



PROTECTED AREAS TRUST

GUYANA'S NATIONAL CONSERVATION TRUST FUND

The First 12 Years

2014-2026

A 12-year compilation of stories, decisions and partnerships that shaped the Trust's identity





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Shyam Nokta

Chair of the Board of Trustees, Protected Areas Trust

It's been said that "conservation without money is just a conversation." For the Protected Areas Trust (PAT), conservation is far more than a conversation. Established in 2014, PAT provides a sustainable financing mechanism to support the effective management and long-term sustainability of Guyana's protected areas. Through this role, PAT helps ensure that the financial resources needed to conserve and manage these important natural spaces are available for the benefit of present and future generations.

This work is grounded in a simple but important principle: protected areas are the foundation of conservation. They safeguard our biodiversity, ecosystems and natural resources, while also providing benefits for communities and creating opportunities for future generations. Over the past 12 years, PAT has grown alongside Guyana's Protected Areas System, contributing to its development and strengthening the resources available to support the conservation of some of our country's most important natural spaces.

As Guyana's protected areas system continues to grow and expand, PAT's role becomes even more important. The Trust is a demonstration of the Government of Guyana's commitment, together with its partners, to the conservation and sustainable management of our natural environment. This commitment is reflected in Guyana's leadership in conservation through the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 and the Global Biodiversity Alliance, positioning Guyana as an important voice in global efforts to protect nature while advancing sustainable development.

This progress would not be possible without the people who have dedicated themselves to the work. As we celebrate 12 years, I commend the Board, the Executive Director and the entire PAT team, past and present, for their dedication, hard work and contribution to this important national effort. Their collective efforts have helped build PAT into an institution that plays an important role in supporting the continued strengthening of Guyana's protected areas.

While 12 years gives us an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come, it also reminds us that conservation is an ongoing responsibility. As Guyana's protected areas system continues to evolve, so too must our commitment to securing the resources and partnerships needed to sustain it.

Twelve years on, PAT stands as a testament to what can be achieved when conservation is matched with commitment, investment and action.



Oleta Williams

Executive Director, Protected Areas Trust

This history book marks the Protected Areas Trust's twelfth anniversary and is an essential record of how a national institution grew from an idea into a cornerstone of Guyana's conservation landscape. Over the past twelve years, PAT has evolved in mandate, scale, and influence, navigating complex environmental, financial, and governance challenges while steadily strengthening the foundation for long-term protected areas management. Capturing this journey in a dedicated archive preserves the stories, decisions, partnerships, and lessons that shaped the Trust's identity. Many of these stories are at risk of being lost as leadership changes and institutional memory shifts. A history book also honours the people and communities who contributed to PAT's development, from past Executive Directors to staff to policymakers and Board Trustees to rangers, Indigenous partners, and early champions of conservation finance.

By documenting the milestones, setbacks, innovations, and collective achievements that brought PAT to this point, this publication becomes both a tribute and a tool: a tribute to the visionaries who built the system, and a tool for guiding future leaders as we carry the institution into its next decade of growth. It also offers the wider public a clearer understanding of why protected areas matter and how PAT's work safeguards Guyana's natural heritage.

We hope you enjoy our story as much as we do!

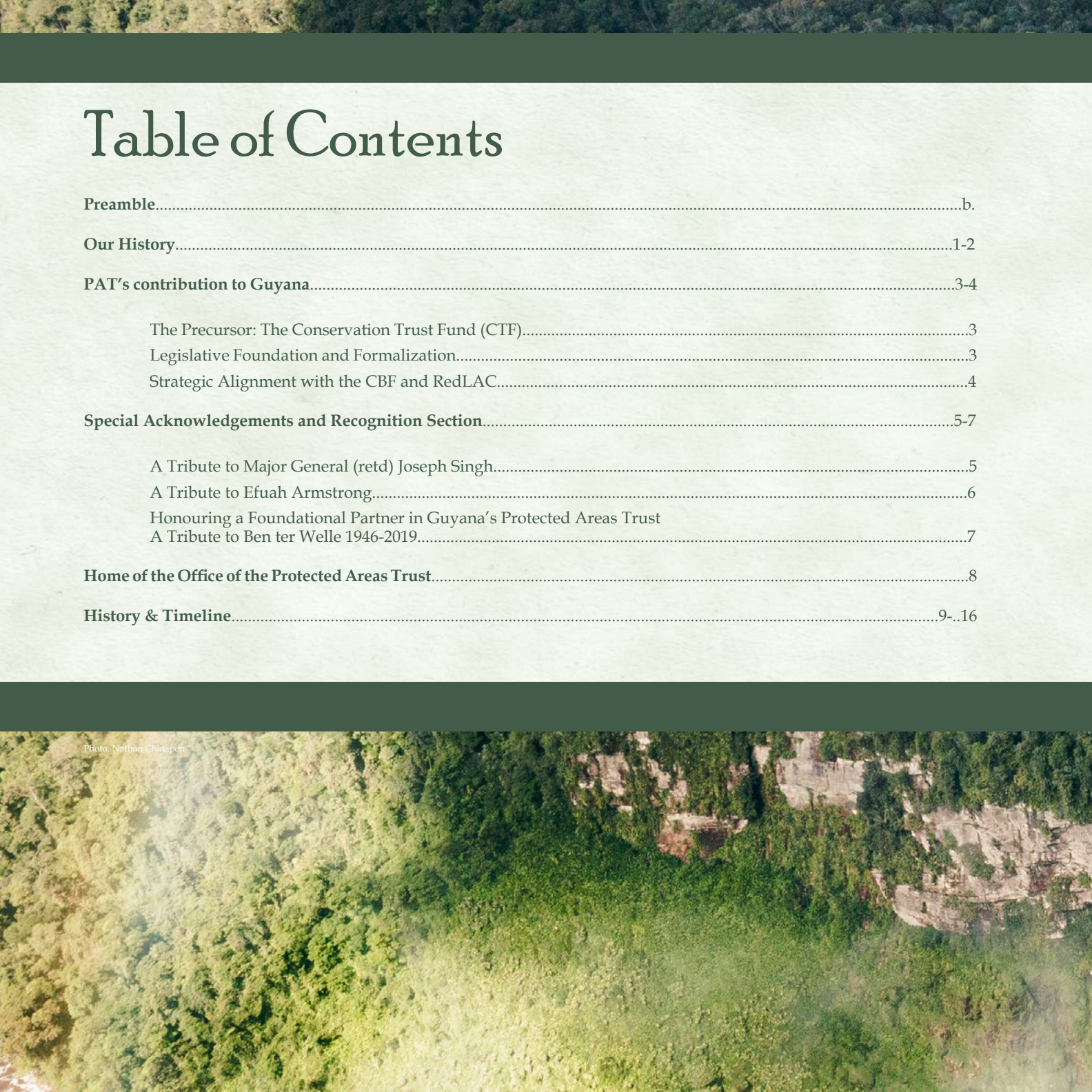


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Photo: Nathan Chinapen



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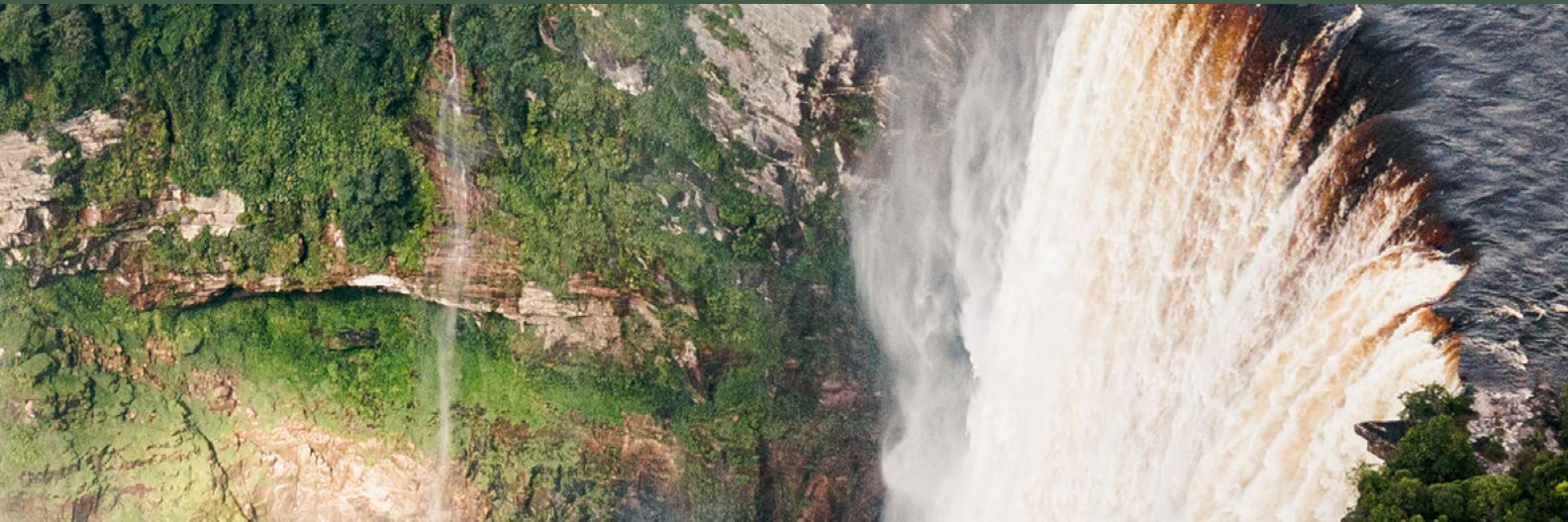
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Our History

The genesis of the Protected Areas Trust (PAT) is deeply rooted in the evolution of Guyana's environmental policy and the recognition of its unique natural capital. The formal history of the organization is a narrative of transition from a temporary financial mechanism to a permanent statutory body.

