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## MISSION STATEMENT

The overall objective for the development of tourism in Bonaire is to enable the people of Bonaire to benefit from the promotion and development of tourism by providing an optimum level of economic contribution consistent with the overall protection of Bonaire's environmental assets, cultural heritage, human resources and lifestyle.

## GENERAL POLICY GUIDELINES

While this objective has to be adhered to by all those involved in the tourism sector, whether private sector or public sector, it is for the public sector to enact policies and to carry out programmes to reach the stated objective.

To this end, the government will:

1. Encourage the orderly, fair and reasonable development of tourism resources within the context of a carefully planned and executed Tourism Development Plan.
2. Give full active support to the development of tourism activities which raise the wealth of Bonaire and its inhabitants.
3. Ensure a pattern of tourism development consistent with the protection and conservation of the island's natural resources and attractions, particularly its off-shore reefs and which also guarantees public access to the coastal zones. This ensures locals' and visitors' access to diving sites, beaches and fishing areas.
4. Strive continuously to improve and upgrade the product which Bonaire has to offer to international and domestic tourism in order to consolidate a strong and competitive position in targeted overseas markets.
5. Encourage a balanced and diversified growth in the number, types, place of origin and travel motivations of visitors to Bonaire by stimulating well-researched and financed marketing and promotion campaigns and, while encouraging further expansion of the diving market, actively explore other leisure-oriented markets compatible with Bonaire's character and image.
6. Encourage a tourism development that caters to high-quality—and specialty, non-mainstream tourists: i.e. boutique tourism.
7. Encourage the modernization and competitiveness of the accommodation sector.
8. Grant licences and leases for new development only to bona fide investors, with a demonstrated planning and delivery capability, who are willing to follow the guidelines set out in this policy statement.
9. Maximize job opportunities for Bonaireans and other qualified Antilleans at all levels of skill and responsibilities in the tourism sector by expanding training opportunities for nationals already working in or potentially interested in entering the tourism industry and by limiting the validity of work permits of expatriates in cases where suitable qualified Antilleans are not available to such



- reasonable periods of time as are required for the training of local counterparts. Bonaire's labour policies should seek to encourage Bonaireans and other qualified Antilleans living elsewhere to consider taking up job positions in Bonaire.
10. Encourage Bonairean and Antillean ownership and management of tourism facilities and services, utilizing locally available capital resources and seek foreign capital only for those investments for which local funds and/or management capabilities are limited or not available.
  11. Encourage a more intensive exploitation of the scope for linkages between tourism and other sectors of the local economy, particularly agriculture, livestock, fisheries, handicraft and services.
  12. Encourage the Antillean Air Company, as well as other airlines which currently service Bonaire, or which may service Bonaire in the future, to provide on a year-round basis a reliable and convenient air service at a competitive price.
  13. Facilitate the entry and exit of visitors at all ports of entry and strive to ensure that facilities are improved to keep pace with the demands of visitors and other passengers.
  14. Exploit the positive effects of tourism on the socio-cultural fabric of Bonaire, while minimizing those aspects which may create potential conflicts or loss of cultural identity.
  15. Create a better understanding among residents and public officials of the importance of tourism to the island's economy; and foster a spirit of continued hospitality and friendliness toward visitors.
  16. Promote tourism in a manner that fosters visitors' understanding and respect for the culture, customs and ethnic traditions of local residents and for the delicate and varied ecology of the island.
  17. Continue to work closely with the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Caribbean Hotel Association and strengthen ties with other regional and international organizations involved in the areas of tourism, economic development and conservation.
  18. Establish and implement the necessary institutional changes and legislation necessary for the attainment of the above policies and goals.
  19. Consonant with the above, strive to strengthen the functions, capabilities and resources of Tourism Corporation Bonaire, which is the agency of the Bonaire tourism sector.

## SPECIFIC POLICIES

### **New hotel development**

The projected growth in tourist accommodation is far in excess of the development goals of the Tourism Strategic Master Plan and the Bonaire Tourism Structure Plan. From the first quarter of 1994, the government has imposed an official moratorium on all new hotel and related tourist accommodation developments,

including condominium and time-sharing projects, for an initial period of seven years during which no new permits for such development will be issued. In addition, all existing permits for new lodging developments and extensions to existing properties will be reviewed and, where appropriate, renegotiated so as to ensure that the total number of lodging units is kept below 1600 units.

It is expected that this policy will result in a re-focusing from an emphasis on attracting large new projects to facilitating the upgrading of the existing tourism product and stimulating small business growth. Investment in other viable tourism-related facilities, both by Bonaireans and overseas investors, will be encouraged provided such projects conform to the guidelines set out in this policy statement.

