



ENVIRONMENT

SHTA White Paper

Environment

Proposed Solutions to protect the Environment on St. Maarten

Problem: Overdevelopment poses a challenge to our environment

The SHTA is committed to the sustainable management of St. Maarten's natural resources and environment. Through proper business development and sustainable commerce a suitable balance can be achieved where environment and businesses can prosper, not only for visitors, but for residents as well.

Businesses in general can profit from a clean and healthy environment. Our local community depends on it, and our visitors enjoy it.

Resident Impact

Loss of access to public beaches, polluted seas, sewage and waste issues, eroding beaches, limited land, island becoming overdeveloped.

Business Impact

Beach erosion, littered landscape, polluted seas, lack of natural attractions, sewage and waste issues, nature is visitors' reason for coming.

Visitor Impact

Main attractions are pristine beaches and natural landscape, environmentally aware guests, littered landscape, over development.

Goal: Protect Natural Environment and Maintain Accessibility for All

Proposed Solutions

Legislation

- Improve Environmental Laws
- Enforce Existing Laws and Policies
- Manage Growth

Awareness

- Sensitize the Public
- Sensitize Businesses
- Sensitize Government

Programs

- Environmental Standards
- Research
- Alternative Clean Energy Sources
- Waste Reduction
- Reduction of Carbon Dioxide

Conclusion

The proposed solutions can only really protect the Environment when residents, businesses, visitors and government work together and support them. Many of these solutions will not be easy to implement, but will be necessary to improve the quality of life on St. Maarten for residents, businesses and visitors.



Improve Environmental Laws

Description

Current environmental laws do not cover certain issues, such as reef protection. Stronger laws and policies need to be put into place to ensure that businesses and residents learn to respect and protect our natural environment. Aside from this, local and international lobbying needs to be done to ensure that visitors and residents understand the importance of sustaining the environment on St. Maarten.

Benefits

Updating and enforcing existing laws, will prevent overdevelopment, which in turn will lead to distinctions between commercial, residential and industrial zones and protection of St. Maarten's habitat.

Potential Challenges

Lack of political will to take the necessary steps towards the implementation of the necessary laws will result in little or no change.

ACTION

- **Implement Marine Park Ordinance** for underwater and reef protection. This would reduce the amount of water pollution, leaving our shores clean not only for visitors to the island but for the local community as well.
- **Implement Beach Ordinance** to protect beaches and coastlines.
- **Implement Fisheries Ordinance** to regulate over-fishing, and/or illegal fishing through proper fishing methods.
- **Attain financial backing** and achieve sustainability through levies/fees/fines. Offshore banking is also a possibility to prevent overdevelopment while at the same time still profiting from taxes, which can be put towards sustaining the environment.
- **Implement Zoning policies** to prevent overdevelopment and clear distinctions between residential, commercial and industrial areas. This would protect the greenery on the island along with plants, buildings and similar items of historic value.

Enforce Existing Laws and Policies

Description

The current environmental policies and laws need to be better enforced with fines being levied that go towards repairing the damage to the island. The local rights of access to the natural resources on the island also need to be protected.

Benefits

Visitors and residents of the island will be more cautious of the importance of the environment and will think twice before doing anything to cause harm to St. Maarten's habitat. The issuing of fines for actions, such as: littering, air pollution and waste will ensure that people act more responsibly towards St. Maarten's environment.

Potential Challenges

The main challenges are political will and public support. Also the lack of necessary responsible parties to contribute accordingly will lead to little or no implementation of the above-mentioned solutions.

ACTION

- **Enforce Beach Policy** to protect beaches and coastlines.
- **Improve communication** with Coast Guard, Prosecutor's Office and VROM Department.
- **Implement 'Environmental Police'** and 'Environmental Inspectors' to increase visibility and enforcement throughout the community. With this in place, we would then be able to manage and control the extent to which businesses operate on the island, making sure they do this in an environmentally friendly manner.
- **Implement Beach Patrols** to maintain the cleanliness of the beaches by reducing littering and other types of pollution as well as making the beaches safer for tourists to visit by reducing the number of thefts and other types of crime on the beaches.