The Precursor: The Conservation Trust Fund (CTF)

Before the PAT was legally established under the Protected Areas Act of 2011, a critical interim step was taken with the formation of the Conservation Trust Fund (CTF). This was necessitated by substantial early commitments from international donors: Conservation International (CI) who contributed USD 3 million, and the German Development Bank (KfW) who provided USD 5.5 million. Since the legal framework for a national trust was still being drafted, these funds, totaling \$8.5 million USD, required a secure and transparent vehicle for management.

The CTF was established as a trust deed. This temporary arrangement allowed the initial endowment to be invested in the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), ensuring the funds could begin generating returns while the national legislation was being finalized and operationalized. This period was marked by rigorous testing and "error-filled" processes as the young organization navigated meeting international standards of financial status.

Legislative Foundation and Formalization

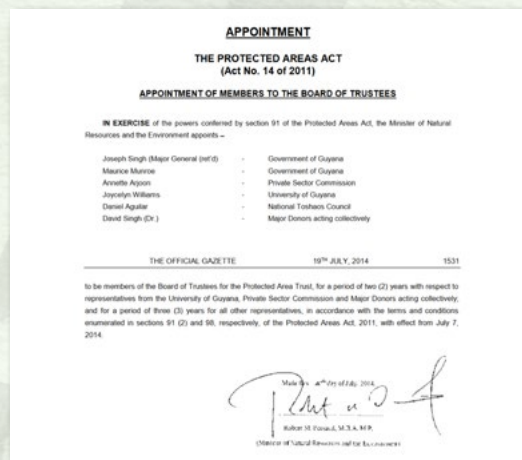
The passing of the Protected Areas Act in 2011 provided the necessary legal mandate for PAT. This Act integrated the Trust into the broader National Protected Areas System (NPAS), alongside the establishment of the Protected Areas Commission (PAC), the national entity responsible for the establishment, management, maintenance, promotion and expansion of the NPAS in Guyana. Major General (retd) Joseph Singh was appointed as the first formal Chairman of PAT, bringing his extensive experience from the military, national service, and his previous role as Executive Director of Conservation International-Guyana. PAT's first board meeting was held on September 1, 2014, and is now recognized as the official commemorative operationalisation date of the Protected Areas Trust.

The transition from the CTF to PAT involved transferring the invested endowment and establishing formal governance structures. During PAT's formative years, the organisation benefitted significantly from the leadership of its early Executive Directors, particularly Nadia Sagar, whose legal background was instrumental in guiding the institution through its initial establishment and governance framework. She was succeeded by Denise Murray, who continued to strengthen PAT's operational foundation during this transitional period. Since PAT was formally established on September 1, 2014 and the long-term Executive Director was appointed in September 2015, it is helpful to clarify that this one-year interval was shaped by the stewardship of these early leaders, who ensured continuity, institutional development, and the groundwork necessary for PAT's long-term stability. The first long term full-time Executive Director, Geeta Singh, was appointed in September 2015, inheriting a draft operations manual and a five-year strategic plan that set the stage for the Trust's operational growth.

PAT's first Board of Trustees were

- **Major General (Ret'd) Joseph Singh** – Chairman (Government's Nominee)
- **Dr. David Singh** – Vice-Chairman (Major Donors' Nominee)
- **Mr. Maurice Munro** – Trustee/Chair, Finance Committee (Government's Nominee)
- **Ms. Joycelyn Williams** – Trustee (University of Guyana's Nominee)
- **Ms. Annette Arjoon-Martins** – Trustee (Private Sector Commission's Nominee)
- **The Late Toshao Daniel Aguilar** – Trustee (National Toshi-
os' Council's Nominee)

Note: Ms. Chuvika Harilal - Scribe (Former Senior Protected Areas Officer (PAC))



*Gazette of first Board of Trustees
dated July 19th, 2014*



Signing of the CBF Partnership Agreement in May 2022 by former PAT Chair Curtis Bernard and CBF CEO Karen McDonald-Gayle. Overlooking are former PAC Commissioner Natasha Ramdas and former PAT Vice Chair, Melanie McTurk

Strategic Alignment with the CBF and RedLAC

A cornerstone of the Trust's history is its membership to RedLAC (the Regional Network of Latin America and Caribbean Environmental Funds) in 2016 and its partnership with the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) in 2022. These partnerships represented a fundamental shift in how Guyana approached conservation financing.

Becoming a member of RedLAC in 2016 allowed the young Guyanese PAT Secretariat to exchange strategies with established funds across the region, moving the conversation beyond local constraints and into global best practices for endowment management and grant-making.

Acquiring a partnership agreement with the CBF in April 2022 was described as a rigorous and challenging process. This was an internally demanding journey where the Trust's operations were brought 'under the microscope' to ensure they met international benchmarks for transparency and accountability. The partnership agreement allows PAT to access USD 1 million over a 5 year period as well as access technical support to strengthen the organization's institutional affairs and day-to-day management efforts.

By successfully navigating these standards, the Trust evolved from a fledgling local entity into a credible, professional organization capable of managing large-scale international endowments.

PAT's Contribution to Guyana

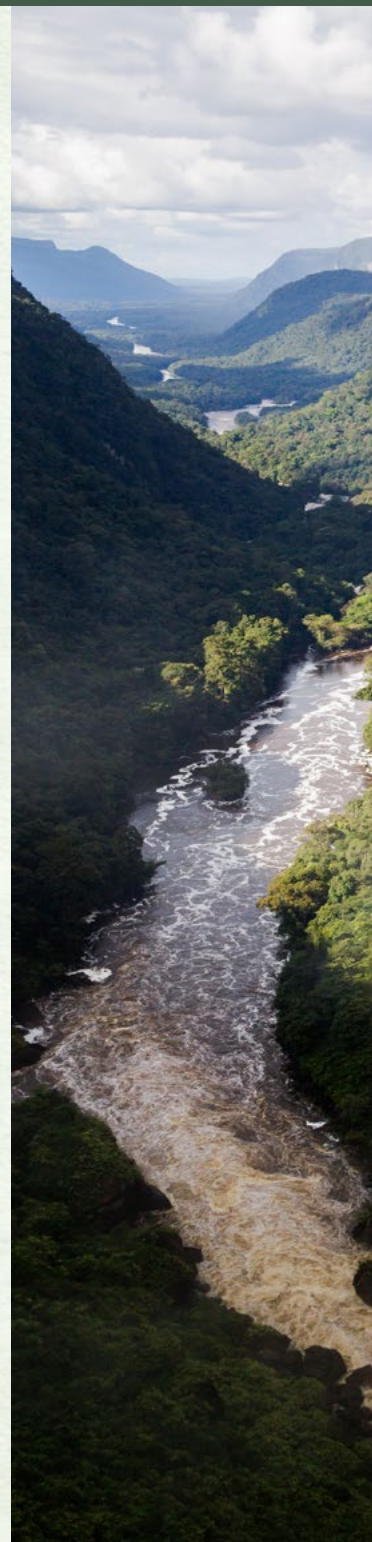
The Protected Areas Trust serves as the primary sustainable financial engine for the conservation of Guyana's national protected areas system. It is Guyana's only national Conservation Trust Fund and a trusted financial mechanism for channeling funds from donors to protected area management authorities and communities who work tirelessly to conserve Guyana's protected areas. Its contributions are multifaceted, ranging from institutional stability to direct community support.

Financial Stewardship and Transparency

One of the most significant contributions of PAT is its role as a transparent mechanism for international donor engagement. By maintaining high standards of financial accountability, the Trust has successfully attracted additional funding beyond its initial endowment, notably from the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF). This financial credibility ensures that conservation in Guyana is not dependent on fluctuating national budgets but is supported by a growing, sustainable endowment.

Support for the National Protected Areas System (NPAS)

- Kaieteur National Park, Shell Beach Protected Area, Kanuku Mountains Protected Area, and Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area: Funding for these sites supports essential infrastructure and the presence of rangers who protect the biodiversity of these important spaces.
- Ranger Support: Grants issued by the Trust directly improve the working conditions and capabilities of rangers, who are the "boots on the ground" for conservation efforts.
- Infrastructure Improvements: Ongoing efforts include upgrading facilities at site offices to improve staff comfort and attract more visitors.
- Conservation: PAT supports key conservation measures, including management plan development, ecological monitoring, environmental education, public awareness, and related activities essential for effective protected area stewardship.



Community-Led Conservation and Science Diplomacy

The PAT has pioneered a model of community-owned conservation finance, most notably with the Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area, which is community-owned by the Wai Wai people. By honoring commitments made to indigenous communities dating back to 1969, the Trust ensures that conservation is a collaborative effort that respects local rights and knowledge.

Furthermore, the Trust is moving towards “science diplomacy”, raising the profile of Guyana’s natural capital, its biodiversity and ecosystems on the global stage; including its current membership to the Global Biodiversity Alliance as of 2026.



Official declaration of the Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area in 2017



A Tribute to Major General (retd) Joseph Singh

Major General (retd) Joseph Singh's contribution to the Protected Areas Trust is characterized by a "broad and all-encompassing" portfolio that stems from decades of national service. His involvement is not merely administrative; it is deeply personal and historical.

MG (retd) Singh's commitment to conservation of the protected areas can be traced back to 1969, when as a young officer, he first met the Wai Wai people. This early encounter eventually culminated in the establishment of the Wai Wai Community Conservation Area, now established as the Kanshen Amerindian Protected Area, a goal he pursued throughout his career. His leadership at Conservation International Guyana (CI-G) from 2001 to 2005 was instrumental in setting the stage for the National Protected Area System (NPAS).

