 26 - Phil D. Whale - Recycling



OUR WORK

Ashford Richards, Breakers beach monitor, and Lisa Gaymes, Sea Turtle program manager examine a hatched sea turtle nest.

SEA TURTLE MONITORING NETWORK

Supported by Edmiston Yachts

Instating the Turtle Harvesting Ban

In 2017, St Vincent & the Grenadines Environment Fund (SVGEF) helped pass a law baning the killing of sea turtles in the country. Despite the ban, recent monitoring shows that people are still poaching and consuming turtle meat and eggs, whilst key coral reef, seagrass and beach habitats are being damaged by illegal sand mining and development, affecting turtle populations across the region.

"

Our community-led sea turtle monitoring program not only upholds protective laws but also fosters a sense of stewardship over our marine ecosystems"

LISA GAYMES, SEA TURTLE PROGRAM MANAGER, SVGEF







Sea turtle tracks in the sand

Community support

With financial support from the **Edmiston Foundation, SVGEF** established the sea turtle monitoring network, protecting sea turtles along the Leeward and South Coast of St.Vincent. We help to train the local community to patrol the coastlines and collect nesting data to identify hotspots of turtle poaching. Monitors along the Leeward and South Coast of St.Vincent lead their community in conservation. This network also creates new local alternative livelihoods for coastal communities (away from sea turtle exploitation and unsustainable practices) and drives eco-tourism opportunities resulting from enhanced nature opportunities.

UNION ISLAND GECKO & PINK RHINO IGUANA

Project partners: Fauna & Flora International, Union Island Environmental Alliance



In collaboration with Fauna and Flora International and Union Island Environmental Alliance, we conducted a biodiversity study of Chatham Forest on Union Island, revealing it hosts 11 native terrestrial species, surpassing St. Vincent's much larger mainland which only has 9. The project researched the Union Island Gecko and the Pink Rhino Iguana. The

Union Island Gecko is listed under the IUCN Red List Guide as critically endangered and is only found in the Chatham forest.



CONSERVATION MILESTONES

- Designation of Chatham Forest as a protected zone, leading to the establishment of forest ranger patrols and security cameras thanks to the biodiversity study.
- Successfully listing the Union Island Gecko under Appendix I of CITES in March 2019 to halt international trade, boosting its survival chances.
- Creation of the Union Island Gecko Action Plan in 2016 to counter threats against the gecko.



Nesting Red footed booby from Battowia photo by Nakita Poon Kong

SEABIRDS OF THE GRENADINES

Seabird conservation, a critical component of marine ecosystem preservation, was bolstered by SVGEF's support for the Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) initiative in the transboundary Grenadines. This collaboration led to the development of a Communitybased Seabird Conservation Management Plan, groundbreaking research on seabird nesting and threats, and an extensive educational campaign. Notably, SVGEF funding facilitated the discovery of new nesting areas for Magnificent Frigatebirds and Red-footed Boobies on Battowia, and the mapping of invasive animals in the Grenadine islets.

Educational efforts engaged over 2,000 participants through various initiatives, including school presentations, outreach events, and a seabird-themed waste-to-art competition. Ongoing surveys by trained citizen scientists continue to monitor crucial nesting areas, providing vital insights into seabird health and marine ecosystems, crucial for their sustenance and survival.



Brown Noddies and Laughing Gulls foraging in Tobago Cays Marine Park



MONITORING AND CONSERVING NATIVE FRESHWATER FISH SPECIES

While marine fish often dominate headlines, freshwater fish represent a rich, yet often overlooked, biodiversity.



Despite freshwater habitats comprising only 1% of Earth's surface, they host 51% of all known fish species. Alarmingly, of the 18,075 identified freshwater fish, a third are at risk of extinction, underscoring the urgent need for conservation efforts in these vulnerable ecosystems.

John Renton, fish enthusiast and educator, supported by SVGEF, spearheads the fresh and brackish water fish project, diligently gathering data on fish and crustacean species across St. Vincent's river systems alongside his forestry department team and local river fishing experts.

Our project has two main goals:

First, conduct thorough research on the biodiversity of St. Vincent's freshwater and brackish water fish to support effective ecosystem management and conservation. Second, increase public awareness of SVG's diverse aquatic life and conservation needs through initiatives like developing a fish identification card and organizing educational presentations and field trips.

"

To date, I've catalogued 17 fish species across 12 families in St. Vincent's freshwater and brackish waters. Notably, this includes the economically vital Sicydium gobies (tri tri) and the endangered American eel, as recognized by the IUCN."