Manage Growth

Description

Strict zoning policies need to be put in place to protect existing monuments and natural environments such as ponds, nature reserves and marine parks to preserve these for future generations and to protect the island from overdevelopment as well.

Benefits

Creating zoning policies prevents overdevelopment and overpopulation, which in turn preserves St. Maarten's habitat and reduces traffic, which improves public health and preserves St. Maarten's aesthetic value.

Potential Challenges

Government might not see the value in zoning policies as it limits the number of businesses that can operate on the island, limiting taxes and other sorts of income for the island government.

ACTION

- **Implement Monument Ordinance to protect all monuments** (Heritage Foundation, Archeological Foundation).
- **Improve/update Monument List**, which describes all existing historical monuments.
- **Devise a 'nature list'**, which itemizes all important and ecologically valuable trees, endemic species, plants and flower species.
- **Implement and enforce a 'Pond Ordinance'**, which protects all natural remaining ponds from negative impacts.
- **Implement a zoning policy**. Clear distinction between Commercial, residential and industrial areas.
- **Devise a 'Green Zone' or 'Green Belt'** that would designate certain important ecological areas from any development.
- **Implement and strictly enforce Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)** for any development or construction to take place. The EIA ensures proper procedures and guidelines to possible developers that have an interest in investing in St. Maarten.
- **Implement a 'Commercial Zone'** where businesses can benefit from commercially oriented facilities catering to the business community. The advantage would then be that they aren't mixed in low class residential areas also known as "ghettos", influencing the first impression of potential clients.
- **Discuss various alternatives & solutions to the "Incinerator" Project.** ECODEC, a recycling plant operating in many Caribbean countries, for example, would be a good alternative to this incinerator as it recycles plastic and used tires and converts non recyclable materials into pellets, which can be used for energy. There would still be a need for landfill but with a remaining 5% of garbage per year (as opposed to the 20% with the incinerator) that would be stabilized in such as way as not to affect or degrade the surrounding environment.

Sensitize the Public

Description

The public needs to become more aware of the impact on our natural environment and how they can help in preserving our only natural resource by conserving, recycling and protecting. The SHTA supports business in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. The environment of St. Maarten is very important to the business sector. A clean and healthy environment is good for the overall business atmosphere and reflects sustainable tourism practices. It is for this reason that green businesses and green business practices be carried out.

Benefits

By creating awareness amongst the local and business community, everyone becomes more environmentally aware leading to effective waste management, recycling, less air, land and water pollution by businesses and preservation of our local habitat.

Potential Challenges

In order to achieve effective awareness, a suitable waste management system needs to be introduced to the public, such as a recycling company. Such a company exists (ECODEC), who has offered to have our garbage exported to their plant in Guadeloupe where it would then be recycled. This would then ensure the public that their trash is being dealt with in an environmentally friendly manner as opposed to the manner it's being dealt with currently, but without the political will to implement the necessary legal framework for this process to get started, no actions can be taken.

ACTION

- **Prepare public service announcements (PSA's)** on local TV, radio, and cable TV. Get sponsorship from large companies that cause harm to the environment. Consider getting these large companies to do a "swap-for-nature" as it is done in other large countries.
- **Education in schools**, through school visitation programs or mandatory educational programs, where students have to partake in a number of community service activities in order to receive a passing grade.
- **Education for community** in general this can be done through media. For example, have a two page spread in the Daily Herald similar to the Out 'n About, which highlights environmentally unfriendly people, such as people littering, oil spills by businesses etc.
- **Provide information in large public places** on the airport, cruise ships, harbor etc. Information should be visible to every one coming unto the island stressing the importance of St. Maarten's environment.
- **Inform visitors** of the fragility of SXM ecosystems. This can be done through local and international lobbying. Get the word out with destination marketing ads, in the lobbies of hotels, restaurants and other tourism/ hospitality related businesses.

Sensitize Businesses

Description

Businesses need to become more aware of their corporate social responsibilities to protect this commercial resource for sustainable development of the island. Businesses play a large role and are able to achieve large results in waste management, energy reduction and clean up programs.

Benefits

Businesses set an example for the local population. If businesses on the island start becoming more environmentally friendly, their customers/clients will be as well and soon enough the entire population of St. Maarten will be following in each other's footsteps.

