



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[DPRN WARNS PUBLIC OF STONY CORAL TISSUE LOSS DISEASE](#)

Commissioner Nominee Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning & Natural Resources announces that the Division of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) is alerting the Virgin Islands community of the emergence of the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD), which has recently been found on St. Thomas.

SCTLD is a lethal coral disease that can affect roughly half of the coral species in the US Virgin Islands. The cause of the disease is unknown, but scientists do know that it is transmittable through water. SCTLD will attack all stony corals, but will affect brain and pillar corals first, and then move quickly through the rest of the stony coral, leaving behind large areas of bright white skeletons. SCTLD doesn't pose a threat to human health, but will damage corals that provide food, tourism value, and physical protection from waves during storms.

DPRN is asking the general public to be on the look out for this disease when you are swimming, snorkeling, or diving throughout the territory. Look for large areas of bright white skeleton on corals, especially on brain and pillar corals. Report sightings and Visit www.reefconnect.org/bleachwatch and download the Bleach Watch app, or report directly through the website. Be sure to include photos and location information. If you are unable to make a report, call Coastal Zone Management at 340-774-3320 or email czm@dprn.vi.gov

A public meeting is being scheduled for Wednesday, February 20th at 6:30 pm on St. Thomas. Location is TBD. Information will be published on the Coastal Zone Management website at dpr.vi.gov/czm/SCTLD as well as on the DPNR Facebook page.

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For more information about this topic, please call DPNR at 340-774-3320 extension 5115.

And remember please protect all coral! Don't anchor on coral, know what's below when you drop your anchor. Stand only in sand. Don't touch, kick, or stand on coral. Every living piece of coral is valuable.