

National Park Service
Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve
Coastal Zone Management Enforceable Policies Determination
Rehabilitate Salt River Contact Station

INTRODUCTION

In September 2017, Hurricane Maria, a Category 5 hurricane, devastated much of St. Croix, including the Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve (SARI). Hurricane Maria caused substantial damage to the SARI Contact Station and it remains closed today. Approximately 80-percent of the Contact Station roof shingles were lost, resulting in significant water intrusion and damage to the rafters on approximately 50-percent of the structure. Additionally, multiple concrete block and rafter pockets were crushed, windows and doors were damaged, and the entire roof was lifted and removed from the two-story observation tower. Many other elements of the Contact Station including the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are in poor condition due to impacts of the hurricane.

The SARI Contact Station is the main visitor contact and information center for the SARI. The 1,015-acre park is jointly managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Government of the United States Virgin Islands (GVI). SARI is home to vitally important estuarine ecosystems of mangroves, coral reefs, and a submarine canyon. SARI is also home to important historic resources of every major period of human habitation in the Virgin Islands. The location of the Contact Station is a popular visitor destination and education center with over 15,000 visits in 2017. The site has a vantage point to oversee multiple historical and ecological features. The loss of use of the Contact Station has had a detrimental impact on the SARI's ability to offer basic visitor contact services and provide interpretive features and educational programs. The NPS has a requirement to re-establish the Contact Station within the existing real property to the greatest extent possible in order to serve SARI's visitor contact and educational outreach needs. Maintaining improvements within the existing footprint will meet SARI operational needs, minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources, and meet NPS accessibility, sustainability, and resiliency standards.

The project proposes the rehabilitation of the Contact Station within its existing foundation footprint with repairs and alterations to the existing building to meet current code requirements. The Contact Station will remain within the existing footprint but will be reconfigured with an open-air interpretive gallery, accessible restroom facilities and a classroom. The lower level exterior walls will remain and any cracks in the structure or finish will be repaired. The existing apartment building will be updated to secured offices and storage for law enforcement as well as office space for employees and volunteers. Public restrooms will be provided close to the Contact Station and the main pedestrian entry. In support of the re-establishment of the existing Contact Station, the NPS is proposing to widen portions the existing road with pervious materials, increase the existing parking area with pervious materials, install a new septic system, install low impact stormwater retention best management practices (BMPs), and install building-mounted photovoltaic arrays.

In accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] §1456(c) this document provides the GVI, Department of Planning and Natural Resource (DPNR) and Coastal Zone Management Division (CZM) with the NPS's Federal Consistency Determination under Coastal Zone Management Act section 307(c) (1) and 15 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 930, Section b, subpart C for proposed actions to occur on NPS federally-owned land at SARI. The proposed project is located in DPNR CZM Tier 1 Zone (as shown in Figure 1 below) per the Interactive ArcGIS Map on the DPNR CZM Permitting website.

