

GEO Bahamas

2005



The Bahamas State of the Environment Report



GEO Bahamas 2005



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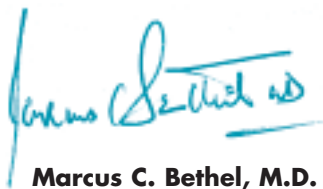
Foreword



As Minister with responsibility for the Environment, it is an honour for me to launch The Bahamas' first State of the Environment Report. The Bahamas, like most Small Island Developing States (SIDS), depends greatly on the environment. Having a population of approximately 305,000 and millions of tourists visiting our shores annually, the Government realizes that protecting and managing the country's natural resources and safeguarding against social and environmental ills is critical and in our best interest.

This report brings focus to the current state and pressures on the natural resources of The Bahamas. Consultation with various stakeholders actively working in the environmental arena throughout The Bahamas determined the issues to be discussed in this report. The information and recommendations contained herein are useful to the nations' continued environmental assessment and policy review; and will undoubtedly provide a basis for the expansion of themes in future publications.

To this end, I must commend the Bahamas Environment, Science and Technology (BEST) Commission for their vision, researchers and consultants of the College of The Bahamas, along with various government and non-government agencies for their invaluable input in this process. Accordingly, I look forward to further collaborations and commitments to data gathering and analysis for future state of the environment reports.



Marcus C. Bethel, M.D.
Minister of Health



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Introduction

The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) Bahamas 2005 report represents the first of its kind for The Bahamas, which assesses the intrinsic and external aspects that characterize the socioeconomic and environmental nature of the country. As such, it seeks to provide an outlook that is important for local use and fulfillment of The Bahamas' international mandate. The production of this report has been made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Bahamas Environment, Science & Technology (BEST) Commission, researchers and consultants at The College of The Bahamas, along with various Government and Non-Government agencies

GEO Bahamas 2005 features four chapters that provide a clear overview of the current state of the environment in The Bahamas. The assessment provides data and other information that could benefit environmental, social and economic management, planning and decision making.

In the first chapter, various aspects of The Bahamas are captured in discussions on its geography, demography, lifestyles, infrastructure and economic sectors. One element echoed is that of the extraordinary beauty of the coastal features of The Bahamas, the most extensive archipelago in the Western hemisphere, coupled with the climate it enjoys, which provides the primary natural resources that fuel its major industry, tourism. This aspect, along with others, are

reefs and fishing industry help to express the significance of these resources. In addition, an account of land resources, waste management, fresh water resources, and the vulnerability to natural and technological hazards are similarly discussed.

The third chapter offers a policy response review of, existing and proposed environmental policies and legislation in The Bahamas. Particular emphasis is given to the provisions of the current legislation and strategies to manage and protect environmental issues, which may arise as a result of population growth, increased visitors and development pressures on the country's natural resources.

Finally, the fourth chapter provides specific recommendations from experts engaged in this process within The Bahamas, on each thematic area covered, to guide decision-makers as well as the general public in mitigating existing environmental threats. These recommendations are also offered to prevent or further minimize degradation of the Bahamian environment. Further, the information is provided to stimulate participation in the conservation and protection of the environment. No particular priority or suggestion of an appropriate managing authority is given.

The GEO Bahamas 2005 report hopes to bring about a greater local and international awareness of the state of the Bahamian environment. Additionally,

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