



## VCHT: FOCUSED ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF VIEQUES

*The staff and volunteers of the Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust remain vigilant and diligent in their commitment to the conservation and preservation of Vieques' natural resources.*

**T**hrough **collaboration** with other agencies, **advocacy** for governmental policy, **research** for understanding natural systems, and **education** for conservation, **VCHT works to create environmental sustainability for Vieques.** The severe drought that has affected the Eastern Caribbean, the high water temperatures, the extremely high heat and radiation indexes... all are important warnings we have to take action and **VCHT is acting.**



EPA funding we have mapped the location of septic systems facing our north shore and gathered information on their current condition. Our workshops, talks, and electronic media cover the environmental impact and proper construction and maintenance of septic systems and water conservation techniques.

**Clean water in our creeks and seas is imperative for a sustainable environment.** MANTA and MANTASTIC carried out coastal cleanups and educational campaigns to prevent trash from reaching the sea. On World Water Day 2015, MANTA students, VCHT staff and volunteers did water quality tests in the town creek and in Quebrada La Mina. We reported the findings to the EPA. Mark and Lirio participated in a training provided by EPA on monitoring for pathogens in surface and seawater.

**Human pressures impact the island.** VCHT participates in land use and planning. We provide advice and commentary to the government regarding the Puerto Rico Land Use Plan, the Vieques Land Use Plan, and the Municipality's plan for the sports complex. We participated in the Vieques Sustainability Task Force. We are members of the Advisory Committee on Light Pollution, and we have participated in the interagency Committee for the Regulation of Light Pollution. With

**But of course, our main focus is always the conservation of Bio Bay.** We continue to provide support to USGS with the water quality monitoring and other research activities in the Bay. We provide support to researchers from several universities. We train tour guides and operators in environmentally safe techniques in their bay-related businesses. We recently completed a yearlong dinoflagellate-counting project and have received funding to continue for another year. Our Cooperative Agreement with the Puerto Rico Natural and Environmental Department regarding the Vieques' Bioluminescent Bay Reserve is being renewed with an emphasis on environmental sustainability and bioluminescence conservation.

**2015 was the VCHT's 30th birthday. It has marked an important milestone in our efforts toward the conservation of Vieques's natural resources. We have directed our attention and work to environmental sustainability. Without your contributions we could not do this important work.**

**What does it take to protect and preserve the natural beauty of Vieques?**

**It takes VCHT's CARE: Collaboration, Advocacy, Research and Education.**

With your membership and contributions you join the many people who want to protect the island of Vieques.

*Please join in the effort!*

## BIO BAY A RARE AND VALUABLE NATURAL RESOURCE

When the glow dimmed, VCHT sounded the alarm and called for action to study and protect Bio Bay. Several agencies and institutions became involved. We are happy to report that Bio Bay glows brightly now.

VCHT has always been committed to preserving and protecting Bio Bay. VCHT was instrumental in having the area become a Patrimonial Natural Reserve and VCHT continues to collaborate with governmental agencies and educational institutions to study and preserve the bay.

**For the second year in a row, the Puerto Rican Legislature is providing funding to the Trust to conduct a dinoflagellate count in the bay.**

Daphane Gemill, Elizabeth Langhorne, and Bill Mueller donated a special microscope that has benefitted our work this year, and Barbara Hyland provided training in Dinoflagellate-counting by Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Scripps Institute, the VCHT staff, and advisors, will analyze the dinoflagellate count data.



Jorge Morales –Osorio, VCHT Staff, Collects water samples

Trust staff maintains the USGS real-time water quality monitoring station that was installed last year. It continues to take the pulse of the Bio Bay every 15 minutes measuring water salinity, turbidity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and the rainfall. You can see the station results on our website ([www.vcht.org](http://www.vcht.org)).

