



# THE DPNR BULLETIN

4th Quarter - 2016



Commissioner Dawn L. Henry, Esq., and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources welcome you to a new edition of our quarterly

newsletter, The DPNR BULLETIN. The BULLETIN will serve as an informative tool for the 10 divisions of the department to enlighten the general public of its programs, activities, advisories, and upcoming events.

DPNR is responsible for the administration and enforcement of all laws pertaining to the preservation and conservation of fish and wildlife, trees and vegetation, coastal zones, cultural and historical resources, water resources, and air, water and oil pollution. DPNR is also responsible for oversight and compliance of land survey, land subdivision, development and building permits, code enforcement, earth change permits, zoning administration, boat registration, and mooring and anchoring of vessels within territorial waters.

This agency is mandated to promote, implement, support, maintain and coordinate library and information services and museums, and preserve items of historical significance in the archives of the Virgin Islands. The Department is further obligated to formulate functional

development plans for the territory's human, economic and physical resources of the Territory.

DPNR has ten (10) primary operating divisions, each with its own unique set of administrative and/or regulatory mandates. The divisions are: 1) Business and Administrative Services, 2) Coastal Zone Management, 3) Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning, 4) Environmental Enforcement, 5) Environmental Protection, 6) Fish and Wildlife, 7) VI State Historic Preservation, 8) Libraries, Archives, and Museums, 9) Building Permits and 10) The Virgin Islands Council on the Arts.

*The mission of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources is to protect, maintain and manage the natural and cultural resources of the Virgin Islands through proper coordination of economic and structural development in collaboration with other local, federal and non-government organizations, for the benefit of present and future generations so they will live safer, fuller lives in harmony with their environmental and cultural heritage.*

## **DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT**



### ***Legislative Hearing - Mooring Fee Increase***

The Division of Environmental Enforcement (DEE) conducted three town hall meetings in April; one in each district to receive input from the boating community on the departments' proposed mooring fee increases. Opinions for and against the proposal were voiced at these meetings; all of which were taken into consideration with the development of the legislation. On June 29, 2016 Bill No. 31-0333 was sponsored by Senator Novell Frances and voted on unanimously by the full body of the 31<sup>st</sup> Legislature and is now awaiting the signature of approval from Governor Kenneth E. Mapp.

DPNR supported amending the legislation which increased mooring fees from \$5.00 per foot to \$10.00 per foot for recreational vessels and \$15.00 per foot annually for live-a-boards and \$20.00 per foot for commercial registered vessels.

The Department also supported the following amendments:

- a) Anchoring fees for live-a-boards **only** from \$2.00 per foot per month to \$3.00 per foot per month.
- b) An increase on late fees from \$25.00 to \$75.00 per mooring per month
- c) The implementation of a **\$100.00** permit fee for administrative costs and if the permittee requests the Divisions' marine assets to be deployed to provide a safety zone for an event (ie. boat races,

regattas, fireworks, etc.) an additional **\$500.00** fee.

The projected increase in revenue from Bill No. 31-0333 will supplement the day to day operational costs of the Division, which have continued to rise throughout the years. Note that these fees were initially implemented in 1992, and have **not** been increased since their inception.

### ***Boating Under the Influence Arrest***



On June 17<sup>th</sup>, St. Croix DPNR Enforcement Officers responded to a report of a sunken vessel at the Christiansted Board Walk. Upon investigation, fishing charter passengers reported that the captain was possibly intoxicated. DPNR officers along with the VI Police Department conducted a field sobriety test which confirmed that the captain was indeed intoxicated which most likely led to the vessel sinking. The individual was arrested and charge for Boating Under the Influence (BUI), under Title 25 Chapter (15) Sec 297 (A). Bail was set at \$1000. The case is still pending.

### ***Electrical Work @ Gustav Quetel Fish House***



The Division of Environmental Enforcement (DEE) completed the individual stall electrical meters for the Gustave Quétel Fish House on St. Thomas. Work began on July 18<sup>th</sup> and took 4 weeks for completion. This project removed the burden of the electrical usage from the Division and placed it on the individual tenant. The impact will result in a cost savings of approximately \$90,000 annually. The Division is also in the process of vetting plumbers for the plumbing portion of the facility. Once completed, this will add another \$ 70,000 annual savings to the Divisions budget.

