

January 2017

Newsletter of the Caribbean Netherlands Science Institute at St Eustatius (CNSI)

Continuation of CNSI until 2023

The minister of Education, Culture and Science of The Netherlands, Mrs Dr M Bussemaker, announced during her visit to CNSI on 28 November 2016 that her department decided to continue the financial support for the institute until 2023. The minister was briefed by staff and guests of CNSI about the institute's development since its opening in April 2014 and about a number of topical activities, such as coastal water nutrient monitoring, cooperation between CNSI and Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences on Small Island Management, and cooperation between CNSI, Naturalis Biodiversity Center and St Eustatius National Parks on outreach and education and nature awareness. The minister was especially interested in the efforts by CNSI to further reach out to the youth and the schools of St Eustatius and to foster inquiry-based learning and scientific curiosity. She considers a possible role for CNSI in education research leading to evidence based recommendations for improvements in education in order to create equal opportunities and a fertile basis for the development of a resilient, able-bodied society.

The minister visited St Eustatius for the 3rd Caribbean Netherlands Education Conference.



Artificial Reefs On Saba and Statia (AROSSTA)

The 'Nationaal Regiorgaan Praktijkgericht Onderzoek' – SIA (national steering body practice-based research), part of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) approved the AROSSTA proposal submitted by Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (VHL). The project aims to study how artificial reefs may best be used to contribute to the recovery of coral reefs on Saba and St Eustatius. In this project, which will run for two years, VHL will work together with St Eustatius National Parks, Saba Conservation Foundation, Wageningen Marine Research, Golden Rock Dive Center and CNSI. The results will provide answers to the functionality of different three dimensional designs, the suitability of different substrates and materials, the colonisation of artificial reefs on a temporal and biodiversity scale, and the contribution of artificial reefs to the development and/or recovery of nearby areas and ecosystems.



Dutch Caribbean preparedness for mosquito-borne infectious diseases (DUCAMID)

Within the framework of the programme Caribbean Research: a multidisciplinary approach, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) selected nine projects for funding for the years 2017 - 2021. One of these projects, DUCAMID, focusses for a large part on St Eustatius.

With their dependence on tourism, the climatic conditions favouring mosquito establishment, and their central position in wildlife migratory routes, the Dutch Caribbean are potential hot spots for outbreaks of virus diseases spread by arthropod vectors (arboviruses), like Zika virus, yellow fever, and others. DUCAMID will investigate the potential for incursion and spread of medically important arboviruses by studying resident mosquitos and hosts, their virome, and signatures for immune response in mosquitos and hosts as possible barriers to incursion and / or spread. The research also aims to develop tools for implementation in future risk-based surveillance targeting mosquitos and reservoir hosts that can be operated in local research institutes with a public health mandate. DUCAMID focusses on a comprehensive program of arbovirus preparedness research and brings together key players in Curacao and Sint Eustatius with partners in the Netherlands Centre for One Health, represented by Erasmus University Medical Centre as World Health Organisation collaborating centre for arboviruses and director of the Emerging Infectious Diseases research theme, and Wageningen University with its vector ecology research program. The partners involved in DUCAMID from the Dutch Caribbean islands play an important role in research on vector-borne diseases on the island of Curacao and are linked to regional research and public health expertise, thus securing a problem-oriented research agenda that is relevant to the disease problems in the region and translation of research findings in the same context.

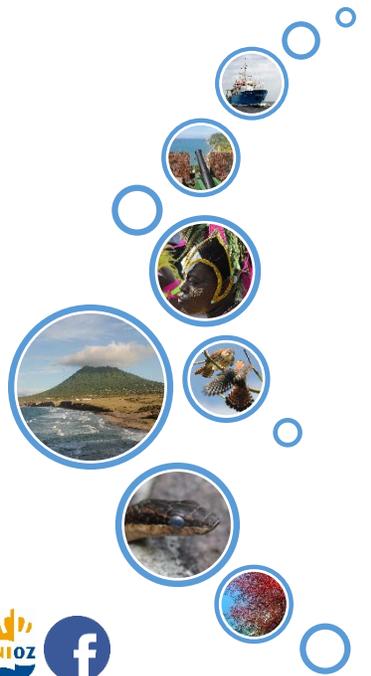
Royal Palace Symposium Dutch Caribbean Coral Reefs

HM King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima hosted a symposium on 6 December 2016 at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam on the status of the coral reefs in the Dutch Caribbean. CNSI director Johan Stapel and STENAPA director Clarisse Buma represented the scientific and conservation sectors from St Eustatius. Together with about 150 scientists and other stakeholders primarily from the Caribbean and The Netherlands, they discussed natural and socio-economic threats to the Dutch Caribbean coral reefs and ways in which human societies could positively contribute to healthy reef systems.

Nature Funds

The Public Entity of Sint Eustatius recently signed a management agreements for two projects with the Caribbean Netherlands Science Institute. Hon. Act. Isl. Gov. Julian Woodley and CNSI director Dr Johan Stapel signed on behalf of both parties. The projects concern the environment and health and consist of a Rat Control and Coral Restoration project. Both projects are to run for the next two years and are co-financed by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. As part of the projects, CNSI will among others organize lectures and seminars for the public. These will be announced in due course.

CNSI now manages three projects on behalf of the Public Entity Sint Eustatius. The Nature Awareness Project started in October 2016. The projects will be implemented in close cooperation with St Eustatius National Parks (STENAPA) and the Eastern Caribbean Public Health Foundation (ECPHF) at St Eustatius, in support of Statia's departments of Public Health and Economy and Infrastructure.



Students welcome

