

# GUARDIANS *of* THE BLUE



A RESIDENT'S GUIDE  
TO MARINE  
SUSTAINABILITY  
IN CURAÇAO



Implemented by Expertise France  
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# FOREWORD

**Welcome to “Guardians of the Blue: A Resident’s Guide to Marine Sustainability in Curaçao,” brought to you by Green Phenix and with the invaluable support of the Resilience, Sustainable Energy, and Marine Biodiversity (RESEMBID) Programme. RESEMBID is a 47-project Programme funded by the European Union and implemented by Expertise France.**

This document is your guide to becoming a steward of the sea, a defender of our marine treasures, and a champion for the future of Curaçao’s coastal wonders.

Curaçao, with its vibrant culture, stunning landscapes, and azure waters, is a true island paradise. However, beneath the surface of this natural splendor lies a delicate ecosystem that needs our protection. Our marine environment is a treasure trove of biodiversity, offering not only breathtaking views but also sustenance, recreation, and livelihoods for our communities.

Green Phenix partnered with RESEMBID, to bring you this guide. It reflects our collective commitment to preserving the marine environment for generations to come.

Our aim is to serve our community, providing the knowledge and resources needed to make sustainable choices.

In the following pages, we will embark on a journey of discovery and action, learning about marine pollution, sustainable consumption, waste management, and the principles of a circular economy. Our goal is to empower you with practical knowledge and inspire you to take simple yet impactful steps toward a cleaner marine environment.

Whether you’re a lifelong resident of Curaçao or have recently made this island your home, you have a crucial role to play in the protection of our marine heritage. Together, we can reduce pollution, preserve our stunning coastal ecosystems, and ensure that our beaches remain pristine for generations to come.

As you read through this guide, remember that each small action you take contributes to the larger mission of safeguarding Curaçao’s marine treasures. So, let’s dive in and become the Guardians of the Blue, working hand in hand to protect and cherish the natural wonders that surround our island.

**The journey starts here. Are you ready to be a Guardian of the Blue?**



# THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT: A vital lifeline for island living

**The marine environment is the lifeblood of small islands like Curaçao, and its significance extends far beyond its captivating beauty. Here's why it matters:**

**Economic Livelihood:** Our marine ecosystems provide a vital source of income for many residents. Fishing, tourism, and recreational activities contribute significantly to our economy, sustaining livelihoods and businesses.

**Food Security:** The sea supplies a substantial portion of our diet. It is a primary source of protein and sustenance for our communities, making the health of our oceans directly linked to our well-being.

**Natural Defenses:** Coral reefs and mangroves act as natural barriers, protecting our shores from erosion and storm surges. Healthy marine ecosystems enhance our resilience to climate change and extreme weather events.

**Biodiversity and Tourism:** The vibrant marine life and pristine beaches attract tourists from around the world. Tourism not

only fuels our economy but also fosters cultural exchange and international connections.

**Climate Regulation:** Oceans play a crucial role in regulating our climate. They absorb and store carbon dioxide, helping mitigate the impacts of global warming. Moreover, more than half of the oxygen we breathe in is produced by this magnificent blue wonder. Healthy seas are essential for a stable climate.

**Recreation and Well-being:** Our marine environment offers countless opportunities for relaxation, recreation, and a higher quality of life. It provides a sense of place and cultural identity that enriches our lives.

For small islands like Curaçao, the marine environment isn't just a backdrop; it is the foundation of our identity, culture, and prosperity. Protecting it is not just an environmental duty but also an investment in our future well-being.



# FROM CHOICE TO CHANGE: Your impact on Curaçao's marine world

**While the preservation of Curaçao's marine environment is a shared responsibility, it begins with each of us personally. We are all stewards of our island's natural wonders, and our individual actions carry significant weight in this collective effort.**

Consider the power of your choices: with every product you purchase or refuse, you shape not only your own lifestyle but also the world around you. It is an act of personal responsibility that contributes to the larger cause of environmental protection. By making conscious decisions that prioritize sustainability, you become an active participant in creating a cleaner, healthier future.

