

The Bahamas Destination Stewardship Council Initiative

A Bahamian Approach to Small Island Sustainable
Destination Management



Presented By: Janel Campbell
**The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investments, and
Aviation**

CSTC Conference | Fiji | 2025

The Bahamas, a country of...

- 700 islands & 2,000 cays
- Friendly people (pop. 400,000)
- Marine protected areas (20,600 sq. miles)
- Cultural authenticity
- Unique biodiversity & ecosystems
- Exceptional & diverse visitor experiences



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- Pandemic led to a bold decision.

EMBRACE A NEW PATH FOR RESILIENT RECOVERY

- Focus placed on inclusive and resilient recovery
- Core question that guided the development of the initiative:
How can tourism be more inclusive, especially at the community level?
- Programming: Destination Stewardship, Nature-Based Tours for Resilient Livelihoods, Community Tourism Clusters, Immersive Experiences.



Initiative Overview

CURRENT :

Partnership with Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

- Ground-up model using the GSTC Criteria Community driven development
- Community driven policy development and inclusive destination management
- GSTC Mentorship: Kathleen Pittman, Michelle Janke, CB Ramkumar
- 6-8 month guided training cycles
- Localized Education around the SDGs
- Community Projects in the Blue Green & Orange Economies

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS:

Destination Stewardship stakeholder engagement in:

- a. Climate Adaptation Policy development
- b. Marine Protected Areas Policy and Co-Management Framework development
- c. Tourism Competitiveness and Vulnerability Diagnostic for seven islands in the Northern Bahamas

Private-Sector

Drives economic growth and innovation



Public-Sector

Provides governance and policy-making



Education & Training

Serves as the foundation for skill development



Civil Society

Engages citizens and advocates for environmental and social issues



Pillars of the Destination Stewardship Council Initiative:

Capacity Building

- Collaborate with community stakeholders to **create** local **awareness** of sustainable best practices and climate impacts.
- Strengthen sectoral linkages with tourism in communities to **create sustainable economic opportunities** for citizens and residents.

Strategic Partnerships

- Promote **responsible tourism management** by destinations & enterprises in strategic planning, operations and branding.
- **Support ethical and sustainable product sourcing**, consumption, production and delivery mechanisms.

Destination Management

- Encourage environmental conservation & protection of natural resources & biodiversity.
- **Recommend respectful approaches** to the integration of heritage and cultural traditions in the visitor experience.



Council Partners

Abaco Stewardship Council Ltd.



