

# U.S. students completing programme in coral reef research



Three students from U.S. universities are now completing a three-month institute for Tropical Marine Ecology programme tailored to provide them with hands-on training in marine biology by combining field research on coastal ecosystems, and excursions around the island to learn about its history and culture. Amy Diamond of the University of California at Santa

Barbara, Wendy Lehman of Eastern Michigan University, and Don Lucas of the University of Texas at Austin, have been engaged in in-class courses in Tropical Marine Ecology, Natural History, and Classification of Marine Organisms, and Marine Research Conservation.

The primary focus of the non-profit, interdisciplinary programme, directed and

## WAWU Convention, Delegates Conference April 29

Plans to deal with the threats and challenges facing the WAWU and the Trade Union Movement as a whole are expected to emerge from the Waterfront and Allied Workers union 25th Annual Convention and 11th Biennial Delegates Conference at its Headquarters, on 43 Hillsborough Street, on April 29, 2001. The Convention will hear messages from local, re-

founded by Dr. Sasha Steiner, President of ITME, is coral reef research in which the three students have learnt snorkelling and scuba research methods as well as practice in writing and presenting scientific publications.

During the programme, the students listened to lectures by some prominent Dominicans including Dr. Lennox Honychurch, Arrington James, Raphael Joseph, Harold Guiste, and Terry Raymond.

The students are now completing independent research projects on different aspects of the marine environment at Tarou Point, also known as Rodney's Rock. Tarou Point is a remnant of

an ancient lava flow originating from Morne Trois Pitons. The weathered remains of this volcanic eruption project westward into the Caribbean Sea south of the village of Tarou.

The submerged rocky walls of this site are encrusted with coral, sponges, and macroalgae. The coral-covered boulders also provide a habitat for reef fish, some of which may be under heavy fishing pressure. While Tarou Point is frequented by local fishermen and is also gaining popularity as a prime snorkelling and diving site, no in-depth ecological studies have been done here. In their research projects the students have been survey-

ing the marine environment of this site, identifying and quantifying the species of fish, coral, and other organisms that exist here. This baseline data will be used to monitor the health of this habitat.

The students are encouraging the implementation of sustainable practices of fishing and tourism in order to prevent coral reef degradation and the loss of ecologically important fish.

Data collected so far has revealed over 65 species of reef fishes and 19 species of stony corals at Tarou Point. The final document of the students' research projects will be presented in May and submitted to governmental as well as non-

governmental agencies in Dominica.

In expressing their gratitude to the people of Dominica for providing them with a beautiful learning environment, the three students expressed their wish to see Dominican students participate with them in their future classes and research.

Interested students who have completed secondary school and who would like to learn more about marine biology should contact Dr. Steiner at [admin@itme.org](mailto:admin@itme.org), or at the Springfield Estate. ITME serves not only to educate students interested in marine science but also to assist in the conservation of the natural resources and ecosystems of Dominica.

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