

The Nature Foundation is a non-governmental/non-profit organization working to promote conservation and preservation of the island's environment. Established in January 1997 the Foundation's objectives include enhancing the environment through proper management, education, public awareness, law enforcement, and scientific research and monitoring.

Currently the Marine Park is focused on numerous projects, one of which is maintaining the Mooring Program. Boat moorings reduce the damage caused by anchoring, which accounts for a substantial amount of coral reef destruction. More than 20 moorings, to be used by local boats and dive operators, have been installed by the Nature Foundation in the Marine Park that provide protection to our most important dive areas.

With the funding assistance of the Dutch Recovery Fund and the Tourist Office of St. Maarten, The Nature Foundation of St Maarten has been able to start its first Artificial Reef Program of its kind. With the cooperation of Reef Ball Foundation, over 150 Reef Balls of all sizes will be deployed, around the coastal waters of St. Maarten.

Reef Balls are artificial reef modules designed to provide the same function as a natural reef. The form and function are designed to be as close to nature as possible. They are made from concrete poured into a fiberglass mold containing a central Polyform buoy and various inflatable side balls that provide holes and cavities. Reef Balls vary in size, weighing from 11 kg, the smallest size, to 1800 kg the largest size. With a variable size, shape and number of holes, Reef balls imitate nature to a great extent.

The Reef Ball Foundation is an international environmental non-profit group. Their mission is to help restore our world's ocean ecosystems and to emphasize and protect our natural reef systems through preservation, technology, and innovative public education opportunities, and community involvement. The Reef Ball Foundation coordinates over 200 projects worldwide, including Curacao, and now St. Maarten. Besides several projects in the Caribbean, the Reef ball Foundation have built over 200,000 Reef Balls and deployed them in over 1500 projects worldwide.

Coral reefs, mangrove forests and sea grass beds, are typical Caribbean ecosystems that are all found on St. Maarten. Within these habitats you will be able to find an assortment of fauna, such as tropical fish, Queen Conch, iguanas, sea turtles, several species of marine birds and other protected species.

Molly B'day, Pelican Rock, Hen and Chicks, and Cow and Calf as well as the Proselyte are some of the last pristine marine locations on the island, where excellent diving and breeding grounds for birds, fish and other marine life can be encountered.

The Nature Foundation of St. Maarten, in an ongoing effort to increase public awareness and education through sustainable management welcomes the Reef Ball Project with open arms, as it will increase the tourism value of the island, by increasing dive destinations. Additionally, it will also enhance the diving possibilities, and will add to our eco-tourism value.