JOHN RENTON - PROJECT LEAD



Our findings will be published in an open-access peer-reviewed journal. We'll distribute fish identification cards to educate the public about St. Vincent's freshwater biodiversity and organize lectures and field trips for students. Our extensive survey covered 14 river systems, recording over 800 samples across 40 sites, identifying 6 new species previously undocumented in scientific literature for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This data is vital for understanding our rivers and the changes in the environment reflected by the presence of these fish species.

Local Involvement

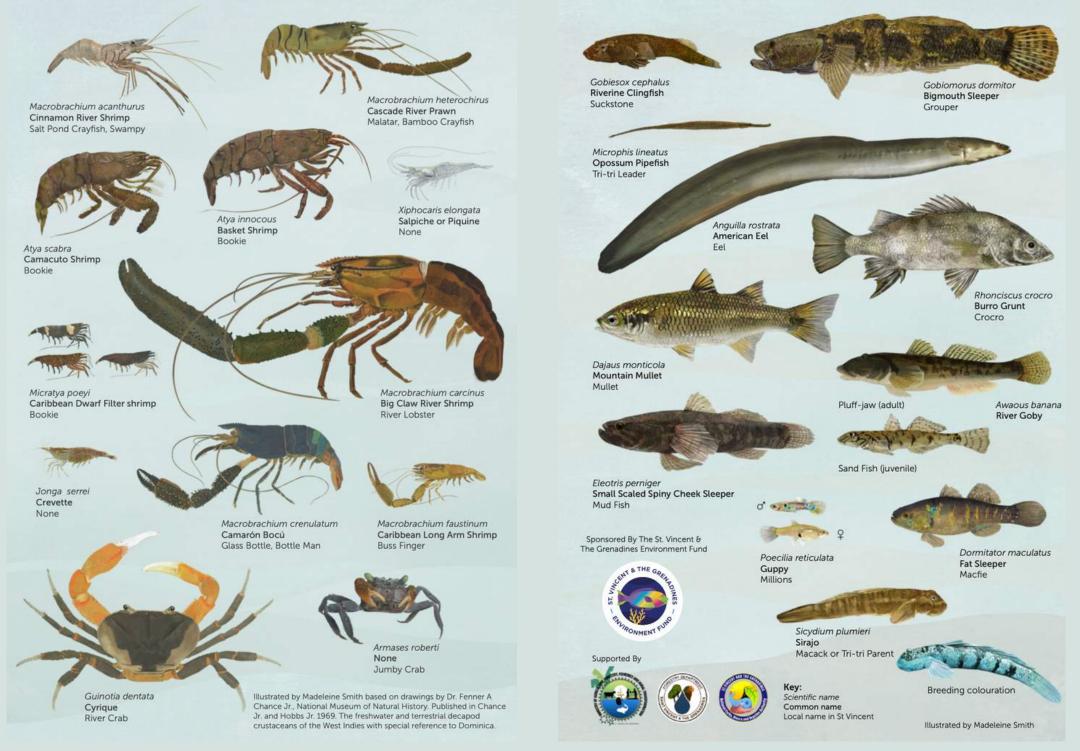
Local fishing practices are under threat from factors like pesticide use, construction along rivers, and climate change. To preserve traditional methods and local knowledge, we're collaborating closely with fisherfolk. Their expertise aids in locating and documenting the freshwater fish species. Additionally, the project has trained forestry personnel in modern survey techniques, such as dip nets and seine nets, enhancing species documentation in river ecosystems.

Achievements

- 5 new species documented
- 44 rivers surveyed
- Over 4000 River Fish ID cards to be distributed throughout the island for school children, forestry and fisheries officers to use in the field for species ID. (see next page)

Freshwater Shrimp "Crayfish" & Crabs of St. Vincent W.I.

Freshwater Fish of St. Vincent W.I.



SUSTAINABLE WHALE WATCHING TOURS IN BARROUALLIE

Whales and dolphins are remarkable creatures that play a crucial role in the ocean's ecosystem. Despite this importance, St. Vincent has an unregulated whaling fishery at Barrouallie where small cetaceans are hunted. Meanwhile in Bequia whalers are permitted to catch humpback whales under the International Whaling Commission's quota system. We work with Fundacion Cethus to promote regulated whale watching as a sustainable alternative livelihood as well as monitor the catches at Barrouallie .

SEA CAMPS

The Caribbean Cetacean Society (CCS) received a grant to operate, "Sea Camps". They organized camps in Fancy, Barrouallie, and Union Island, introducing over 100 kids to whale watching, sustainable practices (being plastic free) and blue economy livelihoods.



Co-Director Mr. Andre Iton speaking at the handing-over ceremony in Barrouallie. Pictured left Lennox Stephens and middle Kirk Grant

ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS

We supported Kirk Grant, a resident of the whaling community of Barrouallie, in launching a whale watching/wildlife tour boat business. Today his business know as Alex Tours is a leading tour operator on the Leeward Coast of St. Vincent, offering coastal and wildlife tours. The hope is to build a thriving whale-watching tour business, steering the community towards sustainable alternative livelihoods.

