

*"Protect the  
Ocean and You  
Protect Yourself."*



July 1, 2006

The Rt. Hon. Perry Gladstone Christie  
The Office of the Prime Minister  
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Dear Honorable Perry Gladstone Christie,

I have had the good fortune of traveling extensively and witnessing firsthand many coral reefs around the world. I have seen the vital connections between the health of coral reefs and the quality of people's lives. Coral reefs themselves are interconnected on wide geographic scales with other marine ecosystems through fish and bird migrations, the dispersal and recruitment of fish and shellfish larvae, and through people as they travel to exploit or enjoy the reef's resources. I have also observed how coastal development, deforestation, agricultural runoff, pollution, overfishing, and destructive fishing practices affect the vitality of coral reefs. And without the protection of the neighboring coral reefs, coastal communities become more vulnerable during hurricanes and will also suffer.

I have received expressions of concern from some members of Ocean Futures Society that the Bakers Bay Golf and Ocean Club development on Great Guana Cay may undermine the environmental health of the region; specifically affecting the nesting sea turtles of Gumelemi Cay and to the north, and impacting the neighboring reefs adjacent to the proposed golf course. Knowing from experience that ecological consequences of very large developments that do not have strict environmental safe guards can have far reaching consequences, I urge you to review the environmental impact of this development and consider the consequences for future generations of your citizens.

Coral reefs are in decline world-wide and are especially stressed in the Caribbean. In almost 50 years of exploring and filming in the Caribbean, I have seen firsthand the disturbing decline in coral reef health, abundance and diversity of fish and other species. With scientific studies documenting the decline in coral coverage and the alarming increase of coral diseases, many of which are related to human development, I encourage you to carefully evaluate the environmental consequences of developing the 250-slip marina, 18-hole golf course, 70 additional residential units and associated support structures, staff housing and utility sheds.

The coral reefs are not the only ecosystem that could be threatened by this development. The removal of 70 acres of coastal mangroves and estuaries, which provide an important nursery to many reef residents, will impact the residents of the neighboring reefs. Just last August I had the pleasure of working with two Goliath Grouper scientists in the Florida Keys for an upcoming TV special and witnessed first hand the value of these mangrove habitats. These endangered fish spend their first 4-6 years in the protective roots of the coastal mangroves before venturing

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off into deeper waters. The state of Florida has protected this species for twelve years but without the protection of their juvenile habitat of the mangroves there's little hope for full recovery. This is just one example why one needs to take into consideration all components of the ecosystem before any one is taken apart, removed or damaged.

We are not an anti-development organization but we do believe that a sustainable future depends on a partnership where ecology and economics mutually reinforce each other. This partnership cannot be success without the local communities input. This project has to be in their interest too to be success in all elements of sustainable development. I call your attention to our modest resort in Fiji, the Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort (<http://www.fijiresort.com>), that last year received Conde Nast's award for the best eco resort in the world. Should your team want our thoughts on responsible development and tourism we would be happy to respond.

Please consider the impacts of this project and that whatever is done or not done will be in the interest of future generations and the environment that will support them.

Sincerely,

Jean-Michel Cousteau  
President