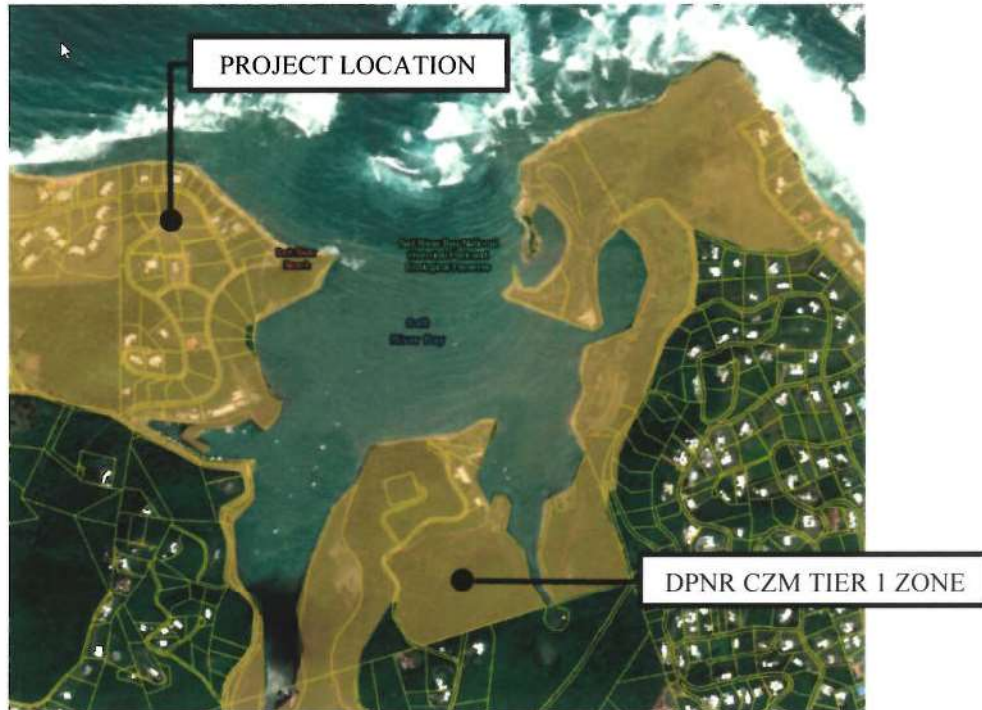


Figure 1 – Project Location and DPNR CZM Tier 1 Zone (shaded yellow)

NPS has reviewed the VI Code, Title 12 Conservation, Chapter 21, Virgin Island Coastal Zone Management (VICZM) Section § 903 b Findings and Goals and found that 8 of the 11 enforceable polices are applicable to the proposed action within the Coastal Zone. Enforceable polices not applicable to this project (Goals 3, 10, and 11) were not analyzed further. In addition, NPS has read and reviewed VI Code, Title 12 Conservation, Chapter 21, VICZM Section § 906 (a)1-10, (b) 1-10, (c) 1-7 specific policies applicable and found that these federal agency undertakings are in support of and not in conflict with any of the applicable policies in Section 906. The following analysis is only for those policies that are relevant to the NPS's proposed action.

APPLICABLE ENFORCEABLE POLICIES

Section 903b, Goal (1) - Protect, maintain, preserve and, where feasible, enhance and restore, the overall quality of the environment in the coastal zone, the natural and man-made resources therein, and the scenic and historic resources of the coastal zone for the benefit of residents of and visitors of the United States Virgin Islands.

The existing Contact Station offers sweeping views that extend out toward the Caribbean Sea as well as across the Salt River Bay watershed. The park visitor contact station above the western side of the bay is an ideal place to interpret the site and experience the scenic views. The maritime viewshed remains largely intact today, thus conveying its historical significance and maintaining the park's coastal context. Nighttime scenery, starry night skies, and natural darkness are important components of the resources protected by the park. SARI holds an important harbor of darkness in St. Croix and provides an excellent opportunity for the public to experience this resource.

As both a historical park and ecological preserve, SARI protects important archeological resources dating back 2,000 years as well as a vibrant estuarine ecosystem. SARI has significant Caribbean indigenous history of the Taino and Carib people in addition to SARI including the location where Christopher Columbus landed on St. Croix. SARI provides an opportunity for visitors to view, discover, and understand the precolonial and colonial history of the U.S. Virgin Islands and recognize the relationship between impacts of human habitation and the environment on the island.

Scenic and Historic Resources

Provisions will be taken to preserve the scenic viewsheds, historical resources, protect the coastal zone during construction, and enhance the quality of the environment following construction. The proposed project is located on an existing site and building footprint that is approximately 325-feet from the shoreline; therefore, within the 1,000 foot setback of the DPNR CZM Tier 1 Zone area (see Figure 1 above). The Contact Station area is at an elevation of approximately 100-feet and is separated from the shoreline by a hillside and dense vegetation. The maritime viewshed remains largely intact today, allowing visitors to enjoy its historical significance and maintains SARI's vibrant coastal scenery. The proposed rehabilitation will be located entirely within the footprint of the existing Contact Station structure and maintain the existing two-story height of the building; therefore, maintaining the existing maritime and historic viewsheds. The project has been designed to maintain visual sightlines from surrounding viewsheds, minimize light trespass, and conform to dark sky requirements to preserve nighttime scenery, stargazing, and natural darkness. As such, site lighting is not proposed with the exception of a solar light for signs.

Although the existing Contact Station is not considered historic, it does sit within a historic landscape and is surrounded by cultural and environmental resources that define the park's mission and the visitor's experience. Many of these archeological and historic sites are yet to be scientifically surveyed or studied. Through preservation and study, these archeological and historic resources will provide invaluable information to enhance our understanding of the history of St Croix. The proposed project preserves the surrounding historic landscape by rehabilitating from an existing footprint and limiting site disturbance to only 2.5 acres.