## **DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

### **SNAKES ON ST. CROIX !**

From January 2000 to January 2012 only one snake (a boa constrictor) was caught on St. Croix by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. Since January 2012 more than **26** boa constrictors have been caught or documented by the Division of Fish and Wildlife!

It is pretty clear that something happened in 2012 that lead to a mass increase of snakes loose on the island. Remember what happened? HOVENSA closed, which led to the loss of jobs, and thousands of people leaving the island. It appears that many people left their pets behind, this includes snakes. The first boas we caught were in the 6 to 8-foot range. In the past few months we have caught 12-14 inches long boas, suggesting that they are now breeding. Being ovoviviparous (live bearing), each female can produce 20-50 live hatchlings after a 110-150-day gestation period. Recently, scientists have found that boa constrictors can have parthenogenetic reproduction (asexual reproduction).

All the boas captured have been from the west end of St. Croix. The DFW is working closely with St. Croix's west end residents to catch and

remove released snakes. A question that the Division is often asked, "what harm do they cause?" The *Boa constrictor*, also known as the red tailed boa, is considered an apex predator. Boa constrictors are generally ambush predators, so often lie in wait for an appropriate prey to come along. However, they have also been known to actively hunt, particularly in regions with a low concentration of suitable prey.



Hunting behaviour generally occurs at night.

The boa constrictor kills its prey by constriction. Although it may have a preference for small mammals such as rodents and bats, it also eats birds, amphibians, lizards, iguanas, and other snakes. It can be found in forested areas, grass lands, cultivated sites, and suburbs. We have caught snakes in both terrestrial and arboreal habits. In its native range the snakes have been



seen entering caves to catch flying bats.

Boa constrictors can affect agricultural activities. For example, causing damage to chicken farms, eating baby goats and sheep. It also threatens all our native species of amphibians, birds, lizards, and bats. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) considers that this species can represent a threat to humans, particularly babies and small children.

So far the only large snakes positively identified on St. Croix are the boa constrictors. There may be other species loose as well. DPNR advises the public to call 911 and report the snake immediately. 911 will contact DFW and we will respond. If possible maintain visual contact with the snake, but do not try and catch it. We do not want anyone getting hurt by any snake.

### **Presentations**

Classroom presentations continue to be the most effective method of education and public outreach. Presentations to the territory's public, private and parochial schools, as well as fieldtrips and celebrations are key components of the Aquatic Education Program. The DFW-Aquatic Education program focuses primarily on the youth of the VI since they are the most impressionable segment of the community. Through student education we hope that they share with their families what they have learned thus spreading the knowledge even further.



*Students at Salt River Bay, having a field day and learning about our marine ecosystem*



*Alexander Henderson School finishing their exploration of Mahogany Ghut.*



*Exploring Mahogany ghut with Campers from the Police Athletic League.*

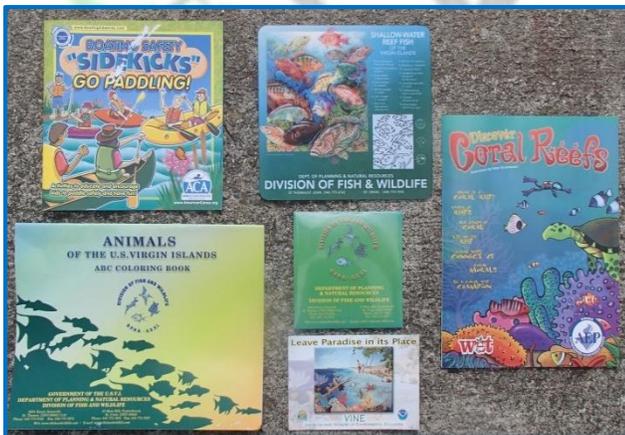


*Central High school marine science class at Long Point.*

## Resource materials

Resource materials are the secondary method of reaching out to the community. Our educational materials include posters, videos, brochures and coloring books. These materials are distributed free of charge to students, teachers and visitors. We are currently in the process of updating the appearance of our brochures, making them more user friendly so that a wider audience can be reached. We have redesigned many of our brochures by adding new information, using color images and using a better quality paper.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife is working on a new website. This site will have digital versions of DFW-produced brochures, posters, animal fact sheets, coloring books and a USVI fish Guide.