Each time you drink water from the tap instead of a drink from a plastic bottle, support local sustainable businesses, or properly recycle your waste, you take a step toward reducing the strain on our marine ecosystems. These small actions, when multiplied by many, create a substantial impact.

This guide is here to provide you with the knowledge and tools to make sustainable choices, not out of obligation, but because you recognize the importance of safeguarding Curaçao's natural beauty for yourself, your community, and future generations. It is about taking personal responsibility for the world you want to live in.

As you embark on this journey, remember that every decision counts. Your dedication to sustainable living is a testament to your commitment to a brighter, cleaner, and more harmonious future.



# UNMASKING THE MENACE

## Plastic pollution in Curaçao's marine wonderland



## CHAPTER 1

**In this first chapter, we will dive into the heart of the pressing issue – plastic pollution in our stunning marine environment. Get ready to uncover the hidden perils lurking beneath the waves.**

## AN ISLAND UNDER SIEGE: The unlikely battle on Curaçao's rugged North shore

Stand on the untamed, rocky north shore of Curaçao, where the relentless sea (option 1) continuously crashes against the rugged coastline. This stretch of shoreline, once a secluded sanctuary, has been thrust into an unexpected battle - one against a merciless foe, plastic pollution.

The north shore, with its wild beauty and towering cliffs, used to be a pristine refuge, rarely visited by many. But now, it is a battleground against an incessant plastic invasion. The waves, with their immense force, bring plastic waste to these shores. Even in its remote solitude, this untamed landscape bears the scars of a crisis that knows no boundaries.

Here, amidst the rocky terrain, plastic debris clings tenaciously to the coastline. The bottles, bags, and plastic fragments are a stark reminder of a struggle that often goes unnoticed. Few venture to these rugged shores, but those who do bear witness to the shocking sight of inlet beaches covered with multiple layers of marine debris.

Yet, while the plastic invasion on this unique north shore is undeniable, it is only half of the story. The greater menace lies concealed beneath the relentless waves. These are the plastics lurking beneath the surface, silently endangering our marine ecosystem.

As we journey through the pages ahead, we will explore the threat of plastic in the marine environment, both on land as well as beneath the waves.

## UNVEILING THE SOURCES: The Culprits of Plastic Pollution This environmental crisis has multiple instigators:

- 1. Single-Use Plastics: Everyday Durable Offenders**  
Single-use plastics, like bags, bottles, straws, and utensils, are not just occasional culprits; they're in constant circulation. People rely on them for mere minutes, but their durability ensures a long-lasting presence. Instead of disappearing, these materials persist in the environment, gradually breaking down into smaller pieces. This transformation of larger items into microplastics highlights the problem: excessive use and unwavering durability create a recipe for disaster. There's no such thing as "away"; these plastics remain in the environment, leaving an enduring footprint.
- 2. Inadequate Waste Management: A Looming Challenge**  
In many places worldwide, including small islands and developing nations, the challenge of proper waste management is a pressing concern. Recycling isn't always easy, and it can be costly. Often, there is a lack of infrastructure to handle waste effectively. As a result, plastic waste finds its way into the environment, from streets and beaches to ill-managed landfills. The absence of robust waste management systems exacerbates the plastic pollution problem, leaving communities grappling with its consequences.

- 3. Fishing Gear's Impact:** Lost or abandoned fishing gear, known as "ghost nets", harm marine life, significantly contributing to plastic pollution.
- 4. Microplastics:** These tiny particles, often under 5 millimeters in size, emerge from larger plastic items and products with microbeads. They enter the ocean directly or through wastewater systems.

These sources, each with its method of contribution, are part of the complex issue of plastic pollution affecting our marine ecosystem.

## THE IMPACT: Unmasking the Consequences

**The consequences of plastic pollution are not merely hidden; they're devastating:**

**Marine Wildlife:** Plastic pollution poses a dire threat to our marine animals. Sea turtles, birds, fish, and marine mammals ingest or become entangled in plastic debris, leading to injury and death.

**Ecosystem Disruption:** Plastic pollution disrupts marine ecosystems as microplastics are ingested by filter-feeding organisms, potentially entering the food web and affecting species higher up the chain, including us, who consume seafood.

