

**Book Review****The Environmental Authority - State of the Environment Report 2004, pp 157, illustrated, soft bound.**

It is now some ten years since the first State of the Environment Report was published by the Authority. The Environmental Management Act 2000 requires the Authority to prepare and publish a report each year. The first, prepared by Canadian consultants, was a slim and costly one, profusely illustrated with colour paintings and graphs on glossy paper, and fraught with dozens of silly avoidable errors. I was publicly critical of the report and the Authority with the assistance of a small team of experienced nationals developed an alternative approach and format and since then the quality of their reports has been of consistently high quality, with each produced around a central theme, such as, for example, biodiversity or pollution.

The 2004 report is a departure, not in the sense that a central theme is not developed, there is an even stronger theme, but in that it reports on a collaborative multi-organizational effort of civic society, national and international institutions. The substance of the report presents a broad general study collecting and evaluating published material on the Northern Range of Trinidad, putting it into a highly informative and readable form. What is of particular note is that the inputs to the study include such diverse fields as demography, sociology, economics, tourism, biology, geology, meteorology, biology, culture and human behaviour, with the central theme of ecology in its broadest and true sense. The text is clear and extremely well illustrated with maps, charts and tables, making it easy for readers to glimpse and understand reality in a moment. At the same time it is also a handy reference source to be consulted by readers of widely varying interests.

The study was supported financially by the Millennium Assessment, the Cropper Foundation, The British High Commission to Trinidad and Tobago and the United Nations Development Programme Global Environment Fund and its Small Grants Programme. The study is in fact part of a number of similar ecosystem assessments being conducted simultaneously in different parts of the world, designed to generate a global perspective of the state of the planet in this new millennium. Support and inputs also came from the University of the West Indies, the Tropical Re-Leaf Foundation, the Trust for Sustainable Livelihoods, the Environmental Management Authority, some Northern Range communities and many individuals and professionals.

The intent of the study to put together in one volume a distillation of material from all sources of all reliable information into one coherent readable volume that will enable all involved in the overall management of the natural environment of the Northern Range to understand and chart the future. The central thrust of study is the intimate linkage between human society and the immediate environment that supports it, an understanding of which is the key to sustainable use of the resources. The remarkable byproduct of this long and arduous effort, possibly never intended, is a volume that will be of immense value to teachers and students in the CAPE syllabuses, especially in Environmental

Studies, Geography and Biology, as well as all who have serious concerns about the future of our country. I trust that the Environmental Management Authority will have a large enough number of copies for what I anticipate will be a flood of requests for the book, which hopefully might also be available online.

All who have participated must be highly commended for their contributions, especially Senator Angela Cropper for her dedicated leadership role and the financial sponsors who have made it possible. The EMA Board is also to be commended, meeting two responsibilities, reporting and public education. I suppose that I might simply be daydreaming – wouldn't be highly imaginative and responsible of those who plan and govern also to have initiated a comparable assessment of the southwestern peninsula in order to manage it sustainably for the citizens who live there? All Parliamentarians will receive a copy of the report. Will any read it?

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649 words