Enhance and Restore Environmental Quality

Stormwater management on the site will be designed with Low Impact Development (LID) measures to closely match the pre-development conditions and in accordance with federal requirements. Before construction activity begins, erosion prevention Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be placed throughout the construction site to aid in the prevention of sediment-laden stormwater runoff. The measures to be utilized include: rainwater harvesting through existing cisterns, permeable pavers, reinforced pervious gravel paving, and flow through existing/proposed vegetated filter strips. Additional BMPs will be applied in areas with high potential of erosion, areas preceding infiltration practices, and will be applied to all steep slopes. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) was prepared and identifies the site-specific stormwater control measures in detail and can be viewed on Sheet C2.03 Erosion and Sediment Control Plan of the Construction Documents.

The proposed site design will provide new accessible parking near the Contact Station with accessible routes to the main and secondary entrances, and improvements to the existing grass/gravel terrace parking lot. The new accessible parking area is proposed with 5,930 square feet of permeable pavers, and the existing terrace parking lot will be replaced with 7,530 square feet of reinforced pervious gravel. The proposed parking creates a 520 square foot net increase of additional parking area, as well as 950 square foot net decrease of impervious concrete material. As a result, there shall be no net increase in stormwater runoff, which matches the existing intent of promoting stormwater infiltration onsite.

A tightly bound limits of disturbance is proposed using existing circulation routes and parking areas. The 12-foot wide concrete driveway shall remain in the same location, but will be widened to 20-feet at the existing entrance to improve safety. A new concrete driveway will also be installed from the main driveway to the lower terrace overflow parking area and a new concrete vehicle turnout will be installed along the north side of the existing driveway to allow for passing. These enhancements continue the park's mission and visitor experience with new accessibility options.

There are existing Agave (*agave eggerrisiana*) plants within the project limits and are listed on the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Though consultation with the Virgin Island Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), this project demonstrates conservation by relocating the Agave plants to areas outside the limits of disturbance prior to construction. The plants will be protected throughout the duration of construction with orange fence tree protection as shown on the Tree Protection Detail of Sheet C2.08 of the Construction Documents. Landscaping will be very minimal, and mostly limited to the courtyard. The courtyard will be a mix of paving and turf with some limited native plant beds with small palms and/or shrubs for accent. A few other small planting beds will be replanted at the southeast corner of the kitchen and across from the turn-around.

The improved site access will benefit the residents and visitors of the Virgin Islands by improving access to public lands in the coastal zone within the park. The rebuild of the Contact Station and associated parking and driveway improvements will provide educational and recreational opportunities and ensure that the operational and management needs of the park continue to be met.

Section 903 b, Goal (2) Promote economic development and growth in the coastal zone and consider the need for development of greater than local concern by managing (1) the impacts of human activity and (2) the use and development of renewable and nonrenewable resources so as to maintain and enhance the long-term productivity of the coastal environment.

The proposed project will promote the economic growth and development in the coastal zone while controlling impacts of human activity by utilizing low impact and sustainable construction methods and materials within the park. Construction will be focused on previously disturbed areas which simultaneously allows for surrounding natural area preservation. The proposed project will rehabilitate and enhance the Contact Station that was damaged by Hurricane Maria in 2017, which will benefit visitor attendance and experience within the park.

Additionally, it is anticipated that many jobs will be created for the 18 to 24- month construction of the project, with the vast majority of them made available to qualified residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The proposed project will include onsite renewable resource strategies including rainwater capture/harvesting, gray water recycling systems, and on-site renewable energy systems including building mounted photovoltaic arrays. Proposed mechanical and lighting systems will be high efficiency to reduce overall operation costs and environmental impacts.

Section 903 b, Goal (4) Assure the orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of the resources of the coastal zone, taking into account the social and economic needs of the residents of the United States Virgin Islands.

St. Croix was devastated by the 2017 hurricane, and communities have been slowly recovering. Community needs were carefully considered by the NPS planning team when evaluating potential repairs to ensure no adverse effects to local communities. The proposed project will have a positive influence on the social needs of the residents of St. Croix by facilitating recreation, supporting historic preservation, and restoring terrestrial landscapes characteristic of the island of St. Croix.

