

“Sustainable Tourism...0 Emissions...”

February 3, 2009 at the United Nations Headquarters

On Tuesday, February 3 the International Solar Energy Society, New York (ISES, NY) hosted a meeting entitled “Sustainable Tourism...0 Emissions” at the United Nations Headquarters. Ms. Roma Stibravy introduced speaker Mr. David Sklar, CEO of S.T.A.R. Island. ISES, established in 1954, became a UN accredited NGO in 1973. ISES NY is part of the umbrella group UN NGO Sustainability, along with the Bangladesh Women’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI), Ms. Stibravy is Chairperson (<http://www.unngosustainability.org/>).

S.T.A.R. (Sustainable Terrain and Resources) Island is located in the Bahamas just minutes by boat from Eleuthera and Harbour Island. The first buildings are scheduled to be completed in 2009 at which point S.T.A.R. Island enterprises will be the first carbon-neutral island in the world. It was mentioned that resort proposals by actor Leonardo DiCaprio and Virgin CEO Richard Branson involving lands in the Virgin Islands and Belize, respectively, are also underway. Mr. Sklar, an “eco-tech” with a degree in architecture, heads Dalu Design Group, a small firm based in Savannah Georgia that caters to eco-friendly designs and lifestyles. He was recently appointed to *Newsweek*’s Global Environment Leadership Advisory Board for his innovative eco-sensitive design solutions. Mr. Sklar believes that our current dependency on fossil fuels strains the economy, threatens security, costs lives and pollutes the environment. He described the problem of dependency on fossil fuels as one of simple math: in the future there will not be enough fuel to sustain the basic services on which we have come to rely. Mr. Sklar believes the solution is a simple one - clean energy - in this case a luxury island resort community that is fully functional off the grid.



Mr. Sklar describes his architectural philosophy as a holistic design approach; the architecture both integrates the technology and is aesthetically pleasing. The S.T.A.R. Island development team has been working closely alongside various consultants, including Senior Energy Advisor Mr. Scott Sklar (no relation to Mr. David Sklar). Mr. Scott Sklar, President of the Stella Group, Ltd., is one of the leading experts in applying clean energy. He has based the latest innovations of the United States military in alternative energy technology to the development of S.T.A.R. Island.

S.T.A.R. Island is divided into three general areas which have been explicitly designed to balance with the natural environment: the boutique hotel, the amenity core (including hotel, club house, spa, fitness center, marina, etc.) and the residential area. Mr. Sklar describes the **micro-grid** as the most important element of the project. Every building on the island will be capable of generating its own power from a photovoltaic roof and a small wind turbine. The grid will link all of the buildings together as well as to the core so that if one building cannot meet its own power needs, it will be able to use excess power generated by other buildings. Moreover, the core of the grid will have multiple backup systems including a battery powered storage system that can last up to three days. In all, this carbon-neutral island is capable of generating power in multiple ways, using a mix of solar, wind, hydro and biofuels.

Mr. Sklar said the island will function as a working prototype and plans to build a conservation center as well as implement a “back of the house” tour on which visitors will learn firsthand how the island’s power system works. He also anticipates implementing an outreach program to aid local communities in transitioning to a micro-grid system which will allow them to connect with their neighbors to pool energy resources.

One question raised at the meeting concerned what the presence of humans might do to an island that has never before had human inhabitants. In this regard Mr. Sklar and his team have been working alongside the Bahamian Environmental, Science and Technology Trust to protect the local bio-diversity and reverse the effects of pollution. The S.T.A.R. Island team has created a plan to not only clean up the island after years of dumping, but also to restore the bio-diversity that has been destroyed. They will both replant and bring in species as the island is developed.

Every part of S.T.A.R. Island has been designed to protect and better the environment; for example, the roads will be built so that drainage flows into a natural, fresh-water pond. Each building on the island will have its own FAST wastewater treatment system, a system developed by the U.S. Coastguard. The FAST system allows for expansion because it does not require every building to be hooked up to one central waste management system, instead as each building is completed it is connected to its own small system. Mr. Sklar has also prepared for up to a category five hurricane and have special impact glass and the buildings are made of concrete.

The total cost for S.T.A.R. Island is expected to be between 150 and 200 million dollars. In answer to another question, Mr. Sklar acknowledged that building a carbon-neutral

resort is more expensive than building a resort that is dependent on fossil fuels; however, he believes that this is only true in the short-term. In the long run he expects the resort to save money because of its green technology. Each building on the island will be fully energy independent which will allow Mr. Sklar to develop the island progressively, adding more buildings as demand and circumstances allow. He looks forward to updating the resort's technology as the newest sustainable advancements become available. Mr. Sklar hopes that his luxury resort will show people that green building can be done in an attractive way and that visitors will return home and implement a better, cleaner standard of living in their own houses. S.T.A.R. Island helps illustrate that sustainability without sacrifice is not only possible but also beautiful, functional and good for the planet.

For more information:

On January 11, 2009, The New York Times published an article on S.T.A.R. Island:
<http://travel.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/travel/11eco.html?scp=5&sq=david%20sklar&st=cs>