



REGIONAL REPORT BAHAMAS UPDATE

Cont'd from page 16

However, owners of private islands (which comprise around one third of all land in the 176 square mile park) are entitled to develop their property for private use, with planning permission from government. Park stewards from the Bahamas National Trust were consulted on plans and the development was scaled back with the elimination of a second channel leading into the existing barge landing area on the western side of the island. An Environmental Management Plan approved by the government and the Bahamas National Trust is being enforced by an environmental compliance officer who has been monitoring the development since work began in June.

Dengue in New Providence

The Bahamas Ministry of the Environment has issued a new alert after discovering new cases of Dengue Fever in New Providence, and possibly on several other islands. Dengue is a febrile (fever) disease transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. The Ministry urges all residents to check any unwanted water-holding containers and properly discard or potentially infected standing water. The mosquito can hatch in containers such as buckets, tires, tubs, flower pot plates, air condition trays, drainage systems, etc. Thus far there are no reports of cases impacting visitors.

Stolen boat recovery boost

A rash of boat thefts have sparked calls for greater penalties for thieves from Marina Operators of the Bahamas (MOB).

"When you look at the value of the vessels versus the fines, we need more [severe penalties]," said MOB consultant Jeffrey Beckles, who is working on developing a master plan for the Bahamas' marine tourism industry.

"When you weigh the reputational damage against the punitive action it's a huge disparity. Tourism is impacted, the insurance sector is impacted, every sector is impacted."

Just under 50 boats were reported stolen to the Marine Support Services Branch of the Royal Bahamas Police Force in the first six months of 2011, of which 30 have been recovered.

Assistant Superintendent Clarence Finlayson, the officer in

charge of the marine branch and a MOB member, puts the improved recovery rate down to good communication between boat owners and the police. But he agreed the penalties are still not enough to deter thieves. The men found guilty of stealing a \$350,000 30-foot Grady-White with twin 250-hp engines were fined just \$1,000 in court.

Recommendations to amend the law have been inspired by legislation enforced in New South Wales, Australia and are being circulated among MOB members.

New manager for Big Game resort

The Bimini Big Game Club has welcomed a new General Manager to take charge of operations at the Guy Harvey Outpost Resort. Michael Weber, an award-winning hotel manager credited with implementing the first European Marketing Plan for the Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau, moves to the historic 51-room property in Alice Town, Bimini from Freeport, Grand Bahama where he managed the Our Lucaya Beach and Golf Resort. Weber replaces Bahamian manager Christopher Pollock, who will remain on at Big Game as an advisor.

Eric Jarvis, President of SBC Operations, Ltd., said Weber is a perfect match for the resort. "Mike's long history of successful hotel and resort management in South Florida and the Bahamas is also a perfect match for the mission of Guy Harvey Outposts and ourselves in providing sport fishermen, cruisers and divers—as well as families—with a top-of-class experience in both traditional hospitality services and a variety of outfitter pursuits." 