

FRANCE

Biodiversity restoration, preservation & enhancement

Location

Gaschet dam

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P4 – Ecosystems
management

Measure

M8 – Investments in
forest areas

Funding (EUR)*

Total budget 174 524

EAFRD 139 619

National/Regional 34 905

Project duration

2016 – 2019

Project promoter

Conseil départemental de la
Guadeloupe

Contact

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Website

<https://fr-fr.facebook.com/guadeloupela1ere/videos/5-000-plants-darbres-%C3%A0-gaschet/1727577150594140/>

* ERDF was also combined to support the signposting of the interpretation trail as well as the smart phone application.

An afforestation project to protect the largest body of freshwater in Guadeloupe and improve the biodiversity in the surrounding area.

Summary

The Gaschet Dam is the largest body of freshwater in Guadeloupe. The area is home to a wide range of bird species. One of the major challenges in the area is to manage an invading acacia species. The project supported the afforestation and enhancement of the Gaschet dam site. The project was carried out in two phases.



The first involved a study to make an assessment of the ecological and social situation in the area. In the second phase the project helped create multifunctional wooded areas with educational elements, e.g. an interpretation trail.

Results

Approximately 5 000 tree seedlings were planted in order to enrich the flora and fauna around the dam.

The main species planted were Poirier-pays (*Tabebuia heterophylla*), which grows rapidly and which starts its first stage of growth in a plant nursery. Other plants used include honey plants and fruit trees.

In 2017, the interpretation trail with five spaces for nature drawing was completed. Five benches and one ornithological observatory were also installed.

In May 2017, the interpretation trail and its digital application were presented to the local community and the media.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The project combined agricultural performance (improved irrigation system) with environmental preservation (bird sanctuary) and tourism development (interpretation trail).
- ❑ The strength of this project was due to the local actors who came to work together on the project.

Context

The Gaschet dam at Petit-Canal is located near Port-Louis in the north-west of Grande-Terre. The site is the property of the Departmental Council. It extends over four kilometres and covers a water surface area of about 100 hectares. It is the largest freshwater body in Guadeloupe, providing irrigation and water supply to the North Grande-Terre. Its water storage capacity is 2 500 million cubic meters. It was constructed in the early 1990s for agricultural irrigation purposes. The area has been classified as a Natural Area of Ecological, Faunal and Flora Interest since 2000.

Some areas of the dam required reforestation work to protect the water body and preserve biodiversity. During studies conducted to manage invasive species, specifically the water hyacinth, scientists advised against planting along the banks to avoid enriching the water with organic matter and thus enabling the hyacinth to expand. It should be noted that the island of Grande-Terre and in particular the North Grande-Terre, had been logged extensively in the past and now only few native forests remain.

Objectives

The objectives of this project were threefold:

- Ecological - by focussing on the preservation and improvement of the dam's water quality status, as well as the preservation of biodiversity.
- Social - through integration work during the tree planting phase which improved the landscape quality, and preserved the quality of the living environment;
- Educational - by raising awareness amongst local people of how the dam works, the natural (birds, honey plant species) and cultural resources.

Activities

Since 2012, the Departmental Council has been working on a project to reforest and enhance the Gaschet site. This project is being carried out in two phases:

- Firstly, a study was conducted in order to make an assessment of the ecological and social situation in the area;
- Secondly the afforestation work was carried out which included the creation of multifunctional wooded areas for bird protection assigned areas for hunting and

improved public facilities. During the afforestation indigenous species were used exclusively. This was compliant with the French masterplan on pollinators and the regional roll-out of this policy, promoted by the Ministry of Ecological Transition and the National Agency for Insects.



Main results

Approximately 5 000 tree seedlings were planted in order to enrich the flora and fauna around the dam.

The main species planted were Poirier-pays (*Tabebuia heterophylla*), which grows rapidly and which starts its first stage of growth in a plant nursery. Other plants used included honey plants and fruit trees. The re-introduction of honey plants such as acacia, verbena, pear trees and mango trees, will boost the production of honey and the consumption of local fruit. The project also covered the cost of two-years of plantation maintenance to ensure the proper development of the species.

From an ornithological point of view, the site is renowned in the eastern Caribbean for the observation of migrating ducks. In 2017, an interpretation trail with five spaces for nature drawing was completed. Five benches and one ornithological observatory were installed. In May 2017, the interpretation trail and its digital application were presented to the local community and the media.

Key results

The project combines agricultural performance (improved irrigation system) with environmental preservation (bird sanctuary) and tourism development (interpretation trail).

The strength of this project is the result of local partnerships who came to work together on the project. Private organisations such as the Lions Club Chateau de Basse-Terre, and other environmental NGOs also participated in the process.

Additional sources of information

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BIs1gDuoNA>
www.amazona-guadeloupe.com/gaschet.html