



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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March 23, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR CONTINUES MISSION TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources announces that the Division of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) is pleased to update the community on the progress of the “**REFILL BOTTLES, NOT DUMPSTERS**” program. Since February 2020, CZM has delivered over 1,500 reusable water bottles to students in the territory in an effort to spread the message to **Refuse, Reduce, and Reuse**. This program also facilitates the purchase and installation of ELKAY BOTTLE FILL STATIONS. These fill stations are compliant with COVID-19 safety protocols and boasts a touchless operation that will provide chilled and filtered water.

Recently, CZM distributed over 1,000 reusable water bottles and is in the process of installing five bottle fill stations at Eulalie Rivera Elementary on St. Croix, and Lockhart Elementary and Ivana Eudora Kean High School on St. Thomas. DPNR has collaborated with the VI Department of Education in identifying more schools to implement this program. “Our goal is to complete 3 more schools throughout the territory this school year,” said Kristina Edwards, CZM Education and Outreach Coordinator.

REFILL BOTTLES, NOT DUMPSTERS was started as part of the VI Clean Coasts eco-certification program run by CZM. This program helps VI businesses to make more environmentally friendly choices such as eliminating the use of expanded polystyrene and reducing the amount of waste created by single use plastics. “The Department expanded the program into our schools for a couple of reasons: to help families save money from purchasing multiple bottles of water a day for their children; to help schools to reduce the amount of waste created by those bottles; and to alert children of the negative effects of drinking out of plastic bottles,” added Commissioner Oriol.

Participating schools receive reusable water bottles designed and provided by My Brother's Workshop, an invaluable partner in the program. Each student in participating grades receives their bottle and learns about waste reduction, the issues of marine debris in the territory, and is invited to decorate their bottle to instill ownership and pride. The schools also receive bottle fill stations that have chillers and easy to replace filtration systems. "Each unit has a counter display so they can see how many single use water bottles have stayed out of the landfill, and possibly our beaches," concluded Edwards. For more information and full-resolution photos, please contact Kitty Edwards at kristina.edwards@dpr.vi.gov



In February 2020 (pre-covid) Lockhart Elementary students in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade received their reusable water bottles. – Photo Credit Chrystie Payne, My Brother's Workshop



Refill Station installed at Eulalie Rivera Elementary School on St. Croix, ready for students and their reusable water bottles.