*VCHT needs your support in funding the important work of preserving the natural resources of Vieques. We are confident that challenge gifts of 10 donors will exceed \$25,000. The challenge is to the rest of the membership to raise an equal, and hopefully double amount. When you receive the Appeal Letter in a few days, please help us meet our goal.*

**VCHT Board of Directors**



Photo by Dennis Rivera for the New York Times

VCHT staff provided assistance to Juan Alvarez, a student from the University of Maryland, who in conjunction with the University of Puerto Rico, is conducting a study of several coastal lagoons both bioluminescent and non-bioluminescent. The goal is to develop a production model for these complex ecosystems.



Pedro Ayala-Cruz, VCHT Staff, records data

VCHT staff also assisted the USGS in conducting a bathymetry (study of the depth of the bay's bottom), and a 24-hour study of the water flow in the entrance of the bay.

Each year hundreds of visitors come to Vieques to see its bioluminescent bay. Recently, the bay has been featured on the Travel Channel's program *America the Beautiful*. Fittingly, it stars Mark Martin Bras on the Trust's vessel OOT-ORCA talking about bioluminescence and the wonders of science. We have Mark, all VCHT staff, volunteers and donors to thank for protecting this natural treasure.

**YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT MAKES THE WORK OF THE TRUST POSSIBLE**

## Dear Friends of the Trust,

Our Trust family has been working tirelessly to do the necessary work that keeps Vieques a special place. This newsletter shows you the ways we have made science education come alive for the children, the advances we have made in safeguarding the Bio Bay, and the input we have provided for sustainable development. These are unique and significant contributions to Vieques and her economy. We have also developed new communications tools -- a new web site, a regular e-newsletter, and frequent postings on Facebook to help tell our story and engage our members and friends. All this is critically important because Puerto Rico is struggling through hard times. We will need the enthusiasm and support of all Trust members and many new friends if we are to remain successful.

Since I became president last February, the Board, Lirio, and her staff have worked to concentrate our energies on what we feel are the core competencies of the Trust.

- Fostering science as the basis for responsible sustainable activity in Puerthro Mosquito
- Advocating for appropriate development in Vieques while safeguarding the ecological heritage of the island
- Providing essential science education programs and facilities.

Continued success can happen only if you give to and support the Trust. The Commonwealth cannot be counted on to provide significant support. They are willing, but not able. The federal government, likewise, has great praise for our accomplishments but is severely limited in what it can do directly. It is up to us. If the Trust is to carry on its unique roles, we need the increased support of our members and new friends.

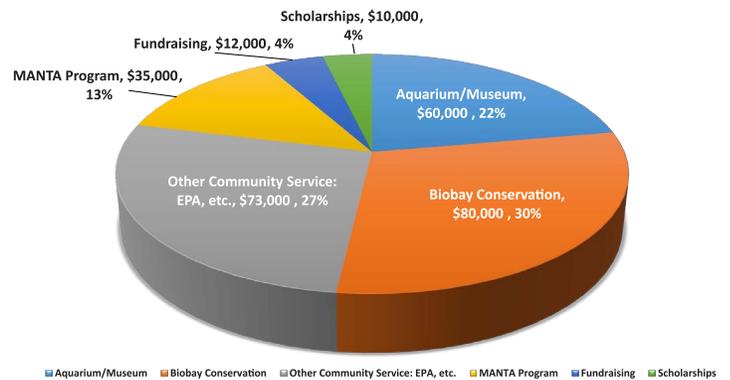
I strongly urge you to consider a significant gift to the Trust this year – either for program support or to help build our long-term endowment, or both. And perhaps just as important, speak to friends that you believe share our commitment to Vieques, and ask them to join you in supporting the Vieques Conservation and Historic Trust.

Your generous support is needed now more than ever.

