

## *Conservation and Sustainable Development: Insular Caribbean*

### **Strategy Overview**

The MacArthur Foundation's first venture in grantmaking outside the United States was in 1988 in support of Caribbean conservation. Since that time, the Foundation has provided \$13 million through 65 grants to organizations working largely on environmental education, biological research, and organizational development. Following a strategic review in 2000, the islands and nearshore marine environments of the Caribbean became a geographic focal area for Conservation and Sustainable Development (CSD) and the region was placed in line for multiple cycles of grants in 2001 and 2004. The next two rounds of grants in the Caribbean will be made in 2007 and 2010.

The central goal of the MacArthur Foundation's grantmaking in the Insular Caribbean is to strengthen conditions for *sustained conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem processes, and evolutionary options*.

### **Grantmaking Priorities**

At the time of European discovery, the Caribbean islands were mantled in moist and dry tropical forests and encircled by pristine fringe and barrier reefs, but history has not treated this rich heritage well. A complex array of social conditions evolving from a legacy of colonial plantation agriculture, slavery, weak institutions, and limited economic opportunities resulted in 90 percent of the Caribbean's original forest cover being converted to agroscares and urban centers and over 50 percent of its coral reefs being threatened by land-based pollution and over fishing. The combination of the Caribbean's rich biodiversity — much of it endemic to the region — and severe threats makes the region a global conservation priority. Fortunately, significant representation of original ecosystems survives, largely in the hinterlands and coastal areas of the Greater Antilles distant from human settlements. Together, they offer significant opportunities to safeguard this exceptional biodiversity.

In order to build on these opportunities and address threats to the region's biodiversity, the Foundation will support work toward two strategic goals: 1.) conserving priority landscapes; and 2.) building and strengthening conservation capacity of local, national, and regional organizations.

The Foundation's priorities for implementing these two strategies were developed in close consultation with conservation and development specialists from and with a long history of working in the Insular Caribbean and in response to three outside reviews of previous

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MacArthur grantmaking in the region. The priority areas and themes listed here will guide the next rounds of grantmaking in the Insular Caribbean.

*Conserving Priority Landscapes.* Grants under this conservation strategy will focus on areas in the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola) that are recognized for their global conservation importance. Emphasis will be on strengthening protection of existing parks and reserves and expanding sound management practices beyond their boundaries to enhance ecosystem services and the survival of species of special concern. Special attention will be attached to the integration of terrestrial watershed and coastal marine management.

During the 2007 and 2010 grant cycles the Foundation will specifically target five large areas in the Greater Antilles for on-the-ground support, including:

- South central coast and archipelagos of Cuba
- Eastern mountains and coastal zone of southeastern Cuba
- Borderlands of southwestern Dominican Republic and southeastern Haiti
- Cockpit country and watersheds of western Jamaica (exploratory)
- Coastal zone of northwestern Dominican Republic and northeastern Haiti (exploratory)

*Building Conservation Capacity.* Grants under this second strategy element should contribute to strengthening the technical and institutional capacity for sustained conservation in the Greater Antilles or regionwide. Grantmaking preference will be given to applicants based in the Insular Caribbean, with particular attention assigned to projects that integrate conservation objectives in national and regional economic plans, sustain conservation financing, maintain a stream of human resources, affect public law and policy, and build public constituencies.

Collectively, the three cycles of grants should strengthen the effectiveness of public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, local communities, and teaching and research institutions to meet the conservation challenges and opportunities in the Insular Caribbean. A formal evaluation of accomplishments and assessment of options for future grantmaking will be conducted prior to 2010.

*Supporting Applied Research.* The majority of grants in the Insular Caribbean will focus on the twin goals of conserving large landscapes and building local institutional capacity. However, there is a continuing need to promote the generation of knowledge and the development of new models to help address conservation issues. Some of these research ideas might have a broader international relevance and can be integrated into CSD's Research and Development program area. Funding in the Insular Caribbean over the next six years will therefore include support for research on topics critical to the future implementation of conservation within the region.