

**Dutch Caribbean Program  
Environmental and Social Management/Risk Mitigation Plan**

**July 2024**

**Contents**

**Acknowledgement**

**Section 1 – Background and Context**

**Section 2 – Standard triggered 1**

**Risk scenarios**

**Targeted mitigation measures**

**Section 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Annexes**

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## Section 1 – Background and Context

WWF's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF), provides an institutional mechanism to manage the environmental and social risks of WWF's work, helps deliver better conservation outcomes, and enhances the social well-being of local communities in the places where WWF operates. The safeguards framework is designed to address a broad range of environmental and social risks, mindful of the different challenges and needs in different parts of the world. It systematizes good governance practices to achieve human rights, transparency, nondiscrimination, public participation, and accountability, among other goals.

WWF has conducted the ESSF risk screening process for the Dutch Caribbean Landscape, managed by WWF-NL. There is one issue area corresponding to the substantive ESSF standards were identified through this process and are addressed in this plan with the aim of mitigating potential risks, namely: restrictions to access to resources, and inclusive, community driven conservation. In addition, the program needs to remain aware of the need to implement inclusive, community driven conservation allowing the program to be guided by knowledge provided in the community. This plan serves to guide WWF NL in its program design and will be applied to project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation for all activities supported by WWF across the landscape. In addition to restriction of resources, the program needs to be mindful of inclusive conservation in the broad term, including the challenges regarding which or who's knowledge is considered and valued in the field.

The Dutch Caribbean is part of the WWF-NL Caribbean seascape with three islands off the coast of Venezuela in the Southern Caribbean and three islands in the Northern Caribbean with a total marine area of 200.000 km<sup>2</sup> and the islands themselves covering 980 km<sup>2</sup> of land area. Due to the Southern islands' location outside of the hurricane belt, the reefs in the Dutch Caribbean are among the top 3 most healthy reefs in the wider Caribbean region, making them important strongholds of marine biodiversity. The windward islands of St Eustatius, St Maarten and Saba are home to coral reefs as well, but also the Saba Bank, a 268.000 ha submerged atoll which houses unique marine nature, including pristine deep-sea reefs and relatively healthy fish stocks.

All inhabitants on the Dutch Caribbean islands are Dutch Citizens and fall under the same kingdom statute. There is a separate legislature in place for the islands because of the autonomous status of Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten within the Dutch Kingdom, and for the special Dutch municipalities Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba because of their small scale, relative autonomy, and geographical distance to the European part of the Netherlands. There is a strong sense of hereditary uniqueness among the inhabitants of individual islands, but they do not consider themselves indigenous communities as such. There is a large population of originally South American peoples. Especially during the current unrest in Venezuela, the Southern islands have a large influx of (illegal) Venezuelans that put pressure on the social security, job availability, social structures and increased drug trade on these small islands.

WWF-NL has been working in the Dutch Caribbean since the 1960s, supporting the set-up of park authorities, biodiversity trust fund, as well as acquiring long-term funding for nature conservation, restoration and education. While WWF-NL's support in the past consisted mainly of funding local organizations, in recent years, WWF-NL has been actively implementing and advocating for nature protection both locally and nationally. A local branch office, which is fully part of WWF-NL, has been set up and the majority of staff and consultants are located on the islands. This office is not a separate legal entity like a PO or NO. The WWF-NL Dutch Caribbean program focuses on the protection and preservation of the coral reefs in the context of the broader marine seascape and its flagship species. As the impact of climate change increases in the form of ocean acidification, increased storms, drought, sea level rise, rising sea temperatures and more, our goal is to link the global drive towards reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to building resilient coastal ecosystems that can withstand these global pressures and contribute to protecting the islands.

As fishers are one of the more groups affected by the work of our program, a brief description is provided below.

There are four types of fishers on the islands:

- Professional full-time fishers with relatively large vessels. Target species are pelagic, with bottom fishing to complement income.
- Recreational fishers, small vessels, shore fishing. Mostly reef based.
- Part time fishers with small vessels. Mostly reef based.
- Charter fishers aimed at tourism. Largely pelagic based.

