

Curaçao Welcomes the World's Most Advanced Underwater Habitat, PROTEUS™

SANTA BARBARA, CURACAO, March 11, 2021: A planning expedition to create [PROTEUS™](#), the world's most advanced underwater research station near Santa Barbara is taking place this week, which will bring significant ecological, tourism and economic benefits to Curaçao.

Led by the ocean explorer and conservationist [Fabien Cousteau](#), PROTEUS™ will be the world's most advanced underwater habitat and 'International Space Station of the Ocean'. Mr. Cousteau is currently undertaking a planning expedition on the island to source the exact site for the station - which is expected to be completed in late 2023/ early 2024 - in waters near the Santa Barbara Beach & Golf Resort.

Curaçao has been chosen for its accessible coral reefs and incredibly rich biodiverse marine ecosystems, which will support PROTEUS™ in discovering new species of marine life, creating a better understanding of how climate change affects the ocean, and the testing of advanced new technologies for green power, aquaculture, diagnostics and robotic exploration.

Measuring approximately 370 square meters, the marine research and observation platform will house up to 12 people simultaneously and contain research labs, living space, a food galley, greenhouse, video production studio, as well as sleeping quarters. A 2,300 square meter building will be created on land nearby, housing the dozens of people required to ensure operations in the station run smoothly.

In addition to near-term construction and trade jobs, the project will require approximately 25 full-time employees to support on-going operations for PROTEUS™ 12 months after construction begins, creating an estimated \$1.2 million in annual salaries. Once the marine habitat is built and installed, an estimated 500 visitors are expected to come to Curaçao annually for multi-week stays to support research and media activities around PROTEUS™. Curaçao will also benefit from increased visibility through PROTEUS™'s marketing efforts, which are expected to include a documentary, designed to encourage increased tourism to the island.

PROTEUS™ will also contain a state-of-the-art production studio enabling the international profile of Curaçao to be further raised through worldwide live streaming of educational programming and content from both inside the station and the beautiful waters of Curaçao.

Prime minister Eugene Rhuggenaath: When I was a little boy I was captivated and inspired by the journeys of Jacques Cousteau, Captain Nemo & the Nautilus. Motivated by our own biodiversity research institute CARMABI and as Prime Minister, I'm committed to protect life below water (SDG14). Realizing our potential as being an innovation and knowledge hub, I am grateful to Fabien Cousteau for bringing Proteus to Curaçao and most grateful for realizing our dreams and creating hope for the next generations for our planet. Not only for that little boy, but all the little boys and girls living on Curaçao.

Dr. I.S (Steven) Martina, Minister of Economic Development for Curaçao, said: "Our incredible Caribbean Sea holds immense riches yet to be fully discovered. The economic potential of having

the first underwater research laboratory located in Curaçao's waters is enormous, from job creation to tourism.”

Fabien Cousteau, who comes from a renowned lineage of underwater innovators and explorers, commented: “While having explored many coasts around the world, the pristine, biodiverse waters of Curaçao remain a favorite to dive in. I am continually impressed by the people on the island, and I look forward to further developing the initiatives to benefit Curaçao.” This trip will also mark the opening of an office for Cousteau's non-profit the [Fabien Cousteau Ocean Learning Center](#) (FCOLC), which is devoted to protecting the ocean through a variety of educational programs and initiatives.

Roald Smeets, Director from the Santa Barbara, added: “Attracting such a unique project as PROTEUS™, backed by a renowned personality such as Fabien Cousteau, is a major accomplishment for both Curaçao and Santa Barbara. Our collaboration with the Curaçao Government will help to establish Curaçao as an international tourist destination. We are delighted to be at the center of such a genuinely distinctive destination in a vital growth area of the sector – eco-tourism.”

A longtime supporter and advisor for PROTEUS™, Robin van Bokhorst, born in Curaçao, holds a profound belief in marine conservation, and is a strong proponent of reinvigorating the economic development and enhancing the educational infrastructure of Curaçao with projects like PROTEUS™. He and his family office are leading the initial investment round.

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Notes to editors:

A link to digital renderings of PROTEUS™ can be found [HERE](#). Initial concept designs by Yves Béhar and fuseproject.

About Proteus Ocean Group

PROTEUS™ is operationalized and run by Proteus Ocean Group, Ltd. (POG), a private sector social enterprise, a sustainable for-profit business that will scale and have global impact. POG manages the coordination of and partnerships with strategic collaborators such as Northeastern, Rutgers, Government entities (including Curaçao), and private sector partners. The Fabien Cousteau Ocean Learning Center (a 501(c)(3)) (FCOLC) is a major stakeholder in POG and leads the educational programming.

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