Potential Challenges

In order for businesses to become more socially responsible they would first need to know what their responsibilities are and secondly they would need the proper resources to do so. They need to be aware of all the possibilities that exist when it comes to dealing with waste. This is not only a requirement for businesses but for the local population as well. Once St. Maarten's population has a clear idea of what to do with their trash and what will happen after they have gotten rid of their trash then we'll start to see improvements in waste management.

ACTION

- **Inform businesses about the environment on St. Maarten.**
Provide businesses (start with Front Street) with printed materials about the environment of St. Maarten. Materials should be easily accessible and can be placed above the cash register. The printed materials can contain relevant info on the island's ecology, but also what that specific business is doing to protect it. This shows that the business cares about the environment and should be proud of their contribution to the environment.
- **Organize discussions and workshops with local business associations** to discuss the importance of nature on St. Maarten and how it correlates to visitor satisfaction and ultimately to sales. Encourage participation from the associations through education.
- **Carry out awareness campaigns** to publicize examples of businesses causing harm to the environment. This will prevent other businesses from causing the same hard to prevent negative publicity.

Sensitize Government

Description

Government should play an active role in rewarding businesses that embrace their corporate social responsibilities as well as do their part to ensure that our natural resources are managed well and protected where necessary for future generations.

Benefits

Businesses would then play a more active role in doing their part of maintaining the environment, which will lead to a domino effect of others following. Once the environment enhances, other aspects of the quality of life on St. Maarten will improve as well.

Potential Challenges

Government might not see it necessary to allocate their funds towards the environment. Under the pretences that the profitable businesses on the island should want to enhance the environment regardless of any reward system, the political leaders might not want to contribute to that.

Suggestions:

- **Hold discussions on how to work together towards** the conservation and preservation of nature. Refer to the TOURISM MASTER PLAN for these actions.
- **Urge government to implement much-needed legislation.** Refer to the TOURISM MASTER PLAN for these actions.
- **Urge government to look into funding opportunities** and make this a PRIORITY. Refer to the TOURISM MASTER PLAN for these actions.
- **Implement “Noise Ordinance”** to reduce noise pollution created by businesses, such as night clubs and bars, and the impact it has on residents.
- **Implement “Signage Ordinance”** to reduce impact of uncontrolled placement of road signs.

Environmental Standards

Description

Environmental Certification Programs such as Green Globe, Blue Flag and ISO 14001 would assist businesses in developing standards and creating positive publicity for the island.

Benefits

Businesses and the local population alike will get their act together, once these standards are in place, as they would want to hurt St. Maarten's economy by being recognized as an environmentally unfriendly island.

Potential challenges

As these standards are strictly market-driven, it's all up to political will to want to participate in being rated by these standards.

ACTION

- **Inform government officials of the importance of environmental standards** and the positive impact it will have on the tourism industry.
- **Inform the local population** on the importance of being environmentally friendly
- **Compare St. Maarten with other Caribbean islands participating in the ISO 14001, such as Trinidad & Tobago, Cuba, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, Barbados, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic** and try to implement a similar strategy

Research

Description

Proper research and monitoring can assist nature organizations in providing government with proper and up-to-date information on valuable resources. Monitoring and data collection can show historic value to certain ecologically important areas. Policy-makers can then make decisions of control and enforcement.

Benefits

Preservation of St. Maarten's history will lead to more historical landmarks and limits the extent to which developers build their properties. It also reassures the population that the Government is trying to preserve St. Maarten in a sustainable manner and not trying to overdevelop the island.

Potential Challenges

Insufficient public and private sector support
Insufficient funding
Insufficient public awareness
Insufficient human resources

ACTION

- **Continuation of coral monitoring**, such as Reef Check as executed by Ocean Care.
- **Continuation of Bio Rock coral transplantation**, also executed by Ocean Care.
- **Continuation of coral monitoring and bleaching**, as executed by the Nature Foundation.
Garbage Bag project – A project, which would reduce the use of plastic garbage bags, should be implemented.
- **Management Plan for Emilio Wilson Estate** should be executed by the Emilio Wilson Estate Foundation.
- **Ecological valuation of the Emilio Wilson Estate**, which should be executed by the Emilio Wilson Estate Foundation.
- **Sea Turtle research and education** to be executed by the Nature Foundation.
- **Data collection of birds** to be executed by the EPIC foundation with the assistance of Nature Foundation.
- **Data collection of fresh and salt water ponds on SXM** should be executed by the Nature Foundation.
- **Various/other ongoing projects** should be executed locally, regionally, and internationally.