In addition, Curacao is formally part of ICATT. Under the flag of Curacao there are several Spanish fishing fleets targeting the catch of Tuna in the waters off the coast of West Africa. This implies a reporting obligation of Curacao towards ICATT. On Saba and Statia and Sint Maarten there are also targeted red hind and lobster fisheries by means of fish traps. This fishery is regulated through a permitting system. A permit system is in place for the BES islands for large fishing vessels (>12m) outside of the Territorial waters (>12 miles offshore). Rights to access of resources and traditional uses are not specifically captured in national legislation with some specific exceptions like traditional fishing being allowed sometimes where industrial fishing is not. In Sint Maarten fisheries recreational fishing is only allowed to the country's residents unless you are in possession of a valid fishing license or are making use of a legal fishing charter service with proper permitting. Both commercial and charter fishing require a yearly permit.

The main WWF NL activities in the seascape are:

- Advocacy:
  - For improved solid waste and wastewater management at national and island level
  - On the urgency of coral reef loss and the need for strict protection measures and nature-based solutions
  - Supporting the National government proposal to designate 30% no fishing zones on the islands
- Supporting coastal ecosystem restoration activities in partnership with the tourism sector and other local and national partners.
- Research on threats and solutions for reducing pressures on the coastal ecosystems and flagship species.
- Support to the local fishing sector to fish more sustainably (promote non-coral reef-based fisheries, identify and support implementation of alternative fishing techniques, setting up coops and pushing for inclusion in decision making of coops through co-management methods).