**Coral Reefs:** Plastic pollution can smother and damage corals, making them susceptible to diseases and bleaching, imperiling the underwater wonders we hold dear.

**Economic and Tourism Impact:** Our tourism industry relies on pristine beaches and a thriving marine environment. Plastic pollution can deter tourists and harm local businesses, affecting our island's economy.

Seeing is Believing: Local Examples of Plastic Pollution

To truly grasp the gravity of the situation and advocate for change, we need to unveil the problem. In the pages ahead, we'll share local examples of plastic pollution in Curaçao, shedding light on the pressing need for collective action. Stay with us on this journey as we peel back the layers of this plastic predicament and explore how each of us can play a vital role in becoming the Guardians of the Blue. Together, we will face the menace head-on and protect the marine paradise we call home.

## EXPLORING THE PROBLEM: Inviting you to see it for yourself

Since you are already delving into this practical guide, it is clear that you share our concern for Curaçao's marine environment. We would like to take this opportunity to extend an invitation. Why not venture out and witness the issue firsthand by visiting one of the north shore inlets?

In the following pages, we will provide you with essential insights and knowledge about plastic pollution. Armed with this understanding, your visit to these affected areas can be a powerful experience. It is a chance to see the problem up close and be inspired to take meaningful action.

As we navigate the challenges and solutions together, remember that the power of many is required. We are all Guardians of the Blue, united in our dedication to protect and preserve the marine paradise.



# FROM STORE SHELVES TO OCEAN SWELLS

The link between  
consumption  
and marine  
sustainability

## CHAPTER 2

Welcome to a chapter that reveals the relation between our daily choices and Curaçao's marine environment. Here, we'll uncover the profound influence our consumption habits wield, and how this knowledge can empower us as guardians of the sea.



## BEYOND PRODUCTS: The ripple effect of resource consumption

Our choices as consumers extend well beyond the realm of plastic products. Consider the devices we use daily, like smartphones and laptops, or the clothing we wear. Each product has an ecological footprint and whilst these items seem disconnected from Curaçao's marine environment, they are intrinsically linked through a chain of resource consumption.

To grasp this connection, let's follow the journey from the extraction of raw materials to the manufacturing of these products. The mining of minerals, such as coltan for electronics or cotton for clothing or oil and gas to produce plastic, often occurs in regions with delicate ecosystems. These resource extraction activities can disrupt natural habitats, affecting not only terrestrial but also marine ecosystems.

The manufacturing phase of these products consumes vast amounts of energy and resources. Factories emit greenhouse gases and pollutants, which, when released into the atmosphere, can indirectly influence the marine environment. Climate change, driven in part by industrial emissions, has consequences for ocean temperatures and currents, impacting marine life and habitats.

The ripple effect of resource consumption is a complex web of cause and effect. It's a chain reaction we must recognize, even if the connection to our daily choices is not immediately apparent. Every electronic device we purchase, every article of clothing we buy and every bottle we use contributes, albeit indirectly, to the state of Curaçao's marine ecosystems.

## CARBON FOOTPRINTS

The carbon footprints left behind by our consumption habits are not confined to the production phase alone. They extend through the entire lifecycle of a product, including the often-overlooked journey from distant lands to our shores. For Curaçao, a small island nation heavily reliant on imports, this aspect carries particular significance.

Consider the origins of the products we bring to Curaçao, many of which are sourced from far-flung corners of the globe. The energy-intensive process of extracting raw materials, manufacturing, and packaging is just the first chapter. These products must then embark on a lengthy voyage, often involving multiple forms of transportation, to reach our island.

The transportation phase introduces a new dimension to our carbon footprint. Ships, airplanes, and trucks transport goods across great distances, leaving behind emissions that contribute to climate change. This phenomenon doesn't just affect our atmosphere; it ripples through our oceans. The consequences of these emissions manifest as rising ocean temperatures, shifting currents, and changing marine ecosystems. The delicate balance that sustains Curaçao's marine life is perturbed by this invisible yet far-reaching force. As consumers, we often underestimate the link between our choices and the altered seascape.

