

## INTRODUCTION



The Environmental Commission of Trinidad and Tobago stands on the threshold of tremendous opportunity. As with societies everywhere, the dynamic created by the competing forces of economics and the environment require strategic management if sustainable prosperity is to be achieved. Balance can only be gained through active management. Trinidad and Tobago is blessed with natural resources and a population growing in environmental awareness. It is also blessed with some of nature's most unique and attractive attributes. Without a managed balance of this abundance, it is possible to lose both.

With the enactment of the Environmental Management Act of 1995 and later the Environmental Management Act of 2000, Trinidad and Tobago took the first important step toward securing the future. This was the culmination of work begun as early as 1981 with the establishment of a Ministry of Health and Environment followed by a National Consultation on Environmental Health and Protection in 1985. The roots of the present policy can

be traced to the Port of Spain Accord that emerged from the First Ministerial Conference in 1989. Other countries in the region have since begun the journey, but it originated with leadership provided in Trinidad and Tobago.

As one of the Caribbean's pioneers in this area, there remains a leadership opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago to create the institutions that others can model as they attempt to create more strategic, thoughtful and sustainable ways to manage their environments. Much has already been accomplished. Important legislation has been passed establishing the Environmental Commission as a superior court of record (hereinafter referred to as "the Court"). Financial resources have been provided. Regulatory mechanisms have been established (specifically the Environmental Management Authority).

The Environmental Management Act of 2000, Section 81, gives the Court jurisdiction for hearing certain enumerated environmental disputes. Its

jurisdiction currently includes hearing appeals from decisions or actions of the EMA relating to noise pollution, environmentally sensitive areas, environmentally sensitive species, and certificates of environmental clearance. Parliament intended an even wider jurisdiction for the Court. Specific provision is made in Section 81 (5) (i) of the Act for expanding the jurisdiction of the Court.

Each of these mechanisms is relatively new. Each must be fine-tuned through day-to-day performance in the execution of environmental policy.

The opportunity exists to approach that performance either reactively or proactively, either by letting individual circumstances dictate the Court's direction, or by thinking strategically about three important questions:

*Where are we now?*

*Where do we go?*

*How do we get there?*

This is the essence of strategic management. The creation of a plan with verifiable goals and objectives is the first step in achieving it. For those who see the Strategic Plan as one component of a larger strategic management process, it becomes a very practical decision making tool at every level of the organisation. In fact, it serves to give every employee a "line of sight" from their work to the purpose of the organisation. It allows them to identify their particular contribution to the accomplishment of the organisation's mission and vision. It

causes resources to be concentrated on activities that add value.

It is our philosophy that the real purpose of strategic thinking is to build a set of prepared minds throughout the organisation who understand what the organisation is trying to do and the importance of their individual role in it. It is in this context of "strategic management" that the plan becomes an essential guide for decision makers at every level.

We used an inclusive, interactive process to draw on the experience and perceptions of all employees and stakeholders of the Court. This assisted us in completing the development of the strategic issues facing the Court and, in turn, use them in the creation of a strategic agenda that forms the basis of this plan. We used this process to create a set of priorities for the Court and outline a set of strategies for realizing them.

Through a series of individual interviews and stakeholder workshops, over one hundred parties were involved in developing this strategic plan. Individuals representing the EMA, the legal profession, government, industry and environmental interest groups provided their input.

The capstone of this workshop process was a specific set of goals and objectives represented in this strategic plan. These will serve the Court as a management action roadmap for the three year period of the plan. **Figure 1** illustrates the Strategic Planning and Management Process.