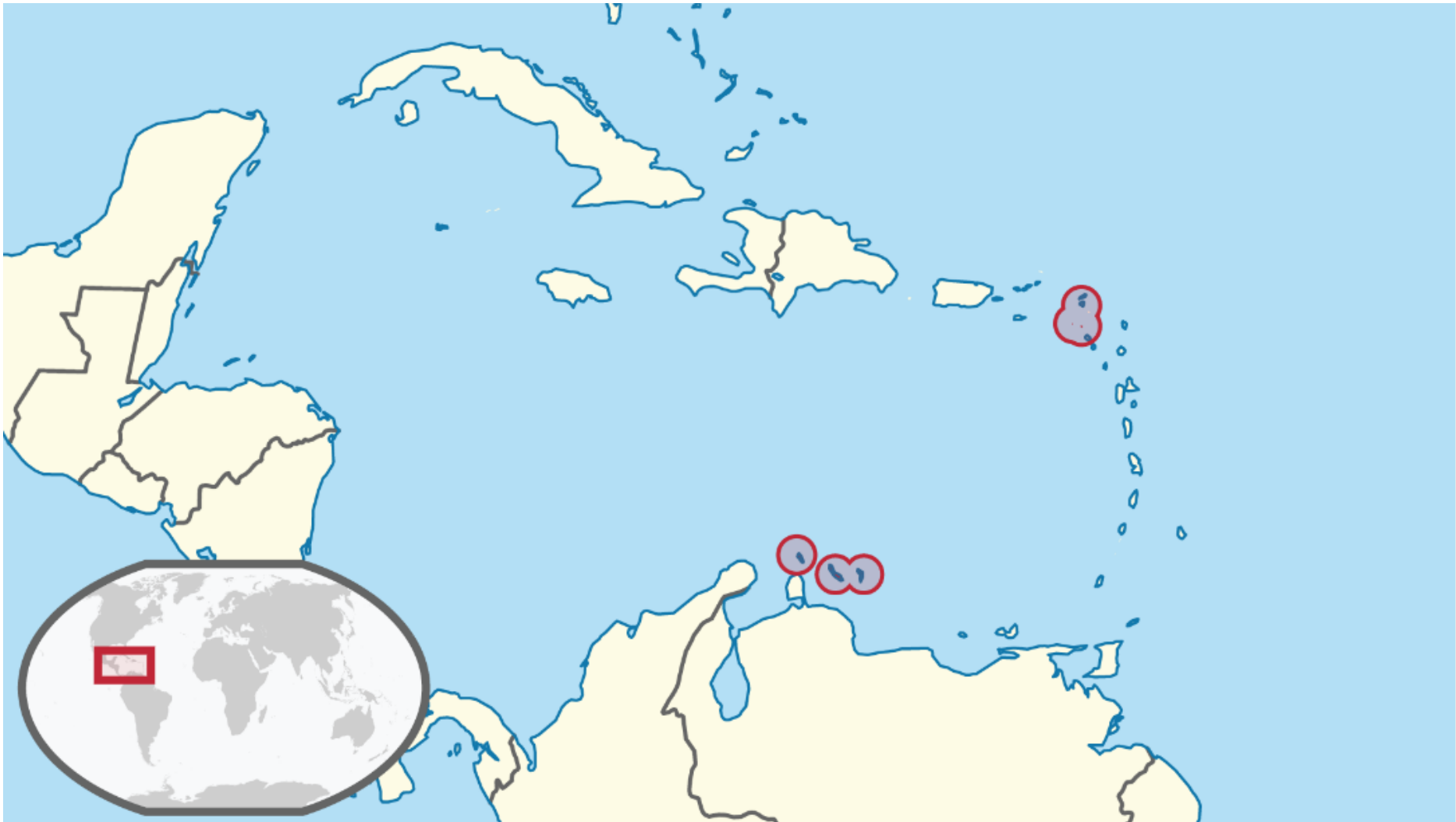


Figure 1. Position of the six Dutch Caribbean islands. Source: [www.dutchcaribbeanspecies.org](http://www.dutchcaribbeanspecies.org)