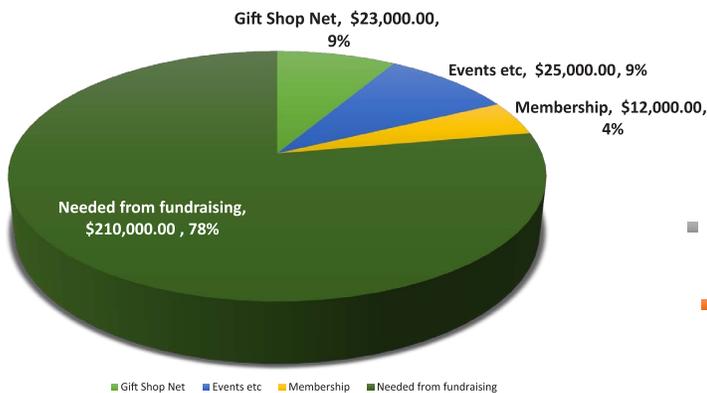
Ken Storms,  
President

P. S. Please check out the financial charts—they are an important part of our story. They show in real numbers our commitment to our community and to the future of Vieques. Will you help make those numbers grow?

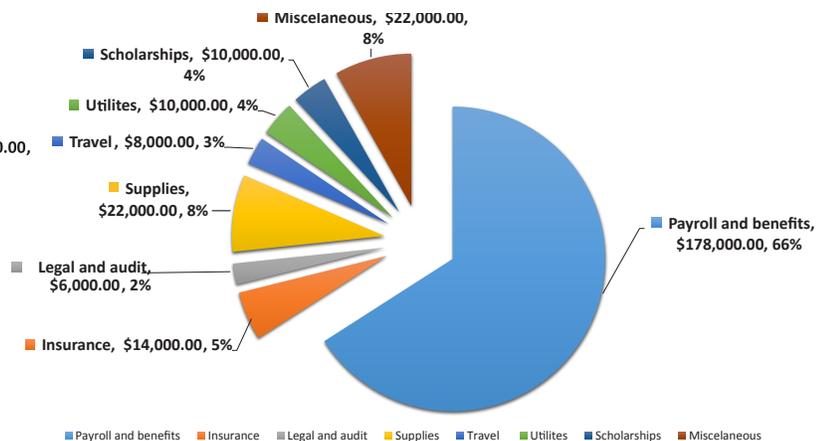
### Programs/Activities Funded



### VCHT Income Sources



### VCHT Operating Expenses FY 2014-15



## MANTA: An investment in the future of Vieques



**MANTA** is an “incredible journey” in which kids learn about the natural beauty of Vieques, and they develop life-long respect and appreciation for this special island. The experiences and lessons of MANTA stay with them forever.

In **MiniMANTA** twenty-six 5 to 8 year olds had their first look at the Vieques as young, eager explores. Many learned to swim, and they all learned about recycling, up cycling, and conserving nature.



**MANTARaya's** twenty-five 9 to 12 year olds looked at the world as scientists. They learned the importance of sustainability. Using technology and the scientific approach, they learned to identify problems and find possible solutions.

**MANTA's** twenty-five teenagers followed the MANTA Way. They learned about conservation, preservation, sustainability of Vieques' natural beauty, and about eco-tourism careers.



**MANTASTIC** is made up of visiting and local kids together learning about Vieques and its natural wonders.

**2015** was a wonderful year for everyone involved in MANTA programs. It was a journey filled with life-long lessons of love and respect for Vieques.

Our former Manta student and VCHT Scholarship recipient Karib Mar González Rivera graduated this summer from UPR Mayagüez and just started working as an engineer with Applied Engineering Group in San Juan.



## Enjoy Discounts and Free Offerings AND Support the Trust

*New  
Discount  
card for  
the 2016  
season!*

Following the success of the VCHT discount card last season, the Trust is announcing that a new card will be available in November for the 2016 season. With 16 peel off stickers for a variety of restaurants, tour companies, and stores, the \$50 donation to the Trust for the card gives you an opportunity to **save more than \$500** this year. **Many of the most popular vendors have signed up again** — and this year there is a new twist:

### **The W Retreat and Spa is offering seasonal discounts.**

- With the VCHT discount card, you can get 15% off the food portion of your dinners at Sorcé, not only once but as often as you go!
- Also, if you are interested in a FIT (gym) membership you can get \$25 off each month's fee during the season. Your VCHT Discount Card is your membership card!