As the first Chairman of the PAT, MG (retd) Joseph Singh provided the gravitas and diplomatic skill necessary to navigate the transition from the interim Conservation Trust Fund to the formal statutory body. His simultaneous work as Chairman of the Guyana Marine Turtle Conservation Society at Shell Beach and his ability to "bounce ideas" with diplomats and leaders alike ensured that PAT remained a priority on the national agenda. His legacy is one of bridging the gap between military discipline, national policy, and environmental stewardship.

PAT is grateful for Major General (retd) Joseph Singh's exemplary contributions.



A Tribute to Efuah Armstrong

Ms. Efuah Armstrong is one of the pillars of the organisation and the institutional memory of the Protected Areas Trust. Joining in June 2015 as the Accounts Assistant and then redesignated in 2022 as Finance Officer, her tenure has spanned nearly the entire operational life of the organization.

Armstrong's entry into the Trust was a result of persistence and a belief that "all things are possible". Despite initial hesitation about returning to work, she was encouraged by the first Executive Director to apply her 19 years of human resources and accounting experience to this new venture. Known by colleagues for her "humility and sweetness," she acted as a "rock" for the organization during times of transition.

Her contribution goes beyond managing the books. She has been a consistent presence through leadership changes, providing the stability required for a fledgling Trust to grow. Her hope for the future that PAT eventually owns its own premises and expands its grant-making capacity. Her unwavering commitment to PAT reflects her deep-seated investment in the organization's longevity and its impact on the rangers and protected sites of Guyana.

PAT thanks Ms. Armstrong for her current and continued exemplary contribution.



Honouring a Foundational Partner in
Guyana's Protected Areas Trust

A Tribute to Berend ter Welle 1946-2019

The contributions of Berend ter Welle's, commonly known as Ben, to the Protected Areas Trust (PAT) stands as one of the quiet but powerful pillars on which the institution has been able to grow, mature, and serve Guyana's national conservation agenda. His work was never about visibility or applause; instead, it was rooted in a deep belief in the value of strong institutions, transparent systems, and the long-term protection of the natural world. That ethos shaped PAT in ways that continue to guide us today.

Ben joined the Trust in 2017 as a trustee at a time when Guyana's protected areas financing mechanism was still taking shape. He brought with him not only technical expertise, but a calm, principled approach to governance that helped PAT establish credibility and stability. His insistence on sound financial management, clear processes, and responsible stewardship laid the groundwork for the Trust's evolution into a respected national institution.

Ben believed that conservation finance must be built on trust; i.e. trust in systems, trust in leadership, and trust in the mission. He consistently advocated for transparency, accountability, and longterm thinking. His guidance strengthened PAT's governance framework and ensured that the Fund could withstand scrutiny, adapt to change, and remain focused on its mandate.

The Protected Areas Trust honours Ben ter Welle with profound appreciation. His work helped safeguard Guyana's natural heritage for generations to come. His principles continue to guide us and his legacy lives in every acre protected, every partnership strengthened, and every step we take toward a more resilient conservation future.

May his memory continue to inspire integrity, purpose, and service.

Home of the Office of the Protected Areas Trust

The Jenman Building stands as one of Georgetown's quiet architectural treasures, an elegant reminder of Guyana's colonial heritage and the enduring value of preservation. Built in the late 19th century and named after the renowned botanist George Samuel Jenman, the structure originally served as a hub for botanical and agricultural administration. Its timber architecture, Demerara windows, and graceful proportions reflect a period when craftsmanship and natural ventilation shaped the city's built environment.

Today, the Jenman Building holds renewed purpose as the home of the Protected Areas Trust (PAT). With the permission of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Protected Areas Commission, Jenman Building has been PAT's first and only home to date. The building's legacy aligns seamlessly with PAT's mission: both are rooted in stewardship, resilience, and the belief that Guyana's natural heritage must be protected for generations to come. As PAT continues to grow and strengthen conservation efforts nationwide, the Jenman Building has served as a fitting and dignified home to honour the past while anchoring the future of environmental protection in Guyana.







History & Timeline

The institutional history of the Protected Areas Trust (PAT) is defined by its transition from a temporary financial vehicle to a cornerstone of Guyana's national conservation and sustainable financing strategy.

Institutional Timeline of the Protected Areas Trust

2001 ~ 2005

Foundational Advocacy and System Planning

During his tenure as Executive Director of Conservation International (CI) Guyana, Major General (retd) Joseph Singh prioritizes the establishment of a National Protected Area System (NPAS).

Preliminary commitments are secured from international donors to provide long-term sustainable financing for conservation, setting the stage for a national endowment.

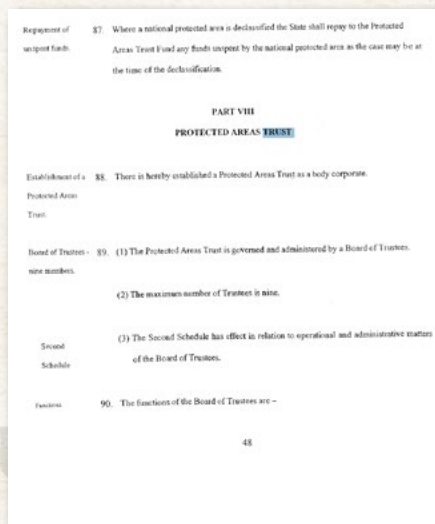
2009 ~ 2011

Pre-Legislative Funding and the CTF

Active drafting and internal review of the Protected Areas Act begins, overseen by the Natural Resources Management Division of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Interim Arrangement: Due to the Act being still in draft form, donor funds from CI (\$3 million USD) and KfW (\$5.5 million USD) need to be disbursed. As such, the Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) is established as a temporary holding mechanism. Attorney-at-Law Nadia Sagar was the first Executive Director of the Conservation Trust Fund, followed by Denise Murray.

The CTF is registered as a Trust Deed and the initial \$8.5 million USD endowment is invested with the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) as the independent fund administrator.



Legislative Enactment

The Protected Areas Act of 2011 was formally passed, providing the statutory basis for both the Protected Areas Commission (PAC) and the Protected Areas Trust (PAT).

The Act mandates the creation of the Trust to manage the endowment and provide grants for the maintenance of the NPAS.

2012

May 15, 2012: Tax exemption of the Conservation Trust was given by the Government.

June 29, 2012: First bank account of the Conservation Trust was opened.

December 20, 2011: By-Laws of the Conservation Trust were approved by the board.

May 17, 2012:

- Operations manual of the Conservation Trust was approved
- Investment guidelines (including exclusion list of investments) were approved.
- Operational tender and procurement procedures were approved.



PAT's first board meeting attended by (from left to right) Damian Fernandes, Major General (retd) Joe Singh, Dr. David Singh, Joycelyn Williams, Minister Robert Persaud, Annette Arjoon, the late Toshao Daniel Aguilar, Maurice Munroe

2014

PAT Becomes Operationalised

The Trust receives the initial **\$8.5 million USD**. Endowment is invested with the **Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS)** as the independent fund administrator. The Trust also finalised its transition from the interim CTF structure toward a fully staffed national entity. Strategic Plan for the fund was approved April 08, 2014.

The Ministry of Natural Resources with support from the Protected Areas Commission engaged the nominating agencies named in the Act and successfully secured their nominations, after which it facilitated the formal appointment of the Trustees, gazetted on July 19, 2014. Following the gazettment, the inaugural meeting of the Board was convened on **September 1, 2014**, where the Trustees elected the Chair from among themselves. **Major General (retd) Joseph Singh** was appointed first Chair of the Board.

In 2014 at the first Board meeting, the Government of Guyana made a landmark pledge of **USD 10 million** to the Protected Areas Trust, marking one of the most significant national commitments to long term conservation financing in the country's history. This pledge to contribute was noted to be made to strengthen PAT's endowment and reinforced the government's role in supporting the sustainable management of Guyana's protected areas.

2015

Establishment of the Secretariat

January, 2015: Denise Murray transitions from the CTF to PAT as first Executive Director and serves until August 2015.

April, 2015 : PAT secures 501(C)3 Charity Status in the United States thanks to the support from Conservation International and KfW.

June 2015 : Denise Thompson joins as the first Accounts Assistant, followed by Efuah Armstrong establishing the Trust's initial administrative and financial reporting protocols.

September 2015: Geeta Singh is appointed as the first long-term Executive Director and serves for 5 years.

Leadership Transition

August 2020: Geeta Singh completes her five-year tenure as Executive Director, leaving behind a stabilized organization with established international donor relationships.



Handover of a token of appreciation to Geeta Singh in recognition of her valuable stewardship of PAT

2019 ~ 2020

Governance and Compliance

2016: The Trust undergoes a process of rigorous internal review to meet international standards for transparency and financial management.

Institutional Growth: The Board of Trustees, including then Chairman Dr. Chesney, continues regular oversight, moving the organization from a "start-up" phase into an active grant-making body.

PAT becomes a member of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Environmental Funds (RedLAC), creating opportunities for knowledge sharing, capacity building and partnerships with a regional network of conservation finance leaders.

2017: PAT issues first grant to the PAC at the value of G\$9.2 million. .

2016 ~ 2018



Signing of the first grant agreement between the Protected Areas Commission (PAC) and Protected Areas Trust (PAT) providing GY\$ 9.2 million to support the effective management of National Protected Areas Systems (NPAS)

2020 ~ 2021

PAT is affected by the detrimental effects of COVID 19 and is managed by its Board of Trustees led by Mr. Curtis Bernard.

PAT completes an independent assessment to charter a new course to strengthen the organization.

2022~2024

A New Strategy

LCDS 2030: The launch of the updated Low Carbon Development Strategy positions PAT as a key vehicle for “natural capital” accounting. The Trust is now seen as a sustainable financial engine for the 30x30 initiative with the goal to protect 30% of Guyana’s territory by 2030.