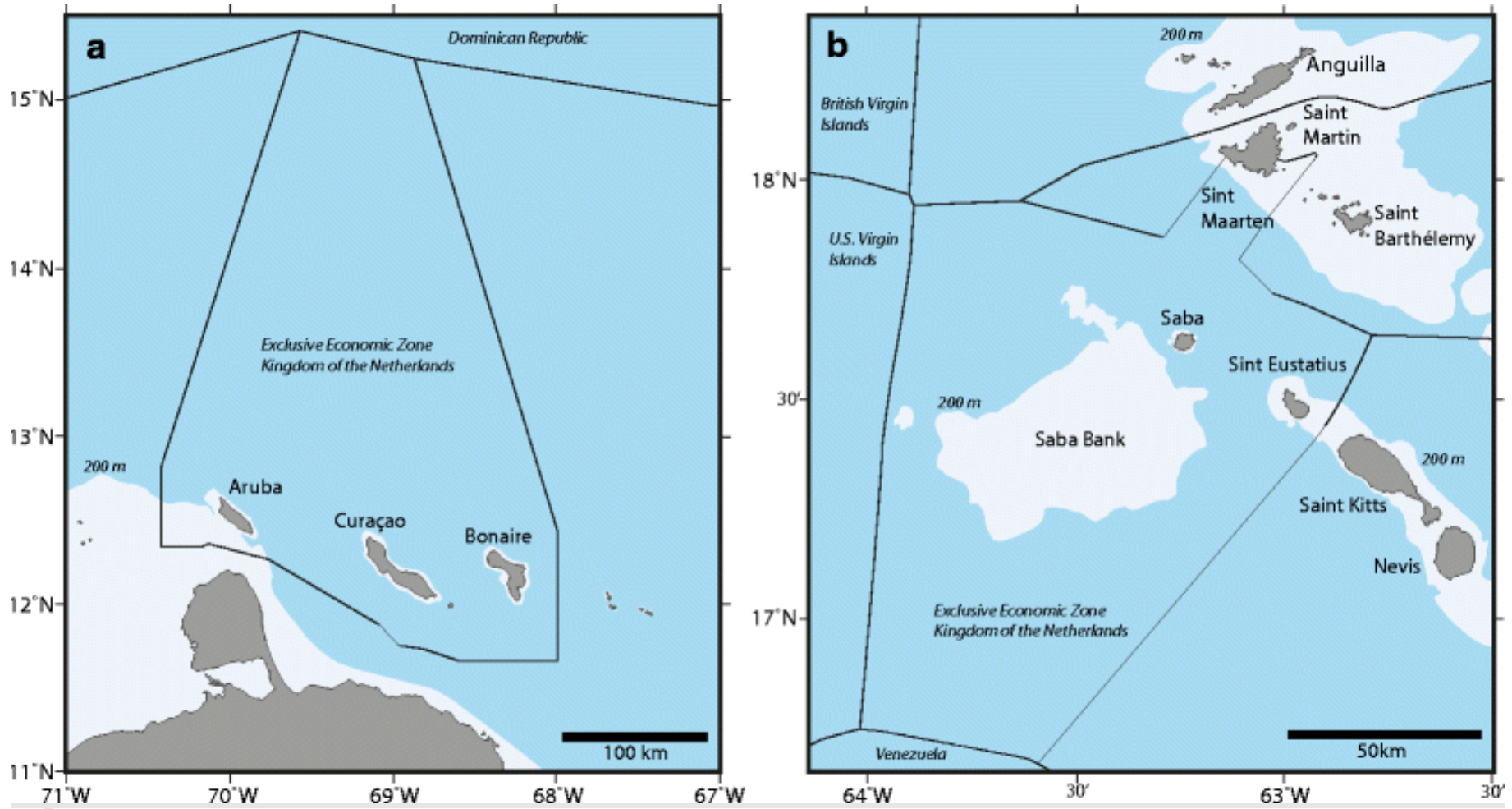


Figure 2: Geographic range of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Dutch Caribbean. Source: [www.dutchcaribbeanspecies.org](http://www.dutchcaribbeanspecies.org)

## Section 2 – Standard triggered 1

WWF supports the National government proposal to designate 30% no fishing zones on the islands, which may result in (temporary) reduced access to fisheries resources. Communities most likely to be impacted by new MPAs which may include no-fishing zones (needed to get to 30% no fisheries goal) or stricter restrictions in existing MPAs (like no fishing zones) would be fishers. Fishers with small vessels and shore-based fishers will be affected most severely. No-fishing zones might be temporary in nature, based on protection of reproductive areas during a specific time of year, or may be permanent, based on protection of a certain habitat or geographic location.

Playing both roles of independent technical advisor to the government and mediation/capacity building for the fishers, WWF is aware of and willing to discuss impacts on livelihoods with the (potentially) affected communities as and when the policy changes are discussed for approval. A strong message in WWF's advocacy is to include provisions for alternative livelihoods, compensation schemes, co-management principles, conflict resolution and more into newly developed legislation. WWF's program currently includes provisions and budget for collaborating with fishers to work on alternative or compensation projects. WWF has collaborated with fishers to develop a policy brief and roadmap towards sustainable fisheries that includes co-management principles and active stakeholder consultation on compensation for measures like access restriction. If provided with adequate support, full-time professional fishers and charters could make the switch to full pelagic fishing, reducing pressure on the reef, allowing a strictly limited number of recreational/part time fishers to continue utilizing the remaining 70% of reef, if considered ecologically possible based on scientific evidence.

The fishers and WWF are currently in agreement about the general approach towards restrictive measures being implemented. The bottleneck lies with the local and national governments, who are in the early stages of developing truly collaborative fisheries policy and sometimes remain a top-down regulatory body. However, this has recently started changing. Local government has initiated the development of a stakeholder-based island fisheries plan, funded by the national government, as was suggested by WWF and the fishers.

The current WWF activities are linked to access restrictions by virtue of the **support given to the government to designate 30% no fishing zones** on the islands, which may result in reduced access to fisheries resources. This means that access restrictions may arise in the future, **thus triggering the Standard**. WWF is working to embed avoidance/mitigation as a central pillar to its support to the government's creation of the MPAs **and** WWF is working with fishers to co-design on-the-ground mitigation measures, meaning having discussion with key stakeholders prior and during the creation of projects. Hence, WWF has pre-existing measures in place to address this risk even before it happens. In addition to the possible designation of no fishing zones, two specific projects that trigger the *discussion* risk of Access restriction are the **Conch Restoration Project** and the **Reef Fish Breeding Project**. While these projects do not impose access restriction as they are being conducted within the existing legislative frameworks, small closed areas temporarily are put in place for the collection of data. In the Conch Restoration Project, juvenile conch will be placed in the Lac Bay of Bonaire for which areas will potentially be closed off. For the Reef Fish Project, filter nets are temporarily placed in several points in the Bonaire Marine Park that do not allow interaction of boats/swimmers/fishers. In both projects the main approach is to ensure the fishing communities are included and involved in the project in all its phases. In addition, where possible and relevant the broader community is actively informed and included throughout the projects.

