



# BONAIRE NATIONAL MARINE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2006



Bonaire National Marine Park  
Management Plan  
2006

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# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AGRRA</b>	Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (Caribbean wide study of coral reef health)
<b>BNMP</b>	Bonaire National Marine Park
<b>Cartagena</b>	The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region
<b>CITES</b>	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
<b>DCNA</b>	Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>ICRAN</b>	International Coral Reef Action Network
<b>IUCN</b>	World Conservation Union (formerly International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources)
<b>MARPOL</b>	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
<b>MINA</b>	Central Government Department of Nature and the Environment
<b>MPA</b>	Marine Protected Area
<b>PA</b>	Protected Area
<b>Ramsar</b>	Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat
<b>SPA</b>	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife – Annex of the Cartagena Convention
<b>STINAPA</b>	Stichting Nationale Parken Nederlandse Antillean
<b>TCB</b>	Tourism Corporation Bonaire
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>WCPA</b>	World Commission on Protected Areas
<b>WSNP</b>	Washington Slagbaai National Park
<b>WWF</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature

# How to use the Bonaire National Marine Park Management Plan

This management plan is intended to act as a reference document and to provide structure for the management of Bonaire National Marine Park. The target audiences include those responsible for managing BNMP in the field as well as stakeholders, external supporters, potential donors and other interested parties.

The Bonaire National Marine Park Management plan has been designed to be a dynamic document, accessible to all interested parties via hard copy, electronic copy and websites. The master copy, owned by the Marine Park Manager should be kept up to date with additional material to allow adaptive management as situations and issues change. Changes to the plan should be listed in a simple format and agreed by the STINAPA director and/or Board. The Plan has 4 parts:

## Part 1. Bonaire: Background Information

The physical, social and political environment that BNMP works within greatly influences the operations of the protected area. Those using the management plan may not be aware of the stage upon which BNMP operates and can refer to this section for background information. Technical terms are explained in the text and names of plants and animals are given as the common name in English, followed by local and scientific names.

*Part 1 provides valuable background and contextual information. It can be used as a stand alone introduction to the island/marine park and has been written with a range of audiences in mind.*

## Part 2. Management environment

This is the first part of the working document which states the significance, mission and goals of BNMP. Resources available to BNMP are described, including the legal instruments, institutional arrangements, human and physical resources. The main issues facing BNMP are detailed and described before being summarised.

*Part 2 will be of interest to those wishing to develop a more in depth understanding of the operational management of the marine park and the issues facing the park.*

## Part 3. Management Plan.

In part 3 the actions that BNMP need to take to work towards the mission and goals are clarified. Day to day activities of the marine park staff are outlined, and actions are recommended to tackle the management issues and external issues identified in Part 2 that BNMP faces.

*Part 3 is of concern to those with an interest in the current activities of BNMP and the rational behind actions being taken.*

## Part 4. Additions and Developments

The final part of the plan is intended to act as a place marker for updates, where management actions have lead to outcomes that can be described or there has been a change in the tools available to the marine park. This section needs to be kept up to date so that staff can work from the proposed actions and work schedule, and so any interested party can pick up the whole plan and have a thorough understanding of BNMP from the context through to the most recent management actions.

*Part 4 is to be used by the management body to keep the management plan up to date; its contents are unlikely to be available until the plan has been formally updated.*

# Summary

The Bonaire National Marine Park was first established in 1979. It surrounds the island of Bonaire and includes the satellite island and the waters around Klein Bonaire. Bonaire lies in the Southern Caribbean approximately 100km (60 miles) north of Venezuela and 12' north of the equator. Bonaire is unusual in that it is a true oceanic island, separated from the South American mainland by a deep water trench. Bonaire is part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and is regarded by the European Union as an Overseas Territory. The marine park falls entirely within the territorial waters and jurisdiction of the Island of Bonaire and is protected by the Marine Environment Ordinance (A.B 1991 Nr.8). The marine park was declared a National Park by the Central Government of the Netherlands Antilles in November 1999. For issues related to World Heritage, Ramsar wetlands, threatened and endangered species, migratory species and marine pollution the Central Government Department of Nature and the Environment (MINA) also has jurisdiction.

The marine park includes 2,700 hectares of coral reef, seagrass and mangrove ecosystems and provides habitat for a diverse range of marine species including over 50 species of stony coral and more than 350 species of reef fish. Sea turtles nest on the shores of Klein Bonaire and forage in Lac, a semi enclosed seagrass and mangrove bay located on the islands windward shore. Bottlenose and Spinner dolphin as well as various species of whale can be found seasonally in the seas around Bonaire. Bonaire is regularly visited by migratory birds.

Bonaire has a well deserved international reputation for excellence in the field of SCUBA diving and is routinely listed in the top five destinations for the Caribbean.

The Bonaire National Marine Park consists of the waters around Bonaire from the high water mark to the 200' (60m) depth contour, the island of Klein Bonaire and its surrounding waters and the mangrove, seagrass and coral reefs of Lac. The park is managed by a local non governmental, not for profit foundation, STINAPA Bonaire which has a co-management structure with stakeholders, conservationists and local interest groups represented on the Board. The day to day management is carried out under the supervision of a Director but the Marine Park manager, Chief Ranger and Rangers employed by STINAPA Bonaire.

The marine park is managed predominately for biodiversity conservation, the promotion of sustainable use and for the protection of cultural and historical sites within the park with the aim of providing protection for the island's unique marine resources whilst allowing appropriate recreational and commercial use to be made of the park.

This is the first management plan for the Bonaire National Marine Park. Rapid changes in management over the past six years have highlighted the need for a strategic document to guide management decision making and to better define the mission, goals and objective of the park. It is also a prerequisite for Bonaire's World Heritage Site nomination and essential if the park is going to begin monitoring its own effectiveness.

