

October 7th, 2024

Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire Announces New Leadership and Team Expansion

SUMMARY

- The Board of Directors of Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire (RRFB) has appointed Ernst Noyons as Chief Operating Officer (COO), who has over 3 years of experience at the organization and previous roles in marine conservation.
- The RRFB team continues to expand and scale their restoration activities to enhance the resilience of vulnerable coral populations on Bonaire, with support from local and international partners.

(Bonaire, Dutch Caribbean) Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire (RRFB) is pleased to announce a significant transition in leadership and expansion of its team. **Ernst Noyons**, an integral member of RRFB for the past three years, has assumed leadership of the organization as Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Noyons' advancement to COO comes as RRFB experiences an expansion of personnel and operations driven by support from several international grants and collaborations. Supported by a specialized team of nine full-time employees and a growing volunteer base, RRFB is fully equipped to carry out crucial, long-term projects amid the mounting challenges facing Bonaire's reefs.

"I'm proud to lead such a strong and dedicated team as we enter this new chapter. With the reef facing unprecedented challenges, our team's adaptability ensures we are ready to meet them head-on. Together with our partners, we're committed to protecting our reefs and securing their future in an ever-changing environment,"

– Chief Operating Officer (COO) **Ernst Noyons**.

The organization has added new, vulnerable species to their focus, expanded their nursery system around the island, and set plans for an on-land facility that will allow them to greatly scale up their coral breeding program and educational efforts. Beyond their on-island operations, RRFB continues to exchange knowledge with an international network of partners via restoration workshops, conferences, and collaborative projects.

Francesca Virdis, who has led RRFB as Managing Director since its inception in 2012, will be transitioning to a new role as Restoration Strategy & Planning Lead at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology's (KAUST) Coral Restoration Initiative in Saudi Arabia. While Francesca has stepped down from her operational role, she will continue to contribute to RRFB as a member of its Board of Directors, bringing her extensive experience and insights to restoration efforts on Bonaire.

“Together with the entire Board of RRFB, I am thrilled to have Ernst leading our Foundation. Alongside our talented senior management team—Caitie Reza, who oversees our communications and development initiatives; Sanne Tuijten, who directs our data, monitoring, and science research projects; and Donetta Murphy, who manages our administrative and financial needs—RRFB is exceptionally well positioned to continue achieving its goals to restore and preserve the biodiversity of Bonaire's reefs.”

– President of RRFB Board of Directors **David Fishman**

In the face of escalating threats and rapidly changing conditions for Bonaire’s reefs, building capacity has become essential for RRFB. Supported by local and international partners, RRFB remains committed to enhancing the resilience of Bonaire’s coral ecosystem in the face of these challenges.

PHOTOS

For the high-resolution photos, please email caitie@reefrenewalbonaire.org.



*RRFB's newly appointed Chief Operating Officer Ernst Noyons.
Photo by Max Rouwenhorst via Evoke Visuals*



The full RRFB team. Photo by Max Rouwenhorst via Evoke Visuals



Corals are monitored at RRFB's horizontal rope nursery in Lac Bay, one of their 15 nursery locations around the island. Photo by RRFB

ABOUT RRFB

Reef Renewal Foundation Bonaire is a non-profit organization focused on the protection and restoration of Bonaire's biodiverse coral reefs. In collaboration with research partners and regional practitioners, RRFB uses science-backed techniques to enhance the abundance and genetic diversity of vulnerable coral populations in Bonaire. Today, with the help of 14 partner dive operators around the island and a dedicated team of volunteers, RRFB has outplanted over 60,000 corals back to the reef, restoring an area of over 13,000 square meters.

To learn how to get involved or lend support, please visit www.reefrenewalbonaire.org or email info@reefrenewalbonaire.org.