SARI contains rich cultural heritage dating back 2,000 years. The proposed project will support SARI's current historic and ecological preservation by providing an accessible visitor contact area which supports the larger SARI mission and function. Additionally, the architectural design will be configured to take advantage of and preserve the scenic coastal views and create a more functional pedestrian circulation on site. To reduce the visual impact on the landscape, all enclosed areas will receive low slope shed roofs set lower than existing hip roofs. The single slope roofing provides a more efficient surface for water collection and the placement of photovoltaics for onsite renewable energy generation.

Section 903 b, Goal (5) Preserve, protect and maintain the trust lands and other submerged and filled lands of the Virgin Islands so as to promote the general welfare of the people of the Virgin Islands.

Overall, the proposed federal action will preserve and enhance public access to the coastal area along the Salt River Bay improving "the general welfare of the people of the Virgin Islands" through access and activities within SARI. Additionally, through this project NPS will continue to improve, protect, and maintain marine resource management/research within the SARI's coastal environment to ultimately aid the territory in preservation and protection of SARI, and to promote educational opportunity to develop the next generation of resource stewards for the Virgin Islands. Parking improvements will provide for more consistent access to visitors and partners, for walks, hikes, tours and SARI operations; as well as, provide improved visitor experience through education and sharing of park resource management/research activities to be conducted from the Contact Station and associated shoreline.

The proposed project does not impact trust lands or other submerged and filled lands. The project is located within an upland environment at an elevation of approximately 100-feet, is over 300-feet from the nearest shoreline, and will be contained within the proposed 2.5 acre disturbance area. The project, as designed, preserves, protects and maintains the trust lands and other submerged and filled lands of the United States Virgin Islands so as to promote the general welfare of the people of the United States Virgin Islands and therefore is consistent with this policy of the Virgin Islands Code Title Twelve Conservation, Chapter 21 § 903 (b).

Section 903 b, Goal (6) Preserve what has been a tradition and protect what has become a right of the public by insuring that the public, individually and collectively, has and shall continue to have the right to use and enjoy the shorelines and to maximize public access to and along the shorelines consistent with constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.

The goal closely aligns with the mission of the National Park Service which is to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The proposed project inherently supports this goal by restoring public access to the nearby shorelines in perpetuity. Enhancements to the parking area will increase access to the shoreline by providing additional parking for the SARI, which leads to Salt River Bay and Columbus Beach. Rehabilitation of the Contact Station will also provide educational and recreational opportunities to the public. Private property owners are not anticipated to be affected by the proposed project.

Section 903 b, Goal (7) Promote and provide affordable and diverse public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone for all residents of the United States Virgin Islands through acquisition, development and restoration of areas consistent with sound resource conservation principles.

The rehabilitation of the of Contact Station restores public recreational opportunities along the coastal area consistent with the site's conservation principles. The proposed project will utilize the existing real property to the greatest extent possible by offering sweeping views from the Caribbean Sea to the Salt River Bay watershed, providing a focal point to launch interpretive programs, hosting educational school programs, volunteer events, and serve as the education and outreach facility.

Proposed parking improvements will provide for more consistent access to visitors and partners, for walks, hikes, tours and SARI operations; as well as, provide improved visitor experience through education and sharing of park resource management/research activities to be conducted from the Contact Station and associated shoreline.

Section 903 b, Goal (8) Conserve ecologically significant resource areas for their contribution to marine productivity and valuable wildlife habitats, and preserve the function and integrity of reefs, marine meadows, salt ponds, mangroves and other significant natural areas.

There are existing Agave (*agave eggerrisiana*) plants within the project limits and are listed on the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Though consultation with the Virgin Island Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), this project demonstrates conservation by relocating the Agave plants to areas outside the limits of disturbance prior to construction. The plants will be protected throughout the duration of construction with orange fence tree protection as shown on the Tree Protection Detail of Sheet C2.08 of the Construction Documents.

The proposed project area is not expected to impact any ecologically significant resource areas. SARI is an Ecological Preserve protecting a diverse and dynamic coastal bay habitat with mangrove forests and coral reefs. The NPS' management of SARI provides a very significant contribution to preserving, protecting, and conserving St. Croix's marine and terrestrial habitats and wildlife including coral reefs, sea grass beds, several natural and man-made ponds, and one of the last intact mangrove estuarine areas in the U.S. Virgin Islands – directly supporting this policy. All NPS construction actions will be undertaken using BMPs to protect water quality, protected species and their habitats, and scenery. Therefore, the project is consistent with this policy of the Virgin Islands Code Title Twelve Conservation, Chapter 21 § 903 (b).

