

Princess presents top conservation accolade to Haiti's Jean Wiener



LONDON, UK: 21 MAY 2008 - HRH The Princess Royal (Princess Anne) tonight presented one of the world's top prizes for grassroots nature conservation – a Whitley Award – to Jean Wiener, of Haiti, for his work to protect his country's coral reefs and mangrove forests.

Jean Wiener, 43, was one of 11 people honoured at the ceremony, held at the Royal Geographical Society, London, by The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) – the UK-based charity which administers the international awards programme and which this year celebrates its 15th anniversary.

His prize includes a Whitley Award donated by Paula and Mario Frering - plus long-term support and the opportunity to apply for further WFN funding.

The award to Jean Wiener recognised his work among coastal communities where the knock-on effects of wide-scale deforestation, poor soils, increased agri-chemical use and flooding are damaging the marine environment on which many Haitians depend. As the director of FoProBiM, Jean Wiener leads his country's only marine conservation NGO. It takes a practical approach - raising awareness, offering training, rallying volunteers for restoration work, building partnerships and acting as a mediator. Recent initiatives include producing an abridged version of fishery laws, to make them easier to understand, and observe; building two artificial reefs, to improve

fish stocks, and installing mooring buoys to reduce anchor damage to corals. Along the shore, mangroves are being replanted to reduce flood damage, and alternatives to Haiti's main fuel, charcoal, are being explored.

Speaking before the results were announced, the fund's founder, Edward Whitley, said: "The aim of the Whitley Awards is to find and support the environmental leaders who are helping to build a future where nature and people co-exist in a way that benefits both. Once again, this year's finalists have risen to the challenge. They have impressed and heartened us by telling us their conservation success stories, and by demonstrating what can be achieved when vision, passion, intelligence and determination are brought to bear. An added bonus is that they give us hope. The example given by people like Jean Wiener is an inspiration for us all."

The awards ceremony was co-hosted by BBC broadcaster Martha Kearney and held in front of a 350-strong audience that included Sir David Attenborough, leading scientists and environmentalists and celebrity conservation supporters.

Edward Whitley added: "We also strive to support them in wider ways – for instance, by offering them opportunities to seek further funding in future years and by uniting them with other donors and conservation organisations. They also become part of the Whitley Fund for Nature's network of past finalists which, after 15 years, now takes in over 100 dynamic environmentalists in more than 50 countries, making it an invaluable source of experience, ideas and best practice."

The Whitley Awards are sponsored and supported by a range of corporations and individuals including WWF-UK, Sting and his wife, Trudie Styler, and HSBC Private Bank.