### Physical planning

The Bonaire Structure Plan (1990) presents a zoning plan for guiding land-use development, including the designation of areas reserved for tourism and tourism-related facilities. All proposals for development require planning approval and must be submitted in the first instance to the Legal Department to verify their conformance with the stipulated requirements of the structure plan.

Final approval is given by the Executive Council on the advice of the inter-departmental Planning Committee of which the tourist office needs to form part. Building permits are issued by the Public Works Department and will not be granted unless the project has been approved by the Executive Council (or Planning Committee). Project developers have the right to appeal with the Parliament of Bonaire within 30 days after notice.

### Protection of the environment

All major development proposals must be accompanied by a thorough environmental impact study conducted by an independent, qualified expert. The government or Tourism Corporation can submit a developer's plan to an outside independent appraisal at the developer's expense.

Effective 1994, coastal zone development will be stopped for a period of at least five years and only projects already underway and with valid permits will be allowed to be completed. This is pending the findings of a baseline study of Bonaire Marine Park on the subject of marine environmental impacts on coastal areas.

The maximum permitted building height for tourist lodging projects is 11 metres (three-storey) and eight metres (two-storey) in environmentally sensitive areas. No building development is permitted in the following conservation areas: Washington-Slagbaai Park, the Lac area, Klein Bonaire; and the designated linear beach park areas as defined in the Structure Plan.

A permit is required for the erection of all advertising signs and billboards which must conform to certain specified standards. The operation of jet skis and similar high-powered marine craft is totally prohibited.



### Bonaire Marine Park (BMP)

The number of divers and other persons using the Marine Park will be monitored and limited if necessary for the conservation of the coral reefs and the protection of the island's tourism industry. To preserve marine life, especially on Bonaire's reefs, existing fishing laws regulating fishing in the proximity of the coastal area's must be strictly enforced.

Further research will be undertaken by the BMP to determine the precise carrying capacity of the park, whether in terms of the maximum number of users or the intensity of use by various categories of user. The annual admission fee payable by any person diving in the Marine Park will be increased to \$25 per diver per year as a direct contribution to the operation and maintenance of the park. At the same time, there will be an intensified marketing effort to attract visitors to Bonaire for reasons other than diving.

### Diving shops

A permit is required by all operators of diving shops and similar establishments who must comply with the conditions governing the operation of such establishments as stipulated in the Marine Environment Ordinance. The government will carefully monitor, and, where necessary, control the number of diving shops permitted to operate in Bonaire, bearing in mind the finite carrying capacity of the Marine Park and the possible need to limit the number of diving visitors, or the number of dives per diver, or both, at some future date.

The government intends to establish a comprehensive legislation framework to govern the use Bonaire's marine resources for all other users. This legislation includes set charges for the various categories of users. Local users of marine

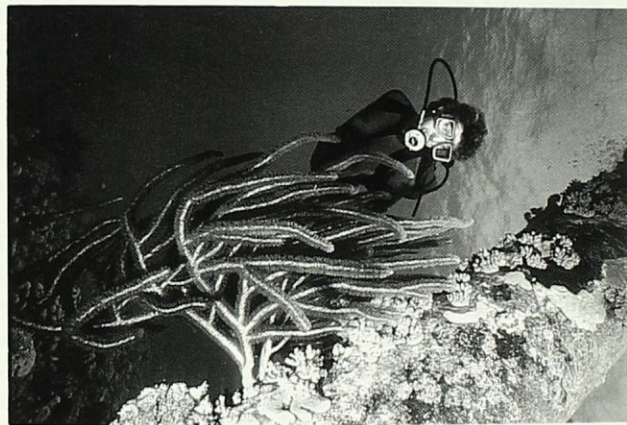


Figure 11.1. Reef diving off the coast of Bonaire

resources are charged for the dollar amount in Antillean guilders ("local" is defined as all persons who register Bonaire as their island residence).

### Product development

The Tourism Corporation and government will continue to pursue a "dive-plus" marketing strategy that will make Bonaire more competitive in existing and new diving-markets while at the same time reaching out to new potential "niche" markets in the general leisure markets in existing and new geographical markets. The government intends to welcome and actively support proposals to upgrade and expand the current tourism product to appeal and cater to identified up-market segments such as birdwatching, windsurfing, fishing, snorkelling, cycling, the family market, sailing, etc.

### Investment

Investment in viable tourism projects, other than those pertaining to the accommodation sector, will be welcome, both from Bonaireans and overseas investors, although quite naturally the government will seek to stimulate and foster local investment. The government will actively encourage Bonaireans to invest in tourist-related facilities such as restaurants, bars, entertainment facilities, watersports and other sports facilities and attractions, transportation and communications facilities, tour and travel operations, retail outlets, handicraft, etc. through the provision of small capital loans and technical advice from the Development Bank of the Netherlands Antilles and other agencies.