### **The card is supported by many of Vieques' best-loved restaurants, stores and tour companies.**

- **Trade Winds** (half price entrée).
- **Bananas** (free bottle of wine with dinner for 2 per table).
- **Vieques Classic Charters** (50% off sunset sail for two).
- **Abe's Snorkeling** (2 free bio bay tours).
- **Conuco** (2 free drinks with 2 dinners).
- **Emporium** (10% off plus gift),
- **Sol Creations** (10% off).
- **Funky Beehive** (20% off non-sale clothing item)
- **Yoga at Hix** (2 for 1).
- **Mama Playa Himalaya** (20% off).
- **Buen Provecho** (2 free sandwiches).
- **VCHT** (Gift Shop 20% off a purchase).

### **New this year.**

- **Al's Mar Azul** (free drink with lunch).
- **Mamasonga's** (20% off dinner for 2).

By supporting the Trust with the purchase of the card for \$50, you could be saving more than \$500! And the Trust will use the funds to support the continued research and protection of Puerto Mosquito the most treasured natural resource in Vieques.

Only 150 cards are available, so order yours now. We will hold it for you at the Trust gift shop. Call 787 741 8850 to reserve your card.

## **A new era in VCHT communications**

**We have worked hard to improve and expand our communications.**

Pedro Ayala, our staff member in charge of Membership, Donations, and Special Events, is an extraordinary IT technician. He has modernized the membership files making it possible to have the most up-to-date contact information in order to communicate with you.

Our new website has permanent reports on conditions of bio bay and a new wildlife sighting program. Also we have created a digital monthly newsletter to keep you informed about our work preserving the natural resources of Vieques.

Our Facebook page now reaches people worldwide with news highlights from Vieques, and our YouTube channel keeps all our videos together in a single place so you can access them easily.

*Please visit our web site at: [www.vcht.org](http://www.vcht.org).*  
**Like us on Facebook and watch our YouTube videos.**

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust (VCHT) is to foster, protect and conserve the environmental, archaeological and cultural resources of Vieques, Puerto Rico. One of the primary goals is to preserve and study the bioluminescent bays found on the island. The VCHT supports a broad array of educational programs for the community, with a special focus on children, through lectures, educational exhibits, seminars, summer programs, publications, computer resources and a unique Vieques scholarship program.



THE VIEQUES  
CONSERVATION  
AND HISTORICAL  
TRUST

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## *Dale, Read the latest about Bio Bay inside!*

VCHT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. No goods or services were provided in exchange for your generous financial donation in conformance with Internal Revenue Code Section 170 (F)(8).

## VCHT: TOURS AND EVENTS 2015-16

VCHT offers a variety of special events: bird walks, house tours, the historic Playa Grande Tour and new this year, an Architectural Walking Tour of Isabella II. Also, the Trust is pleased to sponsor the popular lecture series, art and artisan exhibits.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Sat., December 12	VCHT Open House
Thurs., December 24	Playa Grande Tour
Thurs., December 31	Architectural Walking Tour of Isabella II
Thurs., January 7	Playa Grande Tour
Thurs., January 14	Bird Walk
Sat., January 16	Architectural Walking Tour of Isabella II
Thurs., January 21	Playa Grande Tour
Thurs., January 28	House Tour
Thurs., February 4	Playa Grande Tour
Thurs., February 11	Bird Walk
Sat., February 13	Architectural Walking Tour of Isabella II
Thurs., February 18	Playa Grande Tour
Thurs., February 18	VCHT Annual Meeting
Thurs., February 25	Bird Walk
Thurs., March, 3	Playa Grande Tour
Thurs., March 10	House Tour
Thurs., March 17	Playa Grande Tour
Thurs., March 24	Bird Walk
Thurs., March, 31	Playa Grande Tour



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