



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

4611 Tutu Park Mall  
Suite 300  
St. Thomas, VI 00802  
(340) 774-3320

45 Mars Hill, Frederiksted  
St. Croix, VI 00840  
(340) 773-1082  
dpnr.vi.gov



### Office of the Commissioner

CONTACT: Jamal Nielsen, Media Relations Coordinator  
[jamal.nielsen@dpnr.vi.gov](mailto:jamal.nielsen@dpnr.vi.gov)

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## DPNR TO HOST VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING ON ST. THOMAS EAST END RESERVES MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) announces that the Division of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) invites the community to a public meeting to hear about and provide feedback on updates to the management plan for the St. Thomas East End Reserves (STEER), a locally managed marine protected area.

The virtual public meeting will be held on Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup> from 6 pm – 7:30 pm at <https://meet.google.com/gvx-fhte-mtt>.

STEER refers to the water and cays that are between Mangrove Lagoon in Bovoni and Turquoise Bay in Cabrita Hill, out seaward to Little St James Island. STEER encompasses three distinct Marine Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries (MRWS): Cas Cay/ Mangrove Lagoon, St. James, and Compass Point Pond (*VIRR Title 12, Ch. 1, §94 & §96*). Collectively these MRWS contain 9.6 km<sup>2</sup> of valuable coastal, marine and fisheries resources including mangrove forests, salt ponds, lagoons, reefs, and cays. Today, STEER refers to the protected area encompassing all three of the MRWS co-managed by DPNR's divisions of Coastal Zone Management (CZM), Fish and Wildlife (DFW), Environmental Enforcement (DEE), and Environmental Protection (DEP).

STEER is one of only two locally managed marine protected areas in the USVI, and the only one in St. Thomas (the other being St Croix's East End Marine Park). STEER encompasses St. Thomas' largest remaining mangrove area, which provides flood protection, stormwater management and fishery habitat. DPNR spent the past two years evaluating the progress made and challenges faced over the past ten years in STEER, and has identified changes, new threats, and opportunities for improved management of STEER. After a series of workshops with technical and local experts to guide appropriate revisions, DPNR is finalizing the management plan and re-energizing the STEER Advisory Council.

We hope to see you there!



Image of STEER from Cas Cay looking northeast