Leadership Transition: Oleta Williams is appointed as the 3rd Executive Director of the Trust. Curtis Bernard and Melanie McTurk, during their chairmanships help guide the organization through a new Strategic Plan (2024–2028), focusing on gender inclusion, community-led monitoring, and private sector engagement.

PAT commences upgrade to office spaces at Jenman House including installation of cubicles, repainting of interior and repairs to lavatory facilities to improve working conditions of staff.



Announcement of Guyana’s LCDS 2030 Initiatives
(Source: DPI)

The CBF Milestone

In 2022, PAT signs the Partnership Agreement with the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, unlocking new streams of sustainable revenue for Guyana. Through the CBF Partnership, PAT has been able to significantly broaden its network and cultivate new relationships with key international institutions.

This collaboration has opened doors to strategic engagements with CUSO International, the French Development Agency (AFD), the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM), and Global Affairs Canada; each bringing unique expertise, resources, and perspectives to Guyana’s conservation financing landscape. These partnerships have enhanced PAT’s ability to access technical support, strengthen institutional capacity, and explore new funding opportunities that align with national priorities for biodiversity protection and sustainable development.



ED Oleta Williams with CBF CEO Karen McDonald Gayle and Finance Officer Junior Buchanan following the signing of the historic partnership agreement in 2022.

2024

The Inclusion Milestone

PAT celebrates its 10-year anniversary at a simple ceremony honouring the rich history and impact made to date. Government of Guyana re-commits to honour its pledge of USD 10 million to the endowment made in 2014.

Formal adoption of a revised Strategic Plan that moves PAT beyond biodiversity management into social and community-led stewardship

PAT was selected for the highly coveted RedLAC BRIDGE Mentorship programme and was mentored by the Peruvian CTF, Profonape, with a focus on communications and storytelling for non-communicators.

PAT commences two-year tenure on REDLAC Executive Committee.

PAT mobilised resources from the French Government through support from the CBF for the hosting of Guyana's inaugural Key Biodiversity Areas workshop in partnership with PAC and EPA with the idea of formalising the process of identifying key biodiversity areas in Guyana.



From left to right- ED Oleta Williams, Former PAT Chair- Melanie McTurk, Former Administrative Assistant Rhonda Maxius and Long-standing finance Officer Efuah Armstrong share a moment at the 10th Anniversary celebrations.



PAT with Stakeholders at the end of the National Key Biodiversity Areas Workshop in 2024

2025-2026

Acceleration

PAT hosted four (4) Cuso International Volunteers who focused on gender, communications, monitoring & evaluation and organisational strengthening. They were Nafiseh Imandi, Suneel Mistry, Jim Hamilton, and Maurissa Smith, respectively.

PAT Board approves new Investment Policy, Gender Policy, Communications Strategy and Fundraising Strategy.

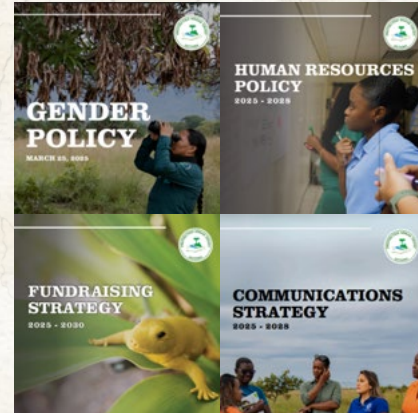
PAT joins Global Biodiversity Alliance established by the Government of Guyana.

Board leadership transition from Melanie McTurk to Shyam Nokta in December 2025.

PAT drafts new Technology Policy and Environmental, Social and Management Systems in keeping with international best practices for conservation trust funds.

Nikkita Greene joined PAT's team as its first Grants Coordinator, allowing for more effective grants management.

PAT completes its second 5 year independent assessment to better strengthen the organization's operations.



Board of Trustees and Secretariat Staff of the Protected Areas Trust 2026



Shyam Nokta
Chair of the Board of
Trustees
Government of Guyana



Shaleeza Shaw
Vice Chair of the Board of
Trustees
Board of Trustees



Chuvika Harilal
Trustee
Major Donors



Abena Moore
Trustee
Government of Guyana



Dianna Da Silva - Glasgow
Trustee
University of Guyana



Alvaro Simon
Trustee
National Tushaas' Council



Mitra Ramkumar
Trustee
Private Sector Commission



Oleta Williams
Executive Director



Efuah Armstrong
Finance Officer



Nikkita Greene
Grants Coordinator



Roxana Chichester
Administrative Officer



Nathan Chinapen
Communications and
Public Engagement Officer

Protected Areas Highlights





Guyana's Natural Legacy

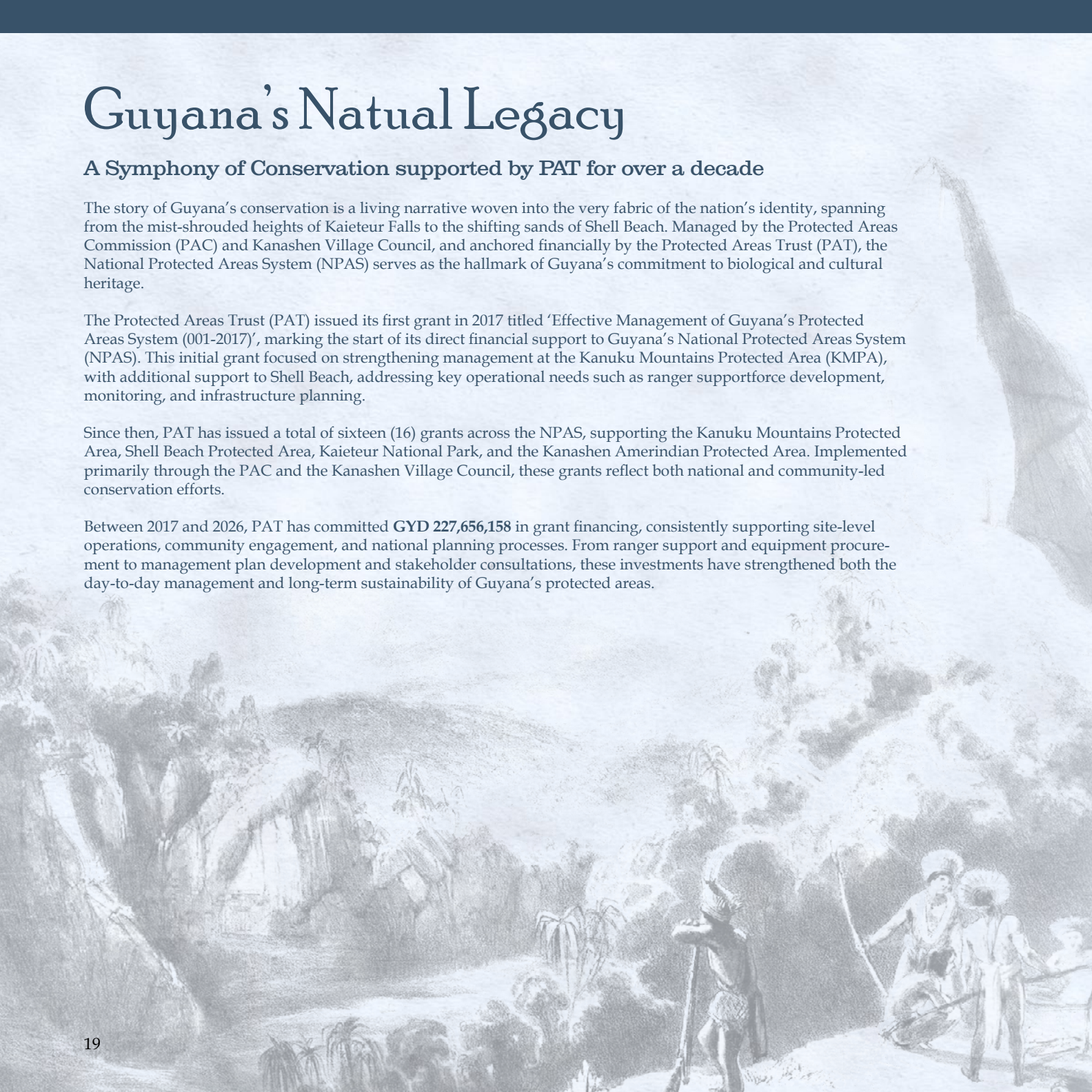
A Symphony of Conservation supported by PAT for over a decade

The story of Guyana's conservation is a living narrative woven into the very fabric of the nation's identity, spanning from the mist-shrouded heights of Kaieteur Falls to the shifting sands of Shell Beach. Managed by the Protected Areas Commission (PAC) and Kanashen Village Council, and anchored financially by the Protected Areas Trust (PAT), the National Protected Areas System (NPAS) serves as the hallmark of Guyana's commitment to biological and cultural heritage.

