

*"Protect the
Ocean and You
Protect Yourself."*



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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

As you will see in the letter below, I am very concerned about the proposed expansion of berthing facilities in George Town Harbor. I feel you might be interested in my thoughts on the subject as we all attempt to get rational and sustainable management of Grand Cayman's resources.

Sincerely,

Jean-Michel Cousteau

Moses Kirkconnell, Minister of District Administration, Tourism and Transport
(moses.kirkconnel@gov.ky)
Duane Seymour, Minister of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing (dwayne.Seymour@gov.ky)

9/28/18

Dear Sirs,

I am deeply concerned about the proposal to expand the port and related cruise ship berthing facilities at George Town Harbor on Grand Cayman. I have been coming to the Caymans since the 1970s. The lure of the Caymans was their coral reefs and clear waters. During the past years 40+ years I have seen tourism increase dramatically, particularly the cruise ship component. There is no doubt that tourism has improved the economy of the Caymans but there are limits. In fact I experienced those limits on my recent visit (June 2018) to Grand Cayman, where getting around in Georgetown was nearly impossible when a number of cruise ships were at anchor. Shopping on Grand Cayman is not what draws people to the island - it is the natural environment. The reefs are

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already stressed from climate change, overfishing, and increased nutrient input. Maintaining Cayman's reefs requires that we reduce human impact, not increase it.

The proposed expansion of Grand Cayman's cruise ship berthing infrastructure would physically destroy nearby reefs and the subsequent increase in sediment created by dredging would certainly harm reefs. During my 70 years of diving I have seen many communities develop commercial infrastructure along their coastlines. I know from personal observation that development and related dredging stirs up sediment. Once this material is suspended in the water sediment mitigation is impossible where waves, currents, and tides keep water constantly in motion. In other words sediment will spread from the site, cover reefs and kill corals. In other words mitigation in the ocean for such projects is impossible and I think past environmental impact assessments have made this clear. It is heartening to see that Cayman's Conservation Law states that the Government shall undertake no projects, which will harm the environment. It is clear that the project being proposed would definitely harm the environment. This is why I am against the proposed expansion of the George Town cruise ship berthing infrastructure.

I have always been impressed that coral reefs and clear waters exist around George Town Harbor. Our Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the Environment education program for kids and adults regularly brings participants to Eden Rock and adjacent reefs and I hope we can continue to share these natural wonders with guests for the long-term future. We are doing our best to educate the public about the importance of Cayman's natural heritage.

I have a long history with supporting tourism in the Cayman Islands. Back in 1994 I was invited to be the spokesperson for responsible tourism in **the** Cayman Islands and I worked closely with Thomas Jefferson, then Cayman Islands' Minister of Tourism and with Mrs. Angela Martin, the Cayman Islands' director of tourism. I was impressed that one of the stated goals was to "Protect our environment, celebrate our cultural heritage while supporting tourism that benefits all Caymanians." With this commitment to environmental protection I was happy to work with government and industry in the protection of the environment for the future along with promoting the attractiveness of Cayman's reefs to visitors.

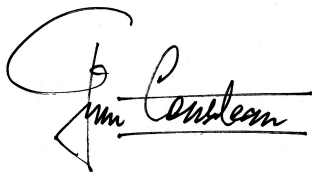
I am surprised and dismayed to see that Ms. Gina Ebanks-Petrie, Department of the Environment, has been removed from the project's steering committee. I am sure that she and the DOE see the need to protect such reefs as Eden Rock and nearby coral reefs. My recollection is that reefs that would be destroyed by the development are already designated as protected reefs under the Marine Parks system. They have been protected for the past 25 years.

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I cannot passively let these coral reefs die without voicing my concern! I am speaking out on behalf of my marine conservation organization, Ocean Futures Society, and hope that the people of the Caymans will also make their voices heard through the petition that is being circulated. And most importantly, I hope the decision makers will see that the value of keeping what draws tourists to their island, the ocean and its reefs, is far more valuable in the long run than more cruise ships and a congested George Town. The environment is the heritage of the Cayman people and decisions made today will have consequences for generations to come.

Jean-Michel Cousteau



President
Ocean Futures Society