

Caribbean Tourism Stakeholders Working To Protect, Regrow Coral Reefs

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CMC photo

MIAMI, CMC – A group of tourism-focused organisations has joined forces to help protect and regenerate Caribbean reefs.

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) on Wednesday said it has collaborated with the non profit Tourism Cares and the Grupo Puntacana Foundation in the Dominican Republic on a "Coral Restoration Capacity Building Project" to assist three Caribbean destinations, which suffered serious reef damage from the devastating storms of 2017.

Two individuals each from Dominica, the British Virgin Islands and the US Virgin Islands recently spent a week in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, completing a Coral First Aid Certification training program, CHTA said.

It said additional individuals from the affected territories will now be trained by these graduates to assist with major restoration efforts.

CHTA noted that marine scientists have confirmed that coral reefs, which makeup only one percent of the ocean floor but support 25 percent of marine life, have declined in the Caribbean by as much as 50 to 80 percent in 30 years.

"CHTA, through our affiliate Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST), has a longstanding working relationship with the Grupo Puntacana Foundation, and we're delighted to be able to draw upon the foundation's expertise to provide this training," said Frank Comito, CHTA's chief executive officer and director general.

"Having one of the largest coral nurseries in the Caribbean positions it as a leading coral gardening training institution. We have an environmental responsibility to regenerate these natural treasures because, without reefs, there would be fewer beautiful beaches; and, without our beaches, fewer tourists would visit. So coral gardening is both an ecological imperative as well as a significant economic driver for our region," Comito said.