The main risks identified through the ESSF screening and mitigation planning process in relation to these activities are:

Standard 2. ACCESS RESTRICTIONS- Risk scenarios<sup>1</sup>

Potential Risks	Risk Scenarios	Potential Impacts	Affected groups
Non-Inclusive Governance Structures Limit Access to Participation and Decisionmaking	Zoning or other resource management decisions taken by marine management organisations and user groups could result in resource access restrictions on groups that lack the ability to participate.	Disempowerment and potential worsening of poverty conditions of affected groups.	Fishers, especially small boat fishers /non boat owning fishers, and marginalized community member that fish for personal consumption (subsistence fishers).
Lack of Access to Project Benefits including Livelihoods Benefits by Marginalized Groups	Poor information of diverse vulnerable groups (e.g. subsistence fishers), elite capture in local schemes, limited access to information and decision making.	Disempowerment and potential worsening of poverty conditions of affected groups.	Fishers, especially small boat fishers /non boat owning fishers, and marginalized community member that fish for personal consumption (subsistence fishers), local/marginalized residents.
Reduced Access to Natural Resources, especially for Marginalized Groups	Marginalized groups may face conditions of restricted access to natural resources of various types for traditional and livelihoods rights (reeffish, conch).	Lack of sufficient fish for consumption, or limited earnings/poverty may drive illegal activities. Income and nutrition of local, marginalized community is compromised.  Encounters with law enforcement personnel could result in potential abuse and harassment (both perpetrators and rangers/enforcers).  Declines in selfprovision of protein (fish), forces subsistence fishers to purchase from the market. May drive illegal fishing and with it encounters law enforcement personnel.	Fishers, especially small boat fishers /non boat owning fishers, and marginalized community member that fish for personal consumption (subsistence fishers), local/marginalized residents, enforcement community (esp. rangers).

<sup>1</sup> For each project/contract, a more detailed ESSF screening and mitigation measures will be formulated that specific to the scope of the project and island context. In addition, it will be closely evaluated which party hold responsibility for the required mitigation measure and reporting on the measure. The specific activities required, and responsible party will be included in the contract with the respective partner organisation(s).

### Targeted Mitigation Measures to Avert Potential Risks

Potential Risks	WWF's Response	Means of Verification	Frequency	Responsible party <sup>2</sup>	Additional partners
Non-Inclusive Governance Structures limit Access to Participation and Decisionmaking	<p>Although the establishment of no fishing zones is a government mandate, WWF-NL has been and will continue to advocate for inclusion of fishers in the decision-making process.</p> <p>WWF analyzed and identified the bottlenecks regarding the management of the fisheries sector, specifically the aspects in participation and supported decision making through social mapping study. Based in these finding WWF, promoted invested in and advocated for the creation of comangement.</p> <p>Through cooperating with the fishing community, WWF enabled and facilitated the establishment of fisheries cooperatives and capacity building programs to <u>increase participation of marginalized communities</u> and other vulnerable groups in fisheries and marine managed areas.</p> <p>Support the creation and work of the a nature platform where all nature organisations can provide input and jointy advocate and push for management decisions. Provide advocacy training to nature organisations &amp; marginalized communities such as fishers.</p>	<p>Social Mapping Report - by means of a suvery among the fishers dirtributed through fisheries cooperatives. Elke's Circles Project</p> <p>Number of meetings conducted with relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Number of meetings with the fishers, number of capacity trainings taken place.</p> <p>Number of meetings with nature platform/statements released?</p>	<p>Evaluation once every 2 years</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p>	<p>Landscape Coordinator with the support of other relevant staff.</p> <p>Program advisor with the support of other relevant staff.</p>	<p>Fisheries coops (PISKABON), Nature NGOs (Stinapa)</p> <p>National and local Governments</p>

<sup>2</sup> For each project/contract, it will be closely evaluated which party hold responsibility for the required mitigation measure and reporting on the measure. The specific activities required and responsible party will be included in the contract with the respective partner organisation(s).