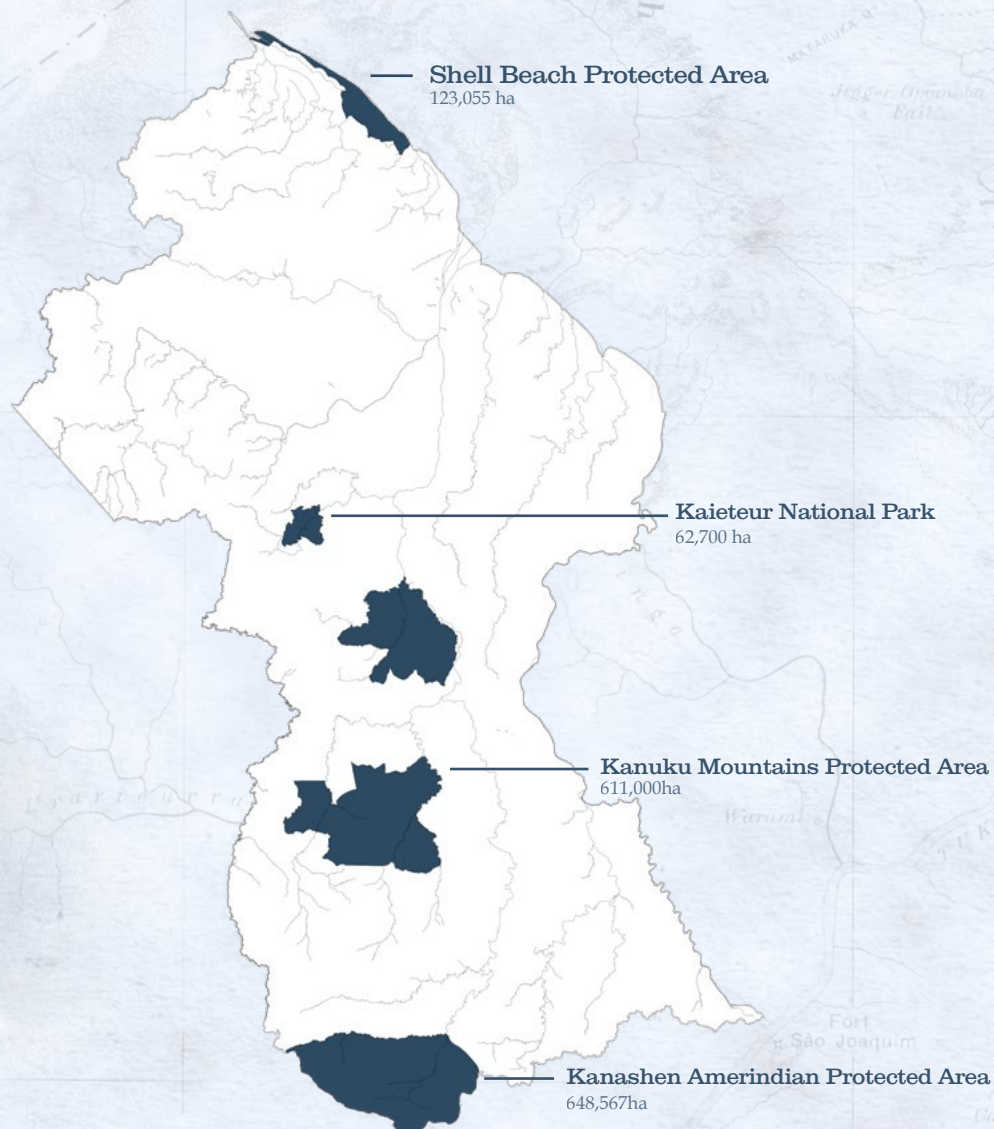
The Protected Areas Trust (PAT) issued its first grant in 2017 titled 'Effective Management of Guyana's Protected Areas System (001-2017)', marking the start of its direct financial support to Guyana's National Protected Areas System (NPAS). This initial grant focused on strengthening management at the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area (KMPA), with additional support to Shell Beach, addressing key operational needs such as ranger supportforce development, monitoring, and infrastructure planning.

Since then, PAT has issued a total of sixteen (16) grants across the NPAS, supporting the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area, Shell Beach Protected Area, Kaieteur National Park, and the Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area. Implemented primarily through the PAC and the Kanashen Village Council, these grants reflect both national and community-led conservation efforts.

Between 2017 and 2026, PAT has committed **GYD 227,656,158** in grant financing, consistently supporting site-level operations, community engagement, and national planning processes. From ranger support and equipment procurement to management plan development and stakeholder consultations, these investments have strengthened both the day-to-day management and long-term sustainability of Guyana's protected areas.



Protected Areas Funded by PAT



Kaieteur National Park

At the heart of this system lies Kaieteur National Park, established in 1929. Spanning 62,700 hectares, it is one of the oldest protected areas in South America. KNP was created specifically to shield the unique ecosystems that have evolved alongside the world's largest single-drop waterfall by volume. Kaieteur is a place where gravity and biology meet; the 226-meter drop creates a perpetual micro-climate that supports life found nowhere else on the planet. Here, the golden rocket frog spends its entire existence within the water-filled leaves of tank bromeliads, never touching the forest floor. For the rangers who walk these trails, Kaieteur is a "natural pharmacy" and a "sacred legacy," representing a direct link to the indigenous wisdom of the Patamona people and the legend of Old Kai.

Building on this legacy, Kaieteur National Park has benefited from two grants from the Protected Areas Trust (PAT): Strengthening the National Protected Areas System (002-2022) and Strengthening of Guyana's NPAS through the implementation of the PAC Strategic Plan (001-2024).

More recent support under the 001-2024 grant focused on strengthening ecological monitoring and conservation awareness, including aerial overflights and education initiatives. These investments contribute to maintaining Kaieteur's ecological integrity and ensuring its continued protection as one of Guyana's most iconic landscapes.



Photos: Nathan Chanpen



Rupicola rupicola

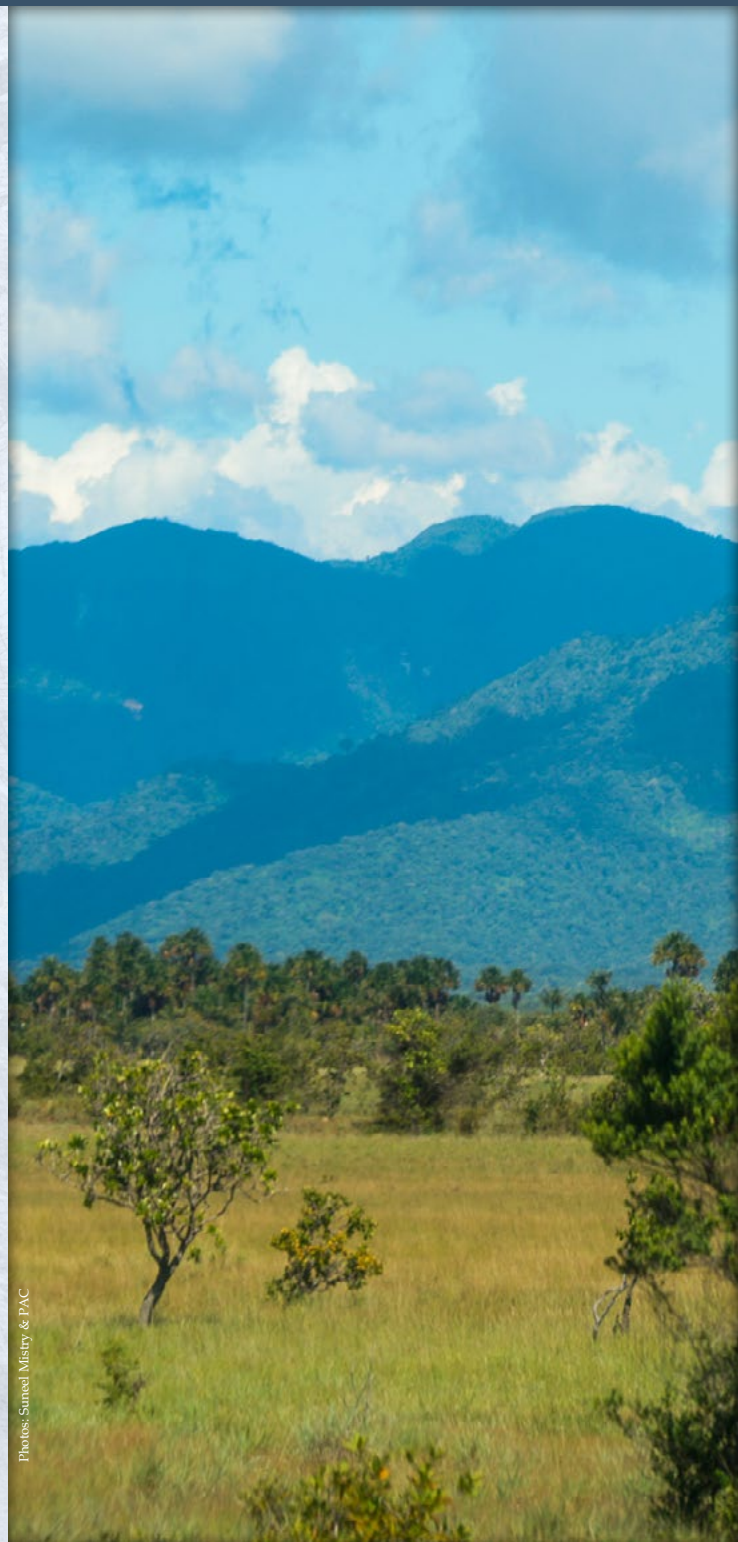
Kanuku Mountains Protected Area

Further south, the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area stands as the “Land of the Giants.” Officially designated in 2011, this massive landscape spanning 611,000 hectares is a biodiversity powerhouse. It contains approximately 70% of Guyana’s mammal species and over 500 species of birds. From apex predators like the jaguar and harpy eagle to endangered species like the yellow-spotted river turtle, the Kanuku Mountains offer a range of life that is staggering in its diversity. As Senior Ranger Octavious Hendricks notes, “Caring for this area is about laying a foundation so that every individual understands the ecological integrity that sustains the region’s watersheds and traditional indigenous knowledge.”

Reflecting its scale and importance, the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area has been the primary recipient of funding from the Protected Areas Trust (PAT). Beginning with its first grant in 2017. Across 6 grants, PAT has supported the strengthening conservation efforts within this vast and complex landscape.

These investments have included infrastructure planning for ranger stations and administrative facilities, procurement of equipment to support monitoring and enforcement, aerial overflights to assess ecological changes, research of the endangered yellow-spotted river turtle and giant river otter, and education initiatives such as nature camps in surrounding communities. More recently, support has also been extended to the development and revision of the KMPA Management Plan through stakeholder consultations.