Section 903 b, Goal (9) Maintain or increase coastal water quality through control of erosion, sedimentation, runoff, siltation and sewage discharge.

Before construction activity begins, erosion prevention BMPs will be placed throughout the construction site to prevent sediment-laden stormwater runoff. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) was prepared and identifies the site-specific stormwater control measures in detail and can be viewed on Sheet C2.03 Erosion and Sediment Control Plan of the Construction Documents. Silt fence with steel poles will be applied along the perimeter of the project area. Additional BMPs will be applied in areas with high potential of erosion, areas preceding infiltration practices, to all steep slopes. The SWPPP shall be implemented for construction activities to control surface runoff, reduce erosion, and prevent sedimentation from entering coastal waters during construction.

Long term stormwater management on the site will be designed with Low Impact Development (LID) measures to closely match the pre-development condition and in accordance with federal guidance from Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA). Compliance with this guidance will be achieved by retaining the stormwater runoff from the 95th percentile storm event through both infiltration and rainwater harvesting/re-use. Measures such as rainwater harvesting through existing cisterns, permeable pavers, reinforced pervious gravel paving, and flow through existing/proposed vegetated filter strips will be utilized to control stormwater. There is an overall net decrease of 950 square feet impervious concrete material, and as a result, there shall be no net increase in stormwater runoff, which matches the existing intent of promoting stormwater infiltration onsite.

Furthermore, the building roof stormwater will be directed to a potable cistern system, and a pedestrian trench drain will be installed around the courtyard to direct captured stormwater runoff from the adjacent building areas to a non-potable cistern. Cisterns will be maintained and re-coated every five years.

The Contact Station septic wastewater system has been in operation for nearly three decades. No apparent onsite sewage disposal area meeting current DPNR guidelines could be located on the site, and no maintenance to the existing septic or onsite sewage disposal area is known to have occurred. Therefore, a new onsite sewage disposal system is proposed. The existing sewer for the building will be disconnected and septic tanks encountered shall be filled per DPNR regulations. The new septic system will be constructed on site and include a 1,000-gallon 2-compartment concrete holding tank, a mounded leach field, and perforated drain piping with stone. The new system was designed to meet current and future demands with a use rate of 100 visitors per day (36,500 visitors per year) which far exceeds 2017's total yearly count of 15,000 visitors.

The new wastewater septic system was designed per the Department of Planning & Natural Resources Proposed Onsite Sewage Disposal System Virgin Islands Coastal Management Rules and Regulations V.I.R. & REGS. Tit. 12, Chapter 21, Amendments to Sub chapter 902 and 910 and guidelines set forth by US EPA Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems Manual (February 2002). The system was located towards the front of the site due to the lower elevation, soil composition, milder slopes, and distance from the building.



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve
2100 Church Street No. 100
Christiansted, St. Croix
US Virgin Islands, 00820

IN REPLY REFER TO:
CHRI 251127

February 16, 2021

Honorable Jean-Pierre L. Oriol
Commissioner
Department of Planning and Natural Resources
Charles W. Turnbull Library
4607 Tutu Park Mall
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00802

Subject: Federal Consistency Determination, Coastal Zone Management and Minor Land Development Application, Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve, Rehabilitate Salt River Contact Station

Dear Commissioner Oriol,

The National Park Service (NPS) is submitting this Coastal Zone Consistency Determination and Minor Land Development Application to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) Coastal Zone Management (CZM) for construction activities associated with the Salt River Bay Visitor Contact Station within the Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve on the island of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

The contact station and related facilities within the park were extensively damaged by category 5 Hurricane Maria in 2017. As a result of hurricane damage, the park has lacked a main visitor contact and information center and proposes to rehabilitate the damaged facility. This project is located in DPNR CZM Tier 1 Zone (see Figure 1) and proposes the rehabilitation of the existing contact station as well as parking, roadway, stormwater, and sanitary sewer improvements. No expansion to the existing foundation of the contact station is proposed and no additional building structures are proposed.

