jetBlue

New Report from JetBlue and The Nature Conservancy Uses AI Technology to Evaluate the Impact of Natural Resources on Tourism

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-- Results Show the Caribbean Depends on Tourism, Which Relies Heavily on Healthy Coral Reefs --

-- JetBlue is Donating 50 Flights to The Nature Conservancy for Scientists to Travel to the Caribbean to Further Research and Help Conserve Coral Reefs --

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- JetBlue (NASDAQ: JBLU), along with The Nature Conservancy, whose mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends, today released a new report focusing on the connection between natural resources and tourism. The report's results revealed that the Caribbean is more dependent on tourism than any other region across the globe and highlights new data on the benefits that coral reefs provide to the travel industry and the region's economy.

Coral reef health is diminishing from impacts such as pollution and climate change. This report, also supported by Microsoft and the World Travel & Tourism Council, utilized machine learning and artificial intelligence to quantify the significant value that reefs contribute to the Caribbean economy through reef-adjacent activities, such as sailing, diving and snorkeling, and the direct connection on tourism. The value of reef-associated tourism is estimated at more than $7.9 billion annually from over 11 million visitors. This accounts for 23 percent of all tourism spending and is equivalent to more than 10 percent of the region's gross domestic product.

This marks the second study funded by JetBlue to measure Caribbean ecosystems and correlate it to travel industry revenue. ***"Estimating Reef-Adjacent Tourism Value in the Caribbean"*** follows 2015's *"EcoEarnings: A Shore Thing."* The updated reportanalyzes the component of the travel sector that depends on coral reefs but does not make direct use of them in the way that diving or snorkeling does. Reef-adjacent tourism value comes from beach activities, coastal views, delicious seafood and tranquil waters for swimming and boating—many of the reasons people flock to the Caribbean. The new report can be found here.

"The Caribbean and Latin America account for one-third of JetBlue's flying. The health and long-term growth of this region is directly tied to our bottom line," said Sophia Mendelsohn, head of sustainability and environmental, social governance, JetBlue. "This study proves the relationship between healthy coral reefs and tourism, and the overall financial stability of the Caribbean. It's time for conservation organizations like The Nature Conservancy and the tourism industry to work together on solutions to conserve the region's resources."

"Scientific evidence shows that living corals in the Caribbean have declined over 60% in just the last three decades alone. The Nature Conservancy is currently deploying innovative solutions to protect and restore coral reefs throughout the region; we must however move faster to outpace the current rate of degradation and increasing threats to coral reefs" commented Dr. Luis Solórzano, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy in the Caribbean. "Millions of people in the Caribbean depend on coral reefs as a source of livelihood, and the region is known as paradise to so many travelers from around the globe. It is ours our responsibility to protect the natural wonders, like coral reefs, that sustain both the Caribbean economy and tourism alike."

The methodology for this study was derived from one of the most prevalent ways people communicate today – social media. Social content was analyzed using Microsoft's machine learning. More than 86,000 social images and nearly 6.7 million text posts were studied for identifiers that indicated reef-adjacent activities. The social media metrics were layered with traditionally sourced data from government agencies and the tourism industry, such as surveys from visitor centers, sales figures reported by travel-associated businesses and economic data from government accounting systems.

"A more sustainable future depends upon our ability to better model, monitor and manage natural resources like coral reefs, and that will require human ingenuity paired with AI," said Dr. Lucas Joppa, chief environmental officer at Microsoft. "For this report, Azure Cognitive Services helped accurately identify coral reef images throughout the Caribbean that were already available on the internet so they could then be used in a tourism-based economic valuation model. We're proud to continue our work with The Nature Conservancy to enhance conservation planning and economic modeling with the power of Azure and AI for Earth."

Other key findings of this study that directly impact JetBlue and Caribbean tourism include:

- The Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, where JetBlue is the largest airline to both islands, benefit from tourist spending of more than $1 billion per year. This tourism revenue is directly linked to reefs.
- The Bahamas, Cayman Islands and Puerto Rico receive more than one million visitors per year whose visits are directly linked to coral reefs.
- The top 10 percent highest-value reef areas each generate more than $5.7 million and 7,000 visitors per square kilometer per year. These reefs are scattered in almost every country and territory in the region and have a large proportion of high-value reefs, each with an average spend value equal to

over $3 million per square kilometer per year.

The countries most dependent on reef-adjacent tourism include many small island nations and JetBlue destinations, like Antigua & Barbuda, Bermuda and St. Maarten, where there may be relatively few alternative sources of income outside of reef-associated tourism.

Only 35 percent of Caribbean reefs are positioned where they do not draw revenue for the region's tourism sector, indicating that there are little to no options to expand reef-associated activities to new areas. Most of the reefs not used for tourism are in remote locations.

The potential impacts to tourism in the Caribbean include climate change and other threats to coral reefs, like overfishing, pollution and coastal development. As tourism is an essential pillar of all Caribbean economies, depletion of natural resources could lead to economic and social risks. With 65 percent of the Caribbean's reefs generating tourism dollars, the results reveal an opportunity for tourism-associated businesses — including cruise lines, airlines, and hotels to work together and continue to invest in protecting the region's environmental health.

As a follow-up to this study, JetBlue is donating 50 flights to The Nature Conservancy for scientists to travel to the region to further research and help conserve coral reefs. JetBlue depends on natural resources and a healthy environment to keep its business running smoothly. Natural resources are essential for the airline to fly and tourism relies on having beautiful, natural and preserved destinations for customers to visit. The airline focuses on issues that have the potential to impact its business. Customers, crewmembers and community are key to JetBlue's sustainability strategy. Demand from these groups for responsible operations is one of the motivations behind the airline's efforts to reduce its environmental impact.

About JetBlue

JetBlue is New York's Hometown Airline®, and a leading carrier in Boston, Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood, Los Angeles (Long Beach), Orlando, and San Juan. JetBlue carries more than 40 million customers a year to 100+ cities in the U.S., Caribbean, and Latin America with an average of 1,000 daily flights. For more information please visit jetblue.com.

About The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. Working in 72 countries, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. To learn more, visit www.nature.org or follow @nature_press on Twitter.

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