

Scientific Assessment of Curaçao's near shore waters to begin next week

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WASHINGTON, DC. (*Waitt Institute*) – In joint partnership with the Government of Curaçao and Carmabi, the Waitt Institute will lead an expedition to investigate the status of marine resources in Curaçao's coastal habitats. This scientific assessment is a critical step in the work of Blue Halo Curaçao, which was launched in February when a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of Curaçao and the Waitt Institute.

The goal of Blue Halo Curaçao is to envision, create, and implement comprehensive sustainable ocean policies. Work toward achieving this goal is based on a foundation of science and input from the community. No new ocean policies have yet been drafted – there is a blank slate – so this data that will be collected on Curaçao's corals, fish, and other species will be useful to the Government for considering what new ocean management measures might be appropriate and effective.

"We look forward to this assessment and its results, which for sure will produce some historical data, in particular in regards to the practically unexplored windward side of the island. The results will undoubtedly contribute to the formulation of the ocean policy plan and act as a baseline for sound ocean management," wrote Ms. Geraldine Christina, Secretary General of the Ministry of Health, Environment, and Nature, in a letter endorsing the research.

The assessment will use the Waitt research vessel, and will incorporate the use of its two tenders as well as one local vessel to conduct SCUBA-based research. Research will be conducted by 12 visiting expert Caribbean marine biologists, in collaboration with scientists from Carmabi, and several local divers.

The research team will visit approximately 150 sites in the waters around Curaçao. At each site, data will be collected on corals, algae, fish, invertebrates, and water quality. All data collected during the Scientific Assessment will be provided to the Government of Curaçao. The data collected will be analyzed and compiled into a scientific report that will be released in early 2016.

Some of the participating scientists will also visit local schools to talk about marine biology in general and what's happening during the scientific assessment in particular.

Additional information and resources:

Waitt Institute: <http://www.WaittInstitute.org>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WaittInstitute>

Instagram: instagram.com/waittinstitute/

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/waittinstitute>

YouTube: <http://youtube.com/waittinstitute>

Tumblr: <http://waittinstitute.tumblr.com/>

For more information or to set up interviews, contact:

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Waitt Institute: The [Waitt Institute](#) endeavors to ensure ecologically, economically, and culturally sustainable use of ocean resources. The Institute partners with governments committed to developing and implementing comprehensive, science-based, community-driven solutions for sustainable ocean management. Our goal is to benefit coastal communities while restoring fish populations and habitats. Our approach is to engage stakeholders, provide the tools needed to design locally appropriate policies, facilitate the policymaking process, and build capacity for effective implementation and long-term success.

Blue Halo Initiative: A “Blue Halo” describes the waters encircling an island where ocean resources are used sustainably, profitably, and enjoyably. The Institute partners with governments, communities, and scientists to create and implement policies, including sustainable fishing and comprehensive ocean zoning. The Institute provides the toolkit, and partner governments provide the political will. The Blue Halo Initiative deeply engages stakeholders through a science-based, community-driven approach.