In addition, Bonairean investors in approved projects can receive a tax holiday consisting of:

- full exemption from import duties for all construction materials including furniture, fixtures and equipment;
- exemption from property taxes for up to eleven years;
- a reduction of all income taxes to 2% for up to 11 years.

For Bonaireans, the minimum capital investment needed to qualify for the above tax incentives will be reduced to Naf. 250 000 for approved projects in the tourism sector (excluding the accommodation sector). Foreign-owned companies that wish to qualify for tax incentives are required to establish Bonaire subsidiaries which include Bonairean citizens as directors and/or include a government nominee on their boards. Tax incentives will no longer be offered to foreign investors for hotels on land-development projects. They will continue to be offered for the renovation of existing hotel properties, whether owned by Bonaireans or overseas investors. In this way, it is hoped to redirect financial mechanisms and an incentives policy away from large new accommodation projects in favour of the promotion of small, locally owned and managed tourism-related businesses and the upgrading of existing accommodation establishments.



### **Tourism linkages**

It is intended that tourism will increasingly be utilized as a catalyst for the development of other economic activities in Bonaire, particularly agriculture, fisheries, handicrafts and other services, and Bonaireans will be encouraged to invest in such projects.

### **Condominium and time-sharing developments**

No permits for new condominiums or time-sharing projects will be issued before 2000 AD. Existing permits for such developments will be reviewed and renegotiated where appropriate. In the intervening period, the government will make provision for the regulation of future condominium and time-sharing developments. The government will need to be satisfied at the planning-application stage as to the experience and competence of the proposed management company before approval is given. Profits from the re-sale of condominium units will henceforth be subject to tax, and owners of condominium units will be obliged to allocate a minimum number of weeks each year for renting.

### **Casinos and gaming establishments**

The government does not intend to issue any new additional licences for casino operations in Bonaire, whether stand alone or part of a hotel establishment. The government's policy is to have one "low-key type" casino for the whole island. The operation of coin-operated gaming machines other than in casinos is totally prohibited.

### **Fast-food restaurants**

No permits will be issued for high-profile American-style fast-food restaurants. Priority will be given to the establishment of high-quality international, gourmet, ethnic and local restaurants.

### **Cruise tourism**

Priority will be given to the development of land-based as opposed to cruise tourism. In that respect, the government will not actively seek to promote cruise tourism or allocate funds for that purpose. Not more than one cruise ship will be permitted to dock at the port of Bonaire at any one time. At the same time, every effort will be made to maximize on-shore spending by cruise passengers and to seek to convert cruise visitors into future stay-over tourists. Cruise ships will be required to remain for a whole day and passengers are not allowed to take food and beverages off the ships.

In order to increase the revenue benefits from cruise tourism, the government has

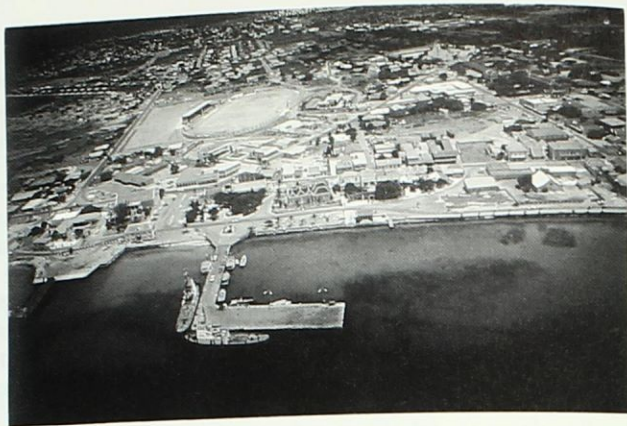


Figure 11.2. An aerial view of Kralendijk

imposed a passenger head tax of US\$5 per manifested passenger on board all cruise ships calling at Bonaire from 1 April 1994. The head tax will be increased to US\$10 at the beginning of 1995, in accordance with CTO guidelines.

Cruise companies and/or their agents will be responsible for disposing of garbage generated by cruise ships visiting Bonaire and will not be permitted to leave any garbage on the island. They will also be responsible for dealing with any pollution, accidental or otherwise, caused by cruise vessels. The government of Bonaire will impose a fine of up to \$500 000 for those ships found guilty of polluting.

### Yachts

A mooring fee of US\$15 per day has been charged from the beginning of 1994 for all anchoring yachts visiting Bonaire and not using the (private) Marina. The government will ensure that in due course adequate moorings are available and that suitable arrangements are made for the removal and disposal of garbage for a reasonable charge.

### Charter boats

All operators of charter boats must have a licence. Licences are only issued for boats taking visitors for day or evening cruises. Operators are not permitted to take hotel visitors on overnight cruises unless this is done by prior agreement with the hotels. No licences will be issued for the operation of live-aboard diving boats.

