



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LAND & FISHERIES**  
**CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT**

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Agriculture Ministry PS aims to encourage more public-sector involvement in beach clean-up exercises!**

**March 01, 2020:-** Despite having more than 1000 registrants for the Nature Seekers' Beach Clean-up event this year, public sector involvement was minimal, with the majority of participants coming from environmental groups, nature enthusiasts and corporate bodies. Such was a statistic Permanent Secretary (Ag.) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Ms. Susan Shurland vowed would soon change as she aimed to facilitate greater staff exposure to activities such as these and have similar-type initiatives promoted throughout the public service.

These sentiments were conveyed on Sunday 1st March, 2020, as the Permanent Secretary (Ag.), led a small Ministry team along the shores of Matura Beach, collecting recyclables (plastics, styrofoam and glass) and general waste items. Armed with a pair of gloves and plastic garbage bags, Ms. Shurland said she was happy to see a reduced number of bags collected as compared to the bag counts observed in prior years. This, according to her was a feat attributed to the tremendous strides made by Nature Seekers in strengthening the public's awareness of the need to conserve our natural environment, including wildlife as well as vulnerable and endangered species.

She added too that while she was personally "*heartened*" by the tremendous support which the event has garnered over the years, there was need for greater collaboration amongst staff of the various Government Ministries. "*Our Ministry can and will do more to encourage increased staff participation in these type of*

*exercises during the turtle nesting season by utilising efficiently, our available resources, so as to monitor these beaches and ensure that our leatherback turtles are not impeded by any debris which visitors and beachgoers may have left behind. In fact, we have seen in recent times, the tremendous benefits which can be derived from public sector collaborations and partnerships and I am hopeful that we can soon engage at the inter-ministerial level, discussions pursuant to environmental awareness, protection and conservation initiatives," Ms. Shurland said.*

This year marked Nature Seekers' 30th year hosting this annual beach clean-up which coincides with the March 1st - August 31st turtle nesting season and culminates with the highly anticipated, Sand Turtle Competition; the challenge trophy for which was sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. The competition, which witnessed more than twenty (20) participating groups this year, involved the sculpting a leatherback turtle in under thirty (30) minutes, utilising nothing more than sand and other natural elements found at the beach.

Persons interested in viewing nesting leatherback turtles at Matura and Grand Riviere during the aforementioned season are required to seek a Permit to Enter a Prohibited Area (for the purpose of turtle-viewing), via the Ministry's Forestry Division at 225-3868. Tours can be arranged by contacting Nature Seekers at 668-7337 for Matura tours or the Grand Riviere Tour Guide Association at 670-4257.

*Photo Captions-*

*MAT1:- Permanent Secretary (Ag.) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF), Ms. Susan Shurland (left), holds a MALF-sponsored challenge trophy, alongside the Chairman of Nature Seekers, Mr. Kyle Mitchell (right), at Nature Seekers' Annual Beach Clean-up on Sunday 1st March, 2020. The trophy honours the winner of the Sand Turtle Competition - one of the main highlights of the clean-up exercise.*

*MAT 2: Participants actively engaged during Nature Seekers' Annual Beach Clean-up in Matura on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2020.*

*MAT 3: Participants actively engaged during Nature Seekers' Annual Beach Clean-up in Matura on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2020.*

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