



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR CO-SPONSORS ANNUAL LIONFISH DERBY ON ST. CROIX

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources announces that the Division of Fish and Wildlife along with the Caribbean Oceanic Restoration and Education Foundation will sponsor the **ANNUAL LIONFISH DERBY**.

The derby will take place on Saturday, May 27th. Participants with eligible harvest of lionfish for the derby will start from 6 A.M. – 4 P.M. Derby participants may harvest in all of St. Croix territorial waters excluding marine protected areas and Buck Island. Weigh stations will be located at Altona Lagoon, Molasses Dock and Frederiksted boat ramp with final weigh-ins starting at 4 P.M.

Public lionfish preparation and tastings as well as the awards ceremony will be at Leatherback Brewery in the St. Croix Industrial Park the following day on Sunday, May 28th from 2 P.M. – 4 P.M. Cash prizes valued at over \$7,500 are available for the teams that bring in the largest and the greatest number of harvested lionfish. The registration fee is \$50, and participants can build teams of up to four people.

Lionfish are a species of reef fish from the Pacific first found in the Virgin Islands in 2008. They eat lobster, crabs, and fish, consuming up to 80% of fish communities on reefs. The species breeds quickly and outcompete native fish for resources. Recent studies have indicated that fishing pressure on lionfish needs to increase many times current rates to become a manageable invasive species in the Territory.

For any questions or more information on the derby or lionfish, please call the Division of Fish and Wildlife at 340-773-1082. Register online for the first annual Lionfish Derby at <https://www.corevi.org/2023derby-609292.html>.