### Manpower training

The government will ensure that the necessary "on-the-job" training is provided for Bonaireans wishing to work, or who are already working, in the tourism



industry. Assistance will be sought from national and international donor agencies in the fields of instruction and student training. Developers will be required, as part of their project proposal, to introduce on an ongoing basis a programme of "in-house" training and induction training for their employees. The government intends to institute a national certification programme for all persons employed in the tourism industry in both the public and private sectors, so that eventually all posts are filled by qualified personnel.

### **Work permits**

Application for work permits for expatriates will not be entertained in cases where suitably qualified Bonaireans or Antilleans are available to fill the vacant positions. Where applications for work permits are granted, they will be limited to the periods or time required to train locals. The charges for work permits for expatriates were raised to Nafls 1000 from July 1994 and for renewals of permits to Nafls 400.

### **Tourism education**

The government will ensure that tourism-related subjects are introduced into the curricula of all island primary and secondary schools so that school leavers are fully aware of the importance of tourism to the island economy and of career opportunities in tourism, both as employees and as owner/managers of tourism-related enterprises.

### **Public awareness**

The government will mount an ongoing programme to increase public awareness of the role that the community at large is expected to play in the development of the tourism sector, including the reception of visitors and the maintenance of an unspoiled environment. The government will continue to support the "Tene Boneiru Limpi" campaign and other community programmes geared towards preservation and enhancement of Bonaire's cultural heritage and natural beauty. It will also give top priority to the realization and implementation of environment protection legislation, including an effective control mechanism and apparatus.

## **CONCLUSION**

Tourism can, if carefully planned, managed and promoted, become the mainstay of the economy of Bonaire. The hospitality industry affects and embraces people from all walks of life, and the increasing economic benefits which it can bring will reach everyone. However, it is necessary to strike a balance between the economic benefits that may be brought by an ever-increasing number of visitors and the possible negative impacts of this growth in tourism on the natural and cultural

environment of Bonaire. The purpose of the National Tourism Policy is to ensure that this balance is achieved and that the island's unique natural and cultural assets are preserved for the enjoyment of future generations of Bonaireans and visitors.

#### APPENDIX: BONAIRE

Location: 50 miles north of Venezuela, 30 miles east of Curaçao, 86 miles east of Aruba and 1720 miles from New York. At 12 5' north latitude, 68 25' west longitude. Outside the hurricane belt.

Size: 24 miles long by 3-7 miles wide, 112 sq. miles. Highest elevation is Brandaris Hill, 784 feet.

Language: Papiamentu and Dutch. English and Spanish widely spoken.

Government: With a population of 11 500 Bonaire is the second largest in size of the five Netherlands Antilles islands: Bonaire, Curaçao, St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius. Since January 1986, Aruba no longer forms part of the Netherlands Antilles. The Netherlands Antilles is an autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Its form of administration is a parliamentary democracy. The Queen of the Netherlands represents the Crown. Bonaire has a lieutenant governor, F. Goedgedrag, residing in Kralendijk, the island's capital. There is a Legislative Council, called "*Staten*": (Parliament), an Executive Council and an Advisory Council. The seat of the central government is in Willemstad, Curaçao. Each island territory has its own legislative and executive body called an Island Council.



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## 11 A Framework for Tourism Development on Fragile Island Destinations: the Case of Bonaire

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### INTRODUCTION

Bonaire is endowed with a variety of natural and cultural assets which, taken as a whole, provide the basis for the attraction of visitors from abroad and the development of tourism. These assets include outstanding marine resources, unspoiled natural scenery, a pleasant year-round climate, an uncrowded environment and a friendly, welcoming population. These assets should be preserved and nurtured not only because they are appreciated by visitors from other lands but because they are valued by the present population and will be by generations yet to come.

The development and promotion of tourism is in the interest of the people of Bonaire and will be encouraged in so far as it contributes to economic and social well-being by creating job opportunities for local people, generates receipts for local businesses, increases foreign-exchange earnings and does not exceed the island's carrying capacity. Development which does not take careful account of environmental and human resource concerns could deplete or eliminate the very assets which makes Bonaire attractive to visitors and local residents alike.

Tourism in Bonaire should develop in a planned and orderly manner so as to provide the maximum benefit to the island and its residents and to ensure that any adverse effects on the social, economic, cultural and general quality of life of the people of Bonaire and the environment are minimized. The objective should be to achieve a managed growth path and a sustainable level of tourism development. This necessitates finding and striking the fine balance between the facilitation of tourism growth and the control of associated developments, bearing in mind that without careful conservation of Bonaire's primary tourism resources, it may cease to have a viable tourism product. A comprehensive national tourism policy is therefore essential if tourism is to grow in an orderly way.