



(OECS Secretariat, Castries, St Lucia) The OECS Secretariat will next Wednesday (March 17th

) launch the fourth in a series of community projects in the district of Willis, on the north east of St George's Grenada. The project is expected to provide new job opportunities for persons living near the Annandale and Grand Etang Forest Reserves – two protected areas, supported by the OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods (OPAAL) Project.

The ceremony to launch the project is scheduled to take place at 5:00 p.m. at the Willis Community Centre, and is expected to attract an estimated 50 persons representing government officials, private sector agencies, tourism and a number of community persons and stakeholders who benefit from or have interest in the two protected areas.

Officials at the OECS Secretariat have expressed enthusiasm about the potential for the project, which they reiterate will not only enhance existing livelihoods for low-income persons living in the vicinity of the two Forests, but in the long-term, contribute to the strengthening of sustainable use of natural resources and an increase in environmental awareness. "A number of community persons are expected to benefit from the opportunities either through training for job enhancement or by obtaining grants to support their livelihoods choices" says David Popo, Programme Officer at the OECS Secretariat.

The project is valued at EC\$ 342,993.00 and was developed in 2009 by Staff members of the Department of Forestry in Grenada together with community persons and other stakeholders. They identified a series of potential livelihood opportunities that qualify for support under the project. These include tour guiding, art and craft development, agro-forestry/horticulture and zip-lining operations. Community persons interested in the benefits of the project will be provided with training in order to establish or strengthen their livelihoods or they can access small grants for the purchase of goods and material to support their respective trades.

Following the March 17th launch, the OECS Secretariat will schedule a training workshop later this year for persons who have been selected to implement the community project. The workshop will deliver skills in financial management, partnership building, community mobilization and other pertinent management areas.

-MORE-

The community sustainable livelihoods initiative is being implemented under the OECS Protected Areas and Associated Livelihoods (OPAAL) project and is the **fourth** such project to be launched by OPAAL. The first three livelihoods projects were launched in Union Island, St Vincent in March 2008, Portsmouth, Dominica in June 2009 and Antigua in October 2009.

Media Contact: Tecla Fontenard tfontenard@oecs.org (758) 455-6366

Subject Contacts: David Popo dpopo@oecs.org (758) 455-6370