

GRAEME HALL NATURE SANCTUARY, INC.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Barbados Government Cuts Water Service to Graeme Hall Sanctuary

**Emergency forces employees to hand carry water from their homes
for rare and endangered bird species**

[*Christ Church, BARBADOS Dec. 15, 2009*] The Barbados Water Authority (BWA) cut water service to the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary last week without warning, sending Sanctuary workers scrambling to implement the Sanctuary's Emergency Management Plan. At stake was the health and welfare of the endangered and captive bird populations in the captive breeding facility, and the Marshland, Gully and Migratory Aviary Exhibits.

BWA apparently shut off the water over a sewerage billing discrepancy. However, Sanctuary officials insist that they repeatedly made good faith requests to the BWA for a review of Sanctuary sewerage charges, and that water and sewerage billings were being paid pending that outcome.

“They never even talked to us about the merits of our requests, they just locked down our water valve and actually cut our main pipeline,” said one official at the Sanctuary. “We had to carry clean water from our homes to take care of the birds, and use emergency pumps and hoses from our water tanks to maintain the Aviary systems.”

The official said that the Sanctuary is fully aware of the conventional BWA billing structure for use of the South Coast Sewerage system, but that it applies mostly to residences and business enterprises.

“We always pay our bills,” said Peter Allard, owner of the Sanctuary. “For years we have been formally requesting good faith review and assistance from the BWA for for a bona-fide discrepancy and they haven't replied except to come and chop our fresh water pipe.”

For billing purposes BWA calculates that most customers discharge more than 65% of their water supply into the sewer. The core of the \$37,000 dispute revolves around the fact that the Sanctuary recycles most of its water, discharging only about 5% of of its total water supply. The vast majority of water used by the large Aviary ponds never reaches the sewer system as it is recycled for irrigation.

The relatively small portion of water actually discharged into the sewer comes from the employee bathrooms and aviary food prep kitchen. Only eight (8) employees remain at the Sanctuary who maintain the captive bird population and grounds since the Sanctuary closed to the general public one year ago.

The Sanctuary has had a long history of cooperation with the BWA during construction of the South Coast Sewerage Treatment Plant. Despite major disruption to Sanctuary operations for years, BWA contractors used the Sanctuary for a construction staging area, and were allowed to dump hundreds of

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truckloads of contaminated clay soil onto Sanctuary property to help the BWA save money on long-distance trucking charges. These resources were given to the BWA and its contractors free of charge.

Allard has recently made formal allegations that the BWA illegally dumped tens of thousands of gallons of raw sewage into the wetland instead of using the approved emergency sewerage discharge structure at Worthing Beach, allegedly violating international environmental treaty conditions and Barbados' environmental protection laws.

Late last week after strong protests from the Sanctuary, BWA workers repaired the water pipe and reconnected the water supply. Sanctuary officials indicated that the dispute with BWA continues and that they do not know if or when the water supply will be cut off again.

Since 1994 Mr. Allard has invested more than \$35 million (US) in the 35-acre Sanctuary to preserve the last significant mangrove woodland and wetland on the island.

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Bridgetown, Barbados

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