Photos: Samuel Mistry & PAC





Shell Beach Protected Area

Along the northwest coast, Shell Beach Protected Area offers a different kind of sanctuary. Covering 123,055 hectares, it is a vital nesting ground for four sea turtle species: the Leatherback, Green, Hawksbill, and Olive Ridley, three of which are endangered. The beach itself is a geological marvel, composed of billions of fragmented shells rather than sand. Beyond the turtles, it protects some of the most intact mangrove forests in the region; a “living shield” that buffers the coast against rising tides, and provides a nursery for Guyana’s fisheries.

Within this shifting coastal landscape, the Shell Beach Protected Area has received sustained support from the Protected Areas Trust (PAT) since 2017, strengthening both protection and community engagement. Across a total of seven grants, investments have focused on improving site-level management and reinforcing monitoring and enforcement along this ecologically sensitive coastline.

Support has included infrastructure planning for ranger stations and administrative facilities, the establishment of inter-agency patrols to strengthen coastal surveillance, and the development of education and awareness materials for surrounding communities. These efforts have enhanced coordination among key stakeholders and improved the capacity to respond to environmental pressures.

Despite logistical challenges, PAT continues to play an important role in safeguarding Shell Beach’s critical habitat and the species that depend on them.

Photos: Suneel Mistry & PAC





Eretmochelys imbricata

Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area

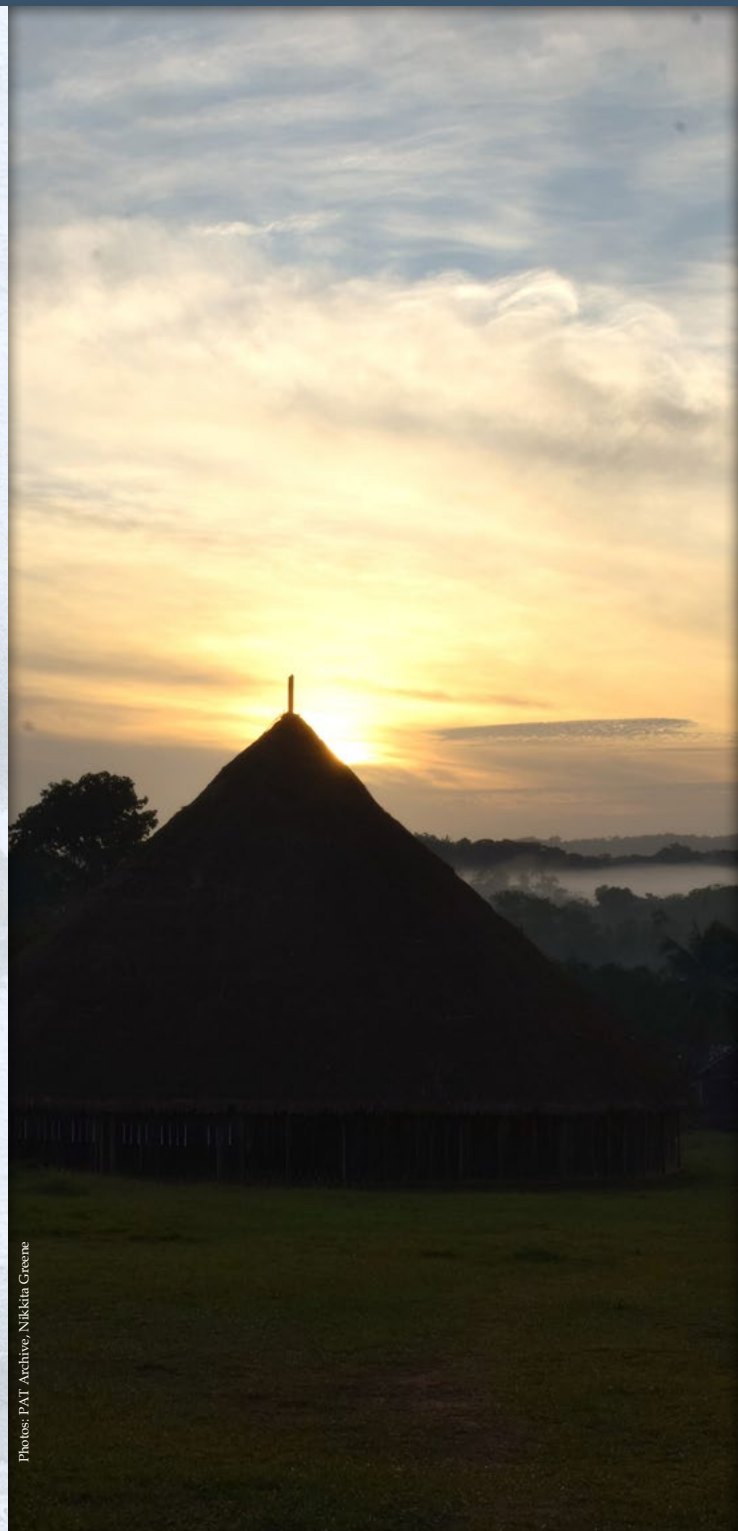
Guyana's conservation model is unique in its focus on community ownership. The Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area (KAPA), recognized in 2007, is the nation's first community-owned protected area and the largest protected area in the NPAS. Managed by the Wai Wai people, KAPA covers 648,567.2 hectares of pristine rainforest at the headwaters of the Essequibo River. It is a world-class example of how indigenous stewardship and modern conservation science can merge. For the Wai Wai, protecting KAPA is a matter of survival, ensuring that the forest remains intact for future generations who will depend on its rivers and wildlife.

At the heart of this community-led model, the Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area has received sustained support from the Protected Areas Trust (PAT) through a total of eight consecutive grants. These investments have focused primarily on strengthening site-level management and ensuring the continuity of conservation efforts led by the Wai Wai people.

PAT's support has included funding for ranger and management salaries, enabling regular patrols, monitoring, and enforcement across the protected area. Additional investments have supported essential equipment, operational needs, consultations for the development of management plans and further coordination between the Kanashen Village Council, and the PAC.

Through continued support, PAT had reinforced a model of Indigenous stewardship that places the Wai Wai at the centre of conservation. These investments ensure that KAPA remains not only protected, but actively managed by the community whose future is most closely tied to its forest and rivers.

Photos: PAT Archive, Nikkita Greene





Momotus momota

Euterpe oleracea

Architects of Sustainability

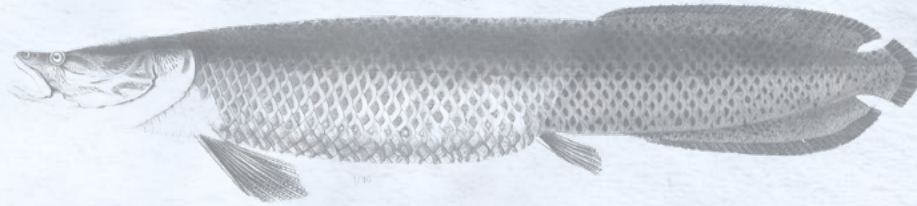
PAT's Grantees

As a national conservation trust fund, the PAT provides the financial stability needed to keep the system running by complementing government commitments. By managing an endowment and securing grants from international donors like KfW and Conservation International, PAT ensures that even in uncertain economic times, there is money and resources that can be issued for a grant for a ranger's fuel, an scientist's ecological monitoring activity to inform management interventions research, or a community's conservation project for example.

The Protected Areas Commission (PAC), established by the Protected Areas Act 2011, provides the technical and operational management framework for the system. The PAC handles everything from ecological monitoring and ranger training to community engagement. With over 43% of Guyana's NPAS under its management, the PAC ensures that these "biodiversity hotspots" are not just protected on paper but are actively guarded/managed on the ground. The PAC remains PAT's main grantee as the management authority for SBPA, KNP and KMPA.



PAC Rangers Octavious Hendricks and Vercida Gomes at the KMPA



Handover of a new boat to KAPA in 2025 under PAT Grant 001-2025, allowing for better transportation and increased monitoring in the protected area.

The **Kanashen Village Council** serves not only as the traditional governance body for the Wai Wai people but also as the legally recognized management authority for the Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area (KAPA), giving it a central role in stewarding one of Guyana's most ecologically significant landscapes. Its dual mandate, protecting cultural integrity while overseeing conservation and sustainable use positions the Council as a critical partner and high value grantee for the Protected Areas Trust. Through its leadership, KAPA advances community driven conservation, strengthens biodiversity protection across the country's only Indigenous led protected area, and demonstrates how local governance can successfully align with national conservation priorities.