Recognizing the carbon footprint of our consumption habits is crucial, particularly in a place like Curaçao, where imports are a lifeline. By understanding the broader impact of transportation on our marine environment, we can make more informed choices and explore sustainable alternatives that minimize our contribution to this global phenomenon.

## **SINGLE-USE PLASTICS: Convenience with Consequences**

Now, let's dive into the issue of single-use plastics and the price of convenience. Single-use plastics, from grocery bags to straws and food containers, entice us with their ease and convenience. However, their convenience is a double-edged sword. While they offer short-term practicality, they exact a heavy toll on our environment in the long run.

What makes single-use plastics particularly nefarious is their longevity. Once discarded, these items do not vanish into thin air. Instead, they persist for hundreds of years, gradually breaking down into smaller pieces known as microplastics. This prolonged presence in the environment ensures that the consequences of our fleeting convenience linger for generations to come.

In the context of Curaçao's plastic pollution crisis, single-use plastics are a major driving force. Their prevalence, coupled with their durability, and the lack of proper end-of-life scenarios means they make up a significant portion of the plastic waste that ends up in our environment. From litter on our streets to pollution in our waters, these seemingly innocuous items have far-reaching impacts on our marine environment, affecting the very essence of Curaçao's coastal wonders.

## **YOUR CONSUMER CHOICES, YOUR MARINE LEGACY**

In this chapter, we've explored the profound impact of your consumer choices on Curaçao's marine environment. Remember, every item you choose to buy or abstain from purchasing casts a vote for the world we create for future generations. It's crucial to consider the ecological impact of products over their entire life cycle, from production to disposal. With this knowledge, you hold the power to shape a more sustainable future for Curaçao's marine realm.





# DISCARDING CONSCIOUSLY:

## Waste disposal and marine sustainability

# CHAPTER 3

**Waste disposal is a critical topic with profound implications for our marine environment. How we manage the waste we generate is an often-overlooked aspect of marine protection. However, the principles of waste management are deeply entwined with the preservation of our marine treasures.**

**From the moment a product enters our lives to the point where it departs as waste, our choices matter. The methods we employ to discard items we no longer need or use significantly impact the health of our oceans and beaches.**

## **THE WASTE MANAGEMENT HIERARCHY: Guiding Principles for a Cleaner Tomorrow**

Effective waste management is not just about disposing of items; it's about making choices that prioritize sustainability and minimize environmental impact. To navigate the complex landscape of waste, we'll begin by introducing the Waste Management Hierarchy, a set of guiding principles that outline the best practices for managing waste.

- 1. Prevention:** The most effective way to manage waste is to generate less of it in the first place. Source reduction involves making conscious choices to reduce your consumption of single-use items and products with excessive packaging. By avoiding unnecessary waste generation, we can lessen the burden on our waste management systems and protect the marine environment.
- 2. Reuse:** Before discarding an item, consider whether it can be reused. Many products have a longer lifespan than we often realize. Repairing, repurposing, or donating items can extend their usefulness, reduce waste, and contribute to a more sustainable lifestyle.

- 3. Recycling:** Recycling plays a crucial role in waste management, as it diverts materials from landfills and reduces the need for new resource extraction. Curaçao has made significant strides in recycling efforts, and as a resident, you can contribute by properly sorting and recycling materials.
- 4. Energy Recovery:** Some materials that can't be recycled can still be used to generate energy through various processes like incineration. While this option should be considered after other methods, it can be a more sustainable alternative to landfill disposal. This currently is not an option on Curaçao.
- 5. Disposal:** The final step in the waste hierarchy is disposal. However, the goal is to minimize the amount of waste that reaches landfills or incinerators. Proper waste disposal, when necessary, is crucial to prevent contamination and protect our natural environment.

### **LITTERING: An Environmental, Economic, and Aesthetic Catastrophe**

Littering is the lowest and most harmful level of the waste management hierarchy because it not only pollutes the environment, damages ecosystems, and poses risks to wildlife, but also imposes significant economic burdens on communities while undermining their aesthetic appeal.

An underwater scene featuring a large, vibrant orange and white striped clownfish in the center. Surrounding it are numerous colorful plastic bubbles in shades of blue, purple, and yellow. Other smaller fish, including a yellow and black striped one and a yellow one, are visible in the background. The water is clear blue, and the scene is set against a backdrop of a sandy ocean floor.

