



PRESS RELEASE 21 January 2009

WildAruba presses for the creation of an Environmental Management Authority

Oranjestad – On Wednesday, January 21st, WildAruba offered its final report from the WildAruba Conservation Planning Workshop to the Minister of Health, Environment, Administrative and Aliens Affairs and to the Minister of Labor, Culture and Sport. This took place in the National Park Arikok. The report contains recommendations on the improvement of policy on nature and environment. The creation of an Environmental Management Authority tops the list but the creation of a marine park and the institution of a moratorium on construction of new hotels are also regarded very important by WildAruba.

Mr. Pieter Barendsen, Chairman of the WildAruba Executive Committee also handed both ministers a written request to rapidly institute a commission to prepare the erection of said Environmental Management Authority, considered a key recommendation in the WildAruba report.

Short history.

Aruba is a small island, with a relatively high population density and a strong economic base. Aruba's environmental beauty makes it a popular vacation destination. If Aruba wants to keep its attraction as a tourist destination and a pleasant place to live, then a sound and transparent policy towards nature and environment are a necessity.

With the desire to give a positive stimulus to this policy a group of people embraced the idea of organizing a conference to

1. present knowledge and information on the current state of matters of nature and environment on Aruba
2. formulate a long term vision on the policy towards nature and environment, draw up specific recommendations with realistic short term action plans.

This resulted in *WildAruba 2008, First National Congress for the Preservation of Aruban Wildlife*. This conference was held in August 2008 and consisted of two parts:

1. A two day symposium, opened by Minister Lee of Labor, Culture and Sports. A hall mark of national and international experts and speakers presented their work. The symposium was open to everyone having interest in Aruba's nature.
2. A three day workshop that was opened with a speech from Minister Wever of Health, Environment, Administrative and Aliens Affairs. The invitees, that represented many different organizations in our society, divided up into different working groups to define issues, develop ideas, and create the recommendations included in the final report. This workshop was professionally facilitated by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG). The IUCN/CBSG was also responsible for the assembly of the final report, which contains the vision, recommendations and the actual reports of the working groups.

WildAruba has been organized by a number of interested stakeholders, including the Parke National Arikok foundation, Toledo Zoological Society, Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA), College of New Jersey, StimAruba, TurtugAruba, Fundacion Arubano pa Naturalesa y Parke (FANAPA), Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA), Veterinaire Dienst (VD), Directie Landbouw, Veeteelt, Visserij en Markthallen (DLVVM), Serlimar en Inspectie Volksgezondheid en Milieu (IVM).

To create a broad basis for its ideas many other organizations have participated in the WildAruba workshop. Without the (financial) contribution of sponsors, WildAruba 2008 would not have been possible.

The final report can give direction for government policy, but also to policy or activities of (nature protecting) organizations outside the government or current projects like Aruba2025 or the Kerntakenanalyse

Most important points of the final report.

The vision:

Aruba, where people appreciate and respect the island's flora, fauna and environment, actively protect nature's evolving processes in healthy habitats, in both marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and manage to live in a sustainable balance between socio-economic development and conservation of its nature and cultural heritage.

During the workshop the conservation of nature has been widely discussed: ideas, wishes, threats, ways to fend off threats, and next a plan of action which can be carried out on a short term basis. This resulted in a large number of recommendations. These were consequently put in order of importance by all the participants. The seven most important recommendations were:

WildAruba Priority Recommendations		
Nr	Description	Votes
1	Institute an Environmental Management Authority (EMA) including a Biodiversity Office	33
2	Establish a Marine Park (implement protected marine areas leading to this	20
3	Reinforce a moratorium on commercial development (hotels, malls, restaurants, etc	19
4	Create a permanent education committee of key stakeholders involved in Aruba's natural history and heritage	13
5	Gather information on species/habitat and distribution	11
6	Change/modify human behavior to create a more environmental minded population (Organize a national awareness campaign that leads to a permanently clean Aruba)	10
7	Ban all irresponsible driving, on land or sea, in Aruba (driving that in any respect damages or disturbs the natural habitat)	7
7	Clean air: reduce our dependence on fossil fuels; reduce use of pesticides/ herbicides	7

The complete report can be found at www.wildaruba.org