Waste Reduction

Description

Recycling, waste reduction and sewage treatment programs will help in reducing the amount of waste the island produces. Simple programs such as reusable shopping crates instead of plastic bags go a long way in reducing the amount of garbage in the landfill. By using services offered by ECODEC, a recycling plant in Guadeloupe, we can start sorting and recycling garbage and biologically stabilizing non-recyclable waste.

Benefits

The waste on the landfill would be at 5% of what it is currently on a yearly basis. The local population of St. Maarten will become more educated in recycling. We would have a feasible solution to our waste problem at a reasonable cost, which will improve the environment on pond island and on St. Maarten on a whole.

Potential Challenges

Political will to draft the necessary framework and draw up the necessary contracts. Community will to assist with sorting, by refusing to recycle at home.

ACTION

- **Urge Government to implement necessary framework** to start this process. Without the legal framework this will just be another idea.
- **Educate the people** on the new waste management solution and encourage them to start recycling at home
- **Ban plastic bags from all merchants** as they are non-recyclable
- **Discuss with French Side on joint waste management.** This will not only reduce cost but will increase relationship between the Dutch and French side.
- **Remove residents from the dump.** The dump should be exclusively accessible to the waste management organization.

Reduction to Carbon Dioxide

Description

One of the ways to prevent Global Warming, the observed increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and oceans, is to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide produced. Evidence of Global warming is increasingly becoming undeniable, as the number of 4 to 5 category hurricanes have doubled in the last 30 years, the flow of ice from the glaciers in Greenland has increased immensely over the past decade etc. We should all do our parts to reduce the impact of Global warming on the economy and our lives.

Benefits

By making simple adjustments such as, unplugging any unused electrical equipment, using clotheslines instead of driers etc, reduces the amount of Carbon dioxide produced. We can then ensure a future for our successors, as the impact of Global warming will be less, leading to less powerful hurricanes being formed, less deaths from malaria and other global warming related illnesses, less heat waves, prevent extinction of certain species and a healthy Environment.

Potential Challenges

The adjustment to environmentally friendly products might be a bit difficult as these are slightly more expensive or involve a lot more effort than regular products.

ACTION

- **Replace a regular incandescent light bulb with a Compact Fluorescent Light bulb (cfl).** CFLs use 60% less energy than a regular bulb. This simple switch will save about 300 pounds of carbon dioxide a year.
- **Clean or replace filters on your air conditioner.** Cleaning a dirty air filter can save 350 pounds of carbon dioxide a year.
- **Choose energy efficient appliances when making new purchases.** Look for the "Energy Star" label on new appliances to choose the most efficient models.
- **Use less hot water** It takes a lot of energy to heat water. You can use less hot water by installing a low flow showerhead (350 pounds of carbon dioxide saved per year) and washing your clothes in cold or warm water (500 pounds saved per year).
- **Unplug electronics from the wall when you're not using them.** Even when turned off, things like hairdryers, cell phone chargers and televisions use energy. In fact, this kind of energy spews 18 million tons of carbon into the atmosphere every year!
- **Plant a tree** A single tree will absorb one ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime.
- **Buy fresh foods instead of frozen.** Frozen food uses 10 times more energy to produce.
- **Check your tires weekly to make sure they're properly inflated.** Proper inflation can improve gas mileage by more than 3%. Since every gallon of gasoline saved keeps 20 pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, every increase in fuel efficiency makes a difference!
- **Buy organic foods as much as possible.** Organic soils capture and store carbon dioxide at much higher levels than soils from conventional farms.
- **Recycle at home.** You can save up to 2400 pounds of carbon dioxide a year by recycling half of the waste your household generates.

For more ways on how you can reduce Carbon dioxide, please go to www.climatecrisis.net

