

PRESS RELEASE : Three University of Guyana students receive research grants for natural resource management.

The University of Guyana in collaboration with the University of Florida and the World Wildlife Fund-Guianas is proud to announce that three students, Ms. Wilda Hungito, Mr. Mark Ram, and Ms. Nadia Hunte, will receive research awards in support of their graduate studies. The students made successful proposals all deemed to provide important information for natural resource management that will affect the livelihoods of many Guyanese.

The grants were made under an academic programme to strengthen technical capacity for natural resource management in Guyana. The programme is funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) under the title, '*Achieving a Green State: Building human capacity for natural resource management in Guyana*'. The project aims to place the University of Guyana at the forefront of high-impact academic research on natural resource management with a strong emphasis on scientific publishing and policy development.



Grant recipients with members of staff from WWF-Guianas and University of Guyana. From left: Mr. Chuck Hutchinson (Protected Areas/REDD+ Lead, WWF Guyana Office); graduate students, Mr. Mark Ram, Ms. Wilda Hungito, Ms. Nadia Hunte, Dr. Gyanpriya Maharaj (Director, Centre for the Study of Biological Diversity, UG), Ms. Aiesha Williams (Country Manager, WWF Guyana Office).

Impact of mangrove loss on fisheries (Mark Ram):

Mangroves provide important services for coastal communities in Guyana. Over the last decade Guyana lost and continues to lose thousands of hectares of its mangrove forests, with potentially serious consequences for the US\$55.4 million fisheries sector, that employs over 6000 Guyanese. Mark's research aims to quantify how loss of mangroves affects fish abundance along the coast of Regions 3-Essequibo Island West Demerara, 4-Demerara-Mahaica, 5-Mahaica-Berbice and 6-



Berbice-Corentyne. Mark will be collecting data on the abundance of different fish species in areas that have lost mangroves and areas where mangroves are healthy. Mark will be working in collaboration with the Guyana Mangrove Restoration Project and the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute to quantify the benefits of mangroves to the fisheries sector.

How trees grow after logging (Wilda Hungito).

The forestry sector contributed 2.27% of Guyana's GDP in 2016 and employed 20,000 persons. An important question for sustainable forestry management implemented in Guyana's forests is how do trees grow after logging. Wilda's study examines how branches of tree crowns on the edges of canopy gaps created by logging respond to the changes to light during the first 23 years after logging. The motivation for studying this phenomenon is that the range of angles over which trees with asymmetrical crowns (i.e., when branches are located to one side of the tree causing heavy lean) can be felled is limited. The forest damage and the personal risk to chainsaw operators increases with crown lean, as directional felling, a foundation of reduced-impact logging, becomes harder to implement.



Importance of trees in Georgetown (Nadia Hunte). The third grant recipient, Nadia Hunte, studies how urban development in Georgetown has led to loss of natural habitats. Loss of tree cover in Georgetown will have serious implications for the well-being of Georgetown's population with a hotter climate (have you noticed it's always cooler under trees?). Trees in Georgetown receive little to no maintenance and many are being removed to erect residential and commercial buildings. For instance, the mahogany trees that long graced Regent Street, are now nearly gone. Nadia will map historical and present-day location of trees using satellite imagery to understand where trees have been lost and where they still stand. Her project will enable continuous monitoring of tree cover across the city and will serve



as a baseline to monitor changes in tree diversity and abundance in the future. Nadia will also study how Guyanese connect with nature in urban spaces. The final output of her analysis will be a map of trees in Georgetown that could be used for urban planning. Protecting trees in Georgetown and other towns will support and promote biodiversity (important for Guyana's budding bird tourism sector), recreate green spaces, reclaim our 'Garden City Status', and develop innovative green public spaces, while retaining the unique cultural and historical attributes of Georgetown.

For more details please contact :-

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