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| Front Page         | Environmentalist: Bimini Bay project a "catastrophe"  |
| National News      | By ROGAN M. SMITH, Guardian Senior Reporter,  |
| Editorial          | rogan@nasguard.com  |
| Sports Desk        |   |
| Island Lifestyles  | An international environmentalist has slammed the Bimini Bay development, calling it a "catastrophe" that has left a "devastating scar" on the land where the project's first phase is being built.   |
| Business Report    |   |
| Religious News     |   |
| Online Classifieds | French explorer, environmentalist and film maker Jean-Michel Cousteau, in an internationally published article, said nothing about the Bimini Bay project suggests environmental sustainability as the developers claim, or that they're even respectful of the surroundings. |
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| Contact US         | Cousteau said if Bimini is to be saved, phase II must be stopped.   |
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## THE FREEPORT NEWS

According to him, garbage is incinerated on the grounds, and human and non-biological waste leaches into the bay and the ocean.

"It is simply a catastrophe," he said. "Dredging the channel and building artificial islands has created a major siltation problem that is disrupting currents and water clarity."

"This also kills off sea grasses and organisms in the bay, seriously impacting species. It makes no sense to destroy the mangrove forests that give life to Bimini and the surrounding Bahamian flats, in favor of dredging to create new land for even more high impact development."

Cousteau said Bimini is now in a battle to survive.

He said the mangrove forests that give life to the land and sea are under assault from heavy, earth-moving equipment and construction.

The environmentalist added that a proposed marine protected area (MPA) would encompass what's considered the most vital mangrove forest in The Bahamas.

"Unless something is done soon to develop a more sustainable plan that safeguards this habitat, it will soon be bulldozed forever. The Capo Group's plan is to expand Bimini Bay in favor of more condos and a golf course in phase II," he said.

"This is by no means a unique case in the world, but in this era of widespread public interest in environmental protection, it would be criminal to let unsustainable development proceed. Bimini is at a crucial crossroads today. The decision to protect this unique paradise must be made now."

Cousteau said creating a marine-protected area would be a victory for all.

"Allowing Bimini Bay to continue with phase II would certainly strip this inland paradise of its precious natural riches. Over time, visitors and residents alike will suffer the decline of economic, social and environmental prosperity," he said.

"Nature has the remarkable ability to heal wounds that we inflict on land and sea. In the case of Bimini's mangrove forests, it's not too late to halt development, establish the MPA and let nature take its course.

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Cousteau said in time, and with human intervention, the shoreline can be restored, re-establishing the hardy trees that do so much to sustain the native species, including marine life that makes this island special.

"In doing so, people will be rewarded with a healthy ecosystem that, in turn, protects life for future generations. The once pristine haven for life is heavily scarred. Large areas of the fragile intertidal and terrestrial ecosystem have been scraped clear of vegetation for phase two of the Bimini Bay Resort development - a joint project of the Hilton Hotel Company and the Capo Group of South Florida," he said.

"In these dark times of environmental degradation from decades of pressure and abuse, such places on our small planet are becoming scarce."

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