



# STINAPA INFORMATION

## EVERY LAST FISH

The pending approval of two fish protected areas along the shores of Bonaire is a great first step in reducing the effects of over fishing that is occurring throughout the Caribbean Sea. If you talk to locals that have been fishing in Bonaire since the 1960's they will tell you about the days when large schools of big fish of many kinds darkened the waters. You will hear the same story from people living on every island in the Caribbean. If you could go back in time with your children and take them fishing 100 years ago; imagine what a different story they would tell their friends when they came back. On this trip they might catch a large tuna, shark, marlin or swordfish or they might bring in several large groupers. For every 10 of these large fish that were present 100 years ago there is 1 remaining now. On this fishing trip 100 years ago, Sea turtles would be nesting in great numbers on the beaches of Bonaire, queen conch would creep along the reef flats, lobster antennae would be jutting out from under every ledge, and bright orange starfish would color the sandy bottom. As time goes by fewer and fewer people remember what fishing was like even 20 or 30 years ago. The younger generation grows up thinking that what they are catching now is the way it has always been. After a single generation many of us have forgotten about the size of the big groupers that were caught here in Bonaire just 25 years ago. The fish protected areas in Bonaire are not large enough to bring back the large tuna and swordfish of the past but they are large enough to conserve reef fish that are being fished for food today. In the no take fish reserves the reef fish will grow to a larger size. Large fish produce many times more young than smaller fish. So over time as the fish get bigger in the reserves, more young will be produced along the reefs. Some of the young fish may remain in the no take zone but many will move around the reef and help replenish the fish that are being caught by fisherman. Now, imagine if you could go forward in time 100 years and take your children fishing. I think you would find yourself smiling inside because in Bonaire we decided not to take every last fish.

*Written by Rita BJ Peachey.*

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## NOS TA BIBA DI NATURALESA



**Traha huntu na un desaroyo duradero pa Boneiru**