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Press release from Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire
Bonaire, Caribbean Netherlands (May 13th April 2022)

GET TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF CORAL RESTORATION WITH REEF RENEWAL BONAIRE

On May 11th, Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire (RRFB) celebrated their 10-year anniversary. The event welcomed many of the people that contributed to the success of this ambitious project, which grew from a dream to an incredible example of coral restoration work and an inspiration worldwide. The celebration opened with the speech from the OLB Commissioner, Hennyson Thielman, who pointed out the importance, for the island future development and economy, of directing structural funding on projects like this that aim to protect and preserve nature in Bonaire.

Via a video call, Ken Nedimyer, who is globally recognized as a father of coral restoration, as well as the Upper Keys–based director of Reef Renewal Foundation International, spoke about this project's humble beginnings on Bonaire and his contribution to help make it happen. He reminded everybody about the importance of reef protection and restoration, stressing the importance of the work done by RRFB in extending the restoration efforts to different coral species and focus on genetic diversity, as well as the need to develop better and more effective field techniques.

The President of RRFB, David J. Fishman, spoke the audience about the initial push for this project, and the startup assistance provided by Buddy Dive Resort. He also recognized how this project grew tremendously in 10 years and became more successful thanks to the later involvement of nine local dive shops: Buddy Dive, Great Adventures Bonaire, Wannadive, Tropical Divers, Beyond the Corals, Dive Dive, VIP Divers, Toucan Diving, and TDS. *"We are informed and driven by Science,"* Fishman said, *"but our work is made sustainable by a powerful engine fueled by the cooperation of local businesses, other NGOs, and particularly, the local dive community. This level of public-private interaction is now a model for the greater Caribbean and, in fact, the whole world."*

The RRFB Chief Operating Officer, Francesca Viridis, took a moment to retrace the past 10 years of the project, in a heart-warming speech that acknowledged all parties and volunteers, saying, *"It is a matter of great pride to see how far RRFB has come and grown over time. Both underwater, and as a community, we have achieved more than what we had ever thought possible, and that is thanks to you and everyone's hard work."*

STINAPA was represented by Biologist, Roxanne Francisca, who read the speech on behalf of Judith Raming. *"STINAPA is a big supporter of the work being done by Reef Renewal-she said. We value our working relationship tremendously and look forward to working together in the years to come."*

The Director of the TCB, Miles Mercera, closed the series of speeches with an important and clear remark, that Bonaire's reef is one of the main sources of income to our Island, as an attraction to our visitors, and an important reason to not only protect what we have but to support projects like this. It is clear to TCB that we need to protect and respect nature and this restoration project is an example to follow and support in every possible way.

All attendees, including the hard-working group of "*Coral Lovers*"(who are the manpower that spends endless hours making this restoration dream happen) were inspired by the positiveness of the event. The night was full of cheerful people enjoying each other as well as a slide show highlighting the journey of RRFB through the years and leaving everyone to look forwards to the new chapters to come and an even better future for the corals. Cheers to RRFB and all the people that helped make this project successful.

Pictures (Higher res can be sent on request)



Dive shop members VIP Diving and Beyond the Corals



Staff and volunteers



Staff and volunteers



with Elisabetta Maccari

Photographer/Videographer Henrick Wuyts and Lorenzo Mittiga



Vries (RCN) with the RRFB team

Hennyson Thielman (OLB Commissioner) and Yoeri de



Ken Nedimyer, Advisory Board RRFB



David J. Fishman, President of RRFB Board



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Francesca Virdis, COO RRFB



Roxanne-Liana Francisca, Biologist STINAPA



Miles Mercera, CEO Tourism Corporation Bonaire





RRFB Team



David J. Fishman (President RRFB Board) and Pierre

Perigault Monte (President STINAPA Board)