

PRESS RELEASE

St. Maarten, 20.10.2015

Port St. Maarten Prepared to Assist with Improving Situation related to Pumping of Water into Great Bay. Solution in Master Plan 2 for Area

October 20, 2015 – Port St. Maarten Management is prepared to assist Government with respect to the process of pumping water from the Great Salt Pond into Great Bay.

Public health authorities on Monday night issued a no swim advisory for the Great Bay area for Tuesday which was lifted at 5.30pm in the afternoon. This impacted business activity along the beach promenade area which is frequented by cruise ship tourists.

Port St. Maarten has included in its Great Bay Master Plan 2 the construction of a pipe that would be hooked up to the storm water pumping system that was put in place to reduce water levels in the pond in the event of heavy rainfall in order to avoid flooding of the Philipsburg area.

The proposed pipe would extend one mile out into Great Bay. In the event the Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure (Ministry VROMI) has to carry out a control lowering of water in the ponds, this water would then exit one mile out into Great Bay therefore allowing bathing/swimming to still take place at Great Bay beach along the promenade.

The cruise passenger visitor experience is very important for a destination as this determines cruise ship itineraries. Cruise ports in the Caribbean, the largest cruise destination in the world that attracts the largest number of cruise visitors annually – over 20 million cruise passengers visit the Caribbean – have to be cognizant all the time with respect to trends and developments in cruise passenger destination experiences.

Port St. Maarten management fully supports the actions taken by the public health authorities in issuing the advisory regarding no bathing/swimming in Great Bay in the interests of residents and visitors.

The advisory pointed out that the water pumped into Great Bay from the Great Salt Pond could be contaminated, from amongst others, rainwater runoff, which if swimmers came into contact with, could cause recreational water illnesses.

As a mature cruise destination, all stakeholders have a responsibility to make sure that visitor's health and safety are priority number one, as this assures long-term sustainability of the destination when it comes to stay-over and cruise tourism.

A nearby island reported cruise passenger harassment at their main landing facility, and that cruise lines have requested something to be done or they will shift their cruise ships to another destination.

Port St. Maarten based on 50-years of cruise business experience is well aware of the requirements of the cruise sector and takes the necessary proactive approaches and measures where needed in order to maintain the country's

number one position as a mature cruise destination.

Port St. Maarten Great Bay Master Plan 2 was already presented to Parliament.



PHOTO OUTLINE: Great Bay Master Plan 2.

For further questions, please contact: comments@portofstmaarten.com