Our main objective is to inform the public of the unique marine resources and the fishing opportunities we have in the USVI. Additionally, upon request we provide presentations and field trips for our students and the public, to learn about our aquatic resources and how we can become better stewards of our resources. We also participate in fishing tournaments and our local fairs.

Some of our recent activities include: participation in the St. Thomas and St. Croix Agricultural fairs, providing presentations and field trips for our local schools, assisting teachers with development of environmental lesson plans,

and providing information for students working on science fair projects.

## DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

### *DPNR held workshops on Environmental Compliance*

Two workshops were held recently to educate Dry Cleaners and Laundromat business owners and managers on Best Management Practices and Environmental Compliance Assistance of the Federal and Local regulatory laws that govern their industry. These workshops were sponsored by the VI Small Business Environmental Assistance Program, Division of Environmental Protection in the Department of Planning & Natural Resources in collaboration with the VI Small Business Development Center (hosted by the University of the Virgin Islands).



The St. Croix workshop was held on Monday, July 25, 2016 at VI SBDC Training Facility, at 4100 Sion Farm Shopping Center, Suite 16 next to Centerline Bakery. The St. Thomas/ St. John workshop was held on Wednesday, August 24, 2016 at the VI SBDC Training Facility located at Nisky Center, 2nd floor, Suite 720. Both workshops gave a general overview of

regulations, best management practices, pollution prevention, and safety techniques. Using these performance base approach techniques will also help make the work environment safer for all employees, promote better community relations, and protect the environment.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

The Department welcomes new employees that have recently joined our team:

- **Kim Blackett**, Assistant Director  
Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums
- **Philsbert Codrington**, Historic Preservation Technician
- **James Lewis**, Assistant to the Territorial Archivist
- **Latoya Williams**, Environmental Specialist I
- **Afiya George, Dorian James, Alexander Joseph and Rene Torrens**  
Conservation Enforcement Officers
- **Kelly Davis**, Planning Technician
- **Matthew Kammann**, Fisheries Biologist I
- **Alecia Rawlins**, Office Assistant
- **Kerion Joseph**, Library Aide and
- **Charmaine Lans**, Office Assistant.

Commissioner Henry also thanks Betty Mahoney, Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts and Roland Moolenaar, Conservation Enforcement Officer for their service and wishes them farewell and congratulations on their retirement.

DPNR employees that have not completed the Health Risk Assessment on MyCigna.com, please do this before the deadline date of September 30, 2016 or face the \$500 penalty.

## DIVISION OF COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT

Division of Coastal Zone Management, St. Croix East End Marine Park hosted its 3rd Annual STXEEMP Summer ECO Camp from June 27<sup>th</sup> to July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The ECO Camp is based at the STXEEMP Great Pond office and was held Monday through Friday except for VI holidays, from 9:00am to 4:00pm.



The ECO Camp engaged all of its camper's senses for maximum learning; while, highlighting the ecological, cultural, and recreational components of the STXEEMP. The majority of its activities takes place within the eastern end of St. Croix. STXEEMP also worked in conjunction with other environmental partners and agencies to maximize and enhance our ECO Camp summer outreach curriculum and schedule field trips to other areas of St. Croix. STXEEMP ECO Campers were exposed to a hands-on, interactive curriculum highlighting ecosystems found within the STXEEMP such as coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, salt ponds, beaches, and more.



The Division of Coastal Zone Management continues to present at major outreach events throughout the territory.

For FY 2016, CZM increased its efforts for proper watershed management, and implement more storm water best management practices in our priority watersheds. CZM will be procuring management plans for the Magens Bay and Salt River watersheds during this fiscal year. In addition, preliminary studies on Great Pond will be done by UVI, moving forward efforts to restore Great Pond as a fisheries habitat.

CZM will be seeking public input on a five-year strategic plan that will guide CZM in one of nine priority coastal focus areas. A contract with Geographic Consulting, Inc. has been secured. The first part will be an independent assessment of the coastal habitat areas of the US Virgin Islands, and a qualitative assessment on the Department's ability to manage those resources. The strategic plan is scheduled to take 7 months to complete and public input will be solicited along the way.

CZM has increased its effective management of submerged and filled submerged land areas. Real Property Records Officer was hired to assist in this endeavor, and the Records Officer was provided with property management tools to increase the efficiency of collections. The software will also assist in creating longevity in the process as collections have fluctuated over the years with the coming and going of personnel.