LA SOUFRIERE VOLCANIC ERUPTION RESPONSE



In response to the La Soufriere volcano's eruption on April 9, 2021, forcing 16,000 Vincentians to evacuate the Red Zone, the SVGEF swiftly emerged as a crucial NGO. Their three-phase initiative addressed the multifaceted impact of the eruption on St. Vincent. Phase 1 involved immediate relief efforts, channeling over US\$30,000 within 8 weeks to provide essentials like food, water, and clothing to evacuees. This rapid response was vital in mitigating the initial crisis before government aid fully mobilized. Phase 2 focused on restoring livelihoods, assisting in home repairs, and revitalizing farming through voucher distribution.

The Barbados Community Foundation donated generously to Phase 2.

Phase 3 shifted towards sustainable development, investing significantly in the restoration of an ecotourism nature trail and supporting the endangered Vincentian Parrot. Collaborating with conservation NGOs and the Department of Forestry, SVGEF established parrot-feeding stations, addressing the risk of starvation due to ash-covered habitats. These comprehensive efforts not only offered immediate relief but also laid the foundation for resilient communities and sustainable livelihoods postdisaster, showcasing SVGEF's impactful support during dire times.

VETIVER GRASS NURSERY

Project Partner: Hand2Earth



Vetiver grass, with its deep-rooted system, is known to have massive benefits to soil regeneration and soil protection. This project supported the establishment of the first vetiver nursery, implemented by Hand 2 Earth and its inspiring leader Ms Vonnie Roudette. The object of this project was to establish a nursery that could be used to cultivate vetiver grass throughout communities in St. Vincent. The nursery has supplied 15 farmers in North Leeward in 2022.

The nursery was set up as a rehabilitation programme for inmates who were trained in vetiver systems technology and in the making vetiver grass crafts.

A film was made about this initiative called "Grass Men II," and went on to attract international attention, including being screened at CELAC in Brussels.



Watch on YouTube by searching "The Grass Men II Grow in Time"

THE CUMBERLAND TRAIL

The SVGEF collaborated with the National Parks Authority, the Forestry Ministry and Mr. Cornelius Richards of Spazio (the appointed contractor) to restore the Cumberland Nature Trail. The goal was to ensure it was not only safe for recreational hikers but also suitable for forestry officers and scientists studying the St. Vincent parrot and other endemic species along the trail. Key elements of the project included stabilising the trail, constructing necessary steps and benches, and designing four bridges to cross the Coffee River and Young Man's Valley River. Additionally, plans featured a parrot observatory and St. Vincent's inaugural zipline.

Beyond physical improvements, the project emphasised community involvement. Consultations highlighted the trail's significance and the importance of conserving the St. Vincent parrot. Furthermore, tour guides will received specialised training to become official guides for the trail. In memory of our late Chairman, Hon. Henry Channon, an award recognized the most innovative design concept for the bridges, bird-watching platform, and zipline. This award was won by Lorenzo Bacchus, Chief Designer, in collaboration with Iris Tse. Throughout the project, conservation remained a priority. The Department of Forestry and the appointed contractor were committed to preserving the forest's natural equilibrium. Fallen trees along the trail were repurposed as steps, aligning with our conservation ethos. Work was executed by small teams, emphasising manual methods to minimise environmental impact, ensuring a safe and minimal footprint trail for all to relish.

Environmental improvements



Fallen trees, once towering sentinels of the forest, were reincarnated as steps and stairs, guiding our footsteps with a grace that only nature can offer.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Project Partner: Blue Marine Foundation

Concerned by escalating pressure on marine resources due to growing fishing activities and heightened fish exports, SVGEF partnered with the Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE) to address challenges in St. Vincent and the Grenadines' fisheries sector. Beginning a three-year marine resource assessment on February 10, 2022, the study, led by experts including Dr. Judith Brown and Andrew Woods, initially focused on conch and lobster stocks, fisheries health, and biodiversity in proposed marine parks. The aim is to provide actionable insights for top-tier fisheries management, aligning with SVG's national biodiversity goals and establishing the nation as a global fisheries management model.

"

SVGEF and Blue Marine's St Vincent sustainable fisheries work is a collaborative project involving fishers and Government Fisheries department. We are gathering data and community voices to provide the evidence to create management measures that work for both people and nature."