# CREATING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

## Sustaining marine environments

# CHAPTER 4

**Responsible consumption and preventing waste aligns with the concept of a circular economy. Therefore it can serve as an effective economic model for safeguarding Curaçao's marine environments offering a path toward reducing waste, conserving resources, and protecting our coastal wonders.**

## UNDERSTANDING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY and its benefits for marine sustainability

The traditional linear economy operates on a “take, make, dispose” model, where resources are extracted, products are manufactured, and eventually, they are discarded as waste. This approach places immense pressure on our natural environment, leading to resource depletion and extensive waste generation.

The adoption of circular economy principles aligns closely with the goals of marine sustainability in Curaçao because a circular economy seeks to disrupt this linear pattern by promoting the following key principles:

- 1. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle:** The foundation of a circular economy lies in reducing waste generation. This means designing products to last longer, encouraging reuse and repair, and maximizing recycling to keep materials in circulation. By reducing waste at the source and promoting reuse and recycling, a circular economy reduces the volume of waste that potentially ends up in the marine environment, safeguarding marine life and habitats.
- 2. Resource Efficiency:** Circular economies prioritize resource efficiency. Instead of extracting new resources, they emphasize the importance of using existing resources more effectively. This reduces the strain on ecosystems and minimizes waste. This is especially vital in a small island context like Curaçao, where resources are limited.
- 3. Closed-Loop Systems:** Circular systems aim to create closed-loop cycles, where materials and products are continuously reused or recycled. This reduces the need for virgin resources and minimizes waste sent to landfills or incinerators.
- 4. Product Life Extension:** Extending the lifespan of products through maintenance, repair, and refurbishment reduces the frequency of replacement, saving resources and reducing waste.
- 5. Economic Opportunities:** Transitioning to a circular economy can create new economic opportunities, such as recycling and repair businesses, which can support local communities and reduce reliance on resource-intensive industries.
- 6. Resilience to Climate Change:** A circular economy can enhance resilience to climate change by reducing emissions associated with resource extraction, manufacturing, and waste management. This, in turn, contributes to a healthier marine environment.



# MAKING CONSCIOUS CHOICES

## For marine preservation

# CHAPTER 5

**In this chapter, we will delve into practical tips and strategies that every resident of Curaçao can implement to make conscious choices and actively contribute to the preservation of our marine environment. By following these guidelines, you will become a true Guardian of the Blue.**

## REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS:

1. **Avoid it.** If you don't really need it, don't buy it
2. **Bring a reusable bag** whenever you go shopping, to eliminate the need for plastic bags.
3. **Bring your own.** Say no to plastic straws, utensils, lids and cups
4. **Use a reusable water bottle.** Invest in a reusable water bottle and avoid purchasing bottled water whenever possible.
5. **Minimal packaging.** Opt for products with minimal or eco-friendly packaging, and avoid excessive plastic packaging. Avoid packaging that is made completely out of virgin material as well as plastic types that cannot be locally recycled.

## SUPPORT AND BE PART OF the sustainable community:

1. **Buy local.** Whenever you can, support local businesses and products. This reduces the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation.
2. **Eco-Friendly Products:** Look for eco-friendly products that are made with minimal environmental impact.
3. **Donate and Volunteer:** Contribute to or volunteer with organizations dedicated to marine conservation and sustainability in Curaçao. You can join a beach clean-up or

participate in community led clean-up activities in your neighborhood.

4. **Engage with Local Authorities:** Be an advocate for change. Engage with local policymakers and authorities to advocate for policies and regulations that promote marine sustainability.
5. **Minimize your waste & recycle correctly:** Familiarize yourself with the local recycling guidelines and make sure to sort your recyclables properly.
6. **Use Energy-Efficient Appliances:** Invest in energy-efficient appliances to reduce your electricity consumption.
7. **Turn Off Lights and Electronics:** Develop a habit of turning off lights and electronics when not in use.

### LEAVE IT better behind

When visiting beaches and coastal areas, leave no trace by cleaning up after yourself and disposing of waste properly or even better, leave it cleaner than the way you found it by cleaning up some litter whilst you are there.