CZM will seek to begin the process of updating its Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) requirements. New to be added will be a description of how applicants are considering the effects of climate into the proposed designs. It is anticipated that several models will be

available and referenced by the EAR, provided that the models are downscaled enough for our small islands. As the Virgin Islands already experiences effects of climate variability, it is important that these effects be considered when applications are being evaluated.

THINK GREEN

## Upcoming Events:

DATE & TIME	SUBJECT	PLACE
<b>PUBLIC HEARINGS</b>		
<p>Thursday, July 28<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p><b>DPNR Application No. ZAT-16-3:</b> Dale LeFebvre (authorized agent, Stephanie Berry) requesting a use variance be granted to the R-2 (Residential- Low Density-One and Two Family) zoned Parcel No. 19-2-101 and 19-2-102 Estate Smith Bay, Nos. 1, 2, and 3 East End Quarter, St. Thomas, to allow for the conversion of a personal office space into a business office space.</p> <p><b>DPNR Application No. ZAT-16-4:</b> Orlando Martinez (authorized agent, Jennifer Jones) for Parcel No. 148-1 Estate Anna’s Retreat, No. 1 New Quarter, St. Thomas from R-2 (Residential-Low Density –One and two Family) to B-3 (Business Scattered). The purpose of the request is to convert a residential building for commercial activity.</p> <p><b>DPNR Application No. ZAT-16-5:</b> Lucita and Laurie Francis requesting a use variance be granted to the R-2 (Residential-Low Density – One and Two Family) zoned Parcel No. 125 Estate Smith Bay, Nos. 1, 2, &amp; 3 East End Quarter, St. Thomas to allow for the operation of a feed shop with associated storage.</p>	<p>St. Thomas DPNR Main Conference Room</p>
<p>Thursday, July 28<sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>DPNR Application No. ZAT-16-6:</b> Sergio LaPlante requesting a use variance be granted to the R-4 (Residential- Medium Density) zoned Lot Nos. 52 &amp; 54 First Avenue (combined), First Subdivision of Estate Thomas, St. Thomas to allow for the operation of a stationary food van (restaurant).</p> <p><b>DPNR Application No. ZAT-16-7:</b> Development Partners International, LLC (authorized agent, David A. Bornn) for Parcel Nos. 6L-Remainder and 6L-25 Estate Nazareth, No. 1 Red Hook Quarter, St. Thoma from R-1 (Residential- Low Density) to W-1 (Waterfront- Pleasure). The purpose of the request is to consolidate lots for a mixed-use project.</p> <p><b>DPNR Application No. ZAT-16-8:</b> Stuart Florida Property, LLC for Parcel No. 2C Estate Contant, No. 7A Southside Quarter, St. Thomas from B-2 (Business-Secondary/Neighborhood) to C (Commercial). The purpose of the request is to allow for warehouse and storage services</p>	<p>St. Thomas DPNR Main Conference Room</p>
<b>INFORMATIONAL MEETING</b>		
<p>Monday, August 1<sup>st</sup> 6:00 p.m.</p>	<p><i>Private Equity Finance for Plot No. 2BC Estate Sion Farm, Queen Quarter</i></p>	<p>Florence A Williams Public Library, St. Croix</p>
<b>DECISION MEETINGS</b>		
<p>Tuesday, August 10<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>St. Croix CZM Commission</i></p> <p><b>Evolve USVI, LLC</b> - The Fred proposing to construct a beachfront boutique resort &amp; spa. “The Fred” will consist of 23 hotel rooms, a restaurant, bar, spa and large in ground pool on Strand Street in the historic town of Frederiksted on the island of St. Croix.</p> <p><b>VIPA Ann E. Abramson Pier Modification</b> - requesting that CZM Permit CZX-36-99(W) be modified to allow for redesigned stairs, minor dredging, replacement of fender piles with pier fenders and change the three-pile dolphins to seven-pile fenders in the vicinity of the recently modified existing service pier on the south side of the Ann E. Abramson Cruise Facility in Frederiksted, St. Croix.</p>	<p>St. Croix DPNR Main Conference Room</p>

*DPNR intends to keep the general public informed about the protection and management of our natural and cultural resources via THE DPNR BULLETIN. To receive copies of this newsletter contact Jamal Nielsen, Editor, at 773-1082 or email at [jamal.nielsen@dpnr.vi.gov](mailto:jamal.nielsen@dpnr.vi.gov).*

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