DR. JUDITH BROWN , PROJECT DIRECTOR, BLUE MARINE FOUNDATION





Measuring of conch during dive survey



The collaborative effort involved local fishers' feedback. extensive dives, and training initiatives, culminating in policy recommendations for a 3 month closed season for conch from September- December. This was adopted on December 5th 2023. Public consultations further engaged stakeholders, marking a significant step toward safeguarding marine ecosystems, supporting local livelihoods, and promoting sustainable fishing in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

SVGEF is grateful to our supporters who make it possible to fund projects in our five project areas: Protecting our Species, Forest Restoration & Nature trails, Education in Conservation, Sustainable Fisheries, and Community Led Conservation. Below is the breakdown of our funding.





Union Island Reptiles \$54,190.00 Sea Turtle \$134,904.44 Fild,705.68 Cetaceans \$107,286.00

IMPACT FROM SPECIES PROTECTION:

• 3 species fully protected listed under international and local laws In support of over 50 local community members in alternative livelihoods while working with regional and international NGOs for training in capacity building. On-going patrols and monitoring in efforts against poaching and illegal

trade of animals

"

Through building a collaborative network of local and international partnerships, the SVGEF leads meaningful sustainability efforts with careful considerations in finance, understanding, balancing impactful environmental initiatives and fiscal responsibility." STEPHAN HORNSEY, MANAGER, SVGEF

\$48,388.39 Freshwater Species

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

FOREST RESTORATION AND NATURE TRAILS \$103,997.95



EDUCATION IN CONSERVATION \$43,679.50



VOLCANO EMERGENCY RELIEF

\$80.765.29

G2%

SVGEF FOUNDERS



Ben is founder of Conservation Collective and CEO of Menhaden Capital, a new energy and resources-focused investment trust listed on the London stock exchange. Previously, in 2005 Ben founded WHEB, one of Europe's leading specialist sustainability-focused fund management businesses. Ben is also Chairman of the UK Conservative Environment Network and of the Goldsmith family's environment-focused philanthropic foundation, the JMG Foundation





KATIE CHANNON Chairperson

Katie and her late husband, Henry Channon have been coming to St Vincent since 1975. Katie has decided to continue her late husband's legacy and passion in his work in the Environment. Like her husband, Katie is deeply committed to preserving and creating a sustainable environment for future generations. She is involved in many environmental projects here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.



Louise's passion for conservation blossomed in the natural beauty of Beguia, where sailing, diving, and hiking were integral to her childhood. Inspired by her parents' love for nature, she cultivated a deep connection to the environment. After planting 36,000 trees in Northern Quebec and gaining 16 years of global experience, she joined the SVG National Trust in 2000. The creation of the SVGEF in 2015 fulfilled her dream of supporting environmental causes in SVG, preserving the idyllic backdrop of her youth for future generations.

LOUISE MITCHELL Co-Founder and **Executive Director**



Founder

Bryan is a musician and photographer from Vancouver, Canada. The Bryan Adams Foundation has been active for the past ten years supporting charities around the world and in SVG, such as the National Trust of SVG, A passionate environmentalist, Adams has served on the board of directors of the Mustique Company for three years and also as Chairman of the Environmental Committee of Mustique for the same amount of time. His past environmental work includes working for the protection of whales, alongside Greenpeace International founder David McTaggert and campaigning for animal welfare with PETA.

VIOLETA ALVAREZ Steering Committee

CATHERINE HEESCHEN **Steering Committee**



DR. PETR FIRT Steering Committee



Conservation Collective



Steering Committee

JOERGEN TROELS LEVRING **Steering Committee**

OUR LOCAL TEAM

Being part of Conservation Collective allows us to share world-class knowledge and expertise across the network.





LOUISE MITCHELL Co-Founder and **Executive Director**



ANDRE ITON Co-Director



STEPHAN HORNSEY SVGEF Manager



Manager

LISA GAYMES Sea Turtle Program Manager

CLONESHA ROMEO Digi-fish Program



COLIN BROWNE **Communications Officer**



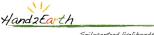


Supporters



Strategic Partners









INTERNATIONAL





FISHERIES DIVISION Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural

Transformation, Industry and Labour





The new Regulation prohibiting the possession of young conch and a closed season is an excellent step in the right direction to protect and prevent the extinction of conch."

KATIE CHANNON, CHAIRPERSON, SVGEF



Hon. Henry Channon and Louise Mitchell seen here in August 2021, presenting an SVCEF t-shirt to Minister Hon Saboto Caesar.

"

Let's get fins in the water!

said the late Hon Henry Channon, as he gave his blessings for the start of the Blue Marine Foundation sustainable fisheries management project.

PHOTO CREDITS

EPIC - Environmental Protection in the Caribbean Nakita Poon Kong Nadia Huggins FFI - Flora and Fauna Lisa Gaymes Stephan Hornsey Blue Marine Foundation Louise Mitchell Nick Spencer



THANK YOU

to all our donors and supporters. We couldn't have done it without your generous support.

SUPPORT US



St. Vincent & the Grenadines **Environment Fund**

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