



**AUBERGE RESORTS AND PARTNERS CREATE THE ST. KITTS FOUNDATION
TO FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
IN ST. KITTS**

**Foundation undertakes first event: “Southeast Peninsula Marine Ecosystem Survey
Week” April 24 – 29, 2007**

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS, WEST INDIES. (April 19, 2007) Auberge Resorts and partners join The Ocean Foundation to announce the creation of the St. Kitts Foundation Fund, to be dedicated to preserving the natural coastal environment of St. Kitts and supporting social and economic programs of benefit to the community. The partnership is currently master-planning 2,400 acres on the island’s southeast peninsula as a sustainably developed luxury resort community.

The St. Kitts Foundation, a fund of The Ocean Foundation, is hosting the “**Southeast Peninsula Marine Ecosystem Survey Week**” on the island of St. Kitts to get a real-time snapshot of the fish and corals these waters harbor and their current health status. These data will be used in support of the Federation’s current efforts to create a Marine Management Area network.

Two expert US-based organizations, REEF and Reef Relief, will lead local divers in on-land trainings and in-water surveys. A third US-based organization, Earth Echo International and its Executive Director Philippe Cousteau, will be documenting the coral-damaging sediment from soil erosion and nutrient runoff caused by over-grazing and over-abundance of feral animals such as goats for *Living on Earth*, a weekly environmental news and information program distributed by Public Radio International.

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With support from Auberge Resorts and partners, the Washington D.C.-based Ocean Foundation has outlined a schedule of immediate priorities for the St. Kitts Foundation throughout the next 12 months. Eventually, the independent foundation will be funded in perpetuity through a percentage of residential real estate sales and hotel operations throughout the development. The St. Kitts Foundation's initial environmental priorities will include:

- Conservation of the peninsula's surrounding coral reefs threatened by climate change and human interaction;
- Reduction of coral-damaging sediment and decades of land erosion caused by invasive species; and
- The creation of marine parks and protected areas around the island of St. Kitts.

The St. Kitts Foundation is hosting the **Southeast Peninsula Marine Ecosystem Survey Week** with support from the St. Kitts Tourism Authority, local dive businesses, Auberge Resorts and partners, and The Ocean Foundation. Participants in the week-long workshop include the Department of Physical Planning, the Ministry of Health, the St. Kitts and Nevis Coast Guard, the Department of Fisheries, UNESCO Small Island Voice, the St. Christopher Heritage Society, the St. Kitts Sea Turtle Monitoring Network, Dive Training magazine, local residents and students.

Activities planned and tentative schedule:

- Training symposium on fish identification and coral reef disease
- SCUBA diving surveys from boats (fish counts, reef assessments, seagrass bed sampling, water testing, mooring placement assessment, underwater video and photography)
- Educational presentations in local primary schools on protecting coral reefs

The St. Kitts Foundation's activities will be supervised by an independent advisory committee of members selected by The Ocean Foundation and will determine charitable initiatives and award grants for conservation and community-based programs. Mark J. Spalding, J.D., President of The Ocean Foundation, will serve as Executive Director of the St. Kitts Foundation, and Kaya Freeman, an expert on international marine policy, has been appointed Program Officer for the St. Kitts Foundation.

According to Mr. Spalding, "our resort partnerships create a lasting community benefit financing mechanism that generates funds to provide local support for all three pillars of sustainable development: social, ecological and economic."

St. Kitts' southeast peninsula features seven miles of coastline on both the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. The site is marked by three private coves, sandy beaches, and dramatic peaks, where it is possible to view the sun both rise over the Atlantic and set the Caribbean Sea. When completed, the Peninsula at St. Kitts project will feature several luxury resorts, a championship 18-hole golf course, spas, restaurants, shops, private villas and home sites and a deep-water marina. The developer's vision is an integrated stewardship process of conservation, protection, enhancement, and regeneration that balances the social, economic, and environmental needs of the peninsula. Construction on the project will begin in late 2007.

About The Ocean Foundation

The Ocean Foundation, a non-profit corporation, is a boutique community foundation with a specialized practice. Its niche is providing high-end philanthropic advice for the community of donors who care about the coast and oceans. For more information about The Ocean Foundation, please visit www.oceanfdn.org. For more information on its St. Kitts Foundation Fund, visit www.stkittsfdn.org.

Organizations Participating in the Survey Week

- Earth Echo International – www.earthecho.org
- REEF – www.reef.org
- Reef Relief – www.reefrelief.org
- Living on Earth – www.loe.org
- Dive St. Kitts – www.divestkitts.com
- Kenneth Dive Center – www.kennethsdivecenter.com
- Pro Divers, Inc. – www.prodiversstkitts.com
- Scuba Safaris – www.scubanevis.com
- Under the Sea, Nevis – www.undertheseanevis.com

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