

Dominicana. Es particularmente notorio el solapamiento que se observa, entre las instituciones oficiales y privadas, en la implementación de una gran parte de las actividades y proyectos, lo que constituye una prueba de coordinación interinstitucional. Ha habido también, de parte de los organismos oficiales del sector, un mayor énfasis en la utili-

zación de las plantas nativas para los proyectos de reforestación, pero dichas instituciones no han sido igualmente exitosas en lo que se refiere al control de las actividades que contribuyen a la pérdida y degradación de hábitats, escuchándose con frecuencia denuncias sobre actividades nocivas para los bosques, incluso en áreas protegidas.

SOMBRERO ISLAND

SOMBRERO ISLAND CONTACTS

JUDY PIERCE

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I have compiled a list of names, addresses, and telephone/fax numbers of the pertinent contacts in Anguilla to whom folks can voice concerns over the proposed rocket launch facility on Sombrero. Please share these with others concerned with the development of the island.

Environmental Impact Statement for Sombrero:

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Anguilla Contacts:

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ANGUILLA NATIONAL TRUST SEEKS ASSISTANCE ON SOMBRERO ISLAND

The Anguilla National Trust is seeking assistance in the development a proposal for the use of Sombrero as a Heritage Tourism destination. This is part of our response to the proposal by Beal Aerospace of Texas to use this offshore cay as a rocket launching facility. Beal has done an EIA which has been criticised for inadequately addressing several ecological concerns.

For those who are yet unaware, the island is considered an important seabird nesting colony which is also home to the endemic black lizard (*Ameiva corvina*). The island also has heritage value for its lighthouse, graves and phosphate mining ruins. There are also some fears that the present tourist market would be negatively affected by the changed image of Anguilla with a highly industrialized development so close.

The Anguilla Archaeological and Historical Society had tentatively planned to conduct heritage tours but also needs help to be able to make some projections about how revenue could be generated in this way as an alternative to Beal's proposal. While our government and the UK government seem favorably inclined to approve the proposed development, the Trust is of the view that we have not helped our government to consider lower impact alternatives as we have presented no proposal with projected figures, etc.

This is what we need – help, but have no money to pay for such help. What we can offer is accommodation in Anguilla for whoever decides to contribute so generously.

I certainly hope there are some takers as we may be running out of time. Our ally in the UK lobbying against the proposed development is the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. There are also some concerns about impacts to fisheries in the area – this is a concern about an important aspect of Anguilla's livelihood.

Please help us to be able to provide such an alternative for consideration by the Government of Anguilla. I hope that someone will respond positively.

Thank you and best wishes

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ROCKET LAUNCHING ON SOMBRERO

LIANNA JARECKI

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You may have heard by now of the proposed rocket launching site on Sombrero Island. Sombrero is a rock that measures 1,609 m long and 412 m wide. It sits northwest of Anguilla, just 45 miles east of Anegada.

Clive Petrovic (HLSCC), Trish Bailey (ARK), and, now, I have been going over the environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the project, which was produced for the British National Space Agency by ICF Kaiser in Virginia. The EIA is frightening. It

describes impacts such as acid rain, sonic booms, and fuel spills, but NEVER mentions their potential effects on land immediately down wind and down current, the closest being the BVI. The entire project has been kept pretty quiet, and it is only now that people here are recognizing the potential consequences. Among other rockets, Beal Aerospace, the Texan company behind the project, intends to launch the BA-2 rocket, which has never been launched before. This rocket is one of the biggest

ever made, standing 230 feet high and weighing about 2,100,000 pounds. Beal Aerospace plans 4 launches in the year 2000 and 12 launches per year by 2002.

Beal Aerospace (owned by Andrew Beal, an investment banker) tried to build this in Hawaii in the 1980s but local objection stopped it. I hope we can do the same here. Any help in spreading the word is appreciated.

Here are some of the issues:

While the EIA only discusses impacts of jet fuels from the BA-2 rocket, other rockets that could be launched from Sombrero burn hypergolic rocket fuel which is very toxic and can produce flammable toxic vapor clouds. Other rocket propellants create hydrogen chloride vapor as they burn. This is toxic and catalyzes atmospheric ozone destruction.

Each rocket launch would (according to the EIA):

- Drop spent rocket stagings into the ocean; parts of these would sink while other parts (the fairing) would float with the current. The EIA claims that these parts will eventually become waterlogged and sink, but this is unlikely to occur before they wash up on our beaches in the BVI.
- Fuel from the spent stages would fall unburned in the ocean. This would be carried down current to the BVI within 24 to 36 hours (according to David Jones, our local meteorologist).
- The evaporation of jet fuel from the ocean (on its way here) would react chemically to form smog
- Organisms (plankton, fish, possibly parts of coral reefs) within a few meters of the ocean surface would die
- Atmospheric emissions from each rocket launch could cause acid rain, photochemical smog, ozone layer destruction, and greenhouse gas production.
- Carbon monoxide released from launched rockets react with nitrogen oxide to form nitric acid which would be absorbed by water vapor in clouds

(hence acid rain down wind, on us).

- The launch and the sonic boom would be clearly audible in the BVI. In fact, these noises will probably be louder than predicted in the EIA, in which calculations assume still air, because the wind will carry it here faster.
- Underwater shocks from the launches will have disturbing effects on marine mammals in the area and may even cause deafness if they are nearby. Sound travels a lot faster and farther underwater than it does in air. SCUBA divers in the BVI as well may be in for a shock.

These same underwater noises may effect fisheries. Fish are extremely sensitive to pressure differences in water. In fact, the line down each side of a fish, called a lateral line, is a highly specialized organ for sensing small pressure differences. Even so, the EIA claims that noise produced from launches will have no effect on fisheries. And, while on the topic of fisheries, we note that pelagic fish could potentially pick up toxins by feeding around Sombrero and then swim to the BVI where they might be caught and eaten.

Sombrero supports large populations of nesting seabirds during their breeding season in early summer. Nesting seabirds on Sombrero include several endangered species. The EIA states that Beal Aerospace will dismiss any employees found harassing seabirds. This seems irrelevant when all the birds will be barbecued during a launch if they are silly enough to try nesting on Sombrero after the island is paved over to build a launching pad.

Sombrero has an endemic ground lizard (*Ameiva corvina*). The EIA states that Beal Aerospace employees will feed the lizard so they don't go extinct (this is thoughtful but unlikely to be effective)

An accident causing spilled fuel in Sombrero will directly impact the BVI. Fuel may cause massive death of coral reefs. And our largest, healthiest reef, Horseshoe Reef, is directly down current and only 45 miles from Sombrero. The proposed Payload Processing Facility intended to process three payloads (107,000 pounds of rocket fuel) simultaneously. Sombrero is exposed to large ocean swells and has no protected water. Unloading fuel from even a large barge under rough conditions may prove rather tricky.