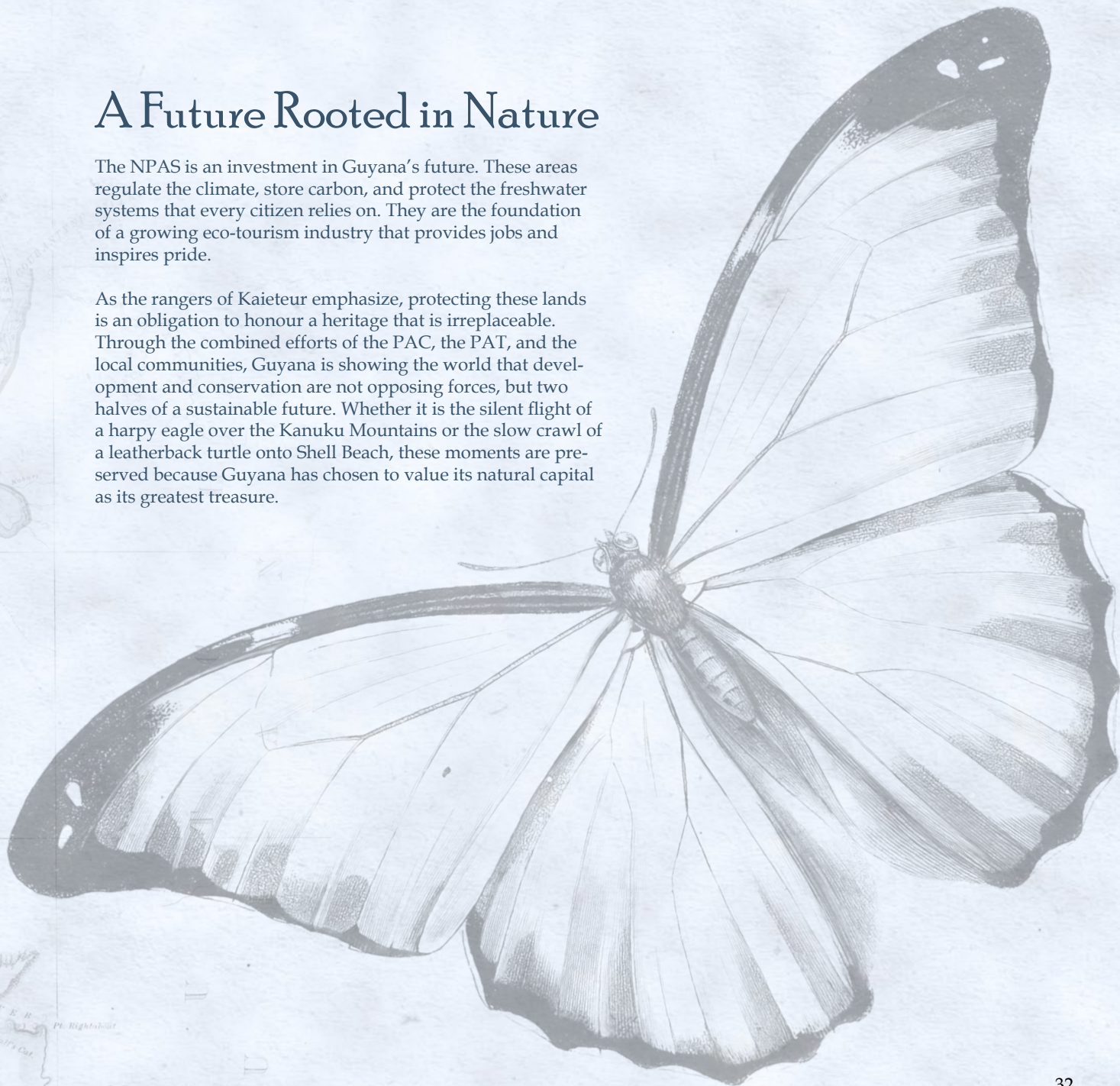
Scorecard Summary for PAT-Funded National Protected Areas

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Kaieteur National Park</i>	<i>Kanuku Mountains Protected Area</i>	<i>Shell Beach Protected Area</i>	<i>Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area</i>
<i>Established</i>	1929	2011	2011	2017
<i>Size (Sq km)</i>	627	6,110	1,230	6,458
<i>Primary Ecosystem</i>	Montane Rainforest	Montane Rainforest, Savannah	Coastal Mangrove	Lowland Rainforest
<i>Key Wildlife</i>	Golden Rocket Frog, Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock	Jaguar, Harpy Eagle, Giant Anteater	Sea Turtles, Scarlet Ibis, Mangroves	Black Spider Monkey, Acai Palm, Bush dog
<i>Unique Fact</i>	Largest single-drop waterfall in the world by volume	Houses 70% of Guyana's mammal species	Nesting site for three endangered sea turtle species.	Only Indigenous-owned protected area in South America

A Future Rooted in Nature

The NPAS is an investment in Guyana's future. These areas regulate the climate, store carbon, and protect the freshwater systems that every citizen relies on. They are the foundation of a growing eco-tourism industry that provides jobs and inspires pride.

As the rangers of Kaieteur emphasize, protecting these lands is an obligation to honour a heritage that is irreplaceable. Through the combined efforts of the PAC, the PAT, and the local communities, Guyana is showing the world that development and conservation are not opposing forces, but two halves of a sustainable future. Whether it is the silent flight of a harpy eagle over the Kanuku Mountains or the slow crawl of a leatherback turtle onto Shell Beach, these moments are preserved because Guyana has chosen to value its natural capital as its greatest treasure.



Our Future

Hopes for the Future: Anchoring Guyana's Green Evolution

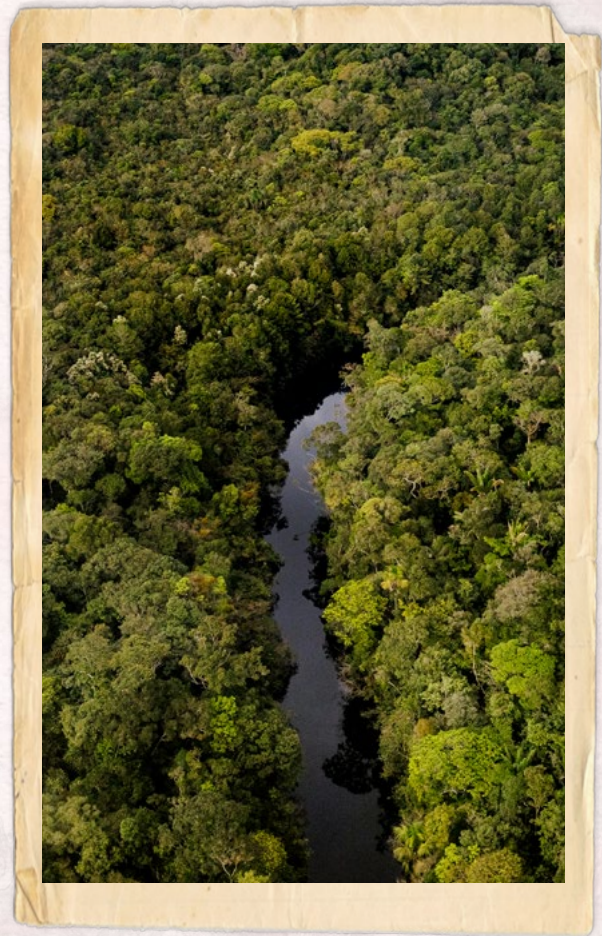
The future of the Protected Areas Trust (PAT) is envisioned as a central pillar in Guyana's transition toward a sustainable, high-growth economy. As the organization moves beyond its first decade, the focus is shifting from establishing basic credibility to becoming a national and global leader in sustainable conservation financing and a primary engine for the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

Meeting the 30x30 Challenge

As part of the global "30 by 30" initiative, the goal is to protect 30% of the world's land and sea by 2030. PAT is expected to play a critical role in the expansion of Guyana's National Protected Area System (NPAS). Major General (retd) Joseph Singh challenges PAT - 'Our future lies in maintaining connectivity across the Guiana Shield and recognizing that the Trust must be a 'People Fund'".

Professionalization and "The Boots on the Ground"

For those who have been with the Trust since its earliest days, hope for the future is deeply practical. Efuah Armstrong, the Trust's Finance Officer since 2015, emphasizes the need for the acquisition of more assets for the Trusts and being able to directly support those communities managing the land.



The vision for the future includes:

Infrastructure Investment:

Moving beyond operational costs to fund major upgrades in visitor centers, ranger stations, and research facilities at sites like Kaieteur.

Direct Community Impact:

Increasing the volume and frequency of grants to ensure that local communities surrounding protected areas, particularly in areas like Kanashen, see direct economic benefits from their stewardship.

Institutional Independence:

Establishing a permanent, independent headquarters for the Trust to symbolize its long-term presence in Guyana's institutional landscape.

Financing Research:

Supporting research within Guyana's NPAS in order to advance evidence-based conservation efforts.



The Early Days of Building the Operational Manual

Geeta Singh, former Executive Director

"When I first stepped into the role in September 2015, I thought I would be starting from absolute zero. Fortunately, there was a draft operations manual and a draft five-year strategic plan waiting for me. It wasn't just about the paperwork, though; it was about the culture. I remember the challenging process of gaining status and the error-filled journey of learning how to engage internationally. Those early years were about making sure we were transparent and credible. One of the most rewarding aspects was moving from our small local context to solving problems alongside international peers."

The Challenge of the "Invisible" Trust

Damian Fernandes, former PAC Commissioner

"In the early days, people didn't really understand what a Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) was. We were trying to explain complex biological and financial ideas to people who just wanted to know how it affected their lives. I always reminded myself: how would I explain this to a relative? If I couldn't explain carbon or biodiversity in a way that didn't compromise the message but stayed simple, I knew I hadn't broken it down enough. We were biologists talking to biologists for too long, and PAT helped us bridge that gap to the marketplace."

The Vision of Science Diplomacy

Dr. Patrick Chesney, Former Trustee and Chair

"I first heard about the Trust while I was working for the United Nations Development Programme. My background was in agriculture, but after the Great Flood of 2005, my horizons shifted toward the broader natural environment. When I joined the Board of Trustees, I saw that we weren't just managing a fund; we were managing Guyana's future."

One of the things I've advocated strongly is what I call 'Science Diplomacy.' I believe that for the Trust to grow, we need to walk the financial capitals of the world, not just as conservationists, but as ambassadors of Guyana's natural capital. We need to link our biodiversity and ecosystems to global market mechanisms. I always say that there is no 'last point' when it comes to this work, but an important one is that we must invest in the science that proves the value of our forests. We are moving toward a future where our natural assets are recognized as global currency, and the Trust is the vehicle to drive that message home."

The Promise of 1969: A Fifty-Year Journey

Major General (ret'd) Joseph Singh

"I was a young officer in the Guyana Defence Force, and I was sent to the deep south of the country where I first met the Wai Wai people. I stayed with them, lived with them, and developed a profound respect for their stewardship of the land. I remember thinking even then that this area, Kanashen, was something special that needed to be preserved."