Remember, your everyday choices have a significant impact on the health of Curaçao's marine environment. By adopting these conscious behaviors, you can actively contributing to the preservation of our coastal wonders and becoming a true Guardian of the Blue. Together, we can ensure that the marine paradise we cherish remains vibrant and thriving for generations to come.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT and resources



## CHAPTER 6

**Community engagement is important. In this section of the practical guide we'll provide some valuable resources for residents of Curaçao who want to actively participate in marine conservation efforts and live more sustainably.**

## JOINING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Getting involved with local environmental organizations is a powerful way to contribute to marine sustainability. These organizations often organize events, workshops, and initiatives aimed at preserving Curaçao's marine environment. Here are some key organizations to consider:

- **Stichting Uniek Curaçao,**
- **CARMABI**
- **Sea Turtle Conservation Curaçao**
- **Green Kidz**
- **Amigu di Tera**
- **The Hidden Green Movement**
- **Curaçao Cares**
- **Kollektivo**
- **Coral Restoration Curaçao**
- **Mangrove Restoration**
- **The Kunukuman**
- **Green Force**
- **BPM**
- **Club 17**
- **The Curaçao Clean Up**
- **Green Phenix**
- **Branch Coral Foundation**
- **Reef Renewal Curaçao**
- **Limpi**
- **Lionfish Curaçao**

Furthermore, many dive shops in Curaçao actively participate in marine conservation and offer opportunities for divers and snorkelers to get involved in cleanups.

## EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

Stay informed and educated about marine sustainability through workshops and events. These activities not only enhance your knowledge but also connect you with like-minded individuals.

Look out for:

1. **Marine Conservation Workshops:** Attend workshops on topics such as coral reef preservation, marine species protection, and plastic pollution awareness.
2. **Sustainability Seminars:** Learn about sustainable practices, circular economy principles, and eco-friendly living at local seminars and events.
3. **Nature Walks and Eco-Tours:** Explore Curaçao's natural beauty and learn about its ecosystems through guided nature walks and eco-tours.
4. **Environmental Festivals:** Participate in environmental festivals that raise awareness about marine conservation and sustainable living.

# CONCLUSION

## Safeguarding Curaçao's marine environment



As we conclude "Guardians of the Blue: A Resident's Guide to Marine Sustainability in Curaçao," we want to reflect on the key points we've explored throughout this practical guide.

We hope this journey has empowered you to become a true Guardian of the Blue, dedicated to preserving the marine wonders that surround our beloved island.

## RECAP OF KEY POINTS

**The Significance of Our Marine Environment:** We've emphasized the vital role our marine environment plays in Curaçao's culture, economy, and well-being. It's not just a backdrop; it's the foundation of our identity.

**Plastic Pollution Awareness:** Understanding the sources and impact of plastic pollution is crucial. Plastic waste poses a significant threat to our marine life, ecosystems, and economy.

**The Connection to Consumption:** Your daily choices, from single-use plastics to resource consumption, directly affect our marine environment. Sustainable consumption is key to reducing our negative impact.

**Managing Plastic Pollution:** Applying the waste hierarchy—prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery, and responsible disposal—is essential to tackling plastic pollution.

**Circular Economy Principles:** Embracing a circular economy reduces waste and preserves resources, benefiting Curaçao's marine environment, economy, and sustainability.

**Community Engagement:** Engaging with local organizations, attending workshops and events, and participating in conservation initiatives are effective ways to make a difference.

## YOUR COMMITMENT TO CURAÇAO'S MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Your commitment to Curaçao's marine environment is a pledge to protect and cherish our coastal wonders. By making conscious choices, embracing sustainable practices, and actively participating in community efforts, you are joining the ranks of Guardians of the Blue. Your dedication is not just for yourself but for future generations, ensuring that Curaçao's natural beauty endures.

## ENCOURAGEMENT TO SPREAD THE WORD

Your knowledge is a powerful tool for change. Encourage your friends, family, and community to embark on their own journey as Guardians of the Blue. Share what you've learned, inspire others to take action, and foster a collective commitment to marine sustainability.



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