	In case of negligence of governments not to include the fisher community, WWF communicates to the respective government officials our red line for support and clarified the possible consequences adhering to that (withdrawal, pressure from higher up, going public).	Survey to assess the perception of fishermen towards their involvement and inclusion in decisionmaking.	Bi-annual		
Lack of Access to Project Benefits including Livelihoods Benefits by Marginalized Groups	<p>Apply and evaluate social mapping report for the the diverse marginalized groups and their interaction with specific project resources (e.g. conch, reef fish restoration).</p> <p>Facilitate preparation of management and project plans with enhanced inclusion and benefit sharing related provisions.</p> <p>Promote participation of fishers and marginalized groups in the institutions (National government, Local government, nature NGOs).</p> <p>Bottom-up planning targeting the poor and marginalized, where activities can range from informing communities to empowering and co-designing with their active participation, depending on the scope of the project (i.e. co-management with Piskabon).</p> <p>Support and push for alternative livelihood programs or compensation packages to be linked up to any new designation of a no fishing area (e.g., wildlife credits in Conch Project). Additionally, compensation schemes are being explored and assessed and we will know more in the future if these are really useful or not.</p>	<p>Revised Social Mapping report / addendum?</p> <p>Number of fishers and individuals from marginalized groups included in, fisheries management, and conch and reefish restoration projects.</p>	<p>Each strategic period</p> <p>Annual</p>	<p>Landscape Coordinator with the support of other relevant staff.</p> <p>Program advisor with the support of other relevant staff.</p>	<p>Fisheries coops (PISKABON), Nature NGOs (Stinapa)</p> <p>National and local Governments</p>

<p>Reduced Access to Natural Resources, especially for Marginalized Groups</p>	<p>Identify the marginalized groups and their usage and dependence on resources that may be restricted. Facilitate preparation of operational plans with strong consideration of impacts on marginalized groups on the islands where we actively work on fisheries.</p> <p>Promote participation of vulnerable groups (fishers) in the local institutions (LNV, OLB, Stinapa).</p> <p>Bottom-up planning targeting the poor and marginalized, where activities can range from informing communities to empowering and co-designing with their active participation, depending on the scope of the project (i.e. co-management with Piskabon).</p> <p>As a condition for WWF support, human rights trainings or having a code of conduct in place is required.</p>	<p>Mapping report.</p> <p>Revised plans such as fisheries management plan.</p> <p>Number of meetings/projects that include fishers.</p> <p>Number of meetings conducted and meeting minutes.</p> <p>Code of conduct</p>	<p>June 2023 – used and adapted for projects.</p> <p>Periodically as per the operational plan provision.</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Annual – moment of contracting/project development</p>	<p>Landscape Coordinator with the support of other relevant staff.</p> <p>Program advisor with the support of other relevant staff.</p>	<p>Fisheries coops (PISKABON), Nature NGOs (Stinapa)</p> <p>National and local Governments</p>
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### Grievance Mechanism

WWF has a grievance mechanism in place with fisher coop PISKABON. This grievance procedure has been made available on the WWF Dutch Caribbean website that has been shared with all our partners.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the mitigation plan closely aligns with WWF-NLs existing program management structure, operating procedures, and process for monitoring the program activities. Major parts of monitoring measures are built into project activities and therefore do not require separate monitoring. Building on the existing monitoring plan and practices may substantially reduce the costs of monitoring the risk mitigation plan and increase its efficiency. However, in keeping with the needs identified to broaden stakeholder engagement and promote greater inclusion of groups of stakeholders not well represented in WWF's projects, WWF NL will design and implement a multi-stakeholder mechanism to enhance existing program-based monitoring and contribute to the effective implementation of mitigation measures. The WWF DC landscape will form a monitoring mechanism involving local actors, local governments, fisheries coops etc. An annual internal process review and reflection of WWF's activities in the Dutch Caribbean-program will be conducted and reported. In addition, after each strategic period, an in-depth evaluation and review with external parties will be organized to increase inclusivity and improve understanding of the views and perspectives of our stakeholders.

A Papiamentu and Dutch version of this mitigation plan will be published online ([www.wwfdutchcaribbean.org](http://www.wwfdutchcaribbean.org)) and shared with diverse stakeholders. WWF is committed to incorporating the measures included in the mitigation plan into the ongoing management of its existing program and into the design of new projects. The mitigation plan is a living document and will be updated as needed to reflect information gained from monitoring and evaluation activities, stakeholder consultations, and in response to changing conditions and dynamics occurring in the landscape.

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**Annex 1 – Stakeholders Consulted or to be consulted prior to the adoption of the Mitigation Plan (TBD)**

- Fishers / fisheries coop
- Partner organisations, including park management authorities