Fast forward decades later, through my time in the military and at Conservation International, and eventually to the Chairmanship of the Trust, I was able to be part of the process that finally established the Kanashen Community Owned Conservation Area. This was the fulfillment of a journey that started in the late sixties. It wasn't just a policy achievement; it was a personal promise kept to a community I had known for fifty years. When we talk about 'protected areas,' we aren't just talking about lines on a map; we are talking about the heritage of people like the Wai Wai, and the Trust ensures that the resources are there to honor that heritage forever."

The “Not So Easy” Road to Grants

Odacy Davis, Former PAC Deputy Commissioner

“People often see the finished product, the rangers at Kaieteur or the equipment at Shell Beach and they think it happened overnight. But I remember the road to getting those first grants; it was not an easy road.

We had to navigate those early ‘rules’ of fund usage and prove that the Trust was a partner in the development of the whole system. This meant, learning to advocate for our needs and making the donors understand the reality of working in Guyana. That growth, going from someone just following the rules to someone helping to write them is the story of the Trust itself.”

Beyond the Biology: The Maturity of the Trust

Curtis Bernard, Former Chairman

“In the early years, our conversations at the board level were very much focused on the ‘biology’, the hectares, the boundaries, and the species counts. But as we sat down to develop the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, I witnessed a profound shift in how we viewed our mission. We realized that being a world-class Trust meant moving beyond just being a bank for the environment; we had to become a partner for the people.

We began integrating a Gender Action Plan and looking closely at how our grants affected men and women differently in indigenous communities. This was a milestone for me. It showed that the Trust was maturing. We weren’t just looking at ‘paper parks’ anymore; we were looking at a sophisticated model of sustainable development. It’s one thing to protect a forest, but it’s another to ensure that the grandmother in a remote village or the young girl starting school sees the direct benefit of that protection. That human element is what makes our work permanent.”

Funding the next generation of Conservation Research:

Dr. David Singh, Former Chairman

“My hope for PAT for the next 12 years, is for the Trust to be seen thanas more than just a passive donor but rather an organisation to play a more leadership role in conservation finance not only in Guyana but in the world.

Research is extremely difficult to fund and there’s no reason why the Protected Areas Trust cannot support Biodiversity research in Guyana”

The People Behind The Protected Areas Trust 2015-2025

Member	Board of Trustees	Executive Committee	Governance Coimmittee	Grants Review Sub-Committee	Fundraising Sub-Committee	Finance Sub-Committee
Daniel Aguillar	Trustee			✓		
Dr. David Singh	Vice Chair		✓			
Annette Arjoon-Martins	Trustee		✓			
Berend ter Welle	Chairman		✓			
Maurice Munro	Trustee			✓	✓	✓
Joycelyn Williams	Trustee			✓		
Hon. Sanjeev Datadin	Trustee					
Damian Fernandes	Trustee			✓	✓	
Nicholas Fredericks	Trustee					
Russian Dorrick	Trustee			✓		
Rene Edwards	Trustee					
Alvoro Simon	Trustee			✓		
Abena Moore	Trustee					
Shaleeza Shaw	Trustee/Vice Chair	✓	✓		✓	✓
Chuvika Harilal	Trustee	✓	✓	✓		
Mitra Ramkumar	Trustee				✓	✓
MG (retd) Joseph Singh	Chairman		✓			
Dr. Patrick Chesney	Chairman		✓			
Curtis Bernard	Chairman/Vice Chair	✓	✓	✓		
Mariscia Charles	Trustee			✓		
Diana Da Silva-Glasgow	Trustee			✓		✓
Dr. Sydney Armstrong	Trustee			✓	✓	✓
Melanie McTurk	Chairman/Vice Chair	✓	✓		✓	
Shyam Nokta	Chairman/Vice Chair	✓	✓	✓		

Current Team

Name	Designation	Appointment
Oleta Williams	Executive Director	March 2022 - Current
Roxana Chichester	Administrative Assistant	July 2025 - Current
Efuah Armstrong	Finance Officer	June 2015 - Current
Nikkita Greene	Grants Coordinator	April 2025 - Current
Nathan Chinapen	Communications Officer	September 2025 - Current

Former Staff

Name	Designation	Appointment
Denise Murray	Executive Director	January 2015 to November 2015
Anthony Fredericks	Finance Officer	January 2015 to June 2015
Geeta Singh	Executive Director	September 2015 to August 2020
Runita White	Administrative Assistant	March 2015 to March 2015
Samantha Thierens	Administrative Assistant	March 2015 to December 2018
Rhonda Maxius	Administrative Assistant	February 2019 to July 2025

Other Technical Support

Name	Designation	Appointment
Aretha Forde	Communications Consultant	July 2024 to December 2024
Nafiseh Emadi	CUSO Volunteer	January 2025 to March 2025
Jim Hamilton	CUSO Volunteer	March 2025 to September 2025
Suneel Mistry	CUSO Volunteer	February 2025 to February 2026
Maurissa Smith	CUSO Volunteer	June 2026 to December 2026
Tanisha Browne	University of Guyana Intern	June 2023 to July 2023
Curtela Lewis	University of Guyana Intern	November 2026 to January 2026
Akeriah Hinds	Part-Time Administrative Assistant	March 2026 to June 2026

Meetings & Partnerships



PAT's first Board Meeting marking the operationalisation of PAT, September 2014



PAT Board Meeting, June 2019



Signing of the first grant agreement between the Protected Areas Commission (PAC) and Protected Areas Trust (PAT), October 2017



PAT Board of Trustees meet with representatives from UBS Financial Services, PAT's fund administrator, May, 2019



Former PAT Executive Director, Geeta Singh consulting with Hon. Sanjeev Datadin on strengthening legal frameworks for the organization, October 2018



*Signing of the CBF Partnership Agreement
in May 2022*



*Introduction of CBF representatives and
Board of Trustees to the
Protected Areas Commission.*



*ED Oleta Williams with CBF CEO Karen
McDonald-Gayle and Finance Officer Junior
Buchanan following the signing of the historic
partnership agreement.*



Signing of Grant 007-2020, PAT's 4th Grant to the Kanashen Amerindian Protected Area, February, 2020



ED Oleta Williams engaged with KFW, one of PAT's major donors, 2023



Representatives from PAT and PAC visit the KMPA Site Office, 2023



PAT recruits consultant to assist in the development of a new strategic plan, August 2023



PAT ED - Oleta Williams and former Chair - Curtis Bernard met with representatives from the American Development Fund, 2023



PAT and other environmental stakeholders at the end of the National Key Biodiversity Areas Workshop, 2024

PAT 10th Anniversary



In 2024, PAT held its 10th Anniversary Celebration, marking 10 years of sustainable financing for Guyana's protected areas





In 2024, Profonanpe, a Peruvian Conservation Trust fund held a mentorship program with PAT and other stakeholders in Guyana. The program fostered further partnership between the CTFs.



RedLAC 2022: Ecuador



RedLAC 2023: Peru



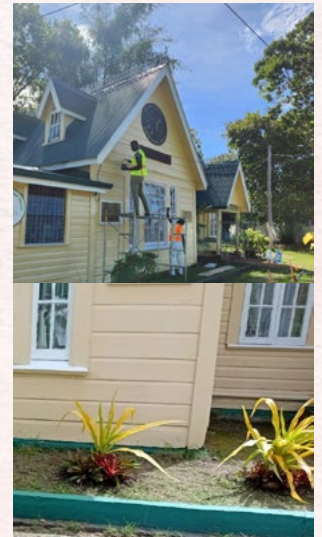
PAT has participated in the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Environmental Funds (RedLAC) Congress since 2016.

RedLAC's Annual Congress enhances participation, knowledge-sharing and partnerships between regional CTFs.





Restoration and Maintenance and The Jenman Building



Balata Animals



In 2025, the Trust commenced a buy-sell-reinvest model, collaborating with balata figurine artisans to promote and showcase the animals of Guyana's protected areas.

Monitoring and PA Visits



PAT's first visit to KAPA facilitating the handover of an updated Village Rules board.



PAT representatives visited the SBPA for a METT assessment and to observe turtle monitoring activities



KMPA Site-Level Committee Meeting, March 2026



Grants Coordinator Nikkita Greene supporting Phase Three of Management Plan consultations for KAPA, 2026





Staff and representatives from CBF at PAT's Booth at Global Biodiversity Alliance Summit 2025



PAT representatives engaging with Hon. Minister Dr. Ashni Singh at GuyExpo, 2025



Communications Officer, Nathan Chinapen and Trustee Mr. Alvaro Simon with PAT's booth at National Toshao's Council 2026



Secretariat Staff and Chair of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Shyam Nokta at the launch of the first Conservation Conversations event, held in collaboration with EMC Foundation, 2026





Designed by:

NATHAN CHINAPEN
PHOTOGRAPHY



Twelve Years of Funding Guyana's Natural Wealth

From an ambitious vision for sustainable conservation financing to a cornerstone of Guyana's protected areas system, the Protected Areas Trust's journey is one of vision, partnership, resilience, and collective action.

This book chronicles twelve years of PAT's growth, capturing the people, partnerships, milestones, challenges, and achievements that shaped the institution. It honours the leaders, staff, Trustees, policymakers, rangers, Indigenous communities, partners, and conservation champions whose contributions helped build PAT and strengthen the foundation for Guyana's National Protected Areas System.

More than a record of the past, this history is a reflection on where we have come from and a guide for where we are going, preserving the lessons of yesterday while inspiring the work of tomorrow.

We invite you to discover our story, celebrate our journey, and look with us toward the next chapter of conservation in Guyana.

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