Cat Island Sustainable Tourism Council



Exuma Sustainable Tourism Advisory Council



Bimini For Sustainable Tourism Council



B.F.S.T. COUNCIL

Eleuthera Sustainability Council Cooperative Society



South Andros and Mangrove Cay Destination Stewardship Council



Participating Islands Projects

Cat Island Council: Healing Pond designated as a wellness tourism site

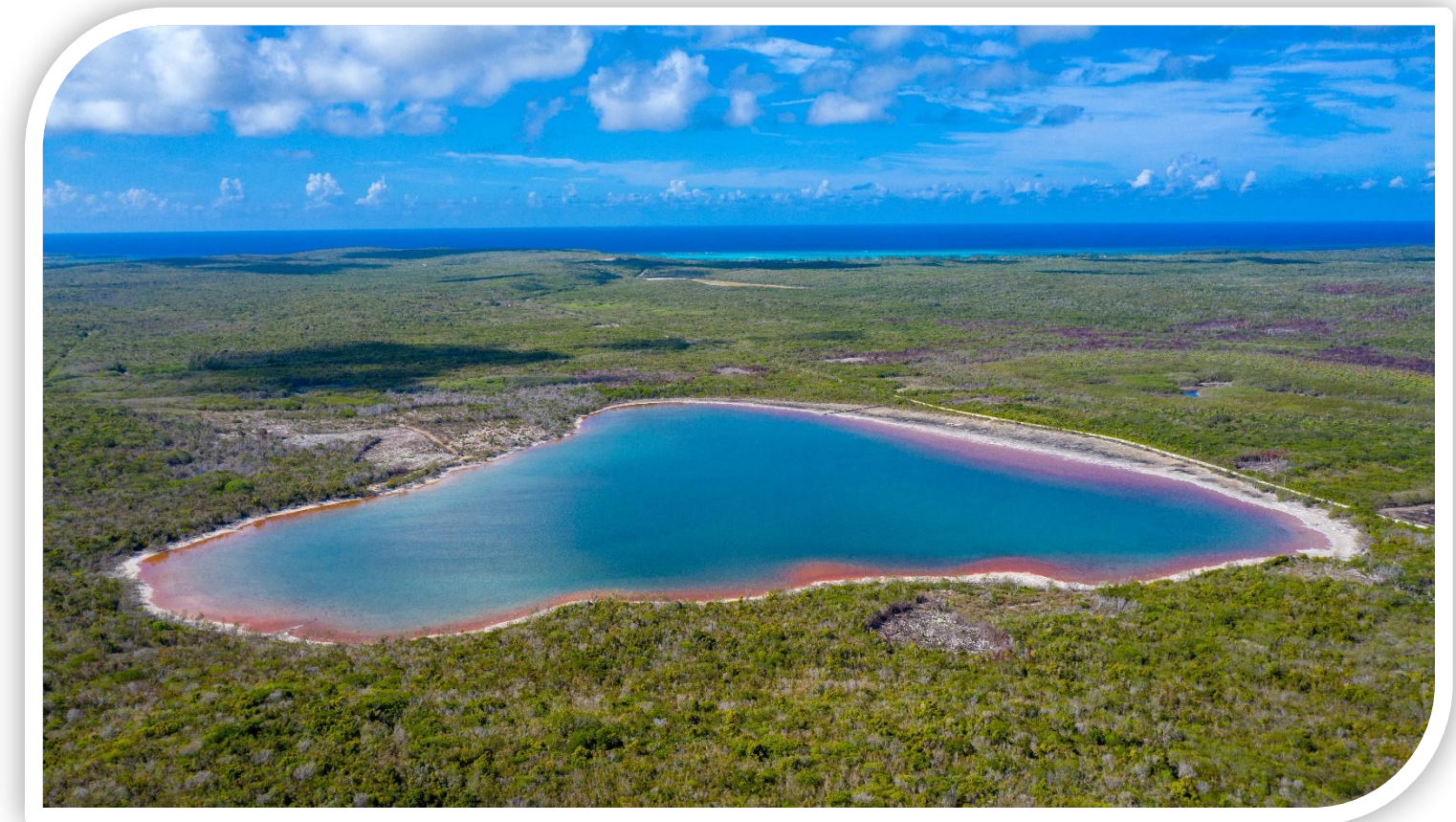
Exuma Council: Oral History Project

Bimini/Harbour Island Councils: > 50,000 lbs. of marine debris removed

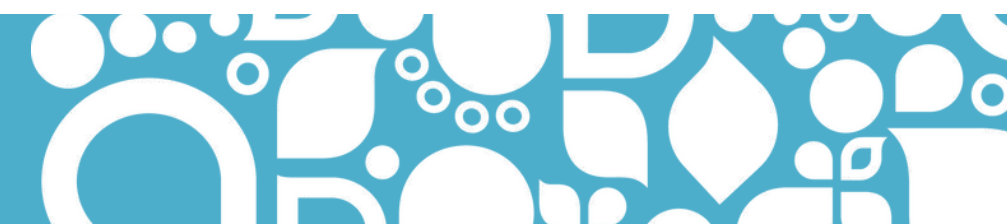
Eleuthera Council: Improving safety and security through the installation of solar lights at strategic locations

Andros/Inagua Councils: Heritage Signage

Abaco Councils: Sustainable Recovery Post-Hurricane Dorian



The Healing Pond – Cat Island



The Bahamas Awarded The Caribbean Destination Resilience Award

- **Major Honor:** Bahamas awarded the Caribbean Destination Stewardship and Resilience Award by CTO & CHTA
- **Core Criteria:** Demonstrate how the destination adapted to COVID-19 and other crises through new strategies, tourism offerings, and services. Highlight ongoing efforts to strengthen resilience and preparedness, and recognition for innovation, public-private collaboration, climate action, sustainable tourism, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **Collaboration in Action:** Featured cross-sector partnerships including NGOS, Government, and the local communities



Director-General Latia Duncombe, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Tourism I. Chester Cooper & Deputy Director-General Valery Alce at the Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2024




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NEXT STEPS

- Expand to all 16 major destinations
- Deepen mentorship
- Strengthen partnerships
- Center community voices
- Connect to national sectoral initiatives



An aerial photograph of a tropical island, likely in the Bahamas. The island features a long, narrow white sand beach that curves along the shoreline. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, transitioning to a deeper blue further out. Several modern, light-colored houses with flat roofs are scattered across the island, surrounded by lush greenery and palm trees. A small, isolated island is visible in the distance to the left. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds.

Forward, Upward, Onward, Together
as
Destination Stewards

THANK YOU

Janel Campbell
jcampbell@bahamas.com