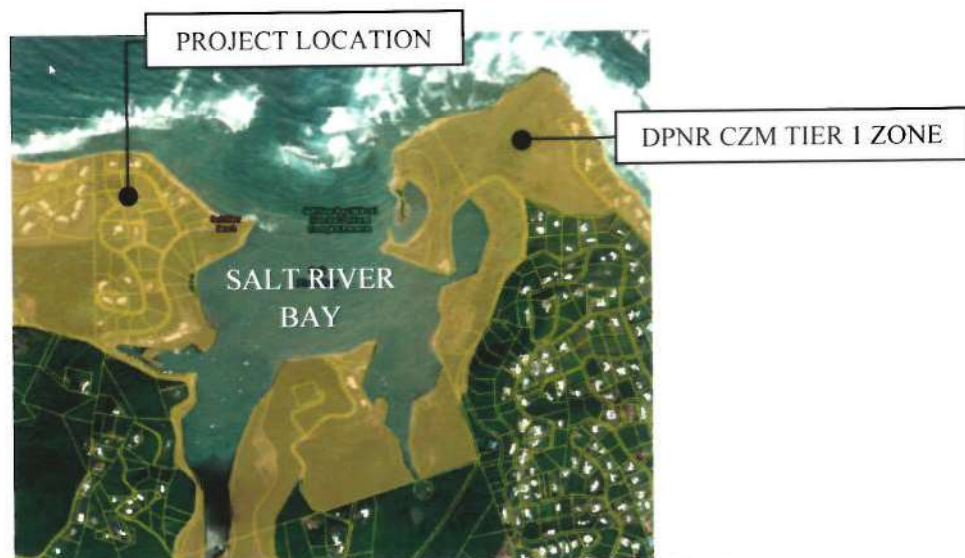


Figure 1 – Project Location and DPNR CZM Tier 1 Zone (shaded yellow)

INTERIOR REGION 2 • SOUTH ATLANTIC-GULF

ALABAMA, FLORIDA, GEORGIA, NORTH CAROLINA, PUERTO RICO, SOUTH CAROLINA,
TENNESSEE, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Pursuant to Section 307 (c) (1) of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 as amended, the NPS as the federal agency has determined that the proposed project is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the applicable enforceable policies of U.S. Virgin Islands federally approved Coastal Management Program. This determination is based on review of the proposed project's conformance with U.S. Virgin Islands coastal management program policies, which are primarily found in Title 12 Conservation, Chapter 21, Virgin Island Coastal Zone Management (VICZM) Section § 903 (b) and VICZM Section § 906 (a)1-10, (b) 1-10, (c) 1-7 of the U.S. Virgin Islands Administrative Code. Details of the determination are provided through submission of the attached narrative, construction plans, location map, Coastal Zone Consistency Determination, and Minor Land Development Application.

The NPS is requesting acknowledgement of the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Natural Resources concurrence with this consistency determination. The proposed project would have minimal potential for environmental impact, and is consistent with requirements of Title 12 Conservation, Chapter 21, VICZM Section § 903 (b) and VICZM Section § 906 (a)1-10, (b) 1-10, (c) 1-7 of the U.S. Virgin Islands Administrative Code and applicable permits that may be considered applicable to the rehabilitation of the contact station.

Shaun Cavey (Stantec Consulting Services Inc | shaun.cavey@stantec.com | 843-740-7700) is the authorized permitting agent for the NPS and should be contacted with any matters related to this permit application and subsequent review/approval. The project manager, Mr. Doug Denk, can be reached at 303-969-2336 or by email at doug_denk@nps.gov.

Thank you for your time and attention to this project. We look forward to working with you to obtain the necessary permits to proceed with construction of the project.

Sincerely,

Reginald M. Tiller

Reggie Tiller
Acting Superintendent
reggie_tiller@nps.gov
404-977-6622

Enclosures:

Figure 1 – Location Map (8.5X11)

Figure 2 – Site Plan (8.5X11)