This document has been prepared in close consultation with STINAPA Bonaire, their management and staff and a considerable number of stakeholders and stakeholder group representatives.

The plan specifies management goals and strategies for the Bonaire National Marine Park related to the park's mission, which is to conserve and manage the natural, cultural and historical resources within the park, allowing their sustainable use for the benefit of current and future generations. It also identifies the major existing and potential threats and issues facing the park from ecological, social and cultural perspectives and includes substantial input from stakeholders. It is designed to be an adaptive management tool.

## Introduction

In 1979 the Bonaire Marine Park was first set up with grant funding from the World Wildlife Fund, in the Netherlands, assistance from the Island Government and other funding sources. The responsibility for management was given to STINAPA Bonaire, an existing non governmental conservation organisation which was already managing the islands land park, the Washington Slagbaai National park which had been created a decade earlier. The marine park had its headquarters at Karpata and was managed by Eric Newton with the assistance of a consultant Tom van't Hof. Over the next four years the Marine Park was actively managed, legislation was passed protecting the park, a system of dive moorings was established along the length of the leeward shore and a range of outreach materials were developed in addition to the very first Guide to the Bonaire Marine Park written by Tom van't Hof (1982). However, failure to identify a sustainable source of funding for the park caused serious financial difficulties. Eventually, with funding for operational management, the Park became a 'paper park' — established on paper but without any active day to day management. For the coming six years the spirit of the Park was kept alive through the hard work of the dive industry and a few dedicated individuals.

By 1990 there was a real fear that the expanding dive industry and increasing tourist visitation were creating a serious threat to the health of Bonaire's coral reefs. After serious concerns had been raised about the lack of formal management of the Marine Park, after a trebling in diver activity, and with increasing pressure on the island's coastal resources, Dutch Government funding (Meerjaaren Plan Fondsen – MJP funds) was sought to re-establish, or 'revitalize', the Marine Park. This was successful and in April 1991 the marine park was revitalized and a new manager, Kalli De Meyer, was hired to work alongside Tom van't Hof in order to re-establish the Bonaire Marine Park. The Dutch Government funding, which amounted to Naf 225,000 per annum for a maximum period of three years, was administered by DEPOS (Departement Ontwikkeling Samenwerking) on Curaçao and had a number of significant strings attached. It obligated the Island Government of Bonaire to:

- Ensure that the Marine Park became self financing within the term of the grant
- Set up an appropriate management structure for the Marine Park

Both of these requirements were fulfilled. The Marine Park was re-established and the Island Government passed amendments to the Marine Environment Ordinance allowing an annual admission fee of US\$ 10 per diver to be levied in order to offset operational expenses. In January 1992 admission fees were introduced and in the course of the first year over US\$ 170,000 was raised, enough to cover salaries and operating costs. The Island Government gave management of the Marine Park to STINAPA Bonaire (Stichting Nationale Parken Nederlandse Antillean), a local NGO which was already had management of the island's land park and created a 'Begleidingscommissie' made up of representatives of the tourism sector, conservation interests as well as local island interests to guide Park management.

Since the early 1990's the Marine Park has gone from strength to strength. By the end of that decade it was considered a model marine park and was being copied as far a field as Bunaken, Indonesia. It was selected as a UNEP/ICRAN demonstration site for the Caribbean and ranked alongside the Great Barrier Reef and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary for the value of its conservation work. In November 1999 the Marine Park was formally declared a National Park by the Central Government of the Netherlands Antilles and the name was changed to Bonaire National Marine Park (BNMP).

Despite its undisputed success, Bonaire National Marine Park (BNMP) has never had a formal management plan. Rapid institutional developments and changes in leadership over the past six years have highlighted the need for such a document in order to better define the goals and objectives of the Park and to clarify management objectives and strategies which will allow the Park's success to be measured and its management effectiveness to be assessed. It will also assist both staff and Board by providing a solid framework for reference, decision making and planning. The management plan will also ensure continuity of management effort and allow stakeholders and other interest groups to understand and participate in the planning process. According to IUCN management plans are an essential step towards ensuring the proper management of protected

areas. This management plan is also a prerequisite document in support of Bonaire’s marine transboundary World Heritage Site nomination.

The first project proposal for a management plan was submitted and approved in January 2004. The strategic planning component was conducted throughout the fall of 2004 and the first data collection and gathering of background information began in September 2005. Stakeholder input into the management plan was conducted throughout the month of January 2006 with formal meetings held over a 3 week period.

**ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AND TIMEFRAME**

For this management plan to serve the needs of STINAPA Bonaire, park management and staff it is vital that it be periodically reviewed and updated. Stakeholders are also keen to see a review process adopted and this emerged as a repeated theme during the course of stakeholder meetings held in January 2006.

It is recommended that Part 1 of this plan is updated every 3-5 years, and parts 2 and 3 of this plan are reviewed together on an annual basis. Necessary updates should then be added in section 4. Stakeholder input to the running of BNMP needs to be an ongoing process. It is recommended that formal stakeholder input regarding the functioning of the management plan is carried out every 3-5 years, in conjunction with the revision of Part one.

The recommendations below for reviewing and revising the Management Plan should be seen as guidelines. After the management planning and review process has been consolidated, revisions may become less frequent and/or more specific.

Section	Time period	People involved
1,2,3,4	Every 3-5 years as required	STINAPA Staff, Board and Stakeholders
2	Once a year additions put into section 4	STINAPA Staff and Board
3	Once a year additions put into section 4	STINAPA Staff and Board
4	Additions made continually	STINAPA Staff

**Table 1:** Recommendations for review of the management document