Coastal Zone Management Enforceable Policies Determination

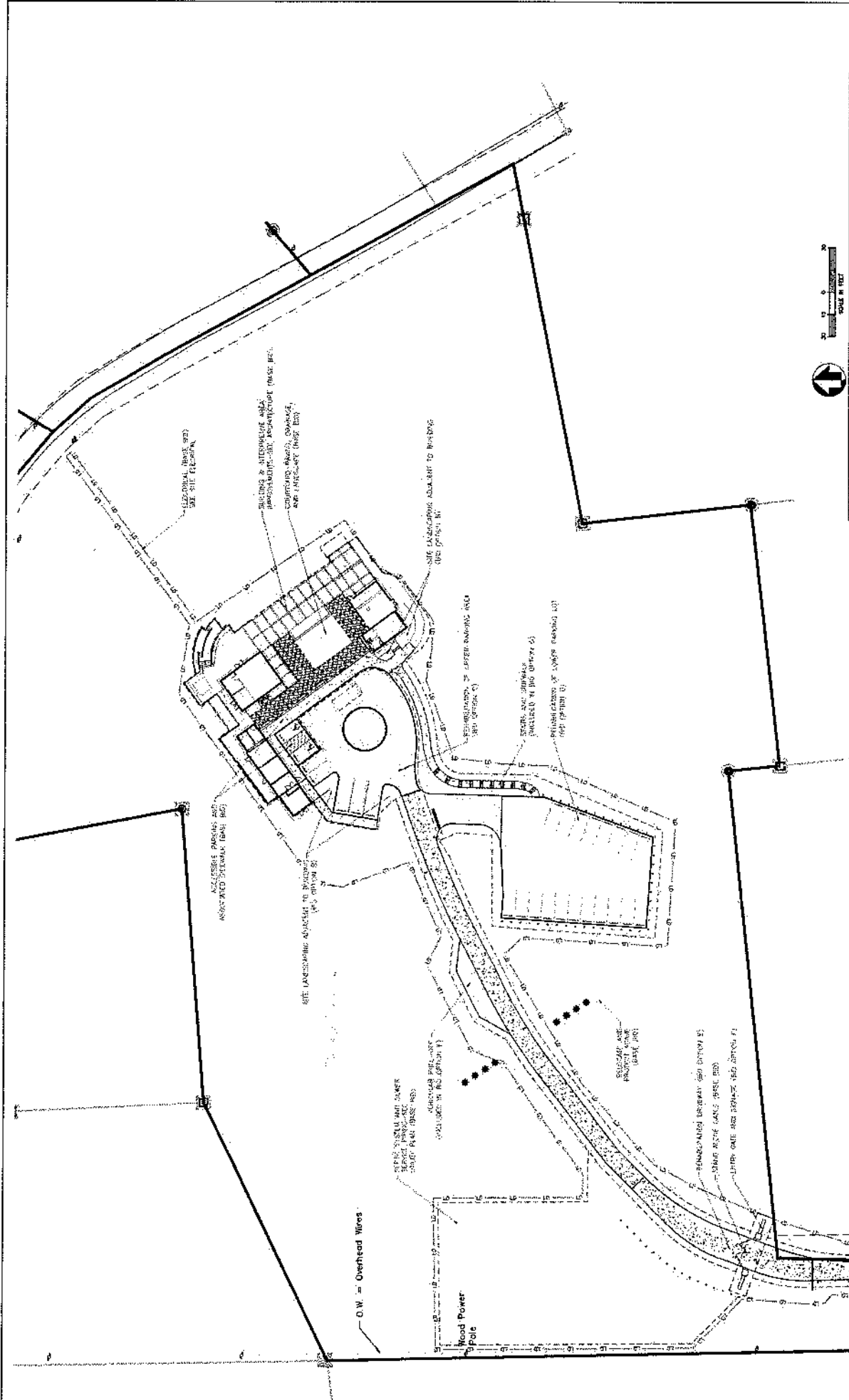
Minor Land Development Application

INTERIOR REGION 2 • SOUTH ATLANTIC-GULF

ALABAMA, FLORIDA, GEORGIA, NORTH CAROLINA, PUERTO RICO, SOUTH CAROLINA,
TENNESSEE, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS



DESIGNED: SGC ©ADD SGC	SUB SHEET NO. 1.0	TITLE OF SHEET LOCATION MAP	DRAWING NO. — —
TECH. REVIEW: JLL		SALT RIVER BAY NHP & EP REHABILITATE SALT RIVER CONTACT STATION	PMIS/PKG NO. 251127
DATE: 02/01/21			SHEET 1 OF 1



DRAWING NO. 361 TITLE TECHNICAL PROJECT NO. 1000000000 SHEET 00 DATE 11/17/2010	SITE OF SHEET OVERALL SITE PLAN	DRAWING NO. 361 TITLE TECHNICAL PROJECT NO. 1000000000 SHEET 00 DATE 11/17/2010	APPR. PISC. ORPH. SALT RIVER VC
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